



*It was midnight and everything was exactly  
as you'd expect it to be in London on a chilly  
April night.*

*Except for one thing.*

*In the middle of the river.*

*Right there. In the water.*

*A swirl of what looked like a bright pink  
ballgown.*

*A screech. A wail. A cry that sounded a lot like*

*I want it back noooooooooooooow!*

*A very, very big splash.*

*And then the drains all around the river exploded.*



## CHAPTER 1

The day that everything went completely wrong and really quite weird started off like every other Saturday.

Clem Carden put on her green raincoat, red wellies and her knitted yellow hat, just like she always did. She looked a bit like a Christmas tree.

She checked her pockets for her emergency

Oyster travel card in case she needed to get an emergency bus, and for her emergency money in case she needed to buy emergency cake. Then Clem picked up her bucket and her trowel from beside the front door and ran down the stairs of her building, just like she always did. She tripped over Raj's toy teddy bear on the next landing, just like she always did. She got up, brushed off her knees and darted down the next flight of stairs. She took extra special care to avoid Mrs Henderson's evil ginger cat, Floofer, on floor 3, just like she always did. Floofer yowled at her menacingly. He was a thug with whiskers and a love of cod.

Floofer neatly avoided, Clem jumped down three steps in one go in a whirl of flapping green raincoat. She knocked her special secret

knock on Ash and Zara's door. There was the usual scuffling and the unmistakable sound of someone being shoved into an umbrella stand, and then the door was flung open.

'Let's go!' shouted Ash, because he always shouted. He was stuffing his pockets with cheese and pickle sandwiches and trying to pull on his muddy boots at the same time. He fell over, and Floofer darted in and took a sandwich.



‘Talk quieter, dingus,’ said Zara, because she hated Ash’s shouting. In fairness, Ash’s voice was easily as loud as a jumbo jet. Zara was completely ready, and her boots were perfectly clean. Ash and Zara were about as different as two people could be, which was why they both suspected the other one had been discovered by their parents in a bin as a baby.

‘Have you got your buckets?’ asked Clem, because Ash always forgot. Like clockwork, he bounced back into the flat and returned holding his red finds bucket.

They carried on down the stairs, knocking on Raj’s door and Mrs Drummonds’s door. Outside their block of flats, they knocked at Mr Zafar’s house right in the middle of Elm Estate, and then finally Sol’s house just by

the community centre. It was time to head off to the river in a rowdy group.

They were going mudlarking.