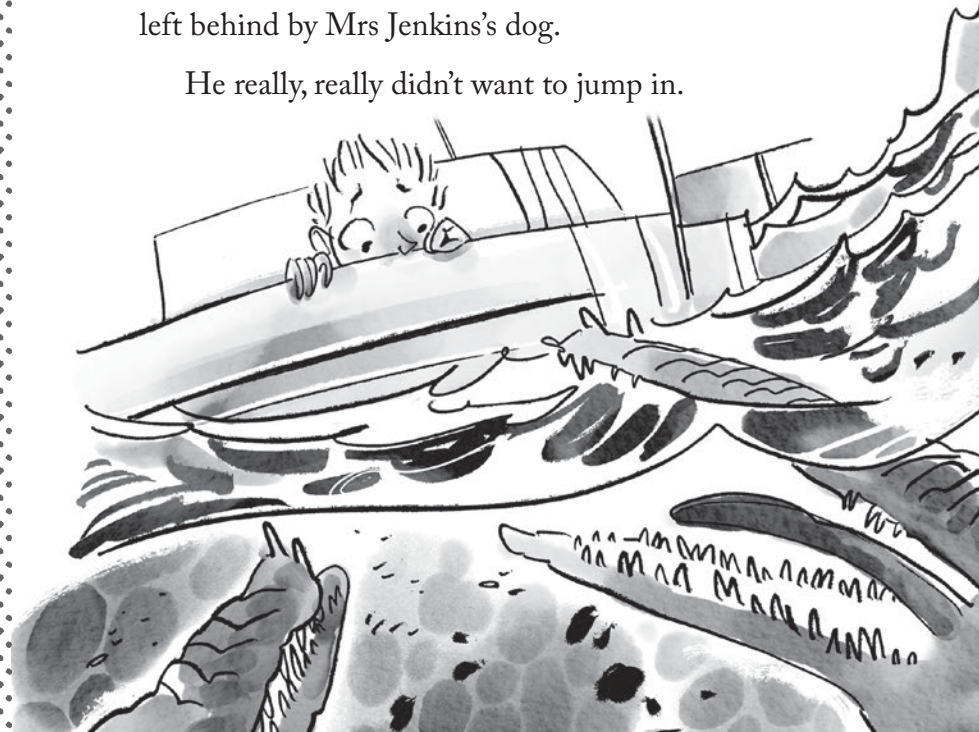


KID KABLAM

Levi peered over the edge of the boat. The river was the colour of chocolate, but it smelled like something left behind by Mrs Jenkins's dog.

He really, really didn't want to jump in.



‘Dad!’ he shouted. ‘I don’t think this is safe.’

Dad had wide eyes and frizzy white hair that made him look like an electrified sheep. He was on the riverbank, struggling to unfold a dented tripod. ‘What?’ he called.

‘I don’t think this is safe,’ Levi repeated.

‘What?’ Dad’s hearing hadn’t recovered from last week, when he blew up a whole stack of firecrackers in the washing machine.

Levi took a deep breath of the foul air. ‘I SAID, I DON’T THINK THIS IS SAFE!’

‘Nah, she’ll be right.’ Dad said this a lot. ‘Get ready to jump in.’

A dark shape cruised past under the water, rocking the little boat. The safety rail wobbled in Levi’s grip.

‘I think I saw a crocodile,’ he yelled.

‘Relax. The water is too toxic for crocodiles. OK, on your marks . . .’

‘Toxic?!’

Dad finally managed to get his battered camera attached to the tripod. He pushed a button, rubbed his

hands together and sat down in his director’s chair. ‘And . . . action!’

Levi didn’t move. ‘Why is the water toxic?’

‘From a sewer pipe upstream,’ Dad said impatiently. ‘It’ll be fine—just try to keep your head above the surface.’

Levi wished he was at the library right now. Or in bed. Or even at the dentist. Anywhere but here.

‘Try to make your hair flutter in the breeze as you jump,’ Dad suggested. ‘Just like Joe Dangerfield in *Blood Man 3*. And . . . action!’

‘Why can’t we just fake this with a dummy, or CGI?’

‘Fake stunts look fake, kiddo. And . . . action!’

Levi still didn’t move. He wasn’t poisoning himself to make Dad’s dumb show. ‘Dad,’ he began.

‘Geez, you’d better hurry up.’ Dad checked his watch. ‘The boat’s going to explode in a minute.’

‘Explode?! Why?’

‘That’s the point of the scene,’ Dad said, exasperated. ‘Kid Kablam realises the boat is about to explode, and then he dives into the water—didn’t you read the new version of the script?’