

Edie and the Box of Flits

KATE WILKINSON

illustrated by Joe Berger

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Chapter Four

Baker Street

Found: *five mobile phones, a mountain of odd gloves and a rabbit-shaped alarm clock*

'Dad? Can I go and look in the Storeroom at the End?'

Edie had joined Dad downstairs in the basement. The day's haul of lost property sacks had already slipped down the blue post chutes that ran from the ground floor to the basement like a helter-skelter. They were now lined up on the trolley beside him ready for sorting. On the wall above the trolley a poster shouted in large red letters: *We Return What You've Lost.*

'All right, but don't spend hours in there,' he said.

Edie loved the storeroom at the end of the corridor on the ground floor. It was the last of three storerooms and it was where all the oddball, one-off things were shelved.

If, as Vera said, the box hadn't been claimed by anyone, it was sure to be there.

'Stack all the items marked *Unclaimed* in a pile,' Dad went on. 'Time they went to the charity shop. Load of old tat, most of it. Can you find a place on the shelf for this?' He handed her a rabbit-shaped alarm clock that had just arrived.

'I love all the old tat,' said Edie. 'Do you remember that cape, Dad?'

When Edie was still at primary school, a sequinned cape had been handed in to the Lost Property Office. It was made out of a luminous fabric that glowed in the dark.

'I do. It was found on the Victoria Line,' said Dad. 'It was a bit spooky, that cape.'

He had let Edie keep it as after three months no one had claimed it and she had worn it in bed for a week. As she lay in the dark wrapped in its luminous green glow she imagined herself running through the tunnels of the Victoria Line with the cape fanned out behind her like a moon creature's wings. When she showed how it shone in the dark to her two best friends from school, Naz and Linny, they were amazed.

As Edie walked down the corridor to the storeroom she tried once again to push away thoughts about her new secondary school. Right from the first week Naz

and Linny seemed different and they had laughed at her new uniform. They'd talked in horrible scratchy whispers about her baggy jumper and oversized school shoes. They'd never made fun of her before, but now that they were in Year Seven it seemed to matter what you looked like.

'Why are you still *so-o* small?' Naz had said one lunchtime. She was already almost a head taller than Edie.

'Did you think getting big shoes would make you grow?' said Linny in a strange sing-song voice. She leant over to Naz to show her a Snapchat picture of a ring of girls laughing and making faces.

Edie opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out. She felt as if someone had pushed her hard and she was falling backwards off a wall that she had sat on for years. She fiddled with the end of one of her plaits. 'I can still run the fastest,' she said.

Naz and Linny looked at her as if she was their annoying younger sister.

'Not in those shoes you can't!' Linny said, and then they had ignored her. They didn't even ask her what she was going to do over half-term.

Edie had decided early on to stop talking to either of them or their horrible new friends and her days at school were largely spent in silence.

The corridor narrowed and Edie stopped in front of

the last storeroom. She unhooked the latch and pushed open the heavy metal door, breathing in the familiar smell of old biscuits. The fluorescent strip lights buzzed into life. There were no windows in the storeroom, as the walls were covered with shelves that reached from floor to ceiling, and there was an old Persian rug on the floor that had been found rolled up at Waterloo Station almost three years before. No one had ever claimed it, but Dad had kept it as he said it gave the storeroom an air of homeliness.

Edie walked along the first shelf, pulling out any items that were marked with the red *Unclaimed* labels. The pile grew – first a child's Pokémon rucksack, then a Mickey Mouse money box, an Arsenal football flag and an egg whisk. She quickly scanned the other shelves, hoping to catch a glimpse of the box, but couldn't see it.

She became distracted by the new arrivals, pressing the alarm button on the rabbit-shaped clock to make its ears wiggle before she found a place for it on the shelf, and plucking at the strings of the purple electric guitar. She was just about to pick up a strange medieval-looking sword, when she heard a tapping sound – sharp and insistent. It was an annoying tap, like a twig against a windowpane on a windy night.

Edie stopped to listen.

There it was again – tap, tap, tap.



It was coming from somewhere high up.

She dragged a chair across the floor and levered herself up until her head was level with the top shelf. She ran her hands along the surface, feeling her way. Her right hand rested on the soft brown felt of a cowboy hat. She pulled it towards her and spun it to the floor like a Frisbee.

Moving further along, her fingers caught in the feathers of a large stuffed bird. She snatched her hand away, thinking for a moment of the bird with the crocodile smile, but its feet were firmly glued to a wooden plinth.

She stopped again to listen. The tapping was over to her left.

Climbing down, she moved the chair along and tried again. Just next to the stuffed bird, her fingers rested on the sharp corners of a wooden box.

She felt certain it was *the* box. Her box. The one she had found on the Bakerloo Line.

Edie scrabbled for it and dragged it towards her. She felt sweat prickling on her forehead as she slid it off the shelf and into her arms. Yes, it felt the same, and she could see Benedict's wobbly handwriting on the brown label stuck to its side, but she could now also see that there were two small panes of glass at each side and the tapping noise was coming from one of the panes.

Edie felt scared and excited. She hadn't been mistaken about that fluttering when she'd handed over the box to

Benedict; there *was* something alive in there. Perhaps it was a hamster with a little wheel for exercise? If it was something alive, it would be very hungry.

Edie weighed up what she was feeling. She knew she could be timid at school and hang back, but all her life curiosity had burnt like the flare of a match inside her. Gripping the box to keep it steady, she stepped back down from the chair.

The tapping became louder and more frantic. Edie held the box up until the pane of glass was level with her face. At first all she could see was a faint yellow glow, but it was blurry, as if someone had smeared the glass with grease.

Her eyes slowly adjusted. A tiny creature was beating its fists against the glass.

It was about the size of Edie's thumb. It had wings that were whirring furiously and a puff of hair that was like the fur on the tip of a cat's tail.

The creature stopped banging and started to wave wildly at Edie. Then, clear as a tiny bell, words began to form.

'I want to come out RIGHT THIS MINUTE.'