

Sam turned to face her sister and was about to say something rude, when the oddest thing happened: Luke and Sam's skin, hair, and clothes turned pale green and sparkled. Next there was a tiny *pop* and they vanished. Actually *vanished*. Gone! A see-through pale green outline of their bodies went fuzzy for a split second, and then fizzled out.

Kitty stared, glued to the spot, totally numb. It felt unreal, like she'd just watched it happen in a movie. The whole thing had probably taken less than a second. It began to replay itself again and again in her mind as she tried to make sense of it, going back over the details: the green light, the tiny *pop*, the fading outline. Gone! The green light, the tiny *pop*, the fading outline. Gone . . .

Everything around Kitty switched to slow-motion. She was distantly aware of Lizzie screaming next to her. The screams made Toby turn to look at Lizzie. Busy deciding which was the biggest bit of cake, he hadn't seen what'd just happened.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" Toby yelled over Lizzie's screams.

Coming out of her initial shock, Kitty stood up. "Sam and . . ." she said then paused, "and Luke – just – vanished," she said, each word coming out on a new breath, her heart banging away in her chest.

"What?" Toby shouted, turning sharply to look towards the computer. He stared in disbelief at the empty chair where Luke had been sitting.

Lizzie's screaming turned to loud sobs.

Still staring intently at the computer table, Kitty said slowly, "I'm telling you, Toby, they were there one second and gone the next."

"It's t-true, Toby," Lizzie wailed.

Kitty took a deep breath and edged forwards to the place where Sam and Luke had just been. She put her hands out, feeling the air in the hope they were still there somehow and she couldn't see them. But there was nothing there. Her eyes went up to the ceiling. Nothing. She looked at the floor. Nothing. Looked round the room. Nothing, nothing, nothing. A frantic feeling started in her chest and spread through her body. She breathed faster and began to shudder.

Toby ran into the hall and up the stairs shouting, "Sam! Sam? You up there?"

*He doesn't believe me then,* Kitty thought.

Charging downstairs again, Toby rushed towards the kitchen yelling, "Sam! Where are you?"

Then it hit Kitty. She began shaking wildly and feeling really sick. Her heart was pounding so hard it hurt her ears – her head felt like it'd explode any second.

Toby came hurtling back into the lounge, wide-eyed with panic now. "WHERE ARE THEY?" he shouted in desperation. "They can't have just disappeared. What happened? What's going on?"

Lizzie was still on the sofa. "Luke, Luke," she kept muttering.

Kitty sat down beside her and put her arm round her shoulders. They both looked utterly distraught.

Toby joined them, perching on the armrest by Kitty. He'd never been so upset before.

Woof dropped his head and whined.

After a minute or two, Kitty started to get her thoughts together. "I need to phone Mum," she said.

She let go of Lizzie and fumbled to get her mobile phone out. She called her mum's number. There was no signal. Another wave of panic spread through her.

"I can't get through to her," she said, standing up. "I'll try Dad on the landline."

"I've just t-tried my mum. I c-can't get through to her, either," stuttered Lizzie. She sank back into the sofa and held her head in her hands.

Toby frantically jabbed at his phone. "Can't get a signal," he said in a hoarse voice.

Kitty rushed out into the hall. Picking up the phone, she tried her dad's office number. His secretary answered.

"Can I speak to my dad quickly, please? It's Kitty," she said, trying to sound calm.

"Yes, of course," said Mrs Green. "Hang on a minute."

She put Kitty on hold and music played. A few moments later she came back on.

"Hallo, Kitty, he's not here. That's odd. Maybe he went for a coffee or nipped to the loo. Don't worry, he can't have disappeared. I'll get him to call you immediately he gets back. Are you alright—?"

The phone went dead. Not on hold this time: no music, no sound; nothing but silence. Kitty tried again but she couldn't get a dialling tone. She put the phone down slowly, as yet another wave of panic rushed through her.

She went back into the lounge and blurted out, "There's something wrong with the phone. It's gone dead."

A noise came from the PC. The three of them turned to look at it.

"It's shut down," Toby said.

"So's the TV," Kitty added.

"I've tried my phone over and over and now it's completely dead," sobbed Lizzie. "We need to call the p-po . . . the police."

"We can't do that, Lizzie," Toby told her. "What'll we tell them? Our sister and brother just vanished into thin air?" Toby shook his head. "They'll laugh at us."

"We *must* call the police, Toby. Something's really wrong," Lizzie insisted, almost shouting the words at him.

Kitty knew Lizzie was right. She got her mobile out to dial 999. Dead.

"I can't even make an emergency call," Kitty said.

"Our mums will be back soon," Lizzie pointed out.

Then Kitty noticed something. "Be quiet!" she snapped, louder than she meant to.

Lizzie and Toby stopped and stared at her. After a moment, they gasped as they noticed it, too. There was no sound: no clocks ticking, no cars outside, no kids playing. Nothing. Total silence.

"What on earth's going on?" Kitty whispered, then crept over to the window, Toby close behind her, and lifted the curtain carefully. "No way!" she gasped.

Something totally weird was going on. Everything had stopped. There was a woman pushing a pram but going nowhere; a ball stopped in mid-air; birds stuck in the sky.

"What's happening?" Lizzie asked from the sofa.

Toby gulped. “Nothing,” he answered, staring outside with eyes wide.

“What’d you mean?” Lizzie asked.

Kitty was absolutely stunned. She turned to face Lizzie and managed to say, “They . . . everything . . . everything’s just stop—”