

*Chapter 55*  
**BLACK SILENCE**

Everything went dark.  
All Elsie could see was black.

All she could hear was silence.

All the girl could feel was a deathly chill.

At first, she didn't know what was up and what was down.

Where was Woolly?

In all the chaos and confusion, she had lost sight and sound and touch of her friend. Immediately, the cruel current of the Thames pulled her far away from the hole she had fallen through. As much as Elsie tried to paddle back to it, that proved impossible. She was being swept further and further away. In desperation, she thumped on the underside of the ice, trying to bash her way through it.

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**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

The ice was inches thick. Her tiny fists were no match for it. They couldn't even make a dent. Elsie opened her mouth and let out a scream. But underwater no one could hear her.

Just as she felt the life draining out of her, and that she was sinking down to a watery grave, she felt a surge underneath her. Something was pushing her up. It was Woolly! The girl was cradled between the mammoth's eyes as her sharp tusks smashed through the ice.

**CRASH!**

Elsie gasped. "AAH!"

**"HOOOOOO!"**

The girl was soaking wet and freezing cold but alive. Just. Elsie slid off the mammoth's face, landing on the ice with a thud.

**"Oof!"**

Although shivering and choking from the dirty Thames water, all Elsie could think about was her friend. "WOOLLY!" she spluttered.  
**"HOOOO!"**

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The mammoth's trunk was just poking out of the hole in the ice, as she desperately tried to breathe. With all her might, Elsie held on to it, so the animal wouldn't sink to her death.

"HOLD ON, WOOLLY! PLEASE!" she cried.

The girl knew it would be impossible for her to hoist this two-ton creature out of the river, but that didn't stop her from trying.

"HUH!"

And again.

"HUH!"

And again.

"HUH!"

"HOOO!"



All the strength in her body wasn't enough to save her friend's life. But they hadn't come this far for it to end now. There had to be a way to save her!

"SOMEBODY HELP!" screamed Elsie.

Her voice echoed across the ice.

In the distance, she could see a handful of the Chelsea Pensioners in their distinctive scarlet coats

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and tricorne hats coming to the rescue!

Titch was leading from the front.

Under their arms the old soldiers were holding a thick rope, which snaked its way across the ice back to the ship.

Above their heads, the Zeppelin was circling for another attack.

"DIE, MONSTER, DIE!" yelled Buckshot.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT!

The machine gun blasted. Another hail of bullets sent shards of ice flying into the air.

KABOOM!

Slowly, the Zeppelin began coming round again to make another attack.

"THROW ME THE ROPE!" called out Elsie. The mammoth was sinking fast. Now only the tips of her tusks were bobbing out of the icy water. Elsie hooked the end of the rope round one of the tusks and tied it tight.

"HEAVE!" she ordered.

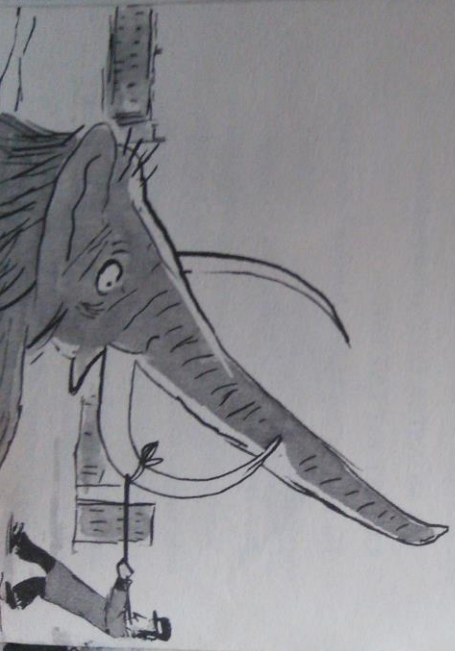
The old soldiers all gripped the rope and heaved

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as hard as they could, just managing to pull the mammoth's head out of the water.

The animal spluttered, and let out a deafening  
**"HOOI!"**

Aboard HMS *Victory* it was all hands on deck, as



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the remaining pensioners took the end of the rope.

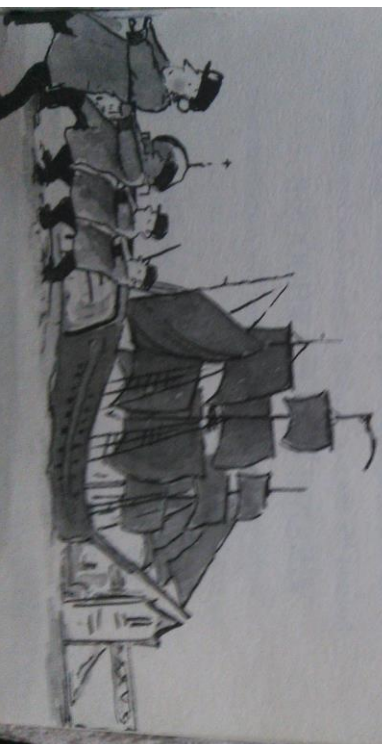
On the admiral's count...

"On three. One, two, three. Heave!"

...they all heaved, lifting the mammoth up and out of the freezing water. Woolly landed with a terrific thump on the ice.

**DOOF!**

"**HOO!**" she sighed.



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"YES!" shouted Elsie. Looking behind Woolly, she saw two arcs of policemen and military policemen closing in on them. "LIFT THE SAILS!" she called out.

"Excuse me, young lady!" called back the admiral. "I am in charge of this ship!"

"All right, then! You say it!"

"LIFT THE SAILS!"

As the magnificent sails of HMS *Victory* were hoisted for the first time in years...

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH!

...the gang on the ice pushed the mammoth back on to her feet.

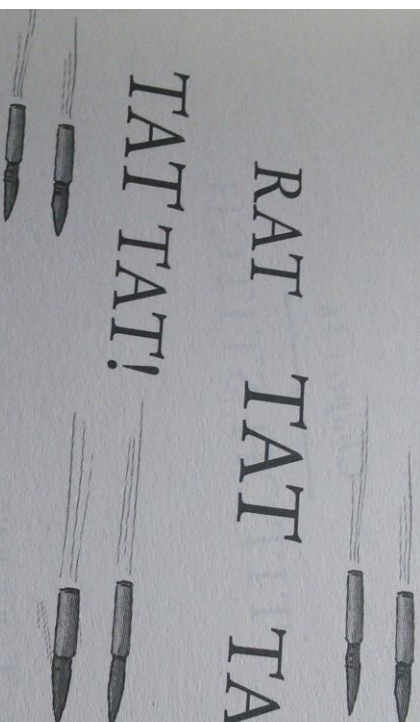
"GO! GO! GO!" called out Elsie. She led the way across the ice to the ship, holding on to her friend so the mammoth would not slip.

In the sky, the Zeppelin was hovering round into position for yet another attack.

Behind the machine gun, Lady Buckshot had the mammoth in her sights once again.

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RAT TAT TAT  
TAT TAT!



"URGH!" screamed Titch as he clutched his stomach and sank to his knees.

