

Chapter 58  
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SLICING  
THROUGH THE ICE

"Which way is the North Pole, sir?" piped up Titch.

"Straight ahead, men!" commanded the admiral, pointing downriver. "Then when we reach the sea make a left!"

Just as the mammoth's arrival into the city had been a cause of great excitement, its departure was proving even more so. Word had spread fast, and soon it seemed like every Londoner was running along the



*Slicing Through the Ice*

banks of the Thames, eager to be part of this awfully big adventure. The proud old admiral saluted them, which made the crowds cheer loudly.

"HURRAH!"

"HOOOO!" called out Woolly as she appeared to wave with her trunk.

This made the crowds go wild.

"HURRAH!"

It was a happy scene, and put joy into the hearts of all on board the *Victory*.

Titch sidled up to Dotty.

"I was very nearly a goner," he said.

"What happened, my love? I thought you'd been shot!" she replied.

"It was much, much worse than that. A stitch."

"A stitch?"

"Yes. A really bad stitch can be deadly."

"I didn't know that," replied the lady. "Maybe I need to kiss it better. Where does it hurt?"





*The Ice Monster*

The old soldier pointed to his lips. "Here."

They kissed. It was the shortest, sweetest kiss in the history of kisses. But the long-awaited meeting of their lips felt like fireworks to them, and they both looked light-headed as soon as they parted.

"I think I need a sit-down," said Dotty.

"I think I need a lie-down," said Titch.

"This is no time for kissing, sailors!" commanded the admiral. "We have a ship to sail!"

As he gave his orders, the men went to work. Soon HMS *Victory* picked up speed, and began slicing through the ice with ease. As the ship sailed through east London, getting nearer to the sea, the ice became thinner. HMS *Victory* began sailing faster and faster, until it passed out of the Thames Estuary and into the open sea.

"HURRAH!" cried the pensioners.

"HOOO!" cried Woolly.

"Port side!" ordered the admiral. This was the nautical term for the left side.

Waves were now hitting the ship, causing it to sway

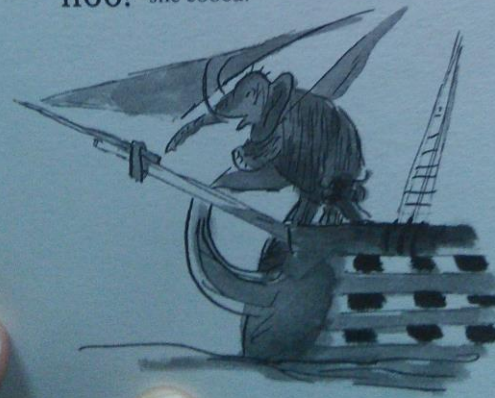
*Slicing Through the Ice*

from side to side. The mammoth had installed herself at the prow like an unofficial figurehead. Her trunk dangled down and covered the actual figurehead, which was a royal shield and a crown with a cherub on each side.

Elsie sidled up next to her friend. "Looking north again?" she said. The girl gazed out across the endless sea. The North Pole was thousands of miles away. "We'll get you home, Woolly. I promise."

With that, she stroked one of the mammoth's big furry ears. Woolly gently pushed her body against the girl as a way of saying thank you.

"HOO!" she cooed.





Chapter 59

A DIAMOND  
DUST OF STARS

Days passed at sea. HMS *Victory* sailed round the furthest tip of Scotland, and found herself alone in the deepest, darkest North Sea.

Weeks passed. As the ship travelled north, the sea grew rougher and rougher. Waves as tall as trees crashed over the *Victory*.

SPLISH!  
SPLASH!  
SPLOSH!

Everyone had to work together to stop the ship from sinking. Even Woolly. The mammoth hosed up the pools of water on the deck with her trunk, and sprayed them back overboard.

Another night descended on the *Victory* as at last they passed into calmer waters. The pensioners

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worked in shifts, and slept in the bunks below deck. Woolly was too large to fit, so when it was time to sleep Elsie stayed with her. Just like at the hospital, the pair of best friends snuggled up together.

"Goodnight, Woolly," Elsie would say.

"HOO!" Woolly would reply, which if translated from mammoth language means "Goodnight, Elsie".

The girl would tuck herself in under the soft fur of Woolly's belly. The mammoth would then shuffle her legs together to protect her friend from the cold. Woolly made the softest, comfiest bed, and at night, as they lay together, Elsie felt that she was home. Looking

up, she could see the diamond dust of stars in the sky.

Everything seemed so perfect.

It couldn't last.

And it didn't.

