

Chapter 64
A POOL OF BLOOD

The young sailors leaped from one ship to another with ease. They landed on the deck of the *Victory*, brandishing their rifles.

"CHARGE!" shouted the admiral, as he led his pensioners into battle. The old soldiers were brave, and attacked the young sailors with their cutlasses, mops and brooms.

CLUNK!

CLINK!

CLANK!



They went straight for the rifles, trying to force them to the floor.

Meanwhile, Dotty had found an old tin bucket, and was bashing the young sailors over the head with it.

A Pool of Blood

BISH!
BASH!
BOSH!

Many were knocked out by the force of her blows.

"OUCH!"

THUD!

"OOF!"

THUD!

"ARGH!"

THUD!

Meanwhile, Elsie attacked the invaders by whacking them on their bottoms with her sail batten.

THWACK!

"AH!"

THWUCK!

"AAHH!!"

THWOCK!

"AAAAAHHHHH!"

A smile spread across her face. This was fun.



Woolly joined in too.

"HOO!"

With her tusks, the mammoth scooped up a sailor, before dropping him in the sea.

"NOOOO!"

PLOP!

As Elsie battled on, out of the corner of her eye she could see a cannon on HMS *Argonaut* swivelling round. Now it was pointing straight at the mammoth. The captain gave the order.

"FIRE AT WILL!"

"NOOOOOO!" screamed Elsie as she put her hands up in the air to shield her friend. The gunner fired, and a huge net shot across the decks of the *Victory*, trapping the mammoth in its web.

"HOO!" roared Woolly. The poor thing was distressed, and began bucking and thrashing around.

HOO!

The more she did so, the more tangled she became.

"HOO! HOO!"

"WOOLLY! WOOLLY!" cried the girl, trying to calm the creature down, to no avail.

The mammoth lurched across the deck, bashing into people and things.

"HOO!"

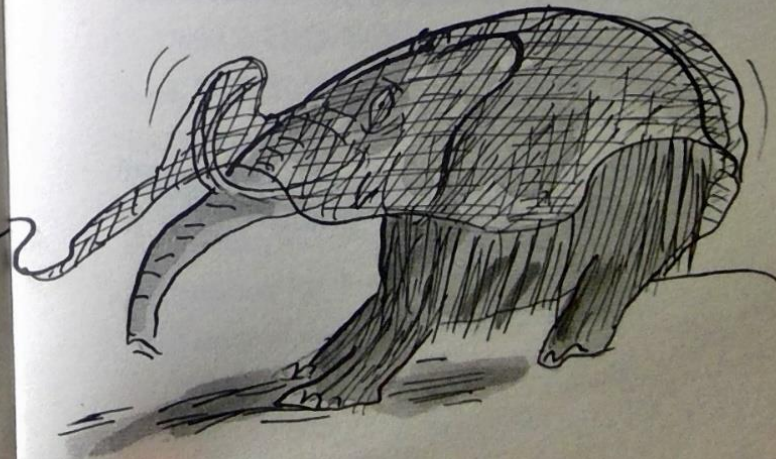
She swung round and knocked a sailor to the floor.

DOOF!

"ARGH!"

Another was trodden on by a giant prehistoric foot.

BOOF!



"OUCH!"

A third sailor became tangled in the net, and was dragged across the deck.

"HELP!"

Still clutching his rifle, the sailor's finger snagged on the trigger. A shot rang out.

BANG!

All was quiet and still on board the *Victory*.

Woolly was quiet and still too. She stopped thrashing around and stood motionless for a moment, before she keeled over and landed with a deafening THUD.

A pool of blood spread across the deck.

"WOOLLY! NOOOOOO!" screamed Elsie.



Chapter 65

HARD RAIN

The old soldiers and the young sailors all worked together to untangle the mammoth from the net. As soon as the captain of HMS *Argonaut* had hauled two of his sailors out of the North Sea, he stepped on board the HMS *Victory* to help.

"I'm so sorry this has happened," said the captain.

Elsie put her hands over the wound in Woolly's chest to stop the flow of blood.

"WHY DID YOU SHOOT HER?" she cried. "WHY?"

There was no answer.

"Somebody do something!" she begged.

Dotty put her ear to the animal's mouth. "I can't hear her breathing. I'm so sorry, Elsie. I know you loved her. And she loved you. But this is the end of the story."

"NOOOO!" yelled Elsie.
BOOM!

Thunder rolled across the sea. Ahead, black clouds were swirling. A storm was coming.

"Sail into the storm!" ordered Elsie.

The admiral looked aghast. "No. It would be the end of us all."

"It's the only way we can save her."

"By sailing into a storm?" demanded the admiral.

"We used lightning to restart her heart before. Maybe we can do it again."

Dotty rushed over to where Elsie was trying to stop the flow of blood.

"Let me take over!" she said.

The lady pushed the end of her mop right into the wound, and the flow of blood slowed.

"We can tow you into the storm!" offered the captain of the *Argonaut*.

"No," replied the admiral. "It's too dangerous. You young sailors have got your whole lives ahead of you."

He turned to the pensioners.

"Men. Are you all with me?"

"YES, SIR!" came the reply.

"Good luck!" said the captain, and he and the admiral saluted each other. "We will make sure Queen Victoria is told all about your bravery."



The captain led his men back on board the *Argonaut* as the admiral called out his orders.

"Set course for the storm!"

The men went to work, and soon HMS *Victory* was flying into the darkness ahead.



"Elsie?" began Dotty. "Do you know what you're doing? We don't have a balloon or metal wire or anything."

"I know." The girl choked, fighting back a river of tears. "But there must be a way."

Her eyes searched the deck of the *Victory*. At the bow, she spotted something.

"See that metal chain, Titch?"

"Yes!" replied the old soldier. "That's for dropping the anchor."

"Put the anchor right next to Woolly's heart, and then pass me the end of the chain."

"Right-ho!"

Titch scuttled over to the bow, and with the help of his fellow pensioners he dragged the anchor and chain over to where the mammoth was lying.

Elsie took the end of the chain and wrapped it round her wrist. Then she placed a cutlass between her teeth like a pirate, and with her monkey feet began climbing the rigging.

"Where do you think you're going?" asked Dotty.

"The crow's nest, of course," Elsie replied, her speech hard to understand thanks to the cutlass in her mouth.

As the ship crashed up and down on the angry waves...

THRUMP! THRUMP! THRUMP!

...Elsie climbed up and up and up. Once at the top, she clambered into the crow's

nest and looked straight ahead into the storm.

"Come on!" she whispered to the sky. "*Give me everything you've got.*"

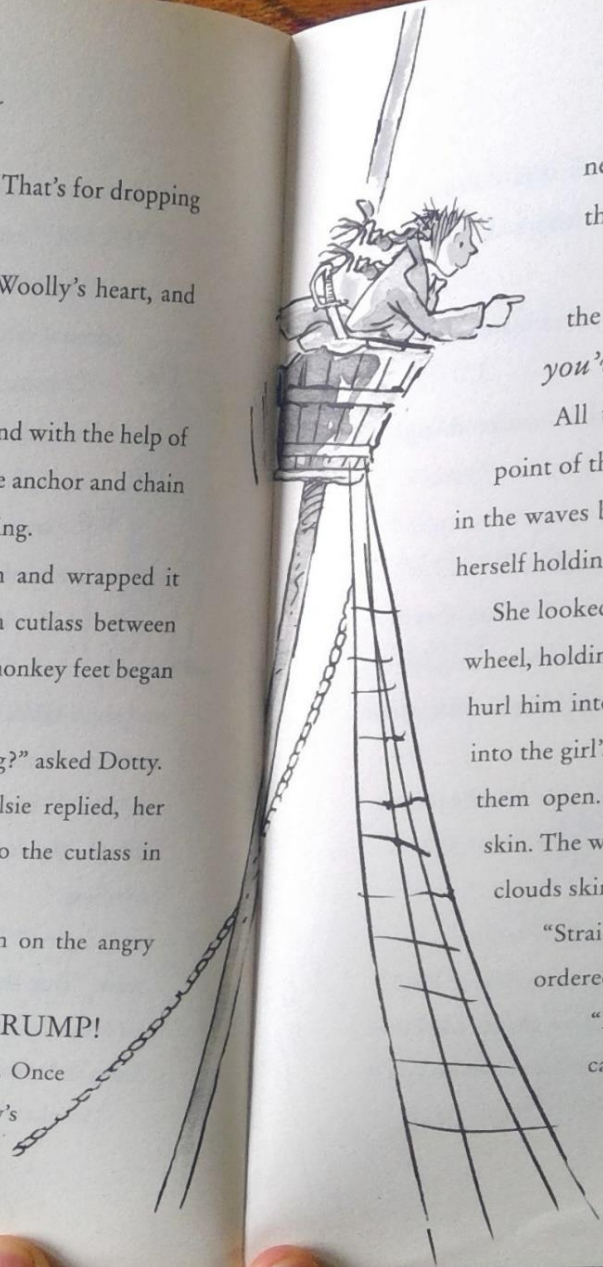
All the way up there at the tallest point of the *Victory*, the rolling of the ship in the waves became exaggerated. Elsie found herself holding on for dear life.

She looked down to see the admiral at the wheel, holding on tightly so the waves didn't hurl him into the sea. Hard rain was flying into the girl's eyes. It was a struggle to keep them open. Soon she was soaked to the skin. The wind wound around her, and the clouds skimmed her hair.

"Straight ahead, Admiral!" she ordered.

"Aye, aye, Captain Elsie!" he called back up.

BOOM!



Thunder rumbled across the black sky.

"Come on, lightning!" the girl whispered. "I know you're in there somewhere."

As if on cue, a flash of lightning illuminated the sky.

KRAZZLE!

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" called up Dotty.

"No. This is madness!"

"Good madness or bad madness?"

"Good, I hope!"

Elsie lifted the cutlass high into the air.

"But the lightning, Elsie. It could kill you!" shouted Dotty.

"If it does, promise you'll look after Woolly for me. Make sure she gets to the North Pole? PLEASE?"

"Don't do this!"

"Why?"

"I love you, Elsie. You're like a grandma to me."

"I think you mean granddaughter, Dotty, and I love you too, but I have to save my friend. Promise you'll look after her."

"I promise!"

A bolt of lightning hit the front sail, and it burst into flames.

BOOM!

"FIRE ON BOARD!" shouted the admiral as his men struggled to put it out.

"Nearly!" whispered Elsie. She stretched her arm as high as it would go, and closed her eyes.

"COME ON!" she shouted.

A bolt of lightning struck the tip of the cutlass.

"AAH!" cried Elsie as the electricity sizzled through her.

