

Chapter 71

SMOTHERING TO DEATH

Woolly led the three humans for many more miles across the ice. North. North. North. As night fell, the entire sky lit up red and green and purple.

"Wow! This is beautiful!" said Elsie as she stopped still and looked up in wonder.

"The Northern Lights, they're called," replied Titch. "You can only see them if you travel really far north."

"Well, I went to Yorkshire to visit my aunt Maud and I never saw 'em," said Dotty.

Titch shook his head. "I mean *really* far north."

"As far as I'm concerned, Yorkshire *is* really far north. It took me hours on the train. Now, where's the manmoth taking us?"

"North!" replied Elsie. "North, north, north!"

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"Are there going to be any shops?" asked Dotty.

"I don't think so," said Titch.

"I don't need nothing fancy, just a cup of tea, some sandwiches or cakes."

"No. Just more ice."

"Shame!" Dotty said. "I'm getting rather peckish."

They climbed to the top of a tall snowdrift and looked down into a valley.

"How much longer?" moaned Dotty.

"HOOO!" hooted Woolly. She pointed ahead with her trunk, before galloping down the drift.

"Something tells me we're nearly there!" replied the girl as she chased after her friend.

"HOOO!"

"HOOOO!" joined in Elsie.

"Nearly where?" asked Dotty.

"I don't know," replied Titch. He took her hand and led her down the drift.

Ahead, Elsie could see something was sticking out of the snow. On closer inspection, she realised it was a flag. A British flag. Next to it were a series of pegs,

The Ice Monster

marking out a large rectangular shape in the ice. It looked almost like a grave.

"This must be where they found Woolly!" exclaimed Elsie.

"HOOO!" hooted the mammoth, miming digging with her foot.



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"Why the blazes has the manmoth brought us all the way here?" grumbled Dotty.

"There must be a reason, Dotty. Trust me," replied the girl.

As if on cue, the coloured lights that were shooting across the sky descended to the ground. The wind



whipped up the snow, and soon it swirled all around them. The four were in the centre of a spiralling snowstorm. It soon became impossible for Elsie, Dotty and Titch to keep their eyes open, and they could hardly breathe. All they could do was huddle close to the mammoth in fear.

"This is the end, Dotty!" spluttered Titch as snow swirled into his mouth. "I need to tell you that I..."

"Tell me what?" asked the lady.

"If you would just let me finish!"

"Woolly wouldn't have brought us all out here to die!" shouted Elsie. "There must be a good reason."

The mammoth wrapped her trunk round the girl.

"HOO!" she cried.

"Hold me close," said Elsie. "Please."

This felt like the end.

The storm moved in. The blizzard was smothering them. They could no longer see, or feel, or hear.

Elsie just managed to prise her eyes open for a moment.

Huge shapes were appearing out of the snowstorm.

"LOOK!" cried Elsie.

They were not alone.



A PERFECT CIRCLE

A dozen figures were emerging from the storm, as tall and wide as ships.

Dotty and Titch struggled to open their eyes. When they did, the most magical sight greeted them.

A herd of mammoths.



"I wouldn't want to have to clean up after all that lot," mused Dotty.

"Is this real?" asked Titch.

"I don't know," replied Elsie. "But it's beautiful!"

"HOO!" cried Woolly.

As if by magic, the snowstorm moved outwards from where the gang of four were huddled. They found themselves standing in a perfect circle of calm as a wall of swirling snow surrounded them.

Slowly, Woolly broke away from the humans, and approached the herd. One of the mammoths stepped



forward and reached out its trunk. Woolly did the same, and the two trunks curled round each other in the most loving way.

All the other mammoths lifted up their trunks and let out a chorus of **HOOs**.

HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**
HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**
HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**
HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**
HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**
HOO! **HOO!** **HOO!**

Teardrops ran down Elsie's face. They were happy tears. They were sad tears. Happy because she knew her friend was finally home. Sad because she knew this was goodbye.

Woolly turned round, and with her trunk beckoned Elsie over.

"HOO!"

The girl took a deep breath, and paced through the deep snow. Woolly wrapped her trunk round her friend, and pushed her close to the much bigger mammoth in front of them. Elsie was scared at first, but the giant mammoth wrapped her trunk lovingly round the girl. The three of them embraced. Immediately, the girl knew exactly who this was.

"Woolly. It's so great to finally meet your ma," said Elsie, choking back tears.

Both animals nodded their heads, and let out tender sighs.

"HOO!" sounded the largest animal behind them. It was time to go. The herd turned to leave.

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The mother mammoth gently pushed her offspring towards the girl. There was just time for one last embrace. Elsie buried her head in her friend's fur, and wrapped her arms round her. In return, Woolly licked the girl's face with her rough tongue. It was a sweet, if slobbery, kiss.

Elsie whispered into the mammoth's ear, "I love you, Woolly. I'm never going to forget you. You won't ever forget me, will you?"

"HOO!" Woolly sighed.

"Hoo!" replied Elsie.



A Perfect Circle

The girl reached out her hand and stroked Woolly's fur as the animal started to move away. This was the very last touch. Elsie watched as one by one the herd faded into the wall of snow. Woolly looked back one last time, and waved with her trunk, and then she too disappeared.

Tears rolled down Elsie's face again, as Dotty and Titch put their arms round the girl and held her tight. The storm passed as quickly as it had appeared, leaving the three alone on the Arctic wasteland.

