

### *The Ice Monster*

“ARGH! ARGH! ARGH!”

The beating was so severe that Elsie wasn't sure she was going to survive. Her little body was black and blue with bruises, and the girl knew she had to escape or die.



### *Chapter 2*

## MONKEY FEET

Elsie loved all the rats and pigeons that would find their way inside **WORMLY HALL**. If she had any food, she would share it with them, and tend to any broken wings and legs. In return, they would snuggle up to her, which made her feel less lonely. In her heart, Elsie felt a deep connection to these animals that Mrs Curdle called “vermin”. To her, they were little creatures all alone in the world just like her.



### *The Ice Monster*

Elsie had noticed how the rats got into the orphanage by scuttling along a leaky pipe that came down from the ceiling.

One thing that set Elsie apart from her fellow orphans was her feet. Elsie didn't have ordinary feet. She had monkey feet.

The advantage of having long, thick toes that could grip like fingers was that it made climbing easy-peasy. So one night, when everyone else was asleep, Elsie scaled the pipe to see where the rats scrambled in. Just as she had thought, there was a small rat-sized hole at the top of the wall.

After that, every night after candles out, Elsie scaled the pipe, using her monkey feet. Once at the top, she would scrape away at the brickwork with her fingernails. Night after night she scraped and scraped, making the hole bigger and bigger.

**SCRATCH! SCRATCH! SCRATCH!**

Eventually, the hole was just large enough for Elsie to squeeze her tiny, underfed body through it. However, she couldn't leave **WORMLY HALL** without

### *Monkey Feet*

saying goodbye to her twenty-five friends.

"Wake up!" she called softly. Little eyes began to appear out of the dark. "I'm going to run away tonight. Who's coming with me?"

**SILENCE.**

"I said, 'Who's coming with me?'"

There were murmurs of, "I'm too scared," and "Curdle'll kill us," and, "They'll catch us and beat us to death."

The littlest little'un of the lot was named Nancy. She looked up to Elsie like she was a big sister. Nancy whispered, "Where are you going?"

"I don't know," replied the girl. "Anywhere but here."

"Please don't forget about us."

"Never!"

"Promise?"

"I promise," said Elsie. "I'll see you all again one day - I know it."



## *The Ice Monster*

"I'm going to miss your stories," said another orphan, Felix.

"Me too," added Percival.

"Next time I see you I'll tell you the greatest story of all."

"Good luck, Elsie," said Nancy.

"You'll always be in 'ere," replied Elsie, patting her chest.

The girl gave one last shimmy up the pipe with her monkey feet. She

squeezed herself through the hole

in the wall, and with one

final wiggle she

was gone.



## *Chapter 3* **PONG**

Elsie ran and ran and ran, as fast as she possibly could. She didn't dare look back. She was free but alone, and now she had to fend for herself on the streets of London, even though she'd never been outside the orphanage before. The big city was a scary place, especially for a little girl. **DANGER** lurked in every corner.

Soon enough, though, Elsie taught herself how to steal food from the market stalls. As for a bed, she found an old tin bath to sleep in, and used old newspapers as sheets. In her mind, Elsie pretended that it was a grand four-poster bed fit for a queen.

With no home or family, Elsie was what was known as an "urchin". Victorian London was teeming with them.