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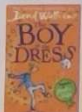
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## Chapter 12

# SABRE-TOOTHED TEETH

Elsie flew forward and burst through a stained-glass window.

**SHATTER!**

She rolled down some stone steps before landing on top of a glass cabinet that housed the skeleton of a sabre-toothed tiger.

**THUD!**

Elsie came down with such force that the sheet of glass on which she landed began to crack.

**KERCHUNK!**

Like a shaft of lightning splintering through the sky, the crack shot across the glass.

**BING!**

In a split second, the glass panel at the top of the cabinet misted over as it became a thousand tiny pieces.

## Sabre-toothed Teeth

Elsie knew exactly what was going to happen next, but was powerless to stop it. She gulped. The glass crumbled beneath her, and Elsie fell into the cabinet, landing on the back of the sabre-toothed tiger.

**CRUNCH!** “OOOF!”



Now the girl was trapped inside the glass cabinet, and with all the noise from the window smashing she was sure to have drawn attention to herself. If only there were some way of breaking one of the glass walls, but they were inches thick. However hard she thumped with her fists, it just wouldn't break.

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**



Feeling that there was little chance of the sabre-toothed tiger skeleton missing it, she pulled out one of its sabre-toothed teeth. With an almighty swing of her arm, she bashed the sharp end of the tooth against the glass.

**BUNK!**  
**SMASH!**

It immediately splintered, and the tiny pieces of glass showered down like rain.

**PATTER!**

Not needing the tooth any more, Elsie stuck it back where she'd found it, and patted the sabre-toothed tiger skeleton in thanks.

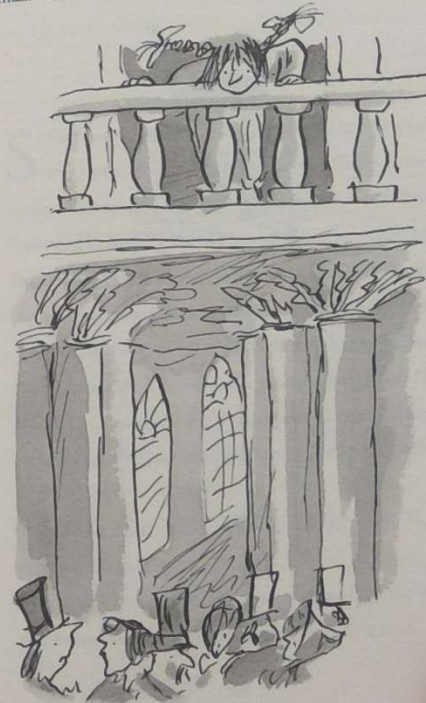
"Good boy!"

The sound of footsteps echoed along the corridor.  
**CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK!**

It must be the museum's head of security, Mr Clout. Elsie knew she had to make a run for it. Having no shoes on her feet, she carefully stepped over the pieces of broken glass, and charged off down a corridor.

Staying close to the walls and keeping out of the

light – something she had learned from the rats at the orphanage – she found a balcony overlooking the main hall.



*The Ice Monster*

From the top floor of the museum, Elsie looked down on the historic scene.



*Chapter 13*

A SEA OF OLD MEN

Sitting on a grand chair that made her look even smaller than her actual size (and she already looked extremely small) was Queen Victoria. Gathered behind her was a sea of old men with white beards, spectacles and stern expressions. They looked like learned men: scientists, explorers and politicians.

Mr Clout circled the room like a hungry shark, ready to attack anyone who made a lunge for Her Majesty. Commissioner Barker was doing the exact same thing. The pair kept on bumping into each other.

"OOF!"

"OUT OF THE WAY, YOU FOOL!"

growled Barker.

Masked by a red velvet curtain, something the size of a house was standing in front of the tiny queen.



A portly man stepped forward and addressed the gathering. He was the director of the NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, Sir Ray Lankester.

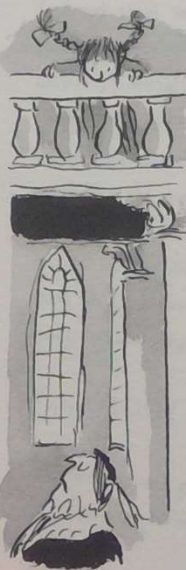
"Your Majesty, my lords, gentlemen..." he began.

"SPEAK UP!" shouted Queen Victoria.

Elsie put her hand over her mouth to stifle a giggle. She wouldn't have had Her Majesty down as a heckler.

Poor Lankester looked aghast, as you might if the most powerful person in the world was barracking you. The man tried to carry on as best he could.

"YOUR MAJESTY, MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN," he began again, his voice cracking with nerves. "As director of the



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, it is a huge honour to house what I am sure you will all agree is the greatest find of the century. When a group of explorers set off across the Arctic..."

"GET ON WITH IT!" shouted the Queen.

"Yes, yes, of course, Your Majesty. I am very sorry. I know you have an empire to run. Will you please do us all the honour of unveiling this creature dubbed the 'ICE MONSTER', which has been perfectly preserved in the ice for thousands of years?"

With some difficulty, the Queen stood up. Her handsome attendant Abdul Karim went to help her.

"I can do it, thank you very much, Munshi!"\* she snapped.

"As you wish, Your Majesty," he purred.

"Actually, can you help me?" she asked, looking a little wobbly.

Abdul gracefully took her arm, and she shuffled over to the exhibit.

"It gives one great pleasure," began the Queen, "to declare this woolly mammoth open."

\* "Munshi" was the fond title Queen Victoria gave Abdul. It is a Persian word which means "secretary", though he was a great deal more than that to her.



With that, she tugged on the cord, and the velvet  
curtain slipped to the floor.

**SILENCE.**

There it was.

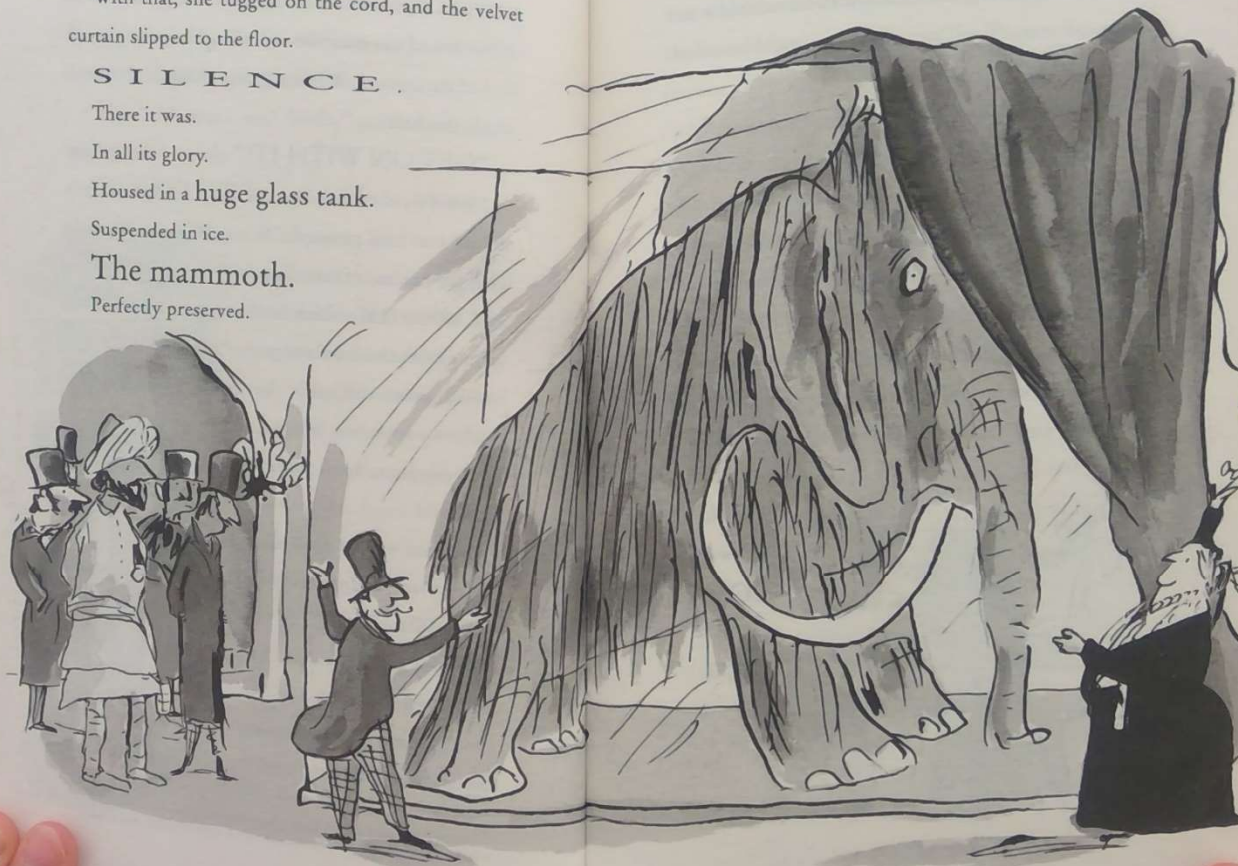
In all its glory.

Housed in a huge glass tank.

Suspended in ice.

**The mammoth.**

Perfectly preserved.



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*The Ice Monster*

It was impossible to believe it had been dead for ten thousand years. To all appearances, it could have died yesterday.

The creature looked like a cross between an elephant and a teddy bear. The tusks were **long** and curled, like the moustaches of many of the fusty old men gathered in the museum. Between the tusks hung a long, furry trunk. The mammoth's body was covered in coarse brown hair, with a thicker and darker tuft on its head like a wig. Its legs were as wide as tree trunks, leading down to four clumpy feet. Its eyes were open. They were small and black, and shaped like tears.



For Elsie,  
it was  
**love**  
at first  
sight.

*A Sea of Old Men*

This was the most **beautiful** thing she had ever seen. Her heart soared, and her mind began dancing with pictures.

Here she was stroking the animal's fur. There she was riding on its back. Then she was being held by its long, furry trunk.

Just as she was flying off into a land of make-believe, Elsie sensed someone standing right behind her. The girl was frozen in fear. She couldn't even turn her head to look round. Then she felt a hand come to rest on her shoulder. Elsie gasped for air to let out a cry...

"HUH!"

...but she couldn't.

A hand was covering her mouth.

