



THE PIRATE, THE DINOSAUR, AND THE SLIMY SNOT MONSTER

By Jill London

It took all week, but by Saturday morning the rain had stopped.

“Finally!” I said, sliding down the hallway and making a heroic scoop for my trainers.

“Not so fast,” said Mum. “Your little brother was sick in the night, and you haven’t tidied your room. I’ve told you half a dozen times to bag up your old games for the charity shop.”

“I’ve done *mine*,” Cat piped up.

“Yes, but you’re still grounded for locking Tom in the shed last week,” Mum told her.

“Fancy locking your kid brother in the shed,” I said. “I would never have done that.”

Cat stuck out her tongue at me. She was hanging on the living room door, as she does, sticking her finger in the hole where other doors have a handle.

“Sort your old toys,” Mum told me, “then make Tom something nice to cheer him up (she told Cat) and you might go out when I get back

from the vets.”

“A real might,” I asked, “or a grown-up might?”

But it was too late. Already she’d scooped Tigs into the cat carrier and left, making the letterbox clatter.

“Maybe we could...” Cat began.

“Not a chance,” said Dad as he shuffled past in slippered stealth for the sofa, a mug of tea in his hand and a newspaper under his arm.

Cat scowled some more and then we argued over what to watch on TV.

“Why don’t you play a board game,” said Dad, who’d luckily heard nothing of the chores or the Shed Incident. “There’s that new game Grandma got you for Christmas.”

We groaned. “It’ll be boring,” I said.

“Only old people like board games,” said Cat.

“Just a suggestion,” said Dad from behind his paper. “But you know she’ll ask if it was fun when she visits next, and you wouldn’t have me lie, would you?”

I fished out Whose Kangaroo? from the games shelf in the airing cupboard and we unpacked it onto the front room floor.

“It’s missing the dice,” Cat said, pulling a face as if a waft of socks had escaped the box.

I went for a spare in Dad’s man-drawer. Digging down, I noticed the handle for the living room door. I shook my head. This was a job Dad should have done long ago.

I slotted the handle into the front room door and suddenly we heard a sound—a great gaa-whooshh.

The handle stuck in the slot, and when I tried to tug it free, the door opened. But instead of the kitchen, it opened onto somewhere else. Shelf upon shelf of amazing objects lined the walls, like an Aladdin's cave of treasures; of musical boxes, suits of armour, stuffed animals, marionettes and a thousand other things piled to the ceiling. Everywhere we looked, something incredible caught our eye.

"Have you left the back door open?" said Dad, from behind his paper.

"I'll go check," I said.

"Me too," said Cat.

We crept in, and as the door shut behind us we realised there was no daylight here, just the flickering light of some dusty, hissing oil-lamps.

"I think it's a shop," I said. "There are labels on things, look. A pirate cutlass from the Caribbean."

"A set of witch's teeth from Salem," Cat read, and shuddered. "Maybe we should go, I don't want to leave any body parts behind."

I pulled up short. "Another door," I said.

I opened it and peeped through onto a tropical jungle.

"Excellent," said Cat. "A holiday abroad! Do you think there's a swimming pool?"

Cat and I crept through. A volcano in the distance spewed lava into the air and high up, a Pterodactyl swooped overhead. The earth shook as a huge Tyrannosaurus stomped into view and caught a baby dinosaur in its jaws.

Cat and I both gasped. Whoa!



The Tyrannosaurus turned and looked at us, and for a moment all we could do was stare in horror. A humongous bellow shook us into action, and we ran for the door, the Tyrannosaurus pounding after us, making the ground shake. We darted through the door and I slammed it shut on the dinosaur's gaping jaws.

We held our breath, expecting the door to burst into splinters, but heard only the ticking of the shop's many clocks.

"We were almost dino-snacks," said Cat.

"Let's try another door," I said.

I opened the next door and our stomachs lurched as we looked out onto nothing but empty sky, the earth far below us. Then an enormous ship appeared, its sail rippling in the wind.

"Ahoy there!" said a voice. It was the ship's captain. "Quickly, jump aboard," he said. "Captain ShiverMeTimbers, the dreaded cloud-pirate is chasing after us. He thinks we have treasure aboard and will do anything to get his hands on it."

We jumped aboard just in time to see the pirate ship lurch into view. At its helm, Captain ShiverMeTimbers shook his sword at us, along with his scurvy crew, who growled and grimaced like dogs.

Our own captain turned our ship about and shot a volley of cannonballs at the pirate ship. They returned fire, then they threw a plank over to our ship and started to shuffle across.



"Turn the ship around!" cried our captain.

I ran to the steering wheel and swung it hard and our ship veered away from the gangplank, sending the pirates tumbling to the ground below us. Only Captain ShiverMeTimbers hung on to the side, his sword between his teeth.

“Quick Cat,” I said, “stop him!”

Cat grabbed a nearby hook and swung it at the pirate’s head. He bit down on his sword and made an oomph sound. He lost his grip and fell too. “I’ll get that treasure yet,” he shouted as he fell.

“That’s what he thinks,” said Cat, “no-one could survive that fall.”

“That won’t be the last we see of ShiverMeTimbers,” said our captain. “Somehow he always survives.”

We watched the pirate crew falling, but at the last moment, their ship swooped in and saved them from the drop.

“See what I mean?” said our captain. “That man’s followed me for twenty years, and always comes back.”

“What treasure does he think you have?” asked Cat.

“The Lady of the Sea,” said the captain, “a beautiful pearl statue that used to be his ship’s figurehead. He thinks it brought them luck but, if you ask me, they’re luckier without it. Perhaps if he got this statue back, he’d leave me alone, but no-one’s ever found it.”

“I hope you find it,” said Cat, “but we should get home now. Mum will be back from the vets and wondering where we are.”

The captain sailed back to the shop door, and we jumped across the gap.

“Wait here,” I shouted across to the captain. “I have to check something, but I’ll be right back.”

I ran inside the shop and sure enough there it was, the Lady of the Sea, her pearly face glinting in the shadows.

“You grab the other arm,” I told Cat, but the moment we touched the statue the shopkeeper appeared; a disgusting, slimy green snot monster with long arms that waved up and down. When he spoke it sounded like, “Wibble, wibble, wibble!” but somehow we understood him.



He said, “Are you going to pay for that?”

“We don’t have any pocket money,” said Cat, giving me an angry scowl.

It kind of was my fault. I talked her into buying my comic after my money ran out.

“I’ve no use for coins,” said the monster. “Different worlds, different currency, see? I’ll do a straight swap, this statue for something of yours.”

“But we don’t have anything,” said Cat. “We’re just kids.”

“We might have something,” I said. “If you can wait?”

“Five minutes,” said the monster, “but no more. Some people have waited a century to get a visit from my shop.”

He pointed to a queue of skeletons sitting in a waiting area.

I ran back to our house and gathered my old toys and games from my bedroom floor, and balancing them on my arms I ran back to the shop.

“What’s all this rubbish?” demanded the snot monster when he saw me. “This stuff is worthless junk!”

“No, it’s not,” I said. “These skates were new last year!”

"I have hundreds of skates," said the monster. "No sale!"

He ran at us, his arms waving wildly as he wibbled at the top of his lungs. Cat and I thought we were done for, but just then the dinosaur burst through his door and he snatched up the snot monster in his jaws and swallowed him in one gulp. Snot dribbled from his lips and he looked a little queasy.

"He looks set to vomit," I said to Cat. "Throw the statue to the captain, quick!"

We carried the Lady of the Sea to the doorway and threw it across to our captain.

"That will stop ShiverMeTimbers chasing me," he shouted, and he waved his hat at us.

We turned to the door home and made it through just as the dinosaur vomited up the snot monster. He ran after us, followed by the dinosaur, but we slammed the door shut and pulled the handle from the door. We stood there panting and looked at one another.

Just then the door swung open. It was Mum with Tigs in his pet carrier.

"You got your room tidied then?" she said to me. "And what about Tom, have you apologised for locking him in the shed?"

"On our way now," said Cat.

We ran up the stairs to tell Tom what had happened. He listened, amazed, and then he lay back on the pillow, looking much better.

"Oh, and I got you something," Cat told him, "to make up for the whole shed thing, and missing out on the adventure. The captain threw it to me when the dinosaur was being sick."

She opened her hand and there was a captain's compass, its needle swinging wildly before settling toward the door handle in my hand.

Cat and I looked at each other and grinned.

"Maybe we can go on a new adventure when you're better, Tom," I said.

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