The Ender Dragon By Emily Slater (12)

It happened the morning after the floods…

Elizabeth awoke and clambered up, walking to the window and looking out. A single tear streaked down her pale face. The castle she’d spent so long building was… gone. Washed away. No more were the tall spires and billowing flags. No more were the smooth, electrical gates and those long nights spent with her husband John, and their children, William and Sophie, defending their castle’s keep from skeleton archers and zombies, who always threatened to destroy all Elizabeth and her husband had worked for. Now, it had all been destroyed, but not in the way anyone had ever imagined. Not monsters, not explosions, not even by themselves. No. The weather had destroyed it. In truth, that made Elizabeth all the more bitter as she eased herself down the wooden stairs, constantly being reminded of her current age – eighty-four. She hobbled over to the kitchen table and abruptly sat down in a convenient chair, stretching her creaky old legs under the table and sighing contentedly.

That was when John came downstairs.

‘G’mornin’ love!’ he cried as he carefully manoeuvred his way down the staircase as if it were a sheet of highly polished ice.

‘Morning, John,’ sighed Elizabeth. She climbed up, once again reminded of her age, and helped John down the remainder of the stairs and sat him down at the table.

‘So, what’re your plans for today?’ asked John, biting into a slice of toast that Elizabeth had brought across to him. ‘I’m headed out fishing at the pool. You?’

Elizabeth sighed. ‘I need to rebuild the castle. It was washed away yesterday.’

John nodded, then exhaled deeply. ‘You don’t really, Elizabeth. We haven’t used the place for years! What exactly is the point?’

‘I had a dream last night. It was so vivid. We’re going to be attacked tonight, by a dragon with darkness in its wings.’

‘You’re not suggesting… the Ender Dragon? Pah! William destroyed that foul beast thirty-four years ago! I’m afraid your memory’s going a little rusty, my dear!’ John shook his head and gave a bark of laughter, climbing unsteadily to his feet. He winced. ‘Oh, me back! Elizabeth, help me!’

Elizabeth leapt up and guided him to the lounge area. ‘John, I’m not sure you should go fishing today. You might-‘

‘Oh, don’t be silly Liz. I’ll be fine, thank you!’ John pushed Elizabeth away, and climbed unsteadily up once again. ‘I’ll leave you the sword, all right?’

Elizabeth said nothing as John left the house, closing the door carefully behind him. She sighed, and headed to their storage room to collect materials for the castle…

John awoke by the fishing pool, the light of the day almost gone. As his eyes became used to the darkness around him, he saw a large cave, illuminated with purple light. And within it, he saw a dark dragon’s head, with evil purple eyes staring directly at him.

‘No,’ he muttered. He leapt up, turned, and ran over the hill, his eighty-six-year-old back protesting heavily. He arrived at the top of the hillock, and saw the utter carnage beneath. His home was burned down, now just a pile of smouldering ashes by the river. ‘Elizabeth…’ he murmured. Then, he saw her. She had somehow managed to build the castle completely, but then she was a strong-willed woman. Banners waved overhead. She was stood behind a brand-new motorised gate, a strong iron sword in one hand. Zombies were attacking the gate, and in that instant John knew that he had to go down there and help. He ran downhill, his back on fire, and struck down the zombies with his fishing rod. Elizabeth opened the gate and pulled him in, shutting it hurriedly behind him.

‘Come on,’ he said. ‘We must go to the keep, Elizabeth. Otherwise, we won’t survive.’

Without even waiting for a reply, he grabbed her hand and dragged her through the castle, listening to the ever-increasing groans of the portcullis behind them. He took her up several flights of stairs, and onto the battlements. He pulled her along, and out of the corner of his eye he saw the great Dragon flying over the hill, darkness in its wings just as Elizabeth had predicted. That sight doubled his speed, and he managed to reach his destination – a small cave – just before the Ender Dragon. He yanked Elizabeth inside, and indicated a ladder to their upstairs room.

‘Go.’

Elizabeth nodded, and climbed up without question. John walked to the back of the cave, breathing heavily, and pressed a button. Then, he turned and ran to the ladder, shinning up the ascent easily. He reached the upstairs room just as the trap activated, spraying arrows in every direction. He walked slowly to Elizabeth’s side, and gazed out of the window. The Ender Dragon drew closer, closer, and opened its mouth wide, revealing sharp teeth.

The purple fire was the last thing that John and Elizabeth ever saw.