

Diary of a Mountie - Part the Sixth **"Welcome to Glasgow, ye great bloody Sassenachs!"**

By

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(based on COTY)

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Three Fishes Inn

The dirigible arrived in Scotland sometime this morning and landed just outside town. Lord Wimsey had the pilot in a frothing state before his feet even hit the ground. Seems he's been asking the poor fellow all kinds of questions about the thing, most of which the pilot simply didn't know how to answer. I think Swift's going to take Lord Wimsey aside later and have a few words with him about that. Those two seem to get along fairly well, although Swift's got a touch of American nationalism that I'm not sure Lord Wimsey will appreciate. The dirigible's been tied down, covered with an absolutely enormous piece of canvas, and labeled a revival tent. Miss Poppins assures me that no sane Scotsman would be caught within a hundred yards of such a thing, so that should avoid too many awkward questions.

The Three Fishes Inn turned out to be a small place within walking distance of the harbour. It wasn't the cleanest building I've ever seen, nor in the best of repair, but they did seem to have put some effort into keeping the place up recently. The shutters on the side that faced the ocean all looked new- I assume they're making repairs as they go. It was no worse than some of the places I've stayed in back in the Yukon, anyway. Given that we had our recommendation straight from J., I assumed the government had made some arrangements beforehand, so I saw no reason to object.

Cranston- of course- felt differently. "You must be joking," he said as he spotted the sign. "This place?" The man had, after all, been wearing a tuxedo when we picked him up from the club in New York. Naturally someone like that was going to have a problem with an inn like this.

Swift was wrinkling his nose, but didn't say anything. Miss Gale seemed to be more interested in looking around the street. Danner gave Cranston a schoolmarm's skeptical look. "I don't see what's wrong with it," he murmured.

"Look at the place," said Cranston, gesturing to the yard. It wasn't much more than a three-storey house with a sign out front. There had been bigger hotels in

Whitehorse. "It's probably going to fall down around our ears while we sleep. There's plenty of other inns around here."

"Aye, there are," came a Scotsman's burr, "but none of 'em have as good a record of guests getting' out alive of a mornin'. My name's Albert, and I'll thank ye not to go insultin' my inn, sir. Now, who might you be?"

The problem with standing on the steps of a place of lodging while you argue is that sometimes the people inside open the door. Albert, a salt-and-pepper haired Scot of middle years, had caught all of us flat-footed. Well, except for Miss Poppins, who looked as if she had fully expected this. "We're deciding whether to stay at your establishment, sir," she said crisply. "Might we have a look inside?"

"Suit yourselves." Albert propped the door open with a half-brick and stepped out of the way.

I let the others go first, taking the opportunity to pick up what little luggage Miss Gale had. "Excuse me," I started to say to the man as I crossed the threshold, "but I have a dog-"

He was looking past my shoulder already. "I should say you've got a bloody wolf, mister! Is it trained?"

"Well- yes, he's-"

"As long as he doesn't eat the other guests in their beds, nor use the carpet for a toilet, I don't care what you do with him. Keep him in your room and out of my sight." Then he was off, trailing behind my companions.

Prince looked up at me expectantly. I just shrugged; what could I say? Being the swiftest and smartest of lead dogs in the North country wasn't going to mean anything to a man like this... bah. "Come along, Prince," I told him, and he got to his feet and followed me in.

The first few rooms we saw looked like they hadn't been cleaned in some time, a fact which had Miss Poppins inspecting with a look of some disdain and Cranston looking fit to burst. Frankly, Swift didn't look all that happy either. Danner- well- he looked just as he had before. I had the sudden feeling that he'd be equally at home sleeping in a heap of blankets in the back of a railroad car as in the Palace Hotel, and that he might have done either in his travels. As for myself, it was a roof and four walls and it came with a recommendation. Besides, I had things I needed to see to in the city.

"Miss Poppins," I said, setting Miss Gale's things down, "I've stayed in places a lot less well built than this back home." Someone snorted. I didn't bother to see who. "As long as I can fit in the bed and not get bitten, I don't really care what my lodgings are like. This place might be a bit messy, but it looks fine otherwise."

She nodded thoughtfully, her eyes flickering over the room and the innkeeper alike as Cranston raised his voice. "Just because it was recommended doesn't mean we have to stay here," he pointed out. "We weren't given orders. Just a recommendation."

"But when someone offers you lodging, it's awfully rude to turn them down," piped up Miss Gale. "It wouldn't be very nice at all just to refuse this place, now, would it?"

I feel fairly sure that Swift would have burst out laughing then if Miss Poppins hadn't thumped the tip of her umbrella against the floor. "Well," she said to Albert, "as long as you've rooms-

"I do."

"Proper rooms-

"We do clean up between guests, if that's what yer askin'."

"And a space for meals-

"We've a full kitchen an' dining room, aye."

"And don't think I won't be inspecting the facilities, sir... all right. Very well, we shall be staying here."

Albert grunted and led us up the stairs to the third floor. "One for each of you," he said, passing out the keys. "Except you, missy, you're stayin' with- what did you say your name was again?"

"Poppins, sir, Mary Poppins. I'm the nanny."

"I don't care if you're the fairy godmother. She's too young to rent a room to, so you two'll be sharin' quarters. Lunch is at one." And with that he stumped off.

I'll give the man credit- the actual rooms were in better shape than the public area of his inn. The rooms were small, no surprise there, but you could feel safe sleeping in them. Mine is on a side of the building that faced the harbor, although obviously the water's quite a ways off. The dirigible's tent is within range, too; I have to admit, that makes me feel better. I know it's ridiculous to even consider, but that monstrosity is our only means of transportation. All that's keeping it here is a couple of big ropes. I'd rather not be stranded in Scotland, thanks. I've unpacked the few things I brought and changed into my civilian clothes. As far as anyone knows, I'm heading out to walk Prince and get the lay of the land.