

Diary of a Mountie — Part the Seventh Stranger in a Strange Land

by Jessica McGeary
(based on COTY)

Day Nine- Afternoon
Glasgow, Scotland

It's not as if I have anything to hide; the fact of the matter is that I did want a look around the city. You can't properly accomplish anything in a city this size until you have at least some memory of it in the soles of your boots, so I wanted to be sure and get a look at the harbour before the case picked up any kind of speed. That port is the busiest place I've ever seen! Why, if we hadn't been lodged in London just the day before I'd swear it was the sole point for food and supplies to get into and out of Great Britain. There were more ships passing through there than- well, than there were men in Fort Munn, and that's a fact. In the ten minutes Prince and I observed the harbor, we saw the stevedores unloading sardines, herring, copra, tropical fruits, bolts of cloth, coal- why, you name it and it was passing through the port of Glasgow. If this is what the harbor looks like when it's under assault- well. No wonder the Crown is worried.

I must admit, it's hard to look at a sight like that and think of something as impossible as Sirens. That's a modern harbour, to be sure. If there were ever any such thing, how could they ever hope to intrude on a place like this? It was just impossible... but no, I had my papers and my orders, and they all said it was real. Either I was being lied to- which I didn't think I was- or the world had gone mad, or I had. And there's really only one place a man can go when he finds himself in a spot like that.

Shettleston Methodist Church is about halfway across the city from the Three Fishes Inn. It's a solid, broad building made out of grey stone, with a wrought-iron fence and a travel agents' next door. The sign out front said I'd missed the end of Sunday services by about half an hour, but the doors were open and really, that's all I needed. Where I come from, the churches are few and far between. I've never really been what you'd call a churchgoing man, but I like to stop in now and again. Can't hurt, after all. And frankly, with all this nonsense going on I need all the help I can get. I went on in and settled myself in the back, where I wouldn't get in anyone's way.

Actually, there really wasn't anyone to intrude upon. The church had emptied pretty thoroughly after the close of worship. If anyone was hanging about, they were doing it in the church's basement. The sanctuary itself was quiet. In fact, as I was sitting there I realized that I was surrounded by quiet for the first time since

I had left the Yukon. Oh, there was still some noise from the street outside, but the doors were thick enough that it hardly made any difference. No rumbling trains, no growling motorcars, no humming dirigible engines... nothing at all but peace and quiet. I must confess, I sat there a good five or ten minutes before I even thought to pick up one of the prayer books.

It's a hard thing, isn't it- for a man to go from a life that he's known forever and a world that makes perfect sense to a country where he's never been and a life he's only seen in secondhand accounts. Even when everything else is completely normal, you might just as well rip a sapling out by its roots and try to replant it somewhere else. It might make it, or it might not. It all depends on how much care gets taken in the process, doesn't it? The Israelites would never have survived their wanderings in the desert without divine help, and the good Lord's own parents had to flee their own country and move to another without any warning at all. I'm hardly in a situation that dire- or that important- but at least there's an example to turn to. I'm not alone. I can do this. I've survived nearly three decades of life in the Northwest Mounted Police without getting worse than a couple of scars. A little strangeness on the docks of Glasgow won't hurt me.

Well, maybe that's a bit of an overstatement. That autopsy mentioned an awful lot of teeth. Then again...

"When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Isaiah didn't say anything about spiky mermaids with unholy numbers of teeth, but I expect we'll be passing through water and fire enough by the time all of this is done. The world might have turned upside down, but it's only the world, after all. Some things endure.

I think I'll be all right.

No one has asked me where I've been. I'm not sure they even noticed I was gone. Miss Poppins, maybe, but she seems the sort to notice everything.