

Diary of a Mountie — Part the Eighth Pause, Listen, Breathe

by Jessica McGeary
(based on COTY)

Day Nine- Evening
Glasgow, Scotland

Lord Wimsey spent some time today talking to the harbor-master while the rest of us were going about our other business. Thanks to him, more than anything provided by London, I have the information I wanted. Unfortunately, it's no good. There's no pattern I can make out in the attacks- none at all. The Sirens seem to discriminate between their targets about as much as a pack of wolves. Whatever they can catch, they sink. And whoever is on it, male or female, winds up looking like those poor devils in our files. They attack at night- that's the only constant. Given what I've seen of predators in the Yukon I'd be willing to bet that they have trouble with bright lights, or that they're out-and-out nocturnal. I mentioned this to Swift, who said he'd come to the same conclusion. He's busy modifying his electric rifles to include a 'flash' discharge in addition to the 'stun' and 'kill' settings. When I find the local telegraph office I'm going to put in a word with RCMP headquarters back in Ottawa. Swift says these electric rifles are too expensive to put into mass production, but it's not as if there are that many Mounties. I have a feeling that there's more than a little bankrolled Yukon gold we'd be able to put towards his efforts. Cranston has enough money as a private individual to make a similar offer- I see no reason why Ottawa shouldn't have the chance.

But back to the matter at hand. Just in case someone was trying to conceal a gory history I asked around about naval disasters in prior years. For the past five years there's been absolutely no record of ships being sunk, destroyed, or otherwise damaged on their way into or out of the harbor. Before that there was some trouble, but it was purely mechanical and confined to a single ship. This is a recent aberration, not- so far as I can tell- part of any kind of cycle or recurrent series. That'd explain why the harbour defenses are useless against the creatures. They really haven't reared their heads before. The British Navy can't be spared to patrol the seas of Scotland looking for mermaids Sirens, and anyway the reports emphasize the creatures' immunity to bullets. It looks like we were told the truth- it's up to us.

Not exactly your usual civilized dinner conversation, is it? Ah, well. Albert's got a decent cook on his hands, assuming it wasn't he himself that prepared our dinners. Some kind of fish stew I didn't recognize, nor did I ask about it. I've heard

too many stories about what the Scots consider acceptable as food. Didn't seem to bother Prince one whit when I put a bowl down for him, though, and since he won't eat anything fouled even if I'm the one who gives it to him, that was all the reassurance I needed. We spent most of the meal discussing our current information. Lord Wimsey seems to have achieved the most investigation of anyone so far, although Danner is making headway with the local stevedores' union. Cranston's getting hot under the collar. Says his agents aren't able to tell him more than 'if it's a watery grave you're after, then by all means take a swim in the harbor'. We're going down to the docks just before dark. With any luck Swift will have finished his modifications by then. If these creatures can sing, there's a good chance they can talk; if they can talk, they may be able to speak English. Better to question the living than try to deduce answers from the dead.

Albert overheard our planning, informed us that we were idiots, said he'd ring the local churches for funerary rites if we weren't back by midnight, and stormed off. Not the most communicative man I've ever known, but not the least, either. He's got something he's not saying, or I'm no policeman. Didn't stick around long enough for me to ask much, though. I'll try again in the morning.