

Diary of a Mountie - Part the Twentieth Discovered

by Jessica McGeary
(based on COTY)

Day Twenty-Three - Sunday, August 30
League HQ
Afternoon

Being recognized by people you don't know and have never met is an extremely odd experience. Prince and I were headed for one of the city parks this morning, can't recall which one, when I heard one of the local policemen's whistles. Naturally, I stopped to see what was going on. Imagine my surprise when I realized he was pointing at me!

It took me a moment to realise he wasn't pointing at me at all, but Prince. I hadn't bothered to leash him, since we weren't going through anywhere especially crowded so far as I could tell. I suppose I should've regardless, but there wasn't anything I could do about it just then. Instead, I told Prince to sit and waited for the officer.

Turned out it wasn't a matter of leashes at all. "Here, mister," said the red-headed policeman (I won't even try to reproduce his accent here), "I hope you've got a bloody good story for why that thing's out of the zoo."

The zoo? I glanced down at Prince and tried not to laugh. That made twice now he'd been mistaken for a wolf. "I suppose I do, Constable. He's not a zoo animal at all. He's a Canadian husky."

"A what?"

"A sled dog." I started rummaging through my pockets (I'm really not used to civilian clothes) in search of Prince's import papers. "Here- see for yourself."

The constable gave me a skeptical look as I passed the documentation over to him. I'll admit, Prince's been shot at once or twice by people who saw him at a distance and assumed the worst, but really. We were on the street in downtown London and he was on his best behavior. Somehow, I doubted any wolf could keep itself calm in a situation like that.

Then again... this was London. It suddenly occurred to me that the constable had probably never seen a real wolf in his life. Or if he had, it'd been at the zoo- behind bars, and probably only for a few minutes. Certainly there's no way there'd be Eskimo sled dogs in London, or anywhere else that got that warm. I couldn't really

expect him to recognize Prince as anything but a wolf, when it came right down to it. It wasn't his fault. He was a city dweller. Civilization is a wonderful thing, but it does tend to separate people from the world around them.

I looked over to the constable then, who was glancing back and forth between Prince and the import papers. "Well," he said grudgingly, "these look like they're... in..." His voice trailed off, and his eyes got very wide.

"Something wrong?" I inquired.

"Bloody hell," breathed the man, his eyes suddenly locked onto the papers. "Preston. You're Frank Preston."

"Bill, actually- only my family calls me Frank-"

"Blimey!" He shoved the papers back at me, suddenly grinning from ear to ear. "And here's me thinkin' you'd broke into the London Zoo! Beggin' your pardon, Sergeant, I should've known you straight off-"

"You should've?" I swear, he looked like he'd just found a gold nugget the size of his head.

"'s right, I should've! Damn, Sarge, I don't think there's a copper in London wouldn't know your name the instant he heard it. Like as no there's near as many'd know you on sight-"

"Wait. Wait, wait wait." I put both my hands up quickly. What he was saying made no sense at all. "What are you trying to tell me?"

He stared at me then, and pushed his helmet back on his head. "Sergeant," he said a little more clearly, "don't you know you're famous?"

"What?"

He nodded then, watching me a little nervously. "It's the God's-honest truth, sir. There's not a soul in the Metropolitan Police doesn't know the reputation of the RCMP. Got a country so bloody big you could fit near fourteen Frances in it and you lot rare as hen's teeth, and you still keep the King's peace there? 'Course we're watchin'. We get the papers same as anyone."

"But the Yukon's at the back of absolutely nowhere!"

He made a rude noise and waved one hand like he was flicking away a fly. "It's got gold in, right?"

"Well, it did, but-"

"Right. Nineteen-ought-three. Half a million men went looking for gold. And they

found it, and they wrote home sayin' they'd struck rich. Only they're not wanting to worry their wives with thinking they might get robbed or stabbed or suchlike, so they say 'we've got this policeman up here name of Preston, there's not a criminal alive can get away once he's on their trail'. Or they take to selling food and drink and clothes and such, and what's in their letters home then? 'I've got a proper business now and it's all down to Sergeant Preston of the Mounted Police making it safe to be a respectable merchant out here'. Even them as didn't stay came back with stories about you and the other Mounties- mostly you, though. Couldn't name another Mountie to save their lives, but they all know you." He grinned.

It wasn't possible. It just wasn't possible. "I don't... I don't know what to say."

"You don't have to say anything, Sergeant- except maybe, if you've got the time..." He cast a quick glance over his shoulder. "Would you mind coming back to the station with me? It'd be a hell of an honour to have you and your giant dog visit, sir. I mean, if you wouldn't mind," he added quickly.

So that's how I came to spend most of my Sunday with the policemen of London. I can't even say how many times I had my picture taken today, but I think I've still got purple spots in front of my eyes from the flashes. It's one thing to be well-known out in the Yukon, where there's hardly anyone to begin with- but who knew there was anyone here in London who'd ever heard of me? Let alone people who'd actually been following my career? It's ... well, it's downright unnerving. I don't know what else to call it. Constable Deadman said it wasn't only the policemen who'd know me, either; he said probably half of London knew my name, even if they didn't know me on sight. That's an even more disquieting thought. How am I supposed to get anything done if people know who I am? It's one thing to be known in your home jurisdiction, because there's nothing like a good solid reputation to scare the less hardened criminals into behaving themselves. (The others are usually the sort who think they're invincible. They're wrong, of course.) It's something else entirely to be known in a city of millions of people, thousands and thousands of miles away from anywhere you've ever known, when you've got what's essentially a secret mission to look for something impossible being done by people with every reason in the world to keep themselves and their actions secret.

I don't think I like the idea of fame very much right now.