



a STEAMPUNK
GUIDE TO HUNTING
MONSTERS



TYSON VICK



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VOLUME FOUR

BY TYSON VICK

BASED ON AN ORIGINAL IDEA BY ALISA KESTER AND TYSON VICK

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A Steampunk Guide to Hunting Monsters by Tyson Vick

Based on an original idea by Alisa Kester and Tyson Vick

Photography by Tyson Vick

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THE

MISANTHROPY

OF THE

MONSTER

HOUSE

SATURDAY, AUGUST THE SEVENTH

I retraced my steps from the night before, and was joined by Sir Hammerhorn, Winchester, the Mayor, and Mister, all bristling with weaponry. We looked out into the yard, and although we saw claw marks dragged along the wood face of a Buddha statue, there was no sign of the escaped werewolf itself. It had vanished.

"Fled into the woods, most likely," Sir Hammerhorn said. "I wonder if anyone in

the surrounding area is killed?"

"You did say a wolf had been spotted in the area," Mrs. Bamfield reminded me as we walked together down the corridor. "To think that it managed to find its way into our lodgings!"

No wolf was found, nor did Lu Yan seem to be prepared to show us how to find one—even if it was rampaging through his own home.

I haven't told anyone what I saw. I'm not entirely sure it was my business, anyway.





FRIDAY, AUGUST THE THIRTEENTH

Well, our trip to the Monster House is over, and I needs must describe how we left that place before my memories desert me.

I continued nightly to patrol for that werewolf. No one had seen it for days. Winchester had set out after it that morning and had not returned, but on this night I heard his voice coming from near the Monster wing. I followed it, and ran smack into his—once again—shirtless torso. He was strong and covered in hair, and angry—strangely angry. He told me to return to my room (like some tottering infant who was up too late).

I returned to my bed, but did not prepare for the night. Deep in the dark, when all was still but me, I sat listening, and my door slowly creaked open. There, two glowing eyes looked in. It was the wolf! It looked at me, and then dashed away! I followed it, gun in hand!

I passed by Percy's door and knocked as I passed. He came out after me and I pointed as the tail of the werewolf disappeared around the corner. We followed around that corner, slowly, and through the house into the Monster Prison.

The werewolf hovered next to a cage, possibly his own, as all large beasts were kept on the lower floors. But, it was a foolish mistake to think that, for the beast leapt upon a large lever, and suddenly all of the security doors between the main house and the prison slammed shut. Percy tried to open the door but it was mechanically bolted.

The wolf dashed towards the control room and I fired my flintlock. It was my best aim, but I was a fool! My bullets were not silver!

The beast burst into the room, pausing to look back at me, then began to move levers. Numerous levers.

Every door to every cell of every monster

was opened!

"We've got to get out!" I cried.

Creatures began to appear at their doors, slinking. The Baku burst from its cage, raging, and knocking railings apart. It charged straight at us, but leapt over us, goring a Nian that approached from behind. We managed to rush to the safety of the staircase just as ghosts began to pour out of their cells, making horrifying noises!

My good friend Percy Longville, he held onto me good and hard. We were not going to be separated, and all those times when I got upset when he manhandled me, I take back. Without his grip there on me, my bearings would have been lost!

Suddenly, the werewolf and a Minotaur crashed by, locked in combat with one another. They fell over the railing, and we rushed past.

We kept climbing higher and higher.

We passed a cell where a group of what seemed to be statues had gathered. They were all gathered around a door. I thought at first that they must be gargoyles or some sort of living statues, but again, thank

God for Percy Longville and his books, for

he wrapped his hand around my eyes.

"What's going on?" I shouted.

He replied, "It's a basilisk! Don't open your eyes!"

And he guided me past! I was being rescued by him! Ha! Ha! What a turn! He was impressive, even if it was just on a technicality of him knowing something that I did not. We moved for a while, but he released his grip on me and he screamed in terror at the sight of a mummy. Oh, heavens, that man. I stepped up and pushed it lightly out of the way. Mummies weigh nothing! We ran by quite unaffected.

But then a storm began brewing. The walls began to sway. Weather was appearing inside the building! The werewolf from below was scaling





the railings, which we were not aware of until it jumped upon us, causing us to stumble back.

A shot rang out, and the werewolf yelped and staggered back.

Lu Yan, the famous Monster hunter, armed with silver bullets, emerged from a doorway.

“What are you doing?” he said to the wolf. “You were my guest. I would have helped you.”

“You have never helped our kind,” the wolf growled. “These cells will be your tomb!”

The wolf threw itself into the crowd of monsters as Lu Yan began to kill *everything*. He came up behind us, guiding us like sheep, and with every step something fell dead. I have slain a few monsters. I have grown accomplished at this feat, but he moved like the second hand of a clock, and with each tick, another monster fell dead.

“The roof is the way out, now,” he said, coldly.

He slashed the head off of a reaching merman.

He threw a talisman over the railing which seemed to magnetize all of the ghosts and burn them up into ether! He stomped his foot upon a chained group of gremlins and rammed a cross through the head of a raging demon spirit before I even managed to make out its features.

His guns unloaded silver into the majority of the beasts (as many beasts as are affected by silver). But the noise was so loud I had to cover my ears. It was snowing inside at this moment.

To my surprise, the werewolf appeared just outside of a cell, opening its door. There, it stood upon its legs and transformed into a man. A man of beauty and danger, a man I had known: the cowboy Winchester. He bled from his wound, but grinned.

Lu Yan aimed, and I screamed, “No!” For I knew the man!

But the shot only hit Winchester’s arm, and he









smiled as he toppled behind the door he had pulled open. Only then did I realize what door he had been standing outside. An emaciated hand reached out of the cell and I began to move away. I needed to get away, but the moment its shoulder appeared, I was moving forward.

I swear I could hear the screams of the entire monster hunting party! I swear Brunhilde Bamfield was calling out to me through the growing winds! The prison was freezing.

The lady-like dew that had been misting the inside of my clothing suddenly turned cold, and I shivered so hard my teeth clacked together. An unmistakable aura of doom settled in over us; I felt an ancient power rise through the air, as implacable and unavoidable as the many flakes of snow that floated in the torch lights. For a moment, I thought Lu Yan felt it as well; he hesitated, the tip of the gun dropped, and I saw an uncertainty almost flicker across his face.

“Philomena...” the wind called to me, and the Wendigo appeared!

Lu Yan fired at it, but somehow, it turned to the left and instantly disappeared.

Winchester only ran further up the spiraling stairs with Lu Yan in hot pursuit and Percy and I clinging close behind.

Winchester ran into the mechanical room of the dead wife. The room that filled me with dread. Lu Yan yelled, “No!”

We burst into the room to see Winchester smashing switches, tearing down mechanics, and just as he clambered on top of a machine and threw a large electrical switch, he tipped his hat to me. Then he threw himself out the window.

Suddenly weird, unknown monsters began to tear the walls apart from without. Percy explained after this ordeal that these may have been the creatures compelled by the Wendigo to do its bidding, but we will never know for sure.

Lu Yan's wife was now more formed than when I last saw her. Her jaw and sternum were replaced

with robotics, her body was there and she wore a striking yellow gown. Electricity filled the wife, and she came to life.

I looked at her. She looked at me. Her mouth, having been removed, could no longer speak, but her eyes plead and wept. And she was looking at me!

The weird monsters burst through the walls, and the Wendigo turned to his right, or took one step forward—it is impossible to describe—and it appeared before the wife, tearing her limb from limb, severing her robotic spinal column! Blood and electricity flew everywhere as Lu Yan let out the most horrifying scream I have ever heard. If the world shattered, I imagine that's the cry all men would utter.

Percy grabbed my arm and ran me past this nightmare to the top floor. We climbed the steep ladder to the roof and shut the hatch below. There was no way down. I leaned over the edge and saw the monster hunters gathered outside, many stories below.

There was a banging at the hatch, and both Percy and I backed away.

Lu Yan popped up through the door, fighting off some unknown enemy below. He locked the hatch behind and then ran across the roof throwing various levers. He grabbed both of us by our wrists, handcuffing us to an invisible wire.

The column in the center of the house fell straight away through the center of the roof, severing every floor and structural support below. Lu Yan pushed Percy and myself off the roof, and we found ourselves strapped to a wire sailing safely towards the ground at an angle.

The monster house collapsed behind us.

Missus Mister and Brunhilde helped us to our feet. The Mayor seemed occupied in finding his spectacles, hardly clothed — the beautifully mustachioed gentleman had mislaid them while out on the patio smoking a cigar — and who, even

now, seemed completely unaware of the chaos surrounding him.

That is how we left Lu Yan's monster house, I am sorry to relate.

SATURDAY, AUGUST THE FOURTEENTH

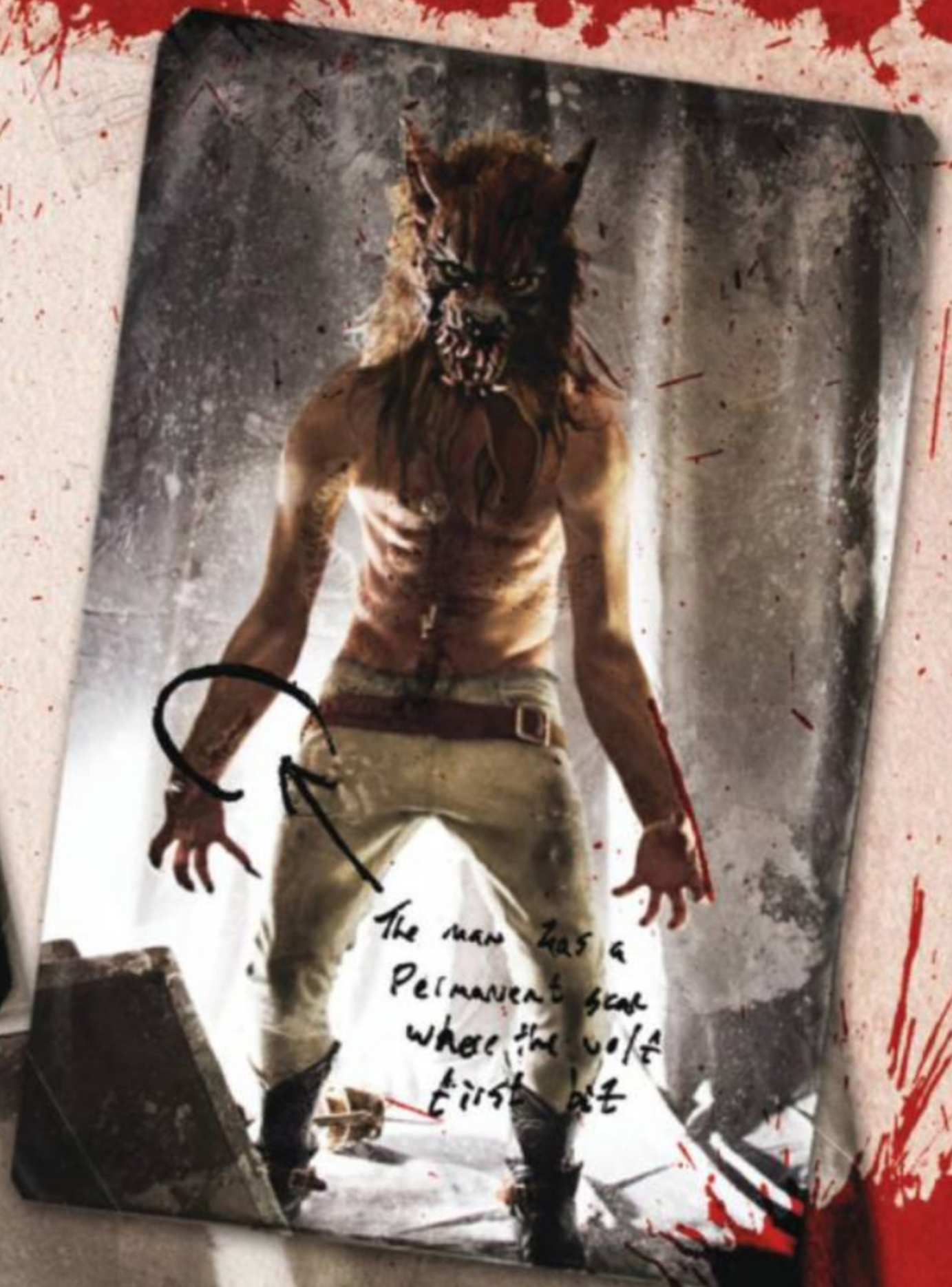
During our journey west, I learned that Brunhilde had never called to me for help the way I heard during that commotion. What's more, she claims to have seen a wolf running into the woods before they saw us appear on the roof of the pagoda.

If Winchester is out there, I hope he meets his fate. I know now what a monster is.

No one found any signs of Lu Yan.

I am ready to go home. I started out wanting to collect monsters myself. I remember wanting to have a collection of ghost glass. Now I do not know what it is that I want, but I do know that I have had my fill of monsters.





The man has a permanent scar where the wolf first bit

Can there be a cure for Winchester?



The transformation takes only a few minutes.

Death is NOT the END

TIPS FOR LADY MONSTER HUNTERS

NO. 14



EVERY MONSTER HUNTER KNOWS THAT THERE ARE PERIODS OF TIME WHEN A CREATURE WHICH PREVIOUSLY SEEMED TO BE MORE IN EVIDENCE THAN OTHERS, SUDDENLY BECOMES SCARCE. A HUNTING PARTY CAN BE UNDERTAKING TO CATCH THE BEAST FOR WEEKS ONLY TO FIND THEMSELVES COME UP EMPTY HANDED. THE LOSS OF AN ELUSIVE MONSTER IS QUITE A SERIOUS THING TO A MONSTER HUNTER. IT MAY SEEM HUMOROUS OR RIDICULOUS TO IMAGINE A FAIRY, GREMLIN OR GNOME RUSHING OFF WITH THE BEST HOUSEHOLD DISHES OR A FAVORITE HAT, BUT THE EVENT SHOULD BE RESPECTED. IT CAN HAVE ITS PAINFUL ASPECTS. WITS SAY THE ONLY PLACE TO RECOVER FROM SUCH TRAUMA IS IN THE BATHTUB, SIPPING A SHERRY COBBLER, BUT A LADY MAY ALSO TAKE A STROLL IN A GARDEN NEAR A STATUE OF ADMIRAL LORD NELSON (OR ANY SUCH INSPIRING FIGURE) AND AFTERWARDS REFRESH HERSELF WITH A COOL SHERRY COBBLER, OR SHE MAY CHOOSE TO CATCH BUTTERFLIES IN AN AERIAL INSECT NET AFTER INDULGING IN A REFRESHING SHERRY COBBLER.

A remedy for failure and loose ends.



THE YOWL

OF THE



SUNDAY, AUGUST THE FIFTEENTH

The train is taking us through the Himalayas to look for the most elusive of all beasts, the Yeti! The view of the mountains is spectacular.

Something had been on my mind for a while and so I sat down to tea with Brunhilde.

“My dear friend,” I began. “You once told me that your former husband, the demon Ahrimanes, was so cruel that he threatened your liberty and your life. I am concerned for your well being when we return home.”

“Thank you most kindly for your concern,” she replied. “But I have no doubt he is but a distant memory. He no longer haunts my dreams.”

“May I ask, if it's not too bold, about the mysterious red room he threatened to put you in, if you failed in your quest?”

“Oh, yes, but you must steel your nerves,” she said in hushed tones, then continued lowly. “If I ever disobeyed him, or refused his requests... he would... he would take me to the 'red room', and there he would... play the piano most vigorously, and out of tune, for hours! I could not get away! I could get no rest!”

“Oh?” I responded, for I could think of nothing else to say.

“It would have been the death of me! I could not live like that any longer. He was fond of Wagner, you know!”

“Good Lord!” I gasped, and could hear no more of the horrors.





The Mayor joined Brunhilde and me in the dining car shortly after, and told us that nothing we have seen so far will compare to what is coming.

"The yeti," said the Mayor, "is a magnificent creature, unparalleled in spectacle."

"Oh, you've seen one?" Brunhilde asked him.

"Well, no," he replied. "But I've heard as much." We giggled most amusedly.

TUESDAY, AUGUST THE SEVENTEENTH

The tour has been divided into separate groups of three in order to scale the mountains. I have been grouped with Percy and The Mayor. We were each given a Tibetan guide and a yak to carry supplies to the camp site. As we passed a temple gate, I saw before me the most magnificent dog I have ever seen. It is like our English Mastiff, only Tibetan and billowy, with fur! It looks just as much like a Yeti as anything I have ever seen!

On the way up to the camp, the guide never stopped talking for a moment, but also never once said anything in English. He pointed to things. Sometimes I thought he might be pointing at animal tracks, for he would often stop to listen. I could almost see the cogs turning in the man's head. It seemed a very laborious process. But after a moment he would continue on talking and hiking through the snow without a second thought.

As we moved, the air seemed to get colder and colder. The silence started creeping in whenever our guide ceased his chat. In the moments when his voice was absent, I felt a cold dread creep in. There are no trees, nor any animals but our own overladen yak, just the crunch of snow and the changing of the winds. I can quite understand what compels the dear man to drone on so!

At one point we all stopped completely, and our guide crouched down. We all crouched with





Philomena

him as he gazed over a rock. The yak crouched down, too. Percy and the Mayor claimed they saw a figure walking through the snow on the opposite mountainside, but I saw nothing but drifting snow. One wonders if they weren't seeing patterns of their own invention as one does when one stares at wallpaper for too long.

Before the final turn into the camp, the guide directed our attention to a bear trap that had been sprung. He talked about it for some time, and when he was satisfied we had heard enough, he led us on to the site. And what a site it was! I have no idea if the yak came up here before us, bearing all these loads, but the most regal tents were spread out and all our luggage awaited us there! Rich rugs were laid out and the loveliest picnic! I do enjoy traveling in style! God bless that noble yak!

But then I learned some startling news! There were only two tents, and I was expected to share one with one of the three men! Well, I hardly knew the guide, and he did talk so that he would surely keep me up, I was not very familiar with The Mayor, save that he was quite handsome and had a ridiculous accent, and I could not possibly consider sharing the tent with Percy Longville, for we have grown well-acquainted, and the others might talk! On a similar note, it seemed hardly practical to squeeze all three men into one tent while I was left alone in another with the potential prospect of Yetis stealing in and carrying me away during the night! I chose Percy.

But then I learned some even more startling news! There was only one bed in the tent, and not only that, but the tent was filled with luggage! Oh, my! That noble yak must have delivered ALL of our company's luggage to the same camp site by mistake!

"Well!" I exclaimed, and set about crawling across the trunks and unpacking my things to avoid the subject.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST THE EIGHTEENTH

I am quite a changed woman. As I look through my journal, I see how I have complained about him most sorely, and to my discredit have praised much lesser men.

I feel my heart melting; perhaps I have been too restrained? How he frustrates me, but also he makes me feel safe and encouraged.

He sat with me, on the throne of luggage, and read to me from his own journals. He showed me how his camera worked, the very camera that has photographed nearly every person mentioned within these pages.

While he was away for a moment speaking with the other men, I flipped through his journals most imprudently. I consoled myself with the fact that he hardly ever writes anything personal since he is far too concerned with research, facts, and dates. But there I found a passage about myself.

"You might say that she has the courage of a lion, though you might not, perhaps, comfortably say that to the lady in person."

(I think you might!)

"She has quick wits, the equal of any experienced monster hunter. I have never known anyone to have a clearer head in the face of danger. I was told not to make her an idol by Sir Hammerhorn, for he says, 'She is only a girl.' But she is not ONLY anything. She is more, and perhaps in time, someday, I could dare to hope that she could be my everything."

Oh! What sentiments! Did he pine for me all this time, or was it a recent affliction? Could I return his love? I had seen in him all types of distress, gentility, intelligence—but he had never spoken of love. Maybe he should have said something sooner?



THURSDAY, AUGUST THE NINETEENTH

As there was only one bed, and that one quite large, we decided, rather than fighting the mountains of luggage, to sleep on opposite sides of the bed, with quite our own blankets, and facing away from one another. But in the night, I admit that I slid my hand out from under the covers, and found his hand and held it—and he held mine in return.

When morning came, we dressed up in our warmest winter coats and stepped outside for tea. While having tea, we apparently took the Yeti by surprise—for the giant beast came around the corner carrying our yak and halted to yowl at us!

The beast was ferocious! Its maw matted with blood and gore! Yet its primitive aspect was adorned with the most interesting jewelry made of bone—not in a scavenged way, but almost as if it was a Yeti artisan.

The monster tossed the yak onto our table, smashing our frozen luncheon and causing the poor beast to yell most uncomfortably! The Mayor rushed forth, shooting a pistol at the Yeti, but he must have quite missed, for the beast only knocked him back with one thrust.

I drew my tiny gun and shot towards the beast, but the projectile was deflected by the creature's jewelry. The Yeti did not stop moving or roaring, and Percy quite disappeared for a moment—only to return with his camera to photograph the beast! I cannot imagine why he thinks first of my safety in every other instance, but in this one—simply because it is the rarest monster and has never been photographed—he quite ignores me. I suppose I must muster my lion-like courage.

Our guide stepped out of the tent, running most aggressively towards the Yeti. The Yeti turned towards the man and ran straight back at him, roaring! The Yeti lifted up the man and then tossed him into one of the tents. He then lifted up the surprised Mayor in one arm and slung the injured yak over the other. Then, the beast fled along the edge of a precipice.

Percy and I immediately took after it in pursuit! After scaling the most jagged cliff face, the landscape opened once again. We chased the beast, our legs slipping thigh-deep into the snow. The trek became most laborious, and so the Yeti threw down The Mayor into the snow.

We ran up to him, and he was quite beaten. His cheek was bruised and his lip bled.









"I saw a Yeti!" he exclaimed, out of breath. "I am one of the only people who has ever made contact with a Yeti! I touched it!"

"Percy," I said. "The Mayor is in a bad state. You are the stronger and must help him back to the camp! I will go after our noble yak!"

Percy agreed, and I dashed off into the snow. I must admit I was quite partial to that yak who bore my luxury up such a treacherous mountain path just so I might be comfortable! I almost immediately lost sight of the boys when I turned around a bend, but I could see the Yeti continuing to trudge down the mountainside with the yak on his back.

The beast took a sharp turn around a jagged rock. After what must have been two minutes, I caught up to that location, only to glimpse the faintest haze of his figure further off through the gathering snow. Across the enormous mountain pass I saw the sun break through the clouds. The light cascaded across the opposite mountainside, and a massive cave was revealed. It looked quite the height of Big Ben three times over, darkness at its center.

Then the light changed and poured into that dark chasm. I could not then comprehend what I saw; it still seems to me a trick of the light. There was an elaborate civilization nestled therein. I saw pillars, fires glowing in windows, staircases carved into the rock, and it seemed to me I saw figures of white moving about.

The light was once again obstructed by the clouds and snow, and I could barely make out the cavern then.

At that moment I saw the Yeti leaping across from one jagged rock on our side to another jagged rock just jutting out of the other side. It was a leap no human could make, and as the Yeti turned one last time to look at me, the snow gathered in the wind and obfuscated my

view of him completely.

I wanted to follow. I wanted to discover whether the Yeti of Tibet was a part of a technologically advanced civilization. Then I looked back towards the corner I had turned. I knew that always around that bend my friend would be waiting. If I were to enter this strange new world, this strange new adventure, only the unknown would await me!

I knew then that I wanted to marry Percy Longville. I would rather go on the adventure of being in love, and being loved, than risk my life for any more monsters. My reckless impulsivity needed to be set in second place if I were to allow someone to be a part of my life. I might not have had the most eloquent of words for it, but love sounded a thousand times more appealing than being torn apart by Yetis.

In every long journey, there comes a time when you are ready to go home. You know you've changed a little as a person, hopefully for the better. I knew this in that moment.

I managed to thrash my way back through the snow and to the camp before the gathering storm caught up with me.

"Did you see where it went? What happened?" the men asked.

"No. Nothing," I replied.

I had lost my nerve for adventure, and I had lost the most noble yak who ever lived. Sometimes I imagine that the Yetis revere that noble beast, sitting him on a golden throne and feeding him the most delicious grasses in their palace in the mountainside. That is how I like to remember him.



TIPS FOR LADY MONSTER HUNTERS

NO. 15



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The key to enjoying a yeti hunt is to develop a sense of wonder for ones surroundings, rather than becoming mired in the moribund minutia. It is entirely likely that a lady will never encounter the beast at all on her journey. As a resolute lady sits overlooking the rugged mountain terrain while the wild tumultuous sky is gently pierced by the setting sun, despairing that a fortnight of exploration has yielded no results, she can take solace in the fact that at least she is getting some fresh air and exercise. A positive outlook will ensure a pleasant excursion for any traveling lady.

E
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THE

UNFATHOMABLE

BEAST

FROM

FATHOMS BELOW

MONDAY, AUGUST THE TWENTY-THIRD

Our trip home has been most relaxing. J.W. Wells and Co. hired an entirely new airship, and for our peace of mind they manned it entirely with humans! Thank God!

We arrived in Venice, and, oh, I'm too tired to describe all the sights I've seen. Venice is strikingly beautiful, and it is pleasant to be waited upon by actual people with actual human faces. The Mayor is glad to be home—this is his last stop, and he returns to his duties tomorrow. He is not only the youngest man to ever hold the title, he is probably also the handsomest man to hold the title. I saw some portraits of the others in the Mayoral hall.

A very rich and noble family, the Ladroncellos, are throwing a costume ball! They are local Nobility—the equivalent rank, I believe, of one of our earls. The Mayor has secured our entire Monster Hunting party invitations! Isn't it exciting?

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST THE TWENTY-FIFTH

I felt like an absolute princess at the ball! I wore the most beautiful shimmering purple silk gown with an ornately bejeweled stomacher! It almost reminded me of the dress that Cyprien had threatened to procure for me from the Genie all those months ago!

The room was most splendidly adorned and featured an enormous golden ring on display in the center of the floor. All the guests wore the most fabulous outfits, many with an oriental flair since the populace knew that the Mayor had just returned from Asia. The Mayor himself was dressed as an Indian Raja, and he looked quite dashing!

"Miss Dashwood!" he cried when he saw me. "You look so beautiful! You are a morsel fit for a prince! And no doubt you'll have one before the night is out!"

I'm sure I did not know what he meant by that, but I had little time to think about it, for Percy arrived dressed in the most beautiful





pearl-studded lilac waistcoat! He looked nearly like a prince himself!

He asked me for a dance, and there is nothing quite like a good quadrille to bring one's spirits up, but he cannot dance. Rather, I watched him throughout the night tripping ladies, treading on their trains, knocking them into punch bowls. I could track his progress upon the floor by the number of ladies he managed to trip!

I feigned fatigue from viewing all the sights of Venice, and instead sat with him on the dais under the giant ring and heard the most interesting story of this noble family.

Percy knew a brief history about Napoleon involving the Ladroncellos. The Emperor, ever asserting his masculinity, wanted to show how powerful he was while conquering various nations. He sunk all of the ships of Venice spanning from St. Marks to the Lido including a famous golden ship called the Bucentaur.

Philomena Dashwood

Percy had found some pictures of the golden boat while thumbing through an old Italian tome. Here we are in the most beautiful city in all of Europe and he has been sitting in his room reading books. The book told of how Buffoni Ladroncello built a business recovering the sunken ships for the local merchants who had lost all their goods. The Ladroncellos were much celebrated and the Ladroncellos claim they were given a giant golden ring by the populace as thanks—the ring which is that stunning centerpiece of the ballroom!

At that time the Mayor stood at the top of the dais and gathered the attention of the dancers assembled.

“I am pleased, beyond all proportion,” he said, “to now introduce you to our guest of honor, and the man who saved my life on many occasions during my trip, our hero, the Duc de Longueville.”

I began to clap with the rest of the audience, wondering who the man could be who saved the Mayor’s life. He had surely never mentioned him on the trip. But then Percy stood up and joined the Mayor, and I admit I was quite confused, but I stood with him.

The Mayor indicated Percy and continued, “Perseus Longueville.”

It was the French pronunciation of his name! The indignity! But did my ears hear correctly? Did he say Duke?

“Thank you,” said Percy. “There was really something else I wanted to do tonight, and I was reading a romantic novel earlier wherein it stated that any girl would be incredibly lucky to be loved and proposed to at such a highly public event as a ball!”

Percy then knelt on one knee before me. The guests gasped.

I was stunned!

“Missus Philomena Dashwood,” he began, getting my address of title quite wrong in front of all of the assembled guests. But I was preoccupied with the Mayor calling him Duke. Had Percy

been a Duke this whole time? This is what comes of not having a proper introduction! I knew it would be a problem from the moment we met!

“It has been my pleasure to know you for the past few months,” Percy continued. “I did not know that I would ever meet anyone who could bring me out of my shell, who could make me see the importance of being an active part of the world around me, someone who showed me love when I was at my lowest, and was happy to see me whenever reunited. I love you. I love you more than I thought was possible. Philomena Dashwood, will you be my Missus, and my wife, forever?”

Percy produced a ring.

And it was right at that moment that the world began to shake. I thought at first it was an earthquake, but not a single Italian guest was stepping out of place. I wondered if they did not realize that the palace could be shaken down around our ears?

I took a quick few steps away from the dais. It was a fortunate thing that I did so; not a moment after I moved away, a tentacle fully as thick around as a stallion’s torso broke through the gilded ceiling, smashing downward right where I had been standing. It coiled around the dais, suckers pulling at the floor. The tip twisted as though tasting the air like a serpent’s tongue.

Someone shouted, and instantly a mass of Italian men in Ladroncello livery threw themselves at the dais. My Italian was not up to a translation, but I quickly gathered by their actions that they were attempting to rescue the giant golden ring from its display. As, indeed, they managed to do, carrying it away in joyful jubilation. The tentacle itself, having felt about the empty dais, withdrew, and the world ceased to shake.

I managed to catch the attention of The Mayor, who had begun assisting fallen dancers. “Mi scusi,” I said, spending nearly all of my Italian, and then was at a complete loss for the Italian word for ‘kraken.’

“Does this ‘grand calamari’ attack Venice often?”

I asked. "It was not mentioned in the guidebook."

"I believe you might find this portion of calamari a trifle oversized," he replied.

I glanced pointedly at the shattered ceiling and smashed dais—not to mention the sucker marks left upon the mahogany floor—and there was Percy grasping about for his own lost ring! Oh, my heart broke for him in that moment! But the whole party was ushered out of the collapsing room, and I quite lost track of him.

THURSDAY, AUGUST THE TWENTY-SIXTH

Percy is strangely distant. At breakfast, he did not mention the proposal, nor did he attempt to interest me in dusty old tintypes, or indeed, in anything at all. He directed none of his conversation toward me, and whenever I discovered his eyes

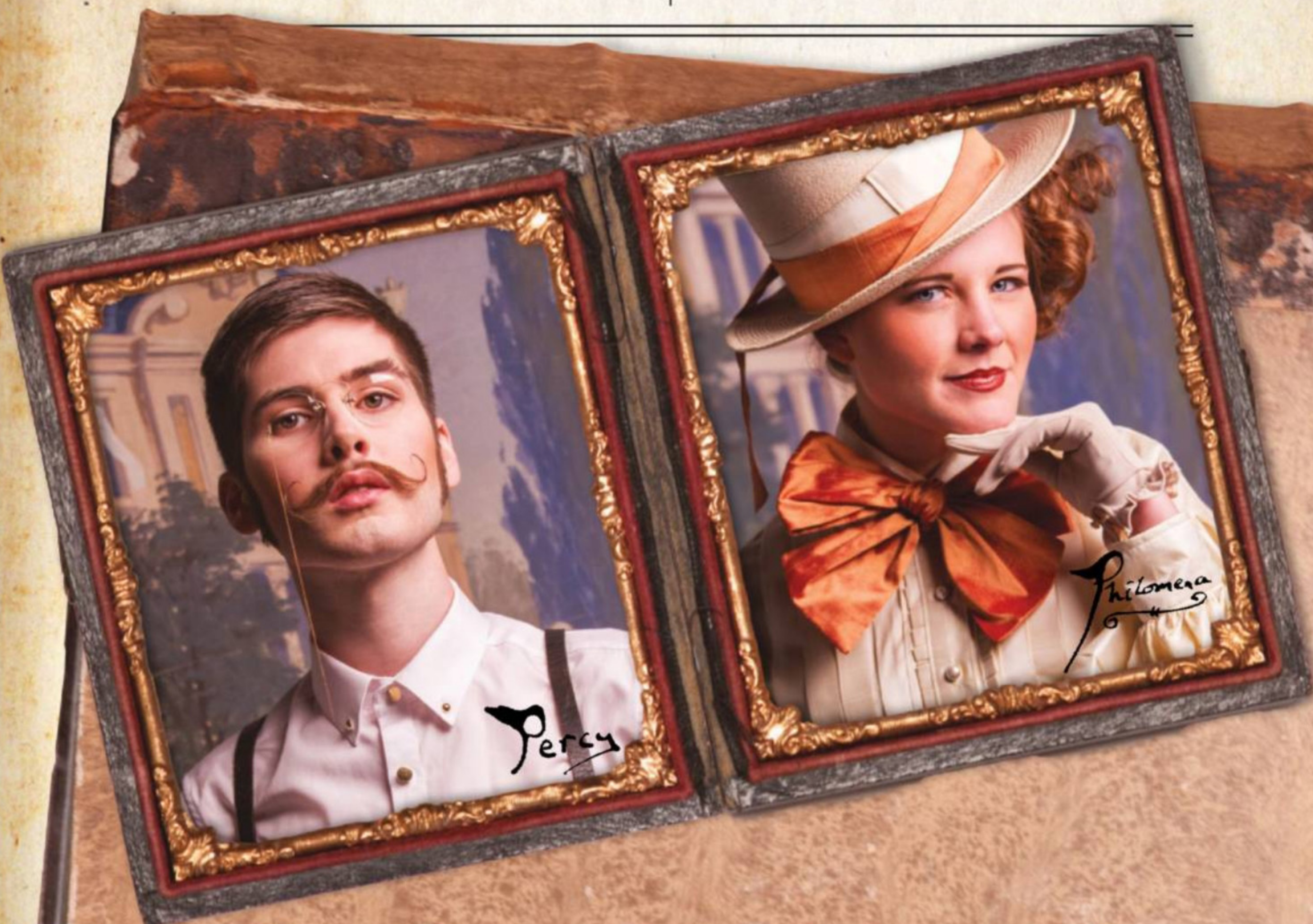
upon me, he turned them rapidly away.

"Percy," I said, hoping to encourage the man. "I would be very interested in picking up the conversation where we left off last night."

"I cannot continue this discussion without that ring," he said, standing and walking away. Poor thing must be too embarrassed for words.

In the street near the cafe, I overheard some libertine tourists speaking together about removing their wedding rings in order to seduce women, the cads. Without so much as a how-do-you-do, the shaking began and the sea-monster's tentacle returned, knocking the men into the canal.

As I went to look for the Mayor, I saw tentacles tossing people about like startled cats, falling debris, and all sorts of pandemonium. I saw a British couple having a terrible row about a lost wedding ring. The



monster appeared and I saw an undulating tentacle rise up, but it left them unharmed, surfacing only briefly to slap down onto the stone, and scatter the market tables.

It's all very peculiar.

But a strange thought entered my head. The monster seems to be attacking every time I witness some form of golden ring being transferred, and the Ladroncellos seemed intent on moving the giant golden ring from the ball during the attacks. Is there a connection?

Not two stalls further down the street the mayor was valiantly standing on a broken bookcart, coat flapping in the wind, lesser politicians looking at the ground, helping a street vendor pick up his wares. Two men in the Ladroncello livery were posted nearby, carrying an ornate chest, their path barred by the sea-monster attack.

"Why are these kraken attacks allowed to continue?" I asked the Mayor, once he had dismounted the cart. "Surely, Venice has some means of defense."

"From the Sea?" the Mayor exclaimed. "Venice does not need to be protected from the Sea! Venice, she is married to the Sea!"

"Then it does not seem to me," I replied, "that this marriage is very happy."

The handsome young politician then gave me a detailed history of the Bucentaur and the sunken gold in his ridiculous accent.

"The Bucentaur, which you mentioned looking at in a book, was a golden ship that the old Doge used during a ceremony called the Festa della Sensa, or, Marriage of the Sea. The Doge would sail to the Lido and cast a golden ring into the sea as a token of the unity of the sea to Venice."

The Mayor described the sea as being the woman in this scenario—being obedient and subordinate to Venice—which, in that moment

made him look a little less handsome to me. Venice, who here was standing in for the man, knew what was best and was always sensible and correct—it was all I could do to suppress a titter—and was sovereign over the sea, which is why Venice married it.

"I suppose," I began, "that if all those rings and all that gold were brought up, there would be enough to make one perfectly immense ring. Perhaps the Ladroncello family is not being entirely forthcoming about the provenance of their gold ring?" I asked, and the footmen with the treasure chest looked furtive.

A strange coincidence then occurred. I saw the British couple from earlier, the ones who had lost their rings, and the woman was berating the husband for having forgotten their anniversary. The tentacles threw things around in the distance.

Perhaps the sea was behaving like that angry spouse, as if Venice has forgotten the anniversary one too many times?

I asked the Mayor, "What do you think the sea might do if her husband forgot her anniversary or took back her wedding ring?" I postulated that, "any woman might throw a fit of temperament if neglected for too long."

I indicated the arguing couple as they disappeared around the corner.

"Perhaps all the gold that the Ladroncellos stole from bottom of Venice's canals is drawing the sea monster to your town," I said. The two footmen leaned in closer to listen.

"The sea monster appears to be drawn to the ring," said Percy, running down the street with a book. "First, it attacked the ballroom where the ring was displayed, and now again while these footmen are carrying the ring through this market. I just learned about its transport, just a moment ago!"

The Mayor took both of us by our arms and spoke





Philomena Dashwood



in hushed tones, "Please do not say such things aloud. While I have never trusted the Ladroncello family personally, they do bring stimulus, jobs, and economy to my town. You cannot tarnish the family name by claiming they stole the gold from the sea."

"The gold was stolen from the sea," Percy said, sternly. "The wedding ceremony to the sea does not seem to have been performed since Napoleon's attack." Percy held out his book for the Mayor to look at. "You must do something!"

"Perhaps returning the ring, and renewing your vows to the sea might help?" I asked.

"Take the ring! Take it and throw it back into the canal where it belongs!" cried the two footmen, opening the treasure chest to reveal the large golden ring.

"Do not even say such sacrilege!" replied the Mayor. "We cannot just seize the Ladroncello's prized treasures to do with as we please!"

And perhaps he was the first politician in all of history to utter such a remark.

An ominous crack came from above us, scattering flecks of stone from the nearby bridge down upon our heads. The Mayor shrieked in dismay. A tentacle wrapped around the Rialto.

"To the Lido!" the Mayor cried.

And that is how I ended up rolling a large ring down the streets of Venice, with a puffing Mayor and Mr. Longville beside me.

We rolled the ring straight into a gondola, and a tentacle swept all three of us, plus the many books littering the streets, straight in after. The mayor grabbed the pole and began to propel us through the waters. Percy proceeded to feel about in all his various pockets (Why are men blessed with so many of these handy receptacles, and we ladies so few?) until he uncovered the desired book recounting the history of the Bucentaur.

"I have a book on the ceremony with me," he

said to the Mayor. However, just as they began to speak, the Mayor was thrown overboard as an enormous wave surged under the boat.

I tried to reach out to him, but he was carried away so swiftly. I saw him latch onto a floating apple cart in the distance.

"You must perform this ceremony for me!" he called after us. "Save Venezia!" And then he floated away.

I was so busy looking at these two very distracting men, that the gondola ran aground, books flying everywhere. Percy lost his grasp on the pertinent one and we scrambled through the pile looking for the correct information while tentacles rose behind us.

The Kraken, or sea monster, rose ominously out of the water. Percy looked between his book and the monster.

"The Ceremony!" I cried.

"Oh... Sea... um, monster... we represent Venice... with..."

"Just the ceremony, Percy!" I cried.

Percy began to read.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice! Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Allow for us, and all who sail thereon, that the sea may be calm and quiet."

I looked up, surprised, for the sea was indeed quieting, and the rage calming, and I found myself gazing into Percy's eyes. It was strangely intimate to hear him reading the words to a wedding ceremony. To avoid any improper displays of public affection, I somewhat ingloriously pushed the giant golden ring into the water.

He laid his hands over mine, enclosing it safely between his palms. "With this ring, I thee wed and bestow upon thee all the treasures of my heart, my





mind, and my hands. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does."

"Likewise," I quickly added. "The husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." I made sure to address the sea.

"That's good and biblical," Percy nodded, agreeing.

We nodded at each other affectionately for a while. One of the kraken's tentacles slapped the canal's surface, returning Percy to action.

"We wed thee, sea, in the sign of the true and everlasting Lord. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"And we intend to be very specific here," I made sure to add. "By letting no man put asunder we mean, specifically, the Ladroncello family."

"Amen," Percy called out to the water, and the retreating tentacles. The seas subsided and grew calm.

"Um," he said. "Er... um. Do you think that's enough, Missus Dashwood?"

"It's still Miss," I said, clearing my throat. "Mr. Longville."

"Will you consent to changing that?" he asked.

I don't know why I suddenly felt so warm. I became aware we were still holding hands.

"I think I might," I replied.

We managed to make it safely back to the streets of Venice, and were aided out of our boat by a gathering throng of onlookers just as the Ladroncellos rushed up, outraged over the theft and sacrifice of their golden ring. They threatened our personal space most aggressively. We were subjected to such a tirade of angry Italian that, were it not for the timely arrival of the Mayor, floating by on his apple stall, we might have had to endure it.

The Mayor lifted his hands for silence, then

raised his voice, quickly gathering the attention of the Venetians.

"My dear Venice!" he called out to both sides of the canal. "Our own dear beloved Ladroncello family, not only has your family proved itself generous in the past, but now—how you surpass all your great history! Your sacrifice of this symbolic golden ring has saved us all! Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have. Your great gift has saved our city!"

The Venetians broke into uproarious applause, and picked up the Ladroncellos and carried them away with violent and happy enthusiasm. The Ladroncellos were much swayed by this display of emotion, and decided not to press the matter any further.

I must admit I was much impressed by the noble, handsome, and heroic Mayor floating down the canal. His tact and grace had turned an event that was headed sour into a celebration with only a short speech. Perhaps the monster hunting tour was a waste of his time. To my reckoning he only saw two monsters in the wild. But here he was, home at last and perfectly equipped to deal with monster attacks. One wonders if the old adage "he had it in him all along, he just didn't know it" applies?

He looked quite majestic. Only, I put my mind to thoughts of circumnavigating the politics of such a busy port town, and all the troubles that may arise from local monster invasions. It made me quite glad that I had never gotten entangled in a relationship with him!

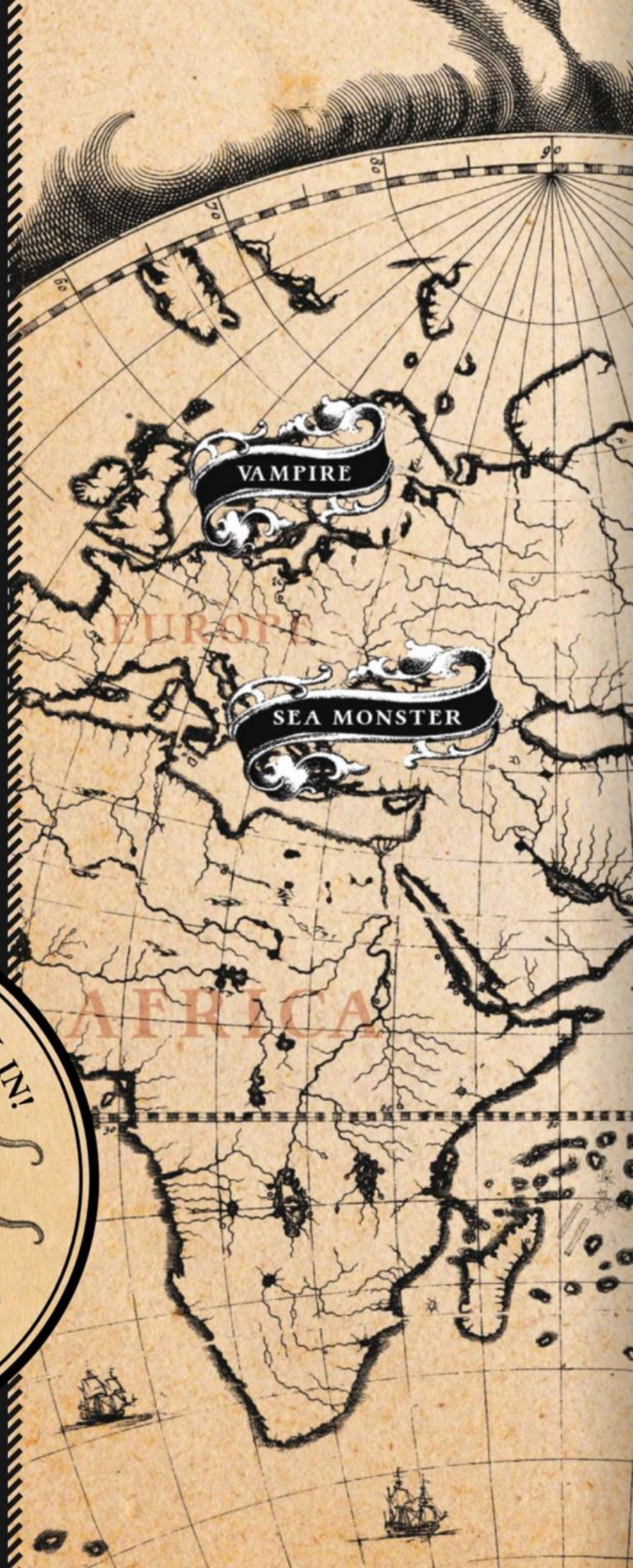
I was quite satisfied with the friend I made in Percy Longville—Duke, if these events are to be believed. I wonder if he is very rich? I do hope so. After all, I have already agreed to be his wife!



TIPS FOR LADY MONSTER HUNTERS

NO. 16

The joys of plunging bodily into a river to pursue an aquatic beast can quickly become undone for a lady of any sensible refinements when she alternately considers what she gains and loses from the experience. She may gain a closeness to God, putting her life at risk for the thrill of the hunt, but she runs the risk of losing her coiffure and reticule to the waves. Just remember it's not worth going after the beast if you don't plan to follow through. There's nothing more distressing to a lady of discernment than to discover she's lost both the beast and her bonnet beneath the billowing waters.



MAP OF WORLD MONSTERS

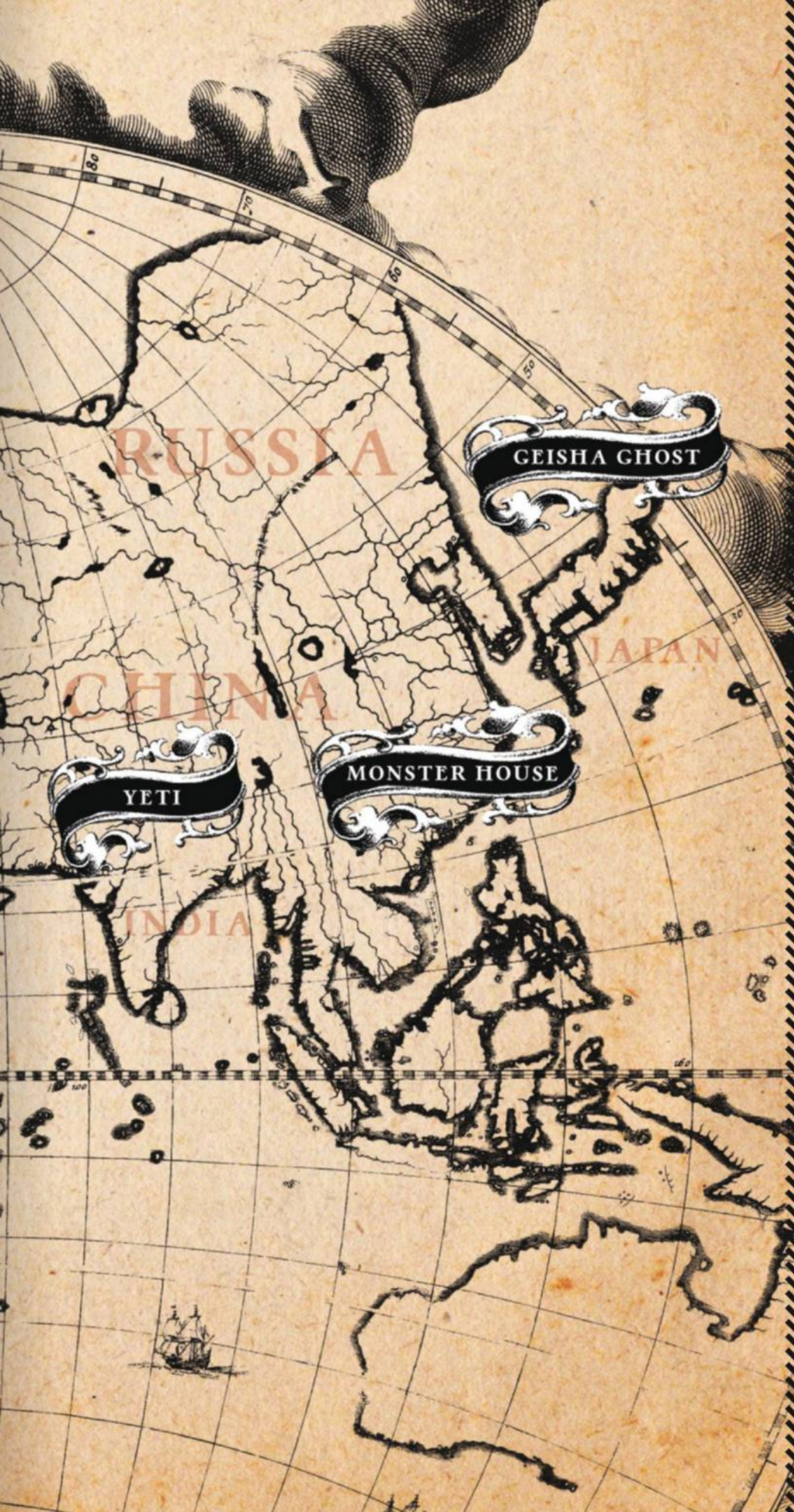
WITNESSED ON THE J.W. WELLS & CO. MONSTER HUNTING TOUR

The journey continued to Japan where an evil ghost was captured.

Next, the trip journeyed to the Monster House of famed Monster Hunter, Lu Yan. The prison was destroyed by a werewolf and all the monsters released.

Following this, the J.W. Wells & Co. monster hunting expedition traveled to Tibet where they documented the elusive Yeti.

From there, the tour returned to Europe where a ball was attended and subsequently attacked by a seamonster.



THE

VENGEANCE

OF THE

VAMPIRE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER THE FIRST

I am home at last! Ah, the wonderful sooty air! The skyline seems much changed since I left home all those long months ago! Yet the adventure has hardly ended, for now I must prepare for my own wedding! Can you even believe it! Only think: a Duke and a Duchess!

Yet there is still one thing that humors me poorly, for wouldn't you know it, but that silly Perdina Meeks has gone and gotten married while I have been away! Friends since childhood and I wasn't even favored with an invitation to be a bridesmaid! Dear Aunt claims my invitation was addressed to the first airship and therefore most likely delivered to the bottom of the sea, but that does not soothe my indignity. And not only married, but to a Baron! If she thinks that she can out-marry me, then she has quite another thing coming! For it isn't often, is it, that you're favored by a visit from a Duchess and a Duke!

Uncle is afraid that he cannot quite afford the kind of wedding most commonly afforded to a Duke, but I have no such reservations, for Percy is quite generous, and bound to help out. He is no miser. I wonder what it will be like to have to pack up all my belongings and

leave my family home to live in a palace? We will have landholdings in both England and France, heaven forbid, which is where we will also be taking our honeymoon.

I immediately wrote to Perdina to invite her to my wedding... to a Duke, which I emphasized in the boldest ink lines. She must have taken it as an immediate invitation, for she has arrived too soon and is even now waiting in the drawing room. I am trying to come up with more things to write here in my journal in order to keep her waiting. I fear it is most pressing that I set out to the shops to choose a trousseau, and I'd rather not go for fear of having her as a companion.

But I have just had the most interesting item delivered to my door. It seems that the first wedding gift has arrived already, and even before the invitations have been sent. It is a gift from Lu Yan, who, I am overjoyed to hear, is alive and well! It is his "Guide to Hunting Monsters."

"Best wishes to the bride," it reads. "May your love be ever true."

It is the most wonderful gift I have ever received, for contained within its pages are photographs, diary entries, specimens, and all the information one could ever want to know



about the greatest monster collection in the world!

There was also a bookmark in this Guide to Hunting Monsters. I noticed at once my upcoming name, Longueville, entered in among the text, as my eye has been quite keen at the sight of the word! This is a very strange connection to Percy's French ancestry, and I wonder why Lu Yan should think of us at all, but for this name appearing within these pages.

I recount the entry:

"In the reign of James the first, Sir Ruthven Gowrie hatched a plot to assassinate his King. Gowrie, a wealthy landowner in Scotland and a young man of one and twenty, was second in the line of succession." He and his brother invited King James to their palace for a hunt, whereupon they lured the king away from his men and into the woods. King James was an avid monster huntsman and was said to detest, most of all, the wicked vampires, who, at that time, plagued the land. Both Gowrie brothers claimed to be keeping just such a creature captive in their tower, which the king was most interested in seeing. The boys led him back to their castle, unseen. They led the King to the highest tower, unguarded, and there they revealed their true nature as members of that unholy band of vampires themselves! They meant to kill the King, for as noble lords, they were next in the line of succession. It was known that they only feasted upon the blue-blood of royalty!

The King managed to escape, shattering the tower window and calling for help. As the vampires seized upon him, the King's men broke through the locked doorways and rescued the monarch just in time! They mutilated the younger Gowrie brother then and there, but Ruthven was taken captive and publically beheaded.

A vampire is never truly dead, though, if one does not also stuff his mouth with garlic

and stake his heart. It is told that an infamous old necromancer from beyond the borders of England gathered both the head and body of Gowrie and stitched them together through his infernal arts. The vampire was fully re-formed, but weak. Ruthven Gowrie was unable to find any of his own family line, for King James had extinguished the Gowrie clan and banned the name 'Ruthven' by law.

Having lost his place in the line of succession, Gowrie made his way to France to make up for it by devouring dozens of nobles. As early as 1788 he had begun inciting much trouble during the lead up to the revolution—which turned out to be quite the place to satiate his appetite for blue blood—and he killed any men who now stood between himself and the throne of England. It says he traced the line to the Longueville family, cousins to James I, and therefore enemies to himself.

Gowrie was captured by the Longuevilles, during the vampire's raid, and buried deep within the catacombs. Many decades later, those graves, it seems, were to be transported back to England to be interred with the rest of the family, and the accidental unleashing of the vampire caused many deaths. This caught the notice of the visiting monster hunter Lu Yan.

Lu Yan followed Gowrie into the channel, catching him and imprisoning him in his own collection of monsters."

That was the vampire I saw there! To think I would have a connection to that creature and not even know it! I wonder if Percy even knows of his family connection to Gowrie? I found a lithograph of Gowrie contained therein.

I knew at once that my husband would be quite irate to discover me poring through this old tome instead of preparing for the wedding, but now I must join Perdina Meeks downstairs, anyway.





Fig. 05.

THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF KING JAMES BY THE GOWRIE BROTHERS.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER THE FIRST

Perdina and I attended the National Gallery. That woman absolutely refused to unlink her arm from mine, droning on endlessly about her Baron husband and their Baron life, but I put on my best smile and nodded politely. I was quite interested to discover that the very painting upon which the lithograph of Ruthven Gowrie was based was housed in the National Gallery. We looked at the painting. The man was quite handsome in his day, not at all like the unsettling thing in the cage.

"Have you seen this man before?" I asked Perdina.

"Oh, heavens no," she replied. "Dear, this painting must be from Elizabeth's Golden Age at least. Though, he does remind me so of my dear Baron, don't you think?"

I suppose it could have been possible if one squinted quite hard in his direction, at dusk, with the light behind him.

We exited the gallery and the familiar overcast skies of London were once again above my head, reminding me of how glad I was to be home. But it wasn't all good news, for we stumbled upon a newspaper hawker who provided the most heartbreaking information. It seemed Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, had had a mysterious fall and bled to death while on holiday in France! Even more tragic, this incident happened right about the time that I had been passing through Europe on my way back home!

We purchased a paper and read within its pages that the Prince did not simply bleed to death, but was, in fact, found with no blood in his body at all!

I began to feel most acutely that there were many coincidences stacking up a little too neatly, and I was overcome with a sort of dread.

I felt eyes were watching me! Linked arm-in-arm to my dear friend, I began to feel the gaze of every young man in the crowd. I dragged Perdina about, trying to find a safe place to escape. We descended the steps to an empty walkway along the Thames, for now I was quite certain that somebody was following us. But the mist by the river, rising and swirling over the distant figures of men, unnerved me even more so. I yanked Perdina back into the busy street, whereupon I crashed right into a group of people. Perdina and myself were left to sprawl about in a most unladylike fashion on the sidewalk.

Then, a most sturdy gentleman stepped forward to give Perdina a hand, helping her most graciously to her feet.

"Oh, thank you most kindly, sir," she said.

"Are you not," he replied. "The Baroness Kennicott? I'm certain I read about your marriage in the illustrated papers!"

Perdina giggled most shamelessly at being recognized. Realizing that the gentleman was showing no interest in helping me to my feet, no doubt blinded by the low hanging fruit of a Baroness, I waffled about until I could stand on my own. I looked at the gentleman.

I must have turned pale as a sheet, for I could feel a swoon coming on. It was the man from the painting!

He looked at me with such disdain. An aloof smile faded from his lips and turned into a sort of sneer. By his expression one would assume that I had somehow wronged him by being too lowly born.

"I am Lord Gowrie," he said, holding his hand to Perdina's.

Perdina giggled once more. "Though I am not accustomed," she said, "to meeting gentlemen in such a way, I will certainly have such a story to tell my Baron! A Lord saving me from falling into the street to be run over



Perdina Meeks

Philomena Dashwood



by a carriage. To be sure! Oh, Philomena, isn't it the most unlikely meeting?"

"I am Philomena Dashwood," I said, trying to regain some sense of politeness.

He responded, "Of the Dashwoods who dash hither and thither and settle in no place they belong?"

Perdina was confused by this sentence, but laughed most heartily, believing it to be wit beyond her comprehension.

"I have yet to meet a Dashwood in society," he said, coldly.

"And you will have to wait longer yet," chirped Perdina, "for Philomena's name will change to something even finer when she is married to Perseus, 'Percy Longville,' Duc du Longueville, isn't it the sweetest thing!?"

The man replied: "Dashing hearts to pieces on your way to become a Duchess, no doubt."

"Surely you have seen the announcement in the papers?" Perdina asked.

"Indeed," he returned. "I would not miss such an announcement. For Longueville is a family connection that I will not soon forget. I believe we must be distant cousins. But alas, the reception must be highly exclusive, for I have not received an invitation. And I could only come if I had an invitation."


"I'm afraid," I said most staunchly, "that it is a private affair, for family only."

"And friends of course, too, dear," added Perdina, turning between us and taking the Lord's hand. "You simply must come. I'll invite you. Who could deny such a helpful and handsome young Lord an invitation to his own relation's wedding?"

My heart dropped, for then I realized that a vampire had an invitation to come into my home, and worse yet, to attend my wedding!

"I would not miss it for the world," Gowrie said, his eyes burning.





Perhaps a lady starts her hunting career with ghosts and goblins, and later she progresses to cliff diving in pursuit of a giant gryphon. No matter how adventuresome a lady becomes, there will come a time when she feels she has run out of things to hunt, and she will invariably set her mind to vampires. However, these beasts are best left to the proper authorities — the police and military. Just as a huntsman who goes out to shoot a deer for dinner would not, in the end, shoot a human, neither should a refined lady monster-hunter ever pursue a vampire. Hopefully this guide will give ladies ideas for monster hunting that will keep her adrenaline pumping and her wallet emptying for the rest of her natural life without ever needing to descend into the demonic realms of the loss of her own humanity and life.

TIPS FOR **L**ADY **M**ONSTER **H**UNTERS

NO. 17

Avoid Vampires!

NOSFERATU AT THE NUPTIALS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER THE SECOND

I have announced some last minute changes to the wedding plans and confused my dear husband. I want a bouquet of Wild Roses and Hawthorn, which I will have to make some ridiculous excuse about having a long and loving history with. And then I shall need all of the vessels and ornaments to be made of silver... pure silver. I will not settle for less, for I am the bride.

Due to my deep devotion to both the Lord Our God and my husband, I would like the most solemn and religious ceremony, and the venue should be blessed most thoroughly by all the best priests and filled with the most beautiful Catholic imagery, of which, I have claimed, I have always been fond. Large crucifixes. Large, but not too large. Something one might pick up if the need arises.

Our meal should be full of the finest garlic flavors, which my husband is a bit worried about, for he notes that there will be kissing, but I have assured him that the guests will be expecting it, and he was not raised around many women so I think I've managed to sneak that one past. I also recommended he wear his most noble armor, to display his noble rank, and noble attitude, I guess, but I was losing the thread and I think he may suspect something.

Perdina Meeks also stopped by again. This time she was trying to boast that she and her husband had been invited to the home of that charming Lord Gowrie that very evening, and I strongly objected to this. She thought me silly and a wee bit jealous, for she did not know that creature only drank the blood of royals. And so I feigned the most obnoxious whining... I was pretending to be

her, I suppose, and I begged her to stay with me.

"Perdina!" I said, overcome with emotions. "You simply must stay and help me or this wedding has no hope of coming together!"

And that seems to have convinced her, for, no doubt, she believes it to be true. She decided to stay, but I did not feel comfortable with one left behind, so I continued, "And poor Percy is in such a state that the sober mind and level head of the Baron would be sure to steady the bridegroom's nerves. Could he please come attend to Percy? I say, Lord Gowrie is only an acquaintance, but you and I are such good friends! We simply must have you around during this important time in our lives!"

Perdina was quite pleased by this and sent for her husband at once.

"Did you know," she said after, "that the Lord Gowrie's name is Ruthven! Ruthven! To think! Whoever heard of such a name as that?"

"It was outlawed, dear," I replied.

"Why ever so?"

"There was a man with that name who tried to murder the King. King James."

"Well," laughed Perdina. "Let's hope they're not related! Ha! Ha!"

FRIDAY, DECEMBER THE THIRD

Percy has come to me in a fit. It seems a man came over to his house the night before and stood just outside the French Doors leading onto his bedroom balcony. Obviously Ruthven Gowrie, the vampire said Percy was marrying into worthless blood—for apparently he doesn't count one half of the family tree bespeckled with baronets and mayors—and that uprooting the base of the





Longville Ducal tree would be a pleasure. Percy knows a vampire is coming now, for he could tell at once that the man was a vampire when he could not enter his room uninvited. Also, the man turned into a bat upon departure and flew away, however theatrical that sounds. Apparently Percy's bedroom is several stories up.

I decided to straighten this affair out immediately and showed him the portion of Lu Yan's book relating the tale of Lord Ruthven Gowrie.

"Don't you understand what he's trying to tell us, Philomena?" Percy asked. "He's trying to warn us that the vampire has escaped his enforced restraint and may have ill intentions towards me!"

"I understand," I replied. "I just did not wish to worry you during the weeks before our nuptials!"

"But if he only drinks blue blood," Percy continued, "then our entire social network is at risk! There is no help for it. In order to keep our hereditary races safe, we must throw a party at once!"

And so, from that night until the day of the

wedding, we threw a party for all the noble Lords and Ladies of London! Our guests piled in from the lowest baronet to the highest prince in the land! They are staying for well over a week. They have such hearty appetites that I couldn't enjoy a moment of it! I've made a heroic endeavor to look unconcerned, but in vain—and I vow never to hold a dinner party ever again!

But they were safe, insomuch as manners dictated that none should invite a third-party guest to a party at a Ducal estate! Gowrie was kept out until the day of the wedding, at least, but rumors have spread amongst our party that a night-stalker has been seen haunting the outskirts of Queen Victoria's palace, and many licentious young noblemen and silly capricious noblewomen who think our party a bore have been drained entirely of their blood!

Having to prepare for an ever-increasing amount of guests and the arrival of a vampire caused me to ask my dear husband if we should



postpone the wedding, but he said we had one chance to capture this vampire, and we needs must take it. He said, and I'm sure he thought it was grandly noble and not at all silly, "I would risk a thousand deaths to make you my wife!"

SUNDAY, DECEMBER THE TWELFTH

Now our monster hunting tour friends have arrived. We have told them about our situation and they have stationed themselves most ably around the house. Missus Mister and Sir Hammerhorn are armed to the teeth. Brunhilde Bamfield has distributed a vast array of charms and vials of holy water to the guests under the guise of party favors.

MONDAY, DECEMBER THE THIRTEENTH

The wedding is over. As I sit here and recount the events of the day, I make it no secret that I survived, but at what cost?

Everything was going swimmingly. The guests were all assembled, and all protected from vampire villainy by our valiant efforts to literally bless every bottle of wine during the course of their weeklong party. A vampire dare not drink such intoxicated and holy blood at any rate.

The sky was dark, ominous and cloudy, then. Good English Weather, if not good wedding weather.

My dress was all I had ever dreamed! 25 yards of ivory silk flowed from my train, and the sheer volume of fabric required for each sleeve was a brilliant sight to behold! The decorated Swiss waist featured a ruched panel of fabric which made for a pretty effect, I think. Oh, I forgot to mention: the lace panel on front is the sole remaining remnant from my own mother's wedding gown! Since the gown is lined in blue silk, this gives the dress "something old," "something new," and "something blue." I borrowed the wooden stake buried in my bouquet from Brunhilde Bamfield, and with a

sixpence in my shoe, I was ready for the wedding!

I spent several pleasant moments walking the crowded central aisle of the chapel; each guest was liberally strewn with colorful and unusual knick-knacks, and was smiling gaily at me, and the whole place was scented with rosewater and garlic. One's senses were quite overwhelmed! There was no vampire in sight! Mrs. Bamfield held a crucifix firmly in hand and encouraged me down the aisle.

There stood my husband. We eased down together onto one of the plush velvet benches, and I was overcome by the wonder of marrying the man I loved. Our love was so deep in that moment that it seemed a tangible presence around us, and the look on his face—oh, how can I describe the look on his face? I felt I was an entirely new person, seen for the first time. It was an invigorating sensation.

The priest asked if any among the group assembled objected to our wedding.

And apparently Lord Ruthven Gowrie did!

"I object," the vampire said.

He was clad in the black of shadows, light vying to escape—sparkling as it were, and as no vampire ought—and he strode down the aisle. Dear Aunt—who had apparently been quite shocked at the man's appearance, for she was transported by the sway of love—began to clutch at her reticule, calling for her smelling salts. Percy, however, did not leap to her aid as would have been his normal behavior. Instead, he took up my bouquet, passing it to me, and laid his hand on his sword.

"Never," the vampire said, "has so high a house, a rank second only to the King, deigned to marry a child so low. With no parents to call her own, she dashes about from one place to another, with no family worth mentioning."

I do believe Uncle tried to object to this, but became afraid when the Lord rotated his head slightly in that direction.

"No family name, no value, no worth. Can I, a Lord of the Realm and Earl, maintain any peace of mind knowing that any number of progeny may



spring forth from the union of a rat and a royal?"

The crowd of Lords and Ladies seemed quite shocked at the sentiment. Perhaps they were confused as to whether they should agree with so high an earl and accept that the mayors and baronets in my family were too lowly born. Perhaps they were mayors and baronets themselves and were afraid of being outed? And perhaps they could still recognize a snob when they saw one?

"And yet," he continued, "my heart isn't so hardened against the Bride that I forget the Bridegroom. Vile heir to that vile family that enslaved my noble lineage, allowing weeds to grow around the throne and bar my ascent. Villainous family, second only to that traitor James the First—" (Aunt quite had a fit at the condemnation of the monarchy!) "—who killed

my brother there before my very eyes. I have come to claim my own! Already is Victoria's son under my dark shadow, as well as some of the vile prattling children spawned by the guests here assembled; so eager to drink, and kiss and sigh and pant. Too many have cropped up in my absence, but you Percy de Longueville, you I know, and you I shall destroy at the fore!"

This speech was going on a little too long for my tastes, and so I unsheathed the wooden stake from my bouquet and lunged at the vampire! Percy drew his sword. The vampire spread his dark shadow, and in an instant in all directions the shadows sprang like wolves onto our monster hunting friends, sitting upon their chests and holding them down under their vicious paws. The guests began to flee!

Ruthven Gowrie wrestled me quite over the



THE MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF LONGUEVILLE.

The marriage of Persues, Duke of Longueville to Miss Philomena Dashwood was solemnized on the Thirteenth of December at the family chapel of Longville Hall. The day was inauspicious, a heavy fog settling in over the city, but enormous multitudes of guests assembled in anticipation of the union many weeks in advance.

His Royal Highness the Prince of the Greyling Arms, and Lord Bevin Makepeace were in attendance upon the Duke as early as a fortnight before the nuptials. -- Duke Winkle Wakefield, Lord Drake Doubleday, the Baron of Kennicot and his wife the Baroness Perdina, Prime Minister Earl Goring, Trade Viceroy Edilson Finder, Sir Huntington Hammerhorn, Captain Sir Edward Corcoran K.C.B, the renowned Mister Manfred and Missus Mayfair Mister, Miss Brunhilde Bamfield and Lady Honey Occularis held a festival for numerous Lords and Ladies for several full days. Many of the guests were unable to attend the wedding ceremony itself due to a ran-tan overcoming the assembled household which caused mass migranes and headaches.

On entering the chapel, the bride, Duchess Philomena, was greeted most sweetly by the sounds of a string quintet and solo harp. The Archbishop, standing at the altar, was approached by the bride and groom as the service commenced. When his Grace came to the words, "If any man can shew any just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak or else hereafter for ever hold his peace," John Ruthven, 3rd Earl Of Gowrie, nearly two-hundred-and-eighty years after his death, appeared at the wedding ceremony and interrupted it most surreptitiously. He overturned a table and soiled two pheasants, while making an alarming speech full of the most detestable sentiments. His shadows began to attack the guests assembled, which drove them right out of the hall. The bride, most righteously outraged, objected. (continued on next page)

DR. PIERCE'S PINK PILLS FOR PALE PEOPLE GIVE SALUTARY IMPULSES TO THE LIVER.

As easy as falling off a log is an old saying. When it was first uttered nobody knows. Nothing is easier, unless it is the taking of a dose of Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. These act like magic. No griping or drenching follows.



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top of poor Aunt and Uncle, straight over to the banquet table where we began to roll about most violently. Why does it seem that I am ever sprawling on top of men during my adventures? One would think I had been raised with improper morals! He pried the stake out of my hand, and so I immediately grabbed some garlic bread in one hand and garlic potatoes in the other and tried to mash them into his pale face. This slackened his grip and I rolled off the table and I ran to Percy, taking his hand.

The vampire was close upon our heels. "I have read about vampires in a book..." Mr. Longville said, panting. A book. Yes. He was once again talking about books and factoids in the middle of fleeing an attacker. I cannot... just impossible!

"We must get to the silver!"

Percy and I began tossing our silver wedding ornaments at the vampire, who kept ducking and smacking them out of the air. I threw a silver pitcher, Percy threw a candlestick, but it seems they had the same effect as tossing hot coals at us would have had. Unless he were immersed, there seemed little point in continuing.

I grabbed the largest crucifix I could, Our Lord and Savior still firmly attached, and charged at the vampire. He caught the cross in his hands through reflex and the cross burst into flames! He managed to take hold of me and wrap my veil around the cross, throwing me over.

Percy slashed at him with his sword, but the vampire was unafraid of being cut. He held the blade with his hand and tore it away. Gowrie seized upon Percy, clawing at his breastplate, moving in to bite his long and beautiful neck!

I was not spent yet. I pulled away from my entanglement, grabbed ahold of my fall-

en bouquet from the floor and smashed the vampire over the head with it. The rose petals caused his skin to sting and burn as if he had been doused in boiling water!

His skin cracked and peeled. I am quite taken aback by my actions then, for I ventured quite near his teeth, grabbing his jaw and shoving the wild roses and hawthorn into his throat!

The vampire began to turn even more pale than he already was! His veins turned black as he stumbled towards the French Door! Suddenly, a light broke through the sky, shining brightly through the window behind him. His shadow moved independently from his body, releasing our friends and fleeing.

I took Percy's hand, he took mine, and together as man and wife we barreled into that monster, knocking him through the balcony door and into the bright, beaming sun.

"It is too bright!" he choked, and cracked, and then seemed to burst into a magical sparkling dust, which floated away on the breeze!

Percy and I waited a moment, and when nothing else seemed like it was going to happen, we turned back to see the wreckage of our wedding. Pews overturned, banquet destroyed, a little portion on the left burning, people struggling to their feet. It was quite a shambles, and would no doubt go down in history as one of the most outrageous weddings ever beheld.

We sat down together on a bench to watch Brunhilde throw a vase full of flowers and water on the fire to drench it.

"Well," said Percy Longville. "Here we are, safe at last, Miss Dashwood."

"Oh, please," I said, gently correcting him with a smile. "Do call me Missus."

THE END



Thank you for reading!

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GUIDE TO HUNTING
MONSTERS

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The hunt is on! The beautiful and oblivious Philomena Dashwood joins a world-wide Monster Hunting Tour in hopes of finding adventure. However, she refuses to give up any of her finery or opinions. After a seance gone wrong, the angry ghost of Esme Gorey attacks, and Dashwood comes to the rescue, but one adventure leads into the next, and soon Philomena Dashwood is rushing off to save the missing village children from a witch in the wilderness. The thrills continue when she faces off with a cursed mechanical mummy, and later is whisked away into the sky by a mystical Genie. Along with her new friends, Brunhilde Bamfield and Percy Longville, Philomena Dashwood embarks on an epic odyssey through the realms of fairy tales and monsters.



A STEAMPUNK GUIDE TO HUNTING MONSTERS
VOLUME TWO

The adventure continues! Philomena Dashwood encounters a series of dangerous shipwrecks, monsters, and threats to her woolen skirts, but perhaps the most terrifying adventure of all is that she must contend with her throng of admiring suitors. If that wasn't bad enough, Dashwood must deal with a revolt of automatons aboard an airship, face the horror of a zombie attack aboard a locomotive of the living dead, encounter pirates who have unwittingly unleashed a blob, infiltrate an insane asylum to save the life of her friend Percy, and prevent the Were-beast of the Wild West from destroying a small American town.

Steampunk Fashion, Photography and Fiction combine in this serialized steampunk fantasy photography magazine by artist Tyson Vick. This illustrated tour de force combines steampunk fairy tales and monster stories with the visual aspect of a graphic novel. Each volume compiles chapters from the free online serial version. Collect all four volumes to read the full story of Miss Philomena Dashwood and her adventures in *A Steampunk Guide to Hunting Monsters*.



**A STEAMPUNK GUIDE TO HUNTING MONSTERS
VOLUME THREE**

The danger escalates! Our heroine, Philomena Dashwood, is separated from the monster hunting tour when she is kidnapped by slavers in the wild west and sold to a bridge troll. She must use her wits to outsmart the beast so that she can return to her traveling companions. One adventure blends into another, and soon she must fend off an attack of aquatic arachnids, unravel the tragic history of the ghost of a Geisha, and enter the frightening monster prison of the world-famous monster hunter Lu Yan where the tour is stalked by a Werewolf that wanders within! If this wasn't enough, Philomena must learn to grow in her personal relations too, helping Brunhilde deal with her demonic husband and becoming more accustomed to the friendship of the ever-present Percy.



**A STEAMPUNK GUIDE TO HUNTING MONSTERS
VOLUME FOUR**

All comes to a head in this exciting finale! Things take a turn for the worse when every monster in Lu Yan's prison is unleashed, but is it too late for Philomena to finally accept her growing feelings for Percy? As the tour finally heads home, she encounters the most elusive of all monsters upon hearing the yowl of the Yeti. When a sea monster from fathoms below Venice threatens to destroy the city, Philomena must find a mate for the monster, and perhaps one for herself as well. Finally, Philomena joins Percy as they contend with a Vampire who has declared his own private war on our brave heroes. This final volume brings Philomena's journey to a satisfying close in this hilarious and action-packed ending.

A STEAMPUNK GUIDE TO HUNTING MONSTERS
2017
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 PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE NOVEL

TYSON VICK, photo and author BOZEMAN, MONTANA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Monster Hunters

Philomena Dashwood	Miss BRIN MERKLEY
Percy Longville, Duc du Longueville	Mr. JEREMY FORNIER HANLON
Captain Sir Huntington Hammerhorn	Mr. CAENAAN HATFIELD
Mrs. Brunhilde Bamfield	Miss LIZZIE WEBB
The Mayor of Venice	Mr. DOMENICO CIANCIOTTO
Clothilde Vandenklamp	Mrs. ANGELA CONRAD
Mrs. Mayfair Mister	Mrs. NATASHA OSTREM
Lord Hargrave (The Archeologist)	Mr. MARK AUSTIN
Cyprien Lehman (The thief turned Pirate King)	Mr. BOWEN KINSEY
Thunderboy	Mr. ALBERTO MALCOM
Drake Winchester (The Cowboy)	Mr. TREVOR KEANAN IVANICH
Lu Yan (Famous Monster Hunter)	Mr. DEVON DIEU
Lu Yan's Wife	Miss SIERRA AMICK
Perdina Meeks	Miss SHAWNA L. DURNEY

Supporting Cast

Middle Eastern Maiden	Miss MYYAH WINCHELL
Steampunk Horse	SOPHIE
Honey Occularus	Miss NIKKI ICE
Miss Perkibaum	Miss LEAH STEMBLER
Vampire Victim Male... ..	Mr. JAYDON BROWN
Vampire Victim Female... ..	Miss MEGHAN MELANDER

Monsters

The Ghost of Esme Gorey...	...	...	...	...	Miss KAT STEPHENS
Baba Yaga (The Witch) ...	...	...	...	...	Miss LIZZIE WEBB
Queen Hetepheres (The Mummy)	...	...	...	...	Miss KAT STEPHENS
Genie ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. JACOB FEDERSPIEL-SMITH
Zombies }	...	...	...	...	Miss CATEY LOCKHART
					Mr. SCOOB DECKER
					Miss JOSIE BARETTA
					Mr. BRANDON DAVIS
Pirates ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. ALBERTO MALCOM
Mad Doctor ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. JACOB FEDERSPIEL-SMITH
Inmates }	...	...	...	...	Mr. TREVIN BAKER
					Miss CHANTELL BURY
					Mrs. SADIE CASSAVAUGH
					Mr. SCOTTIE STEMBLER
					Mrs. SARAH SUTA
Aaron Frew (The Skinwalker)...	...	...	...	...	Mr. ALBERTO MALCOM
Ahrimanes (The Demon) ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. KOLTEN SCHNELL
The Ghost of the Geisha ...	...	...	...	...	Miss MEILYN SAYCHOW
Banshee ...	...	...	...	...	Miss AMBER VOWELL
Ghost Sea Witch ...	...	...	...	...	Miss NIKKI ICE
Wendigo ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. MIKHAIL FARBROOK
Yeti ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. JACOB FEDERSPIEL-SMITH
Sir Ruthven Gowrie (The Vampire) ...	...	...	...	...	Mr. JUSTEN PHELPS

CREW

“A Steampunk Guide to Hunting Monsters” is written and photographed by Mr. Tyson Vick.

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