

AN
ELEMENTAL
DETECTIVES
MYSTERY

THE CASE OF THE CHAOS MONSTER

PATRICE
LAWRENCE

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL KELLAM,
MARILYN ESTHER CHEE AND LUKE ASHFORTH

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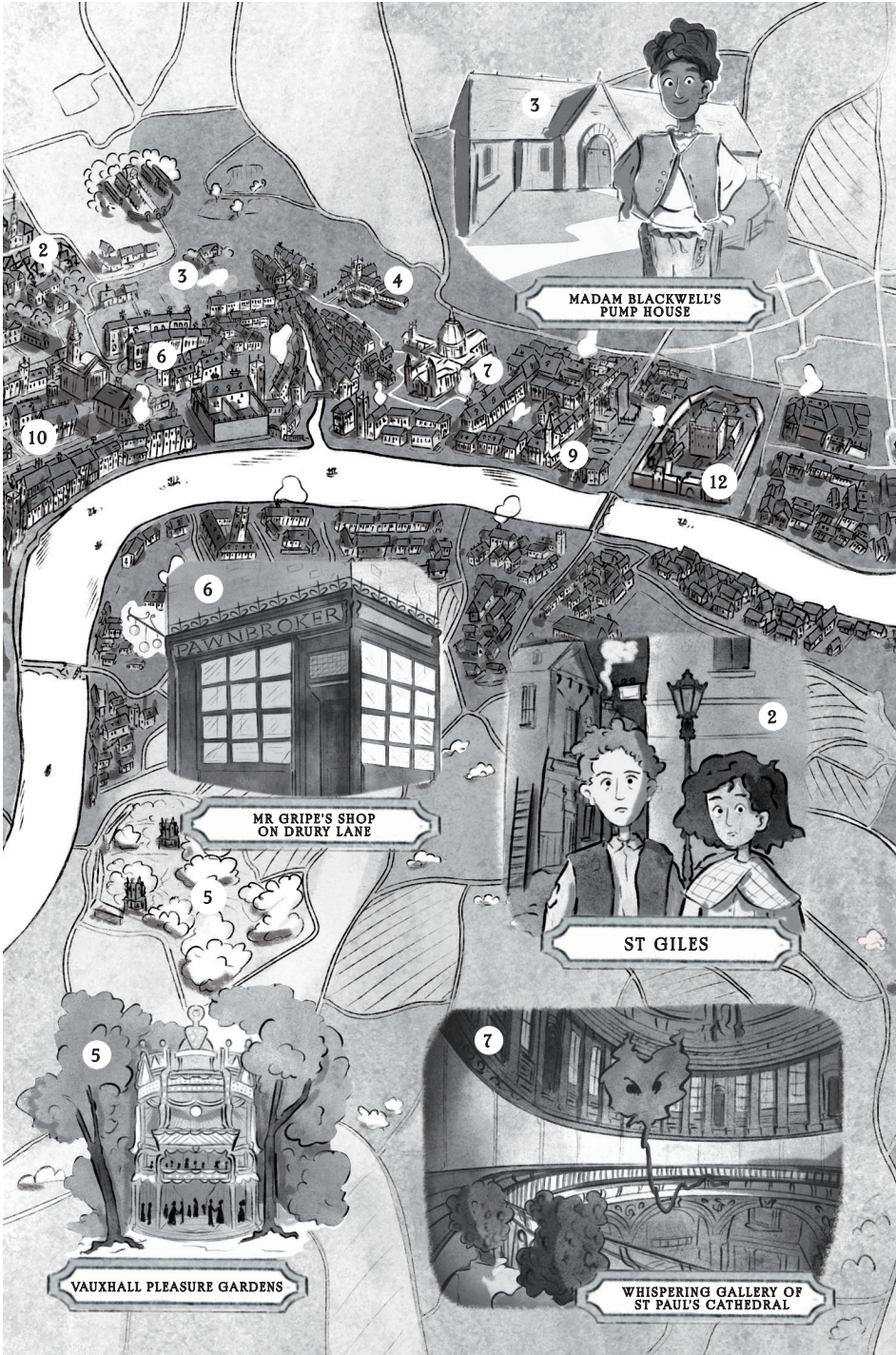


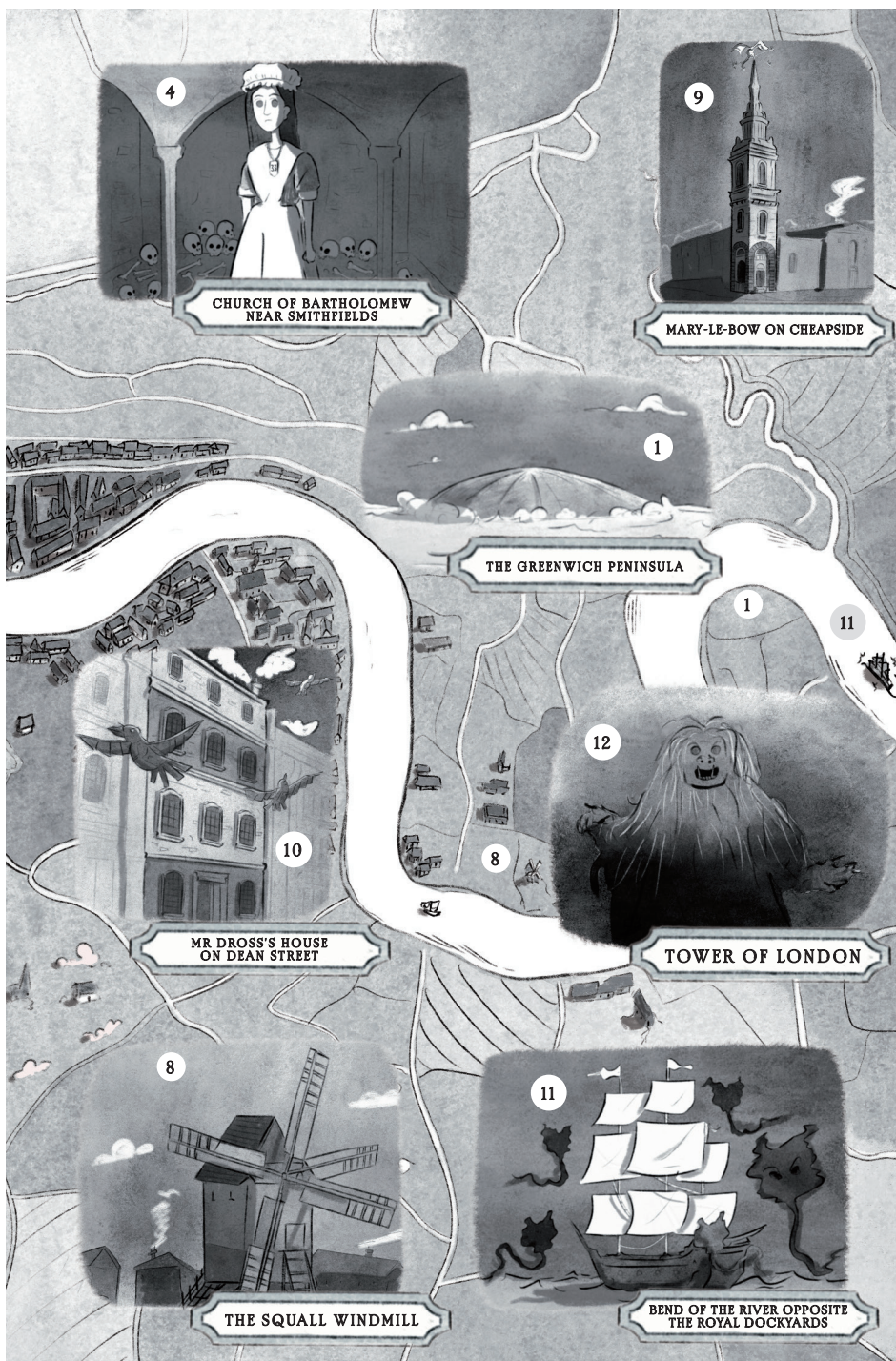
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THE STOWAWAY

No one could see the stowaway unless it wanted them to. It was a Fumi, an elemental spirit made of air. It could draw in smoke and other vapours to give itself a shape. Then, it had a short thin body like a matchstick and a head like a blacksmith's anvil. The Fumis in Salzburg, where it lived, chose this shape as it gave their faces a strong jaw, just like the Solid human rulers of their empire. The Fumi's eyes, when it wanted to have eyes, were simple holes in the smokiness, its mouth a twist of darkness. But it could also be completely invisible, with only the faint scents of mashed malt and fried chicken giving away its presence.



The stowaway was forbidden from leaving Salzburg. The Fumi Elders said that it was too young. They promised – well, said “perhaps” – that in a century or so, if it showed enough skill, it could join the Fumi Sail Bloaters that powered the empire’s sailing ships across the oceans with a supernatural power. That way it would see more of the world.

But the stowaway didn’t want to wait a hundred years. And it certainly didn’t want to be a Sail Bloater and take soldiers to fight wars. The stowaway loved music. It wanted to be a Music Weaver. It wanted to waft through the city’s churches and concert halls and, one day, even the court of the Holy Roman Empire, lifting and smoothing and widening the music, drawing it into every nook and corner, making it perfect for every listener.

The Music Weavers only took the best apprentices. The stowaway had been given one chance to show them what it could do. Its magic had been too strong and too eager. It had almost blown a double bass out of the interview room window, along with the musician playing it. The trumpets had exploded in the Royal Court’s music room two miles from there and the choir in the Salzburg Cathedral had fainted away. The stowaway had been told to never return.

But perhaps ... perhaps there were other places





where it could work with music. But how could it learn about them? And even more importantly, how could it reach them?

And then, suddenly it was in luck.

The stowaway had been watching a particular family for a while now. They were a family full of music. Sometimes, when the little boy and his older sister were practising their instruments, it would let the harmonies rock it backwards and forwards until it felt like it was part of the music itself. When it was feeling furious with the Elders, it would drift towards the family's apartment hoping for music to soothe it.

Then, the stowaway heard them talk about leaving Salzburg to travel. They talked about it for months, but at last everything was packed – clothes, instruments, pen and paper for composing music and writing letters.

At the last moment, the Fumi stowed itself next to the tin ballerina in a small wooden music box. The girl in the family loved this music box. When she opened the lid, the ballerina twirled and a tune tinkled. She made a special pouch to carry it and wrapped the music box over and over again in a scarf before burying it in a case. Shut tight in the music box, the stowaway dissolved into the red velvet lining that cradled the ballerina and slept.

When the stowaway woke up, they were no longer





travelling. This was so exciting! Salzburg and the bad-tempered Elders must be far away now. All it had to do was wait patiently for someone to open the music box so it could look around. Surely there were Music Weavers here that it could make friends with. Perhaps it could practise its magic and go back and impress the Elders.

It waited. Where was the girl? Why hadn't she opened the music box?

The stowaway longed to see outside. It wouldn't hurt to puff out just a little, would it? The box would open just a tiny bit, enough for it to peer through. One quick look...

It loosened itself from the folds of the velvet and drew itself together. Then...

Puff!

The lid flew back and the ballerina shot upright then fell. The box croaked a couple of notes and creaked to a stop.

What ... what had the stowaway done?

A door opened and the girl ran towards the music box, gasping as she saw how the ballerina had toppled sideways.

"Who did this?" she cried. "Who broke my music box?"

Tears poured down her face. The stowaway was





heartbroken. It hadn't meant to break anything, especially something so precious.

The girl's mother said, "Don't worry, Nannerl. There must be someone in London who can mend it for you."

No, the stowaway thought. *I broke it! I will mend it.*

It tried and it tried, but it couldn't fix the tiny metal cogs and hammers that made the sounds. Music made from just metal and wood didn't respond to its magic. Music Weavers wove their magic where Solid humans sang and played their instruments. For years, they studied the vibrations of the human voice box and the thousands of ways that hands, feet and lips created rhythm and harmonies. Human music was the only music that they understood, and they understood it well.

The stowaway had learned something of this when it had studied for the apprenticeship. It knew what it had to do. If it couldn't mend the hammers and cogs, it would find some real music, some human music and draw just a little of it away. If this was a *music* box, couldn't it hold all types of music? All it needed was the stowaway to waft music into it.

The stowaway crept away from the music box and pressed itself against the window. It was light outside and, not too far away, a bugle was sounding. That was where the stowaway would go first. Fixing the music box should be easy and take no time at all.

