

MONSTER OF MAELSTROM

"An Ill Wind"

by

Lauren Henderson

**EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT**

Lightning STRIKES. An 18th-century frigate ship CRASHES through a wave --

**EXT. MORGEN'S SHIP - CONTINUOUS**

-- as the CREW on board scrambles to unravel a large throw net. This is the *VICTORIA*, a fearsome pirate vessel. Captain MORGEN PIERCE - 30's, charming, never felt fear a day in her life - stands on the upper deck. She barks orders down at the crew below.

MORGEN

Don't just stand there trembling!  
Hook the net! She's comin' back up  
off the port bow!

The pirates drag the net to the ship's left side and attach it to a catapult-like machine. A low RUMBLE, then --

A massive sea serpent BURSTS through the water: the MONSTER OF MAELSTROM. It hisses as it glides through the sea.

MORGEN (CONT'D)

Now!

One of the sailors pulls down a lever and the net FLIES through the air. It catches onto the monster's head. SHRIEEEEK. The monster flails as it tries to throw the net off. Dives back underwater. Morgen leans forward on the railing.

MORGEN (CONT'D)

Barwick! She's turned around, ready  
the cannons!

BARWICK - a loyal quartermaster who's almost too old for this job - nods and opens the hatch door to the gun deck. Leans down and yells at the GUNMEN.

BARWICK

Reload now! Aim abeam to starboard!

**INT. MORGEN'S SHIP - GUN DECK - CONTINUOUS**

The gunmen race to reload the cannons. They all yell frantic orders at each other, some open the gunports while others run out the guns.

**EXT. MORGEN'S SHIP - CONTINUOUS**

Thunder ROARS in the dark skies above. Morgen waits --

The monster BREACHES out of the water.

MORGEN

Fire!

The cannons FIRE at the monster. It shrieks and RAMS into the hull of the ship. Everyone on deck steadies themselves as the ship rolls in the other direction.

The monster shakes the net off and dives down. It rapidly circles the ship and forms a massive WHIRLPOOL. The crew members all grab something to hang onto as the bow of the ship dips forward.

Morgen rushes to a HARPOON CANNON near the back of the ship. Loads and aims at the monster, which now towers over them.

She exhales, focuses on getting the perfect shot.

Morgen shoots and the spear flies through the air. It PIERCES the monster's skin. SCREEEEEECH. The monster thrashes in pain.

MORGEN (CONT'D)

Yes! Right in the heart!

Barwick runs up to her. Looks at the monster, terrified.

BARWICK

Captain, why hasn't she fallen?

The wind picks up and the waves BEAT down on the ship as the raging storm worsens. The monster's yellow eyes GLOW.

MORGEN

...My aim was off. Dammit.

They share a look and run for cover. The monster LUNGES at the ship.

**EXT. BILBAO HARBOR - DAY**

A merchant brigantine sways in a lively Spanish port. The CREW carries cargo off the ship and onto the wharf. ELIAS DE AVILA - mid 20's, driven, chip on his shoulder - hands off a powder keg to one of the harbor's MERCHANTS. They stamp the kegs and crates, take inventory.

Elias walks off and takes out a STRANGE MAP. Looks down at it, then to the captain of the ship, HECTOR DE AVILA - 50's, rugged, naturally commands respect. He laughs and speaks with an ELDERLY TRADER.

ISEULT Ó MORDHA - late 20's, relaxed, opportunistic - sneaks up behind Elias and nudges him.

ISEULT  
Just go on and ask him.

ELIAS  
He seems awfully busy...

She pushes him towards Hector.

ISEULT  
*Right.* Come on, Elias, no time to waste.

Hector notices them approach and turns.

HECTOR  
Is something wrong?

Iseult looks expectantly at Elias. He fidgets with the map in his hands.

ELIAS  
Father, I was wondering if I could speak with you about-

ELDERLY TRADER  
Hector, I need you to sign off on these exports.

HECTOR  
Of course. One moment.  
(to Elias)  
Let's discuss this at home, son.  
Just keep bringing those barrels out.

ELIAS  
But-

Hector shoots him a look: *not now*. He waves Elias off and turns back to the trader.

HECTOR  
Right, where were we?

Elias sighs, walks toward the ship. Iseult follows

ELIAS

This is going to go terribly.

ISEULT

You can't put this off any longer,  
Elias. Make him hear you.

**INT./EXT. SEA CAVE - DAY**

Small waves lap on the shore. SERA - 20's, scarred, animal instincts - lays unconscious in the water, dressed in tattered clothes. She slowly wakes and looks at her hands. Furrows her brows.

SERA

...What?

Her eyes widen. She sits up, clutches her body.

SERA (CONT'D)

No- no!!

She stands and paces, examines herself and the cave around her. Her movements are aggressive and awkward. She looks down at her shirt and sees BLOOD seeping through, right where her heart is. Groans.

SERA (CONT'D)

I have to fix this...

She hears distant CHATTER and RINGING BELLS. Turns toward the cave entrance and wanders out.

She looks over to the nearby harbor. Determined.

**INT. SEASIDE HOME - DAY**

Hector and Elias enter their old home. It's disorganized and feels lived in, but strangely empty.

HECTOR

Ha! This place brings back  
memories, doesn't it?

He nudges Elias, who gives him a weak smile. Hector walks further into the house, careful to step over their scattered belongings. Elias lingers near the doorway.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

What was it you wanted to talk  
about, son?

He reaches a cluttered table and sorts through old paperwork.

ELIAS

Well, my apprenticeship is ending soon-

HECTOR

Has it been seven years already?

ELIAS

...Yes, it has. And I've learned a great deal from you, Father. But I feel my opportunities on board have...stagnated.

HECTOR

You want real responsibilities, aye? You've always had a, uh, *culinary talent*, I think you'd make a fine cook. Or perhaps I'll send you down to the gun deck, as long as I can trust you not to fire at birds again.

ELIAS

I- I'm not asking for a promotion. I want to do important work, truly make something of myself. Save the high seas.

Hector stops. Gives Elias a long, hard look.

HECTOR

Are you telling me you intend on...monster hunting?

Hector lets out a hearty laugh.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Oh, my boy! You can't be serious!

Elias looks away.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Oh, you are serious.

Hector grabs a few papers, walks to Elias. Puts a hand on his shoulder.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Elias. I truly do care for you. But look at you!

(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You're hardly a man at all, and you wish to set off alone and captain a hunting ship?

ELIAS

I wouldn't be alone. The hunter's guild would provide a crew and a ship, and I'd bring Iseult with me-

HECTOR

The *last* thing you need is that woman giving you more insane ideas.

ELIAS

Father-

HECTOR

My answer is no, Elias. You're not ready. You wouldn't survive a day, and as troublesome as you can be, I'm not losing you.

Hector pushes past him, heads through the door. Elias sighs.

#### **EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY**

Sera explores a lively market in the center of the town. The merchants sell a variety of goods: spices, textiles, precious metals. She looks curiously at the people running around her, but they are wary of her.

She looks down at her bloody shirt. Sees a DISTRACTED MERCHANT with colorful garments on display. Waits for the right moment, then steals a linen shirt and pulls it over her head. Keeps moving.

She's entranced by a variety of GOLD JEWELRY PIECES throughout the marketplace. Contemplates for a moment, then swipes them one by one. Puts on the necklaces and bracelets as she walks.

Sera looks to the side at an armorer's shop. Slows her pace. A HARPOON CANNON is displayed in the front window.

She stares at her reflection.

#### **INT. ARMORER'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS**

Sera enters, a bit uneasy. The shop is filled with supplies and tools for monster hunters: firearms, blades, nets, heavy armor. She roams through the aisles, stops at a wall covered in bounty posters. Front and center --

INSERT: BOUNTY WALL

The Monster of Maelstrom. A detailed illustration of a sea serpent, with a prize of 100,000 *pesetas* to kill and capture it. Requested by "A connoisseur of inhuman remains."

BACK TO THE ARMORER'S SHOP

Sera glares at the poster. Sunlight shines through the window and catches her yellow eyes.

**EXT. HECTOR'S SHIP - UPPER DECK - DAY**

Hector and Elias return. Hector goes to check on the crew, Elias walks over to Iseult.

ISEULT

Well? Did he approve?

Elias shakes his head.

ELIAS

He thinks it's the most foolish idea I've ever had.

ISEULT

Damnit. We need his endorsement to join the guild. What are we meant to do now?

MORGEN (O.S.)

Captain De Avila!

The crew falls silent. They turn to watch their uninvited guests cross the gangplank onto the ship.

Morgen, Barwick, and JOSEPH - a burly gunner - walk onto the upper deck. Hector takes a few steps forward. Glares daggers at Morgen. She smirks, takes a bow.

MORGEN (CONT'D)

Permission to board?

HECTOR

Morgen Pierce. You look worse for wear.

MORGEN

I could say the same to you.

HECTOR

Did I not warn you to stay away from Bilbao?



MORGEN

Oh, I'm sure you did, Hector, but you must understand- it was crucial for us to dock here!

HECTOR

Crucial, was it? And why is that, exactly?

She approaches him, puts an arm around his shoulder. He tenses up.

MORGEN

Why are you so combative? I come to you now with no ill intentions, Hector, as a *friend*.

She lets go, saunters around him. Eyes the crew members.

MORGEN (CONT'D)

I was wondering if any of you have seen a strange woman lurking around town. She's terribly injured and we just want to help her.

Elias and Iseult share a curious look.

HECTOR

Have you got a prisoner on the run?

MORGEN

Something like that.

HECTOR

Well, none of my sailors have seen her.

MORGEN

Are you sure?

HECTOR

I'm certain. Terribly sorry I can't be of more help.

Morgen squints at him, sighs. Puts a hand over her heart.

MORGEN

Well, if you find her, please do not hesitate to let me know.

She leaves, Barwick and Joseph follow behind. Hector lets out a sigh of relief.

**INT. ARMORER'S SHOP - DAY**

Sera continues to examine the poster. The SHOPKEEPER, who sharpens a knife behind the counter, notices her.

SHOPKEEPER

The Monster of Maelstrom. She's a mighty thing. One of the Great Beasts.

Sera turns, slowly approaches him.

SERA

She seems tough to kill.

SHOPKEEPER

Aye. If you were hoping to claim that bounty, though, you're out of luck. I hear Captain Pierce finally took her down.

SERA

(to self)  
Captain Pierce...

SHOPKEEPER

But if you're preparing for another hunting expedition, you've come to the right place. How can I help you?

SERA

Well...are you familiar with the moon cycles?

SHOPKEEPER

...I'm sorry?

SERA

I need to know when the next total lunar eclipse is. It's urgent.

He eyes her up and down. Puts down the knife.

SHOPKEEPER

I'm not familiar, but I know there's an astronomer's society up in Hastings. They might be able to help you.

SERA

That's great! Um, where exactly is Hastings?

He pulls out a MONSTER MAP, points to a city on the south side of England.

SERA (CONT'D)

Mhm...and where are we right now?

The shopkeeper furrows his brows. Points to a town in northern Spain.

SERA (CONT'D)

Right. Of course. That's not a terrible voyage. Would you mind if I borrowed-

She reaches for the map and he SNATCHES it away.

SHOPKEEPER

This is far too valuable to give away.

SERA

Why? It's just a map.

SHOPKEEPER

A *monster* map. Charts with the precise locations of every beast in the sea are very hard to come by. And costly.

SERA

Can't be that expensive, the locations are all wrong.

SHOPKEEPER

Excuse me?

She gestures to the various monster illustrations.

SERA

All of these monsters are in the wrong place. This guy's moved way down south, that one was hunted down years ago- there should be four little squids right here! Anyone sailing with this map is gonna get themselves killed. I just wanna see if it has the-

SHOPKEEPER

How do you know all of this? Why *exactly* do you need to know about the lunar eclipse?

He points to her chest with the knife. The blood SEEPS THROUGH again...

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)  
And why are you wounded, girl?

Sera finally picks up on his suspicion.

SERA  
...Ya know, I should be on my way.  
Thanks for the help!

She hurries out of the shop. He watches her leave, thinks. Walks to a room in the back.

**INT. ARMORER'S SHOP - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A cramped room for inventory logging. The shopkeeper enters and sits at a desk, hastily writes a LETTER. A TIRED MAN sits nearby. He looks up from his stock logs.

TIRED MAN  
What's happened?

SHOPKEEPER  
Morgen didn't finish the job. *She's here.*

The tired man's eyes widen. He walks to the shopkeeper and watches him write.

---END OF SAMPLE---