

THE LAND WHALE MURDERSChapter 12: Ambergris for the Amber Mill

AUTHOR

Eugene and Anjus have been drugged and dragged to Castle Clinton by the Blow Hole Gang. They're tied up in a sitting room which has been well appointed with Federalist style furniture. Pirate Penny relaxes in a chaise lounge. One of the Goons plays a small squeezebox.

12.1:

Music from the Goon. He finishes with a flourish.

GOON 5

I call that "I'm gonna stab ya Martha, parenthesis, cause I love you so."

PIRATE PENNY

Delightful. And now to my prisoners! Eugene, Anjus - I'm sure by now you've figured it all out ...

A beat nothing.

PIRATE PENNY (cont.)

Um? Hello?

GOON 2

I think they're still knocked out by dart juice.

PIRATE PENNY

Oh, they're not ...

GOON 1

They're breathing.

PIRATE PENNY

Good. Good. So ... um should we wake them up?

GOON 3

They say it's bad to wake someone from a drugged stupor.

PIRATE PENNY

Is that true? I read that but I wasn't sure if that was true.

GOON 1

I wouldn't risk it ...

PIRATE PENNY

Well ... hmmm. Let's just give them a minute then ... play another song.

GOON 5

I only know the one.

PIRATE PENNY

Play it again, Goon.

GOON plays the squeezebox.

AUTHOR

As Pirate Penny waits, let's go nearby where Big Stick is slowly making his way toward Castle Clinton.

12.2:

BIG STICK

Tumble, jump, hop, tumble, punch, punch!

SHAINDEL

Whoa watch it.

BIG STICK

What are you doing here!

SHAINDEL

Trying to get out of the rain. Also I have to save Eugene and Anjus.

BIG STICK

That's what I'm doing! Notice my new custom made action poncho! Water you have met your match!

SHAINDEL

The rain is one thing, but the humidity is frizzing up my hair, let me tell you.

BIG STICK

Hair today gone tomorrow - is what Eugene and Anjus will be if I don't stop those Blow Holers!

SHAINDEL

You want we should team up?

BIG STICK

The Big Stick works alone, Almost Officer Doubles.

SHAINDEL

How did you know my name was Almost Officer Doubles and by 'name' I mean nickname that I don't like because I prefer Shaindel but no one seems to care what I want ...

BIG STICK

Well bully for you!

SHAINDEL

Bully nothing! I'm sick of you boys getting in my way!

BIG STICK

You're in my way!

SHAINDEL

Fine Mr. Stick, you take the left side of Castle Clinton and I take the right side.

BIG STICK

Oh sure *you* get the right side, the best side.

SHAINDEL

Then take the right side -

BIG STICK

Oh you'd like that wouldn't you!

SHAINDEL

I don't care you *farkakhte-*

BIG STICK

How about this! We both take the right side and that way no one gets the left side!

SHAINDEL

Fine!

BIG STICK

Fine!

SHAINDEL

Fine!

BIG STICK

So glad you're fine!

SHAINDEL

I'm finer than my friend Rachel Fienberg who runs Fienberg's Fine china burgs, which makes little cityscapes out of fine china!

BIG STICK

Those sound nice!

SHAINDEL

They are!

BIG STICK

Fine!

SHAINDEL

FINE!

AUTHOR

And they continued separately together toward Castle Clinton. But back inside the poison was wearing off and Eugene and Anjus were coming around.

12.3:

EUGENE

Ooh. Huh? Tied up? Again? This is happening too often. I chaff easily.

ANJUS

Ow my head, what happened?

EUGENE

I'm not sure, but I'm still sleepy. You ever have one of those getting knocked out by a blowdart naps where you wake up and you're even more tired than before? That's me right now.

PIRATE PENNY

Enough! Silence!

ANJUS

Pirate Penny!

PIRATE PENNY

Indeed. And I'm sure by now you've figured out my whole plan.

EUGENE

That I have. It all begin the night of Hiram's murder. He was stabbed with a sword fish. But how do you sneak a fish without anyone noticing? You knew, because you're in the political loop. The big smoked herring party at the Norwegian embassy. The air hangs thick and greasy with the smell of herring driving all the feral cats into a feral frenzy. Between the smell of herring and the cute cats all running around people won't smell or see the swordfish. But what about hear? Well you're the type to be on the board of music appreciation societies. You used your sway to make sure that THE SAME NIGHT as Hiram's Murder there was the brass band trumpet off. No one could hear a thing except the tooting of those annoying, annoying horns. So using the "music" to cover your steps, the herring smoke to cover your Potomac stink, the cats to distract, you gave him the old stabby-stabby. Then there was Lubbins, but you and he have a long history, because he helped you cover up the murder of President Garfield and pin it on that sap Guiteau. Your little cabal didn't want an ambidextrous president. Lubbins wanted to go public - take it to the press - what do they call the press: 'the tentacles of information.' So you gave him a tentacle party to the face - via octopus! A poetic death ... which brings us to Maryanne. She was a poet, she could see your game and her cute-as-a-button nose could smell the herring stink on your clothes. So you smackerled her to shut her up before she similiated your metaphor right to jail. Yes! Expo facto, habeas pocus. It was a nice web you wove wasn't it? But now it's soured, right Former First Lady "Lemonade" Lucy Webb Hayes!

PIRATE PENNY

What?

ANJUS

She's not former first lady Lucy Hayes.

EUGENE

She's not?

PIRATE PENNY

No.

EUGENE

Oh.

ANJUS

But I do know who you are ...

(Beat.)

I should have realized it the whole time. The subtle clues, the deft power to shape events. Of course you'd have a literary bent. But you got sloppy - caviar doesn't come from a mackerel it comes from a sturgeon! A sturgeon is a fish. A fish comes from the sea. Sea. The letter C. C for crime. And what is this country's greatest crime?

EUGENE

Napki-

ANJUS

Slavery.

EUGENE

Slavery. Slavery.

ANJUS

And you hate slavery, don't you Pirate Penny AKA Louisa May Alcott author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*!

PIRATE PENNY

What? Really? Alcott died last year!

ANJUS

I hadn't heard ...

PIRATE PENNY

And she wrote *Little Women* not *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

ANJUS

I'm not really a fiction reader, so ...

PIRATE PENNY

This is really I mean. Wow, you two are terrible detectives.

EUGENE

Who's closer?

PIRATE PENNY

I don't even know how to begin to answer that. Here hold on.

She takes off her mask.

EUGENE

She's taking off her mask! It's - Maryanne!

MARYANNE

Yes it is.

ANJUS

You sound really different with that mask on.

MARYANNE

It kind of pinches my nose. But I like how it strikes fear into the hearts of do-gooders, so tradeoffs ...

EUGENE

But you were ... you were smackerled!

MARYANNE

I set up quite the performance and then vanished out the secret back door that Walt Whitman had installed so he could have a secret "hands on" meeting with Oscar Wilde when he visited America.

ANJUS

You killed your own brother!

MARYANNE

What do you care! You broke his heart!

ANJUS

I can't help my -

MARYANNE

Perversion! Killing him was the hardest thing I ever did. I loved him, but he was weak. There can be no half measures. When I began Project Land Whale he was my biggest supporter ... but he got scared. That very night he called you all together ...

12.4:

Flashback Hiram's Brownstone. He's with Maryanne.

HIRAM

You have to stop this!

MARYANNE

You promised me!

HIRAM

I thought it would be rich and sweet like the idea of fudge. But it turned out to be a giant mistake - like actually eating fudge.

MARYANNE

We're well past fudge!

HIRAM

I am calling a meeting of the Four Elementals! I will bring it up for a vote - a binding vote!

MARYANNE

You dare use Robert's Rules of Order against me! You demand order in a world without order!

HIRAM

And what would you do? You're a hothead hothouse poetess who knows more about ankle fashions than science!

MARYANNE

How dare you!

HIRAM

You will do as I say!

MARYANNE

This is bigger than us! I've already recruited a gang ...

HIRAM

Just dump them like day old dumplings.

MARYANNE

We shall not dump early! I dump when I dump and I will dump long after our dump date is done! I will not be thwarted!

HIRAM

Please! You won't stop me stopping you.

MARYANNE

I will.

HIRAM

What are you going to do? Kill me?

MARYANNE

If it comes to that.

HIRAM

And then what? Create a series of assassinations like razor sharp star fish and exploding anchovies!

MARYANNE

If it comes to that!

HIRAM

And fake your own death?

MARYANNE

If I must!

HIRAM

Fanciful nonsense! Project Land Whale ends tonight! Send out the invitations to the meeting and bake the cookies!

MARYANNE

I'll bake them, but the secret ingredient won't be love - it'll be spite! And some nutmeg.

Flashback ends returns to the present.

12.5:

ANJUS

Too much nutmeg ...

MARYANNE

There's never too much nutmeg! And now he's dead and soon you shall be as well!

ANJUS

So all that fighting with the Cowabungus Corporation was just a cover?

MARYANNE

No, no the Cowabungus Corporation will destroy poetry. But that doesn't concern me anymore. I'm beyond poetry now.

EUGENE

So five paragraph essays?

MARYANNE

NEVER!

ANJUS

I have just one last question -

EUGENE

What exactly is headcheese?

ANJUS

No. What is Project Land Whale?

MARYANNE

I'm an excellent writer, so why tell you when I can ... show you!
Goons pull back the curtains!

AUTHOR

They pulled back the curtain revealing a window looking into the large central atrium of Castle Clinton. And what they saw filled them with wonder ... and dread. There, tied down with ropes, was a giant living sperm whale. But instead of flippers it had four giant legs which pawed the ground. Various goons were scrubbing and hosing down the beast. It let out a deep moan.

ANJUS

Lubbins' missing whale ...

EUGENE

But you got legs on it and it's on land it's like some sort of Terrestrial Cetacean! Or Ground Leviathan! Those are the only possible names for it -

MARYANNE

Yes Project Land Whale!

EUGENE

Or that.

ANJUS

But how?

MARYANNE

Oh I had to kidnap and force the greatest surgeons, taxidermists, seamstresses, tailors and more to stitch and graft it. And then I used the Frankenstein Society of North Bergen New Jersey and the Underground League of Unethical Scientists to tweak and perfect it. It's not financially prudent making a giant walking beast, but that's what trust funds are for.

ANJUS

But why?

MARYANNE

But why? But because I will show the world that whales won't die easily! Not this fellow! Its rampage will instill a fear and want to leave whales alone - they'll be too afraid to anger them again. But how? Because how I pinned a note to its fluke saying; "this is not a fluke, if you hunt us, we hunt you. Love, the whales."

EUGENE

Damn that's fool proof.

ANJUS

But if it destroys everyone then what's the point!

MARYANNE

I've created this beast with one weakness! Crude oil! That's the only thing that will kill it. That or if something plugs up it's blowhole it'll explode - but the oil! The oil is the key! I've hidden caches of oil around the city - on my signal my Goons will destroy the Land Whale with black oil! And then everyone will see that we can just use the oil beneath our feet. We don't need whale oil! Fossil fuels don't hurt anyone! And then industry will turn to natural gas and oil and the whales will be saved! The environment will be saved!

ANJUS

Oil they get from your family's Texas Ranch?

MARYANNE

If that happens it happens.

GOON 4 rushes in.

GOON 4

Boss! The Land Whale is straining against its ropes!

MARYANNE

I must calm him lest he break free too early!

EUGENE

How do you calm that thing?

MARYANNE

The only thing that rests his angry soul is when I sing sea-shanties directly into his blowhole.

ANJUS

We will stop you! He doesn't even look that tough.

MARYANNE

Not yet but see this beaker? It has a serum that will react with his spermaceti imbuing him with power never before seen! It's quite impressive! But for now I must calm him.

(To Goon 2)

Watch them until I return, I plan to keel haul them myself.

GOON 2

Yes Pirate Penny!

ANJUS

You're insane!

GOON 2

Me?

ANJUS

No, her!

MARYANNE

Perhaps, but only one of us will be ground up as chum and fed to the beast!

GOON 2

Me?

MARYANNE

No, her! Goons with me!

GOON 2

Yes Pirate Penny!

MARYANNE

No! Not you, I told you to stay!

GOON 2

Oh right.

MARYANNE

You know what, I don't trust you. You come with me, you stay.

GOON 1

Yes, Pirate Penny!

MARYANNE

Now to the top of the whale.

(Clears throat. Does some vocal warm ups.)

Mi, mi, mi, mi, mi, mi.

Maryanne and the Goons depart.

EUGENE

How can you work for someone so evil?

Long beat.

EUGENE (cont.)

Well?

GOON 1

Oh me? Sorry I thought that was rhetorical.

EUGENE

How could that be rhetorical?

Long beat.

EUGENE

Well?

GOON 1

So that wasn't rhetorical either?

EUGENE

What is wrong with this guy?

GOON 1

Poor parenting.

EUGENE

That one you answer.

GOON 1

I think we got off on the wrong foot. What were you asking?

EUGENE

How can you work for someone so evil?

GOON 1

I reckon good and evil are more a social construct. An abstract idea more than a concrete morality. The contract we enact in a symbiotic society where -

GOON 1 is cut off when he's bashed in the head by a stick. BIG STICK and SHAINDEL enter.

BIG STICK

I hate moral relativists!

EUGENE

Big Stick!

BIG STICK

Shh, times like this it's best to speak softly.

ANJUS

And Almost Officer Doubles.

SHAINDEL

Shaindel.

ANJUS

No, it's Anjus.

SHAINDEL

Yeah, I - never mind.

EUGENE

So you two teamed up and rescued us?

SHAINDEL

No we both arrived separately to rescue you; we agreed we are doing this individually but simultaneously.

BIG STICK

Now to get you untied.

AUTHOR

Big Stick then hit the ropes with his stick which somehow freed them both. That's what my sources say at least.

SHAINDEL

Whoa! Look at that thing!

ANJUS

The Land Whale.

BIG STICK

I'm gonna need a bigger stick.

SHAINDEL

Look at her atop that thing! Wait is that Maryanne?

EUGENE

Yeah long story short she's evil.

SHAINDEL

Huh, OK. Well, let's get her.

EUGENE

No! She's ours.

BIG STICK

Right, me and Eugene.

EUGENE

No, Anjus and me! This is personal! This is Four Elemental Business.

BIG STICK

Can I be an Elemental? I want to join every club and then be its president.

EUGENE

We don't have elected positions. You can't be president.

BIG STICK

Sounds like a challenge! One day I will be president! And it's all because of this random exchange, that's the only reason I'll become president.

ANJUS

What a weird thing to say!

SHAINDEL

I'd also like to be an element. Maybe thulium or thallium.

BIG STICK

There are a lot of great elements. The whole table periodic is awash with possibilities. But none are better than -

BIG STICK & SHAINDEL

The transition metals!

BIG STICK

I guess we're not so different! Maybe we can team up.

SHAINDEL

Big Stick, big friends?

ANJUS

Um, fellows - the land whale!

BIG STICK

What do we do?

ANJUS

Well first we must be rid of this tincture, which will stop the Land Whale from getting charged up.

EUGENE

We could just smash it.

ANJUS

No! We have to dispose of it properly! We can't just smash and throw away everything we don't like! It's not good for the environment!

EUGENE

You're right, it could mutate earthworms into giant super worms that would start an underground hophouse of subterranean worm ragtime musicians!

SHAINDEL

Who would listen to worm rag?

FISH MONGER

I would!

EUGENE

Who?

AUTHOR

And then out of the shadows stepped a giant beast of a man. Clad in leather with an apron and hood, a giant hook for a hand! You see it was ...

FISH MONGER

From the flaming corals of Hell you face THE FISH MONGER!

EUGENE

He does exist!

BIG STICK

Ooooooh Bully!

EUGENE

Wait? Are you Henry B. Lubbins - let me finish - the third?

FISH MONGER

No, my story is one of loneliness and the vast sea! I was but a
-

EUGENE punches him.

EUGENE

Karate?

FISH MONGER

Hey! You punched me while I was telling my origin! So rude!
Never mind then, death to landlubbers! Once I sharpen my hook,
just a tick.

ANJUS

One of you needs to get rid of this potion the other needs to
fight the Fish Monger!

SHAINDEL

I'll fight the Fish Monger.

BIG STICK

But, but - my nemesis! My whole life is leading up to this
fight!

SHAINDEL

I thought you wanted to be partners. I called Monger.

BIG STICK

Dibs is unimpeachable, but ... oooh. But properly disposing of a
potion is boring!

SHAINDEL

So I should do it? See you don't want a partner, you want a
servant.

FISH MONGER

Just so much dried blood on it, almost there.

BIG STICK

But come on! I have the outfit, the cape! I even got a bunch of pouches sewn on! This is Brooks Brothers!

SHAINDEL

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BIG STICK

You're right. You're "yeah, yeah, yeah" made me realize I've been making this all about me, not all about 'we.' You fight the Fish Monger, I'll dispose of the potion. Because no matter the job -

FISH MONGER

Done! Now you all die!

SHAINDEL

I got this, Sticky! And thanks.

(To the Fish Monger.)

Time for you to give up leavening because you're about to get *Pey-socked*¹ in the puss!

FISH MONGER

I don't understand what - oooooof!

AUTHOR

And with that Shaindel ran straight at the Fish Monger and crashed into him knocking them both through the large window.

BIG STICK

That's my girl! Now to dispose of this! Big Stick - Big Exit!

Big Stick runs off with the potion.

ANJUS

Maybe we should have gotten rid of the potion and ...

EUGENE

No. Like I said this is Four Elemental business. Look at her standing atop that whale singing her heart out. That jerk! No. We need to climb up that beast's back and take her down ... for good. Men may not remember our names. In future generations kids in history class may be more concerned about hooking up with

¹ this is a play on the word peysakh (Passover).

Becky Snyder behind the bleachers than about the deeds of a birdboy and a plant-fucker. They might not remember whaling times. In the future people may think of *Moby Dick* as a nickname for genitals, not a long kind of boring book with a message that gets a little heavy handed but you're glad you read it and parts were really fizzin ... but that makes what we do here tonight no less important! America rests on the forgotten heroes who leapt up into the face of evil and said, "Hey don't do that!" and "Seriously you are going vote Democrat?"

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition;
 And gentlemen in England now-a-bed
 Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

ANJUS

Wait what? St. Crispin?

EUGENE

Patron saint of cobblers, tanners, and leather workers. Tortured and beheaded around 286 AD. Feast day is October 25th.

ANJUS

But that's months away ... why are we remembering that?

EUGENE

I don't know. But I don't know for all the right reasons!

AUTHOR

And with that Eugene and Anjus ran toward the Land Whale. Eugene grabbed its soft side.

12.6:

EUGENE

Quick, we just climb up and -

GOON 2

Not so fast!

EUGENE

Oh right the Blow Hole Goons!

GOON 5

Let's get them, weapons out Goons!

Sounds of Goons taking out various weapons.

ANJUS

That's no good.

GOON 4

Let me axe you a question! WITH MY AX! HIYA!

GOON swings his axe but ANJUS blocks it with her fake hand. It sticks into it.

ANJUS

Axe me another.

GOON 4

Her hand blocked my axe! What voodoo do you do?

ANJUS

Just a fake hand but how about a real punch!

ANJUS punches the Goon.

GOON 2

I won't be so easy, skirts! For you see - ow.

He's knocked over by the FISH MONGER who is still fighting with SHAINDEL.

FISH MONGER

Sorry.

GOON 4

Hey buddy you fight over there and we fight over here.

GOON 2

Ow my head.

GOON 4

He's probably got a concussion!

FISH MONGER

We'll just move toward this end here ...

SHAINDEL

Near all the hoses and valves. OK?

GOON 3

Yeah that's fine. No further, further. Good.

FISH MONGER

Right? You set?

SHAINDEL

Set.

FISH MONGER

Taste my wrath!

SHAINDEL

Sorry I don't eat treyf!

They go back to fighting.

ANJUS

Eugene, climb up while I keep them at bay!

EUGENE

It's squishy, like a gross fish fart pillow. Climb with me!

ANJUS

I can't. That axe broke my prosthetic hand; I can't one-hand a whale! You stop her!

EUGENE

All right, come on Gener it's up to you now!

AUTHOR

And the battle raged on. Shaindel and the Fish Monger fought a reasonable distance away from Anjus and the Goons. One attacked her with a sledgehammer shaped like a hammerhead shark! Anjus jumped out of the way and the hammer smashed a spare oil barrel creating a slick that caused a sliding spill that tripped up several Goons. Eugene continued to climb. The Fish Monger brought down his hook, and it caught on a steam pipe giving Shaindel enough time to get some sea anemones out of a tank and throw them at the Fish Monger.

12.7:

FISH MONGER

Your anemones do nothing!

SHAINDEL

Yeah it was a long shot.

FISH MONGER

I like you. Join me and we can rule the city as Fish Monger and Fish Wife.

SHAINDEL

I'm no man's wife. Suck a gefilte fish!

FISH MONGER

Eww no that's awful!

SHAINDEL

Then have a knuckle sandwich on rye!

She punches him.

FISH MONGER

Ow! Where did you get that rye bread that you wrapped your fist in?

SHAINDEL

A good Jewish girl always keeps a slice on her. Natural enhancement for the *tsitsim*.

FISH MONGER

It won't save you!

AUTHOR

And with that the Fish Monger kicked Shaindel hard knocking her to the ground. Meanwhile Anjus was dodging harpoons flung by several Blow Holers. And Eugene still climbed ... all while, atop the whale Maryanne sang into the blow hole.

12.8:

MARYANNE

(Singing.)

And its time for us to leave her ...

(Speaking.)

There, there, good boy.

Sound of gasping and panting as Eugene pulls himself to the top of the whale.

EUGENE

Hey! Whooo. OK. Wow. Yeah. Can't breathe. Hold on. Light headed. So much climbing.

MARYANNE

Eugene? What are you doing!

EUGENE

Sitting for a second. Then defeating. You. Saving. City. Trying to ... I am in terrible shape. But I have to ... put up your dukes!

MARYANNE

Oh, Eugene. You're such a ... a ... Eugene.

EUGENE

It's over Maryanne!

MARYANNE

This is only cause I like you.

She draws two swords.

MARYANNE (cont.)

We shall do this as the sporting class does. Choose a sword.

EUGENE

This one. Did I win?

MARYANNE

Win?

EUGENE

If I pick the right sword you surrender, if I pick the wrong one I become one of your evil love slaves.

MARYANNE

Evil love - what? No, no we fight! To the death!

EUGENE

Oh.

They cross swords.

END OF CHAPTER 12