



# A PERILOUS JOURNEY OF DANGER AND MAYHEM BOOK 2: THE TREACHEROUS SEAS

by Christopher Healy

**It is 1883** — only a few months after Molly Pepper, her mother, Cassandra, and her friend Emmett Lee saved New York from an attack by the megalomaniacal Ambrose Rector while managing to preserve the reputations of Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison, whose technology was manipulated in Rector's scheme. Their selfless heroism will finally earn them a place in the Inventors' Guild, alongside the greatest minds of their generation.

Unless, of course, no one knows that they did any of that.

Left with nothing but empty promises and a struggling pickle shop after the government chooses to cover up the crisis, Molly, Cassandra, and Emmett have no idea where to turn—until they learn of a daring expedition to the South Pole, where a meteorite of mysterious power is embedded, and where Emmett's father, explorer and ship captain Wendell Lee, disappeared years ago.

With the fate of the world hanging in the balance, our heroes commandeer an experimental sea craft to make their play on the pole. But the trip is more treacherous than they realize, and there's no guarantee that they will return successful—if they even return at all.

**Christopher Healy** is the author of *A Perilous Journey of Danger & Mayhem Book 1: A Dastardly Plot*, the novels *The Hero's Guide to Saving Your Kingdom*, a *New York Times* Book Review Editor's Choice, its two sequels, *The Hero's Guide to Storming the Castle* and *The Hero's Guide to Being an Outlaw* as well as the picture book *This Is Not That Kind of Book*. Before becoming a writer, he worked as an actor, an ad copywriter, a toy store display designer, a fact-checker, a dishwasher, a journalist, a costume shop clothing stitcher, a children's entertainment reviewer, and a haunted house zombie. He lives in New Jersey with his wife, two children, and a dog named Duncan. You can visit him online at [www.christopherhealy.com](http://www.christopherhealy.com).





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1** The disappointment that Cassandra, Molly and Emmett feel when Cassandra finds herself still blocked from acceptance into the Inventor's Guild is made even more bitter for Molly when she reflects: "People with power—whether because they were men, because they had fat bank accounts, or because they held positions that were only available to men with fat bank accounts—would tell everybody else what they could or couldn't do." (PAGE 30) Discuss.

**2** On page 41, Alexander Graham Bell introduces the twin goals of his venture to the Antarctic: capturing Ambrose Rector and...if it should so happen...discovering the South Pole. This fictional story is set in 1883. Ask students to research when the South Pole was actually first explored and by whom.

**3** "Molly feared her mother was going to her Sad Place. Cassandra was never this quiet for this long unless she was struggling to hold back feelings she didn't want the kids to see." (PAGE 47) What are some reasons why Cassandra

would be sad? Besides her mother becoming quiet, what is another way Molly can tell she is in her Sad Place? (Hint: Cassandra refuses to invent.)

**4** Cassandra is a woman ahead of her times, and this makes her angry and sometimes, as noted above, sad. She says: "I tried to take classes at the university; they wouldn't let me register.... I tried to sell my work to the department stores; they wouldn't listen to my pitches. I literally saved the lives of the Inventors' Guild and they won't let me into their club. There's only so much a person can take." (PAGES 50-51) Ask students to reflect on how Cassandra feels and why.

**5** Emmett and Molly are like brother and sister, and like any siblings, they don't always see eye to eye. Ask students to read the following sequence and then to discuss what they observe about Emmett's and Molly's differing personalities.

"This isn't right!" [Molly] said in as quiet a voice as she was capable of in that moment.

"The Guild is ruining our lives again! I'm so sick of those guys. We've got to do something."

"Agreed. So, let's talk it through," Emmett said. He hopped up to sit on the counter.

"No, let's do something. You always want to talk things through."

"Because that's how I figure out what to do," Emmett said.

"It's also how you stall, which you do all the time because you never want to make any decisions."

"Hey, that's not why I like to talk things through," Emmett said. "Or maybe it is. There are probably multiple factors involved. Let's talk this through . . ." (PAGES 51-52)

**6** One of the themes of the entire "Perilous Journey" series is the struggle many people have to be heard—to tell their own stories. Molly's frustration is expressed very clearly here: "All she wanted was credit for the incredible things she'd accomplished! It wasn't fair. She deserved that credit. So did her mother. And Emmett. And the Mothers of



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Invention. Even Nellie Bly. They deserved to tell their own stories their own way and not let history be dictated by a few stingy men who refused to give up—or even share—the power they so desperately clung to.” (PAGE 100) Do students feel that many people still feel the same way today? Why or why not? Discuss.

**7** Nellie Bly gives readers insight into what it might be like to be a hard-working journalist—or a writer of any type, for that matter:

“I’m the news bear. I sniff out the truth. That’s what I do. But I didn’t.”

“Hey, at least you were just as right as I was,” said Molly.

“That doesn’t help,” Nellie replied. “I let myself down. Even now, look at me—I’m at the heart of the biggest story of our time and I’m moping here, beating myself up instead of working on it. I mean, I don’t have my notebooks, but I can work in my head. Writers are always working, you know. Even if you can’t see it. Half



the time I’m talking to you, I’m also thinking about why you chose one specific word over another, which expressions on your face I should describe, whether or not the loose threads on your sleeve are an important detail to mention. It can be quite exhausting.” (PAGE 215)

Ask students to reflect on this insight that Nellie offers.

**S** Emmett and Molly and their friend Jasper are great fans of the popular 19th century French novelist Jules Verne, whose book *Around the World in Eighty Days* is mentioned in Volume 1, and whose book *Twenty Thousand*

*Leagues Under the Sea* Molly brings along on their journey to Antarctica. In *A Perilous Journey: Volume 2*, there is a description of the mysterious cave beneath Antarctica where the long-sought Ambrosium lies: “And the Ambrosium’s dancing lights were reflected everywhere, their colors twinkling among the myriad crystals that covered the walls and ceiling of the cavern. Between the explorers and the source of those lights, however, stood a vast forest of bizarre, tree-sized mushrooms. The fantastic fungi towered over Molly, both tantalizing and forbidding, in vivid pinks and yellows.” (PAGE 313) This passage could be read as a nod to Verne’s classic work. Interested students may want to look up the description that Verne wrote of the imaginary “lost continent” of Atlantis in Chapter IX of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (available free of charge at [Gutenberg.org](http://Gutenberg.org)) for comparison.



## EXTENDING THE STORY—THE TRUTHS BEHIND THE TALE

Just as in the first book in the series, *A Perilous Journey of Danger & Mayhem Book 1: A Dastardly Plot, Volume 2* is an adventurous mystery set in the past. Though some of the characters are based on real people and some of the settings and other details are real, the story is the clever creation of author Christopher Healy, mixing facts and fiction to create something totally original. Careful readers may spot actual historical facts woven into the story to help tell the fictional tale. Encourage students to choose among the fascinating people, creatures, and creative expressions featured in the book and to conduct research to find out more about them.

Offered here is some initial information to start the researchers on their quests.

### ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL (1847-1922)

Alexander Graham Bell, along with his wife Mabel Bell and others, actually did invent a series of hydrofoils—fast-powered water boats.



THIS 1907 PICTURE FROM *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* SHOWS ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL WITH CYRUS ADLER ON AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF A HYDROFOIL THAT THEY CALLED THE UGLY DUCKLING.

### ELIZABETH COCHRAN SEAMAN (1864-1922)

Elizabeth Cochran Seaman, better known by her pen name, Nellie Bly, was a novelist, journalist and inventor who first became famous in 1887

after she went undercover, pretending to qualify as an inmate at the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island in New York City. She then wrote an exposé of the dreadful conditions there. (In *A Perilous Journey of Danger & Mayhem Book 1: A Dastardly Plot*, inventor Hertha Marks mentions that her friend Nellie Bly might be interested in investigating the place). Bly later went on a record-breaking 72-day round-the-world trip, a stunt she set up to beat the fictional record set by Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. She was also the patent holder for a milk can and a stacking garbage can. She was on the front line of reporting about the Women's Suffrage Movement, predicting in her 1913 article about the



RECEPTION OF NELLIE BLY AT JERSEY CITY ON THE COMPLETION OF HER JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD IN 72 DAYS.



## EXTENDING THE STORY—THE TRUTHS BEHIND THE TALE

Woman's Suffrage Parade that women would have the vote by 1920. She even made a mark as one of the first women reporters to visit the Eastern Front during World War 1, where she was mistakenly arrested as a spy.

### ROALD AMUNDSEN (1872-1928)

The sprightly young fellow Roald who struggles to fit in with our heroes Molly and Emmett was based, in author Christopher Healy's imagination, on the boy who would grow up to be famed Norwegian Antarctic and Arctic explorer Roald Amundsen, seen here in a photograph taken in 1912. Amundsen led



ROALD AMUNDSEN

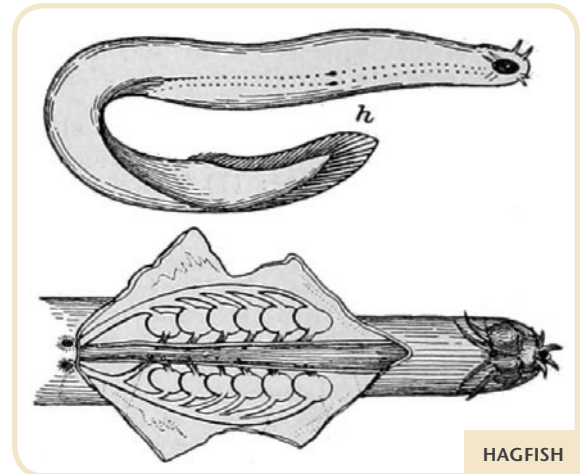
the first expedition to traverse the Northwest Passage by sea from 1903 to 1906, and the first expedition to the South Pole in 1911. He also led the first expedition proven to have reached the North Pole in 1926.

### TUK BANDS

Tuk Band music is an art form that originated in the 1600s on the Caribbean island of Barbados. It combines African rhythms with the music of colonial British military bands. It is performed at festivals where costumed dancers portray figures from African folklore, accompanied by bass drums, triangles, flutes, snare drums and the pennywhistle. Follow this link for a video of a Tuk band from Barbados, featuring characters Mother Sally, Shaggy Bear, Green Monkey, and Stiltwalker: <https://youtu.be/duqUxN6oy78>

### HAGFISH

Hagfish are real and are found in oceans of the world, including in Antarctica.



HAGFISH

Though hagfish are not as large as the ones described the book, they are definitely gross. This eel-shaped, slime producing fish has a skull but no jaws and no vertebrae. Also called a slime eel, it has a paddle-like tail and skin that covers its body like a loosely fitting sock. It basically resembles a blood-filled sack with a hideous head. The best stunt that a hagfish can perform is to exude a tremendous amount of slime—sometimes as much as 5 ¼ gallons—when threatened. If captured, a hagfish can tie itself into a knot, scraping off slime as it goes.



## EXTENDING THE STORY—THE TRUTHS BEHIND THE TALE

### SEA SPIDERS

Sea spiders are real as well, and like hagfish are found in oceans around the world, including in Antarctica. Sea spiders have long, thin legs and very small bodies. A sea spider takes in food (mainly soft-bodied invertebrates) through

### JULES VERNE (1828-1905)

Jules Verne was a French author whose novels were extremely popular in the era when the "Perilous Journey" stories are set. He had a passion for science, exploration, and geography. In the 1850s he came up with the idea of

writing a new kind of novel, which he called a "Novel of Science." These novels combined science with fiction to create stories of exploration and adventure. Late in his life, Verne described his works this way: "My object has been to depict the earth, and not the earth alone, but the universe...."

very short! In order to leave a completed work behind, one would need to live to be at least 100 years old!" \* His imaginative approach to combining real geography and fanciful storytelling is much appreciated throughout the series by Emmett and Molly and their friend Jasper, and in Volume 2 by Agent Forrest, who is seen reading Molly's copy of Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (which he borrowed without permission, further annoying her by folding down a page to mark his place, rather than using a bookmark).

\*EVANS, ARTHUR B. (1988), JULES VERNE REDISCOVERED: DIDACTICISM AND THE SCIENTIFIC NOVEL, NEW YORK: GREENWOOD PRESS

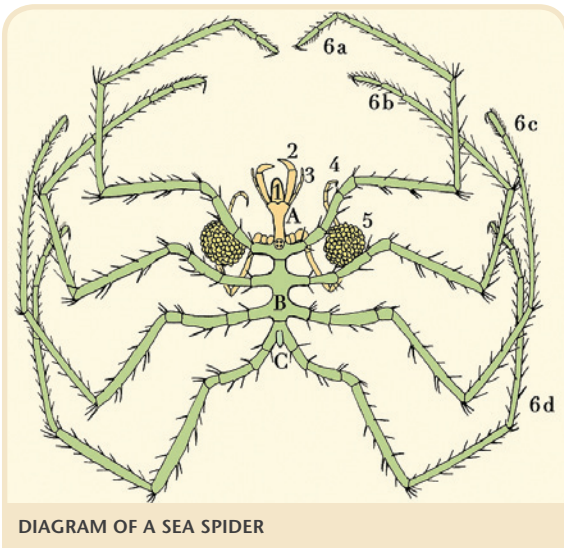


DIAGRAM OF A SEA SPIDER

a long tubular mouthpart called a proboscis. Sea spiders walk along the seafloor on their long, skinny legs or swim just above the floor with a pulsing motion that looks like an umbrella opening and closing.

Acknowledging that this was an ambitious idea, he went on to say: "Yes! But the earth is very large, and life is



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### BOOKS

*A Race Around the World: The True Story of Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland* by Caroline Starr Rose, Illustrated by Alexandra Bye. Albert Whitman, 2019. In 1889, Nellie Bly, inspired by Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, began a circumnavigation she hoped to complete in less time. Her trip was sponsored by her employer, *The World* newspaper. Just hours after her ship set out across the Atlantic, another New York publication set writer Elizabeth Bisland on the same journey, but in the opposite direction. Who won?

*Encyclopedia Prehistorica: Sharks and Other Sea Monsters* by Robert Sabuda & Matthew Reinhart. Candlewick, 2006. While dinosaurs patrolled the lands, massive prehistoric sharks, giant scorpions, and colossal squid cruised the ancient oceans—most with just one thing in mind: eat or be eaten. Pop-up masters Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart explore the prehistoric underwater world where monsters like megalodon ruled the waves. Full of captivating facts and more than thirty-five breathtaking pop-ups, this incredible volume is sure to

astonish and amaze everyone from budding marine biologists to confirmed landlubbers.

*Roald Amundsen: The Conquest of the South Pole* by Julie Karner. Crabtree Publishing Company, 2006. This fascinating new book reveals how Amundsen's years of arctic training, expert dog-handling skills, and luck in finding a quicker route, allowed him to reach the South Pole more than a month before his closest rivals.

*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (Illustrated 1875 Edition), by Jules Verne, translated by F.P. Walter. SeaWolf Press, 2019. This novel is also available as a free download at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/164>.

*When Lunch Fights Back: Wickedly Clever Animal Defenses* by Rebecca L. Johnson. Millbrook Press, 2015. In nature, good defenses can mean the difference between surviving a predator's attack and becoming its lunch. Some animals rely on sharp teeth and claws or camouflage. But that's only the beginning. Meet creatures with some of the strangest defenses

known to science. How strange? Hagfish that can instantaneously produce oodles of gooey, slippery slime; frogs that poke their own toe bones through their skin to create claws; young birds that shoot streams of stinking poop; and more.

### ARTICLES

**"No One Is Prepared for Hagfish Slime,"** by Ed Jong. *The Atlantic*, January 23, 2019. It expands by 10,000 times in a fraction of a second, it's 100,000 times softer than Jell-O and it fends off sharks and Priuses alike.

**"14 Fun Facts About Hagfish,"** by Hannah Waters. Smithsonian.com, October 17, 2012. These frightening creatures defend themselves with slime and chow down on animal carcasses.

**"Zoologger: The giant sea spider that sucks life out of its prey,"** by Colin Barras. NewsScientist.com, July 30, 2015.

**"How Giant Sea Spiders May Survive in Warming Oceans,"** by JoAnna Klein, *The New York Times*, April 14, 2019.