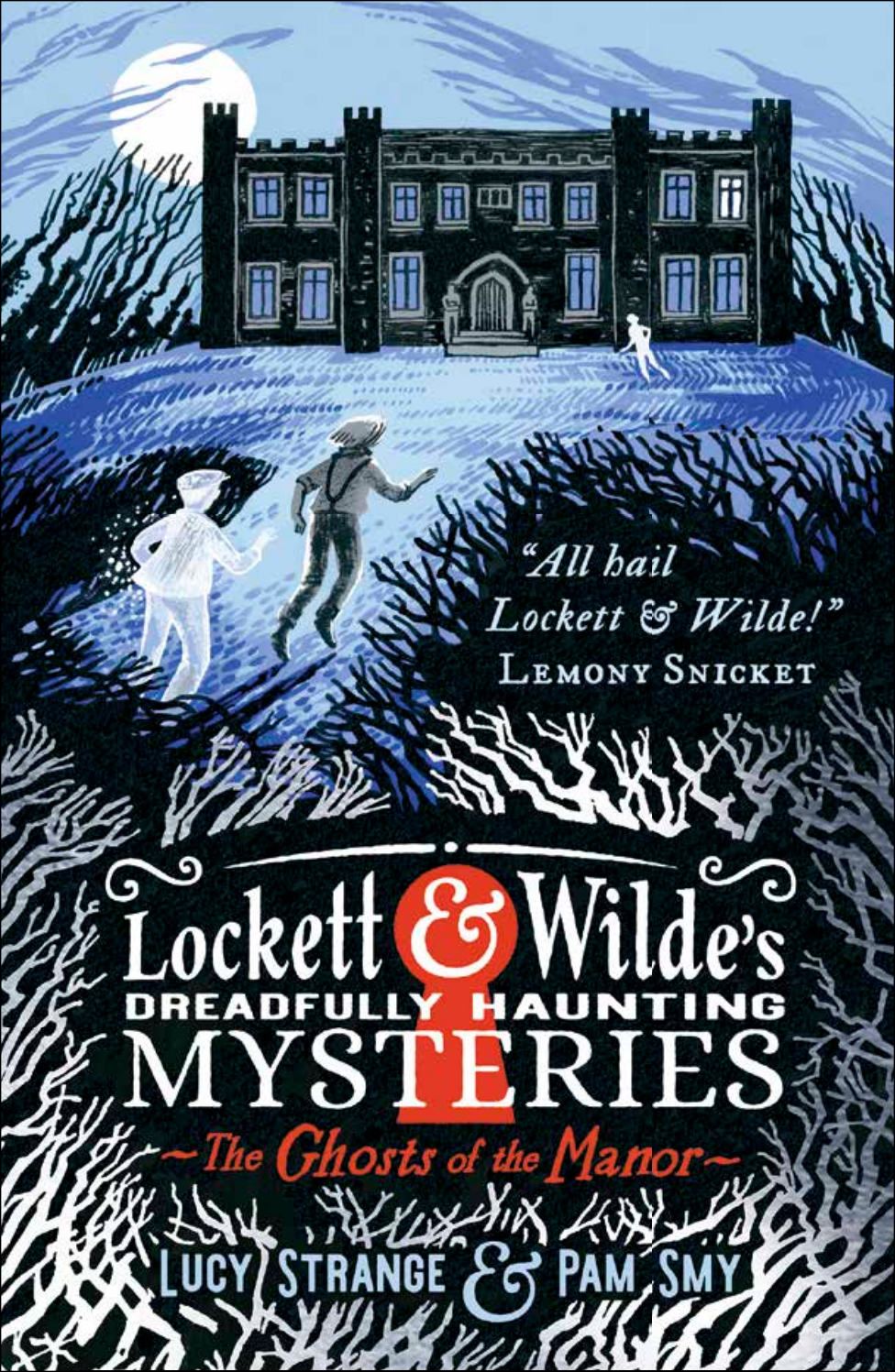

"All hail Lockett & Wilde!"
Lemony Snicket
Lockett & Wilde's
Dreadfully Haunting
Mysteries
~The Ghosts of the Manor~
Lucy Strange & Pam Smy



Lockett & Wilde's

DREADFULLY HAUNTING MYSTERIES



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LOCKETT AND WILDE'S DREADFULLY HAUNTING MYSTERIES

The Ghosts of the Manor

BY LUCY STRANGE AND
ILLUSTRATED BY PAM SMY

WALKER
BOOKS



CHAPTER ONE

In Which The Audience Hold Their Breath

There was a hushed silence in the theatre. The audience watched, transfixed, as the woman on the stage closed her flickering eyelids and opened up her arms, as if welcoming the hordes of spirits that floated all around her.

"YES!" she said suddenly, and the audience gasped. *"She is here!"*

Her eyes opened wide: *"She is here with us!"*

There was a snuffling noise from the audience. A big man with red cheeks was illuminated by a spotlight. He was dressed in a mackerel-blue suit and was dabbing his eyes with a handkerchief.

"Oh!" he moaned. "Little Edna! Can you hear me? Can you hear your old Uncle Barnabus?"

"She can hear you, sir!"



"Are you sure, Signora Valentina?" the man sobbed. "Can it really be little Edna?"

YES! IT IS EDNA!

Signora Valentina nodded solemnly and closed her eyes once more. Her whole body shook with the effort of contacting the spirit child.

"Speak, child! Speak the words you have been longing to say, all this time you have drifted in the shadows!"

There was a tense pause.

"Is she speaking?" the man gulped. "Can you hear her?"

"She is! I CAN! She is saying..."

The audience held their breath. Up on the balcony,

a woman hiccupped with excitement. People clutched each other's hands as an otherworldly voice seemed to whisper all around them.

Signora Valentina, the spirit-medium, swayed from side to side, her eyes closed in concentration.

"She is saying... Oh, Uncle Barnabus! Don't forget to give Molly Cat her special turkey supper on Christmas Day!"

"Molly Cat! Oh!" The big man collapsed back into his chair, sobbing gratefully. "Yes, my sweet little Edna! It really is you! Of course, Molly Cat shall have all the turkey she can eat, and gravy too! I swear it!"

A wave of emotion swept noisily through the audience.

"HUSH!" Signora Valentina commanded. She held up an elegant, jewelled hand, and there was silence at once. *"What's that, Little Edna? You wish to appear to us, to say goodbye to your uncle before you rest peacefully?"*

The woman on the balcony hiccupped again. "Gracious!" she blurted, quite overcome.

Signora Valentina's face had grown deathly pale. Her hands trembled before her. *"I must ask you all*



to concentrate," she said in a strange, low voice. *"Give me the power of your thoughts, so that this child might return to us to say her final farewell to her beloved uncle."*

Signora Valentina called this bit The Silence. It was the pivotal moment of the show. Everything but everything balanced upon this single pinpoint in time...

The theatre grew dark as midnight. Only two spotlights remained, one glowing softly upon the man in the mackerel-blue suit, the other creating a pool of light around the dazzling figure of Signora Valentina on the stage. She raised her arms.

"Come to us, Edna!" she whispered. Then more loudly:

"COME! TO! US!"

The Silence filled the theatre. It was impossibly rich, dark, tense, quivering... It was like the sky before a storm; the moment between lightning and thunder; an ocean before a tidal wave...

Then something happened.

A figure began to appear on the stage. A small figure,



dressed in a long white nightdress. She had a mop of dark hair and her round face was pale as the moon.

It was definitely a ghost – anyone could see that. The child flickered in and out of reality. Signora Valentina reached out to touch the girl's arm, but her fingers swept right through the air as if there were nothing there at all.

The ghost child shimmered. She smiled at the man in the audience – her Uncle Barnabus – and her face shone like a lonely flame.

"Oh, Edna!" her uncle called. "We will take care of your Molly Cat. Rest peacefully now, little Edna!"

The child raised her hand. She blew a kiss. And then, like ripples fading on dark water, she melted away.

"Thank you!" Signora Valentina called to the vanishing ghost child, and then she opened her arms to the audience. *"THANK YOU!"* she cried. She bowed low, as if half-collapsing with exhaustion, and the whole theatre erupted into deafening applause.

People were on their feet, stamping and cheering; tears were running down their faces.

The velvet curtains swept together and closed.

CHAPTER TWO

In Which We Meet Matilda Lockett

"What a show!" a stagehand grinned, clapping Signora Valentina on her sequinned shoulder as she walked into the wings.

A big man in a distinctive mackerel-blue suit skipped up the auditorium steps; his handkerchief was folded neatly in his breast pocket once more. And it was bone dry. He embraced Signora Valentina: "Cracking show tonight, my love – *cracking* show! Your best yet, I'd say! Now where's our darling ghost girl?"

The darling ghost girl, otherwise known as Matilda Lockett, was clambering up through a hidden trapdoor, disentangling herself from the lengths of a Victorian nightgown. "Ridiculous costume," she muttered. "Why can't dead Edna wear a sturdy pair of trousers?"

"But the old-fashioned nightie is SPOOKY, darling

Matilda!" declared Barnabus, helping her up and giving her an affectionate squeeze.

"Spooky?" said Matilda as they made their way through the damp corridors back to the dressing room. "*Draughty*, I'd say. It's freezing in this theatre – don't you think?"

Signora Valentina chuckled as they entered the dressing room.

"I expect I was just too IN THE MOMENT to notice, my sweet, but if you're really feeling the cold then I can sew a nice warm lining into your costume." Aunt Evelyn smiled and cupped her niece's face between her lovely, jewelled hands. "And maybe even a secret pocket for toffees?"



Matilda gave in and grinned at last. "It was a good show, wasn't it? The audience was with us every step of the way."

"My goodness, weren't they just!" Aunt Evelyn opened a bottle of champagne and splashed it out into three glasses.

"Oh, and The SILENCE tonight, darlings..."

"You could have cut it with a butter knife!" Barnabus and Matilda chimed in together, finishing Evelyn's favourite expression.

Aunt Evelyn laughed. She sipped her champagne, sat back and closed her eyes for a moment.

Uncle Barnabus winked at Matilda, and Matilda winked back. She set about smearing cold cream onto her face to remove the ghostly make-up.

The Silence, she thought. Her aunt clearly hadn't noticed, but something strange had happened during The Silence tonight. Something that turned her skin to goosebumps and sent shivers down her spine. "Aunt Evelyn," she said quietly. "During The Silence, I thought I saw—"

But then there was a sharp knocking at the door – RAP RAP RAP!

"Signora Valentina!" someone called. It was Eddie from the stage door. "You have a visitor. She'd like to speak to you..."

"Of course, darling!" Aunt Evelyn called. "I'll be signing autographs in five minutes."

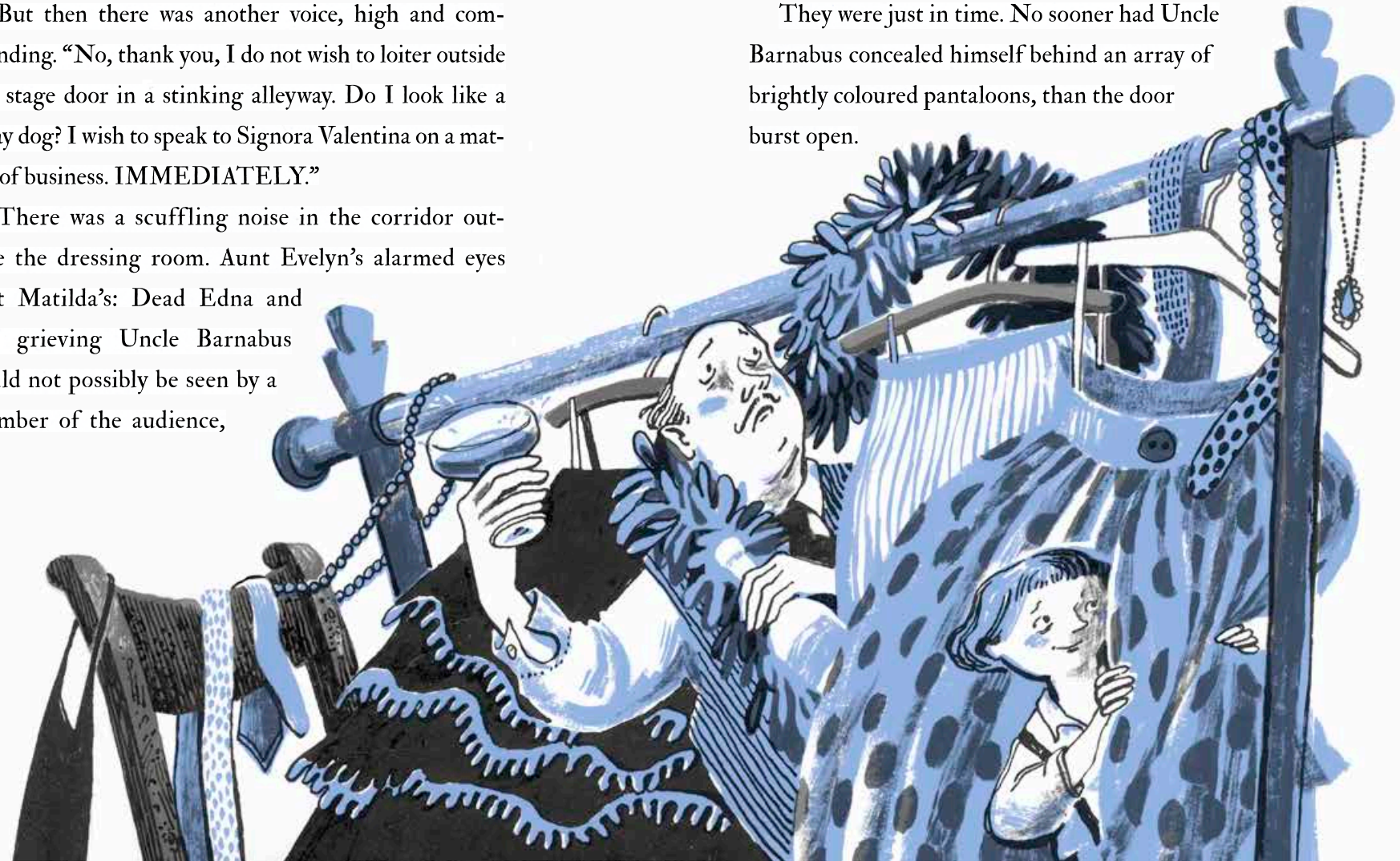
But then there was another voice, high and commanding. "No, thank you, I do not wish to loiter outside the stage door in a stinking alleyway. Do I look like a stray dog? I wish to speak to Signora Valentina on a matter of business. IMMEDIATELY."

There was a scuffling noise in the corridor outside the dressing room. Aunt Evelyn's alarmed eyes met Matilda's: Dead Edna and her grieving Uncle Barnabus could not possibly be seen by a member of the audience,

sharing a post-show snifter with Signora Valentina!

"Hide!" Matilda hissed. She seized Barnabus and dragged him (still clutching his champagne glass) towards a heavily laden costume rail at the far end of the dressing room.

They were just in time. No sooner had Uncle Barnabus concealed himself behind an array of brightly coloured pantaloons, than the door burst open.



A tall woman in a green silk dress filled the dressing room doorway. "Signora Valentina!" she said. "I am Baroness Rosa Beauchamp. And I need your help..."

