

## Peril in the Old Country

**Sam Hooker**

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Sloot Peril, a modest accountant who is “only as superstitious as required by law,” is an unlikely hero in the humorous fantasy *Peril in the Old Country*. With a lyrical flair that evokes P. G. Wodehouse, *Peril* is funny and fun.

Sloot receives an unexpected promotion to personal financier: a fancy name for a miserable job. He'll be squiring his employer's spoiled son around the abandoned Whitewood estate. If that isn't bad enough, his mission is rapidly complicated by Carpathian spies, goblins, and broom-wielding mannerists. Sloot's struggle to adapt to his ridiculous circumstances is hilarious.

*Peril in the Old Country's* real strength is in its dialogue and world building. Sam Hooker has created a fully-fleshed-out, Lovecraftian country for Sloot to mope through. By turns gothic, grim, and gritty, the kingdom of Salzstadt is the perfect stage for Sloot's adventure.

*Peril's* language is equally rich: interesting phrases, invented words, and double entendres twist the ear. Rather than fold in backstory or linger in description, Hooker keeps the story moving. The novel's pace is quick but steady, skipping from plot point to plot point with pithy, dialogue-driven scenes.

*Peril* is Hooker's second novel. The first of the Terribly Serious Darkness series, it's reminiscent of Victorian serials, with a liberal number of pratfalls thrown in. Although most of the novel's surprises come from outside Sloot—A possessed love interest! Bloodthirsty cannibals!—there are a few nice turns that develop his character more fully. Short chapters and action sequences, as well as tightly written dialogue, make this novel a standout.

*Peril* is the best kind of bad fun. Like Sloot, it's pretty good—but not well behaved.

CLAIRE FOSTER (May/June 2018)

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