

A Leaf in the Wind..

By Timothy R Harrison

On the outskirts of London, off of a side rode, there was a commotion going about in a large, make shift, warehouse lab, it was poorly lit and contained another structure. Inside the second structure, Tim was running about in what looking like an engineering room with his torchlight. He wore his usual leather top hat and sand colored canvas pants. His sleeves were rolled to his elbows and a grey, hounds tooth vest, lapelled and unbuttoned, covered his torso. With his black gauntlet laden hands and unbutton collar, he glistened with sweat as if he'd been working for hours.

The walls of the room looked to be lined with pipes and large power conduits as the light from Tim's torch waved around in his hand. Dials and gauges displaying the statuses for various systems, yet to spring to life. He walked over to the back corner of the room to what looked like a large chest, composed of metal and mahogany, standing about five feet high and a footprint of about 2 feet deep and 3 feet wide. There was a brass, sealed outer frame that held the unit to the floor. A large round porthole was in the center with two gauges to the top of it. On the right side was a large knife switch and on the left were two large tube structures, vertically positioned on the device, bearing resemblance to components on his side arm.

He walked over to the knife switch and turned off the torch and slid it in a pant pocket, lowering his goggles off the brim of his hat and on to his eyes, he bent down and pulled up his pant leg and removed a cigar out of the silver case in his boot. Sticking it in his mouth, he pulled a match box out of his vest pocket, lighting it, illuminating the room with a warm glow as he lit the cigar, puffing at the stick, dropping the match and replacing the box in the vest pocket. He reached up to the knife switch and the cherry glow from the cigar exposed a mad grin spread across his face, the light reflecting off his goggles.

"No better time as the present", he said as he pulled the switch puffing at his cigar.

The contacts sparked as the connection of the switch was made. The cabinet sprung to life with a hum as a faint, swirling, green glow became visible at the center of the port hole, growing brighter and larger with every passing moment till it filled the entire port hole and a green glow was cast about the entire room. Tim stood there grinning and staring at the core of the device as the two large tube anti-matter particle resonators began to charge from the reactor core, emanating a bright orange glow and adding their hum to the composition of the other devices springing to life.

The gauges danced as the power reached the terminals, the white neon, overhead lighting began to warm up, slowly illuminating the room. Tim slowly spun as everything came to light. A large water reservoir was now visible, leading to a high pressure boiler in the corner with 4 pipes attached, leading out of the room and two leads attached to the reactor. It began to hiss and puff steam and an unusually

quick rate as Tim walk over to the boiler there four, mechanical valves with corresponding manual overrides lay upon the wall.

Still grinning, he opened each valve with the override 75 percent of the way and the corresponding pressure gauges jumped to 250 psi just to the outer edge of green. The pipes leading out of the room creaked and hissed and echoed on the inside of the warehouse.

Now fully lit, the room was now fully visible, Tim replaced his goggles to his hat, crossed his arms and smiled with content, puffing at his cigar. He slowly spun around the room, about 10 feet wide and 15 feet deep, the large aetheric extraction reactor and electric high pressure steam boiler at the back, to the right were two terminals, he walked to the first and engaged and verified gauge read outs and then to the next terminal and did the same. To the back was a thick iron door with central locking mechanism leading to another room. Walking to the two terminals on the other wall, he puffed at his cigar and said "Propulsion and comms are a go", performing similar actions at the other two terminals and walking to the center of the room, "Weapons and barrier systems check"

He walked to the door and turned around, taking one last look "Gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous", he said smiling and stepping in to the other room, closing the door and sealing it behind him.

Walking through the room to the next, he passed a pair of bunk beds on each side, a small water closet and dresser on the left and a small kitchen and small pantry on the right. The room was warmly lit with hardwood flooring slightly longer than the room before.

Ahead in the next room was a large view window, curving around the entire circumference, only the inside of the warehouse in view. This room was still 10 feet wide but only 10 feet deep. 7 feet from the doorway was a centrally located command station with a wheel at its center and a series of gauges and switches wrapping around each side, grouped in to four categories corresponding the four terminals in the back. Above the wheel were three remote view windows, angled up at at 45 degrees and an independent set of buttons and switches just below them. Everything in the room was ornately decorated mahogany, brass, and coppers and the wood floor mimicking that of the room before.

Tim walked to the center console smiling and gripped the wooden wheel, twisting it left and right and then pushing it away and pulling it back towards him then letting it rest at its natural position.

Smiling and puffing at his cigar he said, "Well, I think it's about time to see what the beaut can do"

He pushed one of the buttons below the view screens and a loud cranking was heard from outside as light began to seep in from above. As the cranking continued and more light came in, he flipped four switches to his left and the hiss of steam and the turning of props began to echo throughout the warehouse. The loud mechanical noise came to a cranking halt and Tim flipped another switch labeled VT. The inside command area vibrated slightly as there was more mechanical commotion coming from the outside and as it stopped, he slid a leaver to his right up to the 10 percent marker. Four pressure gauges replicating the 250psi reading of the ones found in the engineering room dipped 25 psi synchronously then slowly regained ground as the sound of the props increased in velocity.

From outside, the roof of the warehouse had split down the middle and each half to the sides of the building. From the hole in the center, the top of a tan structure began to emerge. As it rose the end caps of a 60 foot long balloon became visible, each cap brass in color with 3 emitters on the inside edge and 2 towards the outer sweeping back. A copper support structure stretched across the top of the balloon, to each of the caps, hugging the structure closely. Two more were on each side, slightly wider than the top and had two propulsion pods on each. Each pod was mahogany in color with brass support rings and a cap on the bottom with a translucent ring around the center of the cap. Copper rivets held the pod together. On top was the prop, also brass, pulling the ship vertically in to the sky, steam exhaust being pushed down from the thrust.

As the ship rose the gondola became visible under the balloon, about 40 feet in length and slightly recessed in to the bottom of the balloon, it shared a similarly ornate color scheme of the propulsion pods. On each side of the gondola, was a pair of flush mounted emitters on the aft side. At the front, just below the view window, were moderately ports, slightly bulbous and closed on each side. At the center front of the ship, below the view window was a pair of two vertically stacked holes. As the ship gained altitude, a centrally located port similarly shaped to those on the side of the gondola, but much larger, encompassing $\frac{1}{4}$ the length of the gondola, became visible.

Tim watched the altimeter rise and when it read 100 feet, he slid the lever on his right back to the zero position and depressed the VT button. On the outside, the propulsion pods rotated counter clockwise till the props were parallel with the balloon and the props locked in place.

Tim puffed on his cigar, grinning like a child, flipped a switch below the view screens, then taking the wheel in his hands, again pulling it and pushing it away, this time the propulsion pods mimicked it's movement. He thrust the throttle past 10% to 25%, the pressure gauges dropped and the shipped sped forward as the pressure climbed. Pulling back on the wheel, the pods rotated down, pushing the ship higher in to the air. He turned the wheel port side and the starboard props increased in speed, pushing the ship around. Once London was in sight, Tim straightened her out and slammed the throttle to 100%.

The four gauges immediately dipped to 0 and then quickly shot back to 250 psi. The props outside the ship screamed to life, pushing the ship to full prop speed. Pulling back, he quickly gained another 200 feet in altitude.

Tim let out a laugh of excitement as the climb pulled him down, turning the wheel left and right, pushing and pulling it, the ship responded instantaneously to his commands.

"Like a leaf on the wind", He said puffing his cigar through a giant grin and a childish glint in his eye.

He continued to gain altitude till the London ship yards were in sight. He then thrust the wheel forward towards the yards. Quickly losing altitude he pulled back and leveled out, throttling down to 10% power. The ship slowed just on the outer edge of the yards directing it towards one of the ships.

Reaching over and flipping a switch to his left and engaging the communication system,

"Alicia Grey, this is The Archimedes, preliminary systems are a go"