

# The Aether Chronicle

## The Imaginary Alternate History of the Steampunk Empire

From Thursday June 26, 2014 to Thursday July 10, 2014



FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE'S UNDER WATER VESSEL, "THE MINNOW".

### UNDERWATER LEVIATHAN INCITES PANIC AT LIME!

THERE WAS WIDESPREAD PANIC IN ENGLAND'S POPULAR SEASHORE, AND THE SMALL VILLAGE OF LIME, WHEN WOMEN WADING IN THE WATERS BEGAN TO SHRIEK THAT THEY COULD SEE "A SEA MONSTER" MOVING BENEATH THE WAVES. ONLOOKERS GATHERED ON THE ROCKY SHORE, AND SURE ENOUGH, THERE WERE SIGHTINGS OF A LARGE FIN, A GLOWING ORANGE EYE, AND A MASSIVE SPURT OF BUBBLES JUST BENEATH THE WATER'S SURFACE. LOCAL SEAMEN, HAVING RECENTLY TAKEN SHORE LEAVE TO REUNITE WITH THEIR FAMILIES, PRODUCED TELESCOPES AND BROAD, STURDY NETS, AS THE CREATURE SEEMED TO BE HEADING INLAND, CAUSING THE DOCKS TO BUMP AND CREAK. WHEN ONE OF THE BOSUNS HURLED THE NET INTO THE SHALLOWS, AND A GROUP OF STRONG MEN HEAVED WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT, THEY WERE ASTONISHED TO BE DRAGGED EFFORTLESSLY INTO THE SURF, AS THE BEAST'S HEAD PROTRUDED FROM THE WAVES, ITS JAW OPEN, REVEALING MASSES OF GNASHING TEETH. THE CREATURE SLOWLY PROGRESSED UP THE ROCKY BEACH, DRAGGING THE SAILORS, STILL CLINGING TO THE ROPE, BEHIND! SUDDENLY, THE BEAST HOISTED ITS BULK INTO THE AIR, AND IT WAS REVEALED TO HAVE CREAKING, BIRDLIKE LEGS BENEATH IT. SEVERAL WOMEN FAINTED. LOCALS PANICKED AND FLED, THOSE WHO DIDN'T WERE PARALYSED WITH SHOCK AND HORROR. THE AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN SUMMONED WHEN A METALLIC CREAKING AND HISS OF PRESSURIZED AIR CAUSED THOSE STILL CLAMOURING UP THE BEACH TO HALT. OF ALL THINGS, A HATCH OPENED FROM THE BEAST'S OUTER HIDE, AND A MAN'S HEAD EMERGED—ALTHOUGH IDENTIFYING HIM AS HUMAN WAS MAINLY GUESSWORK, BECAUSE HIS HEAD WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY INCASED IN SOME SORT OF UNDERWATER APPARATUS. HE HELD UP BOTH ARMS IN A GESTURE OF PEACE AND GOODWILL, WHEREUPON ONE OF THE LOCAL CONSTABLES SHOT HIM. THE OFFICER, ONE

BILLY "BUTTERFINGERS" WEAVLEY, CLAIMED THAT "HE THOUGHT THE CREATURE WAS REACHING FOR A WEAPON." ONCE OFFICERS EXPERIMENTED WITH SOME CLASPS AND STRAPS, THE APPARATUS WAS REMOVED, REVEALING ONE FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE, AN ENGINEER TURNED SCIENTIST RENOWNED IN LONDON FOR HIS LUDICROUS THEORIES AND BIZARRE CONTRAPTIONS THAT WERE MEANT TO PROVE THEM. APPARENTLY, FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE HAD BEEN ENTHRALLED BY CHARLES DARWIN'S PUBLISHED WORK "ON THE ORIGINS OF SPECIES", A BOOK THAT EXPOUNDED UPON HIS THEORY OF EVOLUTION. ACCEPTING DARWIN'S THEORY AS FACT, FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE SET OUT TO FIND HIS OWN EVIDENCE THIS THEORY. HE CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN INSPIRED BY THE FOSSILS DARWIN COLLECTED ON A SEA VOYAGE OF HIS EARLY LIFE ABOARD THE HMS BEAGLE, WHICH DESCRIBED THE EVOLUTION OF MARINE INVERTEBRATES, WHICH DARWIN TOOK TIME AND CARE TO STUDY. CONVINCED THAT EVEN GREATER EVIDENCE EXISTED BENEATH EARTH'S OCEANS, FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE SET ABOUT ATTEMPTING TO BUILD THE FIRST MARINE VESSEL CAPABLE OF JOURNEYING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER. LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONFISCATED THE VESSEL, BUT WERE SO INTRIGUED BY ITS DESIGN THAT THEY CONCEDED FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE NEED NOT BE INCARCERATED IF HE CHOSE TO GIVE THEM A GUIDED TOUR OF THE VESSEL THAT THE INVENTOR HAD NAMED "THE MINNOW." THE DESIGN OF THE VESSEL HAD BEEN MODELLED AFTER ONE OF DARWIN'S OWN HYPOTHETICAL PREHISTORIC SEA CREATURES, THAT WAS THEN CUSTOMIZED BY THE ENGINEER. THE MINNOW WAS A ONE-MAN VESSEL, HORRIBLY SMALL AND CRAMPED, BUT POSSESSING SUCH ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THE MEN WERE SIMPLY AGOG. FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE EXPLAINED THE MULTITUDES OF PROBLEMS HE FACED WHEN DESIGNING THE CRAFT. THE ISSUE OF EQUALIZING PRESSURE WAS KEY, HE EXPLAINED, TO AVOID HORRIBLE SICKNESSES LIKE THE BENDS, AND DAMAGE TO THE EARDRUMS, NOT TO MENTION BEING QUICKLY CRUSHED BY THE PRESSURE OF THE OCEAN ONCE THE VESSEL REACHED A CERTAIN DEPTH. THE RELEASE OF BUBBLES THROUGH A SPOUT APPARENTLY KEPT THE PRESSURE BEARABLE FOR HUMAN BEINGS WITHIN THE VESSEL TO A SHALLOW YET STILL REMARKABLE DEPTH. FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE THEN SET ABOUT ENSURING THE VESSEL HAD PROPULSION WHICH LED HIM TO CO-OPT A PROPELLER FROM THE WRIGHT'S FLYING MACHINE, WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR SLOW BUT STEADY FORWARD-MOTION. FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE TESTED HIS SUB-SEA CRAFT IN A POND ON HIS PROPERTY, BUT HE ENCOUNTERED THE MOST DIFFICULTY GETTING THE MANOEUVRING IN AND OUT OF THE WATER. HE ALSO SUSPECTED THAT THE TERRAIN BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER, ESPECIALLY AT DEEPER DEPTHS, WOULD BE TREACHEROUS, WITH OCEANIC VOLCANOES, CREVICES, AND ROCKY CLIFFS TO OVERTAKE. THIS LED FINNIUS TO CONSTRUCT HIS FIRST SET OF LEGS FOR THE MINNOW. HE CLAIMED HE WANTED HIS VESSEL TO BE ABLE TO CROSS LAND TO REACH HIS NEXT OCEANIC

DESTINATION WITHOUT THE NEED FOR TEDIOUS AND PAINSTAKING PORTAGE. THUS THE VESSEL BECAME AMBULATORY. FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE THEN BEGAN ON ACQUIRING ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT HE WOULD NEED TO GATHER EVIDENCE AND DOCUMENT HIS SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS, IN THE HOPES OF ONE DAY PRESENTING THEM TO CHARLES DARWIN HIMSELF. THE GENTLEMEN OF LIME WERE IMPRESSED BY THE "KINETOSCOPIC" MOTION PICTURE CAMERA, A DEVICE SO NEW THAT THE PATENT HAD NOT EVEN BEEN ISSUED YET (FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE APPARENTLY MET WILLIAM KENNEDY LAURIE DICKSON BEFORE HE HAD INVENTED THE KINETOSCOPE, WHILE HE WORKED FOR THOMAS EDISON.) FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE CONVINCED HIS FRIEND TO DUPLICATE HIS INVENTION SO HE, FINNIUS, COULD TAKE IT BENEATH THE OCEAN AND BRING BACK MOTION PICTURES OF THE STRANGE CREATURES THERE. FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE ALSO OUTFITTED HIS STRANGE VESSEL WITH A PRESSURE GAUGE WHICH ACTUALLY CREATED A VACUUM WITH A RUBBER HOSE, SIMILAR TO THE PROTOTYPES FOR THE LATEST HOUSEKEEPING EQUIPMENT, WHICH WAS LINKED TO THE VESSEL'S "JAWS". THIS ALLOWED THE VESSEL TO OPEN ITS JAWS, WHICH ACTIVATED THE PRESSURE GAUGE, AND WOULD THEN "SUCK" ANY SAMPLES FINNIUS MIGHT DESIRE INTO A VACANT COMPARTMENT WITHIN THE VESSEL. THERE WAS A BRIEF UNPLEASANTNESS AMONGST THE RAPT AUDIENCE ONCE THE MEN REALIZED THAT THE MINNOW WAS FULLY OUTFITTED WITH THE LATEST ARTILLERY. THE PRESENCE OF TWO MISSILES LOCATED BENEATH "THE HULL" CAUSED A BRIEF SCANDAL AND FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE WAS ARRESTED ALL OVER AGAIN. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE MUNITIONS WERE INTENDED SOLELY TO CLEAR GEOGRAPHY, OR ASSIST SHOULD THE MINNOW BECOME TRAPPED UNDERWATER. AS OF YET THE VESSEL DID NOT HOLD A GREAT DEAL OF OXYGEN, AND FINNIUS WAS VERY MINDFUL OF BEING TRAPPED BENEATH THE OCEAN WITH NO WAY TO SUMMON HELP AND NO WAY TO ESCAPE. HE ALSO RIGGED THE MINNOW WITH AN EMERGENCY FLARE, AND A GRAPPLING HOOK. WHEN INTERROGATED ABOUT HIS LUDICROUS HELMET, WHICH SEEMED A MASS OF BRASS, RIVETS, AND SMALL GLASS WINDOWS, FINNIUS EXPLAINED HE HAD SEEN A MODEL OF SUCH A THING, AND WAS HOPING ONE DAY TO BE ABLE TO VENTURE OUTSIDE OF THE MINNOW AT SHALLOW DEPTHS, AND WALK AMONGST THE SEA CREATURES! THIS REPORTER IS NOT ASHAMED TO ADMIT TO CHILLS AT THE PROSPECT OF THIS ADVANCEMENT. IN THE MEANTIME, THE MINNOW WAS DOCKED AT LIME WHERE FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE WAS INCARCERATED OVERNIGHT IN THE COUNTY JAIL FOR INCITING A RIOT AND DISTURBING THE PEACE. HE WAS, HOWEVER, RELEASED THE FOLLOWING MORNING, WHEREUPON HE MADE A SMALL SUM OF MONEY ALLOWING CHILDREN TO SIT IN THE MINNOW, AND GIVING DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE MINNOW'S ABILITY TO TOUR SUB-MARINE DEPTHS FOR A SUSPENDED PERIOD OF TIME, AND BRING BACK MOVING PICTURES OF WHAT THE WORLD BENEATH THE OCEAN LOOKED LIKE. NO DOUBT THE WORLD WILL BE HEARING MORE FROM FINNIUS T. ESQUIRE, AS HE GATHERS EVIDENCE OF DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION, AND SEEKS TO PROVE THAT NATURAL SELECTION BEGAN IN THE OCEANS OF EARTH.



A PORTRAIT OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË, PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEORGE RICHMOND.

## ACCLAIMED BRITISH WRITER EXPOSED AS FEMALE!

TODAY BRITISH LOVERS OF LITERATURE RECEIVED A SHOCK AS THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED LITERARY WORK *JANE EYRE*, WHICH TOOK ENGLAND BY STORM FROM THE MOMENT IT WAS PUBLISHED, WAS CLAIMED IN OWNERSHIP BY A THIN, SERIOUS DAUGHTER OF AN IRISH ANGLICAN CLERGYMAN! *JANE EYRE*, A RIVETING LITERARY MASTERPIECE THAT CRITIC G. H. LEWES DESCRIBED AS “AN UTTERANCE FROM THE DEPTHS OF A STRUGGLING, SUFFERING, MUCH-ENDURING SPIRIT”, AND EVEN DECLARED IT TO BE “SUSPIRIA DE PROFUNDIS!” (SIGHS FROM THE DEPTHS), WAS ACTUALLY PENNED BY SOMEONE OF THE FEMALE GENDER. A MEMBER OF THE SURPRISINGLY LITERARY BRONTË FAMILY, MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË HAS BEEN PROVIDING ENGLAND WITH MASTERPIECES FOR SOME YEARS NOW, HAVING FINISHED HER FIRST WORK WHILE STILL AT SCHOOL AT ROE HEAD IN MIRFIELD, WHERE SHE WROTE A NOVELLA ENTITLED *THE GREEN DWARF* UNDER THE NOM DE PLUME WELLESLEY.

MISS CHARLOTTE’S BRONTË’S FIRST BOOK *THE PROFESSOR*, WRITTEN UNDER THE ALIAS CURRER BELL, WAS NOT PUBLISHED, BUT SHE WAS HEARTENED BY A LETTER WRITTEN BY SMITH, ELDER & CO OF CORNHILL WHO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ANY FURTHER WORK “CURRER BELL” MIGHT WISH TO SEND. IN MAY OF 1846 CHARLOTTE AND HER SISTERS, EMILY AND ANNE, SELF-PUBLISHED A BOOK OF JOINTLY-WRITTEN POETRY, UNDER THEIR ASSUMED NAMES CURRER, ELLIS AND ACTON BELL. THE BRONTË SISTERS’ DECISION TO BE PUBLISHED UNDER A NOM DE PLUME WAS BASED ON STRATEGIC MARKETING. ALTHOUGH NEW TO THE WORLD OF WRITING, THE SISTERS SUSPECTED THAT THEIR WORK WOULD NOT BE

WELL RECEIVED IF IT WAS KNOWN OUTRIGHT THAT THEY WERE WOMEN. OR WORSE, THEIR READERS WOULD FEIGN ACCEPTANCE, WHILE CHOOSING TO JUDGE THEIR WORK AGAINST A LOWER SCHOLASTIC STANDARD. THIS REPORTER SPOKE TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË HERSELF AT LENGTH WITH REGARDS TO THIS ISSUE, AND SHE EXPLAINED: “AVERSE TO PERSONAL PUBLICITY, WE VEILED OUR OWN NAMES UNDER THOSE OF CURRER, ELLIS AND ACTON BELL; THE AMBIGUOUS CHOICE BEING DICTATED BY A SORT OF CONSCIENTIOUS SCRUPLE AT ASSUMING CHRISTIAN NAMES POSITIVELY MASCULINE, WHILE WE DID NOT LIKE TO DECLARE OURSELVES WOMEN, BECAUSE — WITHOUT AT THAT TIME SUSPECTING THAT OUR MODE OF WRITING AND THINKING WAS NOT WHAT IS CALLED ‘FEMININE’ — WE HAD A VAGUE IMPRESSION THAT AUTHORESSES ARE LIABLE TO BE LOOKED ON WITH PREJUDICE; WE HAD NOTICED HOW CRITICS SOMETIMES USE FOR THEIR CHASTISEMENT THE WEAPON OF PERSONALITY, AND FOR THEIR REWARD, A FLATTERY, WHICH IS NOT TRUE PRAISE.” THAT BEING SAID, IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT THE SISTERS’ ASSUMED NAMES PRESERVED THEIR TRUE INITIALS: CURRER BELL, ELLIS BEL, ACTON BELL. WHILE NO EXPLANATION WAS GIVEN FOR THIS PARTICULAR AFFECTATION, THIS REPORTER FEELS CONFIDENT IN ASSERTING THAT THESE WOMEN WISHED TO REMAIN TRUE TO WHO THEY WERE, EVEN WHILE CONCEALING THEIR IDENTITIES FROM THE WORLD. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT CHARLOTTE’S NOM DE PLUME INCORPORATED THE MIDDLE NAME OF HAWORTH’S CURATE, ARTHUR BELL NICHOLLS, WHOM CHARLOTTE RECENTLY MARRIED. THE PUBLICATION OF EMILY’S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* BY “ELLIS BELL” AND ANNE’S *AGNES GREY* BY “ACTON BELL” FURTHERED THE SISTERS’ WRITING CAREER.

THE SUCCESS OF THE BRONTË SISTERS’ NOVELS LED TO SOME SPECULATION BY THEIR PUBLISHER WHETHER THEIR IDENTITIES SHOULD REMAIN A SECRET. HE CONVINCED MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO VISIT LONDON, WHERE SHE THEN REVEALED HER TRUE IDENTITY AS THE AUTHOR OF THESE RENOWNED LITERARY WORKS. THE PUBLIC WAS, AT FIRST, SHOCKED THAT *JANE EYRE* HAD BEEN WRITTEN BY A WOMAN. THERE WAS A MARKED CHANGE IN THE CRITICAL RESPONSE TO HER WORK, AS THE WRITING BEGAN TO BE DESCRIBED AS “COARSE”, ESPECIALLY ONCE HER IDENTITY WAS KNOWN. HOWEVER, RATHER THAN DIMINISHING HER SALES, *JANE EYRE* CONTINUED TO BE STEADILY SOUGHT AFTER, ESPECIALLY ONCE THE BOOK GAINED A REPUTATION AS BEING AN “IMPROPER” BOOK.

AS A RESULT OF HER BOOKS, MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË BEGAN TO MOVE IN MORE EXALTED CIRCLES IN LONDON, AND SHE MADE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF A NUMBER OF PRESTIGIOUS AUTHORS SUCH AS HARRIET MARTINEAU, ELIZABETH GASKELL, WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY AND G. H. LEWES. CHARLOTTE NEVER LEFT HER HOME OF HAWORTH FOR MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS, AND IT CANNOT BE CLAIMED THAT MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË WAS A GREAT CONVERSATIONALIST OR WONDERFUL COMPANY. THIS REPORTER WAS PRIVILEGED TO

SPEAK WITH MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË DURING A SOCIAL DINNER AT THE HOME OF MR. THACKERAY, TO WHICH HE HAD INVITED HIS DAUGHTER AND A NUMBER OF MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË’S ADORING FANS.

MR. THACKERAY’S DAUGHTER, WRITER ANNE ISABELLA THACKERAY RITCHIE, DESCRIBED MISS BRONTË AS “A TINY, DELICATE, SERIOUS, LITTLE LADY, WITH FAIR STRAIGHT HAIR AND STEADY EYES.” SHE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE HER REACTION TO FINALLY MEETING MISS BRONTË: “OUR HEARTS [WE]RE BEATING WITH WILD EXCITEMENT. THIS THEN IS THE AUTHORESS, THE UNKNOWN POWER WHOSE BOOKS HAVE SET ALL LONDON TALKING, READING, SPECULATING...MY OWN PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS ARE THAT SHE IS SOMEWHAT GRAVE AND STERN, SPECIALLY TO FORWARD LITTLE GIRLS WHO WISH TO CHATTER.” THIS REPORTER ASSUMES THAT THIS REACTION MAY BE TO THE YEARS MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË SPENT AS A GOVERNESS TO SMALL CHILDREN. MISS ANNE ISABELLA THACKERAY RITCHIE FELT DISAPPOINTED AT THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING, AS SHE CLAIMED “EVERY ONE WAITED FOR THE BRILLIANT CONVERSATION WHICH NEVER BEGAN AT ALL. MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË RETIRED TO THE SOFA IN THE STUDY, AND MURMURED A LOW WORD NOW AND THEN TO OUR KIND GOVERNESS... THE CONVERSATION GREW DIMMER AND MORE DIM, THE LADIES SAT ROUND STILL EXPECTANT, MY FATHER WAS TOO MUCH PERTURBED BY THE GLOOM AND THE SILENCE TO BE ABLE TO COPE WITH IT AT ALL.” ONE MRS. PROCTOR, ALSO PRESENT AT THIS UNCOMFORTABLY SILENT GATHERING, CLAIMED “IT WAS ONE OF THE DULLEST EVENINGS [MRS PROCTOR] HAD EVER SPENT IN HER LIFE.” ALL GATHERED HAD ARRIVED EXPECTING SO MUCH DELIGHTFUL CONVERSATION, BUT WHAT RESULTED WAS A SURFEIT OF GLOOM AND CONSTRAINT. THIS REPORTER CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT THE LIFE MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË HAS LIVED—LOSING TWO SIBLINGS DURING HER EDUCATION AT THE CLERGY DAUGHTERS’ SCHOOL AT COWAN BRIDGE IN LANCASHIRE, WHICH SHE USED AS A MODEL FOR THE LOWOOD SCHOOL IN *JANE EYRE*, THE DEATH OF HER BROTHER BRANWELL WHO WAS DIAGNOSED A HEAVY DRINKER, AN “OPIUM-EATER” AND A LAUDANUM ADDICT, THE SUCCESSIVE DEATHS OF THREE FAMILY MEMBERS ALL WITHIN AN EIGHT MONTH PERIOD, LEAVES MISS CHARLOTTE BRONTË MUCH FODDER FOR HER WRITTEN WORKS, BUT LITTLE FOR LIVELY CONVERSATION. MISS BRONTË RECENTLY COMPLETED HER SECOND NOVEL *SHIRLEY*, WHICH DEALS WITH THEMES OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY. THIS REPORTER LOOKS FORWARD TO ITS PUBLICATION!

# The Aether Review Of Books

## A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

SEMI-RIDICULOUS SATIRE.

### CHAPTER 1

IT WAS THE YEAR 1863 ANNO DOMINI WHEN THE BEASTLY WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE IMPERIAL MONARCHY OF ALBION AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF NOSIRA. IT

AROSE AS A DISPUTE AS TO HOW MUCH JAM, IN OUNCES, SHOULD BE SERVED AT TEA. A HEATED ARGUMENT BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE AMBASSADORS AFTER THE ALBIONESE DIPLOMAT BROKE OUT IN ANGER THAT "YOU NOSIRANS NEVER HAVE, NEVER COULD, NEVER WILL VALUE YOUR TEA AS HIGHLY AS THE ALBIONESE!" NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE NOSIRANS TOOK THIS, AS THEY TOOK ALL OTHER REMARKS CONCERNING THEIR HONOUR, ETHICS, AND MORAL CODES, IN THE BEST MANNER THEY COULD: WITH A DECLARATION OF WAR. NO SUCH INSULT HAD BEEN PAID NOSIRA SINCE 44 BC, WHEN JULIUS CAESAR TOLD THEM THEY COULDN'T HAVE THEIR OWN CHARIOTS. IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THAT NOSIRAN NATIONALS AMONG THE SENATORS MADE THEIR POINTS QUITE POINTED. HIS ONLY REBUTTAL, IN FACT, WAS 'ET TU, BRUTE?' WHICH ROUGHLY TRANSLATES TO, "UM, WELL, I...Y'KNOW?" SOME PEOPLE HAVE ALLEGED THAT IT INSTEAD MEANS "YOU TOO, BRUTUS?" BUT THESE PERSONS HAVE MOSTLY BEEN SHOT BY THE NOSIRAN MILITARY.

IN ANY CASE, THE BEASTLY WAR WAS NOT ONLY A SCENE OF POLITICAL SCANDAL, BUT INDUSTRIAL ADVANCEMENT. STEAM ENGINES WERE PROLIFIC, AND THE EARLIER TEA-POWERED MECHANICAL MEN WERE FORSAKEN FOR THE NEWER COFFEE-POWERED SOLDIERS. THESE WERE NOT AS POPULAR WITH THE ALBIONESE CIVILIANS, WHO AT THIS POINT HAD A TEA-TO-BLOOD RATIO OF ROUGHLY 2 TO 1. BUT NONE COULD DOUBT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEW JAVA-DRIVEN AUTOMATA WHEN ONE WAS GIVEN ABOUT A POT OF FUEL AND BLAZED A TRAIL OF BLOOD AND DESTRUCTION TO THE RESERVE POT IT SPOTTED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM.

WELL.

AS THE BEAST OF INDUSTRY ROARED AND WE Poured ALL MANNER OF BLACK AND BROWN FLUIDS DOWN ITS COAL-DUSTED GULLET, NEW MILITARY HEROES AROSE. FIELD MARSHAL PHILPOTT TWOLUMPS, ALBIONESE INFANTRY HERO, KNOWN ON THE BATTLEFIELD AS 'THE MANIC AVENGER.' ADMIRAL ARCHIBALDUS CREAMMONGER, A NAUTICAL JUGGERNAUT, ALSO CALLED 'THE GREAT WHITE WHALE.' GENERAL FILMORE HOTTENBLACK, TERROR OF THE SKIES, "THE BLACK SHADOW." THESE AND MANY MORE ARE RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF ALBIONESE MILITARY HISTORY, BUT NONE COMPARE TO GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE, THE IRON DRAGON.

IT WAS IGNATIUS GALLANTE WHO (ALLEGEDLY) INVENTED THE MIGHTY TOFFEE HYBRID-DRIVE WAR CARRIAGE, CODE-NAMED THE WAR MACHINE; A BRILLIANT VEHICLE WHICH RAN ON MINGLED TEA AND COFFEE, ONLY NEEDING THE OCCASIONAL DASH OF LUBRICATING CREAM AS ENGINE UPKEEP; IT WAS CAPABLE OF DRIVING AT THIRTY MILES EVERY HOUR, A RECORD JUST BARELY MATCHED BY THE KINGDOM'S FASTEST STEAM LOCOMOTIVES. IT CARRIED TEN CANNONS, TWENTY REPEATER GUNS, AND COULD HOUSE UP TO ONE HUNDRED SOLDIERS, ARMED WITH RIFLES, FOR EMBARKATION.

ALAS, IN THIS ERA OF BEVERAGE-POWERED WARFARE, TEA SUPPLIES RAN LOW. THE ALBIONESE ENTERED THE BLACK AGE, IN WHICH ONE PERCENT

OF THE POPULOUS ENJOYED NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THE TEA. THE UPPER CLASS, OR UPPER CRUST AS THE BREADWINNER'S GUILD WOULD HAVE IT, DRANK TEA, WHILST THE WORKING CLASS, IN THE BLACK SHADOWS CAST BY THE TURRETS OF THE CASTLES AND MANORS, DRANK COFFEE.

IT IS ON THIS NOTE THAT WE INTRODUCE A NEW HERO: DUDLEY FOXE, A STEAM MECHANIC AND BEVERAGE ENTHUSIAST. IN AN ERA DURING WHICH TEA WAS HARD TO COME BY, DUDLEY DID MOST OF HIS WORK BOTH FOR MONEY AND FOR TEA. HE BECAME INFATUATED WITH A WONDERFUL WOMAN OF THE UPPER CRUST BY THE NAME OF LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY, WHO MADE THE MOST ENCHANTING TEA HE HAD EVER TASTED.

MEANWHILE, GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE HAD ALSO BECOME SMITTEN WITH THE LADY WEATHERBY AND HAD BEGUN SEEING HER WEEKLY. DUDLEY WAS ALSO SEEING HER WEEKLY. THEY NEVER REALLY KNEW THE OTHER EXISTED—UNTIL ONE RAINY TUESDAY.

THIS IS THE STORY OF THAT TUESDAY AND WHAT ENSUED IN THE TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING IT. WHAT MADE THE GENERAL APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF THE UNSUNG HEROES, THE TRUE MEN OF WAR—ESPECIALLY ONE FEARLESS MAN OF INDUSTRY, DUDLEY FOXE.

DUDLEY WINCED AT THE COFFEE AS IT WENT DOWN. POWERFUL, BUT ITS ENERGY UNREFINED AND RAW, IT WAS A DRINK FAR MORE SUITED TO THE RUGGED AMERICANS. GIVEN THE CHANCE, THOUGH, HE THOUGHT HE COULD GET USED TO IT. HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE.

HE GLANCED ACROSS THE BLUEPRINTS. A MIGHTY MACHINE, TO BE SURE, BUT THERE WAS ONE OR TWO THINGS MISSING, ONE OR TWO THINGS LEFT TO CHANCE, PERHAPS THREE OR FOUR UNTESTED AND EXPERIMENTAL. STILL, GENERAL GALLANTE NEEDED IT ON THE 20TH. IT WAS THE 19TH, AND DUDLEY'S DAY OFF, IF YOU PLEASE. HE COULDN'T DO ALL THE DETAIL WORK ON HIS DAY OFF, THERE WAS FAR TOO MUCH RELAXATION TO BE DONE, AND DUDLEY FOUND THAT ON THE AVERAGE DAY OFF, THERE WAS NEVER ENOUGH TIME TO EFFICIENTLY RELAX IN AS MANY WAYS AS HE HAD PLANNED. OFTEN HE'D HAVE TO CUT DOWN TO ONE GAME OF WHIST, ONE GAME OF CHESS, ONE JAUNT DOWN TO THE PUB, ONE WALK IN THE PARK, AND ELIMINATE OTHER ACTIVITIES ENTIRELY, SUCH AS ENJOYING A BOOK IN THE LIBRARY, PUNTING IN THE RIVER, BICYCLING AT DAWN, AND OTHER SUCH ACTIVITIES. DUDLEY FOXE FOUND, INVARIABLY, THAT HIS DAYS OFF WERE INDEED MORE CROWDED THAN HIS WORK DAYS, AND HE NEEDED, PERHAPS, A DAY OFF FROM DAYS OFF.

TODAY WAS THE PERFECT DAY. AS HE'D TAKEN HIS MORNING CONSTITUTIONAL THE OTHER DAY, HE PASSED BY THE GATES OF WEATHERBY MANOR, AND MET—PERHAPS MET IS A SLIGHT EXAGGERATION, MORE ENCOUN—NO, HE DIDN'T DO THAT EITHER. WHAT HE DID WAS WITNESS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD.

WHILE KING DAVID, BIBLICALLY, WAS FAR FROM THE LORD'S WILL WATCHING BATHSHEBA, LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY WAS NOT BATHING, NOR WAS SHE DRESSED FOR THAT OCCASION. SIPPING TEA DUDLEY KNEW HAD TO TASTE DIVINE ON A SECOND-STORY BALCONY, SHE HAD ALL THE QUALITIES HE DESIRED IN A DREAM: PHYSICAL ATTRACTION, SOPHISTICATION, A PLEASANT BLEND OF IDYLIC RELAXATION AND FORMALITY, AND OF COURSE, TEA.

MR. FOXE, THEN, WASTED NO TIME IN MAKING THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE ENCHANTING LADY WEATHERBY. IN A TRICE, HE'D ADDRESSED HER GARDENER, WHO, AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, WAS TRIMMING THE HEDGES JUST INSIDE THE MASSIVE, WROUGHT-IRON GATES. A FEW MOMENTS OF PERSUASION WAS ALL IT TOOK TO ATTAIN AN AUDIENCE WITH LADY WEATHERBY. SINCE THAT DAY, DUDLEY GREW MORE AND MORE CLOSE TO EVELYN, VISITING HER EVERY TUESDAY, A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE SEEMING LESS AND LESS OF A FANTASY EVERY WEEK.

GENERAL GALLANTE STRAIGHTENED HIS MEDALS ONE BY ONE, PART OF HIS TWO-HOUR MORNING ROUTINE. SMOOTHING THE SMART RED UNIFORM OUT, STOPPING THE WRINKLES IN THEIR TRACKS, HE MADE A LAST QUICK PASS OVER HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE DECIDING HIS MOUSTACHE NEEDED STILL MORE ATTENTION.

HE TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT THE LETTER.

"GEN. GALLANTE, THE WAR MACHINE APPROACHES COMPLETION. IT SHALL BE READY ON THE 20TH, THOUGH BE ADVISED WE WON'T HAVE TIME TO TEST OUT ALL OF ITS FUNCTIONS, AND IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE AN INEFFICIENCY OR TWO MIGHT HAVE SLIPPED BY. HOWEVER, I AM CERTAIN IT IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL AND ENTIRELY OPERATIONAL, AND FAIRLY CONFIDENT YOU WILL BE SATISFIED WITH ITS CAPABILITIES.

SINCERELY,

DUDLEY FOXE

HMMPH. ENOUGH TIME FOR THE BLOODY THING TO BE TESTED IN COMBAT; HE DIDN'T HAVE THE LEISURE TO TINKER AROUND WITH THE WAR MACHINE WHEN IT WAS ALREADY BADLY NEEDED AT THE FRONT—THE PLANS FOR THE ALBIONESE CECILS HAD SOMEHOW LEAKED ACROSS THE BORDER, AND NOW ON THE ROLLING GOLD HILLS OF BISCUIT HEIGHTS BATTLED NOT ONE, BUT TWO RACES OF CAFFEINE-POWERED MECHANICAL MAN. THE NOSIRAN CECILS, DUBBED CAFFEINE-ROTARY LEGIONNAIRES, CARLS, RATHER THAN THE DIGNIFIED CAFFEINE-ENERGY CLOCKWORK INDEPENDENT LEGIONNAIRES, DID LACK THE PERSONALITY OF THEIR ALBIONESE COUNTERPARTS. PERHAPS THE PAINTED MOUSTACHES AND SIDEBURNS HELPED. THE GENERAL HAD ONLY ONE MORE DAY IN HIS LEAVE, AND HE WAS DETERMINED TO SPEND IT WITH HIS LADYLOVE, LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY. HE ALLOWED HIMSELF FEW PLEASURES AND PRIVILEGES ABOVE HIS MEN APART FROM THE HIGH-QUALITY TOBACCO HE SMOKED AND THE TEA HE ENJOYED; LADY WEATHERBY WAS CHIEF AMONG HIS PLEASURES AND PRIVILEGES, AND HE INTENDED TO SEE HER EVERY CHANCE HE GOT.

FURTHERMORE, TODAY SEEMED TO BE THE PERFECT DAY. HE HAD GOTTEN ALL HIS AFFAIRS IN ORDER THE OTHER DAY, AND WAS READY TO RETURN TO HIS REGIMENT. TODAY HE HAD ENTIRELY TO HIMSELF. AND EVIE. ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD.

"BEGGING SIR'S PARDON," COUGHED HIS BATMAN POLITELY, "YOUR WEEKLY RENDEZVOUS WITH THE CHARMING LADY IS ON THURSDAY, IS IT NOT?"

"YES, BUT I GO OFF TO WAR TOMORROW. TODAY I SAY GOODBYE TO EVIE. SHE'LL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY MY EARLY ARRIVAL."

GENERAL GALLANTE STEPPED OUT INTO THE WONDERFULLY CLEAN AIR OF ALBION CITY, TAKING A DEEP BREATH AND PERMITTING HIMSELF A GRIN. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO LADY WEATHERBY'S MANOR.

# The Aether Review Of Books

A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

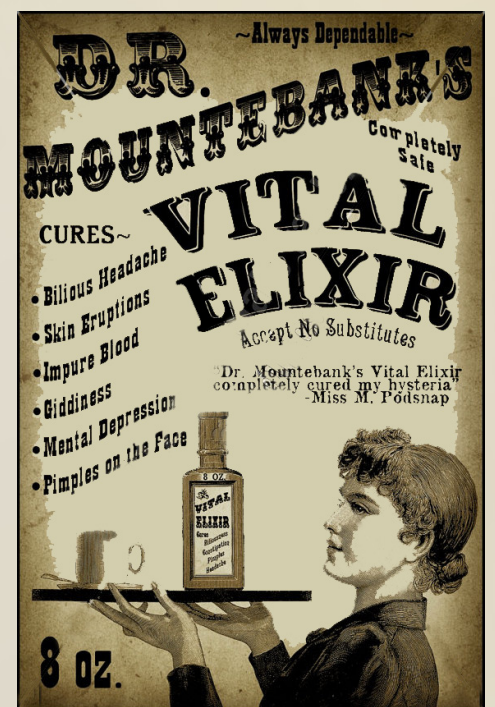
**W**ELL READERS, I CAN ONLY TELL YOU THAT THE SHORT STORY BY ASHER DAVIAN THAT WAS AN ABSOLUTE DELIGHT! THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MONARCHY OF ALBION AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF NOSIRA OVER HOW MUCH JAM, IN OUNCES, SHOULD BE SERVED AT TEA WAS A HYSTERICAL CATALYST TO BEGIN "THE BEASTLY WAR" BETWEEN THESE TWO NATIONS. THE WAR THEN PROCEEDED UTILIZING HOT BEVERAGES TO FUEL THE WEAPONS THE SOLDIERS FLUNG AT ONE ANOTHER. THIS OF COURSE LED TO THE GREAT TEA SHORTAGE, AND COFFEE BEING SOCIALLY RELEGATED AS BEVERAGE FOR THE POOR. I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE DEVASTATION THAT IRON SOLDIERS FUELLED BY TEA AND COFFEE COULD WREAK (ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING ALL OF THE HAVOC THAT MERE MORTALS CAN CAUSE ON THE AVERAGE DAY WHEN THE AFOREMENTIONED SUBSTANCES ARE IN THEIR SYSTEMS). THIS CHARMING SATIRE IS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND TO BE FEATURED IN THE AETHER CHRONICLE, AND IT CERTAINLY WON'T BE THE LAST! THE AUTHOR HANDLED THE "CAUSE FOR WAR" WITH UTTER DERISION, MAKING A MOCKING PARALLEL TO THE VARIOUS CAUSES FOR DISPUTE WE CHOOSE TO QUARREL OVER IN DAILY LIFE, AS WELL AS THE EVER-WOUNDED PRIDE OF THE MILITARY. THE FOLLOWING IRONY OF THE TWO NATIONS' RELEGATING CERTAIN HOT BEVERAGES TO CERTAIN CLASSES IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN THE WAR, IS A WICKED IMPLICATION OF ELITISM AND THE DISPUTE BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES. THE MESSAGE SEEMS TO BE THAT HUMAN BEINGS WILL FIGHT OVER ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING; FURTHERMORE, THEY WILL CONSIDER IT A COMPLIMENT OF THEIR STRONG CHARACTERS, AND EVER A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC TO THEIR RESPECTIVE NATIONS, TO CONTINUE WARRING LONG PAST REASON.

THE WONDERFUL TWIST IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS PIECE CENTRED AN UNLIKELY COURTSHIP BETWEEN THREE VERY DISSIMILAR INDIVIDUALS: ONE, A LOWER CLASS MECHANIC, THE SECOND A HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICER, AND THIRD, A WEALTHY WOMAN OF THE UPPER CLASS. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS IS A WONDERFUL WAY OF HIGHLIGHTING THE EFFECT OF THE BEASTLY WAR ON ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY. IT ALSO NICELY TIES IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A DISSOLUTION OF THE CASTE CONSTRAINTS THAT HAVE THUS FAR RESTRICTED CERTAIN BEVERAGES TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS, ALL IN THE NAME OF "LOVE." I FOUND THE NOTION OF THESE TWO GENTLEMAN COURTING THE SAME WOMAN TO BE A DELIGHTFUL TONGUE-IN-CHEEK REPRESENTATION OF WHATEVER "LOVE" MIGHT MEAN ACCORDING TO UPPER CLASS COURTSHIP RITUALS IN A TIME OF WAR. I WAS VERY EAGER TO SEE HOW LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY WOULD REACT TO THE ROMANTIC INTEREST FROM TWO SUCH DISSIMILAR CHARACTERS. AND, OF COURSE, THE QUESTION: HOW WILL TEA AND COFFEE FEATURE IN THESE RELATIONSHIPS? BEING A MEMBER OF THE "UPPER CRUST" AS THE BREADWINNER'S GUILD WOULD HAVE IT (ADORABLE!) LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY DRINKS TEA. AS A MEMBER OF THE LOWER CLASS (CRUMBS?) DUDLEY FOXE THE MECHANIC IS FORCED TO DRINK COFFEE. AS A GENERAL CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN WAR, AND IN CHARGE OF THE MOST RECENTLY UPGRADED WAR MACHINE, I WOULD IMAGINE GENERAL

GALLANTE IS MIDWAY BETWEEN THE TWO. HOW WILL THE MILITARY CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MONARCHY OF ALBION AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF NOSIRA IMPACT THESE BURGEONING RELATIONSHIPS? POLITICALLY, THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ARE AT COMPLETE OPPOSITION—HOW WILL GENERAL GALLANTE FEEL KNOWING HIS DIRECT COMPETITION FOR MARRIAGE TO A WEALTHY UPPER CLASS WOMAN IS A MERE MECHANIC IN HIS OWN EMPLOY? FINALLY, WILL THERE BE A SATIRICAL SLANT TO THIS NOTION OF "LOVE IN A TIME OF WAR"? AT THIS STAGE THERE ARE ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES, BUT WE WON'T KNOW MORE UNTIL THE NEXT INSTALMENT!



IN ADDITION TO WHAT WE HAVE READ, ASHER DAVIAN IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON *THE DAEDALUS CRISIS*, BEST DESCRIBED AS MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS IN THE AIR, WITH SKY PIRATES, FISH PEOPLE AND KRAKENS; *LOGOS*, A POSTAPOCALYPTIC TALE OF BOOKHUNTERS, AND *THE COMET EXPRESS*, A SPACE WESTERN SET ON MARS, 1889; *HER MAJESTY'S THIEF*, A LATE-RENAISSANCE ADVENTURE IN WHICH A ROYALLY-COMMISSIONED STREET THIEF IS PITTED AGAINST A CONSPIRACY EUROPEAN IMMORTAL ALCHEMISTS AND JAPANESE-BUILT CLOCKWORK KILLER GEISHAS; AND *CUCKOO*, A SURVIVAL HORROR ADVENTURE CONCERNING A YOUNG GIRL AND A CLOCKWORK BIRD, IN WHICH SHE'S SOUGHT BY A LONG-DEAD ALCHEMIST TO DISTIL THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY FROM HER—TIME TRAVEL AND ZOMBIES INCLUDED. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS EXCITING NEW TALENT, PLEASE VISIT [HTTP://PROPHETSTORM.DEVIANTART.COM/](http://PROPHETSTORM.DEVIANTART.COM/).



SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, SUBMIT YOUR WRITTEN WORK, OR OFFER A TIP REGARDING A POTENTIAL STORY (EG. POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, CRIME, SPECIAL EVENTS, ART AND MUSIC) PLEASE CONTACT LESLIE ORTON AT: [ORTONLJ@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:ORTONLJ@HOTMAIL.COM).



NEW AUTHOR ASHER DAVIAN

# Travel

## Egypt, By Amelia Owen Kibbey

GYPT!

**E**

WE ARRIVED IN ALEXANDRIA AT SEVEN IN THE MORNING AND PROMPTLY BOARDED THE TRAIN FOR CAIRO. UNBURDENED OF OUR LUGGAGE AND DRESSED

FOR THE OCCASION, WE TOOK TO THE DINING CAR AND SAT DOWN TO HAVE OUR FIRST LAND BASED AFTERNOON TEA IN AGES.

THE CAIRO EXPRESS IS THE FINEST TRAIN TRAVEL IN ALL OF THE CONTINENT, WITH TIGHTLY BOUND, SMOOTH LEATHER SEATING AND THE SCENT OF IMPORTED LILY OF THE VALLEY PERMEATING THE AIR. WHILE OTHER LOCOMOTIVE PASSENGERS SHRINK FROM THE HEAT OF THE DESERT SUN IN CARS WHOSE VENTILATION IS TENTATIVE AT BEST, GUESTS ON BOARD THE CAIRO EXPRESS ARE TRANSPORTED BELOW GROUNDS FOR MOST OF THE JOURNEY AND KEPT COMFORTABLE FOR THE DURATION.

THE OVERSIZED VIEWING WINDOWS ARE COVERED WITH POLISHED COPPER SHIELDS WHICH REFLECT MAGNIFICENTLY INWARD, PRODUCING A SOFT GLOW INSIDE THE CARS THAT MIMICS THE LIGHT OF THE GOLDEN HOUR. THE INTERIORS STAY COMFORTABLE THROUGHOUT DUE TO THE DEPTH AT WHICH THE BEAST TRAVELS UNDER THE EARTH. THERE IS THE AFOREMENTIONED DINING CAR AS WELL AS A SMOKING LOUNGE (PLENTY OF HOOKAH FOR YOU TO SAMPLE), AND AN ENTERTAINMENT COACH THAT CONSISTS SOLELY OF MIDDLE EASTERN RHYTHMS.

MOST EXCITING IS THE ARRIVAL AT GIZA. WE AROSE FROM THE DEPTHS DIRECTLY UNDER THE SPHINX, ROARING UP AND BACK INTO THE DESSERT BETWEEN ITS PAWS, BLOWING SAND OUT IN EITHER DIRECTION LIKE AN APPROACHING STORM. THE COPPER PLATING ON THE WINDOWS WERE RETRACTED TO GIFT US WITH OUR FIRST VIEW OF THE ANCIENT AND STORIED CITY.

DAY 1: ALICE AND I PARTICIPATED IN AN ALL DAY PYRAMID EXCURSION. OUR GUIDES PREPARED US WELL WITH WATER, HATS AND SUNSHADES, EVEN INSTRUCTING US ON THE PROPER WAY TO MOUNT A DISAGREEABLE CAMEL. WE RODE ACROSS THE DESSERT IN HIGH STYLE AND TREKKED DOWNWARD TO THE MOST FORBIDDEN CHAMBER OF THE DEAD IN OUR FIRST FORAY. I WAS DISMAYED TO DISCOVER THAT WE DIDN'T NEED ANY TYPE OF TOOLKIT FOR OUR ENDEAVORS. I'D THOUGHT TO DO SOME DIGGING MYSELF. SADLY, WE WERE THERE STRICTLY AS VISITORS.

IT WAS HOTTER THAN HELL DOWN THERE. NEITHER OF US CARED A HOOT. BY THE TIME WE RESURFACED I WAS COVERED IN DUST AND THOROUGHLY ENAMORED BY THE PROPHECY OF THE UNDERWORLD. WE WERE LED THROUGH CORRIDORS NOT SEEN BY HUMAN EYES FOR THE PAST FOUR MILLENNIA, HALLS THAT WERE COVERED IN HIEROGLYPHS WHICH OUR GUIDES HAD TO

PATIENTLY TRANSLATE FOR US, AND BROUGHT INTO THE MAIN TOMB ITSELF FOR INSPECTION. THE SARCOPHAGUS WAS OPEN AND EMPTY, THE MUMMY WITHIN HAVING ALREADY BEEN TAKEN TO THE MUSEUM NEARBY FOR STUDY. THE ROOM ITSELF WAS FILLED WITH OBJECTS DESIGNED TO AID THE PHARAOH IN HIS JOURNEY TO THE OTHER REALM. WE WERE WARNED NOT TO TOUCH ANY OF THEM, A THREAT THAT DID NOT PASS IDLY FROM MY EARS TO MY CONSCIENCE.

NOT EXACTLY. WHILE I WOULD NEVER STEAL AN OBJECT OF ANTIQUITY, A LEFTOVER SCARAB CAN HARDLY BE CONSIDERED A THEFT OF ROYAL PROPORTION. I STUCK THE LITTLE BUGGER IN MY POCKET WHILE NO ONE WAS LOOKING AND CONTINUED ON WITH THE TOUR, NONPLUSSED. IT WAS ONLY DURING OUR SUNSET PICNIC THAT I CONFESSED TO ALICE, AND BOY DID SHE FUSS OVER IT! SHE RANTED ON ABOUT CURSES AND REPREHENSIBLE BEHAVIOR UNTIL I SILENCED HER WITH A BIT OF LAMB FROM MY PLATE.

ALICE IS A PUSHOVER FOR GOOD FOOD. AND IT TRULY WAS! WE SAT AT THE BASE OF ONE OF THE PYRAMIDS, BLANKET SPREAD OUT OVER THE SANDS, AND ENJOYED FRUITY RED WINE AND SLOPPY, SUCCULENT MEAT FLAVORED WITH SEA SALT AND SPICES. THE CAMELS SNORTED SOFTLY IN THE BACKGROUND AND THE SUN DIPPED LOW IN THE HORIZON, A PERFECT END TO OUR FIRST DAY IN THE DESERT.

DAY 2: I LOVE MY ALICE DEARLY, BUT SHE HARANGUED ME ALL NIGHT ABOUT THE STOLEN SCARAB AND ANYTHING UNTOWARD THAT OCCURRED SHE BLAMED ON MY TRANSGRESSION AND THE CURSE. SO MUCH SO THAT THE NEXT DAY I CANCELLED OUR EARLY PLANS IN FAVOR OF RETURNING TO THE VERY SAME PYRAMID TO RETURN MY PURLOINED TREASURE, JUST TO APPEASE THE GIRL. I SHALL SPARE YOU THE DETAILS BUT ALLOW ME TO SUM UP THE EVENT IN THIS MANNER: RENTED CAMELS, NO GUIDES, SUSPICIOUS LOOKS, INCOGNITO MOVES TO WORM OUR WAY BACK INTO THE DEPTHS, SLIGHT OF HAND MOVEMENT TO PLACE THE "EVIL" SCARAB BACK IN ITS SPOT ON THE WALL BESIDE ISIS, SIGHS OF RELIEF, FURTIVE GIGGLES, DIRTY LOOKS, AND A RACE BACK ACROSS THE DESERT TO RETURN THOSE SPITTING BEASTS BY THE STROKE OF ONE O'CLOCK.

DAY 3: THE MADNESS THAT IS CAIRO. WE VISITED THE SOUKS, PERUSED THE TACKY AND THE WONDERFUL IN THE REALM OF SOUVENIR SHOPPING. THERE WERE LOVELY GOGGLES FOR THE AVID DESERT WANDERER, NOVELS IN ARABIC COVERING A MYRIAD OF TOPICS, HOOKAHS GALORE, LIVE SNAKES, TAPESTRIES, BRASS TRINKET BOXES, AND ALL SORTS OF HEAVENLY SPICES.

THE HIGHLIGHT WAS TRAVELING TO THE UNIVERSITY UPON INVITATION FROM DR. SALIM HADDAD, A COLLEAGUE OF ALICE'S FATHER, WHO SPECIALIZES IN THE STUDY OF ANCIENT PAPYRUS. WHEN WE ARRIVED HE WAS ELBOW

DEEP IN THE EXAMINATION OF A PIECE HE HAD DATED TO APPROXIMATELY 2600 B.C. THOUGH WE DID NOT HANDLE IT OURSELVES, WE WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXAMINE ITS CONTENTS. DR. HADDAD POINTED OUT RARE BITS OF REVEALING INFORMATION, INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE OF A BEAUTIFUL CAT-LIKE CREATURE WITH A CARTOUCHE OF LEONIDA THE BURDENED UNDERNEATH IT.

DEAR READERS, IT WAS MECHANICAL IN NATURE! I HAD THOUGHT AUTOMATONS TO BE THE PRODUCT OF OUR OWN MODERN TIMES. I WAS STUNNED TO FIND THEM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. THEY WERE NOT COMMON, BUT RATHER THE PREROGATIVE OF THE ROYALS AND THOSE IN GREAT POWER. THERE WERE BABOON PETS, BIRDS IN THE PALACES, EVEN DOGS THAT ROAMED THE ALLEYWAYS LATE AT NIGHT PROWLING FOR SNEAK THIEFS TO PUNISH.

DAY 4: TIME TO SAIL UP THE NILE! ALICE AND I SPENT A LANGUID AFTERNOON ON BOARD OUR VESSEL, SIPPING ICED SWEET HIBISCUS DRINKS AND PLAYING WHIST OUT ON THE DECK. THE VEGETATION WAS LUSH-A REAL CHANGE FROM OUR DESERT HOME OF THE PAST FEW DAYS- THE BIRDS SWARMED OVERHEAD, AND I CREDIT A FEW CROCODILES PROWLED IN THE WATER BENEATH. WE MADE THE TRANSITION INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN AND SCOOTED OVER TO DOCK AT THE PORT OF ALEXANDRIA JUST BEFORE HIGH NOON.

SUCH A COSMOPOLITAN CITY! THE WEALTHY VACATION THERE AND IT WAS EVIDENT THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT FILLED ITS COFFERS FROM THE MOMENT WE ALIGHTED FROM OUR SHIP. WE'D HAD A GLIMPSE OF IT ON OUR INITIAL ARRIVAL BUT HERE WE WERE SHOWN THE FULL BERTH OF WHAT IT HAD TO OFFER. THERE WERE CASINOS, HOUSES OF ILL REPUTE, WONDERFUL SAILING JAUNTS WITH CONTRAPTIONS THAT TOOK TO FLIGHT WHEN THE WATER TRAFFIC BECAME TOO CONGESTED, AND THE BEST FOOD THIS SIDE OF THE NILE. ALICE AND I FEASTED UNTIL WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT EXPLODE THEN ATTENDED A DANCEHALL ROWDY WEARING BELLY DANCERS' BELLS AROUND OUR ANKLES.

AN IMPRESSION OF EGYPT.....  
THE COLORS: ROSE, BURNT RED, AND ORANGE MIXED WITH AN EVER PRESENT OCHRE CARAMEL.  
THE TASTES: SAVORY SAUCES, RICH MEAT, OPEN FIRES, EXTRAORDINARY TEAS.  
THE SMELLS: ENDLESS SPICES! TOBACCO SMOKE, LEATHER, AND LILY OF THE VALLEY (IN TRAIN ONLY).  
THE SOUNDS: MARKET COMMERCE, PALM FRONDS BRUSHING AGAINST YOUR BEDROOM WINDOW AT NIGHT. THE WHISPER OF THE PHARAOHS ACROSS TIME. TRAIN WHISTLES.  
THE FEEL: SAND IN YOUR BOOTS, HUMIDITY IN YOUR HAIR AND ON YOUR CLOTHES.

YOU MUST VISIT EGYPT BEFORE YOU TAKE YOUR LAST BREATH. THERE IS NOTHING ELSE TO BE SAID ABOUT IT.