

# The Aether Chronicle

The Imaginary Alternate History of the Steampunk Empire

From Friday October 31, 2014 to Friday November 14, 2014



CARICATURE OF THE SERIAL KILLER JACK THE RIPPER, PENNED BY AN ARTIST UNKNOWN.

## “SPRINGHEEL” JACK THE RIPPER CAPTURED!

By KENT WHITTINGTON

IN EVENTS BEFITTING THIS TIME OF YEAR, THIS REPORTER CAN NOW CONFIRM BEYOND ANY REASONABLE DOUBT THAT “SPRINGHEEL” JACK THE RIPPER HAS INDEED BEEN CAPTURED! THIS IS NOT ONLY CONFIRMED BY SCOTLAND YARD AUTHORITIES, BUT BY AGENTS OF THE MOTHERHOUSE AS WELL AS YOUR INTREPID REPORTER. YES, THE RIPPER HAS BEEN CAUGHT, AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTIONS ARE NOW UNDER ARREST AND AWAITING TRIAL. ACCORDING TO MOTHERHOUSE AGENTS JOHANNES ABRAHAM AND ISABELLA STANTON, SEVERAL NIGHTS OF TRACKING THE DEVIL HAD GARNERED RESULTS MOST INTRIGUING.

FOR SEVERAL WEEKS NOW, AGENTS ABRAHAM AND STANTON HAVE BEEN PATROLLING THE WHITECHAPEL DISTRICT IN HOPES OF LOCATING THE RIPPER’S LAIR. AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, WHITECHAPEL HAS A REPUTATION FOR CRIME AND THE SCENE OF MANY OF THE RIPPER’S GRUESOME ATTACKS. IT WAS DURING ONE SUCH PATROL LAST WEEK WHEN ABRAHAM AND STANTON CAUGHT SIGHT OF A SHADOWY FIGURE SKIRTING ITS WAY ALONG THE DISTRICT’S ROOFTOPS. RATHER THAN GIVE CHASE, THE AGENTS DECIDED TO FOLLOW AS BEST AS THEY COULD, HOPING TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THE CREATURE.

THE CREATURE LEAD THE TWO INTO A NEARBY SHIPYARD AND ENTERED A CURRENTLY DERELICT FISHERY. THE TWO FOLLOWED, MAKING THEIR WAY TO THE ENTRANCE.

“BEFORE WE COULD ENTER,” MRS. STANTON SAID, “JOHANNES AND I HEARD CHANTING COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR. RATHER THAN RUSH IN BLINDLY WE HAD DECIDED TO OBSERVE. WE FOUND A NEARBY WINDOW THAT HAD BEEN BROKEN INTO IN THE BUILDING’S PAST AND COULD HEAR THE CHANTING MUCH MORE DISTINCTLY THAN BEFORE.”

“I BID ISABELLA TO USE THE INFRARED LENSES ATTACHED TO HER GOGGLES TO DETERMINE THEIR NUMBERS AND GENERAL LOCATION WITHIN THE BUILDING,” MR. ABRAHAM CONTINUED. “AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES, ISABELLA HAD FOUND NOTHING AND FAILING, WE ENTERED VERY CAREFULLY AND QUIETLY, SO AS NOT TO AROUSE ANYONE’S SUSPICIONS. WE DREW OUR WEAPONS AND SEARCHED THE BUILDING, MOVING STEALTHILY TOWARD THE OPPOSITE SIDE.

“AS WE MOVED CLOSER TO THE CENTER OF THE BUILDING THE CHANTING BECAME MORE DISTINCT; SOMETHING LIKE LATIN, BUT MORE GUTTURAL. I COULD DETECT A THICKNESS IN THE AIR THAT MADE IT DIFFICULT TO BREATHE, THOUGH IT DID NOT SEEM TO DETER THOSE WHO WERE CHANTING AND I BEGAN TO SURMISE THAT THEY WERE, IN FACT, THE CAUSE.”

THE AGENTS DESCRIBED THE SCENE TO ME AS THEY REACHED THE SOURCE OF THE CHANTING; NINE FIGURES SAT IN WHAT TO STANTON AND ABRAHAM’S OPINION WAS A ‘MAGIC CIRCLE OF POWER.’ THEY DESCRIBED THE CIRCLE AS BEING DRAWN IN CHALK ON THE FLOOR IN SATANIC SCRIPT WHICH GLOWED A REDDISH HUE, GROWING MORE INTENSE AS THE FIGURES CONTINUED THEIR RITUAL. STANDING IN THE CENTER OF THE GROUP, WITH HIS ARMS OUTSTRETCHED AT HIS SIDES, WAS JACK, CLAD IN HIS HELMET AND SACKCLOTH GARMENTS THAT SEEMED TO SHIMMER AND RIPPLE AS IT SLOWLY FADED FROM HIS BODY.

AS THE TWO WATCHED, THE DEVILISH CLOTHING AND FEATURES OF JACK WERE REPLACED BY THOSE OF A TALL MAN CLAD IN GENTLEMEN’S ATTIRE. WHAT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE WAS THAT, WHILE HE AND HIS CLOTHING HAD TRANSFORMED, THE BOOTS HAD NOT. STANTON DESCRIBED THE BOOTS AS MECHANICAL IN NATURE; POLISHED LEATHER SURROUNDED BY METALLIC BRACINGS AND A STEAM DRIVEN ARMATURE CONNECTED TO A PNEUMATIC SPRING IN THE HEEL OF EACH BOOT.

“WE DEDUCED THAT THE MAN IN QUESTION WAS PART OF A SECRET CABAL,” STANTON SAID, “AND THAT THE BOOTS WERE A VESSEL FOR A POSSESSING DEMON. WE WERE NOT AWARE OF THE NATURE OF THE CABAL, BUT SURMISED THAT THEY WORSHIPPED THE DEMON, WHO USED THE BOOTS TO POSSESS ONE OF THEIR OWN IN ORDER TO COMMIT MURDER AND MAYHEM.”

BEFORE THEY COULD BE DISCOVERED, STANTON AND ABRAHAM OPENED FIRE ON THE MEN WITH THEIR ‘LIGHTNING GUNS,’ INCAPACITATING THEM. THE FIGURE IN THE

CENTER, MOMENTARILY SHIELDED BY THE OTHERS, INSTANTANEOUSLY TRANSFORMED BACK INTO JACK AND, WITH WHAT THE TWO DESCRIBED AS “THE MOST DEVILISH GRIN IMAGINABLE,” LEAPT FROM THE CIRCLE AND CAME TO REST ON A SUPPORT BEAM ABOVE THEM.

AS THE TWO WATCHED, JACK BEGAN TO PRANCE ABOUT AND DANCE, TAUNTING THE TWO. JACK SURPRISED THEM AT THAT POINT BY KNEELING DOWN ACROSS THE IRON BEAM, SUPPORTED BY HIS HANDS, AND BEGAN RECITING POETIC PROSE, WHICH I HAVE ADDED HERE FOR YOU, THE READER, TO CONSIDER.

THEE AND THINE,  
SHALL SEE ME DINE  
UPON THE SOULS I TAKE.  
THEE AND THINE,  
SHALL DRINK MY WINE,  
FROM THE BLOOD I MAKE.  
HAVE A CARE,  
FOOLISH PAIR,  
ALWAYS WATCH YOUR BACK,  
FOR IF YOU DON’T,  
I’LL HAVE YOUR THROAT  
AND YOUR SOUL BELONGS TO JACK!

JACK SMILED A GRIN SO WIDE THEN THAT IT LITERALLY STRETCHED EAR TO EAR, SO THE TWO CLAIM. IT WAS AT THAT VERY MOMENT THAT ABRAHAM ACTED, FIRING HIS LIGHTNING GUN NOT AT JACK, BUT AT THE IRON CROSSBEAM. “AS IRON IS A METAL, IT CONDUCTS ELECTRICITY,” ABRAHAM STATED, “IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THAT IF ONE COULD ELECTRIFY THE BEAM, JACK WOULD RECEIVE THE FULL VOLTAGE THROUGH HIS EXPOSED BODY”

INDEED, THIS PROVED TO BE THE CASE AS A STUNNED JACK, RECEIVING THE SHOCK, FELL FROM THE BEAM TO THE FLOOR, BREAKING THE NECK OF HIS POSSESSED VICTIM IN THE PROCESS. JACK RIPPLED AND FADED FROM THE MAN’S FEATURES ONCE AGAIN, REVEALING THE DEAD GENTLEMAN AND ENDING THE TERROR OF “SPRINGHEEL” JACK THE RIPPER ONCE AND FOR GOOD.

SCOTLAND YARD WAS QUICKLY NOTIFIED AND APPREHENDED THE REMAINING NINE MEN AND THE CORPSE OF THE TENTH MAN. THE YARD REFUSES, AT THIS WRITING, TO DISCLOSE THE IDENTITY OF THE POSSESSED GENTLEMAN AND THIS REPORTER SUSPECTS A COVER-UP; THAT THE GENTLEMAN IN QUESTION IS PART OF LONDON’S UPPER CRUST. AS TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE STRANGE BOOTS, THEY HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO THE MOTHERHOUSE FOR SAFEKEEPING, AS THE AGENTS THEREIN SUSPECT THE BOOTS TO BE THE DIRECT LINK BETWEEN THE WEARER AND THE POSSESSING DEMON. I AM ASSURED THAT THE BOOTS ARE IN SAFE KEEPING, LOCKED AWAY IN A VAULT AWAY FROM PRYING EYES AND, FOR THE MOMENT, SAFE.



## COURTESANS ARMED WITH DEADLY FANS SEEK JUSTICE!

WELL, DEAR READERS, THIS IS A STRANGE WORLD WE LIVE IN! AT ONE TIME DOXIES AND DOLLYMOPS COULD BE ONLY FOUND WALKING THE DOCKS OR DOWN DARK ALLEYS, BUT IN THIS MODERN DAY AND AGE, LONDON BOASTS A HIGH CALIBRE OF "WOMEN OF QUESTIONABLE MORALS." THESE WOMEN HAVE ASSUMED THE TITLE OF "COURTESAN", AND HAVE ATTRIBUTED CERTAIN HIGH-CLASS QUALITIES TO THE TERM. TODAY, A COURTESAN MUST BE CULTURED, SHE MUST BE EDUCATED, SHE MUST SPEAK SEVERAL FOREIGN LANGUAGES, AND SHE MUST BE WELL-TRAVELLED. COURTESANS ONLY PURCHASE CLOTHING ON LONDON'S HIGH-STREETS, THEY TRAVEL IN BLACK HANSOME CABS, AND THEY NEVER SEEK OUT CLIENTS THEMSELVES. THEY OPERATE SOLELY ON A REFERRAL BASIS, LEAVING THEIR ELEGANT CARDS ON THE DESKS OF THEIR CLIENTS, WHO THEN PASS IT ALONG TO SIMILAR LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT UNHEARD OF FOR GENTLEMEN TO COMMISSION SUCH A WOMAN FOR AN EVENING AT THE THEATRE, OR AS A COMPANION ON A BUSINESS TRIP TO EUROPE, OR INVITE SUCH A WOMAN TO SHARE THE HOLIDAYS. THEREFORE, COURTESANS ARE SKILLED IN THE ART OF CONVERSATION, THEY ARE GRACIOUS HOSTESSES, THEY REMAIN UP TO DATE ON CURRENT EVENTS, AND THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN ALL OF THE PROTOCOLS OF HIGH SOCIETY.

ALL OF THIS, DEAR READERS, WE KNEW. HOWEVER, THIS REPORTER HAS UNCOVERED SOME STARTLING REPORTS FROM NIGHT WATCHMEN OF SCOTLAND YARD, TALES WHICH ARE BOTH ALARMING AND RIVETING. SEVERAL CONSTABLES HAVE ENCOUNTERED WOMEN ON THE STREETS WHO HAVE JUST BEEN ATTACKED, THEIR PURSES STOLEN, THEIR CLOTHING TORN, AND THESE WOMEN CLAIM THAT THE ASSAULT MIGHT HAVE GONE MUCH FURTHER, HAD AN ELEGANT LADY BEARING A FAN NOT STEPPED IN AND FENDED OFF THE ATTACKERS! THIS IN ITSELF WOULD BE ASTOUNDING AND STRANGE, BUT THESE WOMEN GO ON TO DESCRIBE A METHOD OF SELF-DEFENCE THAT IS FRANKLY RIDICULOUS! THE CONSTABLES' REPORTS CLEARLY STATE

THAT THESE ELEGANT LADIES WHO RUSHED TO YOUNG WOMEN'S AID UTILIZED THEIR FANS AS SOME SORT OF WEAPON! APPARENTLY, THESE SEEMINGLY ORDINARY ACCESSORIES TO WOMEN OF A CERTAIN CLASS BORE FIERCE METAL BLADES, WHICH THE DEFENDERS USED TO SLICE AND JAB AT THE ATTACKER'S FACE. SCOTLAND YARD DID APPREHEND ONE OF THESE RUFFIANS, AND HE HAD SIMILAR WOUNDS TO WHAT WAS DESCRIBED, ACROSS HIS FACE, NECK AND ARMS.

FURTHERMORE, THE ATTACK ITSELF WAS DESCRIBED MORE LIKE A SEDUCTIVE *PAS DE DEUX* THAN A BRAWL. THE WOMEN MOVED WITH THE GRACE OF DANCERS, THE FANS SNAPPING OPEN AND CLOSED LIKE A BUTTERFLY'S WING. THESE WOMEN NEVER SAID A WORD TO THE WOMEN THEY SAVED; THEY SIMPLY DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARKNESS. OF COURSE SCOTLAND YARD IS AWARE OF A LONG-STANDING TRADITION FOR LADIES OF THE EVENING TO CARRY SMALL, CONCEALABLE WEAPONS ON THEIR PERSON, TO DISCOURAGE THE TEMPER OF THEIR CLIENTS. BUT SUCH A WEAPON AS HAS BEEN DESCRIBED HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN ON THE STREETS OF LONDON BEFORE! ACCORDING TO THIS REPORTER'S RESEARCH, THE FAN WITH ARTICULATED BLADES CAN BE TRACED ALL THE WAY TO JAPAN, WHERE THE FAN IS UTILIZED BY THE JAPANESE EQUIVALENT TO A COURTESAN, A GEISHA, AS AN AID DURING THEIR SIGNATURE DANCES. IN JAPAN FANS ARE SO DETAILED AND EXPERTLY PAINTED THEY ARE CONSIDERED A WORK OF ART, AND THE MOVEMENT OF THE FAN IN DANCE TO BE AS BEAUTIFUL AND FLUID AS A POEM. HOWEVER, SAID WOMEN DO ON OCCASION REQUIRE A MEANS OF DEFENCE, SO A GEISHA'S FAN WAS ALTERED SLIGHTLY TO BEAR BARBED SPIKES, AS WELL AS THE STICKS UTILIZED TO PIN HAIR. THESE TWO ITEMS WERE THE PERFECT CAMOUFLAGE FOR WEAPONS, AS A PROPER GEISHA IS NEVER WITHOUT EITHER, WITHDRAWING THEM WAS EXPECTED BY THEIR CLIENTS, AND A SUDDEN STRIKE PROVES AN EFFECTIVE DETERRENT. THEN THE WEAPON IS RETURNED TO ITS PLACE, EITHER IN THE HAIR, OR HANGING BY A SILK CORD FROM THE WRIST, ENSURING THAT ANY PASSERS-BY NEVER SEE A GEISHA HOLDING A WEAPON: JUST ONE OF THEIR PRETTY ACCESSORIES. IN JAPAN, THESE DEFENSIVE FANS ARE KNOWN AS "TESSEN".

AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE FIRST IDENTIFIED THESE WOMEN AS COURTESANS TO SCOTLAND YARD, BASED ON A DESCRIPTION OF THE ATTACK BY ONE OF THE WITNESSES. A CONVERSATION WITH THIS ANONYMOUS SOURCE REVEALED MORE TRUTHS TO THE HISTORY OF FANS IN FEMALE SOCIETY:

ANONYMOUS: "THE LANGUAGE OF THE FAN DATES BACK HUNDREDS OF YEARS. IT IS A LANGUAGE OF CLANDESTINE LOVERS, SPEAKING ACROSS A CROWDED PUBLIC FORUM, WITHOUT EVER SAYING A WORD. THE SNAP OF A FAN RESTING AGAINST THE CHEEK CONVEYS A WARNING THAT ONE IS BEING WATCHED; THE SNAP OF A FAN CLOSED IS A SILENT REJECTION; RESTING A CLOSED FAN AGAINST THE SHOULDER IMPLIES DEVOTION. ALL OF THESE COY AND COMPLEX EMOTIONS WERE ONCE CONVEYED THROUGH THE MOVEMENT OF A FAN.

IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF CHINA, FANS ARE A

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AMONGST WOMEN. WOMEN SHARE SECRETS, WARNINGS, MESSAGES OF HOPE, IN *NU SHU*, A LANGUAGE CHINESE WOMEN CREATED, BY WRITING THE MESSAGES ON PAPER FANS. THIS WAY WOMEN CAN COMMUNICATE IN SECRET, AVOIDING DETECTION FROM MEN. FANS HAVE A LONG-STANDING TRADITION OF BEING AN AID TO WOMEN, AND THAT IMPERATIVE STILL CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. A WOMAN WALKING THE STREETS MUST OFTEN RESORT TO VIOLENCE, AND UTILIZE WHATEVER TOOL COMES TO HAND: A PERFUME BOTTLE, THE HEEL OF A STILETTO, AN UMBRELLA. THE DICHOTOMY OF THE TESSEN PRESENTS A DELIGHTFUL CONTRAST: THE BEAUTY AND FRAGILITY OF A FAN, WITH THE DEADLY NATURE OF CONCEALED BLADES. A COURTESAN APPRECIATES SUCH A PERFECT METAPHOR: AFTER ALL, BEAUTY IS ITS OWN SORT OF DEADLY WEAPON. THESE TESSENS SIMPLY MAKE THAT KNOWLEDGE PLAIN TO ALL."

THIS INFORMATION PROVIDES A UNIQUE INSIGHT INTO THE MINDS OF THESE AVENGERS. COURTESANS ARE OFTEN LABELLED AS SNEAKY, UNDERHANDED, AND SLOVENLY CREATURES, WHO HAVE NO CARE FOR THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE, WHO HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THEIR BODIES, WHO ENCOURAGE THE SPREAD OF CERTAIN DISEASES IN LONDON. YET THESE COURTESANS CHOOSE TO STEP IN AND PREVENT WOMEN FROM COMING TO HARM. ARE THEY VIGILANTES? DO THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS METING OUT A HIGHER FORM OF JUSTICE? AND WHO ARE THESE WOMEN? COURTESANS BY NATURE ARE INSCRUTABLE, CAPABLE OF FADING INTO THE BACKDROP UNTIL THEY WISH TO MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN. PERHAPS THESE WOMEN WALK AMONGST US, PERHAPS THEY ARE NEIGHBOURS, ACQUAINTANCES, EVEN FRIENDS. THIS REPORTER IS KEEPING TABS ON THE HUNT FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS, AND WILL REPORT BACK WITH ANY NEW INFORMATION!



# The Aether Review Of Books

## Firefly Glade, By Alan Smith

ART 2

**P** AGAIN THE MUSIC CHANGES AND SHE LOOKS ABOUT SEEING THE OTHERS ON THE DANCE FLOOR OF THE POOL. TO HER GROWING AMAZEMENT SHE SEES

THE ETHEREAL BEAUTIES ALL ABOUT HER. WHEN ONE LADY OF MIST SMILES AT HER SHE IS AMUSED AND SURPRISED TO SEE THAT IT IS NOT FIREFLIES BUT FAIRIES THAT HAVE COAXED THE MIST IN TO DANCERS. SHE LOOKS ABOUT HER FROM ONE DANCER TO THE NEXT, EACH IS FLAWLESS IN DETAIL EACH ONE MOVING IN PERFECT TIME TO THE MUSIC AS IF THEY WERE COMPLETELY WHOLE PEOPLE, EVERY SWEEP OF A DRESS OR THE TAILS OF A COAT FOLLOWING SUITE AS IF THEY ARE MADE FROM CLOTH AND NOT MIST. HE WATCHES AS SHE TAKES IN THE SIGHT OF THE FIREFLY GLADE AND IT'S MAGICAL INHABITANCE. SHE TURNS LOOKING AT HIM, HER AMAZEMENT CLEARLY SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF THE FAIRY GLOW FROM THE OTHER DANCERS.

THE MUSIC SEEMS TO CHANGE ONCE AGAIN AND THE OTHER DANCERS MOVE OFF TO THE EDGE OF THE POOL AND HE FOLLOWS SUITE AND DANCES BACK TO THE GRASS THEN AND ONLY THEN DOES THE MUSIC COME TO AN END, LEAVING THE FOREST IN SILENCE. ONLY THEN DOES SHE REALIZE WHERE THEY HAD BEEN DANCING. WITH A SMILE OF WONDER ON HER LIPS SHE TIPTOES, CLOSES HER EYES AND KISSES HER HUSBAND. THE MOON LIGHT TAKES THAT MOMENT TO BREAK THROUGH THE CLOUDS FILLING THE GLADE WITH IT'S SILVERY LIGHT. SHE OPENS HER EYES AND WATCHES IN WONDER AS THE MIST OVER THE POOL SEEMS TO BE STIRRED BY THE LIGHT. AT FIRST IT REFLECTS FROM THE MIST THEN IT'S GLOW FILLS THE FOGGY FLOOR. AS THE SLOW CURRENT UNDER THE SURFACE GIVES MOTION TO THE MIST THE MOON LIGHT SLOWLY FADES FROM ABOVE BUT IN MAGICAL WONDER IT'S LIGHT HAS BEEN HELD CAPTIVE IN THE MIST AND A FLOATING GLOW COVERS THE POOL.

ONCE AGAIN THE FOREST RELEASES IT'S MUSIC AND THE FIREFLY DANCERS MOVE BACK TO THE POOL. THEY AS ONE TURN TO THE COUPLE AND BOW TO THEM, INVITING THEM TO ONCE AGAIN JOIN THE DANCE. HE LOOKS AT HER AND SHE BEAMS A SMILE AND NODS TO HIM. HE TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS ONCE AGAIN AND THEY STEP OFF IN TIME WITH THE MUSIC OF NATURE, MOVING WITHOUT HESITATION OVER THE WATER TO THE VERY CENTER OF THE POOL. AS THEY TAKE THE PLACE OF HONOR IN THE DANCE THE FIREFLY DANCERS MOVE AROUND THEM SWIRLING AND FLOWING IN TIME WITH THE MUSIC. THEY BOW WITH THEIR HEADS TO EACH DANCER AS THEY MOVE ABOUT THE COUPLE. THE MUSIC TAKES ON A MORE LIVELY PACE AND THEY IN TURN MOVE AND FLOW WITH IT'S HAPPY STRAINS.

SOMETHING TOUCHES HER HAIR AND HER LOVER STEPS BACK A STEP, ALL ABOUT HER THE GLOWING MIST BEGINS TO FLOW UPWARDS COVERING HIS WIFE IN A DRESS FORMED OF FOREST MAGIC. FAIRIES DANCE THROUGH THE VEIL OF MIST GIVING FORM AND ADDING DETAILS OF LIGHT. THE DRESS TAKES SHAPE AS IF A FLOWER WERE DRAPED OVER HER. HER BEAUTY IS TOUCHED WITH MAGIC THAT TAKES PHYSICAL FORM. HE SMILES TO HER AND MOVES BACK CLOSE, THE OTHER DANCERS HAVING

NEVER STOPPED THEIR DANCE MOVE CLOSE ENCOURAGING THEM TO REJOIN THE DANCE WHICH THEY WILLINGLY DO.

SLOWLY THE MUSIC BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO, AS THEY MOVE IN AND OUT OF THE OTHER DANCERS. AS THE MUSIC CLIMAXES THEY FIND THEMSELVES ONCE AGAIN ON THE EDGE OF THE BANK. MOONLIGHT ONCE AGAIN BREAKS THROUGH THE CLOUDS, ITS SHAFTS OF LIGHT STRIKING THE SURFACE OF THE POOL DRAWING THE MIST UPWARDS. THE DANCERS BEGIN TO MOVE INTO THE SHAFTS OF MOONLIGHT SPINNING AS THEY DO SO. WHEN EACH DANCER IS IN THE CENTER OF A BEAM OF MOONLIGHT THEIR FORM DISSIPATES AND THEY BECOME ONE WITH THE MOONBEAM. AS EACH MOONBEAM GROWS IT SPINS FASTER AND FASTER, THE FAIRIES LIGHT BEGINS TO PULSE IN TIME WITH THE MUSIC. WHEN EVERY DANCER HAS JOINED A MOON BEAM. AND THE SHAFTS OF LIGHT HAVE GROWN THICK WITH MIST. EVERY FAIRY CHANGES SAME COLOR. ONE IS BLUE, ANOTHER GREEN, YET ANOTHER PURPLE. WHEN EACH SHAFT OF MOON LIGHT AND MIST ARE COMPLETE. THE MOONLIGHT CUTS OFF LEAVING BEHIND GLOWING SWIRLING SHAFTS OF FAIRY LIGHT AND MIST. AND THEN WITH A FINAL SWELL THE MUSIC ENDS AND THE FOREST ONCE AGAIN FALLS SILENT AND DARK AS THE FIREFLY LIGHT WINKS OUT AS IF IT NEVER WAS AND THE SWIRLING COLUMNS OF MIST SLOWLY COLLAPSES BACK TO COVER THE BROOK.

THE MAN GENTLY PULLS HIS BEAUTIFUL BRIDE TO HIM AND HE KISSES HER SO PASSIONATELY IT SEEMS AS IF TIME SLOWS THEN STOPS ALL TOGETHER. FOR THE NIGHT DARK CLOUDS SLOW TO A CRAWL ACROSS THE SKY AND MOONLIGHT SPILLS FORTH FILLING THE GLADE WITH ITS SILVERY LIGHT. NO SOUND IS HEARD FROM THE FOREST OR WIND FILLED TREE TOPS AS THEIR EMBRACE CONTINUES AND THEIR KISS CREATES A MAGIC ALL ITS OWN. AS THEY SLOWLY PART TIME SEEMS TO CONTINUE ITS MARCH. BUT WHETHER IT IS THE MAGIC OF THIS PLACE OR SOMETHING FAR MORE MYSTERIOUS CALLED LOVE, THE MOONLIGHT LINGERS EVEN AFTER ITS FACE IS ONCE AGAIN HIDDEN BEHIND THE CLOUDS.

"I LOVE YOU MY BEAUTIFUL WIFE."

"AND I LOVE YOU MY HANSOM HUSBAND."

STEPPING BACK HE REACHES FOR HER HAIR AND GENTLY PULLS SOMETHING FROM IT. HE CUPS IT WITH BOTH HANDS ATTEMPTING TO HIDE IT FROM HER BUT WHATEVER IT IS, SHINES WITH A GLOW ALL ITS OWN. "THE FAIRIES MUST REALLY LIKE YOU."

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN? SHE ASKS AS SHE TRIES TO SEE WHAT HE HAS HIDDEN IN HIS HANDS.

HE OPENS THEM AND CRADLED WITHIN HIS GENTLE GRASP IS A SINGLE FLOWER THE SIZE OF A SMALL BIRDS EGG. IT HAS FIVE SILVER WHITE PETALS THE CENTER HAS A SINGLE PESTLE THAT GLOWS LIKE A TINY STAR. WITH EACH TINY MOVEMENT OF HIS HANDS THE SWEET SCENTED FLOWER CATCHES EVERY MOONBEAM THAT TOUCHES ITS PETALS CAUSING THEM TO SHIMMER. .

HE WATCHES HER EYES AS THEY SPARKLE BOTH FROM HER INNER LIGHT AND THE GLOW OF THE GIFT FROM THE FAIRIES.

INHALING THE SENT SHE LOOKS AT HIM AS SHE CLOSES HER EYES. SMILES FLICKER ACROSS HER FACE AS SHE RAISES HER HAND TO TOUCH HER CHEEK. "THAT IS AMAZING." SHE SAYS AS SHE SLOWLY OPENS HER EYES.

"IT IS CALLED A MOON FLOWER AND THE PIXIES WOULD ONLY GIVE IT TO SOMEONE THEY LIKE A LOT AND THEY MUST REALLY LIKE YOU."

"A MOON FLOWER." SHE ALMOST PURRS AS SHE INHALES ONCE AGAIN. "MY HUSBAND DO YOU NOT SMELL ITS FRAGRANCE?"

"YES IT IS VERY NICE." HE SAYS AS HE WONDERS HOW THE SCENT IS EFFECTING HER SO STRANGELY.

"WHEN I BREATHE ITS FRAGRANCE IT IS AS IF I EXPERIENCE EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU HAVE EVER TOLD ME YOU LOVE ME OR SHOWN HOW MUCH YOU LOVE ME OR EVEN KISSED ME. OH I DO HOPE IT WILL LAST A LONG TIME, BECAUSE IF EVER YOU ARE AWAY I CAN SMELL ITS FRAGRANCE AND IT WILL BE AS IF YOU ARE WITH ME.

"I DID NOT KNOW THE FLOWER COULD DO THIS, BUT THERE ARE TWO THINGS ABOUT THIS FLOWER I DO KNOW. ONE MY GREAT GRANDMOTHER HAD HERS TILL THE DAY SHE PASSED AWAY. AND SHE ONLY HAD ONE. BUT THE OTHER THING I KNOW IS..." HE HANDS HER THE FLOWER THEN HE TAKES HER BY THE HAND AND LEADS HER TO THE LITTLE CABIN. STEPPING INSIDE HE BRINGS OUT A HAND MIRROR AND HOLDS IT UP FOR HER TO SEE HER SELF.

SHE GASPS AS SHE REACHES FOR THE MIRROR AND BEGINS TO LOOK AT HERSELF THIS WAY AND THAT.

"AS I SAID. THEY MUST REALLY LIKE YOU."

IN HER HAIR IS A RING OF MOON FLOWERS PERFECTLY PLACED WHICH THE FAIRIES PUT IN HER HAIR AS THEY DRESSED HER IN THEIR MAGIC AND MIST.

TAKING THE MIRROR AND SETTING IT ASIDE HE WRAPS HIS ARMS AROUND HER AND PULLS HER CLOSE. "I LOVE YOU MY DEAR WIFE AND I ALWAYS WILL."

SHE LEANS CLOSER AND KISSES HIM SWEETLY. BETWEEN THE SCENT OF THE FLOWERS AND HOLDING HIM CLOSE A CONTENTMENT LIKE SHE HAD NEVER KNOWN STIRS WITHIN HER HEART. AS SHE HUGS HIM CLOSER STILL. "MY LOVE THERE SHALL NEVER BE ANYONE WHOM I LOVE AS MUCH I LOVE YOU.

"DO YOU THINK THIS IS SOMETHING WE WILL TELL GRANDCHILDREN ABOUT?"

"IT WILL BE QUITE THE TALE... TELL ME MY DEAR HUSBAND.... WILL WE STILL DANCE WHEN I AM OLD AND GRAY?"

"AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH ME MY LOVE YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE MY DANCES, AND I CAN PROMISE YOU I WILL NEVER SEE YOU AS ANYTHING BUT BEAUTIFUL AS YOU STAND WITH ME TODAY."

SMILING SWEETLY SHE KISSES HIM "THANK YOU MY LOVE." WITH THIS FINAL DECLARATION SHE CUDDLES CLOSE TO HIM AS THEY STEP INTO THE CABIN.

THE END

# The Aether Review Of Books

Firefly Glade, By Alan Smith

**D**EAR READERS, TONIGHT OUR FLIGHT OF FANCY INTO THE ROMANTIC WORLD OF FIREFLY GLADE CONTINUES! THIS STORY BY ALAN SMITH TAKES READERS ON A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF MAGIC AND ROMANCE FOR READERS' PLEASURE!

FIREFLY GLADE COMBINES THE WORLD OF ROMANCE WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD. IN THIS SECOND INSTALMENT, THE "FIREFLIES" DEPICTED THROUGHOUT THE TALE ARE REVEALED TO BE FAIRIES, AND THEIR MOVEMENTS ARE COAXING THE MIST INTO IMAGES OF DANCERS! THE WONDERS OF THE NATURAL WORLD ARE EXALTED BY THIS WHIMSICAL IMAGERY, AND THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF THIS MOMENT TAKES THE COUPLE IN THE STORY RIGHT OUT OF TIME ITSELF.

MOVING OUT OF SPACE AND TIME, THE LOVERS SEEM TO ENTER THE WORLD OF FIREFLY DANCERS, WHERE THE FIGURES ARE INDEPENDENT, COGENT, AND COMPELLING. MOVING ON THEIR OWN, THEY TURN AS ONE TO THE COUPLE, INVITING THEM TO JOIN IN THEIR DANCE. THE MUSIC OF THE FOREST LEADS THE DANCE, AND THE LOVERS ARE SURPRISED TO FIND THEMSELVES ONCE AGAIN BACK ON THE BANK, SEEMINGLY RETURNED TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD. THE FIREFLY DANCERS ARE THEN ABSORBED BACK INTO THE BEAMS OF MOONLIGHT, THE MAGIC OF THE EVENING IS DISPELLED.

HOWEVER, THE FAIRIES HAVE LEFT BEHIND A GIFT FOR THE WIFE: A RING OF MOON FLOWERS THEY SLIPPED INTO HER HAIR. THE HUSBAND EXPLAINS THAT THIS IS A SIGN THAT THE FAIRIES TRULY LIKED HER, BECAUSE THE MOON FLOWERS HAVE A MAGIC ALL THEIR OWN. WHEN THE WIFE SMELLS THE FLOWERS, SHE EXPERIENCES ALL OF THE LITTLE MOMENTS OF LOVE SHE HAS EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT HER ENTIRE LIFE, ALL AT ONCE. SHE HAS FOND HOPES THAT THE FLOWERS WILL LAST A LONG TIME, SO THAT WHENEVER HER HUSBAND IS ABSENT IN HER LIFE, SHE CAN SMELL THE FLOWERS, AND BE WITH HIM AGAIN. THE DANCE IS SOMETHING THE LOVERS PLAN TO TELL THEIR CHILDREN, AND GRANDCHILDREN ABOUT, SOMEDAY.

THIS TALE GLORIFIES THE WONDERS OF THE NATURAL WORLD, THERE IS DEFINITELY A STREAK OF PASTORALISM IN FIREFLY GLADE. CERTAINLY, EVERY READER WANTS TO EXPERIENCE THE SAME DANCE THESE TWO LOVERS ENJOYED. AND YET, THE MAGIC AND ROMANCE OF THE DANCE IS ALMOST ECLIPSED BY THE LOVE THIS HUSBAND AND WIFE HAVE FOR EACH OTHER. THE CONCLUSION OF THE STORY IS NOT THE END OF THE DANCE ITSELF, BUT THE LOVERS REAFFIRMING THEIR VOWS TO ONE ANOTHER, AND HAPPILY GAZING OUT OVER THE REST OF THEIR LIVES, TOGETHER. IT IS A WONDERFUL PROSPECT TO CONTEMPLATE: ETERNAL LOVE. AS IF THE DANCE IN THE FIREFLY GLADE MIGHT LAST FOREVER.



NEW AUTHOR ALAN SMITH

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).



THE FIREFLY GLADE

# Travel

## Praha, By Amelia Owen Kibbey

**A**MELIA OWEN KIBBEY HERE- BACK IN THE FOLD AND PUTTING INK TO THE PAGE! ALICE AND I ARE WELL, REST ASSURED. THANK YOU ALL FOR THE WELL WISHES.

MY EDITOR AT THE AETHER CHRONICLE FORWARDED YOUR TELEGRAMS TO ME AND I HAVE SPENT THE MORNING READING THROUGH THEM. YOUR CONCERN FOR OUR SAFETY AND WELL BEING HAS TRULY TOUCHED ME.

WE ARE IN PRAHA. TWO WEEKS AGO WE BOARDED A ZEPPELIN BOUND FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IT WAS MEANT TO BE A SIMPLE TWO HOUR JOURNEY BUT OUR SHIP ENCOUNTERED TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND THE PILOT HAD TO TAKE US DOWN FOR AN EMERGENCY LANDING SHORTLY AFTER LIFTOFF. I LIKEN IT TO OUR MISFORTUNE IN VENICE IN ITS SUDDENNESS ONLY THIS TIME THERE WAS TERRA FIRMA WAITING FOR US BELOW AND WE HAD A CAPABLE WOMAN AT THE HELM WHO MANAGED TO KEEP US FROM UTTER ANNIHILATION WITH DAMN NEAR HEROIC SKILLS. BEFORE IT WAS OVER THERE WERE ABOUT A DOZEN INJURIES, NONE SERIOUS, AND NO LOSS OF LIFE.

ALL OF OUR WORLDLY POSSESSIONS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE LOST IN THE ACCIDENT. THE LUGGAGE CANOPY ABOVE THE PASSENGER CABIN CAUGHT FIRE AS WE DISEMBARKED- DISEMBARKED, HELL, RAN FOR OUR LIVES. LOST SOMEWHERE IN THE POLISH COUNTRYSIDE, WE WERE ALL LEFT WITH NOTHING BUT THE CLOTHES ON OUR BACK AND WHATEVER WE HAD IN OUR KIT BAGS.

I'LL SPARE YOU THE DETAILS OF THE LEGAL ACTION TO BE TAKEN AGAINST THE POLSKA ZEPPLINSKA CO. FOR THEIR NEGLIGENCE. IT TOOK HOURS FOR HELP TO ARRIVE, FROM ANY LOCALE. ALICE AND I WOUND UP SPENDING THE NIGHT AT A SMALL FARM HOUSE WITH A COUPLE I WILL ONLY INDULGE AS FAR AS TO NAME 'UNUSUAL.' THEY WERE QUITE PROGRESSIVE IN ONE AVENUE, I'LL GRANT THEM THAT. THEY EMPLOYED QUITE A BIT OF ROBOTICS IN THE HARVESTING OF THEIR COW'S MILK AND FOR SHEEP SHEARING.

OUR ARRIVAL IN PRAHA WAS A RELIEF IN MANY WAYS. AND REALLY, IT'S WHERE THE FUN BEGAN. WHAT'S ONE TO DO WHEN ONE HAS NO CLOTHES LEFT TO SPEAK OF? GO SHOPPING, OF COURSE. BUT WHAT IF YOU ARE OF LIMITED MEANS? ENTER THE NUDE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT. AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF TO MY DEAREST ALICE THAT SHE COULD NOT PASS UP. NOT ONLY DID IT REPLENISH HER POCKETBOOK, IT SPOKE TO HER SOUL. IT WAS A REAL CALL TO ACTION. WE WERE SITTING IN A COFFEE CAFÉ GOING OVER OUR RESOURCES AND PLOTTING WHEN A WOMAN NOTICED ALICE'S CAMERA BOX ON THE TABLE. SHE APPROACHED US AND ASKED IF ALICE WAS ANY GOOD AT THE ART OF IMAGE TAKING. I ANSWERED IN HER PLACE- I KNEW SHE'D NEVER BRAG ABOUT HOW

ACCOMPLISHED SHE IS. THE GIRL'S VOICE CAME OUT IN A WHISPER AS SHE REVEALED HER NEED. IT SEEMED THAT A CERTAIN GROUP OF LADIES WERE INTERESTED IN CREATING AN EXHIBITION OF A RATHER SCANDALOUS NATURE. NUDE PHOTOGRAPHS, SPECIFICALLY. AND THEY NEEDED A TALENTED WOMAN WITH AN ARTISTIC EYE TO CAPTURE THEIR FORM IN EXQUISITE STYLE. THE RESULTING EXHIBITION WAS GOING TO BE HELD OUTSIDE THE PURVIEW OF MEN AND THEIR PRYING JUDGMENT- AHM, EYES.

ALICE WAS BESIDE HERSELF. PUTTING ASIDE OUR FASHION WOES, WE MET WITH THE GROUP LATER THAT AFTERNOON AT A DIMINUTIVE LADIES ONLY BOUTIQUE WHOSE BACK ROOM FUNCTIONED AS OUR STUDIO. THERE WAS A BURGUNDY SETTEE, PILLOWS, AND FUR BLANKETS ALONG WITH PEACOCK FEATHERS ON THE WALLS, LOVELY LIGHTING PIECES SCATTERED ABOUT, AND VARIOUS ACCESSORIES TO UTILIZE FOR THE SHOOT. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS ELECTRIC AS WE BEGAN. INITIAL SHYNESS EASILY DROPPED AWAY IN THE FACE OF ALICE'S PROFESSIONALISM AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE GIRLS WERE HAVING A FANTASTIC TIME.

I HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT BEING PRESENT AND NOT PARTICIPATING; I DIDN'T WANT TO BE THE ABSOLUTE VOYEUR. OH DEAR, SHALL I ADMIT IN THIS ARTICLE TO BECOMING ONE OF THE MODELS?

THE BODY IS BEAUTIFUL AND ONCE I GOT OVER THE AWKWARDNESS OF DISROBING I FOUND IT THRILLING TO BE IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA. MY HEART POUNDED AT THE IDEA OF ALICE SEEING ME IN SUCH POSES AND I EXPERIENCED SOMETHING I HAD NOT FELT BEFORE IN THE COMPANY OF MEN. THOUGH IT SHOULD HAVE DISCONCERTED ME I REALIZED THAT IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY IN MY HEART. I COULD SEE BY THE LOOK ON ALICE'S FACE AND HER BODY LANGUAGE AFTERWARD THAT SHE FELT THE SAME WAY. GLORIOUS THEY WERE, ALL OF THOSE GIRLS: EMMA, RUTH, CARLA, HONORE, AINSLEY, DOROTHEA, GLADYS, TENNIE, ROSE, AND BERTHA. WE GIGGLED AND DRANK TO OUR BRAZENNESS WHILE ALICE AND DOROTHEA WENT TO THE DARK ROOM TO DEVELOP THE IMAGES. HONORE SET THE EXHIBITION FOR FRIDAY.

BY THE TIME ALICE AND I ARRIVED THAT EVENING WE WERE CLOSE IN A WAY THAT MERE FRIENDS CANNOT BE. SCANDALOUS, YOU THINK? MY DEAREST READERS WILL NOT JUDGE US, I KNOW.

IT WAS A REMARKABLE NIGHT. THE SHOTS ALL TURNED OUT BEAUTIFULLY. ALICE DID AN INCREDIBLE JOB COMBINING LIGHT AND SHADOW IN THE WAY SHE COMPOSED HER IMAGES. HONORE PRESENTED THEM IN ALL GORGEOUS FRAMES. I HELD ALICE'S HAND AS WE TRAIPSED FROM SHOT TO SHOT, NOTING THE SMILES OF THE CUSTOMERS, THEIR NODS OF APPROVAL AT WHAT THEY SAW. ALICE HAD MASTERFULLY CAPTURED THE UNCERTAIN GAZE OF THE SHY, THE SMALL

OF THE BACK AND SENSUAL CURVE OF FULL HIPS, DARK HAIR SWEEPED UP ABOVE THE NAPE OF THE NECK. PORTRAITS CAME DOWN FROM THE WALLS ONE BY ONE IN A FLURRY OF SALES. ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE EVENING'S EVENT WERE TO GO TOWARD FUNDING THE BOUTIQUE FOR ANOTHER CALENDAR YEAR. IT WAS A LUSH PLACE, SET UP FOR WOMEN TO COME AND READ THEIR STORIES AND POEMS, TO EXPERIMENT WITH THEIR DRAWINGS, AND TO HAVE FRANK DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THEIR SEXUALITY WITHOUT REPERCUSSION.

MY TRACK RECORD WITH LUCK HAS PROVEN SKETCHY, BUT THAT NIGHT WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH. THERE WERE NO MALE INFILTRATIONS, NO BRICKS THROWN THROUGH GLASS WINDOWS. NO INSANITY. WE FELT QUITE NAUGHTY AND YET THOROUGHLY OURSELVES IN THAT ENVIRONMENT. I WISH WE HAD THE SAME SORT OF ESTABLISHMENT IN LONDON. PERHAPS WE DO AND I'VE JUST NEVER BEEN AWARE.

THE REST OF OUR TIME IN PRAHA WE DID THE USUAL IN EXPLORING, MEETING PEOPLE, AND EATING GOOD FOOD. THAT WAS MIXED WITH REPLENISHING OUR WARDROBES AND THE BASIC NECESSITIES LOST IN THE ZEPPELIN CRASH. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND RONA'S FOR TEXTILES. BEYOND MY DEGREE OF STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY I AM QUITE HANDY AT THE SEWING MACHINE AND WITHIN A WEEK AND A HALF WE HAD A FAIR AMOUNT OF NEW PIECES TO GO INTO WINTER WITH. BE CERTAIN, THE COLD WEATHER IS COMING; ALICE AND I ARE WELL PREPARED. MEAGER BUDGET = FINE FABRICS FOR ONLY A FEW ENSEMBLES THAT WILL LAST BEYOND THE SEASON. WORSTED WOOLS, DEEP SHADES OF COTTON CHINTZ LAYERED ONE OVER THE OTHER... FAKE FUR LININGS AT THE NECKLINE OF SPECIAL GARMENTS.

THE LARGEST EXPENDITURE WAS TWO NEW BROWN LEATHER PORTMANTEAU AND ONE FABULOUS BRASS SPYGLASS, BECAUSE EVERY EXPLORER NEEDS A SPYGLASS. SADLY, MY JOURNAL WENT DOWN WITH THE ZEPPELIN SO ALL OF MY PERSONAL NOTES ARE LOST TO TIME. ALICE FOUND ME A NEW ONE, WHICH I CANNOT WAIT TO FILL WITH NEW WORDS OF CHAOS AND ADVENTURE. IN SOME WAYS, IT FEELS APPROPRIATE. THOUGH I HATE TO LOSE OUT ON THOSE PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND POEMS ABOUT THE CITIES THROUGH WHICH WE'VE TRAVELLED THESE SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS PRAHA SERVES AS A NEW BEGINNING FOR MY ALICE AND ME.

WHAT SHALL I HAVE TO SAY ON PAGE ONE ABOUT WHAT AWAITS US IN SCANDINAVIA?

# The Aether's Weekly Steamswaddle

By Tropple E. Armitage

MRS PERRIWEATHER'S CAT

MRS PERRIWEATHER  
WHO LIVES IN A  
TERRACE HOUSE  
OVERLOOKING HYDE

PARK WAS CONSOLED BY HER DAUGHTER, MEREDITH FOLLOWING AN UNFORTUNATE HAPPENING. I AM RELIABLY INFORMED THAT IT HAPPENED AT NOON LAST SUNDAY. A SMALL CROWD OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAD ASSEMBLED TO WATCH ONE OF THEIR NUMBER, TIMOTHY BOTTOMLEY, THIRD SON OF LORD BOTTOMLEY OF CRITCHDALE DEMONSTRATE HIS PROWESS WITH A HIGMORTON ROCKET PACK. AS ANY WEEKEND VISITOR ENJOYING A PROMENADE AROUND THE PARK WILL CONFIRM, SUCH GOINGS ON HAVE BECOME ALL TOO COMMON PLACE OF LATE, MOST LIKELY BECAUSE MOORING OF AIRSHIPS IS PROHIBITED BY ROYAL DECREE IN HER MAJESTY'S PARKS, AND ROCKET PACKS HAVE PROVEN TO BE NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO CONTROL REQUIRING A CLEAR AREA TO USE WITH ANY MODICUM OF SAFETY.

MY INFORMANT WAS AT A SAFE DISTANCE AS HE WAS DRIVING HIS HACKNEY CARRIAGE ALONG BAYSWATER ROAD WHEN HE SAW WHAT HE DESCRIBES AS A FLASH THAT CAUSED HIM TO LOOK ACROSS THE PARK. HE WATCHED AS MISTER BOTTOMLEY LAUNCHED HIMSELF SKYWARD. WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE GASPS FROM THOSE WATCHING CLOSE BY. ONE OF THE ROCKETS IS SAID TO HAVE MISFIRED CAUSING THE HAPLESS MISTER BOTTOMLEY TO BEGIN TO SPIN IN EVER WIDENING CIRCLES COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL. MRS PERRIWEATHER'S CAT WAS LYING STRETCHED OUT ON THE SILL OF A FOURTH FLOOR WINDOW ENJOYING THE WARMTH OF THE SUMMER SUN WHEN RUDELY AWOKEN BY THE ROAR OF THE ROCKET PACK A SECOND BEFORE MISTER BOTTOMELY CRASHED THROUGH THE WINDOW.

AS FORTUNE WOULD HAVE IT MR

BOTTOMLEY WAS NOT SERIOUSLY INJURED, BUT THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID FOR THE CAT THAT LEAPT INTO THE AIR IN FRIGHT AND LANDED ON THE FIERY END OF THE ROCKET PACK ATTACHED TO THE NOW PRONE MISTER BOTTOMLEY SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR. FORTUNATELY THE FIRE DID NOT KILL THE CAT, BUT THE LANDING ON THE COBBLED STREET BELOW DID AS IT CAME TO A SUDDEN STOP AFTER LEAPING OUT OF THE WINDOW.

AN ORDINANCE BANNING THE USE OF ROCKET PACKS IN THE PARK IS BEING CONSIDERED BY THE BOROUGH COUNCIL AT THEIR NEXT MEETING AND I UNDERSTAND THAT LORD BOTTOMLEY HAS HANDSOMELY COMPENSATED MRS PERRIWEATHER FOR HER LOSS AND SHE IS NOT PRESSING CHARGES WITH THE CONSTABULARY. CLEARLY ROCKET PACKS AND CATS DO NOT MIX. WE AWAIT THE OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATIONS AND IN THE MEANTIME, I FOR ONE WILL BE AVOIDING HYDE PARK.

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E ARMITAGE

UP AND AWAY

I HAVE BEEN RELIABLY INFORMED THAT ONE, MR HORATIO PINK ESQ., A CONTEMPORARY OF BRUNEL HAS BEEN SEIZED BY THE CONSTABULARY ATTEMPTING TO BOARD AN AIRSHIP TO FLEE TO FRANCE. MR PINK, WHOSE FAME STEMS FROM HIS DESIGN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY BARCLAY BRIDGE AT WAPPING WAS ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF NEGLIGENT HOMICIDE AS A RESULT OF LAST THURSDAY'S SEVERE STORM, THAT EVEN THIS CORRESPONDENT DIDN'T DARE VENTURE OUT IN. UNFORTUNATELY SOME POOR SOULS DID AND HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO USE MR PINK'S CREATION.

AS MOST REFINED PEOPLE IN LONDON WOULD KNOW, MR PINK'S BRIDGE WAS DESCRIBED AT THE TIME OF CONSTRUCTION AS REVOLUTIONARY AND INDEED IT WAS, BEING SUPPORTED FROM ABOVE BY BALLOONS RATHER THAN BELOW BY PIERS CONSTRUCTED IN THE RIVER, THEREBY SAVING CONSIDERABLE COST.

ACCORDING TO MRS FELICITY MAY WHO SELLS FLOWERS ON THE CORNER OPPOSITE THE BRIDGE AND ON THE DAY IN QUESTION WAS SHELTERING IN A DOORWAY OUT OF THE WIND, THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS GROANING NOISE COMING FROM THE BRIDGE AND THEN A SNAPPING SOUND. SHE SAID SHE WAS DUMBOUNDED BY WHAT SHE SAW. THE BRIDGE BEGAN TO TWIST ONE WAY THEN THE OTHER THEN IT BEGAN TO MOVE UPWARDS SPILLING PEOPLE, HORSES AND AT LEAST ONE MOTORISED CARRIAGE INTO THE THAMES. SHE SAYS SHE WATCHED AS IT WAS BLOWN AWAY BY THE WIND WITH SOME PEOPLE STILL CLINGING ONTO IT AS IT WENT FROM VIEW.

CONSTABLE MACINTYRE OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SAYS THAT NO SIGN HAS BEEN FOUND OF THE BRIDGE OR THE PEOPLE AND GRAVE FEARS ARE HELD FOR THEIR WELLBEING.

AS TO MR PINK, HE IS TO BE ARRAIGNED AT THE OLD BAILY ON WEDNESDAY. I AM SURE HE WILL BE WISHING HE HAD ACCESS TO A BALLOON TO LIFT HIM AWAY. I FOR ONE WILL BE AVOIDING SUCH THINGS LEST A SIMILAR FATE TO THOSE POOR SOULS BEFALLS ME.

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E ARMITAGE