



OF SENSELESSNESS &
NON-SENSIBILITY:
THE HOUSE OF SCUTTLEBARRY
&
THE BUCCANEERS
AND
THE LAND OF WONDERS
&
THE LUNATIC CAVALCADE
(IN TWO SCATTERBRAINED ACTS)

By Stylés Akira



OF SENSELESSNESS & NON-SENSIBILITY

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OF SENSELESSNESS & NON-SENSIBILITY

Margaret ran and the kettle could hear her voice. A voice she recognized from years of consultation

We drank coffee imported from Paris by way of Timbuktu in the late hours, by that time of day when tea had fallen out of vogue and the crumbs of scones remained as little more than relics of our past

Cherished antidotes for our raving discontent lay waste on the floral engravings of silver serving platters

Feasts for disenchanted dormice and the sniggling of jealous march hares

What would I but lay in the barrows of these empty passages

Master of sweet artifice, come heal our solemn grief

Take joy in our displeasure and the pulling of our teeth

And there came again the rousing of those strange, old fanaticisms

Like the stirring of witches' cauldrons concocting the venom of harpies in the crucible chamber of Medusa

A child's tender grace and a spoiled brat's wretched temperament rolled all into one

Pint sized heathens awaiting the tip of a lawman's billy club or a lifetime of self-imposed disappointment for the sake of the universe not bending at their every will and command

Summer's over, spring has not yet called

And the heather grey skies of November pilfer smiles from the waking dreams of the more ambitious sort

Downy soft mélange of clouds longing now for the early night sky

Dreams of our forgotten memories, memories of a world before our own

Crying on the streets of London through the cold, dense weeks of late autumn

Enraged, their victims march in the parades of monkeys round gardens full of mulberry bushes

Civil and forthright like the veterans of old wars now long abandoned

Lost in the clouds of the memories of our ancestors

Little weasels too easily enchanted by the sparkle of cheap trinkets and the mesmerizing tails of dancing monkeys and that is to say nothing of the monkeys of dancing tails

How grim the reaper of these psychedelic prose

Merry the perpetrator of refined and dainty pose

Le petite sophisticate, armed with doe eyed expressions and the adoration of all

A memory unkempt due to the repetition of a singular diet of milk, an unfamiliarity with the English alphabet, and an extraordinary preoccupation with the preposterous musings of adults and their penchant for making dimwitted statements in mind numbing voices while maintaining facial expressions little short of buffoonery

At night beneath their sleeping caps they awaken sweet fantasies of frolicking menageries

Their playmates all transform into the shadows of wild beasts

Trumpets announce their regal presence in the programs of the night's festivities

There they are free to displace the stars from their high mantle and take revenge for the autumn clouds in search of treasure lost

And there for the night's safe keeping they remain: **The Lunatic Cavalcade**

Supreme Archetypes of the human condition until they awake and shadows fade at dawn

Then they become codependent on their caregivers once again

An insolent class which has outstripped its own maturity lingering on as rulers of the proverbial nest

A necessary evil if you will, Grownups!

Little more than children who have abandoned the rites of their innocence in exchange for absolute power!

And the ability to reach the top shelf in the kitchen cabinet

Our heroes rendered helpless at their mercy

And this subject deserves further consideration. Therefore let us digress at length for the sake of the reader's deeper elucidation...

ACT I

THE HOUSE OF SCUTTLEBARRY & THE BUCCANEERS

ACT I, PART I

PRELUDE TO A SHENANIGAN: THE HOUSE OF SCUTTLEBARRY

Lucian Scuttlebarry was a rare case of a child who had an imagination of extraordinary proportions which he was quite capable of putting to practical use, or unpractical use depending on who you were in the given situation. But before we embark on the shenanigans of this most intriguing young fellow, let us first digress further and determine how it is our eccentric friend came to be this rarest of specimen. To begin, when he was a little boy he was an only child; the cautious sort, always considerate with his play-things and wary not to sully his wardrobe while thinging with them and not to mention most certainly never, ever, ever while playing with them. Let it be noted for the record that while Lucian was always cautious with his playthings and wardrobe, this did not necessitate that he was always successful in his cautiousness. As for destroying things within the household that is quite a different story all together. His father, James, was always deeply amused by the little fellow, primarily because he reminded him so much of himself at that young and tender age. Yet Lucian was anything but tender. He had a fervent love of animals and he collected them ad nauseam in the form of plush, stuffed figurines with whom he would dine on a schedule he kept meticulously for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.

By the time he could walk he was tying these stuffed animals in a line with a string, tying the string to his leg and parading around the house in his pajamas with a pennywhistle and his father's old Military pith helmet from his days stationed in India with the British Army. As an only child he developed intensely realistic relationships with his animal friends, so much so that at times he even felt that he dreamed with them at night. This matter shall be discussed presently but let us first continue. His youthful musings with his animals became so serious that his parents grew concerned that he began to display signs of exceptional eccentricity of imagination for his age. Most two year olds were concerned with bottles or pacifiers. Lucian would have none of this tomfoolery with rattles and bonnets and such, for he saw these things as a waste of time that could be put to more serious matters such as inventing things, saving the kingdom or discussing business transactions. Although he could not yet count past the number twelve (as far as his parents were aware) Lucian conducted business negotiations with an alligator and an elephant every day over tea in a language no-one else could understand—no-one that is, except for Margaret.

Margaret Scuttlebarry was the twin cousin of Lucian, born on the same day to his father's elder brother Rupert. The pair got along splendidly as they were of equal temperament and shared the same sense of imagination; save for the fact that Margaret spoke mostly to dolls, and inanimate objects such as kitchenware, thimbles, and playing cards while Lucian spoke primarily to animals. Occasionally their playmates would speak to one another and this peculiar behavior

tended to increase as they got older. Margaret was also of the mindset that baby toys and baby paraphernalia in general was little more than poppycock. She deplored being spoken to in baby-talk, as did Lucian, and they both agreed, during their teatime business negotiations, that it was assuredly they who should be responsible for their parents and decidedly not the other way around. The behavior of the two toddlers grew impressively more bizarre as they got older up until the point where there could be seen no visible difference between their relationships with their play things and with real people. They appeared at all times to be engulfed in a world of dreams and fanciful delights, and this was not in the least bit discouraged by the fact that their fathers were constantly telling them tales of their military exploits. There were constantly stories of war counsel with the Queen, battle in enemy trenches, pirates and ferocious animals. To make matters more severe, by the time they were four years old Lucian and Margaret had voyaged to the far reaches of the world with their parents several times over. These experiences served the function of filling their waking imaginations and sleeping dreams with vivid thoughts of a vast world with limitless possibilities. The stage was set and the moment was right for something exciting to happen.

One day while revising the terms for the planned legal codex of their little imaginary kingdom in his father's study Lucian and Margaret came across a tiny book with charts and maps, some of which appeared to be leading to treasure. They ran from the study screaming at the top of their lungs.

"Father!" "Uncle James!" "Uncle Rupert!" "Father!"

"What is it? What have you got there?" Rupert inquired.

"It's a treasure map! A treasure map!" they both yelled at once.

"Come now, what have you got there?" asked James.

Lucian handed his father the tiny book and he and Rupert glanced at one another with sudden surprise mouthing gently beneath their breath at the same time, "Great Scott!"

"Do you know what this is little ones?" Rupert asked as James handed him the tiny book.

"A treasure map!" they both shouted again, as if to inquire whether this was not clear from the first round of shouting.

"Quite right you are my dears...but do you know who this treasure map belonged to?" he asked.

"Who?! Who?!" they implored.

"Why this map belonged to a very good friend of James and I named Slapstick the pirate."

"It's a pirate map! Aaaaaarrghhh!" shouted Lucian as he began to run uncontrollably in circles.

"We're going to find a pirate treasure! Aaaaaaaahhhhh!" screamed Margaret as she joined him.

“Slapstick was the navigator of the most deadly ship and crew on the seven seas—the Clap Jaw. The ship was as broad as this estate and it had black stained wood, it was said from the blood of its victims. And it had two viscous eyes carved into its front hull with a large abysmal mouth with razor-sharp jagged teeth carved into it. They say the ship was alive, and she would catch whales in her mouth just to quell her own hunger. And she was commanded by the most fearsome pirate that ever walked the earth—Captain Filthy McCracken. That is, until we captured him.”

“Whoa....” they both sighed.

“What happened to him?” Lucian inquired.

“You’ll have to hear the whole story.” James replied.

And they sat down as Rupert and James took turns telling the story of Slapstick the pirate and Captain Filthy McCracken. By the time the story was finished night had fallen and it was time to put the children to sleep—another ritual which undermined their sophistication and which they could not bear to endure. They begged for more stories but they were told that they would have to wait another day for the time was getting late. Rupert gave them the tiny book of maps to hold onto for safe keeping and they went to Lucian’s room to lie down.

That night they lay beneath the full moon making shadows against the wall in the candle light. They giggled and spoke to their hearts’ content of pirates and all manner of daring adventure. Rupert had told them that the military could only decipher one single location in the book because the charts were written in code, but that this location was where they found the pirates, and that the pirates led them to all the other treasures charted in the book. But the children knew better of pirates—real pirates wouldn’t have given away half of the treasure in a book of maps written in code. They would only give enough to save their skin. The pair stared into the book of maps at Slapstick’s uncanny handwriting trying to decipher his code. Now as intelligent as these children were even they could not decipher the madness of Slapstick’s methods of cartography and routing. This was primarily due to the fact that he was what one may call ‘scatterbrained’ and in all reality lacked any conceivable method. He merely wrote things in a manner that was completely haphazard in a way that only he could decipher with his haphazard mind. The children, being of keen wit, understood how this puzzle might escape the minds of adults, but were deeply perplexed by the fact that they could not solve the enigma; yet the answer lay in the fact that they were attempting to find the solution in a waking state. They were not scatterbrained children by natural disposition therefore they could not read scatterbrained maps. But while asleep the mind tends to wonder in ways that are unpredictable. And so as they grew weary and exhausted from searching, they eventually reached a point where they slipped into slumber. Amused, James entered the room when he heard them retire and put out the candle and when he closed the door the room fell silent. But in their heads something else was going on. They began to unravel the mystery of the maps and this mystery was taking them to a place that they had never been before. It has been mentioned prior that Lucian felt at times that he could share his dreams with his animals. But for the first time, on that night something different happened—something special. As their little brains lay there pondering over the map their super-

conscious minds connected and they entered into one another's dreams. What happened next is little short of amazing. But before we know the tale of Lucian and Margaret, we must first learn the story of Rupert and James...

ACT I, PART II

PRELUDE TO A PRELUDE:

THE ANTICS OF RUPERT SCUTTLEBARRY

Rupert Scuttlebarry was a dashing gentleman of prime stock. He had deep set, brilliant blue eyes with a determined stare and a rigid brow, shimmering dark wavy hair and a stunning jawline with a perfect layer of stubble that was always very neatly trimmed. Born to a prominent landed family, Rupert was quite a unique child apart from the world's expectations of him given the disposition of each of his parents. His father, Sir Johnathan Scuttlebarry served as head legal counsel for the British Crown, while his mother, Lady Catherine (née Davenport) was an elegant woman of high-society who kept an extremely large estate library to occupy her idle time. Despite the highly reserved temperaments of both his parents, the boy, for reasons unknown, came into the world the most rambunctious little person that either Sir Johnathan or Lady Catherine had ever seen in their lives. What is worse, upon trying a second time the little rascal recruited the second born into his way and the two became a united force of constant pandemonium against the refined manners and courteous graces of their parents. To be certain, the Scuttlebarrys loved their boys dearly but at times they also feared what mischief the duo was capable of—given their proclivity for terrorizing cats, dogs, horses, maids, one another, other children and even adults.

James, the younger of the brothers Scuttlebarry, was frequently beleaguered by the mischievous escapades of Rupert as a boy growing up. The two shared quite an affectionate bond throughout their lives, though Rupert always took some thrill in getting the best of James who was, as a matter of general course, regularly conscripted as lieutenant in the exploits of his older brother. For example, when James was just a wee child barely old enough to speak, Rupert put all of his toys into hiding all about the house and he then went on to drag the little toddler through every room of the family estate on what he had determined to be James' first treasure hunt. After all, from Rupert's perspective a good cadet must be trained in the skill of daring from an early age and one could never begin too early. Mind you Rupert was only three and a half years-old at the time. Poor James, for all his ingenuity, was too young and too innocent to realize that he had not mysteriously by some twist of fate, managed to double his lot in worldly possessions. Although, in truth, James had also neglected to long for his old belongings (which were now missing) in lieu of his new belongings (which were identical to the old belongings and which he had just obtained)—a fact that was sparsely put to use amidst the musings of his two-year-old mind while **enraptured in the antics of Rupert**. Divided by a mere orbit of the earth—as they liked to phrase it—the duo was inseparable; the closest companions throughout their school years and on into college. And so they remained until after college when the brothers reluctantly parted ways to enlist in the military—much to the long awaited approval of their parents, the military that is—as Rupert joined the Royal Navy while James enlisted into the

British Army; a decision which was made selflessly in order to leave one remaining to take care of their parents and continue the Scuttlebarry bloodline should the other be lost.

And so it passed that Rupert advanced eventually to the rank of admiral, commanding a fleet of vessels patrolling the Mediterranean from aboard the H.M.S. Loadstar. The patrol was responsible for maintaining order on the high seas and curtailing the insatiable ambitions of a growing infestation of swashbuckling pirates which had begun to plague the merchant vessels sailing trade routes across the vast blue deep. His daring was unquestioned in the Navy. His reputation was marked by a penchant for danger, his ability to overcome tactical disadvantages, and his willingness to engage the most notorious of pirate vessels *and crews* on land, coast, or open waters. He once set foot, without security forces, into the Scallywag Tavern—a most deplorable establishment known for its harboring of seedy underworld operatives including thieves, spies, and especially pirates. Rupert stormed through the front door and immediately seized a large, ungainly fellow by the collar demanding that he at once return a shipment which had belonged to Her Majesty the Queen of ~~Hearts~~ England and was intended as a gift to the Rajas of India as gratitude for a favor carried out which shall be discussed presently. The shipment had been seized from a small cutter, the H.M.S. Quimby which had taken the mission in order to deliver the goods with haste, avoid terrestrial thieves, and move clandestinely in an inconspicuous vessel apart from the pageantry of the ostentatious retinue which would be ordinarily required to transport such an esteemed cargo.

ACT I, PART III

PRELUDES AND CREAM:

HOW THE RAJAS LOST THEIR MARBLES

The Quimby was manned by a crew of three, headed by its captain, Daniel Evanshire, a rear admiral of the highest reputation, who was entrusted with the important task transporting the Queen's precious cargo. Captain Evanshire had reported that his small craft was descended upon by a an unruly crew of hooligans in a broad black ship named the Clap Jaw, with devilish eyes and a large gaping mouth with pointy teeth carved into its forward hull. Wretches from the Clap Jaw commandeered the Quimby, holding its crew captive until they reached land as reported by Captain Evanshire, who almost lost his head on account of the incident had it not been for the intervention of James, another matter to be discussed *post-presently*. The feared commander of the Clap Jaw was none other than Captain Filthy McCracken, the same gentleman who had been sitting at a pinochle table in the Scallywag Tavern when he was drawn up by his collar by Admiral Rupert Scuttlebarry.

McCracken was a loathsome character of the most villainous disposition, and so it was his nature to tell a lie in every instance given the opportunity to convince. As a matter of fact it was his nature to tell a lie in every instance given no opportunity to convince. Although Rupert had known this individual to have at any moment been guilty of a grocery list of criminal violations, trade law misconduct, and open water traffic infractions, he was in the Scallywag on the Queen's business and so saw fit that he neglect to uphold his regulatory obligations in lieu of the directives of the mission at hand. Having also recognized McCracken as the sniggling liar that he was, he was wary that he not wrongfully accuse the man of any crimes specific to the mission, but rather play his hand by deceiving him into revealing information which might disclose the circumstantial likelihood that it was he who stole the Rajas' pearls from the Queen. But before we carry on let us now double-digress and reveal the important nature of this fantastic shipment of pearls that had everyone going up in arms.

It began when three Indian princes came to Britain to visit the Queen on holiday and to deliver to her a band of thieves that had been captured in each of their districts who had been terrorizing her land-based trade routes. There was Dheemant, the Prince of Nagpur, a tall, sly fellow with broad shoulders, a dignified jawline and glowing white teeth. Then there was Sundar, the Prince of Sind, the youngest of the three, who was rather quiet in his mannerisms and still retained all of the visual appeals of his youth; a svelte physique with large, charming, doe-like eyes and smooth unshaven skin on his handsomely boyish face. Finally, there was Abhibhava, the Prince of Bengal who was a great man, built roughshod like some mighty warrior of another time. He was hulking in his presence though his face and hands upheld a more refined

appearance appropriate to that of a prince. His eyes told the stories of a thousand adventures and he was the oldest of the three that had traveled together on this particular trip.

As it was, the Queen and the Rajas had been taken into a game of cricket by their entourages, when she—being of a most unstable temperament—suddenly demanded that she win and the game be concluded as she had grown bored with its play and weary in need of further, more refreshing entertainment. Now the Rajas had been warned of the fickle nature of the Queen's character and knew to play along and not push back against her erratic and obnoxious demands, especially considering the fact that they were winning at the moment she decided that it was she who should win and that the game end immediately. The Queen insisted they play a round of marbles which the Rajas had no notion of. And so the following dialogue began.

Sundar smiled and replied, "Why your highness, what are these marbles that you speak of?"

The Queen inquired, "My dear boy, have you lost your marbles?"

Dheemant then replied, "How should we know if we have lost them if we do not know what they are?"

Abhibhava added, "My dear Queen, I am not certain we have ever had any Marbles to have lost."

"What???!!!!!! No Marbles???!!!! Guards!!!! Get each of these men one of our finest barrels of Caspian pearls. We will have a game with them and we will transport them to India by sea so they run no risk of being lost should they face trouble en route!" shouted the Queen.

The guards bought the pearls which were illustrious and large, more so the size of billiard balls than marbles.

Dheemant remarked, "Your highness, thank you for giving us our marbles and for taking such care that they are never lost again."

The Queen was pleased, and replied that it was the least that she could offer in return for bringing in the trade route thieves.

ACT I, PART IV: THE WRATH OF CAPTAIN FILTHY MCCRACKEN

Now McCracken, having committed so many atrocities throughout the course of his criminal career, had neither the slightest inclination as to why he was being assaulted nor who it could possibly be that was doing the assaulting. Rupert, with his profound insight, saw to it that he disguise himself as a bandit before entering the Scallywag lest he become minced meat at the hands of the tavern's patrons, who had assuredly all sworn blood oaths to protect their criminal brethren against the hand of the law—which is also why he neglected the escort of a security force.

“McCracken you land loving scum!” shouted Rupert in a faux delinquent accent.

“I didn’t do it, I swear by Poseidon it was that no good brother of mine! I haven’t got your money or the cheese! I swear it sir, I swears by the god of the deep blue sea and the father of Thessius!”

As he had clinched both eyes in order to add dramatic affect to his tirade—he peeked from the corner of one eye to spy the identity of his captor so that he would know whom he was talking to as he declared his innocence and pleaded for mercy. He saw Rupert’s face, which looked vaguely familiar, before coming to the conclusion that his assaulter was no man with whom he had (recognizably) crossed swords or fortunes with in the past eight months. McCracken insisted that the gentleman let him down and regained his composure. It should be noted that McCracken was such a swindler that the regulars in the Scallywag were so accustomed to other pirates and criminals taking such assaults on his person that hardly a soul lifted a brow in response to the disturbance that was taking place. Now that McCracken had established that his pursuer was not the pirate named Brewster Fontana he immediately took the offensive. Brewster had stolen a shipment of Munster Cheese from a French merchant vessel and McCracken had offered to fence the cargo in exchange of one fourth of the profits, yet he disappeared after unloading the goods and never returned with the profits or the cheese.

“You’re not Brewster! What business do you have with me for you to interrupt me round of Pinochle, grabbing me by the throat and such?” shouted McCracken.

McCracken knew by the size of his opponent not to become too offensive.

“Well now, state your concerns or be on your way before me chef and first mate here, begin to take matters a tad bit personal.” said the pirate in his thick, raspy, Irish accent as he leaned forward breathing his foul, cigar tainted breath into the stranger’s face.

The chef, Clam Chop, and first mate, Seaweed McGee, stood from their chairs at the card table and began approaching Rupert with menacing stares. The trio had hoped the stranger would back down seeing that he was outnumbered. But Rupert began to laugh aloud with the confidence that was given by him knowing the fact that his adversaries had no idea who he was or what they were up against, so he called their bluff.

“You, Clam Chop, and Seaweed McGee are going to take me on? A laughable suggestion if I’ve ever heard one! I’ll give the lot of you one chance to take your seats or else I’ll slap each one of you silly and that’s me final offer.”

Dumb founded by the fact that this total stranger, whom they couldn’t identify from a tree in the forest, was so well acquainted with all of them by name, the trio—being relatively reckless and of the unruly type in general—decided to test their hand at fate and rumble with the stranger. Before they knew what had happened they had all been slapped silly and found themselves in the same seats they had opted not to take of their own free accord just minutes prior.

“Now let’s get down to it...Where’s the gold?” cried Rupert

“Gold?! What gold? We haven’t got our hands on any gold in six months counting!” replied McCracken

“You know what gold McCracken! Twas me gold you stole from Evanshire en route to the Rajas...I was following the Quimby in my own cutter when you and your lousy-oaf crew of scurvy land lovers ran on my mark and took me prize! Now me wants me gold and you’d best be having it or else silly slaps will be the least of your concerns.”

This was the moment Rupert was waiting for.

“Gold?!, Gold?!...the Quimby wasn’t a carrying gold when we commandeered her, mate, she was carrying pearls! Pearls to the Rajas I say. You want your gold you’d best be looking elsewhere because the pearls are mine and they’re safe on the Clap Jaw with the most ruthless crew of hooligans you’d ever dare to dance with!” explained McCracken.

“And where might she be that I’ll be showing you *and your crew* a thing or two about dancing...throw the whole lot of you into the abyss I will for me treasure; gold, pearls or otherwise!!!”

“Why she’s in the west bank my good friend and I’ll escort you to her so’s that when my men finish with you I can make you walk the plank for meself...you and all your tough talking.”

Having succeeded in his task without his opponent even realizing it, Rupert let his ego get the better of him and he dropped his rough-house accent.

“Very well done my good man, the Queen will be thrilled to hear this.” said Rupert as he gently slapped McCracken twice on the cheek.

However, his tone and this gesture had suddenly caught the eye of half of the patrons in the Scallywag, which led the other half to also stop dead in their tracks. Rupert, fully aware of the fact, now turned about face in full high-brow swagger and dilly dallied his way to the front of the tavern and out of its doors. Astonished and confused by what had just happened, McCracken, Seaweed, and Clam Chop sat in their seats with their jaws dropped, dumbfounded by the gravity of the situation, unable to grasp the reality of it all and what it possibly meant. To be certain lest there be any doubt, this is what it meant:

1. They had just been infiltrated by an operative of the Queen’s forces.
2. The Royal Forces potentially now knew the location of one of the most secret safe-havens of the criminal underworld.
3. He had just confessed to said forces his part in the banditry of Her Royal Highness the Queen of England’s vessel, men, and her precious cargo intended as a gift to the Indian Rajas and further revealed the location of that cargo.

The rest of the tavern, for their part in the matter, was equally as lost by the sight of the strange character strutting out of the Scallywag with his high English sensibilities. No-one could make sense of it. And then the slow turtle train inside the head of Filthy McCracken began to creep and crawl at a debilitated pace. The events of the previous ten minutes began to play back in his mind and he began to realize from whence he recognized that stunning jawline and those brilliant blue eyes.

“That voice! Scuttlebarry! It’s Admiral Scuttlebarry! Quick! The lot of you, if ye be a seafaring, swashbuckling, low-down, dirty rotten, good for nothing pirate, a thief, or a crook by any means sworn blood oath to sever the long arm of the law as it descends upon us all, take arms right this minute and seize that infiltrator!!!!”

“Hooray!!!” yelled the entire company as they drew their swords and piled into each other in a failed attempt to storm out the doors of the tavern, costing them at least five additional minutes as their prey escaped self-satisfied and lackadaisically. Virtually every single man in the tavern had known Rupert Scuttlebarry from first-hand encounters as he thwarted their sinister plans and chased them across the high seas, posting wanted signs of their faces in coastal towns and otherwise disrupting the conduct of their illegal enterprises. He was the most hated man in the Mediterranean by pirates from coast to coast. They ran from the tavern and chased after him with a fury like none other until they spotted him in the distance. And when they did they chased after him with a fury greater still, though he did not run from their pursuit. The pirates had enraged themselves into such a berserk state that they failed to question why he wasn’t running from them and realize that they were running straight into a trap. This affords us an opportunity to explain the fate of Daniel Evanshire and how he almost lost his neck.

ACT I, PART V: THE TRIBULATIONS OF DANIEL EVANSHIRE

When the Clap Jaw ran on the Quimby its current nearly caused the little cutter to capsize. Captain Evanshire was accompanied by two heavy arms men, Edmond Rodgers and Charles Gladstone, whose muskets became useless when the ship was drenched by the Clap Jaw's wave. With all manner of cannon and musket pointed directly at *them* the crew stood no chance at defense, and they were taken too suddenly off guard to outrun the larger ship. McCracken sent two emissaries, Slapstick and Steel Toe, to negotiate the terms of the surrender which were, according to the captain's articulate specifications,

"The boat and the cargo for your life or the boat and the cargo *with* your life...either way'll be fine by me."

When the emissaries arrived, being idiots, they could not remember the captain's exact terms for surrender so they improvised as best they could.

"Your coat and your knife for our boat, or one night of the life on the town with the cargo and that be the capn's final offer." insisted Slapstick.

Evanshire, being quick of wit, already understood the terms and deductively reasoned that to surrender his life at this point by putting up a fight would be the least effective of all possible choices, for not only would the cargo be forever lost, but he and his men with it. Rodgers and Gladstone, being loyal subjects and skilled soldiers, were prepared to fight to the end on Evanshire's command but he told them to stand down and surrender. Slapstick and Steel Toe unloaded the crew of the Quimby onto their lifeboat exchanging places with them, then escorted the captives to the shore at gunpoint, whereby Slapstick rowed back to the Clap Jaw with the lifeboat and Steel Toe rode the cutter back to sea, leaving the Queens men stranded at Port Said on the Suez Canal. To make matters worse the two blockheads, Slapstick and Steel Toe, managed to get one part of their orders correct, well almost. Before they left Captain McCracken commanded them to,

"Leave the captives with one parcel of the cargo—whatever it be, strip them of their uniforms and give them this here pirate attire to wear."

His motives behind these actions were three-fold. First, he wanted to delay the reporting of the stolen goods so that he had time to get away. As insinuated in his orders, McCrackin actually had no idea what he was stealing nor exactly from whom. In fact his emissaries were so incompetent that they neglected to make note of the fact that the captain of the small cutter titled H.M.S. Quimby which the Clap Jaw had run upon was Daniel Evanshire, Rear Admiral of the Southern Mediterranean British Fleet, second in command only to Rupert Scuttlebarry himself. As Evanshire and the Clap Jaw crew had come into contact on several occasions the duo were quite aware of whom he was. They just failed to make sense in the moment that it was in fact he who was commanding a lone cutter along the northern coast of Egypt. The second purpose for Captain McCracken's orders was to strip the captives of their military identity such that they could not immediately appeal to British forces for aid as they would appear themselves to be pirates and be fired upon at first sight from a great distance, before having a chance to plead their case or offer explanations. Finally, by leaving the captives with one parcel of the cargo, they knew they could not rid themselves of it because to do so would be to forsake their duty to the last remaining shred of their original mission. Conversely, by carrying the lone parcel of cargo dressed like pirates the navy seamen would appear upon initial reasoning to have defected from the British Military and abandoned their orders by stealing the cargo, hiding it somewhere and carrying it piece by piece to spend at their own discretion, as pirates are known to do; thus being deemed as traitors, thieves, and opportunists. At the very best possibility they would sit in prison for a good amount of time before their stories were corroborated and the circumstances of the alleged heist were found to add up properly and make sense. If they were an unfortunate bunch they would be shot on sight for appearing like pirates or hung on the galley for being found in possession of the stolen cargo before the truth was allowed to prevail. McCracken was hoping for the latter case. He knew no-one would initially believe their report about the pirates leaving them with one parcel of cargo to make them look guilty, because it wasn't like a pirate to give up treasure for the sake of long-term benefits. Moreover pirates were extremely greedy and it would contradict their very nature to make any sacrifices, for better or for worse, when it came to their treasure. Alas to be quite frank, it was largely assumed that pirates in general were a rather dimwitted variety of the human species, and no-one was likely to believe that a pirate let alone Filthy McCracken of all people could have come up with such a plot.

McCracken had not counted on this final point as he deemed himself a scholar of the highest order and a well-educated ruffian as far as ruffians are educated. However, the fact that he was widely recognized as a fool amongst the civil authorities, whether he felt so or not, played strongly in his favor as—for as much as a fool as he was—he was actually quite capable when it came to being a sailor, leading his men, devising plots, and getting the best of his opponents. In all truth Alistair McCracken—which was his birth name before he was dubbed “Filthy” for reasons unmentionable in this volume—was remarkably erudite for a pirate, he simply lacked the benefits of a stable upbringing and formal education. In fact, though some of them were truly hopeless, many of the pirates terrorizing the Mediterranean at that time bore a much higher degree of potential than one would expect given their station and their actual behavior but that is a matter for later discussion. What McCracken did not count on was the cunning of Daniel Evanshire.

Evanshire knew that dressed in pirate attire, he and his men would be fired upon at first sight given the tensions in the area at the time. In fact it was actually he who was regularly

giving the orders to fire cannon, musket and catapult at identified pirates and pirate vessels. The first thing he did after being abandoned by the delinquent duo on the shore of Port Said was to find an incoming cargo of coal, roll around in it and appropriate three shovels so that he and his men would appear to be coal workers rather than pirates. The next thing he did was to gain hire for he and his men as coal shovelers on board a ship that was headed to India where he could meet with British Forces. He knew Admiral Scuttlebarry's brother James was stationed as General of the British Troops in Calcutta, and he stood the best chance of survival by prevention of his execution for treason and theft from the crown if he would be able to contact him. By the time they got to Calcutta word had already reached both Britain and India that Captain Evanshire and his crew had come up missing at their checkpoint near the entry to the Suez Canal and neither they nor the H.M.S. Quimby had ever been seen since the time of the previous resting stop. This was due primarily to the chicanery of Filthy McCracken.

Upon returning to the Clap Jaw with the cargo of the Quimby, Slapstick and Steel Toe revealed to the captain and crew what they had discovered in the taking of the small vessel. Having already opened one of the barrels in order to give one parcel of the cargo to the captives before setting them free as the captain had ordered, the entire crew of the Clap Jaw became instantly mesmerized as the duo hoisted the first container of brilliant white pearls over the side of the ship onto the deck.

“What trickery be this here?!” demanded McCracken.

“Cap’n, why these be the cargo you ordered we retrieve from the cutter at sea.” replied Slapstick.

The captain gazed in awe at the treasure glowing before his eyes. He saw the fine crafted cargo barrel carved and painted with the Royal seal and knew he had found the proverbial ‘needle in the haystack’.

“By heaven on high! Quick, QUICK you Scallywags open the other two!!!” he demanded with great fervor.

Inside the other two barrels there were the same, large billiard-sized, shimmering, white, pearls stuffed to the brim. Inside each barrel was also a note that read:

My Dearest Raja,

Please see to it that you always hold onto these. One will never make it in this world if they go about losing their marbles.

Sincerely,

Your Queen and Empress Victoria I

“We’ve heisted the mother of all pearls mate-ees! The treasure is ours!” shouted McCracken.

To which his crew replied, “Hooray!!!” as they began shouting in delirious cheers. Several hours later as the captain was taking inventory of the heist amidst his second keg of celebratory ale, he spied that Slapstick was wearing a highly decorated British Naval Officer’s uniform jacket. Suddenly his inebriated euphoria was snatched from him in an instant as he became startled with fear.

“Mister Slapstick!” he shouted as the celebration cut to a halt. “What is that you have on?”

“Why cap’n, this here’s the spoils of war! My trophy from the heist. I took it off admiral Evanshire meself and given him me old tattered trench in exchange. You ought to seen the look on his face cap’n he...”

McCracken’s ears became deaf to the enthusiastic mumblings of his ship navigator.

“Admiral Daniel Evanshire!?” he inquired.

“Why yes cap’n.”

McCracken dropped his face into his hands. “You let go Admiral Daniel Evanshire, enemy number two of every pirate on the vast blue sea, just like that?”

Not realizing the severity of the situation Slapstick began again, “Why of course not cap’n. I didn’t know he was no Admiral Evanshire at the time. It wasn’t until you asked about his jacket that I even realized who I’d taken it from.”

For fear of losing his navigator in addition to his wits McCracken ceased the line of questioning throwing his hands to the sky and his fate to the wind and returned to his keg of ale, not knowing the worst news of all was still to come. Or perhaps he had known all too well and chose to tacitly let this fact escape him in the pool of his drunken departure.

When they landed on the coast of India Admiral Evanshire and his men collected their pay using it to cover their fair to Calcutta. Smothered in soot, with his back aching from the week’s hard labor he sat in the midst of a desert caravan on his camel, bracing his forehead in his soiled black hands beneath the scorching hot sun of the Indian subcontinent as he mulled over what was in store for him and his men. When they arrived in Calcutta Evanshire went immediately to the military post and requested counsel with General Scuttlebarry. The sentries in front of the military base seeing the lowly state of Admiral Evanshire and the men, whom they assumed to be paupers, commanded them to flee the vicinity immediately under pain of severe silly slapping. Appalled by the indignant attitude of the soldiers, the Admiral reiterated his request adding that his concerns were pressing with regard to matter’s concerning the Queen, being careful not to disclose his identity just yet or the fact that he was in possession of one of the Raja’s lost pearls.

“Now listen hear you indignant little peon, if I ever hear you speak of the Queen again from that filthy mouth of yours I’ll have you fish-hooked in the middle of the market square. Now crawl

back to whatever infested hole you came from and don't let me tell you again!" retorted the buck-toothed guard.

Seeing that this conversation was going nowhere the Admiral, reluctantly and against his better judgment, did what he knew he had to do.

In a raised voice using full Queen's English he declared, "My good man, stand your station soldier! I will have you know that you are talking to none other than Daniel Evanshire, rear-admiral of the southern Mediterranean fleet of the British Royal Navy. I demand to speak with General Scuttlebarry at once or I will have you written up on charges of insubordination!"

The sentries at watch paused in confusion for a brief moment before they burst into full-out laughter.

"He's a mimic!" said one of them in a cackling voice.

"That's not half bad. Can you do me? Do me...I'll give you six pence."

Realizing this too was going nowhere Evanshire saw no other choice but to reveal the treasure he had tucked into the inner pocket of the trench coat he was wearing. When he reached in he felt something he had failed to notice before. Looking down he realized that it was a tiny book of maps belonging to Slapstick the scatterbrained navigator of the Clap Jaw. A stroke of luck had been bestowed upon them, and for the first time in one week Admiral Evanshire felt relief, and he felt it for the exact same which Filthy McCracken was now experiencing so much grief over.

McCracken had told his emissaries to strip the navy men of their uniforms and give them the clothes that he provided because he knew his men would have evidence as to the pirates' activities in their own attire. He realized after seeing Captain Evanshire's uniform jacket on Slapstick that there must have been something of critical importance in the garment he had given to Evanshire but he had no idea how critical. Being a good soul at heart, he did not blame the dense little pirate Slapstick. He knew that if anything he was merely trying to uphold the reputation of his ship and crew by seizing the admiral's uniform and wearing it as a trophy. Furthermore he partially blamed himself because he knew that Slapstick was what one might call 'scatterbrained' meaning every order you gave him would essentially be performed in some disorderly version of its reverse—a quite problematic condition for a ship navigator to have. Hence, when the captain set the terms for the Quimby's surrender as, "The boat and the cargo for your life or the boat and the cargo *with* your life...either way'll be fine by me." Slapstick reinterpreted, "Your coat and your knife for our boat, or one night of the life on the town with the cargo and that be the capn's final offer." But the trick was that if given the command which was the opposite of what one intended, Slapstick was the very best at arriving at the truly intended result. So Captain McCracken would command, "Slapstick, set a course from the Cayman Islands to the East End of London." If in fact the ship were in London's East End and he wanted to reach the Cayman Islands. There were of course misguided bumps and misfortunes on the way, but as stated before, he was the best the crew of the Clap Jaw had to offer by way of a navigator and it was all in a pirates life after all—bumps and misfortunes that is. McCracken

ultimately blamed himself for whatever became of them as a result of the lost attire and whatever evidence was held within. Besides, if worse came to worst he knew he had one final trick up his sleeve that was certain to get them out of any serious trouble they may encounter.

With the new found confidence of having suddenly drawn this winning wildcard in this late stage of the game, Evanshire pulled the large round pearl from his jacket—being truly at the end of his wits with these imbecile-like guardsmen—and asserted his authority stating, “I am Admiral Daniel Evanshire of the British Royal Navy, my cutter the H.M.S. Quimby was seized at sea by the pirates of Captain Filthy McCracken’s ship, the Clap Jaw. The cargo onboard included three barrels of pearls like the one I hold before you now, intended as gifts to the Rajas of Nagpur, Sind, and Bengal from the Queen herself. Now take me to General Scuttlebarry or it will be your heads!”

The men, realizing the situation had just turned severe, snapped into attention at first sight of the pearl and the admiral’s verbal abuse. But as previously stated, word of the Quimby’s disappearance had reached both ends of the world by the time Evanshire and his men arrived on the coast of India. The soldiers soon remembered that there was a massive search for the lost cutter and her crew and the entire British Military had been given orders to arrest anyone in possession of those magnificent pearls, as well as Admiral Evanshire and both his arms-men should any of them be spotted alive, pending further investigation. Being dumbfounded as to whether this filthy looking character standing before them was the admiral himself or some highly skilled mimic, and realizing that they had not the mental capacity to determine the truth with any degree of certainty—in addition to the fact that under either circumstance their orders to perform an arrest were the same—they turned the bayonets of their muskets on the troubled trio and placed the them under arrest. They seized the pearl and escorted them to a detention unit until higher authority arrived.

The admiral knew he was in severe danger of losing his neck because he had been told so by the Queen herself:

“Admiral Evanshire, you are one of my most trusted and reputable military officers, your service to the Crown can never be repaid in gold or in gratitude, which is why you have been selected to carry out this most important of missions above the reputations of your outstanding peers. Should you at any point fail to meet at the appropriate sequence of check points, go missing for any duration longer than accountable weather should permit or be found at or outside of your destination without any parcel of the cargo during the scheduled duration of your voyage, you and your men will be tarred and feathered, hang at the galleys, beheaded, then quartered on counts of treason against the Empire, theft from the Crown and the Rajas of India, and defection from your military duties. I’m certain you will not disappoint. God be with you and good luck on your mission.”

Now to make matters worse it did not help our distressed trio to come to the realization that after seizing their ship and the cargo, Captain McCracken, under fear of retribution for such a crime against the Military and the Crown took immediate precautions to conceal his liability in the heist. In addition to leaving the Quimby crew with one pearl and only pirate attire, he spread false rumors on land and on sea that, “It has been said that the Rear Admiral Daniel Evanshire has defected from the British Royal Navy, stolen the Queen’s pearls for the Indian Rajas and

taken up the life of a pirate calling himself Lilly Pants Evanshire.” Beyond this he painted the H.M.S. Quimby over and renamed her The Little Clapper so that she could not be found.

So Evanshire, Rodgers and Gladstone sat in the prison barracks awaiting their fate or the arrival of General Scuttlebarry whom they were told was out on mission. Then suddenly the door was flung open and a line of soldiers entered the cell followed by none other than Colonel Piers Hastings. Colonel Hastings was a tall, thin man with steel-grey eyes and rust colored hair cropped neatly to his brow. He wore a slim mustache and had a handsome face, but handsome in the slithery way that is discomfoting to small children and animals. He was despised by all the men under his command for it was said that he wielded his authority with an iron fist in a glove made of steel. Hastings was a cold, cruel, and calculated man who never missed an opportunity to disparage another when he was down or in need. He waltzed into the admiral’s cell producing a pompous gaze of revulsion from his bitter grey eyes. With his nose in the air he pronounced in a calm and snooty voice, “You are to be tarred and feathered tomorrow at high noon when you will be flayed and tortured as the boiling pitch melts the flesh from your bones until you tell us where you’ve hidden the pearls. When you finally confess you will be hung at the galleys and beheaded for good sport where-after your remains will be quartered in the market square and fed to the jackals just in time for tea. Do you have any questions?” He snickered with a corruptible grimace of self-delight as he made his little mockery about tea time. Admiral Evanshire simply bowed his head and his men followed suit. “If you confess now you will be put to death swiftly like the dogs that you are and spared all of this unnecessary incivility.” said Hastings with a tone of slight regret. In actuality he loved the viciousness of punishment and torture...to see another soul suffer so; there was nothing in this world that he desired more. He then added, “No-one will believe your story so you may as well confess. There is no way the pirates could have known to out-route you before Port Said with the pearls.” Then he turned and walked away. There was only one problem with this final statement and Evanshire recognized it instantly. He had given an account to the sentries about being run upon by the Clap Jaw, but he had never said anything to anyone on base about being taken near Port Said. In fact he had not given an official report of the event to anyone as he was waiting to speak to James first. He would keep this fact to himself until he saw General Scuttlebarry. If what he thought was correct, Hastings must have been in on the heist.

The following morning the three prisoners were lined up without a trial or jury and set beneath three scolding hot cauldrons of boiling tar and pitch. Luckily for these three the events could not commence until the general was present and ordered the torture and execution to begin. As he had just recently arrived in from his voyage he was still preparing himself to deal with these sorts of administrative duties. Everyone was standing around waiting when he finally walked up to receive the orders for the torture and execution which were to be read aloud. A snare roll began as he grabbed the scroll and unraveled it:

By the orders of Her Majesty the Queen of England and Empress of India under charges of treason against the Empire, theft from the Crown and the Rajas of India, and defection from your military duties I hereby condemn to torture by tarring and feathering, flaying and all inhumane forms of physical assault to be succeeded by execution by hanging, beheading from the axe of the Queen’s henchman and the quartering of your human remains in the market square of Calcutta to thereafter be fed to the Jackals—

One:
Rear Admiral Daniel Evanshire

One:
First Lieutenant Edmond Rodgers

One:
Second Lieutenant Charles Gladstone?

“Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!” he interrupted.

He removed the paper from before his face and studied the prisoners thoroughly only to burst into hysterical laughter upon realizing what had happened. He laughed so wildly that the entire company began to laugh, even the prisoners. They laughed harder and harder to the point that Admiral Evanshire feared that he may die of laughter after surviving their plight with the pirates and seemingly circumventing their execution by the military. James also began to feel the ghost slipping from his flesh and so did his best to regain his composure lest the army find a company of troops whom had laughed itself to death in the middle of Calcutta. “Quite an absurd fiasco that would be.” he thought to himself. And so he caught his breath and stood upright shouting in his commanding voice of authority, “Attention!” In response to which the entire episode came to an abrupt and immediate halt. “Corporal, untie these men!”

Colonel Hastings suddenly broke rank and scurried over to the general pleading the case for their torture and execution explaining, “But General, these men are under persecution by direct order from the crown.”

James replied in astonishment, “You are in attention Colonel and in direct violation of orders from your superior, now stand down before I have you written up!”

At this the weasel tucked his tail between his legs and returned to his ordered stance in the assembly. The General grabbed Admiral Evanshire up and embraced him in his filthy soot covered state, soiling his own uniform shouting, “Daniel, what is this all about?” The General then noticed the filth of his friend’s clothing and quickly withdrew his embrace in mild disgust. “Oh dear!” he shouted, “Let’s get you cleaned up...all of you...me too” And then he commanded his men at ease and walked into his chambers to refresh while the prisoners were reinstated to their proper military status and taken to be cleaned. Later on that day they sat at high tea in the general’s quarters discussing the matter while Colonel Hastings paced nervously in his tent.

General Scuttlebarry was the model of a gentleman in every sense of the word. He was nearly identical in appearance to his brother Rupert save for the fact that he was possibly a half inch shorter and his hair was blonde instead of dark, but just as wavy. He had the same stunning jawline which the brothers both inherited from their father, and the same brilliant blue eyes which were the gift of their mother. He was staunchly built with broad shoulders and a gentle

disposition. While sipping his tea and holding the Queen's billiard sized pearl he opened the conversation to his guest and dear friend by inquiring,

"What on earth brought you to this terrible situation my good man?"

"We were ambushed by Filthy McCracken and forced to surrender." Evanshire replied.

"How on earth did he find you in the fastest cutter on the Mediterranean good boy?" asked James.

And so Evanshire, now dressed in military uniform revealed to him the full account of his marine assault by the pirates, his suspicions of Colonel Hastings involvement and the tiny book of maps belonging to Slapstick the pirate and its contents. General Scuttlebarry assured the Admiral that he would secure his immunity and pardon from the Queen, which he eventually did. And so with Slapstick's book of maps it took two dozen of the Queen's finest engineers, tacticians, mathematicians and technicians nearly six-teen hours of non-stop attempts to decipher the scatterbrained nature of its cartography and notations for just a single location. However, they only needed one location. They sought to determine the location of The Scallywag Tavern, which was found casually displaced in the forests two miles inland from the shores of the Cilles Islands' Illa de Montegudo off the western coast of Galicia in Spain. Slapstick had it marked two miles inland from the eastern Coast of Toroella de Montgrí on the exact opposite side of the Iberian Peninsula.

ACT I, PART VI: AMBUSH AT THE SCALLYWAG TAVERN

We return back to the scene of the mob of pirates chasing down Admiral Rupert Scuttlebarry. Now the pirates had no idea of it in their crazed state of rage but as they approached the recklessly indifferent Admiral, with each step they came closer to their own downfall. For there was, just beyond the brush where the Admiral stood, a host of one-thousand infantrymen and five-hundred sailors armed to the teeth. So when they came just within range to fire upon him with their muskets, they were stunned into motionlessness by the site of the British Military and the sound of a thousand arms firing a deafening cacophony of warning shots just above their heads. There at the head of this awesome force was General James Scuttlebarry and Admiral Daniel Evanshire. They began to speak mockingly in pirate accents.

“Ahoy Maitees!” said the general.

“Well shiver me timbers if it isn’t Filthy McCracken. It’s been a long time since I’ve been seeing you mate. Didn’t expect to be running into you so soon again. Let me see, how did it go? The boat and the cargo for your life or the boat and the cargo *with* your life, either way’ll be fine by me.” said Admiral Evanshire with a satisfied grin.

“And we brought along a little something special for you.” said Rupert pointing to Colonel Hastings who was now shaking convulsively in his boots and a step away from losing his continence right then and there.

McCracken immediately outburst, “Hastings you traitor, we had a deal!”

“Thank you again Captain. You are truly the gift that keeps giving. Hastings you may take your place with your pirate friends now that you’ve been exposed. You see we didn’t have any actual proof that Colonel Hastings colluded with you to steal the pearls...that is until just now.” said Rupert.

Enraged McCracken fell into a near infantile fit as he began to curse his opponents, curse his comrades, curse Colonel Hastings and his foolish plans, and he even cursed himself for being such a greedy pirate. When he finally calmed down he commanded the men to drop their weapons and they surrendered to the Queen’s military without incident.

The Rajas' pearls from the Queen were confiscated from the Clap Jaw and sent to their original destination. The H.M.S. Quimby was sanded and given a new sparkling finish to return back to her old self. As mentioned before, Evanshire was fully pardoned and reinstated to the Navy with promotion to the title of Admiral of the Caribbean Fleet. Lieutenants Rodgers and Gladstone were promoted to the posts of rear admirals of the north and south divisions under him, respectively. The Brothers Scuttlebarry were each granted knighthood for their part in the successful mission which led to the capture of over fifty pirate ships, millions of pounds sterling worth of stolen cargo and buried treasure and the arrest of over two-hundred fifty captains and high pirate officers from the tavern and another seven-hundred fifty pirates waiting guard aboard the docked ships who were also taken without resistance when they were suddenly surrounded by half of the British Navy's Mediterranean Fleet. All were brought to London, tried in the Queen's high court and nearly sentenced to the galleys including Colonel Hastings who was almost tarred and feathered, hanged, beheaded, quartered and fed to the dogs. However, Sir Johnathan Scuttlebarry—being a man of great generosity and compassion—sought other forms of punishment and retribution for the crown.

ACT I, PART VII

ALL OUT OF PRELUDES: THE TRIAL OF THE THOUSAND BUCCANEERS

The Trial of the Thousand Buccaneers was quite the public calamity. Inside the Scallywag Tavern on that particular day there sat an assortment of some of the most notorious pirates, criminal masterminds, and wanted men throughout the whole of the seven seas. There was Sweet Tooth Rodrigues of the pirate ship the Succulent Nectar, whose specialty was tropical produce vessels. He had an insatiable desire for sweet foods and over the last two decades he had caught no less than ten percent of the sugar cane entering the British Isles and the Strait of Gibraltar which were coming from the tropical fields of Brasil to Portugal and back out. Laughing McLaughlin—birth name Lawrence—captained a ship called the Thirsty Bertha because her hull was never without a leak, and he had employed a full-time crew in addition to his primary crew just for the purpose of finding and fixing said leaks. He was half Scottish but his mother came from Wales and he spoke in the thickest Welsh accent which to the non-Welsh always sounded as if he were laughing and this is how he earned his name. He stole whatever he could get his hands on, but his primary means of employment was to ambush vessels carrying Nutmeg from India. There was Sneezzy O’Cleasy—born Clarence—who pirated from onboard the Silver Seagull. His favorite mark was to run down vessels carrying lucrative peppercorns from the Port of Calicut in India. He earned the name Sneezzy because pepper tends to do that to you. There was Spotty McCracken the brother of Filthy. Spotty—born Cornelius—commanded the Dalmatian which he named because of his fondness for the dogs and he kept a kennel of them aboard his ship. The ship was made of a colorful bricolage of wood and it even had spots on her sails and as the banner for her crew. He gained his likeness for the dogs by seizing banking ships carrying silver and other stock goods to the Dalmatia region of Croatia. Of course there was Brewster Fontana—who had been looking for Filthy McCracken in the Scallywag but was asleep in the back corner when he came in and when the incident with Admiral Rupert Scuttlebarry was taking place. In all truth as he was aroused by the men charging out of the tavern, by the time he gathered his wits he saw Filthy leading the call to arms and joined in the rush not to cut down Scuttlebarry but in pursuit of McCracken himself for his money and his cheese. Fontana captained a ship called the Sea Bucket and his ambushes of preference involved catching vessels in route from Cuxhaven carrying his favorites; Bavarian ale—hence the name ‘Brewster’—and

Fontina Cheese from the Italian Alps—hence the name Fontana—to Great Britain. As the trial's title suggests, it is obvious that there were too many bandits in court to name in this single volume but rest assured the worst of the worst were certainly present. The ships of all of the pirates arrested were impounded pending the Queen's final decision.

During the trial the entire host of pirates was tried as co-defendants under a list of charges that read so long it was eventually published by the London Times as a reference book of missing mercantile goods. Added to the initial complaints were eventually several hundred counts of disorderly conduct, contempt of court, using ill-manners before the Queen and shameful behavior less specifically. During the swearing of their oaths, half of the pirates could not determine their right hand from their left hand and the court bailiffs endured several rounds of "The other right, the other right..." before a consensus was reached. What is more, when asked to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." A cry of despair rang out from the lot of pirates that the public had never heard in life. It was the sound of a thousand bleeding souls having the final shreds of dignity ripped from the fabric of their legitimate sense of self-hood. For it was a pirates duty by definition "to lie, cheat , and steal in every opportunity, to swindle and exploit all that was upright and just, to walk the crooked line wherever she be straight." The two notions ran ideologically anathema to one another and the cry that was let out was the thought of the pirates taking their first step to no longer being pirates. It was like the law was turning them to honest men. The internal dissonance was too much to bear and several of them dropped unconscious right on the spot out of sheer disbelief of the words that were coming out of their mouths.

The pirates were represented at trail by The Law Offices of Hook, Line, and Sinker & Associates. The firm had specialized in maritime disputes since its founding over a century prior, and had represented both Sinbad IX, Seabate McCaine, Red Beard, Gold Beard, Blue Beard and Green Beard the pirates before the British Courts. The case was handled directly by a young attorney of morbid temperament known as Francis Hook-Cunningham, Esquire. Mr. Cunningham was the great-grand-nephew of the notorious Alfred Hook, one of the founders of the firm. It took the first two days of trial simply for the charges to be read off, and from the opening statements it was apparent that things were about to get out of control. The prosecution of the charges was handled directly by Naval Attorney Sir Thomas Lancaster, Esquire operating under the direction of the Royal Counsel, none other than Sir Johnathan Scuttlebarry. The Queen insisted that she serve as judge over the proceedings though she often grew bored and fell asleep or made sporadic outbursts with reference to things in no way related to the discussion at hand let alone the trial. Therefore it was saw to that a second judge, Lord Alfred Huddleston, be placed in the proceedings under the Queen's 'direction' such that the trial might remain as speedy and as on topic as possible for the purpose that matters might move forward with haste towards the killings of the culprits who were wanted desperately by every wealthy merchant and businessmen from London to Calcutta.

The pirates had terrorized the maritime trade for centuries but since the period known as "the infestation", matters had gotten severely out of hand. There were instances of pirates robbing a ship bare only to have another pirate ship later on take the crew for hostage because they were out of cargo to rob on their return back to port after having been robbed by the first pirates. When asked by the Queen, "How do you plead to these charges?" With the exception of

Colonel Hastings, the defendants unanimously instructed their attorney to enter a plea of guilty, and they did so with great pride, until Mr. Cunningham informed them that to plead guilty would mean the immediate end of the trial and the forfeiture of any chance at sparing their lives, whereupon they would be sent directly to the galleys for hanging. They were still reluctant to deprive themselves of the honor of publicly asserting the crimes they had committed but after several rounds of discussion and under much persuasion from the Colonel, they came to the conclusion that “He who fights and runs away need not kiss and tell, or something to that effect.” and so McCracken—who had by now become the *de facto* leader of the hoard—turned to Mr. Cunningham and said in his thick pirate accent, “Upon further consideration, my swashbuckling co-defendants and I have decided to reverse our initial petition and we’ll be entering a plea of decidedly not guilty if you would good sir.” Though the Queen was asleep and snoring during this portion of the trial, the articulation of Mr. McCracken’s request astonished not only the court gallery but also Lord Huddleston, Sir Lancaster, and most importantly Sir Scuttlebarry, the elder. This is of particular importance because it was Sir Scuttlebarry’s assessment of the pirates’ *true nature* which was the *actual trial* that mattered. The rest of the proceedings were merely a spectacle of formality carried out to satisfy the grievances and bloodlust of the wealthy merchants whom were in many ways just as crooked as the pirates—a fact that would not go undisclosed during the duration of the proceedings, which they so vehemently demanded of the Queen.

When it came time to call witnesses, the trial slipped across the narrow line between senselessness and insanity which it had been teetering along since the moment the first indictments had been filed. As there were too many witnesses on both sides of the case to provide a comprehensive assessment of the tomfoolery that ensued let us suffice to recall some of the most notable and widely reported highlights:

“The prosecution calls to the stand Captain Alistair McCracken.” Immediately the entire courtroom burst into absurd laughter, including the Queen. Lord Huddleston was the first to come to his senses and slammed his gavel shouting, “Order! Order! Order in the court!” as he gave the Queen a sneering glance of disrepute. She replied by seconding his motion for order—slamming *her* gavel and shouting even louder with her piercing, shrill voice, “Order! I said Order in this courtroom or I will have you all beheaded on grounds of contempt!” This quickly sobered the jocular mood of the court and snapped every person present into full orderly conduct. Filthy McCracken, for the shame of having his proper Christian birth name publicly announced, wandered embarrassingly to the witness stand with a stubborn grin of annoyance. As he took his seat the Queen could not help herself but to give one final sniggle of laughter as she repeated, “Alastair...hahaha.” The courtroom burst into full laughter again as Filthy or Alastair if you will, slumped his chin onto his balled-up fist and steamed with anger at the grand humor that was being had at his expense. The most clever of pirates and never one to be undone, especially with the whole world watching—as soon as the prosecution began to ask its first question he abruptly stood from his seat and pointed into the crowd shouting, “So you think the name me dear mum gave me is funny do ya? Well him, him right there, Sweet Tooth Rodrigues, his birth given name is Emmanuel, and him right there, Brewster Fontana, his mum named him Alawishus...and him right there, Strong-Arm Birmingham, do you want to know what his rightful name by birth be?” Strong-Arm sat in his chair with a look of startle on his face shaking his head, begging for McCracken not to do it. But “This was no time for a pirate’s compassion, lives were on the line.”

thought McCracken to himself as he pronounced the name, “Percival! Percival! They used to call him Percy in the orphanage! His own brother told me so! Ah Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!” At which point Strong-Arm or Percival if you will, gave an angry stare to his brother Sharp-Shot—whose given name was Duncan by the way—to which his brother gave an apologetic nod and shoulder shrug as the entire courtroom completely lost every scintilla of order, civility, professionalism and dignity that it was assumed to maintain. The guards rolled on the floor laughing. One of their muskets fired off burning a bullet graze into the side of Lord Huddleston’s wig, which made the court laugh even harder. The scribes serving as court reporters by this point were merely jotting down mangled arrays of lines that at best coincided with the gesticulations of their bodies as they wrangled back and forth on the ground and tables in absolute hysteria.

Filthy McCracken was a charismatic man by nature, and he looked on with much satisfaction in the fact that he had taken sway of the Queen’s court and he knew he stood a chance if he could use this to his advantage. At some later point the courtroom was brought back into order and the prosecution began its questioning.

“Mr. McCracken tell me why you think this courtroom should consider your plea of innocence with any modicum of earnestness?” asked Sir Lancaster.

McCracken replied, “Well then counsel, I suppose it be for the same reason I should consider your earnestness with any degree of innocence.”

Infuriated, Lancaster rebutted in his calmest voice possible, “But that doesn’t make any sense.”

“Why, it most certainly does make sense! I believe your initial inquiry was with regard to my plea of innocence. Now as a pirate I’ve been around the world and in certain domestic currencies that makes one cent, the sense that I be making that is! I believe I should consider this courtroom’s earnestness under the perspective of my own degree of innocence. And that makes two cents, the second being innocence! Plenty of cents to go around good counsel! Now this court, in and of itself being an institutionalized sanction for the issue of murder and mayhem committed by authorized personnel against the good people of the realm and those outside the realm in the name of the wealthy merchant class, might on one hand be deemed less than innocent on counts of menacing, meddling, and misdirecting the lives of all manner of subjects of the British Crown, especially the poor and downtrodden. You see me and these men we’ve never launched a cannon where we’ve known there were innocents and children, but can you say the same for the military sir? It isn’t a pirates nature to take from those who go without, for it is treasure we seek...ehemm—theoretically speaking of course—and if one be having no treasure then pirates be having no interest in one. Therefore I see this court, excepting Her Royal Hiney the Queen of course, as the most diabolical of contraptions set to upturn the face of justice on itself, hence violating the very sacredness of the Crown it was intended to serve, and this court case of all court cases as an exemplar mechanism for the continuation of that process through its utterly corrupted enterprise. And that’s my two cents!”

For reasons unbeknownst to them all, the entire courtroom was so moved by the captain’s speech that they all jumped out of their seats in an uproar. Even the Queen and Lancaster found themselves cheering. Again the captain had taken sway of the court with masterful skill, but

there was one watchful eye above them all who was taking note of this spectacle—Sir Johnathan Scuttlebarry.

Mr. Slapstick Smith —born Andrew Smith—was brought to the witness stand for questioning. Lancaster pulled forward his Exhibits A and B which consisted of the trench coat that he gave Admiral Evanshire in exchange for his military jacket—which, incidentally, he was still wearing—and the tiny book of maps which the admiral found in the inner pocket of the trench coat, respectively.

“Does this belong to you Mr. Smith?” asked the shrewd prosecutor holding up the trench coat.

He turned to the Queen to ask permission to speak, “Your grace?”

“Go ahead my boy, answer.” she conceded.

“Why no sir.” replied the skinny little pirate in a soft, unassured voice.

The jury gasped in disbelief.

“If it is not yours may I ask if you know who it *does* belong to?” insisted Lancaster.

“Why of course you may ask, you are the prosecuting attorney that is your job. And yes I do know that it *does* belong to Admiral Evanshire.”

This time the entire courtroom began to gasp and whisper until the Queen restored order.

“Admiral Evanshire is an officer of the British Navy. How pray tell do you suppose he came upon such a wretched article of clothing when he is supposed to be wearing his official decorated uniform jacket...a jacket not quite unlike the jacket you are wearing right now.”

But the counsel had outwitted himself. He was unaware of Slapstick’s proclivity towards ‘scatterbrained’ thinking. Without preparing or trying, Slapstick replied in the exact opposite answer to every inquiry that Lancaster could have possibly made.

“Why sir, the jacket *came down* on the admiral, I suppose, by way of his arms and his shoulders, this leads me to assume he came *upon* the jacket through the common force of gravity. As far as him being a naval officer you’d have to ask him why he would wear such an article of attire rather than his required uniform jacket. I see he is wearing his uniform jacket now, as am I, so I suppose that means we both have good taste; him for coming upon the trench coat and me for wearing the same jacket by choice which the navy requires its officers to wear as a protocol of uniformed dress.”

McCracken smiled with deep pride as his trusty navigator unwittingly outwitted the quick-witted attorney. Lancaster was dumbfounded by this response and rather than to be made a fool by a fool, he proceeded with further questioning.

“Well what about this Mr. Smith?” he said as he raised the tiny book of maps into the air.

“Well that’s about twelve pence if you go down to Henley’s...” Slapstick replied.

“No , no! Does this belong to you?” he inquired as his nerves began to slowly unravel.

“Well if it belongs to me and you have it, then that just might mean you stole it from me. Isn’t it true that you came to this trial to strip us of all that we possess? Wouldn’t that fancy little book of yours be the first step in a sinister plot to get away with the crime? A thousand buccaneers fresh for the taking in the Royal Courts of London...Lancaster walks away filthy rich...trust, treasure, and the power of attorney! Objection your honor! Objection! The witness is badgering the attorney!” replied Slapstick as Lancaster stood in complete disbelief.

Lord Huddleston leaned over to the witness and proclaimed, “My dear boy, you *are* the witness whose actions you are objecting against.”

“Exactly!” he replied. “And if you’ll have no further questions Sir, I will now take my seat.” He said fiercely as he snapped up the coattail of his newly acquired uniform jacket and stood and walked away staring at Lancaster with an indignant look of contempt.

Lord Huddleston just shook his head and called for the next witness without bothering to ask Cunningham if he would cross-examine. Clam Chop—whose birth name was Richard Finnegan—was called to testify next.

“Are you the chef of the ship they call the Clap Jaw commanded by Filthy McCracken?” asked Lancaster.

“No sir, I’m the chef of cell number three-forty-seven.” he answered.

The pirate hoard thought this particularly funny since he had actually been assigned cooking duties since being incarcerated. Lancaster had begun to truly lose his wits with the witness testimony and by now was fully engaging with the tomfoolery of the pirates. What is ironic is, the further he went in this direction, the more the prosecuting case began to make sense. Pirating was a highly secretive profession and so the pirates had learned to speak in code at all times, which is why Slapstick made such an effective navigator; no-one could trace their actions through his logs; no-one could find their buried treasure with his maps; it just happened to be a natural condition for him. But Lancaster began to approach the inquisition of the pirates with a slightly more effective—albeit less mentally stable—approach.

“Three times forty-seven is one-hundred and forty-one!” said the prosecutor.

“That’s not my cell number!” replied the pirate with a snickering grin.

“I know it isn’t because your cell is number fifty which is equal to three plus forty-seven!”

“Hey! That’s a rotten trick!” said the pirate.

“Objection!” shouted Cunningham.

“You stay out of this Mr. Fancy Pants!” Lancaster remarked to Cunningham.

The courtroom laughed profusely at this unexpected remark from the ordinarily highly dignified attorney. Lord Huddleston wanted to call for order but he was too weak from laughter to speak or lift his gavel. The Queen of course was completely possessed with laughter.

“Now why did you steal a shipment of caged quails from the H.M.S. Wind Cutter headed to London from Spain last month?” demanded Lancaster.

“They wasn’t a quails Mr. Smarty they was a shipment of Spanish roosters. And we took ’em because they made the finest platters we had eaten in months!”

“The prosecution has no further questions your honor.”

McCracken buried his brow in his hand because he saw that this prosecutor was shrewder than any of them could have imagined. When the defense was called to cross-examine, Cunningham—seeing that the innocent plea was now but the faintest hope by any stretch of the imagination—attempted to lay thick the grounds for victimization by the system.

“Mr. Finnegan isn’t it true that you learned to cook because the orphanage you were held in with Mr. McCracken as a child did not have enough food to feed all of the children, so you and your friends would withdraw yourselves from the lot of mouths with the smaller children to be fed in order to go steal food so that everyone could have more to eat—forget about being healthy.”

The recounting of these events drew a genuine tear from the eye of Clam Chop Finnegan.

He replied in a sobbing voice, “T’is true, that’s how me learned me cooking craft! But we did it for the youngin’s . T’was all but for the youngin’s. We didn’t a know it would lead to a life of crime on the high seas. We just wanted to fill our wee bellies with nice warm food. And many a times it wasn’t even warm!”

“No further questions.”

This exchange was a powerful and extremely convincing moment of testimony for the defense. For the first time it humanized the condition of the pirates. These were no ruthless evil doers any longer in the court of public opinion, but victims of society’s negligence towards those who were misfortunate. The pirates were merely etching out an existence in the free world with what little they’d been given—or so Cunningham would have the court to believe. And by all means his plan was going swimmingly. The Queen, Lord Huddleston, Sir Lancaster and Sir Scuttlebarry were all in tears by the time Clam Chop walked off the stand. The jury, which was composed of a cast of nearsighted elderly folks with thick spectacles, was even in tears. (The jury was selected on grounds argued by Cunningham to be pursuant to a fair trial, such that if they could not see the motley appearance of the defendants very well, they were less likely to

invoke sentiments of prejudice typical of the ordinary peerage of citizenry). The gallery was always a mess hall of over-dramatization. And the pirates were in tears because it was *their* touching story that was being told on that stand.

The Crown and the defense called dozens upon dozens, then hundreds upon hundreds, and eventually thousands upon thousands of witnesses. All of the pirates testified and re-testified. Several directors of orphanages gave witness testimony. Even the mums of some pirates were called to stand as witnesses. The Indian Rajas had been called to witness as well. The crews of raided merchant vessels and the tradesmen who lost fortunes on the hijacked cargo all testified. And of course the Brothers Scuttlebarry and Admiral Evanshire, Lieutenants Rodgers and Gladstone were all called to witness. Not least of all, called to the witness stand was the despicable Colonel Hastings for whom no-one in the court felt one ounce of sympathy.

When it came time for the jury to deliberate they were handed their instructions from Lord Huddleston—which they could not read as a result of their eyesight which was classified as nearsightedness but was also so limited that it included a fair degree of farsightedness as well—and they filed into their chambers for approximately two seconds before walking back out to their seats and announcing a verdict of guilty on all charges for all parties charged.

Sir Scuttlebarry had taken particular interest in the case of these pirates, especially in Captain Filthy McCracken. He and he alone realized the potential of this ruff-house bunch of scoundrels; for it was the compassion beneath his formal, highly disciplined nature that allowed him to peer into the inner glory of all those that stood before him. Such a skill is of the utmost importance when operating within the justice system as a prosecutor of the law. And from this he became inspired to prevent the condemnation of these men to the galleys. He saw in them architects, and doctors, tradesmen and even politicians. He negotiated pressingly behind closed doors with the Queen to have them spared. He argued that the stench of nearly two-thousand corpses in and of itself would be enough to send the city of London into a state of dismay.

“Rehabilitate them your highness. These men are capable! They are without limitations to their potential. They have never been shown compassion in life and most certainly not by the crown. They are fit sailors; many of them are highly intelligent wanting only in formal education. They have a fleet of marine vessels which we do not have the manpower to fully commission. What is more, they have surrendered hundreds of millions of pounds in treasure. Think of it your majesty; you will be praised as the merciful, motherly ruler that you are. They will crescent you ‘The Queen of Hearts’. The people will be eating from your hand.”

The Queen replied, “And what of the trade guilds, and the merchants?”

“They will receive settlements from the forfeited treasure. Everyone will be satisfied. Your generosity will outweigh the people’s lust for blood. A portion of the remaining treasure can be dedicated to the public good. There can be programs for the welfare of the orphanages to curb the rearing of young pirates in the making” he said.

She replied, “Yes...I do believe you are on to something Sir Johnathan. Very well then, the prisoners are to be rehabilitated and sent to become productive members of society in lieu of

their execution by hanging. But Sir Johnathan...you had better be sure of your little pirates because if they are set free and they wreak havoc on the city it will be your neck that will hang along with theirs.”

“But of course Your Highness...Oh and one more thing Your Majesty...Throw Colonel Hastings into prison for a decade of hard labor. How I do dislike that man!” he responded.

At this final notion she laughed a sinister laugh for quite some time.

The time came for the sentencing of the guilty, and all were in grave spirits as the Queen called the pirates to rise and receive their penalty.

“Will the defendants please rise and stand before the bench? You are truly an unruly bunch...a bunch of grapes that have spoiled, unfit for eating that should be plucked from the vine of life. You are a bunch who deserves to be dried out in the sun and converted to raisins...nice little plump ones, scrumptious with the wrinkles just so...and served with pickled carrots and water cress (now licking her lips). On the side of you should be a fat Cornish hen roasted to perfection, where you will serve as little more than a relish. You don’t deserve to be part of the wine that is poured into the crystal goblet, but a mere inkling spotting the plate. The vegetables...”

Just then Sir Scuttlebarry cleared his throat and leaned over to the Queen whispering, “Your majesty, the sentencing.”

The Queen continued in her rapid tone, “Oh yes! Oh yes...but in my magnanimous mercy and compassion I have seen fit that you not be executed by the hangman, but rehabilitated under the administration of the Royal Navy against which you have so vehemently fought. I hereby sentence you each to serve a five year commission beginning as sailors of the lowest rank aboard the vessels you have used in the commission of your crimes, which have now been confiscated by the Crown to be reissued for use by the Royal Navy. Each of you may rise in rank by proving your worth. Upon the conclusion of your mandated commission you may honorably resign from your military post or pursue this station as a career until your hearts content. But until that time you will spend your days hunting down the remainder of your ilk that terrorize the maritime vessels of this and other civilized kingdoms, and you will do so in the name of your gracious Monarch who has spared your lives from the galleys! Furthermore you will each receive an accelerated primary and secondary education during the performance of your commission and you will be expected to proficiently speak ‘the Queen’s English’ by the conclusion of your third year at sea. If at any time during this period you should flagrantly fail to report to duty, be excessively disciplined as a result of your conduct, be discovered in violation of any civil or maritime legal statutes or be found to be in any way clandestinely adhering to the conduct, codes, and blood oaths which you have taken in your life as a pirate...in fact if you even pilfer a single crumb without permission you will meet the full wrath of the crown whereupon you will be promptly tarred and feathered, executed by hanging, then beheaded, quartered and fed to the dogs. You will each be made to bathe thoroughly, be clean shaven and have your heads trimmed of all manner of braids and locks to standard military length. You will also be made to remove all piercings and conceal all tattoos.”

The pirates all grunted at this last demand.

“However,” she continued, “If any of you have any objections to these demands let him come forward now that he might test the full depth of the crown’s bloodlust and be made an example for other detractors.”

At this statement they began to grunt in denial of having grunted in the first place mumbling, “Who me? I don’t object. Did you object? No objections here! Imagine an objection. What does it even mean to object?”

The Queen concluded, “And as for *you* Colonel Hastings...In my current sentiment of mercy I have also seen fit to spare your miserable life for your treachery.”

To this Colonel Hastings let out a deep internal sigh.

But the Queen continued, “You will be sent to the military dungeons to serve ten years hard labor after which you shall be made to enter the British Army, not as a commissioned officer or a soldier with opportunity to improve your rank, but as a manservant to horses and camels cleaning both stables and water closets for the remainder of your days. I need not mention what will happen to *you* should you choose to defect from your duties but to say that you would long for the fate of a defected pirate. This case is closed!”

And she slammed her gavel.

The following day the Times front page read: “Queen of Hearts Pardons Motley Hoard of Pirates in Trial of the Thousand Buccaneers—Col. Hastings Sentenced to Ten Years Hard Labor and Life in the Stables.” The pirates all fared very well in their new lives as seamen in the Royal Navy. They seemed to have felt a relief at having forsaken the Jolly Roger in exchange for the Union Jack. Many of them completely forgot their lives on the wrong side of the law in their pursuit of other pirates, whom were given the same option to turn sides or be fed to the dogs. Some of them resigned after their first commission and became restaurateurs like Richard(Clam Chop) Finnegan, jewelers like Lawrence (Laughing) McLaughlin, bankers like Cornelius (Spotty) McCracken, and legitimate spice merchants like Sneezy (Clarence) O’Cleezy. But others such as Captain Alastair McCracken remained in the navy and climbed their way back to the top. McCracken eventually became captain of his old ship, now rechristened as the H.M.S. Sterling. Gabriel (Seaweed) McGee returned as his first mate and both David (Steel Toe) Stulton and Andrew (Slapstick) Smith rejoined the ranks of McCracken’s ship officers. All in all it was a fair adventure for the Brothers Scuttlebarry. They had found the Rajas’ lost marbles, freed the Mediterranean of the infestation, and made good friends of their most bitter enemies. But most importantly they had gained another daring adventure to tell the world, because they told it to Lucian and Margaret and Lucian and Margaret told it to me and now I have told it to you.

ACT II

THE LAND OF WONDERS & THE LUNATIC CAVALCADE

ACT II, PART I – SHENANIGANS: LUCIAN & MARGARET IN THE LAND OF WONDERS

They felt themselves falling but it was as though they were traveling neither up nor down.

In that place time seemed to have vanished, for it felt as though they were falling for an eternity on one hand and for a fraction of a second on the other hand when they finally hit the ground...or the ceiling... depending on which one of them you ask...Because in that place even space appeared to be no more and be altogether there all at once. It was as if they were looking at things with their eyes closed...so that the images were like memories, but crystal clear, even though most of what they were viewing they had never seen before. This made sense because in actuality they were dreaming with their eyes closed...or were they?

They landed on a floor covered with fresco paintings and crown molding that looked as though there were grand chandeliers rising up from its surface. If Margaret didn't know any better, she'd have sworn that they'd landed on the ceiling. Then she looked up and pointed Lucian's attention to the fact that there were chairs and tables on what appeared to be the black and white checkered ceiling. Just then they noticed that the ceiling was getting closer and closer. Then they realized that the ceiling was not coming down on them, but it was them that were flying up towards the ceiling, that it is until the world inverted and what had just moments prior been the ceiling took its correct place as the floor and vice versa. Disoriented and confused the pair gazed around at this room which was neither here nor there; where up was at once down before it decided to be up again. Just then they heard a shrill voice with an abundance of clanking footsteps marching in rhythm towards them.

They quickly ran and hid behind a large tapestry such that their little feet could still be seen standing beneath what was in actuality a giant portrait of the Knave of Hearts. The harsh voice that could be heard talking in a rapid pace was the Queen of Hearts who was walking en route to preside over a trial as judge in a case about some butter that had run off of a piece of toast while being served to one of the Queen's guests named *Alice*. The butter had insisted that it only ran because the toast was too hot. The toast insisted that it had only been so hot because the baker had turned the oven up too high. The Baker—known as Thing-a-ma-jig, (not to be confused with the Snark hunter named Thing-um-a-jig who was the cousin of the former)—insisted that the oven had a mind of its own, and the oven was willing to swear before the court and testify that it had lost its mind some years ago and had been borrowing the mind of the kitchen thermometer to regulate its temperature. It was wholly unapparent who the oven was

trying to put on with this story about the thermometer because everyone knows that thermometers have no mind due to the fact that they rely on mercury to regulate the temperature and, according to the Hatter, mercury causes one's mind to be lost.

As she rounded the corner with her entourage, the Queen could be heard telling Alice, "You needn't be worried child as long as you tell the truth according to me you run absolutely no risk of being fed to the fipperspats."

Having endured numerous of the Queen's court hearings, Alice was well aware of the fact that none of her subjects were ever actually fed to the fipperspats. In fact most of her trials did not end in an orderly or coherent manner with a verdict or discernable outcome resulting in a settlement of affairs. They merely dismissed themselves after having gone so far off subject that most of the attendants could hardly recall the initial purpose of the proceedings. She hadn't the slightest idea what the Queen meant by "the truth according to me" but she also knew better than to test her majesty's patience with these concerns. In all actuality Alice wasn't even scheduled to make any statements during the trial but she knew that one could never hold to schedules and expectations in the Queen's court, for one never knew what to expect.

The Queen then began shouting orders to other members of the Royal Court.

"Sir Anthony!" she screeched as they neared the Knave's tapestry.

"Your Highness?" replied a large blue elephant in a disaffected voice as he strolled nonchalantly from the front of the procession, stepping forward as his body moved in the reverse direction until he met at the side of the Queen.

"See to it that none of the fipperspats are given lunch or tea today. I want them hungry in the event that the prisoners are convicted. Also have four jellyjops subpoenaed and brought to the bailiff chambers in case we have any jinwillies or hooglespouts in the gallery. Whatever clocks are unwound in the castle, have them smashed to smithereens and have the clockmaker ride the pony in his studio unto the sun set so that he may determine the time for next week. I cannot have him leaving the roosters out of the watches because it wreaks havoc on my complexion. Oh, and have Christopher tell the turtles that the carrots are canceled for tomorrow night's stew. They've been running in place for decades and haven't gotten a single star since yesterday. Have the forces lined up at exactly 5:61pm at the Royal Gates and prepared for a full on assault of the enemy. If the Rhinoceroses do not retrieve the lost noodles by the day before today have three new barrels of old noodles sent to the Peacock Princes. And now for more pressing matters...I want all of the salt removed from my glue because it doesn't quite match well enough and it simply will not do. Send a pound of sterling chocolate to the Duchess and have Chef fry it with an oak tree for her anniversary. Have the scribes write a note in the package that says, 'If it weren't for you there would still be gravity in the grass and we wouldn't have this little problem.' And Sir Anthony..."

"Yes Your Majesty?" he inquired.

"Please do make haste. We have a court hearing and we've been walking down this hall for five whole minutes and we've hardly made it back from where we began."

“But of course Your Majesty.” said Sir Anthony the great blue elephant as he walked off away from them stepping forward as his body traveled in the reverse direction.

Lucian and Margaret sat still behind the tapestry as all this was going on praying that no one would spy their tiny feet standing against the checkered floor of the grand hall. At some point, when the Queen’s retinue began to slow down and gradually reverse its forward motion as she barked out her orders to Sir Anthony our pint-sized heroes became anxious that they were being watched because the procession was not passing where they were standing. What was happening was that they were walking forward but had started moving backwards. Apparently the clock maker forgot to put the roosters in his clocks and watches and so they did not crow, therefore the sun did not rise but stayed seated and time did not flow according to ordinary design—if there was such a thing in this Land of Wonders. This is why the duo felt an eternity in a matter of seconds as they were falling, and why they landed on the ceiling and flew up to the floor. This is also why Sir Anthony and the Royal Court was walking forward to travel backward and why the Queen was blaming the Duchess for the lack of “gravity in the grass”. The Queen thought that the disruptions caused by the roosters failing to call the sun at the appropriate hour were making the motion of space and time unstable and highly dysfunctional. While this was a plausible theory, the fact of the matter was that the Queen had gone through the same changes every week for hours and decades and even centuries with the clock maker and there was nothing to be done to fix it. In fact during the previous week she argued that it was the roosters’ calling too soon to the sun that caused the very same problem, so she ordered him to take them out. This week it was the other way around. The truth of the matter is that the Land of Wonders was a place very similar to a dream state where everything was scatterbrained and disoriented, and frankly quite mad. Up was never for certain and neither was down and the same could be said for all directions—forwards and backwards, left and right. Time was also inconsistent, which is why we hear speak of years and minutes within the same frame of reference. Mastering time and space in this place was like staring at a water spot on a mirror; from the correct angle it could be viewed in focus clearly, but as one deviates to either side, up or down it becomes lost in the reflection of the world. To see objects, to walk and run in the desired direction, to jump up and fall down, one had to merely focus from the correct mental perspective and sometimes that meant walking north to go north and sometimes that meant walking north to go south, it all depended on the object of focus and the actor.

So the little children grew more and more nervous as the voices did not pass them and fade away. Eventually they could no longer stand the anxiety of not knowing—meaning after two and a half minutes of waiting—and they decided to peek from under the tapestry. When they did, what they saw startled them half mad. When they gazed from beneath the fine fabric the Knave’s image began to get jittery at the sensation of the moving children and the image felt a giggle coming on. When they spied the great blue elephant and his mighty ivory tusks speaking with the Queen, and the rest of the Royal Court—which was an assortment of finely clad ostriches, impalas, rhinoceroses, playing cards, kettles, clocks, and matchbooks with heads, arms and legs, and other wild animals and random objects—they became startled. In their trembling fidgety state they began to agitate the tapestry’s tickle even further and after Sir Anthony walked away in reverse their anxiety became more intense and their fidgeting finally caused the Knave to burst out laughing which nearly caused their spirits to leap from their skin and they both screamed louder than they knew they were capable. They ran out from under the great banner

screaming at the top of their lungs. At that moment the Queen was making demands on a tall ostrich named Lady Griselda to have sands taken from the desert to serve as the night's dessert. As the children approached everyone stopped what they were doing to turn and look at what the disruption was all about. When they reached where the group was standing they stopped before the Queen and, being children of high breeding, out of habit Lucian bowed and Margaret curtsied both saying, "Your Majesty." This quite pleased the Queen to see such proper manners in children so young and so she roused from her confused look and smiled with great delight as she nodded her head at them to carry on. They then proceeded to continue screaming as they ran up the hallway where Sir Anthony had recently wandered off. The court was still perplexed by the entire scenario and had remained in a stand-still confused and in awe until the Queen—who by this point was smiling graciously—grew agitated at their dim witted expressions and snapped them out of their delusion as she returned to her previous agenda—namely shouting orders at her court.

ACT II, PART II: THE GREAT BLUE ELEPHANT

The children ran with fury and they rounded the corner of the grand hall, still screaming at the top of their lungs, whereupon they saw the great blue elephant Sir Anthony walking with haste but moving nowhere. Still terrified they attempted to run faster to surpass him but noticed that as they approached him the faster they ran the more they began to slow down until they too stood in place beside him running their legs ragged and screaming their voices dry. With his enormous ears and long trunk Sir Anthony could hear the pair and smell them long before they turned the corner. And when they finally approached him within speaking range, staring up into his face, screaming with their mouths wide open and terrified looks on their faces, he turned to them and began to speak.

“My dear, what do we have hear? I was wondering when you would come out from behind the Knave’s tapestry. I could hear you holding your breath and I could smell the fear in your little hearts. Though I do suppose you smell much more sophisticated than your size would suggest and you look much less sophisticated when you are screaming like babies without their pacifiers. Please do cease this madness. I’m afraid my ears cannot take much more. Furthermore I assure you whatever it is you are running from and screaming about would have eaten you long ago if your lives were ever in any danger. Besides, now is not the time for screaming, it is only one o’clock in the afternoon, and there are many things in the Land of Wonders beyond the safeguarded walls of this castle where you must travel which will give you ample reason to scream until your heart’s content.”

Just then the children were silenced from fear of his words and they stopped screaming and stopped running in shock. When they stopped running they were pulled forward past where Sir Anthony was walking and when they attempted to turn around and walk back they were pulled faster still in the wrong direction. Being highly intelligent four year olds the two quickly realized that if they wanted to get back to him they needed to walk in the opposite direction they wanted to go and so they did. And when they got back Lucian spoke first.

“Did you say we must travel beyond the wall where there is danger?”

“Why of course that is why you came here is it not?”

Margaret, also in distress, began thinking about all else that Sir Anthony had just said to them, and then she realized his bit about pacifiers and babies, which began to irritate her.

“Did you call us babies without pacifiers?” she asked in a scowling voice.

Sir Anthony, amused but undeterred by her annoyance replied, “I merely remarked that while you were screaming in my face for no apparent reason at all, your behavior was more like that of babies without their pacifiers than that of the sophisticated children that you are. And you have proven yourselves quite well to be sophisticated in learning to maneuver your way through these palace hallways so quickly. Despite your little mishap on the ceiling you are doing quite well.”

Margaret thought about it and returned, “Fair enough. But who are you and what is this Land of Wonders and how do you know why we’ve come here? We don’t even know where *here* is let alone *why* we are in this place.”

“But of course you don’t...I am Sir Anthony, head of the Royal Court of Hearts and lead counsel for the King and Queen of Hearts, and this castle is the Royal Palace of the Suit of Hearts in Wonderland. I know why you have come here because it is my job to know everything. You do not yet know why you are here because apparently it is your job to find everything out. Not least of all from me. You were reading a book before you went to bed were you not?”

“Yes, yes it was a book of treasure maps from Slapstick the pirate.” replied Lucian.

“Ah yes, and wasn’t this book written in scatterbrain?” Sir Anthony inquired.

“Yes and it had everything backwards and all mixed up, and we couldn’t solve any of the routes to any of the treasures, it was as if it were a puzzle.” answered Margaret.

“Well there you have it. You were reading the book, you fell asleep and now you are here. Wonderland is not so much of a ‘where’ as it is a ‘how’—meaning that this castle, this place, this world is what you might call a dream state. It doesn’t exist *somewhere* as much as it exists *somehow*. You are here because your consciousness has come here, but you are still in your room because that is where you are sleeping. When you walk around in your ordinary life tending to sheep and kittens and conducting negotiations with the alligator and the rhinoceros over kettles and cups of tea, your mind is in the place where your body is and you experience those things both physically and mentally at the same time. And because both of you are special you share in the conscious experience of objects that are otherwise inanimate, which is why you are friends with matches and clocks and stuffed animals. And just like these objects which have thoughts and feelings that you can understand and even experience in your dreams, the mind of humans does not always follow the body and the body does not always follow the mind. For instance if you fall asleep during a carriage ride as you both did last week when you were going to visit your grandparents, the body experiences all of the world around it where it has traveled, but the mind does not. If you get splashed with grape juice or mud or if someone places taffy in your hair your body will have record of these the incidents but your mind will have no recollection. This does not make the experience any less real. Well the same is true for the mind. While you are sleeping the mental experiences that you endure are recorded in your dreams and you experience thoughts of fear, joy, pain and excitement, but when you awake you have no record of grape juice or mud or taffy in your hair if it occurred during your dreams. As I said just now,

Wonderland is a dream state, therefore these are all real mental experiences but there is a slight difference. In the Land of Wonders unlike other dream states much of what occurs has consequences both physically and mentally on both sides of the mirror—or book in your case. In ordinary dreams you experience things in your subconscious. In Wonderland you have superseded this realm through the use of some door and key—a mirror, a book, a puddle of water—and entered into a higher dream state wherein you use your super-conscious. Now the super-conscious is highly superior to the subconscious, hence the name; and it will incorporate elements from the real world into the mental state and vice versa. So you may see persons and things with which you are familiar here. And if you have come through a mirror or scatterbrained map your sense of direction may be disoriented. That is why up is down and left is right sometimes, because your super-conscious has adapted to the undecipherable code of Slapstick the pirate so that you may find the treasure. But make no mistake. If you are not careful you will be extinguished, and unlike in other dreams if you fall victim in Wonderland you will surely vanish from this world and all other worlds, including your waking life, where you will cease to be a memory in the minds of those you love as though you never existed.”

“How did you know of the map book, and our negotiations and the taffy I put in Margaret’s hair on the trip to our grandparents’? And how are we supposed to find the treasure?” replied Lucian.

“My dear child, I know everything there is to know. That is my job and now your job is to find Slapstick’s treasure in Wonderland where your brain is all scattered and mark it on the map so that you can determine its true location when you awake. The ‘image’ of the map should be in one of your pockets.” said the great blue elephant.

“I’ve got it, I fell asleep with it in my hands!” shouted Margaret.

“Well then come along children, we must make haste. If you are to find the treasure you will need to raise an army and there is precious little time to waste.” he said.

“An army?” they asked together.

“But of course. The enemy surrounds the treasure you seek and they abound in great number.” he replied.

“An army! An army!” they shouted.

Sir Anthony then pulled out a pocket watch whose hands were spinning at lightning speed; he glanced at it, closed it and put it back in his pocket. The cousins looked at one another and merely shrugged their shoulders, for they had no time for confusion. Their little hearts were fluttering once more for they knew they were about to embark on a magnificent adventure. They turned and walked in reverse down the great hall, marching behind the blue elephant.

Three were among them, three who would march
Three who would now on a voyage embark
Three who would play ‘til content were their hearts
Three who would war in the realm of the dark

ACT II, PART III: THE KANGAROO AND JOEY

Now at some point between teatime, the pretrial hearing of the oven, the baker, the bread and the butter (the thermometer was not put on trial because that is just silly), and supper the trio managed to change their apparel into military uniforms and pack supplies before departing from the grand, ancient castle. The time was nearly seven o' clock in the evening and oddly enough the sun was just beginning to rise. Lucian and Margaret had gotten beyond the wackiness of Wonderland by now. They marched through a dense forest for quite some time and saw all manner of creatures. There were strange looking plants in brilliant colors with zebra-striped leaves, polka dots, and plaid patterns in purple and yellow, orange and blue, and pink and green. There were transparent caterpillars and butterflies, floating ants without wings, and glowing eyes hiding in bushes with no bodies, just the eyes sitting there glowing. At one point they came upon a microscopic kingdom of tiny little orange-glowing people called narts who had built a civilization that stretched possibly fifteen yards yet they were no bigger than a speck of dust, each of them. They said that at one point they had been two separate societies, one glowing yellow and one glowing red, and they constantly warred with one another until they decided to come together peacefully, which is how they became a world of glowing orange narts.

As they continued to walk Sir Anthony pulled two penny whistles from his supply bag and handed them to the children. He told them that they would need them to play as the army grew large so that the troops could march in a parade.

"But what will you play?" asked Margaret.

"Why, I will play my trunk of course." said the counsel.

They continued on for quite some time until they exited the brush and came out to a dry desert land. Sir Anthony handed Lucian a topped mason jar and asked him to collect up some sand for the Queen's dessert. The boy just stared at the elephant for a moment then rolled his eyes before he decided to play along, handing the filled jar back to him with a look of disapproval. Suddenly they heard a beautiful voice singing in the distance. They walked quickly in the direction to see who it was coming from. They hid behind a large rock and when they peeked over it there stood a deep red-tinted mother kangaroo with a pink-tinted joey in her pouch holding a large wooden rod.

"A roo, a roo a real live roo!" the children shouted as they dashed to the mother and child.

"Well how do you do? My name is Matilda and this is my joey Alexander" she said in a thick Australian accent.

“Very well it is a pleasure to meet you Mrs. Matilda and Joey Alexander.” They said as they bowed and curtsied.

The kangaroos just smiled at one another.

Then Margaret turned to Matilda and asked, “What was that darling song you were singing just a moment ago?”

“Song? Oh yes, oh yes...you mean the song of the didgeridoo.” she said.

“The didgeri what?” they asked.

And she began to sing like so as the following exchange took place:

THE SONG OF THE DIDGERIDOO



Matilda: ♪ Let's blow upon the didgeridoo quite like the aboriginals do ♪

Lucian: What did she say?

Matilda: What does it do?

Sir Anthony: What do you know?

Alexander: It's true!

Lucian: It's true?

Matilda: ♪ If you blow upon the didgeridoo much like the aboriginals do ♪

Alexander: A song will play

Margaret: For me or for you?

Sir Anthony: For you?

Lucian: For me!

Margaret: For me?

Alexander: For you!

Matilda: 🎵 Now here this lovely didgeridoo, a song it plays, for me and for you 🎵

Alexander: Didn't you catch it?

Lucian: I think I'm confused.

Margaret: I wasn't aware there was something you threw!

Sir Anthony: 🎵 Well what is all this didgeridoo and speak of aboriginals too? 🎵

Lucian: A didgeri-what?

Alexander: A didgeridoo!

Margaret: And what if I won't?

Sir Anthony: Well what if you do?

Alexander: 🎵 I know what aboriginals do, they blow upon the didgeridoo 🎵

Lucien: They didgeri don't!

Margaret: I didn't! Did you?

Lucien: So that's why they call it a didgeridoo!

Matilda: 🎵 What fun we'll have with our didgeridoo, just like the aboriginals do 🎵

Lucien: The abori-what?

Margaret: The abori-who!

Sir Anthony: Like abracadabra?

Alexander: Like alakazoo!

Matilda: 🎵 We float along like pigeons in stew, our goose is cooked our Cornish hens too 🎵

Margaret: A morsel for me!

Lucien: A smidgen for you!

Alexander: While blowing upon the didgeridoo!

Matilda: 🎵 In the cobalt night sky with its indigo hue, there the pinholes of stars, through the clouds, come shine through 🎵

Lucien: In a didgeri-yellow!

Margaret: Or a didgeri-blue!

Matilda: 🎵 No, no, no! No, no, no! Not a didgeri-*blue*! But one *blows* here, like-so, on the didgeridoo! 🎵

Lucien: On the didgeri-blow?

Alexander: Blow the didgeridoo!

Margaret: Yes but how will I know?

Matilda: No you won't have a clue!

Matilda: 🎵 It's exciting to dream and fantastic to do when the melody sings from the pipe that you blew 🎵

Matilda: Called the didgeri

Alexander: Didgeri...

Sir Anthony: Didgeri...

Lucien: Didgeri...

Margaret: Didgeri...

Matilda: Didgeri...

[All Together]: Didgeridoo!

“That was utterly fantastic! That was completely stupendous! Oh Matilda, you and Joey Alexander absolutely have to join our army and come with us to hunt for treasure, you just have to!” Margaret implored.

“An army?” the kangaroos asked.

“Yes. We’re building an army to face the enemy in search of the treasure of the pirates Filthy McCracken and Slapstick. Will you join us?” said Lucian.

“Enemy? Who is the enemy?” they asked.

“Hmmm, that’s a good question. Sir Anthony, who *is* the enemy?” Lucian asked.

“The enemy my dear boy I’m afraid is the hoard of viscous predators that lurk in the dark realm beyond the edge of that valley. It is a dangerous task to hunt for treasure and dealing with an enemy so powerful it may be of great risk for a mother with a young joey to take this voyage.” he replied.

“We’re not afraid are we mum?” asked Alexander.

“No my dear. And if by predators Sir Anthony you mean the crocodiles and hyenas, well I’ve got a bone to pick with them. By no means are we afraid. We are absolutely willing to join. We will march and play our didgeridoos.” said Matilda.

“Well that’s solved then.” said Lucian.

Sir Anthony reached into his supply bag and handed them uniforms to wear in their service. Just then there was a buzzing noise that could be heard coming from behind the rocky hill to the east. They looked and there came over the sand dunes a golden swarm of glowing orange light. It was the narts. They had come to join the battle.

“Reporting for duty captains! We heard the song that you played as you marched away from our colony and we were taken by your noble cause. Then we heard the song you just sang with the roos and we figured if the roos were joining then surely it is a cause worth fighting for. We can play the song of our buzzers as we fly along to the beat. Besides you’re going to need light as the sun goes down to help you carry on. Torches and candles are great, but what is better than a nart? Well I suppose a tart tastes better than a nart, but what is better than a nart when it comes to giving light? We narts make light with our eyes closed.” said the nart King, whose name was Julian. And this was the last wholly sensible conversation that they would have for the rest of their voyage.

And so the little battalion began to take formation. There were over twenty million of them if you counted the narts. But since the narts were technically what one might term a super-organism it will suffice to count them as one and say that our heroic party of six marched off

through the desert with each soldier playing their own song and marching to their own bet, which largely defeated Sir Anthony's purpose in devising the plan to play music in the first place. Yet they carried on: Lucian and Margaret the foreign twin cousins, Sir Anthony the mighty blue elephant, Matilda and Alex the red kangaroos, and the golden swarm of narts led by Julian the Nart King.

Six were among them, six who would march
Six who would now on a voyage embark
Six who would play 'til content were their hearts
Six who would war in the realm of the dark

AN ASIDE: JULIAN THE KING OF NARTS AND THE GLOWING ORANGE SOCIETY

It has been brought to the author's attention—through the constant deploring and extensive disabuse of certain individuals who shall remain un-named at this moment—that it may be a possibility that the story of the Narts has not received adequate attention. And so the author has seen fit to offer as an appendage to the story of Matilda and Alexander a dedicated account of exactly who the Narts were and how they came to join the Lunatic Cavalcade. And so with no further ado...

Deep within the Fluorescent Forest to the west of the Royal Palace of Hearts in Wonderland there were many affairs taking place which easily escaped the attention of the Royal Court. For eons there had been engagements and negotiations involving the glowing insects and plants of the forest concerning their stakes of land, claims to air, sunlight, colors, symbiotic relationships with the forest dwelling animals and things of this nature. The narts were particularly disinterested in many of these political negotiations because their physical size was so minute that they had no need for debate on their claims to territory. While some insects lived in certain trees and on the leaves of certain plants the narts could organize in a small colony of several hundred and live symbiotically on a small stake within that groups symbiotic stake. They were in effect the minor partner of the minor partners in mutualistic symbiosis. Narts were known for catching rides on fairy and pixie wings. The major controversy that narts found themselves involved with primarily concerned color.

To understand this we must first assess the anatomy of the nart. Narts are approximately ten million single hydrogen atoms tall, making them no bigger than a tiny speck of dust as previously stated. They look like tiny people with two arms, two legs, and pointy faces and long pointed noses (which they call noozles and are able to use as musical instruments), with large glowing eyes which they use to see at night and a pair of wings on their back extending from their shoulders. Narts have long, thin and very gracile features. The nart's body is translucent—being composed of a semi-liquid plasma. If one were to look through a microscope powerful enough they would discover the nart's inner workings, bearing witness to the tiny glowing incandescent heart which is busy pumping their dense bioluminescent blood which gives them their great weight (by nart standards) and keeps them from being overtaken by the wind at all times as dust

commonly is. This also causes them to glow a variety of colors depending on a greater variety of factors.

The narts are said to have been among the first living creatures in Wonderland. Even before the four houses of Spades, Diamonds, Clubs and Hearts, the house of Narts are believed to have risen from the glowing indigo pool of primordial soup which formed when the iridescent meteor known as Charlie's Comet slammed into the barren field that is now the Fluorescent Forest on the western border of the Kingdom of Hearts. The narts rose from the soup seeking bread and biscuits, but could find none in the wasteland. So they went about their work spreading the glowing blue ooze all over the land in hopes that it would bring other life with which to share that world, especially bakers to satisfy their craving for bread and biscuits. Therefore the first narts shed a light from their flesh that was indigo in hue because that was the original light from which their life-force was spawned.

As time carried on the narts took different temperaments and sought different pursuits from the world around them. There arose banking narts, singing narts, thieving narts, police narts, narts who play chess, and lazy narts amongst others just to name a few. In all truth there are too many varieties to name, it would take five lifetimes. Nevertheless, let it suffice to say that the different temperaments of narts divided themselves into separate categories which were marked by the color of light which the group gave off. The narts settled different territories within the forest—primarily within the fifteen yard radius aforementioned—and were quite satisfied under these conditions. If one group needed something that another had to offer they would freely share their resources and expertise with one-another. Nart civilization seemed to be thriving. There were schools and libraries and winter pageants and tea parties and anniversaries and swimming pools and grand estates with lineages of well bread sophisticates and everything one could imagine in a civilized world. The narts had a rich history of nart arts and sciences. Education was paramount in every nart civilization (except the lazy narts who eventually disappeared because they were so lazy that they did not reproduce and they gave off no light so that eventually no-one ever saw them and they were forgotten—call it natural selection if you will). They had lives and loved ones, stories and memories to behold. One might agree that the narts had culture—and not just a single culture but numerous variations of a common nart life experience.

Life in the Fluorescent Forest seemed to be going along quite pleasantly until the other civilizations began to rise and during the negotiations of the forest the narts witnessed groups beginning to contest one another bitterly for control over territories that should belong to all. The groups divided themselves as the narts had but instead of helping one another they constantly sought out the interests of their own groups at the expense of all others and so there was constant vitriol in the forest as a result of the bitter negotiations taking place. Despite what the narts will tell you, they actually tried to get involved in the fighting but they were so small that they could hardly be heard unless they were numbered at least at one hundred thousand, and even then they had to all play their noozles to gain a single stroke of attention. Because they could not engage in the mainstream political disputes and they eventually realized that it was pointless to argue against the larger creatures anyways because their concerns did not and could not overlap due to the difference in size, the narts found opponents with whom they could carry on an ongoing dispute—namely themselves. And so the nart factions began to build up animosity against one

another and alliances were formed eventually culminating in what is termed historically as The Indigo War because it was a conflict between the alliance surrounding the indigo narts—who claimed to be the rightful authoritarians of all nart civilization—and the factions surrounding the crimson narts who were the youngest culture to form one million years ago (Wonderland years that is) because they represented the farthest reaches of the spectrum from where the narts had begun in their original state. The crimson factions won and absorbed the indigo side into their system of order and as a result the war has been named as such in recognition of the ‘they’ which was defeated by the ‘us’ who still exist.

Now for a thousand years there was peace in the red society but eventually dissension was sewn and a yellow faction broke off from the red civilization and established a separate colony on the far end of the fifteen yards which glowed a brilliant yellow. The two civilizations co-existed without incident for quite some time but eventually propaganda was introduced on each side describing the other side as being of horrible character. To make matters worse, the narts by this point did not have any distinctions of temperament which was now being signified in their dichotomy of colors, they simply hated one another for sake of the fact that they were different and they were different from one another for no other reason than the arbitrary fact that they had been taught to be from birth. It was believed by this point that narts could no longer change colors and that the different narts were of a separate ilk. Instead of being absorbed this time both sides believed that the other side needed to be eliminated. By warring amongst themselves the narts had destroyed much of their precious history and had lost touch with much of the temperamental significance behind their use of the color spectrum. Political credence was roused within the separate populaces for the malicious discontent of the very existence of the opposing civilization and rumor of war began to spread throughout the nart world. The yellow faction and the red faction began to attack one another and eventually the conflicts grew into an all-out war. But there was one amongst them who saw another way.

Around the time that the civil outbreaks began to boil on **both sides of the equation** there was a young student at the University of the Electromagnetic Spectrum on the border between the two kingdoms who was studying history and philosophy. His name was Julian Rex and he was searching to rediscover the narts’ ability to utilize all the colors of the visible spectrum and other electromagnetic wavelengths that had been unknown even to the ancient narts. Eventually he tapped into this knowledge and he became the most powerful nart that ever lived in Wonderland. When The War of Crimson and Gold broke out he saw fit to use his newly found powers, not to help the golden side from which he originated, but to educate his people from both sides. He taught them that the narts still had the power to change colors and use other wavelengths within the electromagnetic spectrum as a form of power to be used for good. He led a following of narts who used their rediscovered powers to color themselves orange as a sign of neutrality. Eventually this movement spread throughout both colonies and the war came to a cease with all narts choosing to display their color as orange. Upon its conclusion Julian was recognized as the source of the peaceful cessation of the war—sparing the nart world another round of self-destruction. As the discoverer of new powers he was viewed in great esteem but for using those powers for good and sharing them with others he was declared unanimously by the entire population as the rightful King of all Narts. It was agreed that all narts could use their powers to display whatever color they saw fit but must display the color orange no less than half of each day so that there was constant peace and unity in the kingdom.

When Sir Anthony marched through the Fluorescent Forest with Lucian and Margaret and encountered the glowing orange colony the narts paid attention to little that they had to say about their voyage except for treasure, which the narts took to mean bread and biscuits for whatever reason. They saw the small company off but then began to grow desperate with their departure and so followed them. Upon hearing them sing with the kangaroos they pledged their allegiance to the cause of the group in hopes that they may find some bread and biscuits on the way. It is assumed that the narts' affinity with bread and biscuits draws from the fact that they originated in the soup of the forest and their first ever directive in the history of life was to immediately search for biscuits. So that is the tale of the narts and the author hopes that certain indignant parties are satisfied now that their story and their voices have been heard.

ACT II, PART IV: THE CLOUDS OF PASTEL

The parade of characters proceeded across the vast, dry desert until the sands abruptly ended and transitioned into rolling hills of grass. Then suddenly there were a host of small puffy white clouds that appeared above, speckled throughout the otherwise clear blue sky. No-one in the retinue made any particular note of this, being that small white clouds being speckled throughout the sky is not a particularly noteworthy phenomenon under ordinary circumstances. But these circumstances were anything but ordinary. The clouds looked down upon our heroic cast with sad, sad faces and they began to blush pastel shades of pink, powder blue, patina green and pale rusted orange and then they softly began to weep. Just then the great elephant reached into his supply bag and pulled out an extremely large umbrella while continuing to play his trunk with his other hand. The umbrella was so large that it shielded the entire company from the rain. Now as the clouds were spread apart initially, they began to swarm together and follow the parade as it marched through the hilly grassland. No thunder or lightning came and the day appeared to remain sunny and clear apart from the colorful weeping clouds. When Lucian noticed this he decided to step out of rank from under the umbrella and he looked up into the sky and saw the grand faces of the sad, sad pastel puffs.

He spoke to them asking, “But why do you weep great clouds?”

The clouds replied, “It is because no-one cares for us. Every one stares up at the sky longing to see the sun and a clear day and no-one wants for a cloud. Gravity does not want us for it refuses to hug us close to the earth as it embraces you. The wind does not want us it merely rushes us out of its way in all directions as it travels the earth always in haste. When people look up at the clouds they do not envision clouds but all other manner of objects save for actual clouds. And what does a cloud actually look like? We have no form for certain, always changing and swirling. We are mists of water, but soap is not our good friend and companion as it is when we are water that flows from the spigot. Neither the soap nor the shampoo invites us to dance in the morning tub when belly buttons are cleaned and wiggly toes are scrubbed. There would be no teatime without us but tea, sugar, milk and crumpets will have nothing to do with us if we are not in the form of water. Otherwise we are cast from the party, seen rising from the top of tea cups and left to our own devices. No-one wants clouds with their tea. The vegetables farmed in fertile fields curse us for obstructing the sunlight they require to grow and when we sacrifice ourselves to rain down upon them only then in this form are we welcomed. In the ocean the sand embraces us but when we come to the beach as clouds everyone complains and departs on our account. Now even you shield yourselves from our unwanted faces. The life of a cloud is miserable and lonely.

Hearing this sad tale Lucian was deeply distressed but then he raised his head back up to them and spoke again with a clever smile on his face, “We want you. You can join our army and play the song of the wind as we march. Shield us from the harsh rays of the sun as we go into the

desert. I have always dreamed of having clouds with my tea and if you would be so gracious, I would be honored. Join us in facing down the enemy in the realm of darkness and claim the glory of Slapstick's treasure with us. What do you need of soap and shampoo? We are adventurers! We have no time for prissy baths and belly buttons. The beach sands and sea will die of envy when they realize the feats you have achieved. You can help protect us with bolts of your lightning if need be. So what do you say?"

The clouds replied, "Oh what joy! Do you mean it? Might we sit at the table of heroes and dine on fine meats, cheese and biscuits until our hearts' delight? It would be a clouds biggest dream. We will surely play the song of the wind."

And then the rain began to slow to a halt.

"Why certainly! You are more than welcome. After all, we need *you* more than you could ever need *us*." replied Lucian.

"Oh heaven's no. We will operate as spies for the mission. We can enter and depart the enemy territory without being noticed. You may only be little ants, but what clouds need is friendship and caring, no matter how big or small the source. You have given us a chance to have companionship and departure from the cold lonely days in the sky without tea, without the soap and shampoo, without milk, without sugar, without crumpets and sand. We have been isolated up here. Our greatest irony is that the cloud is the highest form for a puddle of water to take before it returns to the great sea and begins all over again but in our highest form we are lonely at the top. We can see all but none that we smile down upon smiles back with joy and glee. We are despised for our unwitting interference with the light of the sun and for the rain that we bring. And even more ironically if not for the rain that we bring all would be lost. It is the greatest gift we have to offer for which we are most unappreciated." said the clouds.

And then Margaret interrupted saying, "Excuse me sirs, but we are not ants, we are people, kangaroos, an elephant and a colony of narts."

The group all looked up from beneath the giant umbrella and asserted that what she said was true.

"Not ants you say? Why forgive us. It is no matter. We will still join your army and give you all the help you need little termites, for it is your courage that will see you through the battle to the end. War is a deadly game of tacticians where all parties lose. The side declared the winner is simply the side that has lost the least along the way. Your bravery has earned you the right to call yourselves whatever you like, for you certainly have the hearts of humans, kandaloos, eleven, twelve, and the numbers thirteen and fourteen too. You've got the strength of the letters 'L' and 'N' also. Go forth and we will follow you to the gates of doom."

The company just shook their heads knowing that it was pointless to argue with a stubborn cast of clouds and that it would be better to merely humbly accept what help they were willing to offer. Especially if it meant them ceasing to rain on the parade. So, on they treaded now a party of seven: two humans, two kangaroos, one elephant, one nart colony, and a cast of clouds.

Seven among them, seven would march
Seven would now on a voyage embark
Seven would play 'til content were their hearts
Seven would war in the realm of the dark

ACT II, PART V: THE THREE MONKEYS

The parade marched on through the grassy hills and into the desert where they gained refuge from the shade of the clouds and the rain which the clouds used to keep them cool. The company marched along to the cacophonous din of music that resulted from a cast of seven different players—the narts and the clouds all managed to play the same songs amongst themselves within their respective groups—performing an amalgamation of seven different songs in and out of key to different rhythms and time signatures. The outcome was utterly distasteful and off in the distance amidst evening tea a party of three aristocratic monkeys sitting at a long table flew into distress spilling their tea all over themselves at the awful sound of it all.

By the time the company arrived where the table had been set, the monkeys were all but in a wreck over the disruption. Sitting there with their fingertips pressed to their temples in complete agony they stared in disbelief as the parade passed by. Then suddenly, unable to grab hold of his wits and unwilling to let this monstrosity continue any further, even if it were to depart shortly, one of the monkeys abandoned all civil politeness and screamed at the top of his lungs.

“Wait!!!!”

The troop—so enraptured in their nonsensical performance that they did not even realize that the tea party was there—halted immediately and was startled (ironically) by the shrill sound of the monkey’s voice. They all turned to determine the source of that harsh sound whereupon they discovered there in the middle of the desert sand dunes of Wonderland’s outer borders, three well-bred monkeys outfitted in full morning dress with single button black tail-coats, matching waistcoats, cuff linked shirts, formal stripped trousers, white gloves, capped toe oxfords and bow ties. The leader of the three, named Geoffrey, wore a black top hat and a monocle; the second, named Dexter, wore a bowlers hat; while the third, named Heathcliff, wore a straw boater hat with a ribbon in turquoise, orange and black. The marching troop stood there in delusion as the monkeys stared back in confusion. Mind you, the troop was staring because here we have three very well dressed aristocratic monkeys partaking in evening tea, which aristocrats do not practice because they only practice afternoon tea, and wearing full morning dress, which was out of place not only because it was evening but because it was also still very hot for this attire as they were in the middle of the desert. The monkeys were staring because the company sounded like a marching band gone mad.

“I am Lucian Scuttlebarry and this is my cousin Margaret and this is...”

“Scuttleberry? what is a scuttleberry? Shall I eat you? I have eaten raspberries and blackberries, greenberries and blueberries, cupberries and strawberries, duckberries and gooseberries,

fizzleberries and sprinkleberries...but I do not believe I have ever had the pleasure of eating a Scuttleberry...can I eat you?" implored Geoffrey

"I don't think so sir." said Lucian

"And why not?" he asked.

"No you cannot eat him!" Margaret interrupted.

"Why not?"

"Because he is a human being you see. If you eat him he will die. He will be dead, gone, no more!" she insisted.

"Well then in that case can I eat you?" he asked.

"No, no, no!" she declared.

"Why not? You are both Scuttleberries didn't you say?" said the confused monkey in all earnest.

"No scuttle *Barrie's* not berries...Barrie's..." said Lucien.

"oh then...I suppose I cannot eat a Barry...or can I? How do they taste?" replied the monkey.

"You don't eat Barrie's, you play with them." said Margaret.

"No, no my child, I believe scuttle barriers are little more than over-glorified grapes—which are technically botanical berries—that have been dried out and converted into scrumptious little raisins." he insisted.

"No, we are not raisins!" Lucian said growing furious.

"Oh...I was unaware...well then what shall we play at? he said.

"Won't you join us for tea?" Dexter asked in haughty yet inviting voice.

"But of course." Margaret replied.

And the company all sat down for tea. The pastel clouds thinned themselves out in order to continue to offer shade from the sun but allow a soft light to pass through. The narts, figuring the war had now been won, began shouting cries of victory and went immediately to the bread and biscuits and began to nibble away.

"I do declare, what was that blasted racket that you all were putting up just now?" asked Heathcliff.

“Racket? We were marching to the song!” replied Alexander!

“Yes my boy but in order to march as a unit you must perform as a unit, anything less would be uncivilized.” said Geoffrey in a sly voice.

At this comment the otherwise highly refined monkeys began to grunt and grin and slam their hands on the table overturning baskets of bread and knocking kettles to the ground. When they regained their composure they placed new baskets and kettles on the table. It was unapparent where these new goods came from but it was as though they had expected the disruption to happen and had been prepared with an abundance of additional rations.

“You’re moving your feet but you have no beat. Your songs are all different. This in and of its self is not such a problem. Everyone has their own song good chap. But together you must play as one only you must play ‘as one’, ‘as seven’. Therefore you must play as eight. For there are seven of you and you must play as one and that makes eight of you.” said Dexter.

“Not only this, but you need a rhythm section. You know a percussion line to keep the beat lest it should escape from you.” added Heathcliff.

“Escape from us?” asked Lucian.

“How does a beat escape from one?” asked Sir Anthony.

“Why it flies away with its wings of course my good man; or it runs away on its feet. Unless it only has one foot then it runs away on its foot...or I suppose it hops away on its foot.”

“How many feet does a beat generally have?” asked Matilda

“A good beat usually has anywhere from two to thirty-two feet. I once had a beat with one-hundred and twenty-eight feet escape from me. I chased it for two hours before I finally caught up with it. Nasty little thing that beat was. I cooked it with salt and pepper and had it for dinner afterwards.” explained Heathcliff.

“Absolutely, one cannot go around letting one’s beats just roam around freely, they must be kept on a strict schedule or else they get their deep maroon juices everywhere on everything and the entire show goes to chaos. Polish beats make the best borsch and they are excellent for waltzes but they are quite unfit for tangos. Spanish beats are the preferred variety for tangos but not so much borsch and certainly not waltzes.” said Geoffrey.

“I don’t believe I’ve ever eaten a waltz.” said Lucian.

At this the monkeys all slammed their hands on the table and gasped in utter disbelief.

“Never eaten a waltz! We’ve got to get you some beats my dear boy! Let’s see you need size three quarters or six eighths for a proper waltz.” said Dexter.

He searched inside a steamer trunk where he had apparently taken the extra rations from. He searched and searched the trunk pulling out all manner of objects and throwing them behind his back and onto the table disrupting the tea party as he frantically pursued his beats in size three quarters and six eighths. First he threw kettles of tea and baskets of bread and biscuits. He threw oranges and squash racquets, forks and ears of corn, stacks of writing paper and billiard balls, women's derby hats and pistols...he threw reading lamps and cookbooks, croquet mallets and military boots, roasted turkey legs and bed pillows, large stones and bouquets of roses...he threw knives and bottles of ink, hard boiled eggs and magnifying glasses, pocket watches and flower pots...he even through a small pig wrapped in a blanket that oinked at the entire party before strutting off angrily into the desert. When he could find no beats in the appropriate size—in fact he found no beats at all of any size in the large trunk—he pulled out two drums with mallets and a pair of cymbals. One was a large marching bass drum to be worn strapped vertically upon the chest with its twin drum heads facing sideways. The other drum was a snare drum to be worn strapped around the neck with its single head facing upwards. The cymbals would be held in the hands at any angle the monkey saw fit.

“Very well then, if we cannot find you a beat we will be forced to make a beat to give to you before you carry along on your way.” said Dexter.

Just then he turned around and he could see the tremendous mess he had made as everyone seated around the long table, with the exception of the other two monkeys, stared intensely with a look of dismay at the catastrophe that was but moments ago a pleasant serving of tea.

“Oh my, I suppose that's all there is for tea.” he said.

He then snatched the table cloth towards himself and off the table spilling all of its contents into the desert sand. He handed the cymbals to Geoffrey and the bass drum to Heathcliff while he strapped on the snare drum. They began to play in a riotous manner so disorienting it made the previous mayhem delivered by the marching troop sound angelic by comparison. The company all covered their ears. The monkeys made no note of this as they had by this time closed their eyes leaning their heads back and their faces towards the sky with great self-indulgent grins as they played their hearts out. Sir Anthony, with his excellent hearing, being especially disturbed by the unpleasant racket was the first to speak up.

“What are you doing!?” he asked.

Just then the monkeys stopped and looked at their guests realizing that the musical indulgence had not ben mutual. Why, even the clouds had begun to frown and darken. The narts were all but fainted on the ground from being rattled out of their senses by the obnoxious din.

“I suppose we're making a beat good chap.” said Geoffrey.

Just then Margaret had a great idea. Knowing that it was truly important to have and keep a beat whenever they did find one and also realizing that no-one but the monkeys knew what the correct beat would look like when they eventually found it, she thought it quite clever to ask the monkeys to stay but to play softly so the beat would not be scared away when they came upon it.

For she had never seen a beat (or beet) with feet or an edible waltz as the monkeys had described. Moreover she was quite unsure exactly what the beat was supposed to measure three quarters or six eighths, as the last time she checked these ratios had been mathematical equivalents. As Margaret and Lucian were only four years old they had not yet begun taking music lessons and learning to read sheet music because their fingers were still quite small for playing on the piano. This explains their complete dumbfounded reaction and lack of argument against the nonsense of the monkeys about beats.

“Why don’t you come with us to find the treasure and then perhaps you can find a beat along the way if you see one running around loose. But until then you can play a wee bit more softly so that you don’t scare the beat away should we see one.” she said.

“Oh, what a splendid idea! Who doesn’t love treasure. We would be delighted to help you find your beat and your treasure. Let us be on our way then.” said Dexter.

Just then the monkeys jumped into their steamer trunk and jumped back out in an instance having changed their wardrobe into military dress which matched that of the marching troop.

“Where must we march in search of this treasure?” inquired Heathcliff.

“To the dark realm.” said Lucian.

“The dark realm? Why on earth would we ever want to go there? There is no treasure there. Only monsters with large teeth who love to eat monkeys, kangaroos, elephants, narts and children.” the monkey argued.

“That’s why we’re raising an army! We have to face down the enemy and find the treasure.” the little boy replied.

With a weary look of anxiety the three monkeys, against their better judgment, conceded to enlist in the convoy as soldiers and drummers. And so the company marched on now with ten in their midst with the addition of the monkeys **they were a cavalcade of lunatics**. There were the twin cousins Lucian and Margaret playing penny whistle, Sir Anthony the great blue elephant holding the umbrella and playing his trunk, Matilda the red kangaroo and Alexander her pink joey on didgeridoo, the glowing orange narts led by Julian the King of the Narts playing their noozles, the Clouds of Pastel playing the song of the wind, and the three monkeys Geoffrey, Dexter and Heathcliff on cymbals, snare drum and bass drum respectively.

Ten were among them, ten who would march
Ten who would now on a voyage embark
Ten who would play ‘til content were their hearts
Ten who would war in the realm of the dark

ACT II, PART VI: THE MILITARY

So, on they marched, our daring heroes deep into the desert where they began to see mirages or so they assumed. There was a large mirror in the midst of the sand dunes that was surrounded by birds. All manner of sea birds, water wading birds, and coastal birds had flocked about this very large reflection. It was not until they got closer that they realized that they were staring into a large salt lake. The birds did not startle as they approached with their ruckus because they were too busy making a ruckus of their own with their honking, squawking, calling and chirping, to be disturbed by the lunatic cavalcade that approached playing its assortment of instruments in all manner of discordant tones and rhythms. As it happened, the monkeys had done absolutely nothing to control the rhythm or tone of the parade's playing. In fact they only added further chaos to the monstrosity that was their mad theme music.

When they reached the water they stopped to take a drink but soon realized that the water was unsuitable for drinking as it was full of desert salt. When they began marching again this time the birds took note of the small troop of ten and some of them began to follow. And like a herd running from danger a contagion took hold of the birds and others began to immediately follow suit. After some time none of the birds knew what they were following, they simply were following other birds because they had seen them following other birds and figured there must be something to gain from this choice of action. By the time the convoy had rounded one half of the lake they had cleared the entire shoreline of birds and the other half, which had been filled with birds was now lined up in front of them waiting to follow suit. The parade ceased and the company looked around at all their followers. A silence befell the mirror lake where there had just been an excess of riot, of noise and of confusion. The birds all stood there without making one peep staring at our hosts and at one another and the company stood there doing the same. And then suddenly without knowing how or why, one voice spoke out to them all. Little Margaret ran up to the middle of the entire gathering and shouted at the top of her lungs saying, "Together!" At this point the birds, the company, even the crabs and the snutes buried beneath the sand all raised their arms, or wings, or claws, or what have you to the sky and shouted some indiscernible war cry in one single uproar that was so loud it could be heard from several miles away. A small puffin and an even smaller blue penguin took up batons and took the helm of the parade as drum majors. The Lunatic Cavalcade was now in full affect. The little Scuttlebarries had raised an army.

Just then, several miles away the sound from the uproar was indeed heard by Christopher, a long horned impala who was on a scouting mission with his two top aides, Dudley and Arthur who were also long-horned impalas. At the sound of the echo, which rushed through the desert like a phantom, they turned and spied the Mirror Lake to the far-east near with their binoculars. When they looked they saw what appeared to be a storm of dust and birds approaching at a slow pace. They swiftly returned to camp another mile away to tell the general and admiral what they had found. There in the command tent stood the Queen of Heart's western war counsel, which

consisted of the mighty rhinoceros Admiral Thomas who was overseeing the marine mission in command of the navy and his younger brother General Timothy who led charge of the land based assault with command of the army along with the three impala Rear Admiral Christopher, the second in command at sea and his two lieutenants Dudley and Arthur. The army's second in command had been a yellow-bellied weasel serving as colonel by the name of Clive, who had since defected to the side of the enemy and aided the swishbuttoner crocodile Captain Jiminy of the infamous ship the Tiger Head in stealing three barrels of precious noodles from the peacock Princes of the Kingdom of Spades. His top aides were Lieutenant Tweedledee and Lieutenant Tweedledum who had both since been promoted to the rank of Colonel. Colonel Clive had been caught in the act and was now sitting as prisoner in the barracks until the Princes' noodles were retrieved and he faced trial in the Queen's court. In the meantime the Queen of Heart's military was busy on the border of the dark realm—where the world ended and the sea dropped into a black hole—engaged in a full out land and sea assault on a legion of swishbuttoning crocodiles, heyenias and cheetahs in an effort to secure said noodles and return them to the peacocks. At word of Admiral Christopher's findings near the Mirror Lake, the war counsel entered into the holding cell of Colonel Clive to question him.

“What is this madness you have brought upon us traitor? “Who is this force of birds approaching from the desert and when do they plan to strike?” demanded General Timothy.

“I don't know what you're talking about. There are no birds working with the swishbuttoners. I told you everything I know in exchange for a fair trial (an agreement which was fairly lopsided against the prisoner given that the Queen was set to hear his case). If you have other enemies attacking you I suggest you deal with them yourself, because questioning me is only wasting your time.”

By the tone of his arrogant reply the counsel knew that the prisoner was not lying. Admiral Thomas ordered the navy to double the attack on the swishbuttoners while General Timothy turned half of the land forces around to its rear to counter the attack headed in their direction from the desert.

By this time our heroes were nearly a quarter mile from the rear defenses of the Queen's military. The cavalcade was making such a monstrous racket. with the original company now playing its chaos as a leading chorus for the ruckus of the army of birds behind them, that they did not hear the warning shots being fired as they approached, they merely saw the smoke rise, thinking it was a distress signal, which led them to double their pace. For some reason Colonels Tweedledee and Tweedledum had decided that it would be funny if they shot watermelons, honeydews and cantelopes into the large crowd, so when they did not stop at the warning shots this is exactly what they did, knocking several birds silly and dirtying many more in the process. However it was lucky for the parade that the Tweedles had such an ill sense of humor, otherwise they would have fired shots of *grape* from their cannons and someone could have been seriously injured.

The company halted upon being assaulted with the melons and raised a white flag. Colonels Tweedledee and Tweedledum rode out to the battlefield on tricycles to secure the terms of the surrender, whereupon they discovered Sir Anthony who was covered in cantaloupe and quite furious with the two young Colonels. The others seem to especially enjoy being smeared in

fresh fruit, especially the children, the monkeys and the narts. The rear forces were then redirected towards the frontal assault and the lunatic cavalcade was allowed to enter into the military camp. Lucian, Margaret, and Sir Anthony were escorted to the command tent to discuss their mission with the high war counsel.

“What is it that you seek Sir Anthony?” asked Admiral Thomas.

“We seek the treasure which the swishbuttoner named Stickslap holds the location of.” replied Sir Anthony in his always dignified voice despite being smeared with melon.

“They’ve got the peacock’s noodles onboard the Tiger Head. The traitor has already revealed it to us. Colonel Clive told us everything.” responded General Timothy.

Lucian and Margaret were in a highly jocular mood as a result of the thrill of being splattered with melons. They heard the general’s remark and looked at one another saying, “Noodles?” and instantly began to laugh out loud.

“What is it young ones?” asked the rear admiral.

“We aren’t searching for noodles. The pirates...I mean swashbuckle...I mean *swish-buttoners* have all types of treasure stored all over wonderland. Not only noodles but cupcakes and biscuits, birthday cake and porridge too.” said Lucian, correcting himself to account for the nonsense of the Land of Wonders.

“Great Scott! How do you know this?” implored Admiral Thomas.

“Because we’ve got an analog of the map that he uses to plot his courses. Now that you’ve got them all here you’ve got to stop them so that we can safely retrieve all of the treasure.” said Margaret.

“But how will we do this?” asked Lieutenant Dudley

“I’ve got a clue.” said Sir Anthony wiping melon from his brow.

The lunatic cavalcade boarded a small cutter named the Wimpy with the members of the war counsel on a clandestine mission to seize Captain Jiminy and the Tiger Head so that the other ships would stand down. The plan was working perfectly they set out to sea under coverage of the Clouds of Pastel which made the ship look like a mere puff of canon smoke. Amidst all of the fighting they sailed smoothly to the Tiger Head and boarded its deck. Just as they spied her captain the Clouds receded to the sky so that the cavalcade could reveal themselves out of nowhere and the entire company drew their swords on the great crocodile swishbuttoner much to the crew’s surprise.

The captain was incorrigible declaring, “You’ll never take me alive! Fight on swishbuttoners! Ahahaha!”

But just then General Timothy brought to the captain and crew's attention that there was an artillery of melon shot aimed directly at the swishbuttoning fleet and that a hoard of birds from the Mirror Lake were waiting for the signal to drop six boatloads of tomatoes from the sky.

Captain Jiminy, seeing that he had been outmaneuvered, commanded his crew to drop the Jolly Rodger and raise the white flag. Seeing this change of position, the other ships soon ceased their fighting and raised their white flags as well. As they did, the Tweedles (never ones short of a gag) thought it would be funny to give the signal anyways and they fired every melon, berry, tomato and kiwi that existed in their rations from canon and from the birds in the sky.

ACT II, PART VII: THE COURT OF THE QUEEN

With the surrender of the swishbuttoners the lunatic cavalcade was able to facilitate the return of the Princes' lost noodles and also retrieve all of the hidden treasure without fear of ambush. The prisoners were taken into the Queen's court to face trial with the traitor. When the war counsel arrived victorious with the prisoners and the treasure they were welcomed onto the palace grounds in a triumph rivaling that of Pompey. Sir Anthony personally ushered the caravan into the castle with the imprisoned enemies. In their enthusiasm they marched directly into the palace courtroom where the butter was still providing witness testimony against the bread in exchange for a plea. By this point the birds, the army and the navy were all being led by the Lunatic Cavalcade with the puffin and the tiny blue penguin out front. Twirling their batons ferociously the band played its obnoxious ruckus as the court doors were slammed open knocking the frog and fish bailiffs to the ground. Everyone turned and looked in utter shock. The little penguin cracked the largest grin, spread his little flippers out as if to conceal his company and edged his way backwards out of the door before letting them both slam before him. The entire courtroom, which consisted of many dignitaries from the suits of clubs, diamonds and spades including the Peacock Princes, was still aghast at the disruption staring in silence at the door. Suddenly the doors flung back open violently knocking the bailiffs, who had just picked themselves up, back to the ground even harder. Seconds later the company returned in full formal dress and marched into the courtroom, all of them. Sir Anthony stepped to the front to address the Queen who was by this point infuriated.

"Your Highness," he said.

"What is the meaning of this Sir Anthony?!!!! I am in the middle of a trial! You are all guilty and sentenced to a life of service in the kitchen without parole. And you," she said pointing at the butter, "I suggest you walk off of the bread of my guests next time rather than run or I will have you fed to the fipperspats. Case dismissed."

The prisoners gulped heavily at the sound of this.

"I have returned from my voyage your highness and brought back the lost noodles of the Peacock Princes. Admiral Thomas and General Timothy here have captured all of the swishbuttoners lurking in the dark realm and brought them in as prisoners. And these two Scuttlebarries have raised an army in the name of the Kingdom of Hearts which has aided in their defeat in addition to retrieving all of their hidden treasure seen here."

And he had the impalas and the monkeys carry the heavy cartloads of ~~gold and diamonds~~ cupcakes and biscuits, which were growing orange as the narts were busy hoarding what crumbs they could from them.

“Scuttleberries? Can I eat these Scuttleberries?”

The two cousins rolled their eyes at this, though the Queen was merely joking. She was deeply pleased with her military counsel and her legal counsel and her newly formed Lunatic Cavalcade. In her delight she glanced over to the prisoners and sentenced them to death much to their despair.

“Off with their heads and feed them to the fipperspats!” she pronounced.

But Sir Anthony intervened, “Does not Your Highness think that it would be better to put these finely dress prisoners—as they had changed into formal dress with the rest of the company when they exited the courtroom the first time—to good use in the service of the crown?”

“Why of course I do, they will be put to very fine use as food for my fipperspats, they haven’t eaten all day.” she said in the most sincere way.

“What I meant your majesty is that there is an army of prisoners. If we teach them right from wrong and proper etiquette as well as a few spirited songs apart from the doggery they are used to singing I do believe they could form a substantial force of allies.” he replied.

“Very well then, place them under the authority of my Cavalcade and let them first march and play trumpets to the triumph of their high and mighty Queen so that they will know the full extent of her mercy in sparing their miserable lives. Then we will see about returning them to their ships and trying their hands in the posts of a civilized navy.” she answered.

“Very good Your Grace.” he said.

“And as for you Colonel Clive! You will feed the flipperspats...”

At this point the yellow-bellied weasel fainted unconscious on the floor.

“You will bathe them and you will tend to their kennels every day as long as you breathe, do I make myself clear?”

But the Colonel was still on the ground out cold.

“This case is closed” she said as she slammed her gavel.

“Now it is time for tea, pass these crumpets out to the guests! Bring in the waiters and the table maids!” she said as she continued to bark orders at her staff.

Just as Lucian and Margaret were about to indulge in the serving of tea the crumpets and biscuits disappeared from their hands and the world around them began to fade away. Soon after they awoke in Lucian’s room. It was now morning time. They glanced at each other and they knew that it had been true. It was real. They suddenly rushed to grab the book of maps and upon first sight they saw that there were all sorts of notations and markings that had not been there the

night before. Then suddenly they smiled at one another with that sensation of fluttering in their little hearts for they knew that a great adventure lay ahead of them.

~FIN~

OF SENSELESSNESS AND NON-SENSIBILITY

Artist Statement

I entered the Wonderland Awards in an attempt to gain clarity and focus apart from my academic studies by using the more creative parts of my brain. The stories of Lewis Carroll have been favorites of mine since early childhood and the opportunity to contribute to work within the universe of that source material has been highly enriching. I gained substantial knowledge used for the development of this work's background from my multiple visits of the G. Edward Cassady, M.D., and Margaret Elizabeth Cassady, R.N., Lewis Carroll Collection. In reviewing past entries I could not decide what creative method to employ in producing a submission and so I decided to write a short novel with a long title that also incorporates an original musical composition with a line of notated score, and a hand drawn mural in pencil, ink, pastel, and acrylic.

The idea of this composition originated with the notion of exploring the separation and interaction that exist between the dream and the material worlds. Carroll's original *Alice* stories dealt with this subject and he is famed for having made caricatures of real life individuals in the character design of the tales. While the relevance of those individuals has largely escaped fans of Carroll's work in the absence of annotation—which was likely not his intent—I felt that this book could gain a greater sense of cultural permanence if it first developed the characters from the real world that would then be manipulated within the dream state of Wonderland. The advantages of this method would be to give the readers a genuine familiarity with the nuance of the contrapuntal figures and the events taking place within the duality of the real world and the fantasy world that has been created. However, to achieve this it was necessary to do extensive character and plot development, which ultimately led to the decision to compose two separate stories, one being representative of the real and one being exemplary of fantasy.

The juxtaposition of these antithetical concepts in and of itself is worthy of consideration because, as mentioned in the introduction poem, the material conditions of our waking lives are formulated in the fantasies of our dreams. The creative process as a whole has been popularly identified as being largely contingent upon dreams as a source of inspiration. Thus we here talk of young artists' 'dreams' of producing films, composing orchestral scores, and painting pictures for museum galleries. The relationship between the dream and material worlds is often mutualistic such that dreams are often highly influenced by real world phenomena and conversely as aforementioned real world phenomena are in many ways the byproduct of activity experienced in dreams.

It is important to note that much of our innate curiosity in dream oriented phenomena stems from the fact that within a dream the subconscious is capable of reimagining real world constructs and corrupting them and making them to bend to its desires. The thing that makes this intriguing is that the mind is essentially unchecked in the subconscious state and the results of these corruptions are often exceptionally unique and therefore highly stimulating to observe. The beauty of Carroll's *Wonderland* stories is that he was able to simulate the randomness and exoticism of this uninhibited psychological experience through the combination of his charismatic wit, his use of non-sense as a literary device and his mathematical acumen. What

makes his works masterpieces is that he was able to incorporate the innocence of childhood into the thought process of that psychedelic dream experience.

Within this project, one of the primary goals was to explore the cultural ambitions which drove Carroll's works through an alternate perspective and with a unique artistic impetus. Thus we have the lead characters of the short novel, Lucian and Margaret, aged significantly younger at age four than what some have proposed as age seven for the Alice character. However it is regularly alluded to that these figures are exceptionally mature for their age, and it is a running gag throughout the story that they despise being treated like children. Yet they were given the same Victorian sensibilities as Alice and like her they are relatively good natured, 'well-bred' English children. There are multiple points of departure from Carroll's stories beginning with the regular reference of Wonderland by the alternate title 'The Land of Wonders' as noted in the title of Act II. The book explores the heavy use of literal humor in the first act through the use of amusing sequences of events that involve a significant degree of silliness in addition to the usage of irony, semantic wordplay, and nonsense. The first act's use of pirates and maritime culture was a nod to *The Hunting of the Snark* as a sea story and an attempt to introduce an unexpected change into the 'Wonderland Universe'. The Victorian Era was perhaps the last period to have swashbuckling pirates on the high seas and the concept lent itself readily to tales of adventure and tomfoolery simultaneously. Great care was taken in the naming of all the characters, especially with the pirates, as they received both legal names which were meant to sound exceptionally conservative and pirate aliases which were used as a form of comic relief against the development of the background story.

The format of the writing exemplifies a dissension into madness as the piece begins with a sensible story which gradually becomes more and more comical, and more and more outrageous. The theme of legal proceedings in a courtroom is a common motif in Carroll's most famous works, and so it has been incorporated here in *The Trial of the Thousand Buccaneers* as homage to the comical court cases of Lewis Carroll as found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Hunting of the Snark*. The use of pirates as the archetype of moral ambiguity was a choice which was made with deep consideration of the subject. Pirates in literature are often seen as both villains and anti-villains. One of the premier tenets of the pirate archetype's visual representation is the frequently employed motif of bodily disfigurement. Pirates are regularly depicted as having been maimed wearing patches over missing eyes, having hooks in place of missing hands and wooden pegs where legs have been taken. Ordinary sailors have been historically viewed as crass members of the lower classes who live apart from society at sea, performing hard labor under extremely dangerous conditions. This sentiment is readily observed in the idiom "to curse like a sailor". The first act concludes with a social commentary about choice, chance and opportunity. It is not a plea for the sympathy of wrongdoers, rather an effort to address the institutional problems that plague us at the core of our lower social orders. It considers how the sustenance of inequality necessitates the very problems stemming from those who are deprived which threaten most those who are doing the depriving. It also addresses the notion of redemption and offers a subtle critique on the legitimacy on the modern penal system and the need for education as a deterrent of criminal behavior. The final theme of this assessment is the notion of forgiveness and brotherly love, which can be seen as the pirates are reintegrated into the society to the point where they become highly respected citizens and productive members of their communities.

The second act deals closely with the anthropomorphic as it explores the freedom of psychological fantasy. The introduction poem expresses that the archetypes of all human experience stem from the shadows of wild beasts born in the sleeping dreams and fantasies of small children. And it is from here that Carroll and the masters of high art forms have drawn their inspiration; particularly in the articulation of the anthropomorphic.

(Say this last part 3x Fast):

Particularly in the articulation of the anthropomorphic

Particularly in the articulation of the anthropomorphic

Particularly in the articulation of the anthropomorphic

Many of the characters in the second act are anthropomorphic analogs of figures from Act I. The outcome of Act II follows the basic premise of the first act's outcome; however the details surrounding the events and many of the actual sequences of the story have been changed to exemplify the randomness and unpredictability of the dreaming subconscious. The children were told the story of the pirates before they went to sleep and the idea is that they incorporated all of that into their dreams and the entire thing got mixed up, which is what often happens. The idea of the Lunatic Cavalcade came from the Ancient Roman tradition of the triumph where wild beasts would be set on display as exotic trophies paraded through the city with the military which was, on these special political occasions, given license to enter the city with a standing army for the purpose of celebration. The convoy led by the Scuttlebarry twins is by contrast a parade in both directions wherein the military are also the wild beasts. Keeping with the theme of Wonderland's madness the band plays nothing but discordant ruckus, yet marches on with fervent intensity accumulating members everywhere it goes until its final standoff with the 'enemy' at sea.

In an attempt to explore more of the physical terrain of Wonderland the Lunatic Cavalcade is taken from the forest to the desert. This choice of location coincides with the use of India as a setting in Act I; however, in following with nonsense and madness of Wonderland the desert begins and ends abruptly and leads directly into tropical forests and the sea with no intermediate ground between. This strong contrast represents how this portion of the story is about extremes. The members of the parade are both extremely small and extremely large ranging from microscopic narts to elephants. The choice to use more exotic animals native to foreign lands was made in an attempt to depart from the *Alice* stories which used more native European creatures such as the white rabbit, the dormouse and the march hare. The mass and size of exotic mega fauna led to the following passage about the rhinoceros being written, which eventually developed into the idea of using tropical beasts as a demonstration of the anthropomorphic which ultimately led to the tale of the Lunatic Cavalcade:

Ivory Matterhorn and Dent d'Heréns arise from the crests of his fair snout

The sterling meadow peak stands supreme above all adversity as trespassers are met with their
departure at its deadly summit

What smiths have forged this hide of iron raw with a heart of gold?

The mural, titled *The Lunatic Cavalcade* was composed as a companion piece to illustrate the visual depiction of the story. The picture was produced on packing paper using pencil, ink, acrylic and pastel.

Finally, Mr. Andrew Smith also known as Slapstick the pirate would like me to tell everyone that he is doing well on the H.M.S. Sterling and he has received corrective spectacles which allow him to see straight forward now. And he wanted me to also note that it was his eyes that were problematic, that he “was scatter-eyed not scatterbrained. You thank.”