

The Heterodoxeum:

A Natural History museum that explores the wonders of the
nonsensical world.

Book 1

"Curse of the Rat Mummies"

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Thank you Jennifer, for putting up with all of my
nonsense.

foreword

According to the respected writings of three actual eyewitnesses*, there lies a Giant Labyrinth hidden somewhere in Egypt, which has yet to be discovered. These witnesses described this marvelous structure as being bigger and grander than the Great Pyramids of Giza themselves.

3000 rooms connected by numerous passage-ways and winding corridors, half above and half below ground, make up this immense structure. It is said that anyone who entered could never find their way out alone. And it's **LOUD**. A horrible thunderous sound echoes through the rooms whenever a door is opened or closed. Buried in the underground rooms are the tombs of the twelve kings who built it and an unknown man named Imandes (ə-man-dēz).

The entire Labyrinth, allegedly, was made from large blocks of syenite ('sī-ə,nīt) rock, and the walls were carved entirely with sculpted figures. It's almost impossible to imagine.

Its location has been documented to be in a place called the City of Crocodiles, near ancient towns and cities depicted on the enclosed map (illustration). But nobody is really sure where these places are, and no one has seen the Labyrinth in over 2000 years.

Where is it? There are no volcanic fault lines in this area, so it wasn't destroyed by earthquake. Being dismantled is also unlikely because people stopped moving such large stones soon after this period of history. In fact, there are no large syenite block structures documented anywhere in Egypt.

Perhaps it is buried under the sand, swallowed by the Egyptian desert, which holds yet another ancient secret from modern day science and academia. Sand has buried pyramids in

the past. Even the mysterious Sphinx at Giza was found buried up to its neck, and this is a likely scenario for the Labyrinth as well. At the very least, there must still be 1500 underground rooms buried in the desert somewhere, holding great treasures and information of the past just sitting there, waiting to be discovered.

*the Greek historian, Herodotus, who lived around 450 BC, the ancient Greek geographer, Strabo, who lived around 30 BC, and the works of the Roman historian, Gaius Plinius Secundus, or Plinius for short, who lived around 50 AD, all wrote of the Labyrinth.

intro

Our story opens over the hot Egyptian desert near the Faiyum oasis (Map). An old bi-wing airplane screams out of control, invading the hot desert sky. On the ground its dark-brown shadow dances across the yellow sandy dunes.

Bushy white-mustached, British, doctor, commander, professor, and scientist,... Whitcomb Zither, our hero, was at the throttle. His world-view opinions are stuck in the past. They reflect an era of science accepted at the turn of the twentieth century, where electricity was the greatest force ever harnessed by man. His scarf was flapping violently behind him, and he was dangerously in command.

His partner, Charles Krasitsky, was sitting in the front seat of the airplane. He is a nervous, suggestible, yet brilliant scientist with a firm grasp of the nuclear age of science and all the fears it brings. He should be at complete ease in the air after writing his paper on the safety of air travel, specifically of the oriental flying rug type. But he was not, and terror was in his eyes.

College graduate, and artist, Josephine Peripheral, or Jo for short, was automobiling a four-wheeled drive jeep to the coordinates the team had marked out for an archaeological dig site. Her ten year old brother, Paul, was in the vehicle with her. He is Whitcomb's apprentice, gifted with a photographic memory, and a keen sense of sarcasm. He was in the passenger seat of the jeep monitoring the airplane's erratic flight maneuvers on his laptop.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

-Albert Einstein

Chapter 1

Keep your eyes open.

"Blast! We should've seen it by now", shouted Whitcomb in his deep British accent and scratchy voice.

Krasitzky screamed. "AAAAAAHHH!!!" as the plane did a loop-de-loop.

"Here we go loop-dee-loop, here we go loop-dee-lie", Whitcomb sang an old tune.

Krasitzky was fighting furiously with his map in the wind, wrestling it off of his face which was now covered in Greece and parts of Russia. After several attempts at flattening the map, and now able to reopen his eyes, he concluded in a loud voice,

"No! It's still south of here!"

"Blimey, I can't see a thing. It must be this glare", murmured Whitcomb. "I'm going in for a closer look. Why don't you get out on the wing, so you can see better?"

"I can see just fine from here", trembled Krasitzky.

"By gum, do I have to do everything myself? Here goes."

With that, Whitcomb rolled the plane hard to the right freeing Krasitzky from his seat and out onto the wing. Pleased with himself, he straightened out the plane.

"How's the view from there, old boy?" said Whitcomb.

Krasitzky's knuckles were as white as cauliflower. He peeked out over the side of the wing through squinted eyes. He had difficulty speaking because his cheeks were flapping

uncontrollably in the fierce wind.

"I can see the jeep."

And he could, otherwise he would have been blind. It was black with black tinted windows and large white letters reading: 'HETERODOXEUM Expedition Crew' across the doors. It stood out among the yellow sand like a zit on the tip of an albino's nose.

"O.K., I'm bringing her down." Whitcomb shouted.

The entire desert landscape was completely flat, an ocean of yellow as far as one can see, save for one large sand dune right in front of where the jeep was parked.

Krasitzky held on for dear life as the plane crashed into the sand dune, ejecting all the tools, Whitcomb, and Krasitzky from the plane. Whitcomb landed directly in front of the jeep, unharmed. The tools rained down neatly next to him into the opened toolbox which had landed first. Krasitzky, on the other hand, was launched 200 feet high into the air. His parachute blossomed against the desert sky and landed him safely about half of a mile from the crash site, except his nose was bleeding.

Jo and Paul stepped out of the jeep.

"Nice landing?" Paul commented.

Whitcomb knew sarcasm when he heard it, and welcomed it.

"The bloody sun got in my eye." was his excuse.

"Whadya guys find out?" asked Jo.

"There's not a single cigar store for miles," murmured Whitcomb.

"I mean about this location," Jo reminded Whitcomb why they were standing there sweltering in the desert heat.

"Of course (mumble, mumble)", Whitcomb collected himself.

It is worth mentioning that Whitcomb speaks with deep incoherent coughs but with "B"'s and "R"'s in his cheeks,

instead of "K"'s. If you were to imitate him it would sound like you were saying "bum hum herrr herbur rummhum". It is quite amusing actually. Since it is hard to spell these said sounds of Whitcomb, it will henceforth be presented as "Harrumphs".

"This is definitely the area depicted on the old scrolls we found on our underwater expedition a few years ago. It's a perfect match. (Harrumphs)" He said.

These scrolls, Whitcomb referred to, contained the proposed blueprints for the Labyrinth. They were dated 200 years before its construction.

"I still think it's incredible that we are even here. I can't believe you found those scrolls." Jo added.

"Indeed. (Harrumph)" Whitcomb agreed, still dusting himself off.

"You never did tell me exactly what happened down there." Paul reminded Jo.

"I thought you knew."

"No."

"Ok, I'll tell you. I remember it vividly." Jo explained. "You know I have a hard time with Underwater Expeditions because of my sinuses. But I was excited about this one so I went along."

The underwater expedition Jo is about to unfold was definitely a first of its kind. Whitcomb and his team brought their three-man submarine or rather, two-man and one woman submarine, to the Egyptian desert a few years earlier to hunt for pottery and gold in the now dried up 'garden pond' of King Sneferu. He ruled Egypt for about twenty-four years around 2600 BC during an artistic and architectural transitional period for ancient Egypt and is credited for the construction of three

pyramids including the 'red' pyramid and the famous 'bent' pyramid (illustration). It seemed that King Sneferu's architects didn't account for proper weight distribution when building this 'bent' pyramid and had to change plans in the middle of construction by creating a new angle for the top of the pyramid resulting in a "bent' look. It was the only solution to complete the pyramid instead of abandoning all that effort of construction. Sneferu's garden pond was of interest. It supposedly was large enough for boats with twenty oars to sail across. Not exactly what we would call a pond, more like a lake in the middle of the desert.

Whitcomb insisted that, "This pond must have been spring fed. Irrigation from the Nile would've been impossible for the Egyptians due to the complex terrain."

Jo took over the telling of the story at this point, and imitated Whitcomb's and Krasitzky's voices as she told Paul what happened.

"When was anything ever impossible for the ancient Egyptians?" Jo said as Krasitzky.

She used a snippy, high-pitched tone to mimic him.

"That's pretty good." Paul said, impressed with his sister's impression.

"Everything about them seems far more advanced than we are today." Jo continued as Krasitzky.

"I disagree," Jo argued as herself. "We have computers and sophisticated telephones with televisions built in them that we carry with us, and we can listen to virtually any piece of recorded music without paying for it. We're also able to put top hats on cute baby octopuses using Photoshop. That far surpasses anything the ancient Egyptians ever accomplished."

"You are completely mistaken, Jo (harrumphs)." She said as

Whitcomb in her pompous deep voiced, British accent imitation.

"That's right on," Paul laughed.

"What did they teach you at that college of yours?" she continued in Whitcomb's voice. "The Egyptians were always aware of their surroundings. If our society were depicted in hieroglyphs today, people would be staring down at their hands holding gadgets, instead of looking up. They are completely missing what's going on in the world around them." Whitcomb noted. "Why I witnessed recently at a baseball game, the bases were loaded, the winning run was at bat and the star closing pitcher for the home team came in to save the game. Hundreds of fans took out their video phones and watched the final at bat through the window of their device instead of experiencing the game with their own eyes. They even bought tickets to do this. What preposterous nonsense. That alone indicates that our society is home to a lesser intelligent bunch than those ancient desert blokes."

"I had no argument."

"After much deliberation with the Egyptian government, Whitcomb was finally permitted to bring his submarine to the site of King Sneferu's garden pond, located near the 'X' on this map (map). The government officials chuckled at him, as they always do, but Whitcomb paid the outrageous import-export fee, and led the desert-sand submarine expedition without haste."

"It took weeks before our team reached the ancient ruins of King Sneferu's palace. There was no pond. No water at all. If there was a pond, it was dried up and covered in sand. It looked like a flat beach without any evidence of water at all. Krasitzky combed the beach for hours determined to find a clue... And he found one. A tiny funnel-like impression in the sand, like someone poked their finger in it, was the only mark on the

barren landscape. It looked like a trap door spider's ambush site."

"That's it, old boy." Whitcomb said. "Load the sub on that spot."

"How could that be Sneferu's garden pond?" I snapped loudly.

"That vortex is the entrance point I tell you, Jo." Whitcomb insisted. "Do not doubt me."

"We dragged the heavy sub onto that spot in the crazy heat. It was brutal."

"Normally, we dig first to confirm any findings. But this time we just dove right in, literally. The submarine sunk rather than dove, as if we were falling through quicksand or an hourglass. Scorpions, dried bones, and pottery shards passed by the front observation window of the sub as it sank."

"Then we saw bubbles."

"This can't be," thought Krasitzky. "It must be one of those octopus illusions."

"You mean optical illusions." Whitcomb explained. "No, they're real, old boy. We've reached the source. (Harrumphs)"

The sub stopped moving for a few minutes, I thought we hit a rock, then we fell a few feet..., no rather we dropped from the top of a cave-like pocket of air into a pool of natural spring water, splashing down and plunging into crystal clear ultramarine blue water, illuminated by the lights of the submarine. We were sinking to the bottom while Krasitzky was desperately trying to start the engines.

"All systems go", Krasitzky checked.

"Prepare to dive," ordered Captain Whitcomb. He took his role as a nautical leader extremely seriously. He put on his naval commander hat and posed like George Washington

crossing the Delaware.

"We passed all kinds of strange never before seen desert fish. Look at these pictures."

Jo showed Paul some of the strangest looking creatures ever documented (illustration).

"Wow. There are so many things on this planet that we just don't know about." Paul said with tremendous insight.

"You are so right. I was able to catch this guy with the vacuum hose of the sub."

Jo held up a picture of a new species of giraffish in a bowl for Paul to see. It was a rare variety of sea horse with a long giraffe-like neck (illustration).

"What an amazing spot pattern. I wonder how big they get. Are those teeth on the top of its head?" Paul noticed.

"I think so. Someday I hope to go back and study it in its natural habitat. But we can't bring Krasitzky with us. He was mostly concerned about how they would taste in a butter sauce."

"I don't know." Paul thought. "That would still be a major scientific discovery, especially for the culinary sciences. The Heterodoxeum does have a wing for that."

"Anyway," Jo got back on point. "We descended as far as we could to the bottom of the 'spring's chamber', as we now call it. Cracks in the earth were below us, pouring water up, and weird hairy lobster-like creatures engulfed the submarine, weighing it down."

"The sub was being sucked through the deepest crack of the desert floor when Whitcomb switched on the windshield wipers to ease the threat of cable crunching crustaceans. But the wires were crossed due to lobster claw clamping and the submarine had short-circuited. It transformed into a yellow, spherical toaster coil, zapping and electrocuting the hitch hiking varmints like a

giant bug zapper." (illustration)

"With that potential disaster averted, we were now able to explore the 'spring's chamber'. To our amazement, there in the dim light, among the pyramid-like rocks, was the wreck of a Scandinavian Viking battle ship."

"What was a Viking's ship doing in Egypt?" Paul asked.

A good question, that. And the answer had been found in the artifacts the team discovered aboard the Norse vessel. On some random planks of wood was written, in Norse language, a remarkable tale.

It turned out that King Sneferu invented the theatrical sport of Battle Boats, an annual event to display naval superiority among nations. The ancient Romans stole this concept for their Coliseum entertainment in later years, but that's a story for another day.

During this naval competition, boats competed for National treasures put up by each team. A simple game really, the object is to sink your opponent's vessel by tossing water from buckets into each ship until one sinks. Some American colleges have adopted this concept for canoes, as fund raisers in Olympic-sized swimming pools. Last ship floating is the winner.

"This was a special find," Jo explained. "It turned out that the Norse ship had been caught cheating."

"Cheating?" Paul asked.

"More like stealing. According to what we were able to decipher from the logs from the wreck, the Norse ship had looted an Egyptian safe. The contents were in the throat of the dragon head keel. That's where we found the air-tight jars containing the scrolls. There were seven jars total, which we brought back with us, and opened them in our special vacuum chamber in our Heterodoxeum lab to prevent disintegration."

"Naturally," Paul complimented.

"We didn't know what to expect. In our possession, we had discovered a map of the Labyrinth by the designer, himself. On it was a second subterranean room that bore the name: Him-mant-deez."

"You mean Imandes?" Paul asked.

"That's what Whitcomb concluded. Immediate plans were made to explore this map before anyone else could. And here we stand today."

"That's incredible. How did you get the submarine back up the sand?" Paul was quick to ask.

Jo laughed. "We didn't have to. We found a passage way through the underground caves that led us right to the Nile River. There were tons of crocodiles, poised like underwater mines ready to go off if touched. After some delicate maneuvering, we surfaced and met the rest of the team somewhere near Dashur."

"I wish we near the river now. It's so hot here."

"At least there are no mosquitos."

"What are we going to do with this wrecked plane?" Paul asked.

"No worries. I've already radioed it in and our guys are on their way to recover the pieces."

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