



THE NARRATIVE OF GORDON ARTHUR OF MARS: LONG LIVE THE EMPIRE.

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The British Colony on Mars...

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THE NARRATIVE OF GORDON ARTHUR OF MARS: LONG LIVE THE EMPIRE. Her majesty's martian colony -- New Victoria in the crown colony of Hellas -- 1917 My name is Gordon Arthur. My father was a well known importer and purveyor of Tea at New Victoria, where I was born. My grandfather was a miner and among the first colonists of Mars. During the original Nickel rush he managed to raise enough money to buy plots of land in Mare Serpentis which he made his fortune. I was sent at the age of six to the Imperial school at New Victoria - Mr Smickett was the Educator, he only had one arm after losing the other in a mining explosion. I stayed at his school until I was in my teens, when I left to take a job at the Aerodrome as a ticket clerk. Mr Smickett had a son called Edgar Allan, who was almost two years older than myself. He had been on an exploration on the surface beyond our small colony and was always talking of his adventures. I used to spend time with him in the Bioscope, sometimes all day. Telling me stories of the valleys and mountains in the great red plains and the creatures he had encountered. I could not help being interested in what he told me, for I had never left the safety of Colony. I felt a great desire to travel beyond the safety of the Aerodrome to travel into the galaxy, beyond the planet of my birth deeper into the unknown. One night there was a party to celebrate the end of the War with Germany. Sitting in the back row of the Bioscope and both Edgar and myself were drunk on hooch that smelt and tasted like Firestalk dung. When some hours into the party Edgar suggested that we "borrow" his fathers shuttle. Edgar's father owned a steam shuttle. Called the "The Imperial", she could hold five or six persons without crowding. In no time we staggered down to the landing field. She was docked at the old Albert Dock by the Irish Quarter. Drunkenly Edgar tumbled the key to the ramp it took him a number of tries before the ramp lowered and we could board. Edgar took the helm, and I stood behind throwing wood into the black heart of the furnace. After the steam shuttle steadily climbed into the air, I sat alongside, mute with excitement. After we started out into the atmosphere, speeding the red planet below. Neither of us spoke for some time, my friend his eyes fixed on the planet below. "What course are you taking." I asked after some time in silence. He was still and wordless for a long while, until he answered: "I am going into space." The red planet was fast vanishing behind as the shuttle continued its trajectory into the thin upper atmosphere. Turning my eyes upon him I could see that he was shaking as he gripped the helm. Something was wrong. "I think we should turn back." I said. Again it was what seemed hours before he acknowledged me with an inaudible mumble, he glared into the distance. I am not afraid to die by this time, I was becoming afraid, a feeling of dread was overtaking me. "For gods sake," I said, "what is wrong?" "Wrong? Nothing is wrong. I am going home." He was drunk, he had consumed much more than myself obviously. My intoxication had vanished into the cool shuttle cabin air. Despite working in the docking bay, I had no idea how to pilot a shuttle or any craft for that matter.

Pushing my friend away from the helm I took the controls. I prayed to Queen Victoria God Empress of the Galaxy and made up my mind to save us both. Edgar had slumped to the floor and was out cold. The shuttle was traveling further and further from the planet, our home. No sooner had I come to this resolution than a terrible grating and tearing of metal shook the shuttle. My hair stood on end. The last thing I remember was falling on top of my friend...