The Fantastical Adventures of Loaf

© Ivor M. Bundell

(2012)

Part I – The rise to Fame

I made a loaf and watched it rise and rise
Till I could not believe my own two eyes:
It first outgrew the tin I'd put it in
And very soon it filled the entire kitchen;
Like the primal universe expanding,
Creating time and space along the way,
Beyond all hope of human understanding
I watched it grow and grow at least a day.
I wondered how I'd bake it, if at all!
I visited the Blacksmith by the way
And asked him - but his furnace was too small.
At last it stabilised - I took a chance
And sailed it up the coast across to France.

In France I found the giant's forge I sought
And haggled round about but at no speed
Until at last Gargantua agreed
To bake the loaf with which I had long fought.
He baked it for a day and for a night
And then another day and night again
And when he judged it to be baked just right
He took it out; I paid him there and a then.
Next we're summoned by King Louis Quatorze,
Who was amazed and wanted just a slice -
How could I deny him? I need advice!
We scarpered - not liking absolute laws .
You would be wise do the same as me
If ever royals invite you round for tea.

By now we're famous, keen to meet the Pope,

And so to Avignon we speed in haste
But he long since to Rome to wash with soap
Had gone and was quite keen to watch his waist;
An audience he would refuse therefore
And so we crossed the straits to Africa.
Ah such amazing sights as ne'er before:
The Pyramids, the Sphinx – my camera
Is digital and I've a thousand shots
To show you all the places that we went –
As far as Asia Minor and Tashkent –
We made a collection of these fine Ming pots.
Upon the Silk Road we vowed to travel
And let the secrets of the East unravel.

One day we came upon a small brick wall,
Beyond which demon dragons freely roamed,
For any mention Baedeker we combed
But nought of interest fathomed there at all.
But Loaf was sure he'd once seen in a book
Some other structure much the same as this
And said we ought to take a closer look
To make sure there was nothing we might miss.
As archaeologists are prone to say:
"The answer lies beneath this very soil"
But we discovered that the only way
To be certain was with blood, sweat and toil.
And as the scientists dig out each clue
I sometimes wonder if it's all too true.

But as we dug the earth in curious vein
An Emperor and his army from the East
Advanced over the vast and darkling plain
With bags of flour and quantities of yeast.
Needless to say that Loaf was much disturbed
And begged to be allowed to leave that place!
So as his terror could no way be curbed
We fled across the desert without trace.
I harken back to think we might have found
The Great Wall of China's lost extent
And wonder what if anything it meant
To sift the sand and sit upon the ground.
But we must leave this far flung realm
And seek our ship of fate and seize the helm!

Now Destiny here takes the upper-hand
And in a wild maelstrom sweeps up all
Into the higher atmosphere; we'd planned
To catch the camel-train, instead we fall
And tumble from the sky into a yurt -
Most fortunate! we're not too badly hurt
And looking round to see what is this place
We find a friendly and familiar face:
The Blacksmith! on a cultural exchange
With nomads in the Steppes, home on the range!
And very soon, our different stories told,
We sleep beside the fire to keep from cold.
And in our dreams we see a palace lawn
With songbirds singing at the break of dawn.

And in that garden, rare with sweet delights,

Fair maidens walk and sip on sherbet limes
And dip their toes in fountains, oh such sights!
That ever we should live to see such times!
We spoke in phrases deft and eloquent,
Our thoughts sprang like a bounding antelope,
We rode aboard the Emperor's elephant -
I plotted with a princess to elope.
And in that vision, far upon a dream,
I heard ancestral voices, in a stream
I saw the prophecies of war and strife
That mar the landscape of this blessed life.
I woke. A spark had set my hat on fire!
The dream had fled, departing with desire.

The Blacksmith bade us both a fond farewell
And left us at a well-known caravanserai.
Imbibing sheesha and sweet tea nearby
A traveller accosts us with a spell.
Immediately we're transfixed and entranced:
See Loaf is lost in deep hypnotic sleep
And I am motionless – I could not keep
My mind from wandering as it spun and chanced:
Strange tales of ice mast high all emerald
Of casting with the fates for life and death,
A bird that brings but ill and want of breath -
As things eternal and ephemeral.
And just as quickly as he came he goes
To tell his tale ten thousand times, who knows?

But now hear Loaf himself take up the tale;

With rolling eyes and tongue he starts to speak:
“Behold! I see a shining silver sail,
A mountain higher than the highest star;
I see a canopy that billows far
And we shall journey though both tired and weak!”
I asked him what it was he saw so clear
But he had fainted in exhausted swoon
So gathering him upon my back I steer
A new course by the light of the full moon;
So burdened with my friend upon my back
I set off down a steeply sloping track.
The sea is dark but there white breakers run!
Now we are almost there and nearly done.

Now I’ve returned to England with my bread,
The crossing not so bad as I had feared,
And all I’ve told you happened as I said -
Believe me I’ve got baguettes in my beard!
The Giant took his coins, the Mariner his dice,
And Loaf has led a mad and merry dance
And I expect I’ll not return to France -
At least before I do I shall think twice.
How Loaf created time and space with ease
To occupy, to puzzle and to please;
His singularity forced this matter
To form, assemble my words, then scatter.
When next you bake some bread, recall this tale -
Beware the loaf that’s bigger than a whale!

End of Part 1