

# THE STAR OF ALBION

Vol 43 No 158. NEW ALBION SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 1914 A DAILY NEWSPAPER FOR ALL CLASSES PRICE ONE PENNY  
PRESENTING THE HUGO AWARD WINNING SHORT STORY

## A STUDY IN EMERALD

Written by Neil Gaiman illustrations and lay-out by Jouni Koponen

### I. The New Friend.

#### THE STRAND PLAYERS

*Fresh* From Their Stupendous European Tour, where they performed before several of the **CROWNED HEADS OF EUROPE**, garnering their *plaudits* and *praise* with *magnificent dramatic performances*, combining both **COMEDY** and **TRAGEDY**, the Strand Players wish to make it known that they shall be appearing at the **Royal Court Theatre, Drury Lane**, for a **LIMITED ENGAGEMENT** in April, at which they will present "*My Look-Alike Brother Tom!*" "*The Littlest Violet-Seller*" and "*The Great Old Ones Come*," (this last an Historical Epic of Pageantry and Delight); each an entire play in one act! Tickets are available now from the Box Office.

It is the immensity, I believe. The hugeness of things below. The darkness of dreams.

But I am woolgathering. Forgive me. I am not a literary man.

I had been in need of lodgings. That was how I met him. I wanted someone to share the cost of rooms with me. We were introduced by a mutual acquaintance, in the chemical laboratories of St. Bart's. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," that was what he said to me, and my mouth fell open and my eyes opened very wide.

"Astonishing," I said.

"Not really," said the stranger in the white lab-coat, who was to become my friend. "From the way you hold your arm, I see you have been wounded, and in a particular way. You have a deep tan. You also have a military bearing, and there are few enough places in the Empire that a military man can be both tanned and, given the nature of the injury to your shoulder and the traditions of the Afghan cave-folk, tortured."

Put like that, of course, it was absurdly simple. But then, it always was. I had been tanned nut-brown. And I had indeed, as he had observed, been tortured.

The gods and men of Afghanistan were savages, unwilling to be ruled from Whitehall or from Berlin or even from Moscow, and unprepared to see reason. I had been sent into those hills, attached to the \_\_\_\_\_th Regiment. As long as the fighting remained in the hills and mountains, we fought on an equal footing. When the skirmishes descended into the caves and the darkness then we found ourselves, as it were, out of our depth and in over our heads.

I shall not forget the mirrored surface of the underground lake, nor the thing that emerged from the lake, its eyes opening and closing, and the singing whispers that accompanied it as it rose, wreathing their way about it like the buzzing of flies bigger than worlds.

That I survived was a miracle, but survive I did, and I returned to England with my nerves in shreds and tatters. The place that leech-like mouth had touched me was tattooed forever, frog-white, into the skin of my now-withered shoulder. I had once been a crack-shot. Now I had nothing, save a fear of the world-beneath-the-world akin to panic which meant that I would gladly pay sixpence of my army pension for a Hansom cab, rather than a penny to travel underground.

Still, the fogs and darknesses of London comforted me, took me in. I had lost my first lodgings because I screamed in the night. I had been in Afghanistan; I was there no longer.

"I scream in the night," I told him.

"I have been told that I snore," he said. "Also I keep irregular hours, and I often use the mantelpiece for target practice. I will need the sitting room to meet clients. I am selfish, private and easily bored. Will this be a problem?"

I smiled, and I shook my head, and extended my hand. We shook on it.

The rooms he had found for us, in Baker Street, were more than adequate for two bachelors. I bore in mind all my friend had said about his desire for privacy, and I