

THERE IS A MASSIVE HISTORICAL GAP IN MOST FANTASY WORLDS. STORIES LIKE LORD OF THE RINGS TELL US WHAT FANTASY WORLDS LOOKED LIKE IN THE MEDIEVAL AGES, WHILE STORIES LIKE HARRY POTTER TELL US WHAT FANTASY WORLDS LOOK LIKE IN THE MODERN ERA.

BUT WHAT DO FANTASY WORLDS LOOK LIKE IN BETWEEN THOSE TWO TIMES? WHAT WOULD A FANTASY WORLD LOOK LIKE DURING THE AGE OF EXPLORATION? TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, WE MUST FIRST MEET A SIMPLE MAN OF SCIENCE WHO DREAMS OF PUSHING THE LIMITS OF WHAT'S KNOWN ABOUT HIS WORLD.

# LANDS BEYOND

BY CAMERON WOODARD



LANDS BEYOND IS A COMEDIC ADVENTURE SHOW ABOUT THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND MAGIC. OUR HERO IS AN EXPLORER WHO SETS OUT TO CHART THE BORDERS OF A WORLD WHICH DOESN'T REALLY WANT TO BE CHARTED. THIS DICHOTOMY BETWEEN ADVENTURE AND ABSURDITY LEADS TO A TONE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN PULP ADVENTURE MAGAZINES AND THE WORK OF LEMONY SNICKET.

THIS IS A WORLD WHERE STRANGE AND INCREDIBLE SIGHTS ARE FREQUENT, WHERE MYSTERY LIES AROUND EVERY CORNER, AND WHERE EVERY DAY IS FRAUGHT WITH EXCITEMENT. IT'S ALSO A WORLD WHERE VICTORIES ARE SLOW AND OFTEN PYRRHIC, WHERE EVERYTHING CONSPIRES TO CAUSE MISFORTUNE, AND WHERE THE ANSWERS TO MYSTERIES ONLY CREATE MORE MYSTERIES.

THE WORLD OF TOND WILL GRADUALLY OPEN UP TO BOTH THE CHARACTERS AND THE VIEWERS, BUT ULTIMATELY SOME THINGS WILL REMAIN UNSCRUTABLE, SOME PROBLEMS WILL REMAIN INEXORABLE. MERIWETHER'S STUDIES WILL ALWAYS LEAD HIM IN CIRCLES, CAPTAIN SHANTY'S QUESTS FOR WEALTH WILL ALWAYS LEAVE HIM DESTITUTE, AND NORTH'S ATTEMPTS TO OUTWIT HIS UNWITTING RIVAL WILL ALWAYS PROVE SELF-DEFEATING.

## BACKSTORY:

MERIWETHER FAUST LIVES IN A VERY SMALL WORLD. ONLY HIS HOMELAND OF REIVING HAS BEEN MAPPED. THE REST OF THE PLANET REMAINS A TANTALIZING MYSTERY. THE REASON FOR THIS IS VERY SIMPLE: ANYBODY WHO ATTEMPTS TO EXPLORE THE REST OF TOND DOESN'T COME BACK. BUT WITH A GRANT FROM TONRIDGE UNIVERSITY, MERIWETHER IS DETERMINED TO MAP THE MYSTERIOUS LANDS OF TOND AND RETURN TO SHARE HIS FINDINGS.

BUT THE FANTASTICAL DANGERS ARE FAR FROM HIS ONLY WORRIES. THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT IS THAT TOND IS A LAND OF MAGIC. AND MAGIC DOES NOT TAKE KINDLY TO THE RIGORS OF SCIENCE. MERIWETHER'S ACADEMIC TENDENCIES WILL BE TESTED BY ISLANDS WHICH REARRANGE THEMSELVES WHILE YOU SLEEP, CREATURES WHICH CAN ALTER THEIR PHYSIOLOGY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, AND LAND MASSES WHICH SEEM TO IGNORE ALL LAWS OF PHYSICS ENTIRELY.

ALONE, THIS WOULD BE AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK. BUT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, WITH THE HELP OF A CYNICAL SEA CAPTAIN AFFLICTED WITH A LEPRECHAUN'S CURSE, A SPACED-OUT HIPPIE WITCH WHO LIKES PLANTS MORE THAN SHE LIKES HUMANS, AND A MUTANT APE WITH THE BRAINS OF A HUMAN BUT THE PERSONALITY OF A DOG, MERIWETHER MIGHT JUST BE ABLE TO COME BACK HOME WITH A JOURNAL FULL OF DISCOVERIES.

## MERIWETHER FAUST

THE OPTIMISTIC AND CURIOUS HEAD OF THE EXPEDITION, MERIWETHER FAUST WANTS MORE THAN ANYTHING TO KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE. CONSTRAINED TO HIS HOMELAND FOR THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF HIS LIFE, HE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND HIM. EVEN HIS STUDIES AT TONRIDGE UNIVERSITY PROVED DISAPPOINTING AS HE FOUND THAT EVEN THE SMARTEST MINDS IN REIVING DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE WORLD OUTSIDE ITS BORDERS. AND SO HE DEVISED A PLAN FOR AN EXPEDITION INTO THE UNCHARTED LANDS OF TOND, AND SECURED FUNDING WITH THE TONRIDGE ACADEMIC BOARD. MERIWETHER HAS TWO YEARS TO EXPLORE THE WORLD BEFORE HE MUST RETURN TO REIVING AND PUBLISH HIS FINDINGS.

MERIWETHER HAS A SCIENTIFIC MIND, AND USES IT TO STUDY THE WORLD AROUND HIM AND TO SOLVE PROBLEMS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LAND OF TOND IS A PLACE OF MAGIC, AND SCIENTIFIC THINKING ISN'T ALWAYS THE BEST WAY TO GET AROUND IT. THIS IS A MAJOR SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION FOR MERIWETHER, AS HE'S BECOME INGRAINED IN HIS METHODS. HE'LL NEED TO COME AROUND TO TOND'S UNIQUE LOGIC IF HE'S EVER TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE PLACE.



REGARDLESS, MERIWETHER'S ENDLESS OPTIMISM AND EXCITEMENT FOR HIS MISSION WILL KEEP HIM GOING THROUGH FRUSTRATIONS AND PERILS ALIKE. THIS DRIVING FORCE CAN ALSO BE A WEAKNESS, AS HIS OPTIMISM CAN LEAD TO HIM PLUNGING HEADFIRST INTO DANGER IN SEARCH OF A DISCOVERY. MERIWETHER HAS MISTAKEN BOOK SMARTS FOR EXPERIENCE, AND WILL SOON LEARN THAT READING ABOUT THE SEVEN-FANGED-BASILISK DOESN'T NECESSARILY PREPARE YOU FOR ENCOUNTERING ONE.

## LOTUS

IT WOULD PROBABLY BE UNFAIR TO CALL LOTUS A SOCIOPATH. IT'S HARD TO HAVE A LOT OF EMPATHY FOR PEOPLE WHEN YOU WERE ABANDONED IN THE FOREST AS A BABY AND RAISED BY PLANTS. IT DOES MAKE YOU A PLANT EXPERT, HOWEVER, AND THAT'S WHY LOTUS WAS PICKED FOR MERIWETHER'S EXPEDITION. WHENEVER A STRANGE AND UNUSUAL PLANT IS DISCOVERED, LOTUS IS THE PERSON TO ASK ABOUT IT. SHE HAS EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THINGS FLORAL, AND IF THAT FAILS, SHE CAN ALSO JUST ASK IT SOME QUESTIONS. SHE CAN TALK TO PLANTS, AFTER ALL. DID I FORGET TO MENTION THAT?

OF COURSE, ALL OF THIS ASSUMES SHE'S WILLING TO COOPERATE AT THE GIVEN MOMENT. SHE COULD JUST AS EASILY DECIDE TO GO OFF AND DO HER OWN THING FOR A WHILE, AND THERE'S NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT THAT. HER MAIN INTEREST IN MERIWETHER'S EXPEDITION IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE UNIQUE HERBS FOR HER VARIOUS WITCHY BREWS. THESE BREWS ARE MAINLY FOR HER OWN ENJOYMENT, BUT SHE'LL GIVE YOU A TASTE IF YOU ASK. TAKE A NIP OF THIS ONE, DUDE. IT'LL MESS YOU UP.



# CAPTAIN SHANTY

IT'S HARD TO STAY UPBEAT WHEN YOU SEEM TO BE CURSED. IT'S HARDER TO STAY UPBEAT WHEN YOU ARE UNQUESTIONABLY, EXTREMELY CURSED. SO IT IS WITH CAPTAIN THADDEUS SHANTY, WHO WAS CURSED TO LOSE EVERY PENNY HE EVER EARNED AFTER ATTEMPTING TO CAPTURE A LEPRECHAUN. SORT OF A REVERSE LUCK-OF-THE-IRISH, IF YOU WILL. FROM A MASSIVE TROVE OF SUNKEN TREASURE TO A PENNY FOUND ON THE STREET, SHANTY WILL INEVITABLY LOSE ANY PIECE OF WEALTH HE FINDS BEFORE HE HAS A CHANCE TO SPEND IT.

THE ONLY THING HE'S MANAGED TO HOLD ON TO OVER THE YEARS IS A MAGICAL SHIP THAT CAN SAIL WITHOUT A CREW. WHICH IS A GOOD THING, BECAUSE HE'D NEVER BE ABLE TO HOLD ONTO WAGES FOR LONG ENOUGH TO PAY ANY CREW HE HIRED. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THE WHOLE SITUATION HAS LEFT HIM SALTY AS A SEA DOG.

PESSIMISM IS SHANTY'S GO-TO REACTION IN ANY SITUATION, AS LIFE HAS TRAINED HIM TO EXPECT MISFORTUNE. HE SERVES AS A DOWN-TO-EARTH FOIL FOR MERIWETHER'S NAÏVE OPTIMISM, AND HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE REIVING PREVENTS TROUBLE JUST AS OFTEN AS HIS CURSED LUCK CAUSES IT.



# KIRBY

EVERY GROUP NEEDS A LITTLE MUSCLE. MERIWETHER'S EXPEDITION JUST HAPPENS TO HAVE 450LBS OF MUSCLE. KIRBY IS A BLUE-BACKED-GORRILIOD, A FANTASTICAL APE-LIKE CREATURE WITH THE INTELLECT OF A FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILD AND THE TEMPERAMENT OF A ONE-YEAR-OLD GOLDEN RETRIEVER.



FIRST MATE (AND BEST MATE) OF CAPTAIN SHANTY, KIRBY COMES ALONG ON THE EXPEDITION AS A BODYGUARD OF SORTS. HER MATERNAL INSTINCTS MAKE HER A PERFECT FIT FOR KEEPING MERIWETHER AND HIS ASSOCIATES SAFE IN THE TREACHEROUS WILDERNESS OF TOND. UNFORTUNATELY, KIRBY IS EASILY DISTRACTED, AND CAPTAIN SHANTY MUST DEVOTE A LOT OF TIME TO KEEPING THE APE FOCUSED ON THE MISSION.

## ALABASCUS NORTH

FOLLOWING THE CREW OF MERIWETHER'S EXPEDITION WHEREVER THEY GO IS ALABASCUS NORTH, A BITTER AND CONNIVING COLLEAGUE OF MERIWETHER OUT TO STEAL HIS SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES. NORTH IS A PROFESSOR AT TONRIDGE UNIVERSITY, AND IS FURIOUS THAT THE SCHOOL DENIED HIS GRANT FOR AN EXPEDITION WHILE ACCEPTING MERIWETHER'S. AS SUCH, HE TOOK HIS LIFE SAVINGS AND SET OUT ON A CONCURRENT EXPEDITION, DRAGGING ALONG HIS RESEARCH ASSISTANT SIMMONS.



EVERY WEEK, ALABASCUS NORTH PLOTS TO STEAL MERIWETHER'S FINDINGS AND PUBLISH THEM AS HIS OWN, AND THE RELUCTANT SIMMONS COMES ALONG FOR FEAR OF RECEIVING A BAD GRADE FROM HER PROFESSOR. MERIWETHER, BLESS HIS SOUL, IS COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS OF THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO SCHOLARS, AND ALWAYS GREET'S NORTH WARMLY IN SPITE OF THE MAN'S OBVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO STEAL HIS RESEARCH. THIS IS A SOURCE OF CONSTANT FRUSTRATION FOR NORTH, WHO CAN'T COMPREHEND WHY HIS GREATEST ENEMY ALWAYS GREET'S HIM WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE.

## 5 STORY PREMISES:

1. THE CREW IS ROPED INTO MERIWETHER'S ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE A SKITTISH HERBIVORE. THEY SOON DISCOVER THAT THIS PARTICULAR ANIMAL CAN JUMP BETWEEN ALTERNATE REALITIES AT WILL, MAKING THE ACT OF CORRALLING IT A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AFFAIR.
2. CAPTAIN SHANTY EXPLOITS HIS BAD LUCK CURSE TO ALTER THE OUTCOME OF SPORTING EVENTS BY BETTING ON THEM. EVENTUALLY THE LOCAL MAFIA CATCHES WIND OF HIS "TALENT" AND COERCES HIM INTO USING HIS CURSE FOR THEIR OWN NEFARIOUS DEEDS.
3. MERIWETHER'S DISCOVERS A NEW KIND OF INSECT AND ATTEMPTS TO RECORD IT IN HIS CATALOG OF SPECIMENS. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS INSECT HAS THE ABILITY TO SHAPESHIFT AT WILL, MAKING IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DOCUMENT.
4. ALABASCUS NORTH ATTEMPTS TO LOCATE AN ANCIENT TEMPLE BEFORE MERIWETHER CAN MAKE IT THERE. HOWEVER, HIS ATTEMPTS ARE FOILED BY HIS INTRINSIC DISTRUST OF MERIWETHER'S HELPFUL NATURE.
5. CAPTAIN SHANTY AND MERIWETHER BUTT HEADS OVER WHETHER BOOK SMARTS ARE AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE. MERIWETHER SETS OUT ALONE TO PROVE THAT HE CAN TRACK DOWN A DANGEROUS ANIMAL USING ONLY WHAT HE'S READ IN BOOKS.