





'I shall do my best.'

And here, for better or worse, is Oswald Bastable's third memoir. I have done as little work on it as possible and present it to the reader pretty much as I received it. As to its authenticity, that is for you to judge.

Michael Moorcock, Three Chimneys, Yorkshire, England.  
June 1980

## Part One

An English Airshipman's Adventures in the Great War of 1941

## 1. The Manner of My Dying

It was, I think, my fifth day at sea when the revelation came. Just as at some stage of his existence a man can reach a particular decision about how to lead his life, so can he come to a similar decision about how to encounter death. He can face the grim simple truth of his dying, or he can prefer to lose himself in some pleasant fantasy, some dream of heaven or of salvation, and so face his end almost with pleasure.

On my sixth day at sea it was obvious that I was to die and it was then that I chose to accept the illusion rather than the reality.





## 2. The Destruction of Singapore

It had been a Utopia of sorts, which the Japanese destroyed.

Designed as a model for other great settlements which would in the future spring up throughout the East, Singapore's white graceful skyscrapers, her systems of shining monorails, her complex of smoothly-run airparks, had been lovingly laid out as an example to our Empire's duskier citizens of the benefits which British rule would eventually bring them.

And Singapore was burning. I am probably the last European to have witnessed her destruction. After serving on the Portuguese aerial freighter, *Palmerin*, for a couple of months, I took several berths for single voyages, usually filling in for sick men, or men on leave, until I found myself in Rangoon without any chance of a job. I ran out of money in Rangoon and was willing to begin any kind of employment, even considered enlisting as a private in the army, when I was told by one of my bar acquaintances of a mate's position which had become vacant the night before.

'Chap was killed in a fight in Shari's house,' he said, nodding down the street. 'The skipper started the fight. He's not offering good money, but it could get you somewhere better than Rangoon, eh?'

'Indeed.'

'He's just over there? Want to meet him?'

















than one.

As the burning days and the cold nights passed, I began to realize that I had no chance at all of reaching Australia, and I started to indulge in debates with my starving, thirsty self on the nature of life, the nature of death and the nature of what seemed to me a continuing struggle between Chaos and Order, with the former tending to come off rather better in the long run.

And it was this babbling and foolish wretch - once a practical and pragmatic soldier in a more orderly world - who eventually sighted Rowe Island and decided, reasonably, that it was nothing more than a splendidly detailed illusion.











sometimes, up at the hotel. Supposed to have been the commander of a merchant airship, which crashed in China before the war. A bit of a mystery.'

'Allsop doesn't like him.'

Hira laughed softly. 'No, Allsop wouldn't. Captain Dempsey lets the side down, eh? Allsop's for the Europeans keeping up appearances at all costs.'

'Allsop certainly works hard.' I wiped a spot of blood off my sleeve.

'I don't think he ever sleeps. His wife left with the mine people, you know. Hira glanced at his watch. 'Well, it's almost lunchtime. Fish and rice, as usual, but I've managed to get a couple of bottles of beer, if you'd . . .'

'No thanks,' I said. 'I think I'll head up to the hotel again.'

## 7. Dead Man

The port where I was staying was the only real town on the island. It was called New Birmingham. Its buildings were clustered close together near the waterfront and were several stories high. As they wandered up the slopes they drew apart as if fastidious of each other's squalor and grew smaller until the houses near the top were little more than isolated shanties erected in shallow hollows in the hillside.

Above the shanty district the hill leveled out for a while and became a small plateau on which the airport













'Poor bastard,' said Greaves. He shuddered and downed his gin.







in.' He was going to lose all his customers.

I told him to send someone to look after Dempsey, and then I ran from the hotel towards the park. My intention was to guide the ship to her mast.

To my astonishment there were already uniformed men on the ground. I rushed towards one. They must have parachuted from the ship.

'Thank God you've come,' I said.

'The nearest figure turned. I looked into the expressionless face of a captain in the Imperial Japanese Army. 'Go back inside,' he said. 'Tell them that if anyone attempts to leave the building it will be bombed to rubble.'







## Part Two

'Neither Master nor Slave!'











'Welcome aboard, sir,' he said in perfect English. He grinned at me with that wild, careless grin which only Russians have. 'We both appear to have had the same idea,' he said. 'I am Lieutenant Pyatnitski, at your service. We took this boat only twenty minutes before you arrived.'

'And the airships back there?'

'Russian. We are rescuing the prisoners, I hope, at this very moment.'

'You're using an awful lot of stuff for a few prisoners,' I said.

'While the prisoners are on the island,' said Pyatnitski pragmatically, 'we cannot bomb the fuelling station.'

One of the English seamen said. 'Poor bloody Greaves. He died for absolutely nothing.'

I leaned on the rail. From the quayside I could still hear Birchington's awful voice, pleading and desperate: the wailing of a frightened child.























































become a conscious traveler between the worlds, to join that strange body of people known as the League of Temporal Adventurers. I felt that what had begun in the Temple of Teku Benga was now finished. A new phase in my life was beginning - perhaps a more positive phase.

Time, as they say, will tell, Moorcock. I have learned only one thing in all my adventures: that despots are all pretty much the same, but there are many different kinds of victims.

I hope this manuscript reaches you and that you will be able to publish it. I have a feeling it is the last you will ever receive from me. The time for reviewing my past is over.

Now I look forward, if that's the appropriate word, to life in the eternal present.

Captain Oswald Bastable,  
Airshipman,  
Somewhere in the Lower Devonian.

## Editor's Afterword

And that, as best I can present it, is the final story of Oswald Bastable. As many readers will already know 'The Steel Tsar' Djugashvili sounds remarkably like 'the Man of Steel', that well-known ex-priest, the Georgian who chose for himself the name of Josef 'Stalin'. But then it is not uncommon, in all the worlds of the multiverse, for the same kind of personalities to emerge in roughly similar roles. What is usually more interesting is when, through altered circumstances, they appear in very different roles. Although I expect further visits from Mrs. Persson, I gather that there will be no more special news of Bastable now that he has joined the famous League. I am glad, however, to learn that he has found himself at last, found some sort of direction, and is reconciled both to his 'crime' and his loss of home.

Michael Moorcock, Yorkshire, June 1980