Intrepid Explorer

by stephen hastings-king

The Intrepid Explorer recounts his travels for the benefit of subscribers to the *Magazine of the Museum of Everything,* who enjoy his accounts of unreliable natives, the geographies of being lost, encounters with creatures that may or may not be unknown, and the ways in which things do not go as planned.

The Intrepid Explorer takes a sip of Pimm's:

We hadn't yet made it to the rainforest that we had to cross in order to explore the Mountain, an enormous sandstone cube the top of which is likely full of things marooned since Pangaea broke apart. I noticed that we were low on petrol. The native driver used hand signals to indicate that a station lay not far ahead. Or I misunderstood him. When we ran out of gas we had a long, silent argument.

The Intrepid Explorer dreams of domesticity:

O Millicent whom the vicissitudes of being intrepid has caused to fade from my memory into a proper name and movements imputed to elements from photographs: Millicent, the ghost who sends me to sleep at night and whose whispers awaken me in the morning, audience for the narrative that duplicates paths cut through forests by machete, first viewer of the photographs that expand the Museum of Everything; Millicent, whose colors I wear to every tournament, how I struggle to remember your tastes and smells while I keep an eye out for poisonous snakes.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/stephen-hastings-king/intrepid-explorer»*
Copyright © 2013 stephen hastings-king. All rights reserved.

The Intrepid Explorer is befuddled:

When we finally reached the Mountain, we climbed an interminable seam of forest between two enormous plates of sheer sandstone. The natives say the trail turns to a waterfall when it rains. I looked through a break in the forest and stone and saw long thin ribbons of water fluttering and twisting as they fell into a void.

The Intrepid Explorer makes a discovery:

The natives thought I was lost. They lead me along a considerable river: the trees were full of birds and monkeys; the ground a continuous possibility of poisonous snakes.

Finally we arrived at a village.

I was greeted by an anthropologist. He referred to himself as the Chair of Department. In their natural habitat, they are quite hierarchical.

He said: We came here from museums and universities all over the North until there were so many of us that there was little left to observe. So we formed a community and began to do the anthropology of anthropologists in the field. At first we approached it with a kind of irony. But with time we made a system for ourselves.

The anthropologists describe each others' actions and rituals in minute detail. They map their own social structures. They write papers about themselves that are vague as to appearance and outfits

and publish them. The most elegant lamentations of a disappearing way of life to yet appear in print have come from this village.

Readers of the *Magazine of the Museum of Everything* found the account of the village of anthropologists to be disturbing and wrote strongly worded letters to that effect. In an unusual move, The Intrepid Explorer replied that this was a most interesting discovery in an exotic location.