

## *“Malcolm in Egypt”*

*A Short Story and Back by Michwel Heril*

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One large dog sauntered down an Egyptian village road not far from railroad tracks that conveyed mainly tourists. Some people the dog passed felt uneasy about its leer, its rough-shod momentum, its natty damp hair and red bandanna branding it of western foreignness. It didn't care. Oblivious to puddles and pedestrians it went. A long tumultuous dog life had been his, in fact many such lives. Lives that now had begun to replay themselves upon the backdrop of his memory. His recent existence seemed to be more and more a series of disconnected stage acts with no sense of a dog's heart-string to thread them together. There was, for instance, the backpacking, bow-legged American couple it accompanied in Karnak. They fed him tofu hamburgers, christened him "Eastwood" with the red bandanna, and shared rambling conversations by propane campfire. And then they too exited. "Have I become a stray being, in addition to being a stray dog?" it thought.

The village walls and the dust were taking on a blush now, as was the gold-en-brown flesh of men and women due to the setting sun's having more atmospheres to pierce. "I would like to be man," was the dog's next notion. "It would be good to wear a business suit with a briefcase to match, like another man I knew. Maybe I'll go to America, like he did"

These roads finally deposited the dog a good distance from the crowds, near the train tracks. His snout on his paws and his disposition quite arid, he lay facing the departed sun. Then surfaced the lone decision to die by somehow offering his life for that of a human being's. Perhaps a spirit and a body of the human species would be leased to him, with an option to walk onward two-legged. Surely this dog had witnessed -- on the streets alone -- enough human proximities to death that could have been shared somehow. Therefore, amidst the hush of the shadows and illumined by twilight's flickering, the dog's eyes, ears and nose gradually focused on a train approaching in the distance. Much closer, there lay a man on the tracks.

The dog arrived fast. Its canines, neck and four legs pulled hard on the unconscious man's wraps. His human limbs were creating resistance against the metal rails. The man became conscious. His

eyelids exposed dimly reflected stars. He and the dog looked up for a split second to see the train engineer's face with alarming clarity.

**M**alcolm, a young teenager, was suddenly and completely derailed from a lengthy dream that moved across an unfamiliar land. Retaking inventory revealed that -- although this hardly felt valid as an immediate reality -- he was on a real train that had braked abruptly some-where near the Suez Canal. He was on an improbable overseas scholarship from Thoreau Jr. High School to visit the Egyptian and the Arab Museums in Cairo. But what most begged explaining now was the sudden state of engine arrest, the fox-hunt commotion just outside his quarters, and the large dog, wearing the expression of a fugitive, that leaped through the curtains onto his bed. "Something tells me you have something to do with all this," said Malcolm. "Yes and no," thought the dog, knowing it would live even longer, and that it could converse with this boy-man.

Conversation between two beings, inter-specie or not, might be regarded a gratuitous wind between two passing weather formations. What linked a *friendship* here was in part the boy's proclivity for taking the dog everywhere it had never been: on the train, into the home where he received room and board as an exchange student, and to restaurants that catered well to the dog's new vegetarianism. People possibly considered they were tourists-to-be-tolerated, too similar in size and too deep in conversation to separate.

As to entry into the corridors of a museum, the dog could only drop its tongue to a new low. New days were dawning. With the certainty of new happiness he re-submitted himself to Freud's pleasure principle.

Malcolm, on the other hand, was observing the dog pouncing on the museum-ground pigeons. "He doesn't try to be anything but himself. I like him." Being far away from home certainly ran a few volts of liberation through the boy's body. However, what catalyzed a gut revelation of how freedom actually behaved was watching this animal's complete self-regulation: every thought, feeling and organ of its body now moving in unison, any point on it following the trajectory of a spinning wave so that the romping effervescence of non-linear life force could hardly be contained in form.

The message seemed to be that to rollick with abandon was the intelligent thing to do in the eyes of the Universe. This made Malcolm glean how he might further reverse the pull of gravity on

himself while a potential tear of joy spectrumed an Egyptian sunray. About to name the dog, he was inexplicably inspired to dub him "Eastwood."

**O**nward walked boy and dog through the museum's corridors enclosed voids that were impacted with the echoing memories of history. Turning corner columns, they continued past misty age after misty age. The two watched closely the corners of archaic objects slowly decomposing and setting tiny units of pre-atomic energy free into the virgin present. Occasionally, here and there, spotlighted by a mist-filled sunbeam, an object thought to be a statue moved and was a living spectator.

Malcolm's teacher had assigned him a written and oral report on a piece of art out of the past, so boy and dog pulled up before a pedestal on which stood a girl carved out of hardwood, and gilded. In accordance with an artistic convention dating back to the beginning of Egyptian history, the left leg was placed in advance of the right. The deep dip in the front of her skirt revealed much of the abdomen. Her eyes were made of glass and her lobes were pierced, but not adorned with earrings. Dog watched boy meeting girl.

For Malcolm did her surfaces emit a revelation of fertile, intelligent spirit that transpired from beneath the gilding. The grace of every feeling in her contour was completely heavenly regulated, and her movement was not forward, even were she not a statue, but radially outward from deepest heart. The thorough tranquility of thought she had attained through time was evident. "What if I am an early teenager?" he advised himself. "I know of the spirit as well as the flesh, and I do know my desire for both of them: Two fires leaped and roared deep inside him --one crimson, one cool blue -- upsetting the mummies lying about.

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***To be or not to be high...To be or not to be free. Whether it is nobler in the mind  
to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous karma...or to shine it on...or to  
like it.***

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**M**ovement now overtook this girl's frozen impulse. Her timeless peace remained, but she did move.

Whereas before, she had held one hand straight before her as if to carry something that dematerialized somewhere in time, she now took that hand and with it smoothed the hair she brushed with her other hand. As the gilding was shed, her hair shone a living black iridescence. She reached for and put on her imported designer earrings. Looking in the mirror, her eyes turned from glass to eyewhite, yet no less transparent of Light. She stepped down from her pedestal, walked across her luxurious room, stepped one last moment to pull her skirt up at the waist. Her name was Isira. She opened the door and walked downstairs to the opulent dining room where she would have a tofu-duck dinner with her parents and a boy from America that was about her age. He and his conversational dog had been with them for about a week.

There was something Malcolm wanted to do and there was little time left. That evening he gathered agreement for Isire to go with him and Eastwood to visit the pyramid of Cheops at Giza. Like her parents, Isire's English got bent up a bit around the corners of Egyptian enunciation, but her eyes looked ever peacefully across the dinner table.

By next morning, they were looking just as quiescently over the Nile River, due south to Middle Egypt. The river was in its flood period, being late August.

"You have a nice American home?" she asked him on the shuttle boat's deck. They climbed against the gentle river breeze.

"Yeah. Blessed with some nice American family problems -- nothing fatal," he smiled back.

"What do you like to read?" she quickly maneuvered. "I love William Shakespeare."

A short burley man, Turkish in appearance, suddenly appeared offering them inexpensive hashish. They motioned no.

She came nearer to Malcolm at the railing. "I read in a magazine from your country an interview with Ram Dass. In it he said, 'At certain stages you just want to get high. And then you want to get free....'"

"He meant getting high doesn't necessarily make you free"

"But what if you are free?!" Her fervor would have refreshed Hamlet. That means you could not help it but to be high, yes? Maybe have family problem, et cetera, but still to sing and to laugh and to dream!" she was articulating dreaminess with her eyelashes.

"Ah there's the rub!...To be or not to be high," jested Malcolm. "To be or not to be free. Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous karma... or to shine it on... or to like it." The breeze, the view, stirred him up, too.

Eastwood's ears were propped high throughout this exchange. Occasionally he would emit ultrasonic whines of accord.

**O**rganized as soldiers of wanderlust, they scale the pyramid to its apex. Isira yelled out through the sky that from that spot one could clearly feel the earth rotate. They concurred, one and all, but were silent as to how very fast it did and just what destiny they felt it spinning towards.

They were already over-full with one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, but descended to the pyramid base still in time to gain tourist admission. With Isira's familiarity and planning, they made their way beyond the tourist areas towards the king's Chamber, using two small gas lamps. "Will there be enough oxygen?" Malcolm asked. Isira yes echoed. When the security crew came to vacate the premises, the three friends hid in increasingly dense shadows.

The energy level in king's Chamber was very high. The three bodies sustained no discomfort when the dominant silence beckoned them to rest on the floor. Spinning waves and nebular clouds of light move in the darkness, and when the murmuring amongst the hieroglyphs slowly died down, the following occurred.

*In their sleep, wherein space moved and time was stationary, they converged to form a tringle, facing each other. Malcolm at Northeast, Isira at west, Eastwood at south, they all held hands—for the dog now too had hands. The Forces entered about them and commenced to mold them like clay into one piece that would be all: animal, made and female.*

*Malcolm and Isria merged their dreamelves with Eastwood's perfect rooting in nature. They visioned them-selves romping across Egyptian desert on all fours – one body in harmony with the unison sound of a Vital Star.*

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*Well before morning, the Forces had finished their work of uniting all: body, mind and spirit. The dog, the boy and the girl were now sculpted as one Sphinx.*

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*Isira and Eastwood were welded together with Malcolm's being by the flames raging from within his Will. They visioned themselves as flames intertwining to create the tendon and fiber of Man's steadfast muscle to withstand and welcome the seasonal sands of Forever... until Foreverness is reached.*

*Malcolm and Eastwood merged and melded with Isira's native conscious-ness of Spirit as it had sprouted and been nurtured alongside the Nile's ebb and rise. They visioned themselves as golden Love itself, radiating from deepest heart outward through soul-directed, lucid eyes.*

Well before morning, the Forces had finished their work of uniting all: body, mind and spirit. The dog, the boy and the girl were now sculpted as one Sphinx. At dawn they visioned themselves on Egyptian sands as the majestic Sphinx, covered in a purple light blended of flames crimson and blue.

It had been a passage ...tailspinning on a windstream through a bottomless canyon. "A humdinger," someone breathed out near the new morn.

**M**alcolm's last day in Cairo began early. He kissed Isira's golden cheeks, saying he would try not to put her up on a pedestal, in time. She said she would remember him as the soul that showed her the dewdrop in eternity. Eastwood had a talk with him alone.

"Did I ever tell you that I even spent some time hanging out with a team of golden jackals in the Serengeti Desert? My most grateful memory of that is the beautiful carnivorous meal of a migratory flamingo. (Pant. Pant.) All that I can remember matters again. Even the parched lake bed I passed by alone in the Ngorongoro Crater. And now it doesn't matter so much that you're leaving as that you and also Ishii have come into my life... my lives."

"I, too, know that in the heart I can't leave you and Isira anymore than you can leave me, Eastwood: "(Pant. Pant.) ...I made up a hai-ku yesterday:

*Faster and faster —*

*Too fast to leave and come back,*

*The world is spinning."*

All three agreed the dog could for the time being attempt a natural-cause approach to death in a context of luxury, with Isria. Malcolm finally said farewell to both of them, in love.

On the flight back to the States the turbo-engines seemed superfluous to the reversal of gravity still happening for him. Curiously, as he gazed out the airplane window, the mental snapshots of Egypt which re-emerged were of the masses of human royalty living im-poverished on the streets.

An inner provocation bubbled up to the surface of his pondering. How might he apply his newly-galvanized sense of self to his life and perhaps the lives of others? He felt he was leaving a land through which rose a continual chorus of praise to Life and he was still resonating to it. They were wavelengths that played him to the tune of wanting to love more, wanting to realize his service to more. Clouds and blue space sped by his window. Time would tell what particular instrument he could be, as well as provide the opportunities... he guessed.

The familiar details of his own neighborhood now took on substance as if to indicate the last phase of a lengthy dream -- one he was determined to remember. He gingerly toted his suit-case up the front walk to his home. American sunrays felt more solidified...

There was no meeting with his mother at the door as he had expected, but rather with his father, who was drunk, unshaven and flat on his back across the front porch. The scent of liquor definitely impinged upon the nose of Malcolm, making him almost feel train wheels locking to a halt.

"I know I never come around here, but ya didn't think I'd let you an' your Ma forget my birthday, did'ja?" he slurred out with a slow, stupored grin.

Malcolm reached possessively into the triangular corners of his own body/mind/spirit for the song, the laugh, the dream that had oh, so recently possessed him. Then he put down the suitcase to anchor the opportunity provided, and reached out to hug his father before the adjective "Happy" and the noun "Birthday" were launched from the diaphragm and resonated past the heart.