

*Elephant Hill
and
The Path of Light*

Part Four

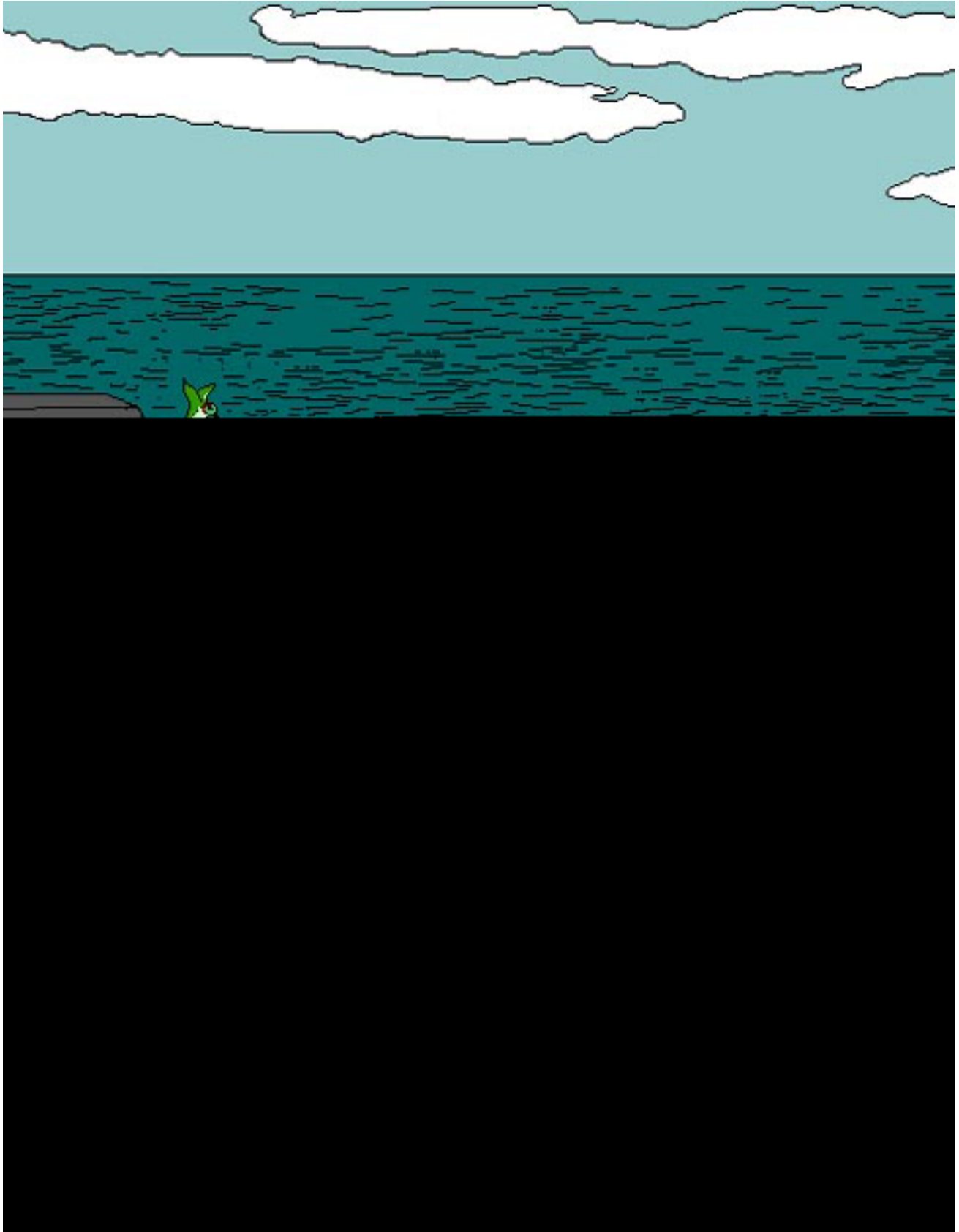
*by
J. C. Dickens*

With the help of the crew of:



Copyright by the Undiscovered Worlds Press, 2005

Back in the office of the Undiscovered Worlds Press in London, Dickens paused in the telling of his story, and a faraway look came into his eyes. In the quiet, it seemed that even the chairs, tables and walls were bending forward to listen.



“Any more tea?” said Dickens grinning, “all this talking has given me a thirst.”

So we brewed up another pot of tea, and the art director found some bread and jam, more sardines and the last of the Dundee cake.

“And you found your ship at Alexandria.?”

“Yes, we were lucky. After all our adventures it was a real holiday to cruise across the Mediterranean. We stopped off in Tangiers to pick up supplies and off load some cargo. And we had a wonderful time with Captain Briggs exploring all the bazaars and



looking for exotic gifts.“

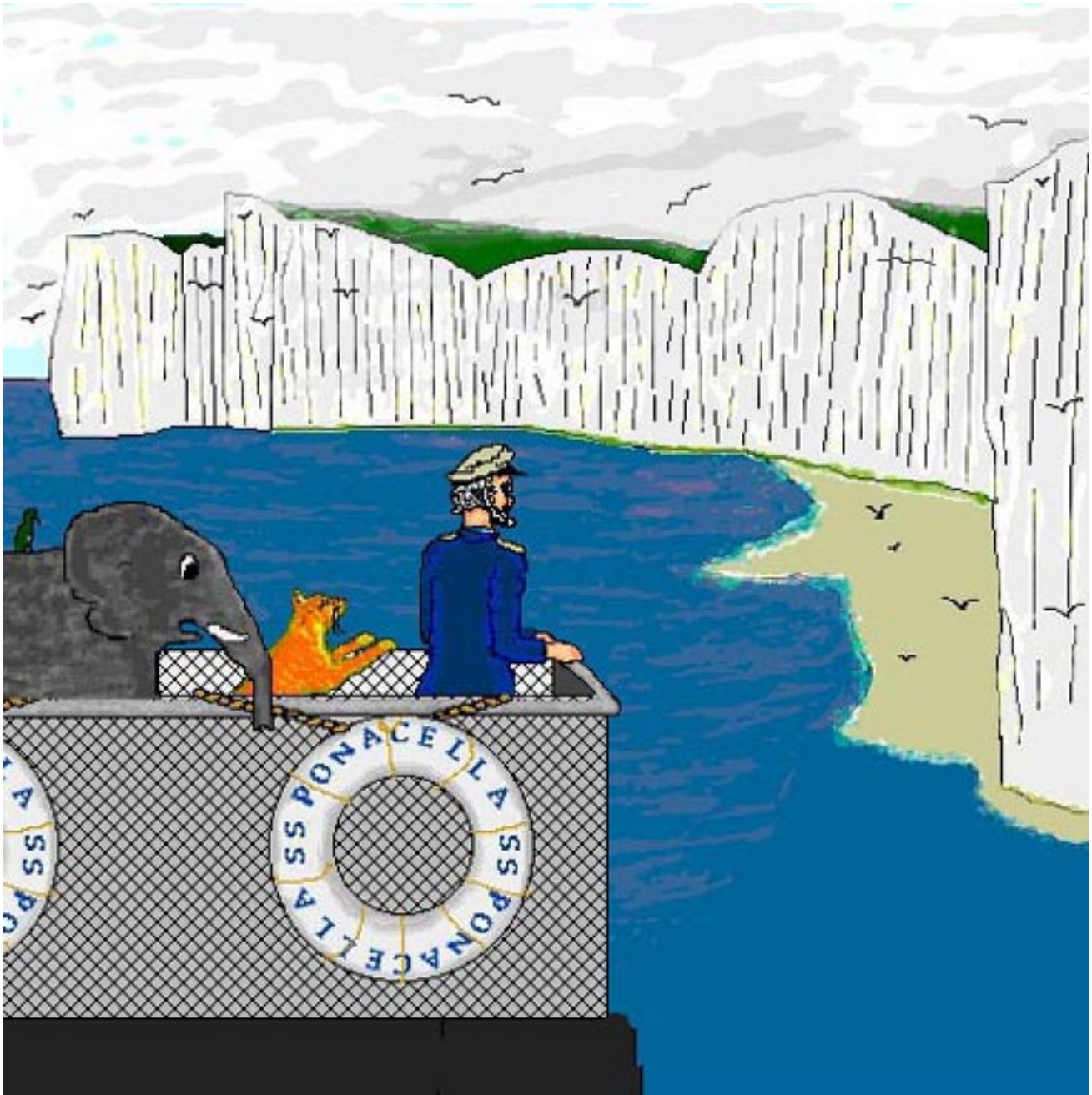
Meanwhile, Uncle Arthur received the card addressed to the London Zoo, telling him we would arrive on the SS Ponacella. Uncle Arthur called round at the Zoo to pick up his mail, and told them to forward all mail to Mr. Heatherington in care of Buckingham Palace. A strange thing happened when the people at the zoo discovered that he was living at Buckingham Palace. They couldn't do enough for Uncle Arthur, but I get ahead of my story.”

“A few weeks later, when we were steaming up the English Channel, Captain Briggs called us and said, ‘Look over there, in a few minutes the fog will lift and you will see the White Cliffs of Dover.’”

The ship docked at Sheerness and Captain Briggs volunteered to show them the city and took them up the Thames on a launch.

“London, at long last,” breathed Amber, and we all peered at the coming lights of the city.

As we came along by the Houses of Parliament, we saw Uncle Arthur waving his blue umbrella high up on Westminster Bridge. With Uncle Arthur in the lead, we hurried across the deserted London streets, along by St. James Park and down to Rose Lodge. Soon, we were all gathered in the cozy living room around a roaring fire, sipping

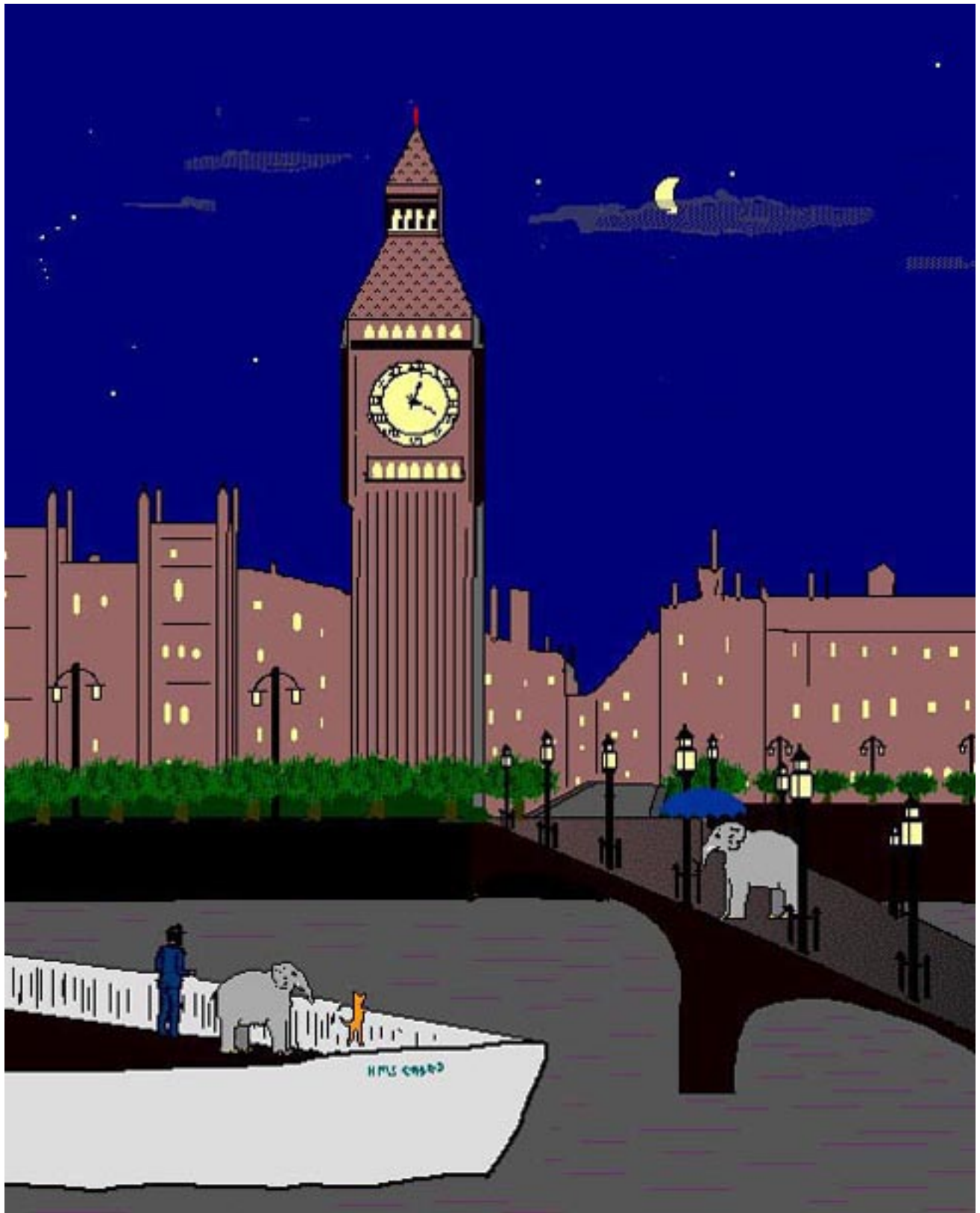


hot cocoa.

Uncle Arthur said with a twinkle in his eye, “And how was your journey? I’m all ears.”

But by this time, we were all exhausted. Amber had flopped down in one of the bedrooms and was peacefully asleep, Chitterbox flew up to the top of the old grandfather clock and quickly nodded off, and well, the fire was so lovely, I kind of just drifted off. Uncle Arthur smiled and thought, well, I guess I’m going to have to wait to hear of their adventures and retired to his own four poster bed.

The next morning, Mr. Heatherington arrived to find that he had two elephants asleep in the bedrooms, a cat asleep by the fire and a hungry hummingbird whirring around. Uncle Arthur woke up and explained that his grandson had arrived and brought along two friends and he was delighted to see us all.

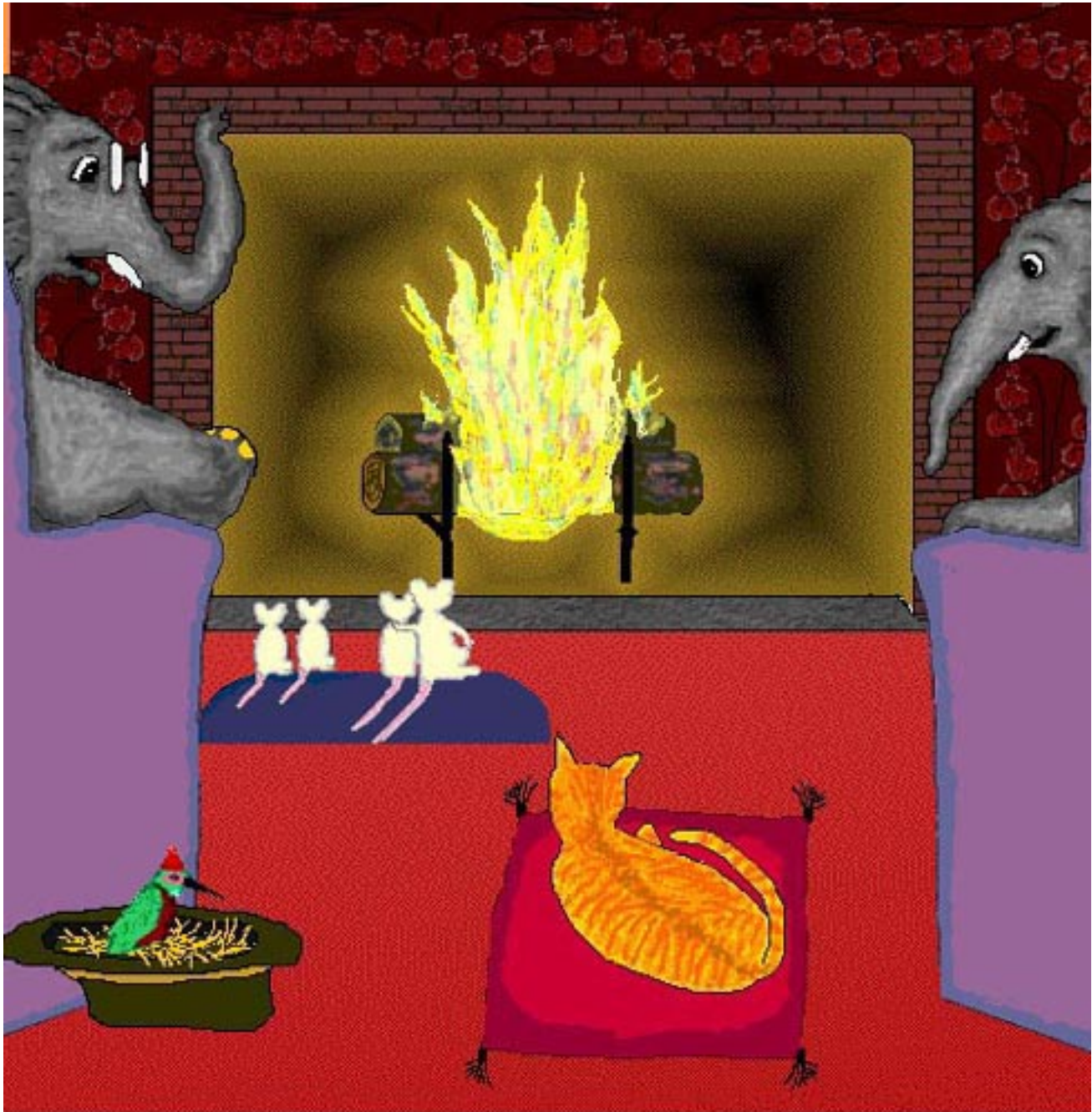


We all got along famously. Mr. Heatherington was soon in deep conversation with Chitterbox on the subject of Asiatic Flora and Flower Nectars and Dickens buried himself in the library, enchanted by all the old books.

We said, “Dickens, How did the Bobbingtons come to be living at Rose Lodge?”

“That is a very interesting story,” said Dickens.

On a cold December evening, Uncle Arthur, the Bobbingtons, Dickens and Chitterbox were all gathered in the wood paneled living room of the lodge in front of a cozy log fire. On this particular evening, Uncle Arthur was telling us one of his strange and beautiful stories about the Great Elephants of the past, when he said, “Well, that’s one of the



stories of us elephants, but everyone has their story, we are all a part of the Great Mystery, isn’t that so Pa Bobbington?”

Pa Bobbington was the very shyest of mice and he went a deep beet root red. But Ma



nudged him saying in a whisper, "Go on, Pa, show them the family tree."

Pa said, "Excuse me for a moment I have something to show you all."

Pa went off to the library and returned with a huge roll of parchment which he carefully spread out on the long table.

We all gathered round and Pa said, "This is the family tree of the Bobbingtons. We were originally just simple country mice who left the fields of summer to seek our fortune in the City. Our ancestors soon became the favorites of a princess. When Queen Victoria died, and our princess just moved away, my ancestors suffered a fall-

ing off of fortunes. The following years were very hard, and they endured dark and dangerous times. Poor and forgotten, they hid away in the cracks and crevices behind the wainscot. Their only treasure was the ancient Bobbington family motto. 'Stout hearts and nimble fingers.' And it's true, nimbleness runs in the family.

"Ma and I were born into this dwindling heritage. Finally, I said to Ma, it's not likely we'll become favorites of a princess again. Let's move away from this place and return to the barns, hedgerows and fields under the wide welcoming sky."

But Ma said, "I have a strong feeling that something good and important is going to happen here one day. Difficult though it may be, let us stay awhile longer, maybe a door will open for us."

"Later we met Mr. Heatherington, the palace gardener, who was very kind to us. He gave us cheese and news of the outside world."

And then Pa Bobbington lapsed into his characteristic shy silence.

Uncle Arthur turned to me and said, "Well, Dickens, you are the writer of our little group, you should include this story in your book so that the Bobbingtons are never forgotten."

Chitterbox, who everybody thought was deep in sleep, suddenly stirred and said rather sleepily, "I wonder if the Bobbingtons would be happy living on Elephant Hill?"

"What a marvelous idea," said Uncle Arthur, "Elephant Hill is very beautiful, unspoiled, and largely undiscovered country. Today, I heard that Abdullah and Chaim are traveling with a large caravan overland to Elephant Hill. It looks as if Elephant Hill will become a happy meeting place for many."

Alf said, "Can we go Ma and Pa?"

The Bobbingtons had a hastily whispered conference. Finally, Pa all flustered and excited said, "We would love to come."

As they sat peacefully in front of the cheery fire, the room was alive with a soft golden glow.

Dickens was telling everyone of the journey to London and the meeting with Abdullah

and Chaim which had made such a deep impression on them.

Dickens said, "Uncle Arthur, why did we feel so close to Abdullah and Chaim, we felt as if we had known them forever."

In the falling golden light of that graceful room Uncle Arthur said, "You felt close to Abdullah and Chaim because those who follow the path are not strangers but companions united by a common destiny. We are born into this world to travel a path of light and to find our destiny. So that eventually we will return to our true home which lies far beyond the moon and stars. It is the true Royal Road," said Uncle Arthur, "but few as yet see it winding like a river of light through this troubled world."

Then very shyly, Em said "But we are only small mice, poor and of little importance, surely this great path is not for us."

And all the other Bobbingtons nodded their heads in agreement.

"Oh, but you are important," said Uncle Arthur warmly, "everyone is important and everyone is needed, and the wonder of the path is that it is for everyone."

And Em said, "Yes, but how do we find the path in all the uproar of the world?"

"Don't worry Em," said Uncle Arthur smiling, "at the right time the path will find you and will come as an unexpected gift."

As Uncle Arthur spoke, the light in the room suddenly grew more intense. It was as if the walls of the lodge dissolved away into the blue night and they were no longer in London, or even in England, but traveling in a faraway place. In front of them, hurrying far away and moving like the wind was Uncle Arthur. He was surrounded by a garland of stars and his giant footsteps were echoing all around our little world. And there far below us, we saw the Path of Light shining through all the darkness.



In the office of the Undiscovered Worlds Press, Dickens faltered and that familiar far away look came into his eyes, and looking at us smiling he said,

"That glimpse of the Path of Light with Uncle Arthur was so glorious that it is beyond the power of any words to describe. Yet, and I know I speak also for Amber, Chitterbox and the Bobbingtons, the memory of that experience will always live in our hearts. And then in the twinkling of an eye we were all back in the familiar living room of the lodge."

We sat in silence for a long time when all of a sudden Chitterbox flew up to the window and said excitedly, "Look, look, white stuff falling from the sky."

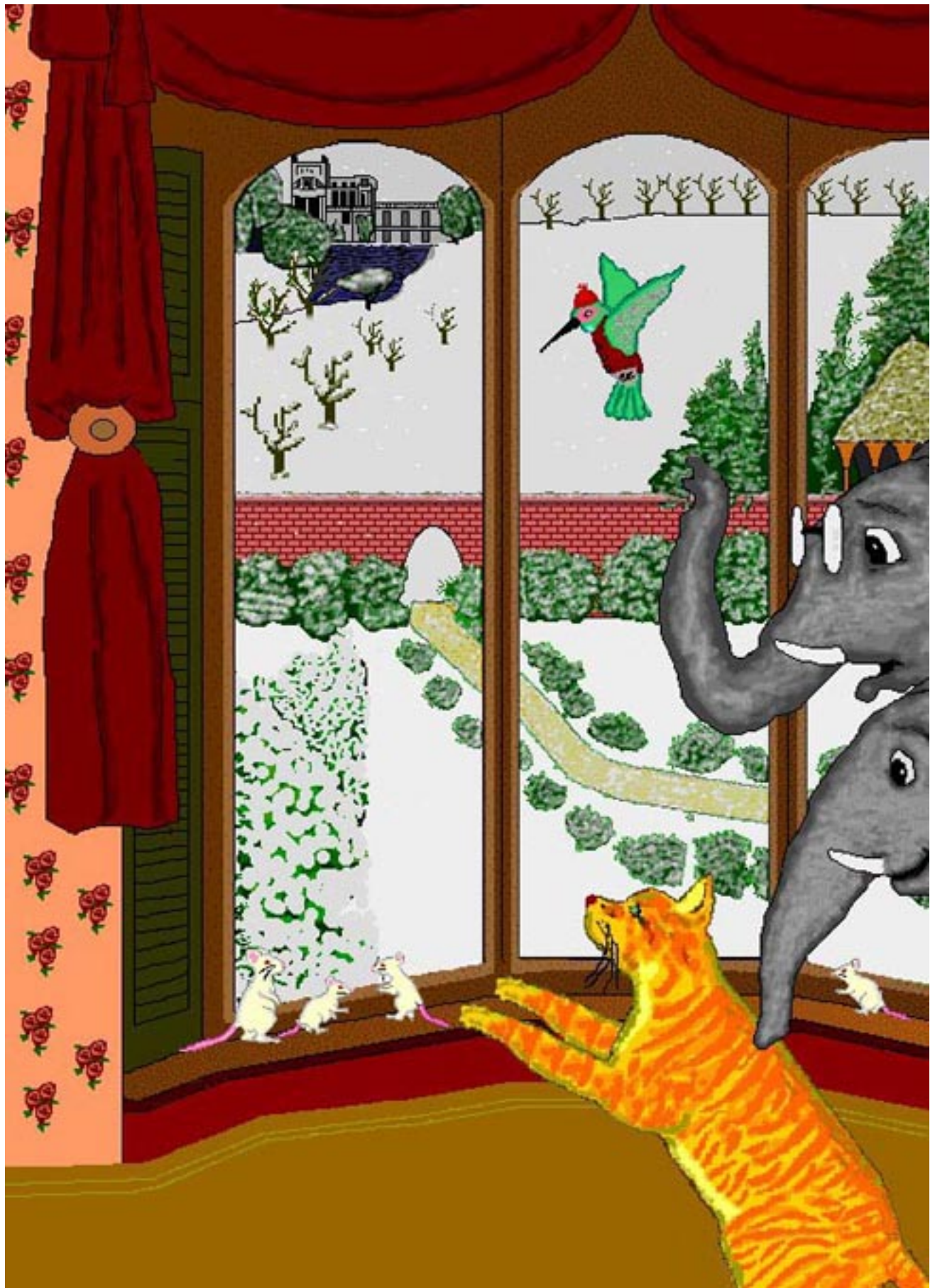
Everyone crowded to the windows and Pa Bobbington said, "Oh, its snowing."

Snow was falling all over London, sweeping over the rooftops and down along the deserted streets.

"It looks like a new world out there now," said Amber wistfully.

"Yes," said Uncle Arthur, "a new world."

As they all looked at the falling snow a soft golden light was falling gently on everyone in the room, crowning the serenity of that time and place.



“Good Heavens,” we said, “what would happen if the King or the Queen discovered you at Rose Lodge? There could be dire consequences.”

“Oh, I don’t think so,” said Dickens cheerily, “I was wandering through the palace one morning, just taking in the sights, you know, when through a half open door, I saw the king writing at his desk. Then I saw him look out through the window and a very puzzled expression came over his face.

“Good Lord,” he cried, as two large lorries groaned by on the outside piled high with



hay and sugar cane, going in the direction of Mr. Heatherington’s garden.

Turning to the Queen, he said, “What on earth does Heatherington do with all that hay and sugar cane? That’s the third delivery this week.”

“Oh,” said the Queen soothingly, “I’m sure Mr. Heatherington knows exactly what he is doing, my dear.”

“Well, I hope so, I really don’t know what’s come over him these days,” said the king shaking his head. “He shows no interest in his bulbs and seeds. He seems to have gone completely rustic. We’ll wake up one morning and find a herd of cows munching their heads off on the front lawn.”

“Do you really think so?” said the Queen brightening up, “How charming.”

“And anyhow,” said Dickens, “we’ll soon to be off, it’s just too cold and gray. Chitterbox has been sneezing ever since we arrived and Amber misses Elephant Hill and even Uncle Arthur feels that it’s time to return home and prepare for the arrival of the



caravan train led by Abdullah and Chaim. We have all loved being here, but as Uncle Arthur said, 'Rose Lodge and Elephant Hill are only way stations on a great journey.' I'd like to travel, it does broaden one's horizons, but need to touch base with home from time to time. Which brings up another subject."

Dickens said "Can you help us book a passage back to Elephant Hill?"

It was a sad duty, but the next day, we went to the offices of the Java Steamship Company where we booked a passage for Uncle Arthur, Amber, Chitterbox, the Bobbingtons and Dickens on the SS Java Express which was calling in at Bombay and Calcutta on the way to Jakarta in Indonesia.

The art director stood at the counter while the clerk made out the tickets.

"I think that about covers everything," said the clerk. "Oh just a few things, in addition to our usual cuisine, will Mr. Arthur and Master Amber be requiring hay and sugar cane?"

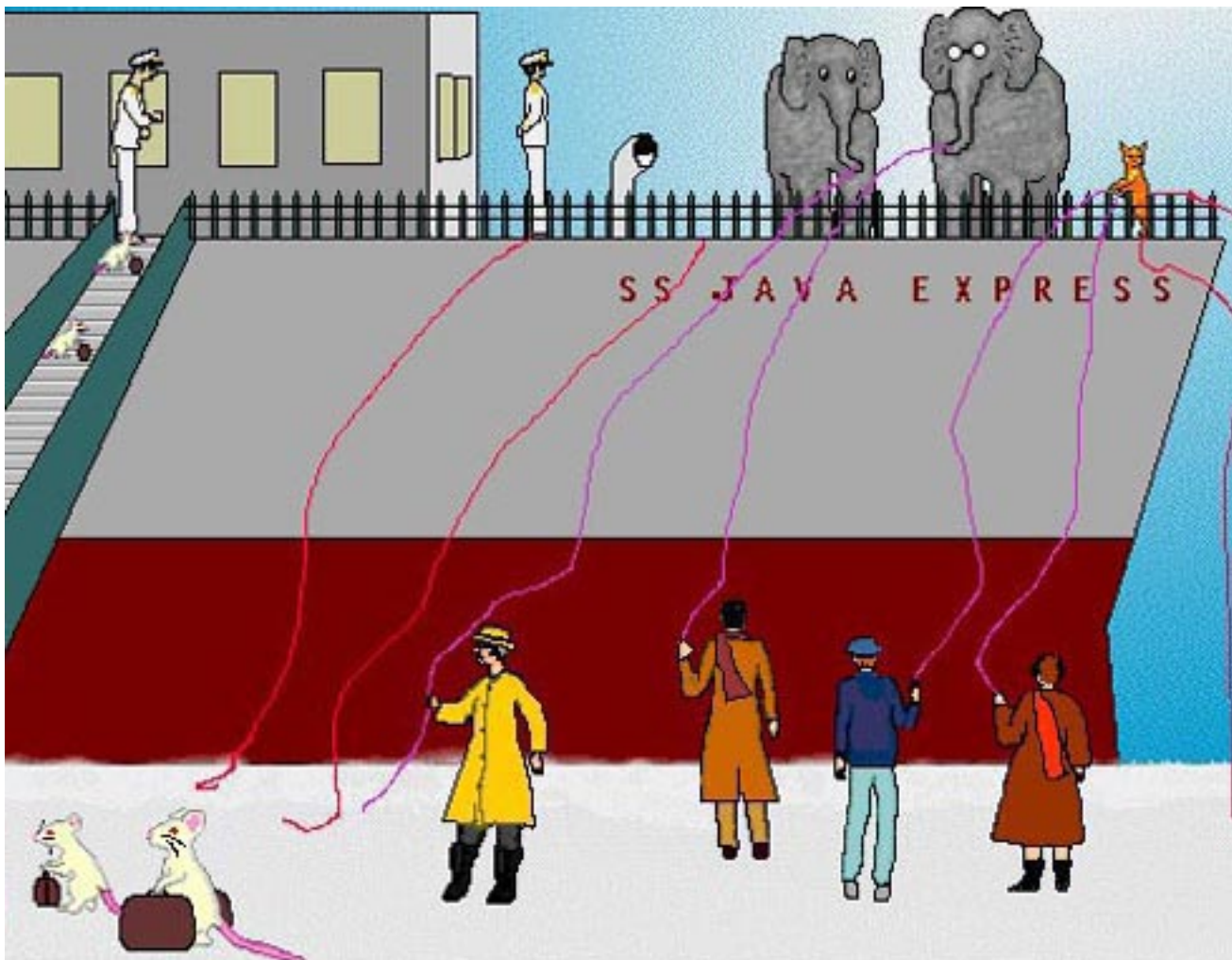
"Yes," said the art director, "large portions four times a day."

"Certainly, Sir, and we have taken the liberty to provide a full range of English and Continental cheeses for the Bobbingtons, will that be acceptable Sir."

"Perfect," said the art director.

"One last thing, Sir, are there any special requirements for Mr. Dickens?"

"Hum," said the art director, "nothing special, but he does like to be wakened in the morning with a pot of Darjeeling and a copy of The Times."



“Certainly, Sir, well, that looks like everything,” and the clerk passed over the tickets to the art director, “and I wish the party a happy sailing.”

At the end of the week, we went down to the docks with Mr. Heatherington and from the quay, we watched the Java Express slowly take the rising tide and steam towards the English Channel.

“Bon Voyage,” we cried. We did feel a little sad, but we cheered up when we remembered something Abdullah had told Dickens, “For those who travel the path, there are no goodbyes.”

The End

Or is it ??

Just today we received a card from Dickens and he tells us all sorts of interesting things. It seems that the story of Elephant Hill and The Path of Light is far from over. It seems that Amber, Chitterbox and he are going on an expedition or caravan along with Uncle Arthur, Abdullah, Chaim, and many others. He says there should be excitement and adventure and he says he will keep us informed.