

August 12

Dear Rose,

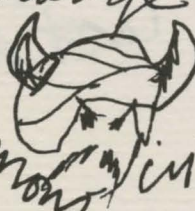
Here we are at the site, the same site that your father's expedition occupied almost 65 years ago, and things could hardly be any better. The weather is about average for the season - it'd be about 105° in the shade, if there were any shade - and aside from the occasional sandstorms, our camp has remained a merry one. Abdul and the boys are having a wonderful time, and we're all hitting it off just fine.

I guess it's true what they say about us all being brothers under the skin. Notwithstanding the archaeological importance of the find and the profits it may accrue, the greatest treasure I'll bring back from this journey is the wealth of understanding I've gained through our brisk cultural exchange of customs and ideas. The other night, for instance, I treated the fellows to their first omelette, and you should have heard the exclamations with which they greeted this new culinary experience. For my part, I'm rapidly acquiring a taste for *kumiss*, a refreshing native beverage made from fermented

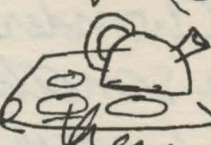
Camel's milk. At first the flavor seemed strange to my western palate, but of late I've grown exceedingly familiar with it. In fact, I'm enjoying a stoup of kumiss right now. I shall be sure to bring you a bottle or two of this resty concoction upon my return.

Of course everything can't be perfect. We've had a slight delay while we wait for the new navigation box to arrive. (I may have forgotten to mention in my previous letter that the old box became damaged just as we were setting out.) Nevertheless, such is the spirit of camaraderie and good fellowship here in camp that the boys voluntarily continued digging on the off chance that we might locate the pyramid without the aid of scientific instrumentation. This steadfastness in the face of adversity is truly heartwarming and I've rewarded the crew by giving them today off.

This has given me a chance to get off by myself and relax. The strain of command must be telling on me — just now, as I was sipping some kumiss, I began to feel lightheaded, and my knees buckled slightly. Or perhaps I'm just intoxicated with the awe-inspiring vastness of this solitude that surrounds me. In any case, I shall have to lay this letter aside for the time being, until this numbness leaves my hands and the landscape stops writhing around so violently... Hello & ~~that~~ have been staring at the same grain of sand for last hour and have you ever heard it said

that if you move one grain of sand you
 change the course of history? well here goes nothing—
 There, I done it, hope I've made the world a better
 place to live in..... My my ^{don't} ~~don't~~ I feel strange
 tonight I wonder what's come over me but wait!!!!
 there was something very important I meant to
 tell you about this waistland Oh yes now I remember
 Did you ever stop to think that T.S. Eliot's name
 is an anagram for "toilet's"? I think I now
 understand what he was trying to tell us all,
 Rosetta ————— must be the desert suns played
 mischief with my eyes for now as I gaze across
 the moonlit dunes who are in no way related
 to Lorna dune I see they've turned into crashing
 curling waves in an endless sea to shining
 see how they cast strange shadow shapes of wild
 arabian demons  who are coming for me
 with my final summons in the kitchen with dinah or
 possibly its the kumiss that's causing these tiny
 little spots to dance and swirl before my
 eyes like grains of sand through an hourglass
 so are the days of our life savings blown
 on a hopeless expedition that's gonna get
 you trully killed just so I can watch these
 spots as they grow and grows and get funnier and funnier

until they've changed into grarled blue men
about two foot tall with eregrins behind their
twisting bristly green whiskers that hang all the way
to their skinnyshinshins as the three little pigs
used to say in piglatin seaway seaway away all the
way home home on the range

where there's no place like home  there's no
place like home is where the heartbreak of psoriasis
is that a shadow i see moving or cood
it be abdul reterning cood it be mack the
knife cood it be desert sickness what cood it be

this cotton mouthed icy sweating brain feverish
rubber arms and legs and head for the hills
are alive with the sound of musicher and
sicker may be it's something i ate guess

i should've left that last deviled ham meatball alone