

## Hoxley and Porter Newsletter 1

Dear Journal

To whom it may concern.

I fear this may be the final epistle from this weary traveller; the last dry scratches from this brittle quill, not because of any imminent demise but because I have at last found a home Heaven-sent for this wanderer's soul.

In my peregrinations throughout the dark continent from the Khan el-Khalili souk in Cairo to a Cape Town full of hope I have seen many wonders and horrors hitherto unknown to European eyes – but it is only upon my return, parched, ill-nourished, racked with sunstroke and ravaged by certain exotic infections, that I find what appears to me a mirage shimmering before these eyes that have seen too much already...

Bamboozled and bewildered by the unaccustomed hustle and uncouth bustle of Upper Street, Islington where natives of tribes seem to rub along without friction, I find the treasure that has eluded me; a veritable diamond amid the choking city dust that sandpapers one's eyes every bit as effectively as the Saharan sands...

Entitled Hoxley & Porter, this bejewelled oasis is no mirage. A wonder to behold, it is an amazing space; a haven replete with the qualities and standards befitting an English gentleman of distinction such as myself, who may quench a six-thousand-mile thirst and rejoice in the genteel company of his peers.

My ever-loyal butler was as beguiled as I, when we were ushered by an elegantly uniformed train conductor, through a perfectly preserved tramcar, into Hoxley and Porter's soft-cushioned splendour.

Dear reader, with its mysterious hieroglyphics redolent of esoteric messages and ancient curses, this fine establishment's sumptuous décor in turquoise, teak and filigree gold leaf transported me back to my adventures with my estimable colleague Porter Rhodes in the enterprise of building the ill-fated Cairo to Cape Town railroad.

Within, I made the acquaintance of a gentleman called Michael Prendergast whose wizardry with the tastes of ancient cultures and exotic flavours was honed at Powder Keg Diplomacy. A man after my own heart, he beckoned me into the exclusive darkness of the Crypt, where I raised a glass or three to good old Porter of Prendergast's splendidly intoxicating tinctures in memory of more genteel times and of the illicit treasure trove we allegedly unearthed.

In this veritable Aladdin's cave of alcoholic temptation, this bibulous adventurer encountered the sublime 'Thyme of Gentility'. After the ordeal of the Saharan sands, this cunning blend of classic Millers gin and rum ingredients with homemade falernum, lemon and fresh lemon thyme was a kiss from a cool spring breeze. Like a tribal shaman, Merlin, Mr Prendergast then conjured up a concoction he described as the 'thinking man's Banana Daiquiri' – a claim I might refute since this thinking man

found himself capable of little cogency after imbibing the ‘Caribbean Inception’ comprising fried plantain, fat-washed gold rum, lime juice, a touch of overproof white rum and molasses syrup. Finally, I was most taken by the charms of something called ‘Whatever Doesn’t Kill You’, which, unless my intoxicated senses deceive me, was tantalisingly garnished with an absinthe-coated scorpion that changed colour chameleon-like from ultramarine to iridescent purple!

I am, dear reader, reliably informed that this wickedly decadent, yet gently surreal homage to the colonial days is the brainchild of a gentleman called Costa Tofan, an estimable proprietor of salubrious hostelries in this locale, and who has urged me to conclude this missive with his words: *‘We wanted to bring something unique and fresh to Islington - at Hoxley and Porter you’ll find inspiring drinks, fine food and the space to appreciate great company. We have created somewhere you can stay all night and get lost in the story, somewhere you can come back to time and again and discover new elements to your surroundings.’*

Dear reader, I shall as ever endeavour to write more of the wonders of this little paradise on Upper Street and the delights that I expect to sample over the coming weeks.

For now, and always, sincerely yours,

Hoxley.