

Foreword

Arthur Pushkin Meds was born on May 20, 1954, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. He was the only son of Prashima Meds. His father's identity remains shrouded in mystery. Prashima claimed that Arthur was the bastard love child of Sir Pandly Moore; a prominent British merchant, who had alleged connections to the Malone family. However, Sir Pandly swore that he never had sexual relations with anyone named Prashima and categorically denied that Arthur was his son. The issue was never resolved. Shortly after Arthur was born, Pandly met an untimely death in a tragic and gruesome accident involving a jet ski, a squid, and an unidentified pointed steel object believed to have been stolen from The British Museum.

Prashima was an untalented stripper and underpaid baker with bad teeth and fallen arches. She was unprepared and unwilling to deal with a child, so when Arthur was born she tried unsuccessfully to convince the hospital staff that the baby was not hers, "He doesn't even look like me." When that failed, she spit up pea soup and claimed to be possessed by demons, "The child must be sacrificed. Saalm must be appeased. Pet the goat! Pet the goat!" Finally, she tried to leave the hospital without the baby, "I need to get a pack of cigarettes and some roti prata. I will be right back." She almost succeeded, but she was spotted brought back to her room by a disgruntled midwife, who insulted her and made fun of her hair.

After a few days of psychotropic drug therapy and intense grief counseling, she left the hospital with her son and a stern warning to, "Get over it!" The first days home with her new baby were rough. She suffered from headaches, crying fits, fever, tremors, nausea, shakes, disorganized thoughts, paranoia, and lack of sleep. Fortunately, her symp-

toms eased once she started drinking again. As her symptoms improved, she slowly got the hang of motherhood and was happy for a time.

After a long hard month of coping with her new baby, she felt trapped and grew restless. Not only did she need to get away, she also longed to have sex with a man named Sven. So she packed her bags, left Arthur on the doorstep of her sister Elenor's house, and headed to the airport.

A few weeks later she returned unfulfilled with a severe sunburn, an unfinished teddy bear tattoo, and green streaked purple hair. She only stayed home for a few days before she ran off again.

Elenor took Arthur in and raised him as her own. Unfortunately, his Aunt Ellie was an eccentric woman who, after the First World War, refused to eat any food that started with the letter 'b.'

By the time he was ten years old, he had already developed some unusual and disturbing habits; such as screaming at bushes, jumping on bugs, taunting small furry woodland creatures, and buying real-estate for no-money-down¹. These behaviors angered neighbors, drew suspicion from federal authorities, and concerned his aunt who felt he needed more structure and stability in his life. She also hated the 'Little Bastard.' Therefore, she called in a few favors and enrolled him in the prestigious Covington Academy. The academy was a boarding school in Bristol, England whose primary mission was to offer guidance and structure to underachieving teenagers who lacked manners, discipline, and clear skin.

"Bring us your rich...
Your Sniveling...
Your spoiled little bastards..."

Its secondary mission had something to do with the spreading of Christian values to the heathen infidels.

"For God so loved the world
That He gave His only begotten son...
That makes you pretty damned expendable!"

His aunt wasn't concerned with such matters. She believed that the school would provide a proper social setting for him. She also hoped

¹This is, of course, impossible.

that the move would get him out of her house, prevent him from eating her food, and stop him from taunting her cat.

Unfortunately, his stay at the academy was short-lived. Arthur did not do well in Covington's structured environment. He lacked the general discipline and personal hygiene needed to fit in. Daily life for him was unpleasant. He was teased by the students, ignored by the faculty, and insulted by the janitorial staff. He tried to compensate for his shortcomings by confusing people, speaking gibberish, annoying ferns, and impersonating potted plants. His efforts only alienated him further and after two years, he was thrown out of the academy when a practical joke involving combustible gasses and a mop almost killed a priest and injured a duck. He returned home and continued his education in Brunei.

In 1974, he dropped out of school to begin an apprenticeship at his mother's bakery. In the years that followed, he avoided conscription into national service by wearing dresses and studying dance.

When he turned 30, he immigrated to the United States where he met Alamina Pelomna while standing in line at a bank. Their encounter was brief. He bumped into her and she called him a jerk. They never saw each other again. By the middle of 1978, he had settled in Cincinnati, Ohio where he found work in a dank and depressing office sorting stamps and organizing butterflies for an eccentric collector.

It was in that office on an old typewriter that Arthur wrote his first book *Following My Lead*. He spent several years trying to generate interest in his novel. When he finally found a publisher, he faced further disappointment. Not only was the book an enormous commercial failure, but also the lone critic who read it wrote: "The sole redeeming value of this post-apocalyptic allegory is that should the human race wipe itself out in some great act of cataclysmic stupidity, then no one would ever be able to read this book again." The review devastated Arthur who maintained that the story was a scathing exposé of the lobster fishing industry.

After the failure of *Following My Lead*, he became despondent and would have given up writing altogether were it not for the prodding of his friends, who convinced him to work on another novel. More importantly, they told him to get the hell out of their house and to stop eating their food.

Five weeks after he started bathing on a regular basis, he completed his second book, which he ironically titled *Tag Sale of the Soul*. The story was supposed to be a highly fictionalized account of Arthur's experi-

ence as a missionary in Namibia. Oddly, no one has been able to produce any evidence that Arthur had ever done any missionary work. As a matter of fact, it was alleged that Arthur never did anything nice for anyone, ever.

As with his first novel, this book achieved little notoriety. It wasn't until the publication of *Useless Inconsistencies* in the spring of 1984, that he attained acceptance as a writer. His third book was not only a staggering commercial achievement, but it was also a great critical success. The following year, he was awarded the prestigious **Milton S. B. Davis Covington Award for Literary Effectiveness** by The Critic's Circle.

Despite the popularity of *Useless Inconsistencies*, no one was prepared for the unprecedented triumph of *The Hope Chest*; first published by the now defunct Starpington Press in 1987. The simple story of a man and a pub had an unexplainable appeal. With the publication of *The Hope Chest* Arthur established himself as one of the premier writers of the 20th century.

The public anxiously awaited his next novel, which he had tentatively titled *The Boat Docked at Pier 14*. It was slated for publication in the spring of 1993.

Unfortunately, before he could complete the book, Arthur Meds died tragically in a bus related accident on October 13, 1992. Even though the draft was incomplete and incoherent, BenchPress Press published the manuscript in its unfinished form in 1994. Readers and critics alike embraced the book and it became Arthur's second #1 Best Seller. Since then, another publishing company bought the rights to four other partially completed manuscripts.² They were immediate and overwhelming successes.

Then in the fall of 1996, Mrs. Wilemina Parkhaus claimed to have found the original draft of *The Hope Chest* in a diaper bag in Chicago. The draft appeared to be a rough version of the final story. The manuscript also contained marginal notes, scenes, and an odd assortment of characters that didn't appear in the published novel.

Critics initially dismissed the papers as an elaborate and unconvincing hoax. They argued that the story bore only a superficial resemblance to the published novel. Arthur's friends also claimed the notes in

²It is widely accepted by many literary critics that only three of the four manuscripts can be attributed directly to Arthur. The fourth one is almost certainly a partial, if not complete, fabrication

the margins were too legible to have been written by him, and literary experts were certain that he would never have included lumberjacks or mechanics as characters in his story. Furthermore, no one could link the diaper bag to Arthur.

Rigorous testing at three separate laboratories put these concerns to rest. The tests confirmed with a 99.9956% certainty that the documents were genuine. The debate was officially resolved when McGreggor & Daniels OPCA Testing Inc. granted their final certification in the fall of 1998.

Our company has obtained the exclusive rights to that draft. It is our privilege to make the copy available to the public. We have made every attempt to keep the text as close to the original as possible.

Some changes were unavoidable.

Due to the popularity and simplicity of ‘spell-check,’ we have fixed obvious misspellings. However, we have not corrected the myriad of grammatical errors or factual mistakes (it was just easier that way). We converted Arthur’s original hand-written and parenthetical notes into italics. In addition, we replaced the word ‘orange,’ when used in relation to Harty Mitciv, with the word ‘hat.’ While a civil case is pending, we have omitted all but one reference to an alleged illegal real-estate scheme. Finally, at the request of the owner of a Chinese take-out, their telephone number has been removed from the ‘deli scene.’ The editors would like to state that there is no validity to the claims that Artthtur encrypted the number elsewhere in the novel and preceded it by, ‘For a good time call...’

By providing the work in this form, it is our hope and our intention that the reader might gain some appreciation and insight into the mind of one of the most influential literary figures of the post 14th century.

Whether you have read the original novel or not, we believe this work will stand on its own, albeit shaky, merits.

Michael Wallace Ellingsby

J.P.D.D.P.T.

