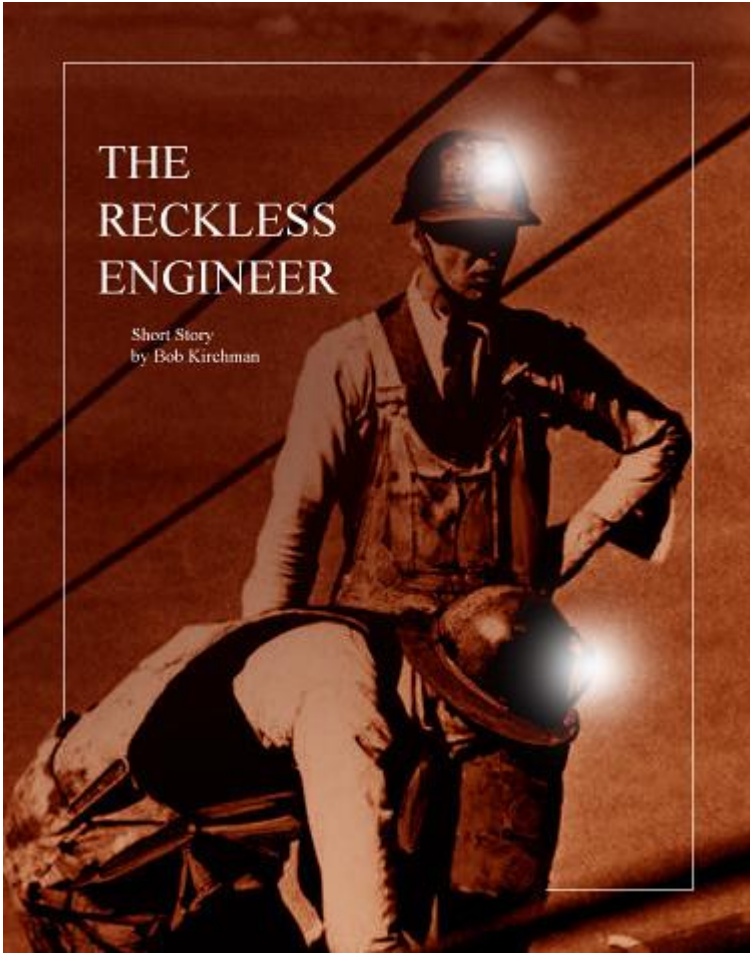


# THE RECKLESS ENGINEER

Short Story  
by Bob Kirchner





# The Reckless Engineer

*Short Story* by **Bob Kirchman**

*And all the people without dreams*

*Oh they laughed and oh they mocked in vain*

*You never needed monuments*

*Look at the Cornish sky and Bristol gorges”*

-- Coast, ‘The Reckless Engineer’

**B**etter drink up” the bartender said. *“This is the last pub in the Western Hemisphere. Diomedes are dry and there’s only cheap vodka for 2000 miles after that.”* The young couple, who were staying at the hotel complex in Wales, AK, were anxious about the next phase of their ‘Around the World’ tour. There was only an older gentleman sitting there with them in a corner of the room... nursing a gin and tonic as he sat musing. *“He might be able to tell us,”* the young woman opined.

**S**ure enough, the question as to the unusual name of the establishment caught his attention.

**T***he Reckless Engineer... hmmm, where do I begin. Well, the reference is to a gentleman who lived in the Nineteenth Century. He was **Isambard Kingdom Brunel**. Most people in the New World don’t have a clue, but the Brits revere him. He basically built the modern infrastructure of a great empire... railroads, tunnels, bridges, and great ocean-going ships! But it was a tunnel that almost killed him before his time.”*

**H***is father, **Mark Brunel** was a French expat and an inventor. He came up with a method of tunneling underwater and set to work to prove it by tunneling under the Thames. It still exists. It is part of the London Underground, but it was a daring move in the day it was built. The biggest problem was the uncertain composition of the earth under the river. It had been dredged and had unmapped holes in it. The younger Brunel was in charge of a crew excavating the bore and when water rushed into the tunnel, he was almost swept to a certain death. His assistant, a Mr. Beamish, plucked the young man to safety. Several colleagues who were with him were not so*

*fortunate. They drowned in the rush of river water and sewage that flooded the tunnel.*

**Y**oung Isambard went to the seacoast city of Bristol to recuperate.

*But he was not the sort to relax on holiday so he entered a competition to design a bridge to span the Avon Gorge there. Mind you, he'd never designed a bridge in his life, but he came up with several beautiful renderings for a suspension bridge over the gorge. Britain's great engineer, Thomas Telford was to judge the contest. He rejected all of the entries and submitted his own proposal. The people of Bristol hated it. In the end, Brunel's beautiful design was chosen. The gorge was high and Brunel built a cable ferry to transport men and materials across it. Once when the basket snagged on the cable, young Isambard climbed out of the basket and hung precariously while he freed the mechanism. There is a pub in Bristol by the railway station that was the first to be named **'The Reckless Engineer.'**"*

**B**ut why is this place, at the end of the world, also named **'The Reckless Engineer'?**" the young woman asked.

**T**he Twenty-first Century was not so much unlike the Nineteenth," the old man said. "After a period of great prosperity followed by great uncertainty, another engineer, perhaps not so young stood on the coast of Wales here, about to embark on the project that linked two continents. I'll tell you a secret... HE'd never designed a bridge either. His Daughter and her husband provided most of the brain power for the actual design. The team of O'Malley and O'Malley are the real force behind the great bridge. Rupert Zimmerman was more of a showman. He convinced investors to back what was then a rather audacious undertaking. His daughter

*Elizabeth created beautiful renderings following the design laid out by her more practical husband.*

**A***nd so, camped on the shore right where this hotel stands, Zimmerman and Martin O'Malley camped to survey the scene of their great work. If you go to the cheesy 'Rupert Zimmerman Museum' here in Wales, they'll tell you how they heroically survived a fire that destroyed their tent and their provisions. They used their survival training to last the week there and returned to Nome as something of a sensation... but that is not the true story. O'Malley and Zimmerman stood on the shore of the Strait, drinking prodigious quantities of their favorite beer as they toasted their new venture.*

**T***hey decided to go for a swim in the Strait. They didn't think about how cold the water was and when they fumbled to build a fire they succeeded in burning up their tent!"*

**S***o, what about the part about him being in the war and all... what really happened there?"*

**W***ell, he really did lose a leg fighting in the battle of Anchorage and he went to Nome to recuperate. His idea for the great bridge came to him there and as his daughter came to Nome to care for him, she really did meet and marry O'Malley. They get that part right."*

**A***nd the part about him riding out the great storm on the partially built span?"*

**T** rue as well, but I think Zimmerman really believed in the cable anchoring system and the pontoon span's integrity. Soon enough the motoring public would be trusting the same system... not really as heroic as they make it out to be."

**A** nd his childhood, hopping freight trains and all..."

**C** an't deny it. I don't think he was as brave as they make him out to be. Still, we'd all agree that he had a pretty amazing life."

**S** o, what's next for him. The bridge just opened this past November. Now you can actually drive to Isambard Kingdom Brunel's England on a highway. What does a man like that do... I guess he can retire and take life easy. Say, is it true that Brunel and Zimmerman were both short in stature and somehow driven by insecurity about it?"

**I** can't speak personally for Brunel but I think you pretty well nailed it."

**T** he night passed quickly. The old man was a repository for so much information about the bridge and its construction. But he asked the young couple to tell their story as well. They somewhat nervously said that they had decided to embark on this adventure but that they had applied to the School of Engineering and Operations run by the Zimmerman organization in Wales. "I doubt if we have a shot at it, but we had to give it a try." the young woman added. We met at

*Virginia Tech and discovered that we were more like this Brunel... reckless and all, than most of our colleagues. Sir, are you familiar at all with the school here?"*

**O***h, I know a thing or two about it."* The old man replied.

**I***s it true that they went back to the old bench-test and physical model methods from the old U.S. Space Program?" "Yes, it is true, and when you are there you will study these methods as well."*

**T**he evening was growing late. The young woman remarked that she wished it possible that they could somehow find a way to get a 'hard hat' tour of the new biosphere being built on Big Diomedede the next morning. *"We're staying here several days." I don't know who would be able to arrange that. If we could afford it, we'd be happy to pay."*

**T**he old man wrote a phone number on a cocktail napkin and handed it to her. *"Call this number in the morning, and depending on how long you are here for, you could see the new biosphere and some of the inner workings of the bridge as well."*

**O***h, thank you so much! We'll call first thing in the morning. You know we'd love to see as much as they are willing to show us! Say, who should we ask for, Mr... oh, I'm so sorry, I never learned YOUR name?"*

**R***upert," the man responded, "Rupert Zimmerman, and I am quite*

*pleased to meet you both.”*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Y***ou built the railroads from the West*

*You built the ships from iron ore and  
All of your bridges never rest  
But without love they're nothing more”  
-- Coast, ‘The Reckless Engineer’*



*Rain, Steam and Speed - The Great Western Railway, by J. M. W. Turner. 1843*

**J**ohn and Alana (for that is the young couple’s names) arrived early the next morning at the offices of the Zimmerman Organization high in a tower overlooking the Strait. They were ushered into the reception area by a lovely young lady who had a distinct sparkle in her mischievous green eyes. *“Hello, I’m Hannah,”* she greeted them. *“Mr. Zimmerman will be with you momentarily, but would you like some coffee?”* *“Uh, sure,”* the young couple responded as Rupert’s



receptionist zipped around the corner of her ample desk, grabbed a tray and dispensed their choices of beverage and placed it on a table by their chairs.

**P**lease excuse my zipping about. My ‘Bionic’ leggings are being retuned today so I’m back in the chair for a bit. If you’d like, we could show you a bit of the research lab before you take the grand tour.” Alana’s eyes grew wide. “I’ve heard many amazing things about the lab. I would LOVE to see it!” She remembered the wonderful story of how Alexander Graham Bell had begun his research with the effort to give sound to the deaf. Here in the remotest part of the world, his legacy continued. “The lady who developed the assistive leggings and I work closely together,” said Hannah. “What is really cool is how they are truly assistive. They do nothing FOR me, but rather provide a little extra steam and steadiness to MY walking. You will see some amazing things happening here... artificial sight for the blind, direct transfer of sound to nerves, and a whole new level of prosthetics.”

**W**e would love to see as much as you are willing to show us,” said John, “We are in no great hurry to venture off into Siberia.”

**G**ood,” because we have three days worth of tour if you’d like it!”

**T**his is what I call the ‘Labyrinth of Exile’” Zimmerman began as they walked through the tower’s endless corridors. “It’s named after a biography of Theodor Herzl, Father of the modern state of Israel, from where many of our brightest researchers hail from.” Indeed the small nation was well represented, as was most of the rest of the world in the serious faces that greeted them over the course of the

next three hours. Zimmerman was clearly delighted to introduce every one of them, like the cherished family he considered them to be. *“Don’t make the mistake of thinking me any less than the tough old bird you’ve heard me to be. I crack the whip around here!”* *“Yes Papa, you do,”* said a young woman in white coveralls and a hard hat. She had slipped up behind them, placing herself deliberately behind the old man’s back... he feigned displeasure at her looking over his shoulder, but his face betrayed a deep love for the young lady.

**W***ell, I suppose you should meet my GRANDDAUGHTER,”* he said somewhat in a feigned disparaging way. *“She will be with us tomorrow when we tour the great bridge, but today I wonder if she would be willing to show you our design rooms?”*

**O**n the boards were two great designs for covered entrances to the great bridge. If the bridge was spare and functional, the approach covers were anything but. They were drawn in the style of Santiago Calatrava, the great bridge architect. Zimmerman called them “Paddington Station” and “Temple Meade” after the great trainsheds of Nineteenth Century designer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. *“We sort of specialize in ‘reckless engineering’ here,”* he said. Zimmerman’s granddaughter chimed in: *“Calatrava’s genius was that he saw the design disciplines as one and that the wonder of living things could guide you in it. Papa sent me to study under him for a while.”*

**C***alatrava built bridges, buildings, even children’s toys, but his mind was the same in all of these disciplines. Nature, if you were quiet and observed it, was your true teacher.”*

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*All of the Reckless Engineer has gone  
And where now does heart  
and soul beat in the city sky?”*  
-- Coast, ‘The Reckless Engineer’



*Le Pont de Chatou, Pierre Auguste Renoir*

*A bridge is a complex machine... or perhaps more like a living organism in that it moves and needs to be constantly renewed,”* Rupert said as the little group entered the service stairway down into one of the great span’s floating piers. *“In the Twentieth Century, great public works were authorized, heavily funded by the U. S. Federal government. In fact, they had a 90% match to 10% state funds. They did think of maintenance, it was supposed to have been funded by fuel taxes... but with the initial outlay for the bridges being so relatively cheap, it became all too easy for politicians to divert the funds that were supposed to be allocated for ongoing maintenance.*

**F**ifty years after the great interstate highways were begun, an appalling percentage of the bridges on it were in questionable condition. Some of them actually failed outright.”

**A**lana and John soaked in the vast history of modern bridge building. Surely it was comforting to know that the operators of this bridge had learned some lessons from the past. Their tour had begun on the next morning... Saturday, but since they were on the International Date Line, the designation on operations calendars was Saturday/Sunday. Zimmerman had met them at the operations tower, beginning with the scores of monitor screens that allowed operations technicians to watch over the workings of Zimmerman’s *‘Darling Bridge,’* as he called it. That was a reference to Brunel’s affection for the Clifton Gorge span more than an infatuation of Rupert’s however.

**W**here is Hannah?” Alana asked? “Oh,” said Rupert, “She’s off today, but I suspect we’ll see her when we stop for lunch at the Big Diomedé site.” I think she was going to paint landscapes with Mrs. Greene after church there today if the weather was nice.”

**S**ure enough, after a morning of ascending and descending into towers, piers and passageways, the entourage emerged on the large island in the middle of the strait to a balmy afternoon. The brief tundra flower explosion was brightly covering the wild plateau of Big Diomedé and there overlooking the colorful display and the sea beyond, two women stood at easels painting *en plein air*. They looked like a Renoir painting themselves standing upon the verdant island. The wildness of this place dwarfed even the massive biosphere dome under construction. There was a raw beauty to this place and the timeless figures who painted it only added to its mystique. Under the

freshly constructed dome a small lone house rose. Workmen were putting the finishing touches on it.

**R***ather than eat at the service plaza, I thought we'd prepare a nice picnic supper,"* Mrs. Greene said after introductions. They were soon joined by Reverend Greene and Elizabeth Zimmerman O'Malley, Rupert's daughter. It seemed like a fine Southern '*dinner on the grounds,*' which indeed it was the remnants of, as it was Sunday on Big Diomed and the little church that met in the service plaza meeting room had indeed enjoyed such a feast earlier in the day. It was like a warm breeze from another Century... indeed even the driven Zimmerman seemed to slow down for it. John was impressed: "*I did not expect food like I grew up on in... SIBERIA!*" he exclaimed as he enjoyed a portion of macaroni and cheese that gained him a scornful glance from Alana, the health nut. But even she was obviously reveling in a bit of home so far from home.

**T***omorrow I will give you the full tour."* Said Elizabeth, but today we will continue on with the inner workings of the great bridge. "*Tonight,*" Hannah said, "*I would love for you to be my dinner guests at my condo in Wales. Would you?*"

**T**he day ended with the sun low in the sky and the last descent into a bridge pier where Rupert opened a hatch. His granddaughter smiled: "You're showing them the fishing spot!" she happily exclaimed. Indeed they found rods and a small catwalk outside the hatch where they cast for some nice ocean fish. "*We'll cook them up at Hannah's place,*" Rupert said. "*But I'm afraid I won't be able to join you as this blasted cell phone is now giving me the message that we have an issue with the bridge seals in sector 217. I'm afraid I'll have to set up a work zone tonight.*"

**I**ndeed the dinner group shrunk to John, Alana, Elizabeth and Hannah. As they gathered in her condominium, Elizabeth took a call. The work on the seals was going badly. She excused herself. *“My father will kill himself for his ‘darling bridge’ if I don’t go out to take some of the load off. Thankfully some of his senior guys have his back and call me like this.”*

**T**ell me about the biosphere,” said Alana. *“I just KNOW there is a story behind it.”* Hannah looked about, walked over to her door and locked it. Slowly and deliberately she began: *“When Mr. Z started this project, he was a pretty brash, no nonsense sort of ruthless industrialist. He ‘reaped where others sowed’ if you know what I mean. There is something you guys need to know about him. You’re in the program by the way, just don’t breath a word to HIM. I know though... I saw the look of satisfaction on his face when we met the relamping crew on the bridge. Alana, when you did not hesitate to climb up with the bulb... the man was one short, remember... you sealed your fate. I daresay the offer will be coming tomorrow.”*

**H**annah continued:

**Z**immerman is a tough old bird, he fought in the battle of Anchorage and all, but when he began this great work people began to see another side of him. There was a young engineer and surveyor that he took under his wing. They went out to Siberia to lay out the road and discovered that it was like the Wild West out there. Trucks that broke down or wrecked by the side of the road were left there. After the local bandits looted them they set them on fire. Rusted and burning hulks were everywhere.

**B**y the time you could get a recovery truck out there, the deed had already been done. The bandits would pull a driver out of his truck if it stopped out there and kill him.

**W**ell, Mr. Z and this other young man were camped out there with plenty of guards... or so they thought, when they were ambushed and kidnapped. The bandits managed to pick off their security people. They took Mr. Z and his friend captive, knowing there would be big ransom money. When they missed Elizabeth's frantic response and thought the money was being stalled, they took the young man away. That was the last time Mr. Z saw him alive.

**T**he ransom money finally came and Mr. Z. was returned. When he returned to Wales he immediately organized a group of Alaska National Guard and they travelled back disguised as a road crew. When they got back to the site of the ambush, they discovered that the body of the younger man had been found in a cheap motel room in a trailer motel that was... well... not a nice place. The body was stripped and smelled of vodka. Rupert er I mean Mr. Z knew the man never drank. He was enraged that the perpetrators would sink to creating a sordid story. Zimmerman knew the man's wife and children.

**T**hat was the only time I ever saw Rupert cry, and he wept unashamedly. I knew then that a man I had thought so cold and aloof loved deeply. He could be moved to tears by the loss of a cherished colleague.

**H**e composed himself pretty quickly, however. His men could not get the local authorities to help them find the killers so in the end, in his great anger, he ordered everyone out of the motel buildings at gunpoint and soaked the place with petrol. Then he burned it to the ground. He returned to Wales visibly shaken but back to his old aloof self. He set up a trust for his friend's widow and children and spoke at the memorial service of his fine service. But he was holding something inside that he couldn't let go.

**T**he flashbacks returned from his war days. Everyone thinks the reason he's estranged from his wife Pat is that she doesn't like cold places. The truth is he wakes up screaming... and he won't seek help for it. He visits her regularly in Virginia but the truth is HE doesn't want her here when he falls apart. He won't let go of his anger and sorrow. I fear it is going to kill him one day!

**T**he biosphere you saw today... its more than an environmental experiment... It is largely the creation of Elizabeth, but you must know that it is Rupert's true 'darling' in that he sees it as an antidote to the "Hell on Wheels" he found across the strait. He claims to have no faith... that pretty much went away in his childhood he says. He 'survived' indoctrination by the 'Sisters of Mercy.' He says they showed none.

**B**ut he knew that his biosphere would be nothing more than glass and steel if it did not have some sort of a soul. That is why he convinced the Greenes to come up here. If you didn't notice before, see how he lets down his guard in their hospitality. Tomorrow you must see the renderings Elizabeth and Mrs. Greene have prepared for the biosphere. These are not the works of one who merely desires



*austere efficiency.*

**I** really don't know why I am telling you all this, but I sense that you may indeed be in a position to help him. He allows Elizabeth and his granddaughter to come closer, but I feel like he's a clock wound too tight... and working in two concurrent times, I fear he's going to break!"



*Summer Landscape, Pierre Auguste Renoir*

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**I** am opposed to the laying down of rules or conditions to be observed in the construction of bridges lest the progress of improvement tomorrow might be embarrassed or shackled by recording or registering as law the prejudices or errors of today.”  
-- Isambard K. Brunel

Sunday/Monday dawned early. Hannah greeted John and Alana at Zimmerman headquarters. *“Elizabeth will be here in a bit,”* she said. *“Long night with the bridge seals!”* A bleary-eyed Rupert popped out of his office: *“How was dinner?”* he asked.

Quite nice,” Alana responded, *“And how did the work go on the seal problem?”*

Zimmerman explained the seal problem... it seems that sustained temperatures combined with heavier stressed connections was taking more of a toll on them than anticipated. *“Say John, you’re a materials guy. Would you look at this tech brief and when you get back here this Fall, would you like to have a go at it?”*

Does that mean we’ve been accepted for the program then?” He responded. *“Sure. Let me read this tonight. My thesis was on something similar with flexible pipe couplings. Maybe we can find a way to take some of the stress off of the seal itself in the meantime.”*

I like that,” said Rupert. *“Most guys just start wanting to remake the seal material straight off. You seem to have another tack. Tell me more.”*

Well, sir, it seems the problem is exacerbated by the movement in the bridge. *If we could add some sort of a stiffener, we could spread the stress better. I mean, you seem to be experiencing very localized*

*failures at places the bridge moves more than others.”*

**S**o, in the minutes before Elizabeth arrived, the young couple had sketched out a pretty interesting clamping system that would spread the flexing evenly along the length of the span. Zimmerman was visibly impressed. *“Hey, we could talk about this with your team tomorrow if you’d like.” Alana said. “That is, if you wouldn’t mind.”*

**W**hen Elizabeth arrived, the congratulations were officially offered.

Alana and John would sign on as mentees for their first year. They would be given accommodations and a small stipend until their year-end review, when they would likely be looking at \$100K in petrodollars each per year starting salary. Of course, if the seal relief system played out, they would be receiving a bonus for that. Zimmerman, who had seen plenty of his ideas taken by employers with no attribution, had no problem sharing the glory when his own team, even the mentees, made valuable contributions.

**B**ut now it was time to head over out to Big Diomedes, a half-hour drive West on the bridge. Elizabeth drove John and Alana across the span... but she spoke little. She was tired, sure, but clearly something was on her mind. *“I’ve never seen someone get accepted so quickly,”* she mused quietly. *“You know, John, you remind me of...”* she caught herself and was silent for the remainder of the trip. It seemed a long half-hour indeed and when the car finally reached the Big Diomedes site, everyone was relieved when Mrs. Greene greeted them. She had worked with Elizabeth in the creation of the Biosphere and sure enough, the renderings of the proposed complex were stunning. It was something out of another Century so far as its craftsmanship and execution. The parsonage was the only building built so far, but it was simple and beautiful; quite a contrast to the

prefabricated world of Wales. A lone tree, freshly planted, graced the yard. Nearby there was a footer where stonemasons were laying the first course of a more substantial building. Elizabeth pointed to a painting of a gothic chapel... *“A memorial to a man who lost his life in the service of the Zimmerman Organization,”* said Mrs. Greene. *“The chapel will be home to our church here.”*



**T**he biosphere was a fascinating place. Artificial sun-spectrum lighting was being installed along the bars of the geodesic dome which had ionized panels that could be clear for natural light but could be clouded to reflect the light from the lamps down. Huge rigs were drilling down to provide thermal heating. Nursery workers were planting quick growing shrubbery to provide air refreshment inside.

**A**t lunchtime, the Greene’s again hosted what Mrs. Greene referred to as *‘Elevensies.’* This time in their newly finished dining room. *“Tell me about the man who the chapel memorializes,”* Alana said to Kris Greene as John and Elizabeth were in deep discussion of geothermal piping following their delicious lunch. *“Oh,”* said Kris, *“I myself never knew him... but I understand he was a close friend of Rupert’s. They were working on the Great Western Road alignment in Siberia, I think, when...”* Elizabeth interrupted: *“I think we’d better get on with our tour now. Thank you, Kris, for your warm hospitality.”*

**B**ack at Wales, Elizabeth was summoned by her cell phone... the bridge never ceased to call on her keepers, it seemed. She apologized for her demeanor. *“Rough day, it has been,”* she said. Hannah was there, eager to show the young couple some of the photos on the wall in the lobby. *“Here is the place where we were drilling for oil, but Rupert discovered that the people were all sick for lack of water. Well, he threw a curve-ball into the calculations for the lateral drill. When it gushed not oil, but fresh water, his crew groaned at his ‘mistake,’ but when he capped it the people had a good and steady supply of safe water. Everyone here sort of goes along with the legend that he’s a real cheapskate... but you did see the beginnings of the Big Diomedé Chapel, didn’t you. That is not a shabby piece of work at all.”*



*Rendering by Lola Dalton, 1914, the Author's Grandmother.*

**A**lana spoke: *“Do you mind if I ask you, ah, about Mrs. O’Malley; what is it that is troubling her? When we were accepted, I mean, it seemed she has some great reservations or something. Look, we don’t want to come here if you have any doubt that is sincerely based.”* Hannah thoughtfully replied: *“This is not the time or place, but please come to my place tonight and we’ll talk further. My husband is in the ‘lower 48’ representing our interests in Washington, a thankless part of his job. I’ll be glad when he’s done, but in the*

*meantime it would be wonderful to have some company!”*

**W***e don't say his name here,” Hannah said softly... “Rupert's colleague who died in the Taiga, but it is clear that he... and his daughter Elizabeth, see the resemblance. He was young, reckless and would go to the ends of the earth... but he had a young family. I would imagine Elizabeth sees her father performing penance, if you will, for the death of his trusted friend. Oh, don't sweat that. I've reviewed your qualifications. You are more than what we require in every way, but I think you will have to deal with the fact that Rupert sees in you an unfinished life. He's not going to go easy on you, mind you, his granddaughter is the apple of his eye, but he rode her harder than the rest of them. I do not think Elizabeth's unspoken fears are rational, but fears seldom are.”*

**S***o, what shall we do?,” Alana asked.*

**I***don't know, really, but I suspect that in time this will prove to be a good thing. You came here prepared to be patient, and the present situation requires plenty of that. Elizabeth is quite protective of her father, and I think she has good reason, but she is fair minded. I think you will prove yourself in the end and you will find her a lovely person to work with. In the meantime, I think it best to avoid discussion of a certain unfortunate occurrence... and of Rupert's attempt to remember it.”*

**R**upert Zimmerman awoke that night screaming. He came to himself in a cold sweat and got up and checked the lock on his door. His was the top apartment in the condominiums over the workspaces and Elizabeth and Martin were directly below. He hoped he hadn't

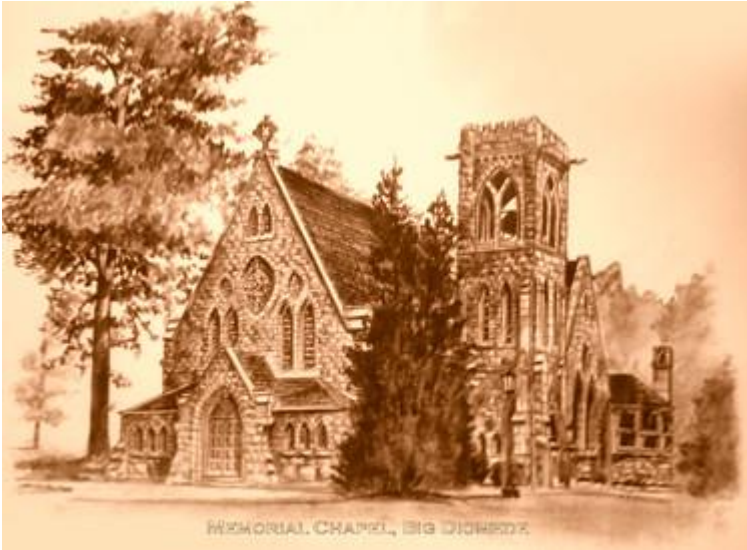
disturbed them, but he knew full well that he had. He didn't know that Hannah's apartment, though it was further away, allowed her to be disturbed as well. Rupert Zimmerman was a man who professed no need for the Divine... but in the endless night, as Rupert raised the blinds in the hopes that the midnight sun would free him from his prison, his daughter, son-in-law and his devoted assistant prayed to the God Rupert spurned. Back in Virginia, Pat couldn't sleep. Rupert weighed heavily on her mind. Thirty miles away from Wales, as a new day began at the end of the world, a young woman took her husband's hand to pray as well: "*I'm concerned for Elizabeth's father.*" She prayed. Though Zimmerman would have scoffed at the very notion, his friends that moment were speaking in unison to that God, pleading for the deliverance that only He could give.

**I***f we must have heroes and wars wherein to make them, there is no war so brilliant as a war with the wrong, no hero so fit to be sung, as he who has gained the bloodless VICTORY of truth and mercy.*  
-- I. K. Brunel

*(the Reckless Engineer is the Prelude to PONTIFUS [6.]*)

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## PONTIFUS, The Bridge Builder's Tale

[click to read]

### **The History of Serial Fiction**

**S**erials have existed in fiction for a very long time. Books were expensive back in the 19th century, so they were printed in installments in order to keep the price low. **Charles Dickens**, often heralded as one of the greatest early self-publishers, was also one of the most successful writers of serialized fiction. Another big name, **Alexandre Dumas**, was a very prolific serial novelist, publishing both *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers* in serial format. In fact, serialization worked so well, it was considered the way to go by popular authors during the time." -- Samantha Warren

**T**HYME Magazine presents, in serial form, the story of a man who



challenged the proposition that something he wanted to achieve was "*impossible.*" Based on history, depicted in the future, *Pontifus* is a tale of human triumph in the face of challenges such as face us today. ([read more](#))



*Sunlight reflects from the biosphere domes of Big Diomedes in this photograph of the Bering Strait Bridge from space.*



*The twin spans of the Bering Strait Bridge. The original span (closest) is the **Charles Alton Ellis Memorial Bridge**. The second span is the **Joseph Baermann Strauss Memorial Bridge**.*



*The twin spans stretching to the West and Asia.*



*Alaska A2.*

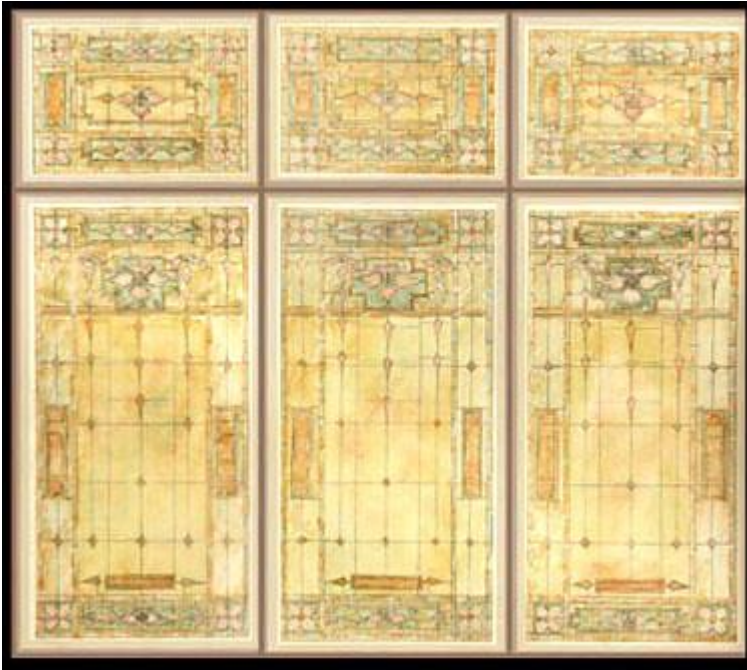
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# New 'Old' Architecture

## The Inspiration for the Buildings of Big Diomede



*The Church on Big Diomede is based on my painting of the University of Virginia Chapel.*



*My Grandmother, **Lola Dalton Carpenter**, designed this window for a stairwell in 1914. I carried it into the Twenty-first Century as a window at the College on Big Diomed.*

**A**t the turn of the Century, as the Twentieth Century began, the great world's fairs presented a vision of civic architecture for America's young cities. A beautiful classicism prevailed, inspired by the model of Greek and Roman architecture. As the *McMillan Plan* transformed Washington DC into a very beautiful city, it put in place a sort of architectural order. The civic buildings of the metropolis all followed the form of Greek and Roman architecture. The great Cathedral and Catholic shrine rose in Gothic and Byzantine forms, thus creating a wonderful order for religious architecture as distinctive.

**F**or Big Diomed, it seemed appropriate to again visit the past for

ordering the future. Thus I returned to classicism for the College and Gothic for the Chapel, the precedent being Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia... a beautiful campus in the Palladian style. Jefferson omitted a place of worship, perhaps by design, but in the 1880's a chapel Designed by Baltimore architect and University alumnus **Charles Emmet Cassell** was erected. The chapel's materials, site, and style signify it as a Christian building in contrast to the Academical Village. Upon the chapel's dedication, **Professor Maximilian Schele de Vere** proclaimed that while the Rotunda represented "*in cold though classic beauty the outlines of a pagan temple,*" the chapel aspired to *Heaven* with its "*pointed window*" and "*flying buttress.*"

**I**n 1980 I was married to my beautiful wife in that chapel, about a century after it was first proposed. Thus that building is very special to me. The Zimmerman Stone Mountain Proposal Story is the story of my own proposal! Yes, the Divine sent a Storm! We like to think it would have happened anyway, without the Heavenly pyrotechnics, but it remains a great story.

**G**randma's window and Inglenook found their way into the story simply because the images fit the mission, and I love them. She was a student at the Maryland Institute in 1914 and produced most of her work in those years. She married O. F. Carpenter, a successful Madison businessman and painted as an avocation until her eyesight failed in the 1970's. **Lola Dalton Carpenter** was extremely talented and had studied fashion design. In a later part of the story, yet to be told, a nod to Kris' efforts in this discipline is really a shout to Grandma, who all of us credit with our own creative impulses. My cousin in Oregon is an incredible photographer. My own children are very good too. We all thank Lola Dalton Carpenter for blazing the creative path for us!



*My Grandmother, **Lola Dalton Carpenter**, designed this inglenook in 1914. Of course, it was exactly the look I wanted for Kris' house on Big Diomede.*



*I added the chalk drawings in front of one of my renderings to create the exterior.*

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