

Things Missed

Simon Peter Eggertsen

Every now and then I make it a point to go
without knowing to these places, try to discover
a view of my own, be surprised, have
an experience uncluttered by history or the facts.
I try to imagine my way to a bit of truth or the
answer to some awkward childhood riddle.

I went to Giza once this way, entered the wind-dusted
space, dodged the thronging hawkers, slid sideways
past the harried shirtsleeve tugs of the pleading guides,
as they offered to sell me a day or two of knowing.

I lingered at Cheop's boat, counted the oars,
thought of his trip to the longer side of eternity.
I measured step by step the footprint of the pyramids
and climbed on a few of the metered blocks—
wondered how long they'd been there,
how much longer they would stand.
I considered the angles and the sides, tried
to recall their geometry and physics, as explained
by Mrs. de Jong at Brigham Young Junior High.

With my shoe I shuffled the underside of the sand.
I exchanged smiles with the camels, complained
with them about our thirst. I curled my lips,
bared my teeth, made a low bellow as they do,
and thought of the crumpled, sepia portrait
of my grandparents riding theirs fifty years before.
Then, I squinted into the west-leaning sun
as the day began telling me to leave.
I went to Giza once this way and failed to find
the nose-broken Sphinx haunching coyly
just beyond the brown edge of the afternoon
shadows there, a little down and to the left
of where ignorance had taken me that day.