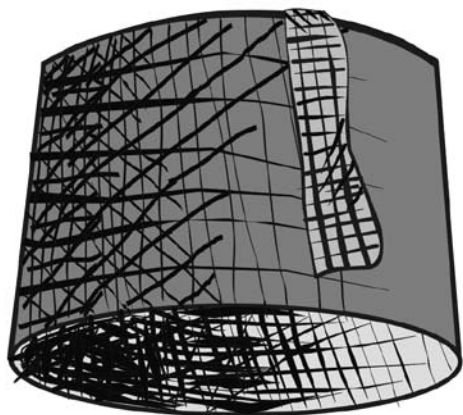


# The Red Fez



Leopold  
McGinnis



## Many rare treasures you will find, my friend...

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*The Red Fez*

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## *The Red Fez*

office that we have found the artifact...or at least something that looks like the artifact...which will be good enough for them. They will want the embargo lifted immediately...the lost trade has almost cost more than the supposed value of the artifact.” Pierre sighed.

“Yes. But shouldn’t we wait and see if the Red Fez tries to re-enter? We could catch him too.”

“Not likely, Philippe. We’ve blown our cover arresting these two. He can slip through any crack now.”

Philippe stared down at his boots. He was disappointed.

“There there. Come. Let us get back to base.” They hopped back into the truck and headed off down the street.



The lights were dim in Savid’s as Habibi and Savid once again sat in the corner of the darkened lounge area. Savid’s employees had spent the early evening dusting and making sure everything was ready for reopening. As Savid had said earlier, no doubt, now with the artifact officially gone, he would be allowed to open his gambling tables quite soon. The speed at which the embargo had been lifted was a testament to that.

“I have something for you, my partner,” Savid grinned from out under his purple fez. He wiped his brow from the

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heat and then, taking the snifter of whiskey on the table, poured Habibi and himself another glass. Closing it up again he took off his fez and carefully pulled a wad of large bills out from under it. He counted them and pushed them across the table to Habibi. Habibi smiled and took them. He made sure to count them – the second last payment of his share - four thousand - was there. He smiled and took a drink.

“Our buyer was most pleased with our efforts. He said it would make a wonderful addition to his collection. And his money will make a most wonderful addition to mine!” Savid grinned...amazed at how Habibi had done it. Showing up with the artifact and then only minutes later the news of the embargo being dropped came in. What kind of man can stop an embargo, he wondered...and half a day before the special police forces arrived. What timing. If only he could hire Habibi to work on commission. “It is good to be the seller and profiteer from illegal activities once again,” he added.

Savid smiled. Though he had paid a fair price for the artifact, which was unpleasant, he *had* managed to outbid and wrest his hands on the most must-have artifact in his long experience. He had done some excellent illegal business and his belly felt like it was full of wealth. Habibi smiled and drank.

“Of course, I will have the rest of the money to you by Friday,” Savid said. “But for now, let us celebrate. The crime



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## The Red Fez

has come full circle. The job is finished and tomorrow we shall look for new ones.”

They drank.

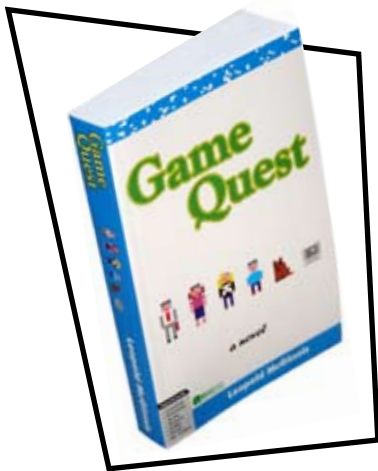


Pierre sat at his desk, the receiver of his phone up against his ear. Staring into the distance Pierre half tuned in to the rough, commanding voice on the other end. Pierre was mostly a passive participant in the conversation.

‘*Oui,*’ he said. The voice spoke some more. ‘*Je sais. Je vais avoir quel-que d’officers maintenir tes attentions de cette instance...*’ he paused and getting up wandered over to his parrot in the corner by the window. He put his finger through the cage and the parrot nibbled on it gently. ‘*Oui,*’ he said barely paying attention, ‘*Je vous direz si nous decouvriens quel-que chose de nouveau.*’ Pierre gazed out over the street from his window while he fed his pet parrot a cracker with his other hand. It was cooler this week, he noted. ‘*Oui,*’ he said half absent-mindedly and then, paying attention again said, ‘*Au revoir, Monsieur.*’ Slowly returning to his desk he replaced the receiver and then, standing up straight, sighed. He hadn’t much to do today...and the sigh was as much from relief as nostalgia for the excitement of the previous week. Crime tended to work this way...high

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