Lucian of Samosata (2 C) was born in Syria and educated in Greece. His work *A True Story* was written between 165 and 175 and is a satire that pokes fun at Homer, Herodotus and other Greek authors. Later authors such as Jules Verne would be inspired by Lucian’s sense of the fantastic and his descriptive adventures.

**Lucian, *A True Story* (excerpt)**

For a whole week we pursued our airy course, and on the eighth day descried land; it was an island with air for sea, glistening, spherical, and bathed in light. We reached it, cast anchor, and landed; inspection soon showed that it was inhabited and cultivated. In the daytime nothing could be discerned outside of it; but night revealed many neighbouring islands, some larger and some smaller than ours; there was also another land below us containing cities, rivers, seas, forests, and mountains; and this we concluded to be our Earth.

We were intending to continue our voyage, when we were discovered and detained by the Horse-vultures, as they are called. These are men mounted on huge vultures, which they ride like horses; the great birds have ordinarily three heads. It will give you some idea of their size if I state that each of their quill-feathers is longer and thicker than the mast of a large merchantman. This corps is charged with the duty of patrolling the land, and bringing any strangers it may find to the king; this was what was now done with us. The king surveyed us, and, forming his conclusions from our dress, 'Strangers,' said he, 'you are Greeks, are you not?' we assented. 'And how did you traverse this vast space of air?' In answer we gave a full account of ourselves, to which he at once replied with his own history. It seemed he too was a mortal, named Endymion, who had been conveyed up from our Earth in his sleep, and after his arrival had become king of the country; this was, he told us, what we knew on our Earth as the moon. He bade us be of good cheer and entertain no apprehensions; all our needs should be supplied.

'And if I am victorious,' he added, 'in the campaign which I am now commencing against the inhabitants of the Sun, I promise you an extremely pleasant life at my court.' We asked about the enemy, and the quarrel. 'Phaethon,' he replied, 'king of the Sun (which is inhabited, like the Moon), has long been at war with us. The occasion was this: I wished at one time to collect the poorest of my subjects and send them as a colony to Lucifer, which is uninhabited. Phaethon took umbrage at this, met the emigrants half way with a troop of Horse-ants, and forbade them to proceed. On that occasion, being in inferior force, we were worsted and had to retreat; but I now intend to take the offensive and send my colony. I shall be glad if you will participate; I will provide your equipment and mount you on vultures from the royal coops; the expedition starts to-morrow.' I expressed our readiness to do his pleasure.

That day we were entertained by the king; in the morning we took our place in the ranks as soon as we were up, our scouts having announced the approach of the enemy. Our army numbered 100,000 (exclusive of camp-followers, engineers, infantry, and allies), the Horse-vultures amounting to 80,000, and the remaining 20,000 being mounted on Salad-wings. These latter are also enormous birds, fledged with various herbs, and with quill-feathers resembling lettuce leaves. Next these were the Millet-throwers and the Garlic-men. Endymion had also a contingent from the North of 30,000 Flea-archers and 50,000 Wind-couriers. The former have their name from the great fleas, each of the bulk of a dozen elephants, which they ride. The Wind-couriers are infantry, moving through the air without wings; they effect this by so girding their shirts, which reach to the ankle, that they hold the wind like a sail and propel their wearers ship-fashion. . . .
Such was Endymion's force. They were all armed alike; their helmets were made of beans, which
grow there of great size and hardness; the breastplates were of overlapping lupine-husks sewn
together, these husks being as tough as horn; as to shields and swords, they were of the Greek type.
When the time came, the array was as follows: on the right were the Horse-vultures, and the King
with the élite of his forces, including ourselves. The Salad-wings held the left, and in the centre were
the various allies. The infantry were in round numbers 60,000,000; they were enabled to fall in thus:
there are in the Moon great numbers of gigantic spiders, considerably larger than an average Aegean
island; these were instructed to stretch webs across from the Moon to Lucifer; as soon as the work
was done, the King drew up his infantry on this artificial plain, entrusting the command to Nightbat,
son of Fairweather, with two lieutenants.

On the enemy's side, Phaethon occupied the left with his Horse-ants; they are great winged animals
resembling our ants except in size; but the largest of them would measure a couple of acres. The
fighting was done not only by their riders; they used their horns also; their numbers were stated at
50,000. On their right was about an equal force of Sky-gnats--archers mounted on great gnats; and
next them the Sky-pirouetters, light-armed infantry only, but of some military value; they slung
monstrous radishes at long range, a wound from which was almost immediately fatal, turning to
gangrene at once; they were supposed to anoint their missiles with mallow juice. Next came the
Stalk-fungi, 10,000 heavy-armed troops for close quarters; the explanation of their name is that their
shields are mushrooms, and their spears asparagus stalks. Their neighbours were the Dog-acorns,
Phaethon's contingent from Sirius. These were 5,000 in number, dog-faced men fighting on winged
acorns. It was reported that Phaethon too was disappointed of the slingers whom he had summoned
from the Milky Way, and of the Cloud-centaurs. These latter, however, arrived, most unfortunately
for us, after the battle was decided; the slingers failed altogether, and are said to have felt the
resentment of Phaethon, who wasted their territory with fire. Such was the force brought by the
enemy. . . Peace concluded, the removal of the wall and restoration of captives at once followed. As
we reached the Moon, we were met and welcomed by our comrades and King Endymion, all
weeping for joy. The King wished us to remain and take part in founding the colony, and, women not
existing in the Moon, offered me his son in marriage. I refused, asking that we might be sent down to
the sea again; and finding that he could not prevail, he entertained us for a week, and then sent us on
our way.

I am now to put on record the novelties and singularities which attracted my notice during our stay in
the Moon.

When a man becomes old, he does not die, but dissolves in smoke into the air. There is one universal
diet; they light a fire, and in the embers roast frogs, great numbers of which are always flying in the
air; they then sit round as at table, snuffling up the fumes which rise and serve them for food; their
drink is air compressed in a cup till it gives off a moisture resembling dew. Beauty with them
consists in a bald head and hairless body; a good crop of hair is an abomination. On the comets, as I
was told by some of their inhabitants who were there on a visit, this is reversed. They have beards,
however, just above the knee; no toe-nails, and but one toe on each foot. They are all tailed, the tail
being a large cabbage of an evergreen kind, which does not break if they fall upon it.
Their mucus is a pungent honey; and after hard work or exercise they sweat milk all over, which a drop or two of the honey curdles into cheese. The oil which they make from onions is very rich, and as fragrant as balsam. They have an abundance of water-producing vines, the stones of which resemble hailstones; and my own belief is that it is the shaking of these vines by hurricanes, and the consequent bursting of the grapes, that results in our hailstorms. They use the belly as a pouch in which to keep necessaries, being able to open and shut it. It contains no intestines or liver, only a soft hairy lining; their young, indeed, creep into it for protection from cold.

The clothing of the wealthy is soft glass, and of the poor, woven brass; the land is very rich in brass, which they work like wool after steeping it in water. It is with some hesitation that I describe their eyes, the thing being incredible enough to bring doubt upon my veracity. But the fact is that these organs are removable; any one can take out his eyes and do without till he wants them; then he has merely to put them in; I have known many cases of people losing their own and borrowing at need; and some--the rich, naturally--keep a large stock. Their ears are plane-leaves, except with the breed raised from acorns; theirs being of wood. Another marvel I saw in the palace. There is a large mirror suspended over a well of no great depth; any one going down the well can hear every word spoken on our Earth; and if he looks at the mirror, he sees every city and nation as plainly as though he were standing close above each. The time I was there, I surveyed my own people and the whole of my native country; whether they saw me also, I cannot say for certain. Any one who doubts the truth of this statement has only to go there himself, to be assured of my veracity.

When the time came, we took our leave of King and court, got on board, and weighed anchor. Endymion's parting gifts to me were two glass shirts, five of brass, and a suit of lupine armour, all of which, however, I afterwards left in the whale's belly; he also sent, as our escort for the first fifty miles, a thousand of his Horse-vultures.