

I DOWNLOADED AN ISSUE OF the *New Yorker* magazine onto my Kindle Voyage e-reader recently and something surprising happened—I didn't get several of the cartoons. As a *New Yorker* print reader, I was in the habit of blazing past the dense columns of articles and making a beeline for the cartoons, craving a bit of urbane wit at the end of a long week.

Oh, I had no problem grokking the medieval guard chastising his buddy: "I've asked you not to use the siege tower to meet women," or the whisper of a Sumo wrestler bear-gripping his opponent: "Full disclosure—I really need this hug." But I wasn't sure about the guy telling his wife, "The utility bills for my secret other life are going through the roof." Then it happened again. This was troublesome.

It was the Kindle, right?

Maybe there *was* fallout to funneling the magazine's voluminous content through a six-inch window in a device that, by the way, balanced quite nicely in the L-shaped crook of my fingers as I lay in bed reading. Which is why I'd bought the thing in the first place. No more weighty, flapping, dust-emitting pulp. Now I had something the size of a couple of graham crackers that could hold every book I wanted to read.

I tapped over to the *New Yorker's* short fiction—which had always been too high-brow for me—and surprisingly found myself swooning in pleasure. Somehow the Kindle had made the rarefied accessible. How? I had no clue. I tapped on.

I began to fall for it, reveling in each print-like 300 ppi e-Ink word. I tapped and I swiped and I read, and I tapped and swiped and read some more, rediscovering reading for pleasure in this wholly unexpected place: on a little screen.

I noticed all sorts of things—like the deception inherent in that screen. Sure, you knew a sizable book or magazine was in there somewhere, the way you knew the Himalayas were on the other side of the

My Life with Kindle

Sometimes You Just Have to Let the River Carry You

BY WARREN GOLDIE



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globe. But without the heft, it didn't quite register. It became a matter of trust.

Even length was indeterminate; it swelled and receded with your choice of font size. And forget about the constancy of page numbers—there weren't any. Unlike in the print magazine, content on the Kindle was always on the move, in flux—but at the same time, stable and unchanging. Thoughts of duality, impermanence, and the I Ching flitted into my mind, threatening to overtake Talk of the

Town and Shouts & Murmurs.

If a printed *New Yorker* was a mountain, the e-version was a river. And I was content to be carried along. "We do not take a trip; it takes us," went the John Steinbeck quote featured in a recent Voyage ad. The Kindle marketers were earning their pay.

Wide eyed, I tapped on. Who would have guessed that the turn of a page would be accompanied by a tiny vibration (did I really just feel that?) for a comforting assurance of physicality. Or that you could

view the highlighted passages of other readers across boundless cyberspace. Or that the device could reach up into the cloud to snatch free sample chapters and Wikipedia entries while helpfully denying you access to Facebook and email. Oh, technology! Oh, product designers!

Finally I figured out the cartoon mystery. The single-panel drawings, which had always appeared like welcome islands in the text-dense waters of the *New Yorker* pages, had migrated to the very end in the e-version, one 'toon per screen, absent the surrounding text—which was exactly the problem.

I was compensating, unconsciously, imagining all the missing print around it, and that distraction had thrown me off. I couldn't accept that the old context was gone, that the magazine's beloved cartoon-copy relationship was no more. The Voyage's sketchy image graphics didn't help either.

The price of progress, I told myself. Accept it. Look, you've got this really cool device, a reasonable \$7.99 monthly subscription fee, and no chance of creating a stack of *New Yorkers* that are impossible to throw away. Be thankful.

I did manage that, and more. Over these weeks I rediscovered a classy read, with Kindle's help. And all those surprises. The grand *New Yorker* was rendered conquerable, finally. The intimidation factor had been notched way down. It was like I had been dealing with a bully or a snob, who, now in new territory, was diminished and had no choice but to be friendly. Perhaps it was the leveling effect of technology. Or the humility required for the six-inch screen.

Whatever the reason, I'll tell you this: my eyes are wide open for the next surprise. Who knows what will be in store when I tap into Tolstoy's substantial *Anna Karenina*, minus the heft and fitted to the small screen. Leo could never have imagined this. Nor anyone.

It's just the future, in its indomitable, unpredictable way, coming around the bend. □