

# CITIES

---

Robert Kelly

1

Where shall I take myself with my ostrich luggage and my peacock pride? I have seen the dawn above the walls of hysterical Jaouedda, veiled city of the Hoggar. I have tasted unfranchised Ethiopian *pernod* in the deceptive suburbs of the magic city of Bunad in the Tigre highlands, where Monks of St. Andreas work new Korean sewing machines in the public squares. Twice a hundred times this eye has seen our lord the Sun shudder as he fell into the silent waters of Lake Parabá, on the shores of which Wuara the sleepless stood, its ten thousand streets the cortex of our planet. In Crêche des Loha, my excellent Minox has intercepted & retained fugitive light reflected from abominable interpenetrations of man and beast upon the Dance Floor of Baron Samedi; from the Haitian promontory I also took my leave, my passport charged with the stamp of exit, and countersigned by a *douanier* three years dead, from whose own hollow skull I had drunk rum and coke not two nights before.

I was born with Sol and Jupiter in the second house, Leo roared in the house of life. Wealth came to me, and the gentlest industry won me more; my health was sovereign. Yet my lustrous gray left eye was left behind in Smyrna, victim of a miscast dried fig, one of many hurled at the Maison Hellénique while I was a guest of Stavros Kalogeropoulos, that culchural-attaché whose theft of the Yezidi codices occasioned that series of skirmishes and anti-Greek demonstrations in the course of one of which my aforesaid and never enough to be lamented eye met its destiny and remained in Asia Minor.

I am 47 years old, in excellent physical condition, of more than moderate wealth, of rubicund and mesomorphic physique but Saturnine disposition. I own houses in New York, London, Paris and Calcutta; lodges in Scotland, New Mexico, the Côte d'Azur, Ceylon and Darjeeling; apartments in Moscow, Tokyo, San Francisco, Rio and Cairo. I own seven cars, a ranch in Argentina, 3000 acres of Maine timber, a palace in Iran, two yachts, four motor boats, a modest old Ford trimotor, a houseboat on the Irrawaddy, a 37-foot limestone wall richly carved with Hindu fable, a moderately powerful radio station in Luristan, controlling interest in three small cheese companies and a middling oil cartel. I own no pets. I own three cemetery plots outright, one acre's freehold in Westmoreland, the largest dairy farm in Hokkaido, and one glass eye. Many monophthalmics own two or several glass eyes, fragile things that they are. But I unswervingly

put my faith in the law of Unicity, which seems unlikely twice to rob one man of the same eye.

From the droll, yet explicit, way in which I have presented these statistics, you will observe that I am a proud man. You will reason that with so many houses and pieds-à-terre, I am easily bored and like to travel. You reason well, perspicuous reader. Your wandering Jew is not more fond of beating about than I. But I defer to him his dearly-bought epithet. To call myself the Wandering Unitarian would be to open myself to unmerited ridicule. And a Unitarian I came into the world in Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts, and a Unitarian I shall leave it, notwithstanding my daily practice of certain Vedic sacrifices, my twenty-year long pursuit of ritual magic, the fact that I am technically a Moslem, and the more resplendent fact that I awoke from a teen-age binge one day to find myself a consecrated bishop of the Primitive Restored Old Catholic Church of North America, annointed by the hands of the Assyrian Nestorian Monothelite Bishop of West 125th Street, that excellent raconteur and union leader, De Forest Justice, D.D.

For a brief time I was U.S. Representative of my native district (its name or number escapes me), but during the long internecine struggles in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Burma in which our country insisted on playing, I realized that even as one of the nation's high elected lawmakers I had no chance whatever to impose my clarity upon the nation's purposeless chaos of foreign policy. I gave up my seat. My farewell address was, in fact, my maiden speech, and in it I expressed horror at several atrocities in which we were, rightly or wrongly, alleged to have indulged, notably the incendiary bombing of the Rangoon Leper Asylum. I was a young man then.

The Asian editor of the *Times* sent me a letter soon after, sympathising with my stand, but pointing out that the lazaretto had in fact burned to the ground weeks earlier in a fire started by a defective bubble-light on the patients' Christmas-Wesak tree. The editor went on to point out, however, that my position had moral justification enough, since the same weekend we had mass-bombed the North Burmese stockpile of prosthetic devices.

I left politics and my homeland at once. At present I have the honor of being a citizen-subject of the Sheikdom of Kuwait, a state whose nationals are so wealthy and so few as to be treated with respect and delicacy throughout the world, even in Pride's Crossing, where I still own my family's mansion, donated at the moment to a north shore Ouspensky group.

So in the inhuman humidity and appalling heat of Kuwait I find my legal home. In fact, I possess no dwelling-place there. In further fact, I have never graced my new homeland with my presence, and know of it as much as you do, learned reader—the corporate presence of my little oil company keeps my chair warm.

## 2

But I started all this truth-telling to talk about cities. Cities. My despair of any wisdom in national polity turned my mind, and its unfulfilled political libido, towards a consideration of City, polis, that rational, organic, self-contained geo-

graphical crystal whose growth, cleavage, fracture and polishing became the chief theoretical study of my life. And more than theoretical. In my youth, interest in cities as such seemed confined to sociologists, poets, and the writers of the Sunday supplements. The average man was content to acquire, as fast as he could, that quarter acre, full acre, or thousand acres that would free him from the painful proximity of burgeoning crime and articulate minority groups, and deliver him to a well-earned patriarchal indolence beneath his own plastic vine. But only men of impoverished intellect could grow excited, pro or con, about the dreary suburbs of New York ineluctably intermeshing with the drearier purlieus of Philadelphia and Boston. Only the die-hardest romantic could mourn the absorption of Poughkeepsie or Saugus or Aberdeen into the megalopolitan complex. On the other hand, only the most milk-bred ecstatic could hope to find Logres in London, or the City of God emanating itself through the endless vistas of Rego Park.

Enough of pottering about with cities, enough of slum clearance and urban renewal, enough of pulling and tugging and stretching to make sense of the uncontrolled senseless sprawl of Urbs Americana. Forget these places and start afresh. So reasoning (if such emotional gushes are to be so understood), I concluded my readings and studyings with the resolve to establish a true city. Constantine became my Saint, who wrought ex nihilo his hub of empire.

Using my position as president of Prideful Oil to its fullest, I was able to persuade my board of directors (most of them unlettered sons of the shifting sands) to buy a small Carib isle, and erect thereon the Autonomous City-State of Fatima. That great city and free port, whose foreign affairs are still administered by the People's Republic of Haiti, is well known to the reader, and I need not enlarge upon it. I need say only that while the reader has often heard that oil interests are behind Fatima, the reader is unlikely to know how true those rumors are. For it was I, as Prideful's president, who devised both the internal and external forms of the new city, designed its traffic flow and its economy, built its cathedrals and its comfort stations, regulated its size and wrote its laws. The island of Fatima bears now, as you know, one of the largest oil installations in the western world, and in its vast somnolent harbor, a very sizable portion of the trade goods of the Americas are trans-shipped. The dark-skinned and incentive-modulated autochthonous population is assured of good nutrition and long life by the government's production and distribution of protein-rich flours, meals and cooked products made from those amiable yeasts which, in our age and to the continuing delight of the votary of providence, batten on hydrocarbons, and flourish in crude oil storage tanks.

Any city can thrive. The thing which makes Fatima unique is its freedom. I recognized long ago that there is nothing more injurious to the Law than laws. The fewer the legislations, ordinances, restrictions, licensings, the fewer the violations of these there will be. Contempt for Law itself is bred in a population so oppressed with a multiplicity of foolish, arbitrary, overinterpretive, censorious and busy-body legislations that it must daily violate some of them merely to survive in body or soul.

For Fatima I wrote but three laws: Do Not Kill . Do Not Hurt People . Do

Not Take What Isn't Yours. Punishment is always corporal, and takes the form of either a set length of time working in the refineries or cracking stations or on the docks, without pay, or, in severe or repeated cases, exile for life. Nobody likes to leave paradise. Crime, except for crimes of passion, is exceedingly rare.

This same freedom, however, soon made Fatima the gambling and prostitution center of the new world, and tourists from everywhere came to sample hygienic neurophysical delights and aesthetically sedate doses of Risk.

I had, more to preserve my leisure than from motives of modesty, declined all high offices in government, and had contented myself with being Chief Justice. In a very few years, I was able to lay down an impressively clear and simple body of precedents and decisions to allow all future generations of Fatimids to walk with confidence the newly straightened pathways of the law. My only published work was *The Skeleton Key of Justice*, a commentary on the Threefold Law, in which I lucidly interpreted such words as "take" "hurt" and "yours" thoroughly enough to obviate the formation of a legal guild or profession.

But with perfection comes weariness. I was soon bored with the happiest, healthiest city in the world. "Gentlemen," I said to my board of directors through my pretty Yemenite interpreter, "I've built Prideful the best city in the world, the best oil center on the west of the table of earth. Allah willing, Prideful can be sure of more *baraka* than any other oil company. Our best geologists are confident that coastal and offshore oil will rise to our hands within the decade. Beyond the huge and secure income from taxation and excise revenue and customs and trans-shipment and harbor fees, and the vaster income from tourism, Fatima—and Prideful—can look forward to being an actual producer of oil, fairly low quality, it's true, but oil nonetheless. Thus is the Crescent planted with the Derrick in the New World."

Prideful sadly accepted my resignation as president, proudly appointed me Chairman of the Board (for life, it was understood). I was a free man now, liberated from the responsibilities of my own ingenuity.

What I had not told the Board was what preyed on my mind: I had established the fairest city of earth, made the best city I was capable of dreaming up. Now what? Alexander on the banks of ironic Indus was not more despondent than I. And for equally little reason.

Beyond him, the whole of Asia slumbered or raged in its complex seclusion. Wiser than Alexander, I knew the time had come for me to gulp the last measure of my beverage of cities. I guessed, as all men have guessed, that there are hidden cities in the world, vast urban complexes hidden in jungle or mountain range or desert, cities of cryptic purpose and unknown history. All fable speaks of them, and we take Time too seriously if we fear we come too late. To anticipate myself, let me assure the reader that there are dozens upon dozens of populous cities and city-states in the world today, in search of which the reader will turn in vain the awkward pages of his fabrikoid-bound atlas, and strain his poor eyes to no purpose in commodious gazeteers. For, as the Prince of Yed remarked once to me, there are cities of which men can know by speaking and hearing, and other cities men can know only by being there. For the reader to understand the simple question with which these pages begin, I must devote the remainder of them to an account of some of the secret cities of the world.

After the Board of Directors meeting in Cairo, I set out on my travels. I wore a white suit, with weskit, woven of wool and nylon to the lightness of cotton and the strength of steel. I carried a slim dispatch-box which contained all my needs: a very powerful miniaturized transceiver, a supply of anodynes, quinine and antibiotics, a tube of eye-socket salve, a change of underwear and a clean shirt—made, like the shirt I wore and my tie, of a new fabric which allowed air to pass through the microscopic interstices of the weaving, but the actual substance of which was absolutely impervious to all stains and discolorations. A wet sponge (it was in my dispatch-box, with soap pellets, razor and cologne) gave me a fresh clean shirt. Apart from these items, the rest of the space was filled with neat bundles of American and English money, letters of credit, extra travelers checks and the like. I had been one of the first to benefit from the perfection of the Micro-Tattoo Forensic Process, so I had a bonafide passport and legal certificate forever engraved on a patch of skin no bigger than a modest mole on the inner side of the outer shell of my left ear—may it be an eye to my journey, I thought.

From the time I stepped out of the air-conditioned National City branch in Cairo on the 30th of June 1973 till my arrival in Rio, on July 8th 1977, I had no fixed place and no star but the Star of the City to guide me.

I flew to Samarcand and moved overland southeast, my ship of the desert making nothing of that Russian Star (knotted of red tape) burned dully in the north. Much weary wandering over Central Asia, and nothing but ruins of cities. My name (slightly cyrillized to Godkins) is of sweet savor to Soviet archeologists and Asianists; through my radio messages they first learned of Gagarrat and Stuprinabad, and the quartz temples of Lubata where, far from its congeners, the first fragments of Tokharian D were recovered. It was I, with my temporary Armenian companions, who first excavated the putrid Fosse of Duilipit, and forced the brazen gates of neolithic Hogna, whose salacious bronzes were later dated to the sixth millenium before Christ—to the confusion of all chronologies. But these were dead cities, and all the troves of learning therein were dust to me. I wanted the living patterns of secret cities, cities to some purpose, cities whose streets *meant* in their meanderings.

I stayed some weeks in Qunduz, within sight of the Hindu Kush. I watched the worshippers of the Bean squabble in the streets with the worshippers of the Bird. I gazed with bored intentness at those rites of the Egg that ululated at midnight in an underground temple, of ovarian floor-plan, whose porous limestone roof muffled all the cries that would otherwise have haunted the midnight upper air and driven simple Moslems sick with fright, or with the nauseous stench of apostasy.

Each day I sat at a table outside the café, waiting for Kurd or Jew or Pushtu or Persian or Hindu to bring me some message. After three weeks, I was tired of waiting, tired of my whole scheme. One day as I sat letting Afghan cigarettes go out by themselves before me, I saw a train of pack asses idle up the street; as it shambled closer, its ruffianly driver suddenly drew an ancient pistol, leveled it at me, fired. The ball seemed to strike my chest, & I lost consciousness.

I came to in the Palace of the Prince of Yed, whose servant Klipoth had been my assailant in Qunduz. The 'ball' had been a bolus of somnifacient salves that abraded my skin but did not pierce the thoracic wall; one week I had lain unconscious; I was a prisoner in Ngur Yed, deep in the Hindu Kush, as I later learned, when I was free to stroll with a borrowed sextant along his highness's terrace above Lake Suid, whose waters are always frozen.

The Prince favored me with many hours of pleasant, if eccentric, conversation. Knowing me to be of Kuwait, he took me for a Moslem until we bathed together in the Rumizd, the ancient Roman hypocaust the Yedis used as a wading pool. Seeing me to be a Christian ("One who declines to eat of the horse"), the Prince explained that the land and city of Yed had been "inside itself," in seclusion, that is, from the rest of the world, since Daryauz (Darius?) was King of the West. They knew the rest of the world was there, but had odd notions of it. They received radio broadcasts with ease (I gather their astrologers had devised vacuum tubes sometime in the 12th Century), but understood little of the discontinuities of external history. Since Yed had been ruled by the Ipokan family for sixty-three generations, they assumed that France was still the homeland of mustachio'd crusaders, for instance, and that the Shah of Persia ruled from the Bosphorus to Sinkiang. In any event, it was he, that tyrant Shah, usurper of liberty and confiner of the people, who was ritually execrated every Tuesday afternoon at the Wakden ceremony, the chief apotropaic rite of the Yedis.

Of nuclear fission and nuclear fusion they had formed the idea that by increasing the rate of vibration of atmospheric hydrogen, a nuclear device would 'atomate the air' the victim breathes, and thus allow the vibrating hydrogen atoms by physical assault and friction to break down the atoms (cells) of the victim's body. In Yed-wi, one word, *dzih*, serves for 'cell' and 'atom' (and 'brick' and 'piece' of anything).

Their holistic philosophy is astrological in source; a cardinal tenet of their faith is that all things are present everywhere; hence the chiefest of their sins is travel and transport, and it may be conducted only by the regnant Eunuch-Vizier (Klipoth, during my stay). Yedis never leave their principality; radio is permissible since, after all, the waves are received here, are they not?

Astrology is their chief concern; from time to time the Eunuch-Vizier goes out into the world to kidnap men of an intelligent mien, expressly to have a few non-Yedi horoscopes they may compare with their own. They reckon 21,600 *dzih* in the Zodiac of the ecliptic, any one of which may be occupied by one or more of the 17 planets they count. Owing to precession of the equinox, their computation of planetary longitudes varies by some 37° from the astronomical values of the west.

They consider Jupiter a star, the 'Good Angel,' and five of its satellites (they have observed them with ice-lenses) as planet-brothers and planet sisters of Earth, Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn. They do not in any way reckon the Moon—the moon' is a word of ill-omen in Ngur-Yed. When I asked why they discount it in their astrology, the Prince's Chief Genethliac could only assert, and not explain, that the moon is the future.

Before I left Ngur-Yed, the Prince explained all his wise men could disgorge

of their force-fed memories about the secret cities of the world. The Yedis, long ago recognizing the threat a written language poses to the here-and-now, abandoned their ancient syllabary and destroyed their books. What they have chosen to keep in their memories is entrusted to the wise men. These wise men have developed remarkable mnemotechnic powers; from them I learned of the secret city of the men of Harappa not a hundred leagues from Yed, and of the Vedic city of Ahampura with which New Harappa was in periodic conflict, though Ahampura was deep in Mongolia. Evidently that ancient warfare, one time of infantry versus cavalry, had by now been sophisticated to magic sendings and cloud-borne curses sent northeast and southwest.

4

New Harappa was the most depressing secret city of my travels. Neat, clean and foursquare, it was an efficiently conducted bureaucracy of magic and magical warfare. Its atmosphere was that of the Pentagon, or of Red Square on October Day. Yet I learned much magic there, of a remarkably effective kind. The Neo-Harappans are utterly unconcerned with the rest of the world, and the occasional Moscow-Kabul jet that passes overhead is ignored, as if the plane were somehow an obstreperous but inefficacious sending from Ahampura. Neo-Harappans are ardent littérateurs, and it is their boast that they possess 365 major military epics and several thousand minor ones of various less urgent *matières*. Books are printed from wooden blocks and distributed throughout the small country by enchanted vultures, eagles and hawks, trained to clutch the latest verses in their talons and seek out the eager readers of the hinterland. Literacy is universal, and published prose is unknown. All communications to be printed must be in one of a number of straightforward, but rigidly observed, metrical formulae, of which the most common (I refer to my notes) was the *tágara* or ‘national beat,’ literally, perhaps, ‘ictus of the city’. It is a distich of double lines:

■

The words marked *a* must exemplify alliteration *and* assonance, or rime, with one another, but not both. In the third foot of the first line, and only there, may occur a free number of unstressed syllables. The *b* rime (or assonance and alliteration) links each distich to the next. Distichs are commonly endstopped (and always in the older *huënëha*, ‘old man’s lullaby,’ an expanded simple narrative form involving “lays” or strophes of 50 distichs), and caesura *never* follows the second *b* rime—hence the *b* is the weaker, or ‘lunar’ rime in a distich (since its second part is ‘thrown away in darkness’), while the *a* rime is ‘solar.’ The effect of the *tágara* is markedly dactylic, and suits a language where word stress is universally recessive; further the effect is uncommonly tedious, as of a never-ending slow and halting flow of anecdote delivered by a drunk, always running down but never quite getting there. Their ‘primary school’ epic, which all male children of the seven upper castes learn reading from, comprises 49,000 distichs, and exults in the title *Mënëvedaëtu Sawa*, “The Magical Dilemma of Shava,” their great god, who may indeed be that Siva the Aryans received in India from a pre-Aryan population, perhaps ancient cousins, or even fathers, of the Neo-

Harappans. Oddly, the memorization of epic and other verse material is forbidden by law: it is felt to pre-empt those “meadows” of the brain best committed to the memorization of magic formulae. All 12 castes work magic, and each caste has a system, or at least a magical language and priesthood, of its own.

I was pleased enough to leave Harappa, especially after I had thrown together a precious bundle of 12 printed magical texts, three old codices, and a Persian notebook of my own in which I had elaborately transcribed magical praxis. The twelve printed texts (one for each of the castes) were given to me by the Archimagus of the Lower City, in whose orthodox and uninteresting streets I had dwelt. In rare honesty, I pointed out to him that I was going to try my damndest to get to Ahampura, and that their magic texts might fall into the hands of their enemies. The Huëhuëpopolo (Old Man of Lesser Town) smiled and assured me that any neo-Aryan who cribbed their formulae would find his sendings coming right down his own chimney. “Such is the law of Harappa magic,” he unequivocally explained.

## 5

In a sunken desert valley near the old philatelic empire of Tannu Tuva, the neo-Aryans of Ahampura flourished meanly in the excessive cold. To their city a six-month yak caravan delivered me, weary of mountains, weary of potash plains, weary of the efficient collectivized hamlets of Communist Tibet, weary of Sinkiang, weary of cold. I had seen Koko-nor, and I had seen God, in the person of the four-year-old boy who’d lately been discovered, after long search, as the re-fleshing of that poor Dalai Lama the hysterical Canadian paratrooper assassinated in Assam several years ago. The impoverished fugitive lamas in his entourage, the faithful remnant of the fallen glory of the Potala, looked at me with clear eyes and gestured proudly at their captive little lord. I knelt before him and offered him a pair of bullets, the only disposable things in my attenuated kit. He let fall a cambric handkerchief upon my shoulders and that was that. His teachers took my gift as good omen, signifying power and victory spiritual and temporal. May he enjoy them. I am prepared to wish well all nation-less monarchs and city-less burgomasters, the whole vanishing fey troupe of impotent alcaldes and generalissimos, Hapsburgs in Brazil and Bourbon-Parmas in Argentina. May they find their cities and their subjects one day; my heart, full of my own successes, sings them greeting.

And so in clean shirt and spotless tie and white suit, huddled in yak-wool and tiger skins and wolf-hair stoles, I entered Ahampura, city of the last pure Aryans, my own ancientest ancestors, dubious reader, my own old folks at home. I found a city of some thousands, tucked away in the warmest part of a god-forsaken dingle Siberia forgot and Ulan Bator know not of. Here a race of delicate rough paleskins with blue and hazel eyes raised horses, chunky animals little bigger than dogs, scarcely able to bear at any speed even their own down-bred riders. And here, elsewhere vanished from middle-earth, the ancient purity of the Vedas was maintained. Each day the smoke of the fire sacrifice rose from each brahmin house-altar (they were all brahmins now), smoke from smouldering

horse dung or yak droppings hoarded and dried. Here on rare days of national portent the king himself, Proto-*raja* of the world, sacrificed one of the miserable ponies, and the priest-people (since all men were brahmins all men were priests) chanted with flawless and immemorial fidelity the oldest rituals of what we call our civilization.

Each week, services of cursing were held, and double-*vajra* wands and *vajra*-bells were shaken with compass accuracy in the direction of New Harappa. Each day the shivering brahmins, bare but for loin cloth and thread, made their way down to the tepid inconstant alkali rivulet which they, in their dedicate unreason, called *Ganga* still, their Ganges, and bathed therein, to the salvation of the sentient beings of all worlds.

It was to me as if I had come home to find my grandfather plucking out flies' wings in the attic, and grandma kneeling in front of the washer-dryer and pummelling nylon tricot with heavy stream stones in the extremity of her poor strength. I was ready to flee Ahampura, "City of the Ego as Center of Conscious Awareness," by foot and alone if necessary, and seek my way among the yurts of the nomads or the plywood government offices of the Mongolian Peoples' Republic. But good luck forestalled me: way-worn, I contracted a lingering fever; chilblains scurried my extremities. When my fever had responded to geomycin, and to the fervent petitions to Agni my hosts had mounted, I received a visit-of-state from the king himself, accompanied by his chamberlain.

A man snatched from the brink of prolonged discomfort is a man easily pleased. So while I thought little would come of his majesty's approach, I wanted even less of it. But Ahamannada XIV surprised me, and I must here set down my gratitude to a gracious and learned sovereign without whose wisdom my searches would have come jejune to some lame and uncertain conclusion.

The King's Majesty sat on the edge of my bed, and the king's chamberlain crosslegged on the floor. From within his greasy robe the chamberlain took a scroll and flopped it out before him, letting it unroll almost to the foot of my bed; it must have been six feet long. I found it hard to read from my angle, but it seemed to be a life-size drawing of a man, performed with great attention to anatomical verisimilitude.

The king said, "This is world." I could see, rubbed with some reddish powder, the fuzzy outline of continents and seas; after a brief inspection, the outlines, with that sudden shift of recognition, became those of our terrestrial world, with west at the top. The navel of the human figure, an hermaphrodite, I now saw, was in Central Asia, the genitals in India, the head was Britain, the feet North America. Only the Northern Hemisphere was shown, rounded off neatly, with a false exactitude of periplos, at about the equator. Atlantis and Pacific Lemuria occurred, as the right and left hands respectively, the one raised, the other lowered. Our world had lost its hands. "This is world," the king repeated.

The chamberlain walked over on his knees and hovered over the map. The king started telling me about the secret cities of the world, and as he would mention one, the chamberlain would place his finger on its location, and hold it there patiently till the king went on to tell of the rest.

He told me of Droichead, subterranean town under the rocky, sterile soil of Monaghan, Ireland's poorest county, a city that was the bridge between the surface of the earth and the people of the earth's mantle, who lived a timeless life without a technology of any sort, a race of telepaths and meditators who dreamed events in our world into being. Droichead was their one point of physical contact with our world, and they saw to it that Ireland stayed poor and raunchy and underdone, to keep their adit open.

He told me of Lyonesse, the subtle city, which exists coextensively with Paris, is Paris' fourth dimension, so as to say, though real enough. Certain Parisian streets are sometimes in Paris and sometimes in Lyonesse, and there were gloomy overcast Thursday mornings when the priest at the high altar of Notre-Dame might sniff the incense of the Solemn Mass of Cernunnos co existing in the same place, and might even feel himself jostled by the shaven pated priests of Lyonesse, or even catch sight, on the rim of his chalice, of a gleam of that sunlight which illuminated, at that same hour, the worshipping citizens of the subtle city all round him. Many a man has entered a crowd of loiterers on the Boul Mich and come out of it in Lyonesse, where no man drinks wine and the tobacco is golden and burns with a greenish haze. Many an early morning housewife has bought a fine fish in what she took to be the Place Maubert, only to find when she gets home that her smelly wet newspaper bundle contains a statue of St. Roche, or a blood-stained copper dagger, or the horn of a wild ox, or a box of used postage stamps from the British colonies.

The king told me of these cities, but not necessarily in the detail with which I write. I have myself walked under Castleblayney, and idled in front of the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt three evenings till the turn of time made the Seine the Sequanus again, and the gold-anodized aluminum hydrofoils of Lyonesse skimmed on its waters. So also have I known in my own flesh many of the cities of which the Vedic king told me in that incredible five-hour dissertation on the subtle neural ganglia of the political and historical body of man. In fact, I have visited all of them that still are open for business. It must be remembered that Ahmannada's scroll was itself made before legionaries had seen Lutetia, and with the passage of merciful time many a shimmering burg has gone the way of Atlantis. So I never did find myself in Bomodrespricon, the "Big Apple of the West," where men rode on bulls and women went bare-breasted, and a tower stood whose top appeared to touch the visible rim of the sun at noon on winter solstice, bore up the sun and gave him back to burgeoning. I never floated, and you will never float, in gay kerosene *vaporetti* across the lagoons of Crimean Mirsuvia, whose insouciant, beardless people perished in the great influenza of 1918, and whose alluvial lands sunk low and bear now the derricks of a Soviet oil field, one that Pridedeful Oil would dearly love to sabotage.

I told His Majesty that Droichead and Lyonesse were too metaphysical, too astral, for me. I craved the secret polities of ordered, but unbound cities. I was, I explained, far more interested in sanitary engineering than in hyperspace and paratime; my intelligence was the luminosity of the superficies—I wanted the radiant surfaces, and would leave to more patient men (I thought of old Ahasuerus himself, who would be cheered to have a few extra dimensions to

poke around in) the pursuit of the depths and yieldingnesses of things.

The king listened without sign of annoyance, smiled and went on with his exposition. He spoke of Zeboim, which had escaped the destruction of its sister cities of the plain and went its lubricious way still, not 50 miles from the Dead Sea, in an uncharted wadi. It was, I learned, the *Siupra a Layilat*, or "Book of the Nights," composed in Zeboim, from which all the many collections of *Arabian Nights* proceed, and it was in Zeboim that certain zany polymaths put into Hebrew a collection of street tales and called it the *Mishle Sendabar*, and sent it west among the remnant of Jewry in Palestine, to scandalize and delight them with febrile stories of fictive journeyings. Not three months ago, sedentary reader, I sat in the well air-conditioned Hotel Edward VII in Zeboim, reading the Paris Herald and sipping iced clam juice and gin. If I lowered my paper, I could see sumptuous transvestites cruising the lobby, or I could lift my eyes beyond that spectacle to shop windows tastefully offering sexual devices and herbal stimulants, or look past them in turn down the arcade to the glare of unshadowed street, where naked slaves of all sexes and races were harnessed to odd, canopied public jinrikishas waiting at the kerb for their fares. It was a city that spelled plain the difference between liberal and libertine, and to my surprise I found myself more of the former than of the latter. I left Zeboim by the first mechanical conveyance that presented itself: a Land Rover owned and piloted by a Milwaukee lady anthropologist fresh in from New Guinea, and who had wearied of Zeboim's casual permissiveness. "Spineless," she called it.

In Ahampura I listened, and after a time, took notes, with His Majesty's permission. By the end of that long afternoon, I had an itinerary worked out, and was eager to get on the trail again. I mentioned this to the king, and told him, as respectfully as I could, that I hoped to leave with the salt-caravan I'd come with, and that had been resting and commercing the ten days I'd been Ahampura. The caravan would leave in two days to cover the brief last stage of its annual journey from Koko-nor (where I had joined it) to Irkutsk (where I hoped to catch a jet to Moscow). The caravan, by the way, was conducted by Hakka merchants, who brought salt and potash from Tibet and Sinkiang north to Siberia, but had, for untold generations, carried a variety of other supplies just for Ahampura: best ghee, tea, lighter fluid, sealing wax, papers and parchments, astrological ephemerides from Ladakh, and had received in turn magical inscriptions, good counsel, pastoral care, and soapstone images of Vishnu which they could market in the Buddhist north as statues of Maitreya, Buddha of the Coming Age.

The king urgently advised me to let the caravan go without me. The chamberlain added his counsel to the same effect and spoke portentously of my health, and of the current astrological mise-en-scène which favored delay. Stubborn as I am, I saw some wisdom in letting my chilblains heal before traveling, and when they had pointed out that Irkutsk was only a twenty-day ride, even on microhorse, and that they would send a guide with me to bring me safely there, I agreed to stay over.

I am profoundly glad I did. On a morning sunnier than usual, I stood shivering in white (the furs had gone back to their Hakka owners) and watched the Chinese gypsies on and among their yaks and camels mosey out of Ahampura.

I was standing under the eaves of the chamberlain's rickety house, built on top of the Great Gate of the North, through which, below me, the Hakka were passing. The Great Gate of the North was an aperture in the six-foot high mud city wall; besides being crowned by the wood and wattle hut above it, it possessed only the distinction of its august and deceptive name: it was the only gate in Ahampura; the wall bordered only the north of the town. When the caravan had dwindled to a jittery bookworm on the blank page of the distance, I turned and found my hosts gone. I stepped round the corner of the house, treading lightly on the splintering catwalk, and saw nothing at all. The city of Ahampura was gone: a dazzling plain in all directions. I was standing on a rock, and saw only my shadow prostrate before me, like an image of my mood, black and flat on its face.

There is no need to give any account of the self-evident and predictable tenor of my thoughts—write them up for yourself, reader, or assume them as delivered and signed for; we have all looked on emptiness, we have all plummeted in heart's bathyscaph to a deep current where demonic luminescent enigmas grin at us in the pressurized cabin of our isolate despair. I have no wish to detain you with the obvious.

My first hope was born out of the womb of my shadow: I noticed that my shadow no longer stretched out flat and straight, but, about at midriff, bent upright, straight up in the air, like the silhouette of a torso. I was distracted from my wonders at this by a distant roaring; it seemed to come from far up the listless little stream, and was soon accompanied by an optical effect as well, a concentrated turbulence in the air, a whirl with glints in it; sight and sound came closer, and resolved themselves into a vast crest of water rushing down the stream bed! As the wave came abreast of the perimeter of the city that had been, great houses and palaces and orchards and parks and temples sprang up, shining, panchromatic, exultant. Street after street leapt into solid radiance as the wave reached it; the wave was beside me now, and suddenly my shadow's angularity leapt into sense: it bent up the gleaming battlements of a marble wall only a few feet from where the rock I stood on metamorphosed itself into the platform of a lofty tower. I was a hundred feet above a vast and beautiful city; the air was warm, and sang of nutmeg and sandalwood like any temple of the south. The streets were filled with healthy, serene beings. At my side stood the king, unbelievable in crimson and saffron, circled with blossoms. "How do you like Ahampura now?" he asked. I joined my hands and bowed in silent acquiescence before him.

"We disguise ourselves once a year, when the caravan comes; as long as it stays, Ahampura is drear. We could hide ourselves from them completely, but it is good that some, elaborately distorted, rumors of our continued existence get abroad. We deceive the faithful Hakka, but they benefit greatly. Our magic sendings are ever with them for their protection, and they always arrive at Irkutsk with twice as much salt as when they set out—that they do not even notice is, in a way, a tribute to their lack of selfishness. Further, their yaks and camels are surefooted at the precipice, and live far beyond their usual span."

What could I say? I stayed in Ahampura for three whole years, years that are more private to me than the marriage bed, years that are mine among the

public dispersions of what I foolishly call my life, years during which I learned more than in my whole life before. When I left it was at the command of the King, and in conformity with the ancient, indeed, pre-Vedic, injunction "Three dawns shall the guest espy through thy roof-hole." A liberal reading of the law construed days as years, but at length I had to go. At my departure, the king pressed into my hand a star sapphire, unmounted, and told me that when the star within it turned red, it was then that I might try and seek out Ahampura again.

At dawn on the day before the vernal equinox, they returned to me my precious white suit and my attaché case, and took away all Ahampuran effects, save only the sapphire. They made me mount a brightly painted wooden merry-go-round horse, whose pommel was of thick braided gold. The chamberlain whispered a word into the horse's ear, and I found myself high above the city, streaking through the sky. I was in Irkutsk within the hour; the horse left me at the airport, in time for the weekly jet. Spring opened its gooseflesh arms to me in Moscow.

## 6

I spent several weeks in Russia, most of them at the suburban lodge of my long-time correspondent M. S. Protokop, doyen of Soviet Central-Asian archeologists. By day we'd work over the charts and maps and almanacs, or I would feed my less clandestine experiences into his tape recorder—in bad Russian; in case I inadvertently told more than I planned to, I could disclaim the tape as erroneous because of my faulty command of the language. In the evenings we'd meet with Protokop's colleagues, or scholars in kindred disciplines at the Institut. I felt my travels were, in a sense, at an end; in a moment of ironic fulfillment, I went shopping for luggage at the G.U.M. Rodyon Nakanakian (son of Troubetzkoy's co-worker in the Caucasus) went along with me. We ran into a sale in the Alpha department, and I picked up a full set of very handsome ostrich-skin luggage, imported on a trial basis from a new and highly tentative People's Republic of the Transvaal dearly in need of augmenting its national product. I bought in sterling at the Kuwait premium. Little had I to fill my luggage with, so I left the two largest pieces in Russia, guest-gifts to Protokop and a Karelian girl respectively. That left me with three pieces. Into the smallest I put the dispatch box, then the smallest into the smaller and the smaller into the largest.

From Moscow I went to Paris, and in Paris I went to Lyonesse. Though I spent only one apparent evening in Lyonesse, it was in Parisian time three weeks later that I found myself on the Rive Droite again, as I learned from a notice posted in the cab I took to my house near Concorde: the rates had risen. On the Avenue Paul Valéry, we passed for a moment through Lyonesse again, as I could tell by the sudden appearance of a cluster of blue-robed monks and peruked courtiers fighting it out on a street corner while a caped *agent* stood in their midst oblivious to it all. By a happy chance, when we rolled out of Lyonesse 10 seconds later, two weeks had elapsed backwards, and the driver was overjoyed at the large sum I gave him, computed by a tariff that would not yet be in force for 10 days.

I spent only two nights in my Paris house, then the need to wander took me; I cradled my ostrich skin bags in a packing crate—into the smallest of the valises I laid a shallow intricately carved antique pearwood box Protokop had given me; in the box rested the notebooks of my travels, secure behind the complex secret lock of the box, product, like the box itself, of the fabulous craftsmen of Ustyug Velikiy, a city that had once presented to Alexander III a malachite studbox with so devious a mechanism that it could never again be opened after that busy and unfortunate monarch allowed the combination to be forced by matters of state out of his fated head. The whole nest was air freighted to Rio, to await me, and I had done with business once more.

For five weeks I roamed North Africa using a small hovercopter courteously offered me by the Libyan Air Force. I was, after all, Honorary Air Marshall of Fatima. Despite the magnificent isolations of deserts and highlands and mountains, the secret cities of northern Africa are rather blah.

From peaceful Bunad of the prestidigitators, distinct for nothing but its obstinate sorcery, I went south to Grahar, highland city of the so-called Leopard Men, through whose gates no white man had ever passed; I found it full of intelligent Bantus writing love lyrics and pastorals in several of their dozens of secret languages, and full too of fiery sons of those shy warblers, sons who read Bakunin and Engels in incomprehensible Swahili renderings from the last century, sons who hated their fathers' mooning ways and rallied round me to learn the latest news from Moscow. To group after group of them I had to describe the October Revolution and the assassination of the last Romanoffs. I fled.

Next on my list, was the tropical city of Juju whose eponymous white queen luxuriously ruled a scanty population given over to the delights of love. Nowhere in my travels had I encountered so elaborate an *ars amandi* as flourished there.

But poetry, rusty anarchism and hot love were not what I sought: these were particularist fastnesses, not true cities. I had better luck in Jaouedda, back in the north, in the mountains of the Hoggar. Jaouedda is the city of speed; its people start school at 18 months, are married at eight, parents at 10, old men in chimney corner by 25. People sleep a total of two hours a day, in four half-hour shifts. Beds are unknown, and the Jaoueddans fall asleep instantly and deeply in whatever posture his appointed repose finds him. Their only conveyances, and their only borrowings from the world outside, are tiny automobiles, like go-karts, an engine and steering wheel mounted on a three-wheeled frame, and in these they zoom through the narrow streets of their city, and skid up and down the ramps that serve them instead of stairs. Their birth rate is, and must be, very large: a good fifth of the basic population is killed each year in traffic accidents. When a Jaoueddans reaches the age of 20, he is eligible (she is not) for membership in the *dunat* or senate, but most of them are too busy to bother. So the *dunat* is made up of the more hypothyroid citizens, and their sessions are listless and infrequent.

At twenty-five all Jaoueddans are exiled from the city, and may take with them one-half the value of all their goods. The exiled Jaoueddans, bearing the feather money of the republic, is escorted over the mountains to the sister city of Kominolomon, of which he is now an automatic citizen. Kominolomon is the city

of sloth and repose. Its citizens, all superannuated Jaoueddans, live to the term of their lives in whatever luxury or penury their former efforts have earned. They are allowed to earn money in no way, nor are they permitted to work even un-gainfully (this circumstance is, no doubt, at the root of the greedy hurry of their lives in Jaouedda). All hobbies or avocations are subject to the approval of the Jaoueddan *dunat*—nothing ordered or vigorous is permitted. Board games are violently encouraged, and the telling of jokes. Most ex-Jaoueddans spend their years and their savings making heavy investments in hashish, though other intoxicants are known and encouraged. Indeed, to those who come poor to Kominolomon, the government issues gratis plentiful supplies of an execrable date wine fortified with grain alcohol and codeine. Kominolomon is a calm city; the only occasions of public congress are the fortnightly services in honor of Timat, dual goddess of Fertile Chaos, who is worshipped perfunctorily in Jaouedda under the title of Tziltzit, the Lightning Flash, and elaborately in Kominolomon as Adá-Adá, Goddess of Other-Where. All forms of activity are sacred to Tziltzit, all forms of sloth, especially intoxication, to Adá-Adá. I found Kominolomon uninteresting, but safer than Jaouedda, so it was from its vantage point that I surveyed, and deplored, the customs of the Jaoueddans. My time was spent chiefly with the *azbaz Timatuit*, the old fathers of Timat, as the theologians were called. Their immense treatises, largely drug-inspired, were read with seemly patience by most Kominolomonians who could read. In the company of the *azbaz*, I sampled many a so-called hallucinogen, though I could distinguish the drugs only by location, intensity and noxiousness of the headache produced by each. My most vivid hallucination was of flying an ancient Stuka over the burning Rangoon Leper Asylum, and strafing the inmates as they fled.

Just before leaving the twin cities, I discovered in Kominolomon a clandestine band of Tziltzit worshippers, who shunned drugs and practiced an accelerated form of Swedish gymnastics in the cellars of the town, and who in private talked as fast as they could. Whenever the authorities uncovered such deviants, they took matters in hand by liberal administration of a primitive and fairly safe form of lobotomy. That takes the Tziltzit right out of a man, and keeps the peace.

In the Maghreb I passed briefly through Kabáh, Es-Sinuha, El-Aouina, and Vavar ait Griym, neolithic cities still swimming upstream in time. They were fresh and invigorating, like Athens before it was Athens, or Canaan before the Hebrews, where men sought and somewhat found the homely wisdom of goat and figtree, where they smiled to see oil flowing from the olive press, and wept to see death.

I left the hovercraft in Tangiers in care of the Fatimid Consul, in whose splendid house (we pay our diplomats well) I spent some days transacting my neglected Pridelike business, legal matters from Fatima, and such personal affairs as I permit myself. It was Dr. Honneghoy, our Consul, who asked me, I trust in all innocence, what I had been looking for all these years. I intimated that it was no concern of his in any case, but the question stuck in my throat, like the ice-cube I swallowed once as a child. Like the ice-cube, its presence was intolerably painful and vividly menacing; like the ice-cube too, it would, if I could

keep breathing long enough, dissolve and slip down my throat to be dealt with effectively by the merciless apparatus we run inside us to cope with such matters. Nonetheless, I realized that if I had been, in fact, looking for anything, I had not found it, except for whatever promise the sapphire, still shining white in its starry heart, might portend. If, on the other hand, I had been, and was, looking for nothing, I would cut a more logical and aesthetic figure sitting in one of my many houses in graceful ease. I determined, therefore, that if the question still troubled me in six months, I would answer it and act accordingly.

Feeling no desire to return however briefly to Europe, I decided to take a relaxing steamer around Africa's shoulder to Dakar, and fly thence to Brazil. The *Ulises*, a Chinese-captained, Norse-manned tanker of Liberian registry was prepared to take me, and to extend whatever first-class privileges its genetic pool could think up. I sailed uneventfully for several days, enjoying my first true leisure in years. By evening of the fifth day, it was apparent that the cook was insane; the red ink whipped with the mashed potatoes at lunch might have been an accident; the deep-fried cakes of breaded shoe polish served up for dinner made the thing unmistakable. The poor fellow was put ashore in convulsions at Villa Cisneros, and the captain hastily hired a Somali roustabout who could cook "chickum"—but not hastily enough to keep his first-class passenger. I went ashore, lured by the possibility of making a detour to the Canaries.

But it was Ára, last of the North African secret cities, that drew me instead. North of Villa Cisneros, but still in the Spanish Sahara, Ára stands on a rocky peninsula that faces the Canaries, from which thousands of years ago the Ára (people and city have the same name) had come, remnants of the high urban culture of Atlantis, just as the once happy inhabitants of the Canaries, Isles of the Blest, were offshoots of the yeoman stock of the sunken continent. The Ára still burn sharp, clean incense and seasalt before the altar of Poteii, God of the Sea, monotheos of Atlantis, whose name they say survives in the Greek Poseidon, wherein "-don" appears to them simply a form of an old word meaning "god." Poseidon was a god with much reverence, many temples, but little function among the Greeks—a typical fate to befall the god of a greater people swallowed by a lesser.

Their worship, while reverent, is peripheral to their interests, distinctly 'institutional' in its atmosphere. Always technologists, the Atlanteans in Ára had come to specialize in the one technology whose raw materials were ever at hand—biological engineering. Tiny winged cats sing to the idle ladies of Ára, and greenish sheep sport on the barren rocks above the sea, sustained by photosynthesis. Fish in the sheltered bay of Ára grow legs, and at the deep throat of a gong whose resonance is imprinted in them, they come walking up the beach to the gentle hands of their shepherds, who clip the scales of some (for use in several chemical industries of the city) and send them back to the waveless bay, and stun others to a sudden death to flesh out the richest bouillabaisse I have ever eaten.

Ára desalinates its water, so needs no natural fresh; hence it can occupy a site where no nomad would pass one night. Landward, the rocks give way to absolute desert. In that isolation, Ára has been able for millenia to devote its chiefest attentions to its own citizens.

The human body is everything to the Ara: it is their home, their science, their pleasure, their entertainment, their hobby, their religion, their work. The men and women of Ara come in all colors of the spectrum, being able to change color completely at the drop of a pill; I was even told of certain members of the Guild of Angels (who were the police and diplomatic corps of Ara, handling all contact with the outside world) who were able to turn infra-red, and thus walk invisible through the world. But by and large their colors are decorative, and express only the taste or whimsey of their exhibitors. Certain colors, however, possess meaning as signals. A peculiar pale blue means "I am lonely, come talk to me," while there is a rich brown expresses "For heaven's sake, whatever you do, don't bother me *now*."

All these things I saw; much I didn't see, for the unpleasant reason that I was tossed into jail five minutes after my arrival. Their jails are breeding grounds for test animals to be used in some of their seamier experiments. I had the good fortune to be chosen for research in what I could only guess was x-ray vision, and after several days with no cheerier companions than a genuine headless man, and a young boy, otherwise normal enough, who had been apprehended stealing muffins from the Arch-Flamen's windowsill, I was removed to the Ophthalmic Section.

While the chief doctors were examining me, I casually let my glass eye fall into my palm. They were amazed at the thing; with all their cunning, they lacked almost all non-biological material, and their plastics industry was infantine.

I have archly concealed from the reader till now that while in Moscow I had had a skilled lapidary drill out a cavity in the rear of my glass eye, in it I had inserted the Ahampuran sapphire. Imagine, then, the consternation among the doctors when I took my eye from my head, and a stone from my eye, and showed them the stone had a star in it.

They freed me at once, and watched as if they thought I would fly away—a trick they have not yet mastered. I demanded to be brought to their Arch-Flamen, and of him I requested a single boat, with oars, since I was one of the Old Ones, from the Old Country in the Furthest West, and would return over the water. A boat was swiftly fitted out; I refused all provision, but said that if they gave me a flask of their civic water, I would do them the honor to pour it out on the high Altar of Poteii Beyond the Sunset. They brought me a liter of water in a golden flask. With it in my right hand, my dispatch-box in my left, I stood in the prow of the boat as they pushed me away from their peninsula. I stood up, nobly facing the west, until I was out of sight, then sat down, took a rough course, and rowed South for dear life. I was in Cisneros by nightfall.

The *Ulises* had not yet sailed; the new cook was found to be suffering from rouechettia, a puzzling new lymphatic infection that has swept East Africa in the last decade. Our cook must have been one of the first victims to reach West Africa. I re-occupied my stateroom, to the delight of the captain, who spoke English but not Norwegian, and sailed next day, without a cook. The Purser kept us blandly stuffed with fishballs and starch soup till Dakar.

When two days later I landed in Rio de Janeiro, after four years of travelling, I felt neither sated nor empty. I had not yet reached a crisis in my concerns: hidden cities still drew me, perhaps not as strongly as they had, but inchoate enthusiasm must always temper to steady dedication. So to speak. After a month of delightful inactivity, I went back to my travel jottings, and especially to the lecture notes I'd taken of King Ahamannada's talk. I'd now visited a sizable number of the secret cities he knew, and the rest were at my disposal. But I began to be keenly aware that only the northern half of the world was represented. True, the bulk of the earth's landmass is north of the Line, and true, too, that the Southern Hemisphere seemed in all ways younger, less time-ridden. Yet the outstretched left hand of a man on the king's chart had been Lemuria, to call by a conventional name the lost Pacific continent.

Presumably in one of the secret cities of the western Americas I would find a Lemurian homologue to Atlantean Ára, or at least a tradition of one, or best still, another king with another mappemunde, this time of the southern secret cities opulent under the blaze of Crux.

It was not till my third day on the trail through the viscous jungle beyond Cuyabá that it occurred to me, between stings of deltoid zumbidão fly, that I had succumbed, glass eye and all, to the ancientest gypsy fish lure in the world, the call of Atlantis.

Right there in the Matto Grosso, I almost gave up the whole business. I sat down on my camp stool, watched João and Feliz pitch a tent inches above the dismal soup that served as ground. I sat and cursed. I cursed Plato for *Timaeus* and *Critias*, for unwrapping for the first time in our culture, with hebephrenic guile, the authentic boloney, I cursed him for his myths and his deviations from myth. I cursed gullible Herodotus, gorging on Egyptian darkneses and vomiting them forth in a language that did not have, like Egyptian, the grace to die out when its time was done. I cursed Bacon and Campanella and More and Rabelais and Johnson and Butler and Bellamy and Huxley and Golfing, I cursed all hankerers after utopias, sacred colleges, magic islands. I cursed Cacklagonia and Poictiesmes, Mu and Lemuria, Hy Breasil and the Fortunate Isles, I cursed the Pure Land and the Hesperides. I cursed the National Geographic Society and all its pomps and works and ektachromes. I cursed vril and the gold of El Dorado and the Elephants' Graveyard and the Mountains of the Moon and all happy hunting grounds whatsoever. I cursed myself for a fool.

And when I had done with my imprecations, I looked up from my chagrin and my Pimm's Cup and saw Feliz and João lying on their faces in the muck, the undone tent flapping in the ground breeze. They lay before two resplendent figures coruscating even there in the dingy jungle light. Conceive Mohawk astronauts, white Watusi, Gurkhas from Poland: seven feet tall, faces of dark molten copper, sinewy smooth arms. Silvery eyes in serene faces, bodies richly tunic'd and caped in bright many colored parrot feathers. The two men were as alike as twins, and each wore a gold diadem around his otherwise bare head of free flowing garnet hair. Their feet were shod in some pliable metallic substance,

and to my astonishment they seemed to hover slightly above the ground. The godlike beings looked at me for a long time.

I sat and looked at them in turn. The wait was endless, but lacked any tension of suspense. We looked at one another as casually and intently as boys watch ants pursuing their long concerns. At no particular moment, with no change of expression, one of them spoke. The parrot god who wore a great eagle claw hung round his neck raised his right hand from the elbow, palm open at me. I noticed that the palm was not lighter than the rest of the skin. He stood a moment frozen in that Roman salute and then said "How!"

I did not laugh. If the pious Christian, his life's pilgrimage tottered to its weary triumphant end, should pass over the waters of separation and enter the aureate gates of the New Jerusalem, and there be received of the angels, and brought by them to the foot of the throne of the Lord, and if, from that blazing majesty hidden eternally in itself, a voice should boom out "Hi, there!", that Christian would be certified in all conscience by the eternal inevitability of those words of welcome. Those words, if those words alone, would prove to him that he was indeed in Paradise, and not in some Bardo dream.

As the overtones of Uncas' greeting died limply in the damp foliage, I gave him answer. Yes, his name was Uncas, and his companion's was Pincas—I am not responsible for those names; the reader is well-advised to possess himself of a half-hour or two from his busy round of tasks and devote it to a consideration of synchronicity, coincidence and serendipity. But take it on faith now: Uncas and Pincas, no doubt in the world.

Conscious of the importance of my speech, I confined it to essentials: "Me Hodgkins," tapping my head as I said it. The beings did not move. Uncas said "Pincas," and Pincas said "Uncas," each gesturing at the other. I gathered that their civilization was one of high courtesy, and my inference was more than supported when I felt myself gently lifted from the ground and drifting over it towards them, without any muscular effort beyond a brief forgivable flurry in the first dreamlike moments of levitation. I drifted between them and off through the rainforest, my velvet captors gliding at my side. We skimmed faster and faster, until we traveled a good thirty-five miles an hour; once we reached that speed, we kept at it. All day. All night. All the next day. I ached. I longed to sit down, though not in any real way fatigued, since my system expended no energy in its passage through the changing landscape beyond fright or irritation when things started up out of the shadows or we came suddenly close to big trees in the darkness.

Late in the afternoon of the second day we came to the shore of an immense lake, whose lateral extremities were out of sight beyond the horizons, but narrow enough for me to guess something of the opposite shore: an inch of irregular solid haze above the motionless water. And there we stood. "Parabá," Uncas said, pointing to the lake. This was the first word I'd gotten out of them the whole journey despite a range of efforts, from puppyish to professorial, by which I'd tried to lure them into speech. So we stood there until the sun fell into the lake far off to my left. When darkness was as general as the stars let it be, we began to move again, straight out across the lake. No drop of Parabá wet my shoes,

though I tried at one point to drag my foot in the water, illogically to convince myself of the phenomenality of what passed. But my feet could not thrust through the lower limit three inches above the surface; it isn't that an obstacle interposed itself, but that at the critical point my muscles simply and quietly refused to extend; I might as easily have been trying to swing my lower leg forward from the knee.

In an hour we had made the crossing, and stood at the foot of a broad-stepped staircase that came to the water's edge. It glowed faintly in its own luminescence. At the head of the steps an obscure wall, a gateway in it of the same stone as the steps. After we had waited some minutes, Pincas cried "How!" in a voice identical to Uncas'; only the vibrations from his body specified him as speaker. This time, I noticed that the initial consonant was more of a spirant than I'd caught the first time, and that the simple diphthong I'd heard at first was really a slow triphthong of a-o-u, each vowel getting its full value briefly. I'd represent it phonetically by /xaouw/.

Immediately the gate opened and radiance blinded me. We went up, we went in, and I was in Wuara, largest hidden city in the world, the arcane metropolis. It had not been mentioned by the king of Ahampura.

The city was a colossal square: 5000 streets ran east and west exactly, 5000 streets precisely north and south. A city 250 miles wide, 250 miles long, spread over the joinings of Bolivia and Peru and Brazil! Wuara was not precisely underground: a weather-dome, whose plan circled the square, floated above Wuara, and the outer surface of that dome was planted with jungle and mock-jungle, trees and things that looked like trees but were telescopes or television masts or solar batteries or missiles. There was even a false shallow lake in the surface, and a man-made meteorite crater, which in its vast concavity served to disguise the dish of a 7000-foot radio telescope.

The technology of Wuara was millenia ahead of earth's best. Its citizens were precise replicas of one of three patterns: man, woman, wáhana. In one eugenic masterstroke the fathers of Wuara had eliminated physical considerations altogether without eliminating the body. Identical men mated with identical women; the wáhana mated with each identical other, or not at all; they were vaguely hermaphroditic in appearance, hoydenish. Appearance is nothing. Behavior is all. All Wuarans were born *wáhana*; at the age of thirty-five (they live well into their second century as a general rule), they choose which gender they will join; chemotherapy and some simple surgery realized their choices. Thereafter, they must stay what they've chosen to be during one whole revolution of Saturn; only when, by heliocentric reckoning, Saturn stands at 0° of Libra may a frustrated Wuaran change his sex. (September of 1980 will be the next opportunity; already many Wuarans were busy searching their souls and persons, testing their muscles and dispositions to see whether to walk into the new cycle in their present genders.)

At the same rite of passage wherein the newly-mature Wuaran chooses his sex, he elects his name, and his profession, and declares all the material needs he is likely to have until the next boundary day (Kalfa Agawis, "relaxation of the sphincter," as the Wuarans call Saturn in 0° of Libra). The cunning anticipation of

needs is a closely studied art, since the government, utterly generous in meeting the first request, is almost unflinching in its refusal to make any additional disbursements between boundary days. So the Stating of Estimated Needs is a vital moment for the young Wuaran, and he prepares for it with the elaborate precautions of a beta scientist applying for a government grant, and states it with the desperate reluctance of a bridge player making a bid which will govern his play in a game that lasts twenty-nine years.

Twelve million people live in Wuara. There are many parks, rivers, pools, lakes and prairies. There is no crime. Wuara is everything the rest of the world, my world, will devote its next two thousand years to becoming, with only indifferent chances of success. Wuara is the perfect city. Its population has not varied more than one per cent in 782 years (that is, since the Great Orgy of 1195, after the first Wuaran space ship was perfected, and a doubled generation was encouraged: in 1236, the first convoy left Wuara. There are now Wuaran settlements on Mars, Venus and two of the moons of Jupiter. To keep some interest in the game, the Wuarans covenanted to defer all contact with their colonies till a thousand earth years had passed, to give the externs a chance to make their own way.)

In effect, Wuara rules the earth, some of the nations of which are descendants of Wuarans who left the City in the last great schism, precipitated by the building of the weather dome in A.D. 675. Some of those descendants, like the Hopi, have preserved their autonomy. Others are scattered among the races.

I was invited to remain in Wuara, to mesh the insignificance of my life with the fabric of their ordered and harmonious civility. I would be given an intensive barrage of remedial genetic therapies, and would be allowed to become man (Wuaran men are tall, bronzed, green-eyed), woman (pale and voluptuous, gold-eyed), or wáhana (Uncas and Pincas, like all the Rangers, were *wáhana*).

It was rewarding to taste the hairy antiquity of El Aouina, or contemplate the outlines of the Aryan past from Ahampura. Wuara meant the future, meant entering an already accomplished perfection. My choice was clear.

While the Wuarans were out in their parks celebrating the tenuous sliver of the new moon with ballets and balloon-ascensions and performances on the water-harp, I crept in a dark feathered cape to the automatic monorail, and took a car to the western gate. It opened of itself to my "How!" and I took off. My gliding-generator was powered by tiny mercury batteries, a slow model I'd stolen from a sleeping child, that lasted only nine days. It took me deep into the foothills of the Andes. There I took to my heels, or, thanks to the inflexible mountains, to the balls of my feet. After incredible hardships, chilblains, moon-madness, arctic psychosis, and something that could only have been pneumonia, I found comradery and the rudiments of shelter among some vicuña herders. Who in the fullness of their days led me to the lowlands in time for me to catch malaria. It was shaking body and soul with that old-hat ailment that I finally collapsed in a rustic police station. When my delirium passed, I came awake in the British Hospital at Callao, and the Fatimid Consul sat at my bedside, weighed down by a huge mound of flowers from Prideful Oil and a shopping bag full of telegrams congratulating me on my rediscovery of civilization. These I feebly accepted

and dismissed the Consul. Only then did I notice the nurse in the room; her back was to me, and she seemed to be doing something to the flowers under the window. I did not need to wait for her to turn around to know that she was Wuaran; Peruvian nurses do not run to dark topaze hair and Vargas legs. She turned to me and smiled; she lifted one lapidary fingertip to her lips and left the room. I never saw her again. After a day or so, my fright eased itself in the current of things. But she is by no means the last Wuaran I saw. I've seen them here and there through the wide world, and you too, innocent reader, have feasted your eyes on their heroic manhood or venerate amplitudes, or have been titillated or enraged by sleek enigmatic *wáhanas* offering themselves as whatever sex they choose. Innocently you have watched and measured them, thinking to see before you nothing but a successful élève of Vic Tanney or Dame Nature. Reader, you are ignorant in this matter. O tax-burdened American, be aware that your reluctant dollars have lifted more than one Wuaran in spacecraft's painful confinement beyond the circle of our moon.

Yet constant as the Wuarians are in their infiltration *a superiore* of our doings, their intentions are ever philanthropic and enlightened. Do not worry about them; be aware of their presence, and signal your awareness by a finger laid to the tip of your right ear, national greeting of Wuara ("I hear you"); but do not be afraid.

## 8

Wuara took the life out of my pursuit of hidden cities—yet the residuum is there, and smoulders at times in no mean effulgence. After partial recovery in Peru, I went, more leisurely and by more conventional vehicles, in idling search of America's lost cities. Haiti and the Caribbean were fruitful, and the north of Mexico has a density not equalled even by Africa: in two months journeyings, using nothing more than recondite than a jeep, I turned up for breakfast in 13 secret cities; all of them reeked of indianism, and most represented pretentious *voulu* revivals of ill-comprehended Aztec rites and customs; these were cities founded not long after the Conquest. Only Isla de Corazon, in the Tarahumara mountains, was motivated by anything but atavistic Nahua nationalism; my benevolence restrains me from announcing the curious customs of Corazon to any public whatever, lest some talented but maladroit young man seek them out and, less evasive than myself, spend the noon, dusk and evening of his poor life as a 'living stone' in the market place, or as a *cabeza juegosa* in the hideous temple of Iyitl.

I am likewise shy of disclosing information about the secret cities of the United States; most of them cherish a precarious anonymity, and most are close to, if not coincident with, major urban concentrations. So I will mention certain of the secret cities for the benefit of the fortunate reader with means and opportunity to develop these hints into his own quest.

As an example, let me tell you of Shawami, which flourished till 1966 beneath Cincinnati; its well-hidden conduit to topside surfaced under the bleachers of Crosley Field; many were the Reds' home games after which more bipeds left the park than had entered it. On Thanksgiving Day, 1966, the teenage lover

double suicide pact deaths of Marietta halfback Tony Alavino, sixteen, and Marietta cheerleader Trudy Vodyinski, sixteen and a half, during the Southern Ohio High School Football League play-off, led to a police investigation beneath the stands, where Trudy's farewell note had been blown by a still unkindly fate. The police found many ingenious ambiguous things indeed, but by the time they came back after the holiday to delve thoroughly, the beast-men of Shawami had moved, in the night, lock, stock, cellular library and nuclear reactor, to a distant arroyo I will not specify.

Cities like Thip, Mornokus, grave Castù and somnolent Acadá, temple-complexes like Old Laredo, Ogipwee, Hassa and Pweltróvim, all flourish surprisingly close to state capitals and metropoleis.

Others, like Busomir on the great alkali plains, thrive far from Euramerican man. And in the Grand Tetons quivers the invisible city of Walmai, whose streets I have walked and with whose learned citizens, expansive in their security, I have passed in high talk all the nights between full of the moon and full again. Yet nothing did I see there, except the monstrous geology of the place itself.

In Arizona I explored Sharon, hidden city of the last followers of Sabbatai Zvi, piteous Israelites under a shepherd who purports to be Zvi himself, and looks every day of his 400 years, and who walks so bent therewith that his white beard touches the ground. Whoever he is, in his white velvet snood that shrouds his beard from defilement, he is a good and holy man. From him I learned more of the secret stars that shine in man's internal firmament than ever yogi or lama taught me; from his lips one cool purple desert night there came such a commentary on *Lech lecha* that all my travels were worth it for the hearing. The so-called Zvi explained that when he was seized by the Ottoman he "walked in the spiritual places" and so eluded his persecutors, who thereupon chose an idler and spendthrift from Jewry, and made him impersonate Zvi. It was that imposter, the old man told me, who had apostatized under the doleful blandishments of the Turk. And while the true Zvi had walked his dimensionless road, it came to him that he was not Messiah, but was in truth a leader of the elect—he has led them ever since; brought them here on a Dutch ship and led them into the empty west, where Hopi supported them till they grew strong enough to vanish into themselves and their cryptic city. Whoever he is, I bless him and praise him, may Jordan spring up where his feet step slowly on the desert, the holy old dodderer.

Far the greatest of North American secret cities is Mount Shasta. Not in it or on it or near it, but the mountain itself. For years now California has been replete with rumor of the weirdness of Shasta. From that circumstance alone, I might have guessed that the Shastini plan to reveal their existence within this century. In any case, my guess was confirmed by Alderman Bruharis, Chief Selectman of Shasta, and close cousin of the reigning queen. The scholars of Shasta were able to set my mind at rest about Atlantis and Lemuria—but to what conclusions their evidences compelled me I will not here disclose, any more than I will elaborate on Shasta itself. For all these things will become widely known within the next years, when Shasta, on the 500th anniversary of the first European annexation of American soil, will at length declare itself. So, impatient reader, I counsel you to shun drafts and strong medicines, and if you go about your

business more sedately, and contrive to elect a wiser legislature than the crew of hoarse-voiced sword-rattlers you've lately chosen, you will almost certainly survive till Shasta Day.

And as for me, Selvage Immanuel Hodgkins, your concerns need not be tender. Almost a decade has passed since I set out on my searches, and I sit now in calmness, waiting for that red star to blaze like a nova in the tiny sky of my sapphire, waiting to return to Ahampura, a city poised with loving sophistication between the hazards of the past and the tedious perfections of the future. When the star shines red, I will go there, to the only city that has truly moved me. Till then I hold myself in readiness. To be closer to my goal, I have withdrawn in some seclusion to my chalet above Darjeeling. The newspapers come with their tidings of left-wing agitation in Fatima, right-wing agitation in Cuba, more landings on the mental quicksand of the ominous moon. I look at them and let them flutter to my study floor; what I read are the elaborate grammars of Bopp and Whitney and McDonnell, furry with footnotes and exceptions, which will conduct me more surely into the Vedic world. I read the Rig Veda in English and the Atharva-Veda in Whitney's edition, and every weekday afternoon receive the learned and consoling Sri Prajñananda Ghosh, who chants to me from the Krishna Yajur Veda, and guides my studies generally. Sometimes, of an evening, his brother, Sri Prajñalila, comes too, and plays for us on his ancient vina.

It is a pleasant life, but padded, inert beneath the dusty cushions of scholarship and traditions, traditions which in Ahampura flash with the swift brilliance of clean steel on steel.

At length, much travelled reader, I can bring my story to a close. I linger with the pen; I know that when I drop it and look up, I will see the conundrum of the Himalayas wordless across the sky. Here on my terrace I await the shining of the star, and pray only that it comes before the smoke and fury of our latest war comes up out of India or down from Tibet to turn to bitter obscurity the clarity of the wine-sharp air.

---