

A VISIT TO THE KING

The mystical vision ~ A contemporary fable

In the inter-solar blackness existed a little world, one among many such, hugging its own personal sun with the familiarity born of long association.

On this world the inhabitants were very busy, digging, drilling, building, making things to fly, setting off controlled explosions in laboratories and minor conflagrations which wiped out a city or two now and again. It was a somewhat fractious world, disputatious; full of Rulers of important principalities located in grand buildings called "City Hall" or "White House" or "Palace of". Each Ruler had his own brand of expertise. Some excelled in dropping names, some in dropping bombs, and others in dropping mountains of paper into the in-trays of the nation causing bureaucratic sclerosis. The truly great specialized in all three. But on the whole it was a very creative world, where people got on with their lives and nursed their children and adorned their homes with wondrous objects arising from the fertile marriage of science and artistry.

There came a time when the Great One looked upon this world and found it ready—ready for an invitation to the Convocation. Calling His ministers to Him, He decreed that the summons be sent.

So it happened that a bored and somewhat sleepy technician, trying to locate a fault in the telescope which scanned distant stars in the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence, got a shock when he checked his screen. Something out there was pulsing in a most irregular fashion. Something was coming through, sending all the data-gathering technology into a frenzy of activity. To cut a long story short, a decodable message arrived, sending the scientific community into a frenzy of stupefaction. The Rulers were informed, (some of them), and were precipitated into a frenzy of obfuscation, invoking every secretive and censorial mechanism known to man. At all costs the people must not know until the Powers had worked out procedure.

Unaware of the crisis threatening the family of nations, a long-distance computer salesman by the name of Jemar was driving through the north of England late one winter's night. His day had been routine. The deal clinched, he was on his way home across the moorland after a late and leisurely dinner at a remote inn, when he stopped to answer a call of nature. The night was clear, and the moon had not yet risen, so the blackness of the sky was ablaze with stars; not just the constellations glimpsed in cities, but opaque with tiny points of light in-filling the spaces between.

"Truly as numerous as the sands of the shore", muttered Jemar, transfixed with wonder and awe as he realized that the astronomical enhancements he'd seen which show the night sky as just a sea of white light, were a true picture of the reality. His heart went out from him and knelt before the Creator of such munificence.

But home beckoned, and the wind was chill, so Jemar turned toward his car. As he did so he became aware of a figure walking towards him along the road, a craggy figure, puffing on a roll-up. Probably a local farmer out for a stroll. They exchanged greetings, remarked on the splendour of the heavens, and Jemar climbed into his car to start the engine. Nothing happened. Puzzled he examined the dials and saw that the fuel gauge sat squarely in the red. "Damn", said Jemar. "I knew it was low, but thought it would see me home." A few coughs from the engine later, Jemar resolved to abandon it and go after the solitary figure receding down the road for assistance.

The farmer, if that he was, was helpful. "Well, I have a vehicle further along," he said. "Can't give you any fuel, but you can ride with me a-ways." They rounded a bend and Jemar saw the vehicle. It was long and low, flattish and much wider than a standard car, and covered with dark panels. "Solar-powered," observed the stranger. "A proto-type. I'm testing it for the manufacturers. "

The interior was conventional, and Jemar took his seat with interest, quizzing the driver on its storage capacity and manoeuvrability as they glided smoothly along the winding road. It seemed a long way to the next town. Good food, a pint too many and a tiring day coalesced, and Jemar fell into a doze.

Hence he did not observe that the vehicle smoothly left the road surface, and smoothly dived into the night, heading towards those far-off points of light.

He woke suddenly. Nothing took a normal course after that. His companion had parted company with his roll-up and was transformed into a commanding presence, courteous but firm, with eyes that penetrated every layer of the computer-salesman's psychological attire. He was bidden to alight from the vehicle and follow his guide through a series of passageways seemingly carved in rock. Soft blue light emanated from the walls. The journey was a descent, occasionally permeated by a gentle breeze and an indefinable perfume.

They reached a great door barred with iron. The stranger stopped, looked appraisingly at Jemar, smiled, and then rapped upon it. "You're on your own now," he said gently, pushing Jemar through the widening gap.

Jemar entered an immense hall, so lofty it seemed forever empty, but filled with the rustle and vibrancy of many beings gathered, The walls were ringed with fire, and across a chasm set with swords were ranged the Hosts of Might, guarding this way and that, and ready to cut down the unworthy with bars of iron, glinting in the light of the fire.

His breath stopped with the terror of the situation, Jemar felt himself advancing past the swords and the Hosts, beyond the clang of steel, into a space vibrating with power, like great wheels turning and generating the lives and deaths of many worlds.

He did not cry out. He did not turn back. Some inner drive propelled him to walk steadily onward, looking neither to the right nor left as he became aware of music, a multitudinous singing almost beyond the range of his hearing. The singing began to draw him, in waves of sound, rising and falling. At the same time, his ears caught the flutter of wings, beating upon the air.

"This must be the court of the King", he thought from some knowledge deep in himself. "Perhaps I will see Him. Perhaps at last I can kneel in homage to Him who is the beginning, and the end, and the centre of all for which my soul has longed"

A wind blew. The choirs fell silent; the wings were stilled.

Alone, upright, in the depths of that deep silence, the man from Earth stood and looked towards the Throne, raised on crimson folds of cloth that cascaded to his feet.

He saw the One who was seated upon it. He saw, but could not speak.

Afterwards all he could remember were His eyes; the eyes of the Great One who had looked upon him, lovingly, humorously.

For they were human eyes.

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