

The Court of the Star King

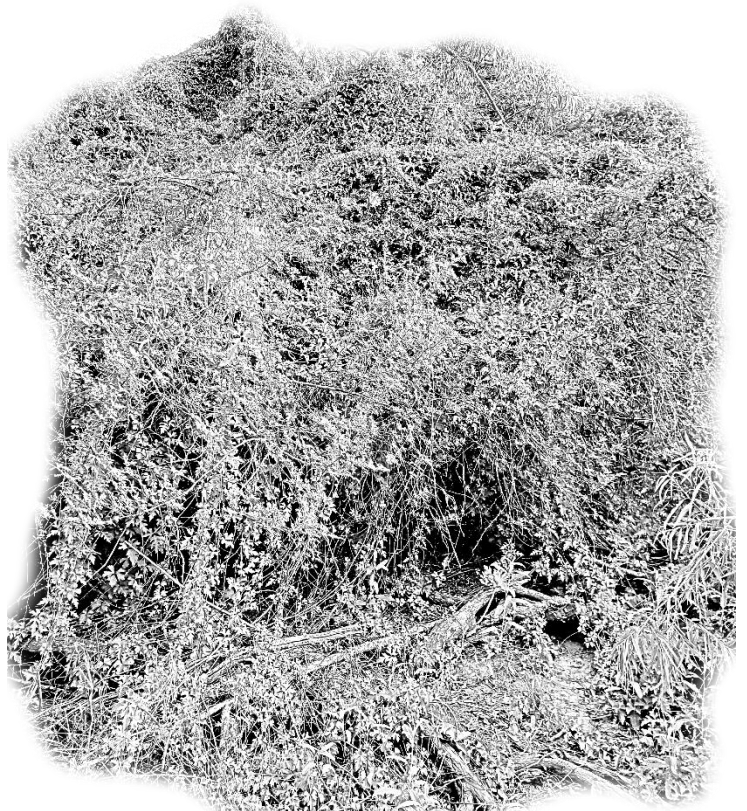
By J. Rodriguez Velez

I

Somewhere, in a thicket, verdant but veiled,
Shrouded by night, which the starlight assails,
There are two trunks, sentinels of that gate.
Nestled in that oaken bosom made so ornate.

Wrought by angels; made with intimate care.
Pickets silver, latches golden. See there
Those blest metals, now bear a way to find
The road to lead, beyond somber Earthly confines.

Forward, treading now, on that hallowed ground.



II

Through the door I walked, on that dainty night
But forwards zephyrs bore me not, despite,
The path that went beyond the gate into,
The bastion of shadowed obscured black trees.
Rather upwards, and through the air I flew
The lands below distant, out from my view.

I soared taller than falcon might venture
Touched I clouds, for now I was contender,
To object greatest born of dearest Earth
Flying on that midnight wind o'er mother.
Towards destination none, pointed I not,
For firmament bound I, new astronaut.

Then upon a shore I landed
And was greeted open handed
By a man of stately stature.
Near him flew an azure banner.
An aide-de-camp professed to be,
He was in service to a king.
Then trotted back to lines of men
Whose nation's name filled not my head.

Aethereal sand, sat still on this shore
Amidst a violet aura the sky bore.
There were great dunes of reds and golds and blues,

There were waves that battered in wine-dark hues.

Knew not where I, had found myself a-washed
For a moment I was soaring, now lost!
But to relief of mine, the man returned
And bid me follow, safety he affirmed.

A cape of gilded craft, lay there upon his back
And tricorn on his head, aureate and begemmed.
Whiskers coarse and wiry, On skin almost icy,
Countenance firm he wore, beside mantles of war.

Down to the line, where power did make camp,
Saw I there a man, who fortune seemed to stamp.

The men looked on me with great inquire
“Art thou warrior? Mayhaps a squire?”

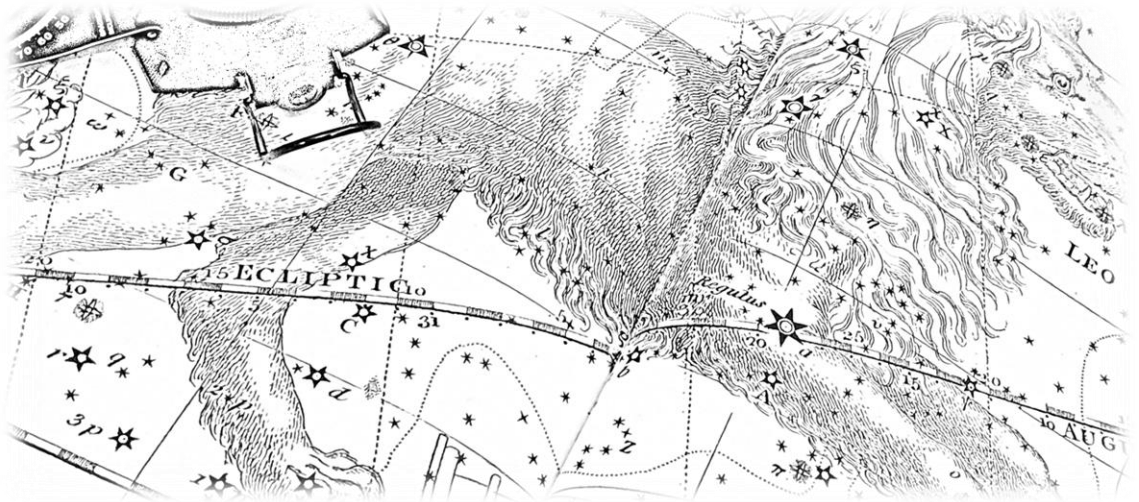
“Not of this land am I.” I thought to say
Brows were raised and questions arranged.
“Of what land be ye then, noble gent?”
“The Land of Yutri? The Land of Chent?”

I spoke then with a determination
To state the nature of my nation
“I am from a land down below
Where thine land seems to glow
For I should think I find myself amongst Ptolemaic candles,

Where swans doth soar through fields of suns
And where heroes of myth still live on.”

The men clad in metal of honored make
Possessed awe upon every face
“Ne’er have we heard, of land below our own.
Know we only of lands beyond our home.
The Land of Yutri is hot and scorching and the heart of a mighty beast
And Chent is temperate and yellow, lay it to the east”

Then the man who fortune seemed to brand
Approached us, gathered upon the sand
And with lifting up his hand
All notice he seemed to command
“Venturer from far below, beeth this, the Land of Leoyazad”



III

“One who walks in heaven, is surely blest by right of god
So then walk after me, follow paths where I hath trod.”

And then with a turn of mighty breast of metal white
Sat below a great forked beard that seemed as sapphire,
The man who fortune stamped beckoned me to follow
And we started along a path I thought hollow.

“Why then, Lord of Statelike make,
Whose name I may not relate,
Doth the path dressed in such splendor,
Lack the spirit of human tender?”

“The name given unto me is Kabal’azad, a Knight of the Silver Blue,
And I shall tell you the tale of why you see deserted roads before you.”

Long ago in time forgotten, a woman of night crafted Leoyazad.
Born from darkness, her heart burned with passion,
And from her bosom she bore,
Land, from mountain to shore.
The fire that burned within her shone so bright.
That color painted the land with soft blue light.

Then people she made, grown from icy ichor
And into them breathed life she did.
Upon the land they walked, and the gifts they found they used.
Piney woods and stony mounds, from each resources diffused.

But some men greed gained,
Man's goodwill was stained,
And patience of lady strained
Action then was made.

Lady of Night then bore one last being,
A princely stag of fearsome demeanor,
Whose antlers of ivory blackened, glistened in the starlight.
His hide a violent, velvety argent, slicked with dusk-born dew.
Through woods and groves galloped he,
And with thundering resonance upon every collision,
Tore up the wreath-topped wooden towers to litter the soil with splinters.
The Stag ended the convening of stone so that plains declared themselves mountains.

Man fled those reaches of the Stag where still he roams today,
Watching trails and looming over any who dare stray
From the protection of the cities walled,
Whose battlements relieve all,
For Knightly men may then defend, the city walléd to the end.

IV

Approached I now, alongside Kabal'azad
A magnificent construction.
A gemmed and metal façade
To serve the great function
Of the defense of city grandiose
That hugs a fortress most morose.
For within the vibrant palisades of gems and clouds
Cries of dismay and brooding thunderously sound

Be it though that boulevard there, is crafted with silver,
The precious cobbles knew unease no greater.
Men of shining aura, frigid in the skin
Hurried about, shuffling, and closed
And women, fair as winter night led frosted children softly on.

And then arrived bastion sullen,
Upon its walls a dozen
Different banners, noting an audience
Of many lords seeking royal providence.

Led by knightly companion, I was taken into the hall
And led through a castle decorated in great manner
For purples and golds encrusted every banner
And dream-colored murals slept on every wall

Then ordered the lumber of that chamber opened,

My guide relayed to princely guards.
Fine pine was grasped, then moved and
Bore witness did I to light in high regard.
For there sat a table round with knights abundant
Whose surprise at me, made mine redundant
For I had seen a king, and though reluctant
Introduced myself to the exultant
Monarch who beamed with royal glow
Of chilled ice and frosty snow
And he smiled and welcomed me to know
The Court of King Rihardathrow

Knew I now the Cerulean, Star King of Leoyazad

V

“Hail ye, thou who lacks skin of blue and aural shine,

What bringest thou to this realm of mine?”

The Cerulean King inquired with booming voice,

And stunned was I by every manner of his being.

In a city whose walls acted as dams holding back a sea of worry,

The great Star King retained nearly blinding, Cerulean gleam.

The knights under his employ shone with dimmer light,

Yet moonlight could hardly compare,

To the glory of the sky, these men seemed to own

And I was sure then that Stars were their homes.

“Starmen, and dear Cerulean King, I wandered a thicket, verdant but veiled.

Tw’as shrouded by night, which thy starlight assails.

I had supposed that perhaps, it bore a way to find,

The road to lead, beyond somber earthly confines.

Alas, my loom is finite, and thread of night grows shorter with every passing minute

I know that forever here, I cannot stay,

Believe I, that I’ll return come day.

For now though, I have found

A world of stars, and so let beat this heart,

Filled with the joy of knowing this place.

Despite the great terror which befalls it

Wonder I, if I might provide mine aid

If thy Cerulean lordship doth permit”

Cerulean Star King stayed silent, his person still glistened.

He put hand to beard and began to ponder

Could he employ the help of this wander-

ing, young man, who knows eagerness of course

But who speaks so boldly in this Court?

“Sky Wanderer, from far below, I shall permit thy aid only if,

You may find a man within this very castle, knight or servant

Who may speak to your nobleness, but should I whiff

A hint of trickery, I shall cast out a foul, wretched serpent.”

The Star King painted on a face stern

In order to ensure, he might discern

The nature of the wanderer from far below

Who now sought to make reputation known.

I turned to find Kabal’azad gone, On request of the King.

Eyes prowled to the room and scanned bluish faces.

Nobody could I think to ask, of my praises sing.

Until I had exhausted all of the places,

Except the one where, Cerulean Lord stood.

“Star King, I seek to call upon you

Do you believe me noble and true?”

Star King, smiled and bellowed with laughter

He thought my bravery to ask the master

Of all this kingdom, was most admirable

He accepted my tale, and began a preamble

To battle he said,
“The greatest hunt yet.”
We would find the stag
And Leoyazad would have its head.

*Elder
of
the
Starmen*



VI

We set out then, on the march
Every man in careful step.
We exited through begemmed arch,
To victory beget.

Cerulean Lord was upon horseback,
And looked he like an Arthur,
With dressed shield and shining lance,
Fear could ne'er hope to barter

Terror from the face holding resplendence,
In contrast to his many knights.
Who feared that recompence
Would have to be paid to their families the following night.

I too was fearful, unlike example Rihardathrow
Despite my being armored and shielded.
I dreaded the coming conflict so,
Regardless of what protection I wielded.

Tw'as then that I was trailing behind,
The final rider on that Quest-train,
That Kabal'azad came to remind,
Me and to rest my worries lay.

“A lull before the battle, is like a serpent in the mind.

It will offer you a fruit that you must always decline.
It will try to tempt you and force you back,
But never listen, always-“ ATTACK!

The call rang out from Cerulean chest,
The battle had begun, a knightly combat test.
The Stag stood before the path and gleamed and gnashed its teeth.
Nevertheless, brave inspired warriors, rode to meet the beast.

Cerulean King was first, flanked by his holy guard.
They rode up and prodded the silver-furred, yet left the Stag unscarred.
They rode back to the convoy, and others went forth,
In this second wave, one Knight gave a blow that produced a roar.

The Stag kicked and it bowed and charged down the road,
It meant for us to its blackened antlers know.
The men in front, of horses had great command,
And by this virtue avoided demise by Stag.

Alas, as Kabal'azad and I joined the fray,
The Stag had now found its prey.
We had not heard the battle calls,
And if we had, perhaps he wouldn't have met fall.

Kabal'azad and I rode with swords drawn
And we charged in rank to slay Night-Spawn.
We hacked and slashed and made great strides,
But in truth we only damaged his hide.

When I saw Cerulean King about by the wayside, beckoning us to come,
Twas too late, for the fate of Kabal'azad had already been spun.
I called to him "Heed the King and follow me to the line!",
But he was too enveloped in chivalric glory, to my words find.

The angry beast, now wounded more,
Turned again and great anger it bore.
Its head faced Kabal'azad as he made a final thrusting charge,
But alas fell, mangled, bloodied and scarred.

The Stag fled further on to see to its injuries,
And unto the dying Knight, go did we.
Cerulean King and I, stood both beside.
And propped up Kabal'azad,
As he went into that great dark beyond.

His mumbled final words,
Were nothing renowned,
But his plea of "Fight on."
For all of us did sound.

The phrase became our battle cry,
We carried on our minds,
As we buried dear Kabal'azad,
And the Stag we went to find.

VII

Under the Azure Banner, we trudged through ice and snow,
The city walled, once a spectacle, was now a distant and faint glow.
Then upon a forest we did arrive,
And found some trees still miraculously alive.

These were the wastes of which Kabal'azad spoke,
And what we saw in all great woe evoked.
While some trees stood, most littered the ground,
And where a mountain might be, rubble could be found.

Then over the wastes there came a bellow,
And the Cerulean King bid us to ride.
We dashed across splintered lumber and vanquished stones,
And the den of the Stag did we find.
The Cerulean dismounted and bid me to do the same.
He handed me a torch, so that glory I might claim.
He said to me that we shall go but I shall lead,
To aid Leoyazad, the slayer should be me.

I protested, saying that I was unfit.
But his Lordship insisted.
I took up the sword and torch,
And all valor that there befitted.

But rather than charge headfirst into an enclosed space,
I thrust the torch headlong into the deep and musky cave.

The Cerulean King thought me a coward, but I rebuked,
“We shall flush out the Stag, and on the surface, he’ll meet his due.”

The King thought a moment, and thought it well,
And we back unto our mounts and within us imagination swelled.
One man thought to string from the stumps rope, to trip up the beast,
Another devised to dig pits to ensnare the great Stag’s feet.

The King still preferred full battle, and so did I,
But we agreed that other plans might perhaps suffice.
The beast let out a great roar for the flame had reached him deep,
So quickly we began our efforts, so that a Death the Stag would meet.

As the Earth trembled as the Stag burst from the cavern,
We had prepared with plan of war.
We were all in our formations,
Prepared to inflict or thereby receive gore.

The Stag sprinted, roaring all the way, but tripped up on lines laid there by the way.
While the Stag was down, a pelting of arrows was loosed,
And seeing the Stag’s blood was to morale a boon.

The Stag returned to its hooves, his argent painted red,
It turned its eyes towards our shielded center, and ragefully charged ahead.

Alas for the Stag, an enspiked pit its ankles met.
For though it was shallow, great damage did our pits beget.
With a limp but an even more frightful rage,

The beast lumbered towards us and to end our starry days.

Hack! Smash! Clash!

Blades met antler in great flashes.

To the city were heard our clashes.

Thrust after thrust, hack after hack.

Twas a stalemate, until I heard a crash.

The shields of seven were worn down great, and snapped their wood had,
Fallen were more noble knights, of the land of Leoyazad.

Into a fury the King flew, and he urged me to follow through.
He urged me to remember Kabal'azad's plea,
And a spear he handed unto me.

It flew with a blue banner, the Cerulean's own herald.
And it had a shining iron tip, in aura unparalleled.
The Cerulean King then led me on, twas a final blow that we sought.

From amidst the echoing of clashing steel,
And the roars and groans of both beast and Knight's zeal,
I and the King rode past the flank,
And from the side would we attack.

In the glistening starlight,
We gripped our spears,
Rode up to a hill,
And gave out our cheer,

Of “Fight On!”

As we barreled down the slope.

Our horses galloping,

And unto the fighting Knight’s, a shining hope.

For with such force did we ride,

And no vigor did we hide,

That lances plunged into the Stag’s side,

And hearts and minds sprung with pride.

For the Stag fell dead!

And let out a final gasping sigh,

As it perished,

And gave its spirit up to the sky.

All rejoiced in that bloodied waste,

And so did I until I saw markings of the day.

The Cerulean King saw as I,

And in a jarring moment waved goodbye.

Before I left though he spoke aloud,

And he and the Knights unto me bowed.

They hailed me as noble hero, savior of the realm,

And a Knight took from his head, and placed upon mine a helm.

Tw’as a symbol of great laudation,

And in the dawning sky,

I bid farewell the King and Knights,

And left homebound, for my Earthly confines.

When I came finally to the shore upon which I came,
I found the sun was nearly to show, the beginning of the day.
I crawled within a bark that lay abandoned there,
And set out from Leoyazad, I know not where.

I suppose I drifted asleep, for I awoke upon my bed.
Twas the one I'd known all my life, where often dreams are said.
As the daytime sun sent rays through my windows,
I wondered if a dream had been the land under Rihardathrow.

Still, know not I,
The truth of that thing,
But never shall I forget,
The Court of the Star King.

