

DAVIS SCHNEIDERMAN

The Letter-Writing K.ampaign

Encounters in the City of K concern the skirting of kith and kin, the skulls of kilted, jocular functionaries, occasionally caught in kimonos, most often in kepi caps, bivouacked in underground bunkers and barracks, broken dignitaries with sparkless smiles and keen katamorphic responsibilities.

These minor functionaries break their duties into compact bursts of knavish corruption, sneaking kickbacks to candidates through the cold knuckles of Kublai Khan's electoral fingers. The Khan employs all constituents in the county, funds the bureaucracies—the copy editors, Klan members, Knights of the Bath, monotheistic carpenters, *corpus delectis*, concierges, lackadaisical accordionists, Kung-Fu artists, lactating yak peddlers and kangaroo keepers, cuckoo-clock artisans...and every resident of the claustrophobic city knows only too well the duties of their acknowledged, and officially-sanctioned racket.

“KK” insignias decorate the corner drug stores, arcades both classical and commercial, the electronic blips on optical keratometers, the knots of knee braces requisite on the architecture, and every single cone of molecular particle lost in the specim

For everything must be marked with the correct insignia—the “KK” of creatures great and small—despite domestic or foreign creation. Once collected within the City of K’s borders, each physical construct finds itself trademarked to better serve the Great Khan’s endless kingdom. Occasional scribes and seekers protest against this aspect of the Tartar scheme as *too* controlling, not at all in the cast of the lo

experience in K does nothing to corroborate the speculative scope of the grounds as ascribed by the citizenship.

you enough...state your k.oncern, then k.indly ak.sept my k.alculated k.ommissionation for your predik.ament, and be on your way..."

I cramp my back against the vertical frame of the cracked-rim bed and the front of the antique desk, taking notice of its interlocking, collapsible nature to keep the distinction between work and rest. The calliope of papers comes to a systematic halt, and K., his moniker carved in relief on the desk, bookended by two trademarks of the Khan— KK K. KK—casts his gaze directly at me.

"I'm already charak.teristically intrak.tably off sk.edule. Who k.alled you to this lok.ation?"

"I can't say," I say.

"I see. Dok.uments please."

Conveying my documents into his corpulent fingers, I feel the affliction of their crass ink forsake the sketch of my own digits and leech like an ancient sin to a fresh supplicant. Our covalent bond locks his naked eyes to my corporeality; sacking the landscape of my passport, K. looks less than content.

"Well, this will take some time to k.lassify and process..."

I'm struck by a mark of degradation, standing erect as K. commences to file my assembled documents into any number of the writing desk's dozens of concealed compartments. By means of a crank on one side, of which I have not taken note, K. produces a multiplex of combinations and recombinations in the desk's compartments, inoculating the distinct fractions of my documents into the slowly sinking and ever-changing configuration of panels, drawers, and cabinets.

I count the moments expectantly, in dumb shock at the complexity of this desk, more an exotic configuration than casual scribbling surface, and also at the disbelief that these certificates and documents, so customary to me as to be

components of my inner self, collapse like spectres into the colon of this miscreation, which so far as I can conceivably know in my current exposed state, may never see fit to expel them.

“You k.an plainly see the energy ek.spende.d on your k.ase...and I am not even your k.ase officer. From the look.s of you, I k.an’t be k.onfident you even have one. Yet, it is part of my sworn duties as a funk.tionary of the City of K., k.oncerned with k.ombattin.g the introduk.tion of the ‘K.,’ to direk.t all diplomatik. agents who k.ross my track..”

K., upon completion, closes the open drawers, jerks the control crank once again, and sends the stalks of exposed documents scurrying into darkness. Together, we feed upon the incandescent opacity fluctuating not through a window pane (none grace the cubicle) but through heat ducts encrusting the ceiling, conveying artificial daylight in spasms from some distant corridor. K. speculates with bureaucratic reserve, his pens and calligraphy implements at rest, the writing desk making residual cracks deep beneath an oaken finish.

“I’m attempting to balance my k.arma out,” K. says in seeming explanation for his actions, “like starch to sugar, it’s all converting to K.ismet. And I’ve always hated the Turk.s...”

I think of laughter, still, standing erect before this servant of the Khan, no longer expecting my documents to reoccur in the room, convinced of K.’s faith in his own techniques. “Will I have safe passage towards Xanadu...? My concerns in the capital city are crucial...” I tack on an uncertain caveat, “and involve the Great Khan directly.”

K.’s expression converts from apparent non-excitability to abject complicity, a skinny *crink* of nose and shadow, nearly imperceptible, but unmistakably extant to my

trained assassin eye. His jaw cracks lightly as reconnaissance for what will no doubt be a significant speech...

“I have work.ed in this City of K., for K.ing K.ublai K.han, k.areful to k.eep K.ierkagaard and K.ant from k.onfronting one another, k.oncerned with k.astration, K.aballah, and the K.oran, ak.septing that magik. ak.septs our imperfek.tions, just as we must k.apitulate to its silent presk.riptions. You may speak. highly of this k.nowledge, if ask.ed, and have even felt k.ornered by the k.lasp you k.laim it holds

K. and the K.ountrydr K.n

Our k.ongress is awk.ward, inek.spert, and I k.an feel the change as it ok.k.urs. It is the k.ansellation, just as Direk.tor K. predik.ted, of other k.arak.ters in the system. We ek.splore our sk.ripting hands and then k.raft ark.ane messages on the nak.ed ek.spanses of bodies k.onjoining us. Mine ak.sented with typewriter ink., his k.old and k.rawling with the enk.umberance of the Sity's bureauk.rasy. "Other phonemes disk.onek.t; there is nothing to sensure," K. whispers.

The k.rak.s of my palms fill with k.um. K's? Mine? I k.annot make the nessesary distink.tion. K. buk.les the seremonial k.lothing of his station. "Nothing is ak.tual, everything is k.onseivable."

Still visk.ous, another k.rank ek.sposes the k.onscientiously k.ept sentral k.orridor, swept k.lean twice every syk.le by emissaries of the spesigi t rok.ho316.1(n)-16.7(a)-14.4(9-6(i)

