


THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS!

# GREEN MOUNTAIN POST

FROM  
COAST TO  
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PANAMA RED  
TAHITI-ALASKA-JAJOUKA

PLEASURES OF THE IMAGINATION

# THE ROYAL ROAD SOCIETY

# PANAMA ROAD

A FRAGMENT FROM JACOB LIGHT'S LONG AWAITED NEW NOVEL

*The story of how these people came together to form The Royal Road Society is not mine. I was not there at its inception, nor did I witness these scenes. Most of this information came to me over a three-year period—in fragments from Daisy Cutler, The Hat, and others, participles of conversation as always—but it involved a beautiful piece of human lace-work, a spider's web, invisible, Cosmic, and out there at the straggling end of a thread-in-progress I found myself inextricably dangling.*

*But there is a part of the fly's mind which is drawn to the spider at the center of the web, compelled to discover death's mystery with the same magnetism which draws the moth to extinguish itself in the flame.*

It began with a game of chess, though it was not a game, nor was it a chess set in any normal sense of the word. When you looked carefully at this particular chess set, the pieces took on a life-dimensionality which mirrored the Real Thing in perfection and exactitude.

The board was in fact a squared miniature continent, with plains and mountains and forests, criss-crossed by rivers. Yet super-imposed as a dimly-lighted grid, were the sixty-four almost even squares of light and darkness—sunshine and moonlight, night and day, good and evil, yin and yang, fire and water, earth and air—just call it life and death.

Whatever person, pawn, knight, bishop or king, stepped into a dark square, he found himself encumbered by the night—while on the light squares, sunshine prevailed.

The pieces of this unusual set were constantly in motion, propelled by unseen hands: when you stared at it, as you were inevitably compelled to do, the armies

carried out their combative manoeuvres, a constant backwards and forwards battle was waged, yet neither side would win. *En prise, en passant*, on and on the war; it was not a chess set to play with.

This remarkable world of miniature Persian armies, in their perpetual battle-ballet, could not precisely be called material, and yet it was no hallucination. But seeing this magical chess set, *just laying your eyes on it, forced you to leave yourself, a part of your rational, intellectual mind, behind*—and therein lay the magic of the game as well as the power of its possessor, the extraordinary Robin Rothschild.

The data of Rothschild's parentage is/was unknown: from his appearance, the thick dark Biblical beard hung on the young but gaunt bony face, the long jet black hair flowing close to his shoulders, but offset by a worn Spanish leather coat, one might have taken him for Greek, Italian or Jew—any permutation of the Semitic, mediterranean races. At 18 years of age (in 1963 when Robin first appeared in Cambridge), he was clearly a man of international experience, a citizen of the world whose passport bore the visa-stamps of thirty-odd countries like scars on an old, embattled street dog.

The members of his soon-to-be-formed *cabal*, The Royal Road Society, found their individual paths to Robin Rothschild's door, the door of a demure house on a quiet, tree-lined academic street, a New England street not more than several stone's-throws from the heart of America's first university.

There, in Rothschild's house, seated Moroccan-style on large overstuffed-cushions covered with exquisitely printed silks, with shoes off (Rothschild's custom), this small group of friends, (several of them Harvard students) would get high on the finest black and blonde hashish which

ever made its way into the New World.

A special incense burned throughout the wooden two-storey building, and Robin Rothschild would ceremoniously wait for the hashish and the strange vibratory humming which ran undeniably through his house, to take effect on the guests. The ever-moving set of combating forces glowed in the hashish candle-lamps and the aura of life's perennial struggles enveloped the room.

Outside the greying house, the normal bustle of college-town continued, but inside Robin Rothschild's domain the repeating warp of Time-and-Space revealed its mainspring secret—that the illusion of the chess set was merely a microcosmic reflection of the illusion of Life itself—as above, so below. And the young men and women, clothed, for the most part, in the expensively-tailored cynicism of their bourgeois backgrounds, were blown away.

Robin Rothschild was a born Initiate, an exceedingly rare condition, heir to a long line of leaders of an ancient mystical secret society whose existence pre-dated the Christian era. How and why this particular spirit should have chosen to incarnate in the Twentieth Century and should appear in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the winter of 1962-63, is a mystery and therefore must be dismissed.

The first to fall under Robin Rothschild's magnetic sway was Franz Mandel, a bright exchange student from The Netherlands who'd come to Harvard to study international commerce and finance. Although his father, a Dutch toy manufacturer, made many business trips to New York, Franz had never been to America prior to the fall of 1961, when he entered Harvard as a freshman.

Franz first met Robin over a game of chess at a Cambridge coffeehouse, *Le*

*Petit Roi*: the sandy-haired Dutch student had been a patron of the place during his first two-and-a-half years at Harvard, felt comfortable with the classical music, the *cappuccino*, the chess sets which lined the walls of the coffeehouse, reminding Franz of Amsterdam. *Le Petit Roi* was a good place for foreign students to socialize, and Franz did well with the Radcliffe types he met there.

But in his many off-and-on visits to the *patisserie*, Franz Mandel had never before seen this bearded stranger. Sitting alone, sipping coffee, and staring into space with a predisposed air, something of Robin Rothschild's vibration struck Franz Mandel with a jolt. For a few minutes, Franz tried to ignore Rothschild, tried to keep his eyes from glancing toward the stranger's magnetic direction.

It was not Robin Rothschild's outer manifestation which had ensnared Franz's attention there in the coffeehouse, though Rothschild's long hair and his thick hirsute face were not quite commonplace yet in Cambridge in the early fall of 1962 (a year prior to the assassination of President Kennedy and before the Beatles made their deadly assault on the American media-machinery). Europe had been more than accustomed to these outrageous stylistic demonstrations, particularly Amsterdam, Franz's hometown; but it was an invisible something which Rothschild radiated as he sat there, and Franz Mandel, the lanky Dutchman, found himself walking over toward the stranger's table, introducing himself, and asking if Rothschild wanted to go a round of chess.

They never finished the game that afternoon.

The foreign student, and the foreign *non*-student compared notes: the cities of Europe, which Franz had visited occasionally on pleasant vacations with his family, Robin Rothschild knew like the taut, veined skin of the back of his hands. The intricacies of European government and finance, which Franz studied so assiduously, Robin Rothschild seemed to have authored, throwing out complex quotes and citing figures from internal European governmental documents about which Franz had only heard tell, let alone read. But more important, the young stranger was blase about his wealth of information, as if the academic data of Europe's historical past and future were already inscribed and therefore of secondary importance.

It was Robin's non-attachment which caused Franz to forget the game of chess and even his *cappuccino*, and concentrate his full attention on the curiously different personality of this international stranger.

A week later, after a sumptuous Persian-style dinner, which Rothschild seemed to have prepared himself, for there was no one else in his home that night, Franz Mandel smoked hashish for the first time and got loaded.

But it was the vision of Rothschild's magical chessboard, revealed later on in the evening, which caused the young man

from Amsterdam to experience an ecstasy lasting several months and which changed the course of his thoughts, as well as the rest of his days.

"I don't believe you guys are stoned," J.T. (which was what Jon Truesdale had been called all the way through his Indiana High School career and his younger days at Harvard, before he became The Hat), J.T. couldn't quite buy his friends' tales of this wizard and the chess set which no one ever played with.

When Franz and Chris suggested taking J.T. with them to visit Robin, Truesdale balked; in spite of himself, he did believe their stories possible, and he wasn't quite ready to confront the whatever-it-was which had blown the minds of his two closest companions. Perhaps because J.T. was so concerned with the theatre, spending his Cambridge days immersed in the medium, acting, directing, perhaps because he knew that something indelible had clearly occurred to his friends, J.T. tried to stay clear of the character Robin Rothschild.

But Cambridge is a small university town, the streets are thin and narrow. Trying to avoid someone in Cambridge, someone who apparently has your number, is out of the question: sooner or later your paths will cross.

J.T. was stepping off the curb at Mt. Auburn Street and simultaneously reading a piece on Antonin Artaud in the theatre section of the Sunday New York *Times*, completely unaware that he was about to be run over by a large Cambridge Transit Authority bus.

Suddenly, a strong hand from nowhere reached out and grabbed him by the arm, pulling Jon Truesdale a fraction of an inch out of the path of the oncoming vehicle.

Truesdale, quite surprised and happy to have been saved from a calamitous rendezvous with death, turned to thank the person who'd pulled him out of the way of the bus. First he bent down to pick up the newspaper which had fallen out of his hands, then said "Hey thanks, man," and found himself staring into the bright burning onyx eyes of none other than Robin Rothschild.

It is impossible to say that the young Initiate operated from a set of plans, though in retrospect this might appear to have been the case. Ideas were his only possessions; even the magic of the chess set was to him just an idea.

In the short span of four or five years in Cambridge, Robin gathered a tightly-knit group of twelve people, ten men and two women, who shared an affinity, a psychic bond, created and based, in good measure, on the vision of the primal chessboard. Within their circle, the members of The Royal Road Society developed a sense of cause; that it was somehow their duty to make manifest the message of the chess set, the illusion of life's battles. They would be an inspirational force declaring that in the face

of ongoing madness, political strife and domestic upheaval (and these same thirteen young people were growing up, and older, with it), they would work toward the spreading of cosmic-cannabis-consciousness on a massive scale across the United States of America.

Their conspiracy was one of concept, a conspiracy of thought as well as action—the people of The Royal Road Society, under Robin Rothschild's direction and advice, would pool their personal and familial resources into a wide-spread, organized, revolutionary, dope-oriented brotherhood, involving hundreds in the United States and in many other countries, whose sole mission was to turn on the green light, turning people on through every possible avenue—dispensing the concept as well as the material herb itself.

Their pyramidal dealing consortium developed rapidly, with Rothschild subtly at the helm, organizing the systems and yet minimizing his own visibility as much as possible.

A missionary spirit seized the cabal right at its inception, and as their enterprise began to skyrocket, larger and larger sums were turned over. Profits from the cannabis trade were re-invested in all manner of New Age cultural effects and efforts—underground newspapers, rock and roll emporiums, FM radio stations, cottage industries related to dope (cigarette papers, hashpipes, etcetera), films, and hundreds of other unnameable enterprises which spread the message of the newly developing cannabis-oriented culture. Many different levels and personalities of the radical political movement of the '60's benefited, most unknowingly, from the invisible (and therefore tax-exempt) dope-dealing foundation.

The operatives of The Royal Road Society were everywhere, hundreds, perhaps thousands, connected tangentially, although only a miniscule few were actually aware of the existence of this secret organization sitting at the peak of the pyramid. Some had perhaps heard the name "Royal Road" bantered about in the hippest of circles, but with no actual meaning behind it, just a phrase, a name. With the certainty of a large, rolling tidal wave, appearing as a slim spiral of herb-smoke of the earth, the entire American value structure began its re-orientation.

Through the stoned-out burgeoning middle-class youth, a society of its own, and through the public media, The Royal Road Society was able to influence the larger masses. By the Summer of Love in 1967, just before I got into heavy dealing with The Hat, more than seven million dollars had passed through the Royal Road's collective treasury in less than four years operations. Less than a decade later, Robin Rothschild and Franz Mandel, as representatives of the RRS, were permanent board members as well as principal stockholders of a medium-sized Swiss bank with assets well over 75 million dollars.