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The Survey of A and Z

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THE SURVEY OF A AND Z

In AD 946, Italian diplomat Luitprand of Cremona was sent as ambassador to the Emperor Constantine of Constantinople, who formally greeted him while he rested on his palace's legendary "Throne of Solomon."

The "great gilt lions" roared and simultaneously the "gilt birds" sang "according each to its kind." The throne itself, "of great size," floated from the gilded floor and levitated straight to the ceiling—clearly not your everyday chair—but Luitprand reports "I felt no terror, nor was I moved with astonishment, having made inquiry beforehand of these things, from one who knew of them." Where Someone-A gets pingpong eyes in stupefaction, Someone-Z is slipping into lidded-eyed ennui. The man who nursed his infant son ("thick milk, and very sweet") for five months when the mother's breasts went dry, amazed the European scientist—enormous exclamation-pointed rushes of amazement—though the natives of the Venezuelan village all accepted it as curious (but mildly so), and in the spirit of similar village history. And the sinister, wizardly gesture that bespooked a band of well-armed Mongol bandits into fleeing?—was Museum of Natural History archeologist Nels C. Nelson removing his glass eye. Just one more example: last night, at The Kozy Korner Tap & Grill, a nineteen-year-old puppyguy comes in with the antigravity leaps of an astronaut jiggling in space, he's so *alive* at the thought of being alive, he's so much freshly risen cream. "Am I in *love*?" he asks the room, "Am I in love? Oh, *am* I!"—there's the sugared glaze of danishes across his eyes. He tells us: "I can't stand to be away from that woman *one minute!*" And up at the bar, six grizzled veterans of it all, in their forties and fifties, turn to stare at him—their faces so overswimming with pity and envy at the same time.