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Some critics are predicting that Jorge Luis Borges will become one of the "big" literary names of our time . . .

THE TWO KINGS AND THE TWO LABYRINTHS

by JORGE LUIS BORGES

(translated by Donald A. Yates)

MEN WHOSE WORD MAY BE TRUSTED (BUT ALLAH KNOWS MORE) RELATE that in the early days there was a king of the islands of Babylon who gathered together his architects and magicians and ordered them to construct a labyrinth so perplexing and so subtle that prudent men would not venture to set foot in it, and those that did would become lost. This creation was a scandal, for confusion and marvel are properly operations of God and not of man.

With the passing of time there came to his court a king of the Arabs, and the king of Babylon, in order to make fun of his guest's simplicity, had him enter the labyrinth, where he wandered ashamed and humiliated until the setting of the sun. Then the king of Arabia begged divine succor and came across the exit. His lips uttered no complaint, but he said to the king of Babylon that in Arabia he had a better labyrinth and that, God willing, he would make it known to him one day.

Then the king returned to Arabia, called together his captains and his lords, and overran the kingdom of Babylon with such bright fortune that he destroyed its palaces, defeated its peoples, and captured the king himself. He tied the king of Babylon on the back of a swift camel and led him to the desert.

They rode for three days at the end of which he said to the captive, "Oh, King of Time and Substance and Great Presence of the Century, in Babylon it was your will to lose me in a labyrinth of bronze with many stairs and doors and walls; now the Almighty has seen fit that I should show you mine own labyrinth, in which there are no stairs for you to climb, nor fatiguing corridors for you to explore, nor walls to block your way."

Then the king of Arabia untied the cords and abandoned the king of Babylon in the middle of the desert, where he died of hunger and thirst.