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*A Brief History Of The Fourth Finding Of Wagadu, by Dr. Bambl Trepklin*

The refrain to a Fasan oral epic dating from at least 4000BPE:

*Four times, Wagadu, that great city, stood in all her splendor! And four times she slept and was lost. Sleep came to Wagadu the first time through vanity, the second time through falsehood, the third time through greed, and the fourth time through dissention. Four times Wagadu changed her name. First she was called Dierra, then Agada, then Ganne, then Silla. Four times she turned her face: Once to the north, once to the west, once to the east, and once to the south. Those are the directions whence the strength of Wagadu comes! The strength in which she endures whether she be built of stone, wood, or earth! For truly, Wagadu is not made of any of these things; she is not a city, but is the strength which lives in the hearts of men, and should she ever be found for the fourth time, she will live so forcefully in the minds of men that neither vanity nor falsehood, neither greed nor dissention will overcome her again.*

*Hoob! Dierra, Agada, Ganna, Silla! Hooob! Fasa!*

Hereafter follows a scholarly account of the fourth finding Wagadu, by the holy knight Labin ah Akrab. Copies of the original tale can be found in their entirety in the libraries at Ælexandroð and Wagadu<sup>1</sup>. The original, allegedly written by the hero (generally believed to be fictitious) Septimus Aulus Gallus Claudius Alegerius, has, to put no fine point on it, disappeared without a trace.

The story is generally considered to be a fabrication with very interesting verisimilitudes, though it should be mentioned there exists even in academia a strong support for the factual accuracy of the legend. There are reasons for this, the most predominant of which stems from the ending of the Old Wars some nine hundred years ago, and the Peaceful Era that has continued since, the ending of the former and the commencement of the latter coinciding with the traditionally accepted date of the rediscovery of Wagadu.

The tale goes as follows. Some 8,000 years ago, djinn again took the city of Wagadu from the mortal realm and hid her in their own ethereal world. Over the course of the next seven millennia, Wagadu existed in an imprisoned state outside of the physical world. According to the tale, Wagadu is sentient and becomes an avatar of herself, creating a world within her city limits, not unlike the Brahman who creates and destroys all of space and time as he wakes and sleeps.

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<sup>1</sup> French: Ouagadougou.

The world is limited, but only in a sense. The city was surrounded on all sides by a thin forest, which Wagadu was magically bound against entering. Any of her creations passing into the forest were quickly hunted down and destroyed by the sleepless djinn. An outsider was required to pass through the enchanted forest of the djinn so that Wagadu could chance the escape.

And so time passed. The fantasy world Wagadu created changed according to her whims, whole epochs spanning at the speed of time or slower, as Wagadu was the omnipotent master of her own world, though bound by the laws of the world *she* existed in (that is to say, our own). She could move her creation no faster than the time we experience, nor could she contrive anything other than what we as a society contrived in our hearts. She was a goddess, but limitedly so, from our outside perspective.

The narrative is told from the point of view of the alleged author, the aforementioned Septimus, later King Septimus Alegerius. He was a talented illusionist in his time. Wagadu had become a small town with only a few thousand inhabitants, and the tales of powerful magic of old had become little more than tales; illusionry was one of few remaining magical trades a citizen of Septimus's Wagadu could take up for a living. Septimus did this for supplemental income and for pleasure: his primary occupation was that of a Coffeehouse cashier and cook.

As the tale goes, he was leaving the coffeehouse after a day of work and ran into Labin ah Akrab on his way home. Labin, we are told, "was spat out of the forest as a man spits a cherry pit, a burst of ethereal flame the terrifying hue of emerald serving as an the expelled spittle."<sup>2</sup> Certainly disoriented after an unknown period of time in the djinn's forest, Labin was assailed by two of the town's guardmagi, Sir Caius Quintimus Gallus and Sir Albus Claudius Claudia, who are immortalized for us in song (Mendell 42). Unfortunately for them, and as previously mentioned, the goddess Wagadu intentionally depleted the reservoir of magic in her town, leaving the guardmagi virtually defenseless against the knight Labin, who had come from a period of fighting against beings made almost entirely of magic. Though he was nearly spent physically and mentally, he was fierce, and dealt quickly with his assailants before he understood his bearings.

The narrative becomes entangled in chronological controversy at this point. Certainly Septimus and Labin met conversationally at some point in the next several minutes, but there are at least two dominant versions of the next several events. Both translations of course affirm that they're exact copies of Septimus's own hand, and of course both stories *could* be considered to be true, depending on the specificity of detail that the writer was going for. Quickly: the older account, dated to 233PE,

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<sup>2</sup> *The History of the Eternal City*, vol. 5, pg. 94.

states that Septimus was spotted by Labin shortly after disintegrating the two guardmagi. Septimus began to run first and Labin gave chase.<sup>3</sup> Labin was allegedly trying to do to Septimus what he did to the unfortunate guardmagi, but found his spells completely ineffective against the seemingly unimportant Septimus. The other account skips this detail, asserting instead that Labin noticed instantly that Septimus was protected by an aura<sup>4</sup>. Whatever the case, Labin soon catches up to Septimus, and the two have an understandably awkward conversation for a short time. Labin tells Septimus about his aura (aurae?) of protection, and then, upon learning that he has reached Wagadu, tells Septimus his mission: to “take the eternal city back from the djinn who would doom [humanity] and spread peace over all the land.”<sup>5</sup> In response—and the origin of perhaps the longest running physical-humor joke in history—Septimus knocks Labin out with a rock, and dashes across town to his girlfriend’s house, who is none other than Wagadu herself.

While the action-packed beginning and end of the story entertain many younger readers, this middle part has been the subject of so many philosophy and theology books over the last nine hundred years as to border on the cusp of absurdity. Septimus, who before thought his girlfriend’s name (Wagadu) and the name of his birthplace was simply a coincidence, finds himself stricken with an indomitable curiosity and even suspicion. Septimus may have disregarded Labin’s comments, had he not showcased his power rather wantonly when they ran into one another, but he had, so his suspicions were not easily quelled.

Nor did Wagadu try to ease them. Septimus, arriving at her apartment on the opposite side of town, announces why he had come and what he had seen that night, and Wagadu, instead of offering comforting words, “looked as if Septimus had just found out Santa Claus was only a fairy and not, in fact, God”, and embraced him (Mueller 214).

She didn’t explain immediately, but gave her boyfriend a significant hint when she announced the arrival of Labin, without Septimus ever having given her his name. Septimus follows Wagadu out of her apartment and is, in one of the more humorous moments in the legend, according to Dr Ridell MacPherson, professor of linguistics and folklore at Okzenford College, “blindsided by Labin’s fist, smacks the door, and falls over, delirious for the time being” (53).

During Septimus’s short daze—it can be inferred—Labin and Wagadu have a very important conversation, where Labin learns that Septimus’s girlfriend is Wagadu—“not a physical embodiment

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<sup>3</sup> Still other diversions of this tale state that Labin began to give chase first, but such inconsistencies are expected to occur in predominantly oral literature.

<sup>4</sup> Two auras, in some cases.

<sup>5</sup> *Labin ah Akrab: A Biography*, pg. 67.

of Wagadu, but *actually* Wagadu, the whole damn city, idea, essence, standing right in front of him, inside the town of Wagadu” (Mueller 216). Labin offers Wagadu his services (namely, getting her back into the real world), and, after Septimus returns conscious to the scene, the three set off immediately towards the forest, intending to make a run for it.

A pause from the action for now. Septimus, it should be understood, now knows that his girlfriend is, for all intents, his goddess. In the story he accepts the information calmly, and though it his anger shows itself later, at no time in the next hour or two (roughly the time it takes the trio to complete their quest) does Septimus really talk about his feelings. Wagadu often says in the tale that she “knows” that Septimus is capable of this feat or that—of course she knows! She created him! As well as any omnipotent being can know a temporal being, so Wagadu knew her boyfriend, and created him according to her will. If a stranger relationship could have ever existed, it’s not recorded. Even the story of the War at Illias, when Helen returns to her husband and lives a placid life after indirectly causing the genocide of the Mykean civilization, their people, barely compares to Wagadu and Septimus.

And yet it is still not fully known what Septimus was thinking after he found out he was little more than the figment of a bored prisoner’s imagination. Perhaps Wagadu created him to mentally repress the information, or even created his will in such a way that it wasn’t a difficult barrier to overcome. Either way, the connotations of such a revelation and idea of existence are deeply disturbing.

Moving along, the trio entered the woods and, of course, encountered djinn. The first appeared shortly after their entrance into the forest. It appeared struck a spell on Septimus, who seemed utterly doomed. To everyone’s surprise, however, the spell didn’t work! Wagadu, earlier, told Labin that she had no power in the forest, and could not even enter it without a guide from the outside world. Labin offered the idea that it was Wagadu’s love for Septimus that kept his protective aura/ae active even in the realm of the djinn, but Wagadu struck down the idea as “ridiculous.”

Whatever the case, we know that the djinn couldn’t hurt Septimus, but Wagadu and Labin had no such protectives. Thus it was that Septimus took his role as the hero of the story. They took as straight a line as they could through the place, their desired goal, according to Labin, an unimpressive creek that flowed around the forest, which was in fact the Creek of Undoing: a final barrier devised by the djinn to keep outsiders out and prisoners in. The water was in fact a very volatile and destructive spell that, if touched, would utterly annihilate the offending individual. We see the power of the spell when, as the three encounter the river, a djinn appears and takes Labin by

the neck and dangles him over the stream. In an instant, however, the djinn's mocking laughter is cut off, and the demon itself tumbled back into the creek, making no splashing sound, but is never seen again.

The reason for his doom, it seems, is Septimus. In the first example of handgun technology, Septimus held his hand in the traditional shape of a handgun, and shot a "magic bullet" from his finger, which had the desired effect on the djinn. We find out how he did this soon after: Wagadu, after seeing that Septimus was immune to djinn magic, reconfigured existence in her world to allow magic to again be practiced. Septimus of course instantly felt this silent well of power spring to life in him, being a practitioner of magic. It is to be assumed that Wagadu also told him, so as to make sure her plan worked, if the need called for it.

As a last thought, Labin did not tumble into the creek with the djinn, but was saved at the last moment by Wagadu, who rushed to his aide. In addition to Labin being small in stature, Wagadu was also somewhat stronger than the average young woman, not being bound by an actual physical body like the rest of us.

This brings us to the end of the tale. The three stand at the bank of the creek, ready to say their goodbyes. Septimus, of course, can't go with them, since he technically doesn't exist outside of Wagadu's imagination. He realizes this, and prompts her with the heavy question: What will happen when Wagadu leaves Wagadu? Will Septimus's world cease to be? Will it be quick, existence one moment, nothingness the next? Or will there be a time of destruction as the world is slowly unmade, as seen in the book of Revelation?

Thankfully—and certainly in the only way a true fairy tale could end—Wagadu says the world will not end. Wagadu is their world—they exist inside of her, and will go wherever she goes. The forest will be safe now, and the town will grow into a great city, still surrounded by forest on all sides, but now the forest will be safe, and it will be King Septimus Alegerius who deems them safe, having entered and returned from them, and with no small booty in tow (Septimus would of course be credited with the return of magic to Wagadu). They would exist in their world, removed from our own, until the end of time. Wagadu would never be captured again, and they would never have anything to fear. An era of peace would reign there forever, even as Labin's world enters its nine hundredth year of the Peaceful Era.