

Rays From The Rose Cross Magazine

For Children

The Adventures of Rex and Zendah in the Zodiac— Part I

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You have all heard about the twelve signs of the Zodiac, those groups of stars that form a band around the earth, through which the Sun seems to pass during the year and the Moon, in her journey, every twenty-eight days.

Tales and legends about the signs of the Zodiac have been told for thousands of years, for they are very, very old, perhaps older than our earth. Children in China, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Arabia knew much about them, and looked up and found them in the sky as you may do now.

The names the ancient peoples gave them were not always the same as ours, but the stories they told about them were similar. In Babylon, the sign we call the Lion was the Great Dog, and the Twins had a shepherd to look after them, to see that they did not get into mischief, I suppose, as twins often do!

The Chinese picture the Zodiac much as we do, but they have Virgins sitting with their hands folded instead of one, and a Dragon instead of a Sea Goat, and sometimes all the signs are nicely seated on little stands like those you see on old Chinese vases in the shops. You can recognize the same signs too in the Egyptian pictures, where the Sea Goat is often depicted as a Crocodile, while in ancient Arabia the Ram, Bull, and Goat have a god riding on their backs, and the Fishes have a god seated between them.

The zodiacal New Year does not begin when ours does and perhaps you wonder why the Ram does not "rush in" on January first. The New Year does not start on January first for every nation, and many hundreds of years ago it was the custom to celebrate this at the proper Sun Time—that is, March twenty—first, for the Sun always says that is the beginning of the year, in spite of the laws that men make. The old Romans

recognized this for a long time until one of the Emperors decided he would alter the calendar.

The Sun, Moon, and stars form a giant clock and calculate their time just the same, whatever we say, and it is not so very long ago that men in England counted their day, month, and year sums so badly that their time and the Sun's did not agree. When they tried to put it right, they had to lose eleven days to straighten things.

What happened to the children who had birthdays about that time I do not know. It is bad enough, you will say, to have one on February twenty-ninth in a Leap Year! However, just to show that the Sun knows better than grown-ups, he gives you a birthday just the same every year, even if you are born on the twenty-ninth, only it is not always on the same day.

The stars that make up the groups that are called the signs of the Zodiac can be observed if you will go out on a clear night. You will see them best before the Moon has risen. Perhaps the easiest to find are the Twins, for the two big stars that are supposed to be on their heads are easily seen, one below the other.

Not far off you will find a cluster of seven small stars called the Pleiades, and these are in the Sign of the

Bull. They are sometimes termed the Seven Sisters. One was supposed to have done something wrong and so was shy and hid behind the others. Unless your eyes are very keen you cannot see her.

"Is any of the tale true?" you may ask. Well, some of it is, but which part you must find out for yourself. If you have a birthday on the same day as either Rex's or Zendah's, you will find that some of their adventures will happen to you either asleep or awake, or you will want to do many of the things they loved to do. Now we must start the adventure.

Prologue

Rex and Zendah lived in the country, on the side of a hill with great pine trees on the top, which Zendah always said sang the Sun to sleep at night. Rex thought they were the poles that carried the fairies' wireless messages to the star people.

Every morning from their bedroom they could see the Sun rise over the hill opposite, and at night they often watched the stars gradually light their lamps—that is if they happened to be awake! In the winter they sometimes crept out of bed to peep at the sparkling Dog Star that comes up over the side of the sky to

keep watch over the earth after Orion has drawn his sword and lighted up his belt for everyone to see.

Rex's birthday was on March twenty-seventh, just when the Sun has come into the Sign of the Ram. He was quick and merry with bright brown eyes and curly hair, the color of a ripe chestnut. Some of his boy friends said his hair was as hot as his temper, hut he was never angry for long.

Zendah's birthday was on November twenty-sixth, when the Sun is in the Sign of the Archer. She was fair-haired, with big blue eyes, and thought it a great shame that her hair was only wavy and not curly like Rex's! Her greatest delight was to ride the little white pony given to her by her father on her twelfth birthday.

They both disliked being kept indoors, and they would rather spend all their time racing over the country in search of adventures of one kind or another. In the winter they liked sitting by the fire, when the wind was howling in the pine trees on the hilltop, and listening to the stories about birds and animals that mother told them, or looking through father's telescope and trying to learn all the names of the stars.

So that when the Great Adventure came—but there—you must read it for yourselves.

The Adventure

On this special night, the twentieth of March, Rex and Zendah had talked about the stars for a long time before going to sleep, so Zendah was not very surprised when she woke with a start to find a shining yellow figure standing beside her bed. "Rex," she cried, "wake up, Hermes, the messenger of the gods, is in the room! Do wake up before he goes away!"

Both children sat up in bed and gazed at the figure of the messenger. They noted the wings on his feet and his staff with the two twisting serpents that father had told them about. Hermes smiled at them and said, "Do you really want to know all about the Zodiac? Father Time says you may come with me and travel to the lands of the Zodiac tonight, if you wish."

"But won't it take ever so long?" asked Zendah, "and what would mother say if she found us gone?"

"Those who pass through the golden entrance gates of the twelve signs just a second before midnight are able to have all their adventures before the clock strikes twelve—everyone knows at that moment there is no time at all."

"Oh, what fun!" cried both the children, jumping out of bed and dancing wildly around. "Do let us start at once."

"Stop a minute," said Hermes with a smile. "You must use your 'star bodies'—those you have now are too heavy. You cannot go to the stars like this."

Then he took them to the window and told them to gaze on the bright Dog Star, Sirius, and to wish with all their might to visit him. As they did this, they felt a curious sensation of sinking and sinking, and getting smaller and smaller, and tighter and tighter, till suddenly—snap!—and there seemed to be two Rexes and two Zendahs, one asleep on the bed and the other very much awake indeed, with a shiny body and a curious cloud of many colors all around it.

"Now you are using your star bodies," said Hermes, "and you will be able to fly with me to the Golden Gates."

Off they went, flying through space—passing on the way the Moon and many strange things—until they came to the entrance of the lands of the Zodiac. The gates lie just between the Fishes and the Ram.

What wonderful gates they were! White, and yet shining with many colors! Sometimes they seemed to be made of golden fire, sometimes of silver fire; yet when you looked again they appeared quite different. Something of their color you will see on a cold night when there is a wood fire burning; sometimes you will catch a glimpse of their glitter when the Sun is just sinking to his rest at night.

At a word from Hermes, the gates rolled open and the wondering children entered. Thousands of beautiful forms surged to meet them. "The Angels!" whispered Zendah. Hermes led them toward a white marble temple, which had seven massive steps leading up to the entrance porch. Inside they found a great circular hall with twelve alcoves, in each of which was an angel. The angels were dressed in beautiful robes of different colors and with a shining star on their foreheads. The travelers could not see very much of their surroundings, for the light was too strong; it seemed to change and flash, first one color, then another.

Suddenly it became more dazzling and pure white, and at that moment a voice was heard saying: "What want these mortal children?"

"Oh, Great One, permit us to visit the Lands of the Twelve Signs," answered Hermes, "that these children

may return to earth and tell others of the work of the Zodiac, as did the Wise Men of old."

"That is well chosen," said the voice. "Go, children, and lose not the magic talismans that the Guardians of each sign will give you."

Keeping their faces ever toward the light until they reached the entrance of the hall, Hermes led them out of the temple and brought them to the first gate. As they went toward this gate, they noticed doors at intervals in the cloudy walls surrounding the entire country. It was toward one of these doors on the left hand that Hermes took them. "Behold the entrance to the Sign of the Fishes," he said.

"But why," asked Rex and Zendah, "do we not start at the Sign of the Ram, for we were taught that the Ram came first on the list?"

"Because in Starland everything is reversed. If you want to see a beautiful view of the distant country on earth, you must start at the bottom of a mountain and climb to the top, and, having seen everything, you go down again into the valley and tell your friends all about your journey. Your earth is like a mirror and in it is reflected the picture of all that happens in the stars, and you know in a mirror everything is reversed.

"When you return home and wish to use the talismans given you by the Guardians of the Signs, you will begin with the Sign of the Ram. Take this scroll and do not lose it, for on it are written the passwords for all the signs; the Keeper of each gate will demand them of you before you can obtain admittance."

Hermes bade them farewell and left them to continue their journey, but told them with his merry laugh that they would see him when they least expected him.

(To be continued.)

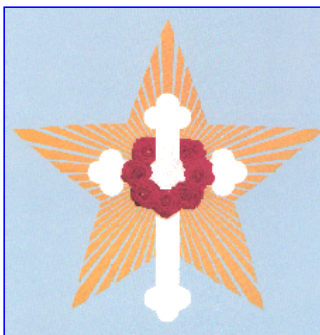
—Esme Swainson

—*Rays from the Rose Cross Magazine,*
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