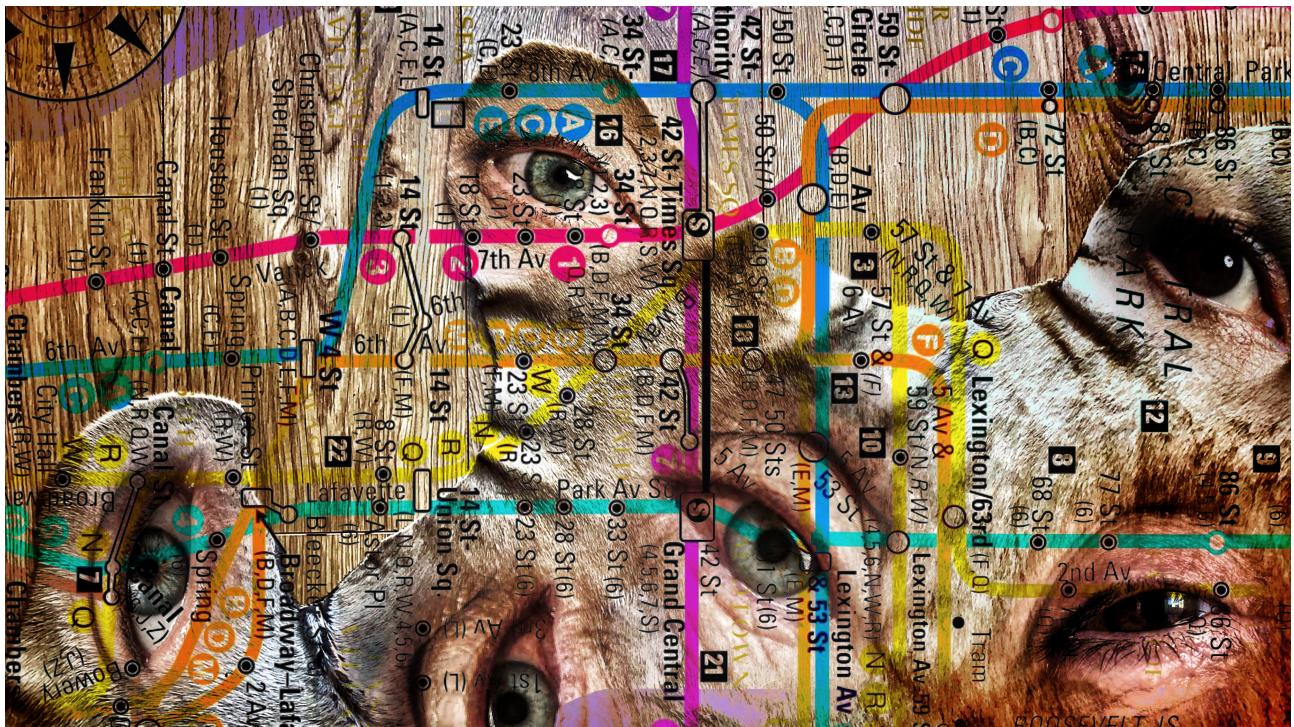


# A MAP TO FIND ONE'S WAY BY

By Richard Hall



**I**magine if you will, a highly detailed map commissioned by a powerful dictator, which was drawn at one to one scale, and was then placed over all of the lands he controlled, so that it matched up precisely with the original land mass beneath it. And imagine that it was so convincing to the citizens of that land that they eventually believed the map to be where they lived, while the place where they had originated from was gradually removed from underneath them. Having deported the populace in this fashion without causing much consternation, the dictator then directed his cartographer to make alterations such that the citizens believed these changes to be quite natural, despite the fact that much of what was being changed defied the laws of nature. With only these distortions of the map to navigate by, the unfortunate citizens were subjected to whatever whimsical alterations

the owner of the map decreed. Yet, they could not see beyond the precincts of their predicament to realise the true extent of their dispossession from reality. So they proceeded incuriously down circuitous routes within their towns and cities, often becoming quite lost, lived in upside down houses, sitting, eating and sleeping on their ceilings, fed their children brightly coloured food packaging believing the shreds of plastic and cardboard to be wholesome, planted bones in their gardens expecting dainty flowers to grow from them, and elected domestic pets to minor public positions with great pomp and ceremony. All of these details, though met with a little surprise to begin with, became quiet normal to these map dwellers, and after comparatively little time, despite remarks by a few in their society who considered their community's condition to have gone awry, these criticisms were perceived by most as aberrations from the norm, and were thus disregarded. And despite the mounting evidence revealing this new reality to be quite impractical, as small details such as gravy pouring not towards their roast dinners, but away from them, caused perplexing problems, they by and large resisted the temptation to question the very things that were causing them so much trouble. Indeed, not only did they refuse to acknowledge the folly of the place, but they began to stamp out any opposing voices within their strange country, and ruthlessly punished detractors with cooking implements that they administered perversely, and somewhat enthusiastically. And bound thus to reinforce their disturbing fictions, they became inordinately proud of the customs they had half remembered from the doctored history books situated within the miscellaneous aisles of their local libraries, and blithely trumpeting their pride, celebrating noisily in the streets the unique qualities they possessed like victorious strutting cockerels, and all could see to marvel at this righteous razzmatazz, despite these celebrations often ending up in cul-de-sacs.

**B**ut times change, and when the wind blew in from another direction, fluttering the edges of the map, there came a reformer. With clear sighted determination, he sought to correct what by this point had become a topsy-turvy world, not with idle promises or spells, nor by redrawing the map, but by wishing to return the citizens to their country of origin. But despite his conviction that this would surely resolve the many troubles that had been piling up like so much refuse in their streets, his mere suggestion of a return to this true place could not be comprehended by these twisted minded folk. For, had they not always lived in this place where for generation after generation they had seen no change, and had they not always done what they had always done, and that surely this was an attack on the very nature of who they were. And was not this interloper therefore, merely out to cause outrage by muddling their affairs for which he had absolutely no understanding, affairs that after all, were unquestionable. And so, convinced of the inviolability of their customs, preferring a life of walking up stairs to arrive at basements, or eating their own shit in the hope of shitting sausages, these stolid citizens sent packing the stranger who had arrived uninvited into their midst.