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SMYRNA

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Revelation 2:8–11

What's in a name?

The **S** is the sinister hiss of a snake.
The **m** melts like manna on your lips.
The **y** merges with an **r** that ripples like a bird-trill.
The **n** serves to launch, from the tip of your tongue,
an **a** that is open to anything.

There is poverty in Smyrna,
better seaports elsewhere,
an agora destined to become one more
museum the world won't flock to.

Add to poverty affliction, and there's more
promised: imprisonment,
persecution to the point of death.

When the fine print says 'crown,'
think metaphor.
When it says 'don't be afraid,'

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imagine the shadow of wings
hovering over the city.

THYATIRA

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Revelation 2:18–29

Beauty has enriched the city. Who wouldn't be delighted
to live here, savour rich colours, test with a finger tip
textures of wool, leather, linen. Measure enough
purple fabric for a shawl or shirt. Buy a bronze kettle.

Commerce thrives in Thyatira. Buyers and sellers,
masters and slaves. There are those who grow rich and those
who never escape punishment. Light alternates with darkness.
Every morning the sun rises, a fire hot as the eye of God,

reflecting off the golden lamp stand, blinding the potter
at the kiln. When darkness falls the weary leave their labour,
bend their knees and, holding fast to what is promised,
keep watch for the morning star.

PHILADELPHIA

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Revelation 3:7–13

You kept the lamp burning,
whatever the price of oil,
the length of darkness.

Like any flame
it could have flickered and died,
but never did.

Year after year you toiled,
endured with patience,
stood firm as the new Jerusalem

against all odds.
Your door is always open.
Your light (like your name)
is love.