

## Alexander and the Moon

February 3<sup>rd</sup>: Chemotherapy 5

Presences: Ifosfamide, Etoposide, Ativan.

Alexander liked to believe. It didn't really matter in what, simply so long as it could be believed in. A detractor, in speaking of Alexander, once said that he could not possibly have faith in all of his conflicting beliefs. That simply wasn't true; Alexander had an intimate and genuine conviction of each and every one of his beliefs regardless of how much they conflicted with one another.

When Alexander was a little boy, he would wear costumes. It didn't really matter what type of costume- lurid and violently-colored polyester space-suits, intricate tangles of makeup that made him into a clown, a pixie, a troll, or sometimes just the dull patina of mud and faded corduroy pants that caked another boy in his school- Alexander loved to wear them all.

He was truly a "liver" in the long-dead or never-born sense of the word. He wasn't in any way attached to a pancreas nor concerned with digestion much at all- but enjoyed living with the most desperate and pathetic fervor. Every breath that passed was its own epitaph, made a bit milky and sad by Alexander's reluctance to let it go.

It is easy to deduce Alexander's most Secret Passion by now- it was to Fall in Love.

Alexander lived far away, or a long time's hence, or whatever is necessary for you to pull away from right now. There were many wars on the planet Alexander lived on. Young men would grow to a certain age, and then go die- and if they lived they grew into old, sad, bent people with calipers for hands and rulers for arms and microscope lenses for eyes. "Why," they would wonder, "Why must we do this to one another?" They never asked each other of course- since they knew they wouldn't listen, but would just sit on opposite sides of the planet and wave their rulers around and ask "Why?" Well it's obvious why, isn't it?

The moon. The moon that breathes over the lover's mandolin- the moon's dandelion milk that the poet laps up through a cat-tongue quill- the moon that men have built pyramids and temples and arches and domes in order to stand upon to reach- of course it was the moon. Without the moon,

men wouldn't fight, they deduced. They didn't know what else would happen- but they decided to fix the moon.

The old men from both sides of the world had the same idea- and began to erect two massive concentric glass spheres around the planet- one nestled inside of the other like an embryo inside of an egg-shell- made visible by Aristotle's steady dissecting hand. When they got halfway and met each other- they didn't say anything, just sort of scowled and joined up the sides. They then filled the spheres with ocean-water. To some dust floating about in space, it made the planet look divine- the child of an iridescent soap bubble and a ripe lemon when the sun hit it at the right angle. The old men then went to work discovering a type of octopus that hated sunlight and didn't need to eat. Eventually, they found what they needed- and they bred enough octopi to blot out half the planet and filled the spheres with them.

Any point of the world that could be touched by moonshine was now ceilinged by magnificent embers of burnt-orange tentacles that seethed through the black fire-wood of octopus ink. When the sun came, the octopi would scatter under its arrow-fire to the other side of the planet.

Without the moon, people didn't go to war. There were no Helenas left to Troy about. But the old men didn't foresee what blotting out the moon would do to people's hearts. There were no more wars, but also, people couldn't fall in love.

Oh poor, Alexander. Poor, Alexander- for there was a girl.

She must've been from the other side of the world because her hair strangled itself under the sweet, rich weight of its own Turkish coffee. Her eyes were like vivid china-plates that had been painted on as if brooding Russian poets had sprouted sweeping Spaniard's hands. The last syllable of her name was "Aah..."- it was the sound made out of the inevitable coitus of palate and throat that occurs after one dunks their head in a stream. It was the sound the zippers on Alexander's costumes would make when he was a child. This girl! But when they kissed it was like a bird pecking at its own reflection, or two tombstones crumbling into one another. Poor Alexander, for he was sure that they would be madly in love with one another, if there was only a moon.

Alexander couldn't stand it. He would spend all dusk waiting for the sun to set- hoping for a glimpse of the moon before the octopuses tangled and noodled their way in front of it. But he never saw it.

Alexander wanted so desperately to live, he was willing to die for it. One day he couldn't take it anymore, so he gathered together all the things that once loved the moon. He got them to agree to make a catapult to shoot

him into the glass spheres and break them and let people fall in love again. He gathered the great cracked leather backs of olive-pickers who once ruttled like goats with milkmaids and with them he laid the frame of his catapult. He gathered the wind that rustles through the ropes of a swing-set and the top of birch trees and sings in B-flat and he tied together the broad beam-backs. He took an lip-stick stained wine glass and fasted it to the end of a beam and snuggled himself down in it and weighted the other end of the beam with a sigh from the last damsel in the last tower guarded by the last great vermillion dragon. Then he cut the rope of wind with the pirate-king's sword- and catapulted himself up into the air.

The clouds poured on top of Alexander- they made chariot rushes that broke the phalanx of his jet-black hair into chaotic, routed, strands. He saw whites and blues and whites and then red as he burst through the glass and blue again as he tumbled through the ocean and then red again as he burst through the glass. The moon smiled at him- you don't really know how white something can be until you see the moon so close- and for a wonderful moment, Alexander was- yes- in love. He floated on until he went asleep in the cleft under the moon's eyelash, and might as well have been dead because he was so in love, and also- he was dead.

The girl fell in love too as the moonlight gushed forth across the world, riding a current of ocean-water and dying octopi. But, poor girl! She was alive! And her love, the love she realized she had always loved and loved so deep was dead. She felt, and felt, and felt and it was so sad to feel! Oh, she cried! She cried stars, and comets, and cried the purple rings of planets. But the moon looked at her and laughed, and said "Silly girl, to eulogize the epitaph. To love is only the end of the beginning. It's the beginning of the beginning, middle, and end that makes worth loving." The girl looked up at the moon and said "What?" The moon shrugged, and said, "Near-incomprehensibility is the hallmark of the poet's genius." The girl didn't feel any better, but one day she would love again. And until that day, at least there was moonlight for her tears to travel up- like dew on a spider's web- so that they could blanket Alexander from the cold. Or at least, that was what he liked to believe. And now, she did too.