

The Search for Alexander

By

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1 EXT. THE HEATH - AFTERNOON

1A [Wind whistles through dead grasses.

1B [Trees tilt on the breeze.

1C [A lone branch bounds up and down in the cold air. Up and down, up and down. Slowly then quickly, bouncing.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

(Calm, neutral, almost a whisper)
I never learned how to whistle. I don't know why. Maybe it's one of those things I just never picked up or didn't ask about, but I've never been able to. I regret that. I had friends who could whistle. Most of my family could whistle, or, at least, I assume they could. Come to think of it, I don't know if I ever saw my father whistle, not in person at least. I think he told me he could once, but I never actually saw him do it. I just believed that he could. I suppose I could try learning. I certainly have the time now, but the air's too thin up here, and I doubt my lips would make the shape at this point. I'm not even sure I remember what the shape would be. A sort of "o," maybe? I don't know. It doesn't matter.

1D [Thin clouds roll overhead, drifting along like trails of windborn sand on a beach.

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)

I managed to fall asleep again last night. It's been a while since I was able to. I say night, but it never gets dark here, not properly. I just know that I should be asleep, and I drift off without really thinking about it. Night without the dark... Maybe that's how all sleep works though. I should ask someone. Next time I see someone, I should ask them.

ALEXANDER sits beneath a dead tree beside a rocky trail. His legs are crossed. He wears a long overcoat.

1F } ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
 He was here again while I was
 sleeping. I'm almost sure of it. } 6

Alexander stares plaintively toward the ground.

1G } ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
 He never says anything or touches me
 or interacts with me at all. Most of
 the time, I don't even see him, but I
 know he's there, like dew on a front
 lawn, I just know he's there. I can
 feel him. Even when I'm not asleep,
 he's still watching, from somewhere. } 7

Behind Alexander, in the distance, THE MAN IN BLACK stands
 unemotive and immovable, dressed in a top hat and tails.

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
 Some day, I'll manage to catch a
 glimpse.

Alexander continues his examination of the ground in front of
 him.

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
 I saw another traveler today, two of
 them.

2 EXT. THE HEATH - MORNING 2

Alexander looks up. } 8

2B } On the trail in front of him stands THE STRONGMAN, a bald,
 muscular figure in a leopard skin leotard and handlebar
 mustache. He guides THE BANKER, a thin businessman in a suit
 and tie, who crawls on his hands and knees on a leash in
 2A } front of him. The two look down at Alexander vacantly. } 9

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
 They didn't stay for long.

2D } Alexander continues to look up at The Strongman and The
 Banker. } 10

CUT TO

2C } THE FOOL looks down at Alexander. } 11

Alexander looks back up at him. } 12

CUT TO

2C

2A

THE EMPRESS looks down at Alexander.

Alexander looks back up at her.

] 13

] 14

CUT TO

2D

THE HERMIT looks down at Alexander.

Alexander looks back up at him.

] 15

] 16

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)

I don't know where they were going. I don't think they knew where they were going either, but nobody ever seems to know where they're going, not on this road.

] 17

The Strongman and The Banker turn away from Alexander and walk and crawl away down the trail in tandem.

2D

Alexander turns to watch them walk down the road.

] 18

2E

He turns back, looking down at the ground again.

] 19

3 EXT. THE HEATH - AFTERNOON

3

3A

Alexander looks down at his right arm, which rests in his lap. The end of his sleeve hangs limp. He is missing a hand.

] 20

3B

He turns his wrist over in front of him, as if examining every facet of an invisible appendage.

] 21

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)

My hand started to itch again this morning. I still can't remember where it went or if it was ever there to begin with. I think it was. I can remember using it. Not for anything specific, just a general memory that I used to use it for things. Picking up the groceries, resetting clocks, buttoning up my coat. I don't recall the specific movements of my fingers or the feel of my palm against surfaces, but I know that it was there...I think.

3C

] 22

3D

Alexander looks up. After a beat, THE SALESMAN walks past, an enormous satchel of pots and pans over one shoulder. He does

] 23

30 not slow as he JANGLES away.

Alexander watches The Salesman go then turns away.

32 ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
It reminds me of a story a traveler once told me. He was the first to talk to me. He might have been the last. I can't remember.

4 EXT. THE HEATH - MORNING

THE CENSUS TAKER (O.S.)
Hello.

Alexander looks up, his eyes open and observant.

ALEXANDER
Hello.

THE CENSUS TAKER stands over Alexander, dressed in a thin, dark suit and a bowler hat. He holds a clipboard in one hand, a pen in the other.

4A THE CENSUS TAKER
(Clipped, officious)
I wonder if you could help me. I'm from the Bureau, here for the census. Could I have your name, please?

Alexander turns away, looking into the middle distance.

ALEXANDER
(Searching, confused)
John...George...James, I think...

THE CENSUS TAKER
(Skeptical)
You think or you know?

ALEXANDER
(Apologetic, unsure)
I think...I know.

The Census Taker makes a face.

4C THE CENSUS TAKER
(Huffy, uptight)
Well, Mr John...George...James, could I ask you how many people you've seen along this road today?

ALEXANDER
(Still searching for his name)
...How many people?

31

THE CENSUS TAKER
(Getting impatient)
Yes, yes, who've passed along this way. It's for the census.

Alexander turns back, looking The Census Taker up and down.

ALEXANDER
(Is this a trick question?)
...One.

32

The Census Taker immediately starts scribbling on his clipboard, taking notes.

THE CENSUS TAKER
Hm, one, alright. And could you describe him?

33

Beat.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)
(Correcting himself)
...or her!

ALEXANDER
Ah...He was tall and well dressed and thin, and he carried a clipboard...

34

The Census Taker stops writing. He lowers his clipboard and pen, giving Alexander a sour look.

35

THE CENSUS TAKER
Please, Mr James, I wish you would take this seriously. This is official business, from the Bureau.

36

ALEXANDER
(Confusedly apologetic)
I'm sorry.

37

THE CENSUS TAKER
(Speaking slowly)
Am I to assume that I am the only...individual...that you have seen walking along this road today?

38

Alexander turns away again.

39

4A

4B

4C

ALEXANDER

(Really thinking now, remembering)
Ah...Yes. I don't think I've seen anyone other than you for days.

39

THE CENSUS TAKER

(Almost amused now)
Days? Come now, Mr James, there was a young couple in fancy dress who passed me not ten minutes ago. They must have come along this way, unless...

He turns away from Alexander, a look of near terror crossing his face.

4C

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)

Dear me, straying from the path. What will the Bureau think of this?

4A

40

He turns back to Alexander.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)

(Urgently)
Are you sure you haven't seen anyone else pass by today?

4B

Alexander looks up to The Census Taker. He nods quickly.

41

The Census Taker throws up his arms in a huff.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)

(Frustrated)
I don't know why we bother anymore. Things getting worse all the time, people straying from the path. You wouldn't believe the things I heard in the last town.

42

ALEXANDER

Like what?

43

THE CENSUS TAKER

(Distracted)
Hm?

ALEXANDER

What did you hear in the last town?

44

THE CENSUS TAKER

(Hesitant at first)
Well...May I sit down?

40 Alexander gestures, shuffling aside to give The Census Taker room. He takes a seat at the base of the tree with him. 44

The Census Taker sits with his knees pulled up in front of him.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)
Thank you, thank you.

He shuffles, getting comfortable.

40 THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)
Now, I didn't see anything with my own eyes mind you, but, um, according to a Mrs...no, wait... 45

He refers to his clipboard, flipping back several pages.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)
According to a Ms Randon Rothchild, local landlord and barmaid, there was a struggle in her tavern the night before...

5 INT. TAVERN - NIGHT 5

5A The room is dark, lit only by candles and dim lanterns. MS ROTHCHILD blows out a candle on the bar. 46

On the other side of the tavern, JEB wipes down a table. Ms Rothchild attends to a row of glasses behind the bar in the background. 47

Ms Rothchild turns her attention from a glass in her hand to Jeb, looking toward him slyly. 48

SD SB SB Jeb wipes away, his back to Ms Rothchild, oblivious of her gaze. 49

Ms Rothchild smiles quietly, looking back down to her glass. 50

SE Outside, a shadow passes passes over the shuttered windows one by one, a figure moving patiently along the wall to the door, the SHUFFLE and CLACK of footsteps accompanying it as it moves. At the doorway, the shadow comes to rest. 51

Beat.

Three deep KNOCKS sound against the wooden door. Jeb and Ms Rothchild stop and turn to the sound. 52

		Jeb looks from the door to Ms Rothchild hesitantly.	53
		Beat.	
		Ms Rothchild gestures to the door, cuing Jeb.	54
	Sc	Jeb, still hesitant, moves to the door.	55
		Hastily, he draws back the bolts of the door, each with a loud, metallic CLANG, and pulls it open, revealing utter darkness outside, nothing on the doorstep.	56
		Beat.	
		Behind the door, Jeb looks back to Ms Rothchild nervously. could someone be playing a trick on them?	57
SH		Ms Rothchild cranes her neck, trying to peer into the darkness outside.	58
Sc	SF	The Man in Black suddenly glides through the doorway, catching Jeb off guard.	59
SI	Sc	The Man in Black walks further into the tavern then carefully stops, turns, and takes a seat at the bar.	60
		Ms Rothchild looks to Jeb at the door.	61
		Jeb hastily shuts the door then hurries back to his table on the other side of the room.	62
		Ms Rothchild watches him go then turns to focus on The Man in Black.	
		MS ROTHCHILD (Switching to "customer service" mode)	63
		And what can I do for you this evening sir?	
		The Man in Black remains silent and still.	
		At the back of the tavern, Jeb looks up to the bar warily.	64
		Ms Rothchild looks back to him for a beat then back to The Man in Black.	
		MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D) (Nervous)	65
		Whisky? Ale? A wine maybe?	

Again, The Man in Black is silent.

66

sc

MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D)

Well, how about a glass of water?

67

sk

Finally, The Man in Black reacts, raising a single gloved finger. At the back of the room, Jeb keeps an eye on the situation.

68

sf

MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D)

(Relieved)

A glass of water? Very good sir, coming right up.

69

At the back of the room, Jeb still looks back and forth from The Man in Black to his table.

70

The silver gleam of a watch chain dangles from The Man in Black's waistcoat.

71

sd

Jeb looks back to his chores deliberately.

72

Ms Rothchild draws The Man in Black's glass of water from a flagon, her back to both her customer and Jeb.

MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D)

(Making small talk)

Lucky you, showing up when you did. Jeb and I were about to close up.

73

sf

In the background, Jeb sidles around his table, making a slow approach on The Man in Black.

MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D)

A slow night we've had though. Last fellow to come by was...maybe two hours ago, and all he wanted was a loaf of bread. Can't charge much for bread these days, what with all the flour coming from Andalusia.

74

Jeb pads closer and closer to The Man in Black, taking careful, considerate steps.

With every pace, The Man in Black's watch comes nearer and nearer to his grasp.

sn

MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D)

Then again, I suppose there was that one fellow who stopped by to ask directions. Can't hardly get anything

75

SN	SC	out of passersby though, except for an ale or two.	75
	S)	Jeb looks up to Ms Rothchild, still turned away, and The Man in Black then back to the watch.	76
	SO	He reaches out, ready to snatch the watch from The Man in Black's pocket.	77
		Suddenly, The Man in Black whirls about to face Jeb.	78
		Turning back to the bar, Ms Rothchild gasps, dropping The Man in Black's glass of water.	79
	SA	The glass shatters against the brick tiling of the ground.	80
	SR	The Man in Black holds Jeb by the jaw, his head thrust back at an awkward angle, his reaching hand firmly in the clutches of The Man in Black's other hand.	81
		Ms Rothchild watches, speechless, her hands held in front of her.	82
		Beat.	83
SS	SR	The Man in Black takes a step away from the bar, pushing Jeb in front of him.	84
	ST	Jeb can only roll his eyes about in a panic as The Man in Black walks him to a table on the other side of the room, a candle mounted at its center.	85
	SU	At the bar, Ms Rothchild watches on as Jeb's head is pushed toward the flame.	86
		Held motionless by the grip of The Man in Black, Jeb grimaces as he is pushed closer and closer to the burning wick, the light of its flame gleaming in his eye.	87
		Beat.	88
SV		MS ROTHCHILD (CONT'D) (Finally breaking) No!	89
		The Man in Black holds Jeb steady.	90
	SW	His back faces the bar, still, silent.	91
		Ms Rothchild inhales nervously.	92

sw [SV] The Man in Black throws Jeb away from the candle. He slams against the wall in a heap.] 91

[SP] He holds for a moment, standing over Jeb, then strides out of the tavern, shutting the door behind him.] 92

[SX] Jeb watches The Man in Black leave then slumps down against the wall, exhausted and relieved.] 93

] Ms Rothchild quickly rounds the bar.] 94

6 EXT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS 6

6B [GA] Ms Rothchild throws open the door, looking left and right for The Man in Black.] 95

] The courtyard outside is silent, dark. Not a soul moves.] 96

] Beat.] 97

] Ms Rothchild turns away, shutting the tavern door behind her.]

FADE TO

7 EXT. THE HEATH - MORNING 7

7A [Alexander and The Census Taker sit at the base of the tree.]

THE CENSUS TAKER

And he vanished into the night. Ms Rothchild claimed that she never saw him again.

Alexander stares into the middle distance, his eyes lost in thought.

ALEXANDER

What could he have wanted?

THE CENSUS TAKER

Well, I should think that was obvious. He wanted a glass of water.

Alexander looks down to his feet.

ALEXANDER

Maybe.

] The Census Taker looks away, down the trail.] 98

7A

THE CENSUS TAKER

Well, I must be off.

99

He stands, taking up his pen and his clipboard.

THE CENSUS TAKER (CONT'D)

The census won't take itself after all.

Alexander looks up at The Census Taker.

ALEXANDER

No...it won't.

7B

THE CENSUS TAKER

The Bureau will likely send through another official in a month or two. Take care of yourself, Mr James.

100

Alexander looks away.

ALEXANDER

I'll try.

The Census Taker shifts in place awkwardly.

The Census Taker turns on his heel and walks away down the road.

Alexander watches him go.

101

7D [7C

In the distance, The Census Taker walks past the indistinct form of The Man in Black. He takes no notice of him.

102

Alexander smiles lightly, turning back to the road.

103

8 EXT. THE HEATH - AFTERNOON

8

8A

THE LOVERS sit in a bush on the opposite side of the road to Alexander. They stare at him silently, their heads held closer together.

104

Alexander looks back at them.

8B

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

I finally met the couple in fancy dress the man had mentioned. I woke up one morning to see them on the other side of the road, just watching me.

105

CUT TO

9 EXT. THE HEATH - LATER

9

9A [The bush stands empty now. The Lovers are gone.]

9A

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
They were gone by later that morning.

106

9B [Alexander looks down at his arm.]

9B

107

9C [Both of his hands are missing now. His left and right sleeves are empty.]

9C

108

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
I shouldn't have fallen asleep again.
he came last night, took my other
hand.

9D [Alexander looks up and away, into the distance.]

9D

109

ALEXANDER (V.O. CONT'D)
It feels just the same as last time. I
could swear I used my hand just
yesterday, but I don't really
remember.

9E [Dry grasses wave in the breeze in the distance.]

9E

110

Alexander's eyelids slowly droop then fall. His head drops.]

111

CUT TO

10 EXT. THE HEATH - NIGHT

10

10A [Alexander wakes. Behind him stands The Man in Black.]

10A

Beat.

THE MAN IN BLACK
(Low, calm, reassuring)
It's alright. It's done. The long
wait, the intermission, the eternal
challenge is over. Your struggle, your
time in the sun, it's at an end. Take
my hand. Let me guide you, let me lead
you away from this place. There is no
threat in discovery.

112

The Man in Black places his hand on Alexander's shoulder. He
begins to whistle slowly, a high, thin tune.

Beat.

	Alexander purses his lips and whistles the same tune, high and thin.	}	112
10A	Beat.		
	Alexander looks up.		
10B	[The Man in Black looks down at him. He smiles.]	113

CUT TO

11 EXT. THE HEATH - MORNING

11

11A	[The Man in Black and Alexander walk along the trail together into the distance, silhouetted against the empty sky.]	114
11B	[In the vastness of the heath, they are specks in the void.]	115

FADE TO BLACK