

## **The Death of Alexander the Great**

**by Lucas Mohan**

*Scene takes place in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II. Alexander is lying on his bed, ill and surrounded by doctors. Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, Antigonus and Perdiccus enter. The doctor approaches with a grave look on his face.*

ANTIGONUS

How is faring, good doctor?

DOCTOR

[shaking his head] I fear he may not survive the night, my lords.

PTOLEMY

Weeks marching through inhospitable desert wastelands without water could not kill him, and yet you say a mere bout of overeating will lay low this man who had the whole world under his heel?

DOCTOR

The strings of fate treat king and pauper alike, good sirs. His fever rages on as intensely as ever and I cannot see any hope for his recovery. [The generals, scarcely believing the doctor's words, fall silent for a few seconds.]

CASSANDER

How could this come to pass? That insatiable fire in his eyes just a few days ago seemed ready to conquer death itself . . . [Alexander is heard breathing heavily, and as the doctor rushes to his bedside, he begins to in a hoarse and strained voice.]

ALEXANDER

You pack of cowering dogs! There's no need to conceal anything. I know that I'm a dying man.

SELEUCUS

You cannot die, my king! You are second only to the great gods of Olympus in might and strength. [Alexander laughs bitterly for a few seconds until his wheezing laugh turns to a cough.]

ALEXANDER

Me, a god? On the contrary, Seleucus, I've been a slave serving one harsh master all my life.

PERDICCUS

Of what master do you speak, O King of Kings?

ALEXANDER

[Alexander breathes heavily, his eyes closed for a short time.] Ambition, general. All the while, as I won glorious battles and subdued proud cities, I was under its iron heel. [He pauses as the doctor swabs his forehead with a cloth.] But I am not its only servant. You too, my generals, serve the same harsh master.

ANTIGONUS

We serve none but yourself, my King!

ALEXANDER

Don't be a fool, Antigonus! I know all of you are already thinking of your share of the spoils. [An uneasy silence follows.]

PERDICCUS

O King of Kings, you have only to name the man whom you wish to succeed you, and rest assured that your humble servants will honor him.

ALEXANDER

[Alexander takes the signet ring from his finger and gives it to Perdiccus.] Let the throne be given to the strongest man among you. [Alexander collapses back again, eyes closed. Perdiccus clutches the ring tightly for a few seconds as the generals begin to slowly move away from Alexander's bedside. However, Alexander, summoning all his remaining strength, calls them back.]

ALEXANDER

[Slowly, haltingly] One last warning for you my generals. [Pause] Take great care, for I sense . . .

SELEUCUS

Sense what, my king?

ALEXANDER

There will be strife... [labored breathing] and there will be blood! [Alexander falls back, a sickly cough racking his body. The doctor rushes to his side and makes himself busy tending to the dying king.]

PTOLEMY

What can he mean by this?

ANTIGONUS

None can tell. The man is obviously too ill to speak any further. {The generals stand around Perdiccus who holds the signet ring in his open palm. Antigonus reaches out to touch it, but Perdiccus hastily pulls his hand away, a look of abhorrence flashing briefly across his features.

CASSANDER

Come now, we must discuss how best to fulfill our king's final wishes.

[Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, Antigonus and Perdiccus exit.]