

A Dying General's Dream

By JP Levenick

Setting: Alexander's bedroom, where Alexander is attended by his servants.

SERVANT 1

Great Master of all the world, you cried out in your sleep a lot last night.

ALEXANDER

Oh, really? That is quite odd, seeing as I had a dream about one of my old acquaintances, Clytus. What did I say?

SERVANT 2

Great Master of all the world, you seemed quite distressed and mentioned things such as the teachings of your teacher, Aristotle, whom you, of course, have surpassed in wisdom long ago. Besides that, you mentioned multiple times, 'Clytus, Clytus, why does it have to end like this, with your blood on my hands?'

ALEXANDER

Take this man to the gallows. Everybody knows my killing of that usurper Clytus was justified! [Enter Hephaestion.]

HEPHAESTION

My dear friend Alexander, what causes you to cry so loudly?

ALEXANDER

This man is hinting that I feel remorse at the unfortunate but necessary means by which I eliminated the man who was once my best friend, Clytus.

HEPHAESTION

[self-consciously looking down at his opulent robes, knowing that if he does not side with Alexander all these riches could disappear] My dearest friend, your course of actions against the lowly Clytus were most justified! You loved his mother dearly, but unfortunately, the apple had fallen far from the tree. [Exit servant 1, screaming in terror.]

HEPHAESTION

[whispering quietly so that the servants cannot hear] Do not worry about this Alexander; through my experiences with you, I know you to be one of the hardest men in the world, as well as a forgiving one. I will never forget

the time you spared the lowly Jews when their high priest came out and begged for mercy. Not only did you spare them, you were humble enough to admit that you had received a warning from the Jewish God, which proves that you are a holy man as well.

ALEXANDER

Thank you my friend. However, I still am not satisfied. I was not telling the truth when I said the servant was lying. I remember everything he claimed I said last night as well as if it had been real life; in a way it was: I think I was seeing an assortment of flashbacks.

HEPHAESTION

Alexander, you are my best friend and I could never even imagine lying to you. My thoughts on these flashbacks: even the greatest men can make mistakes that they will come to regret. Besides this, you have done much more good in your life than bad.

ALEXANDER

Hephaestion, stop trying to flatter me. [Awkward silence. Enter Roxana in beautiful robes and wearing powerfully scented perfumes. (Hephaestion glares at her. It is obvious that they have an ongoing rivalry because they each try to flatter Alexander more to win more money and favors.)]

ROXANA

My dearest husband, who are you talking to?

ALEXANDER

My friend and companion in war, Hephaestion.

ROXANA

But my dearest lord, he died of a fever. Have you forgotten?

ALEXANDER

But he standing right next to you. Look and see. It was only a dream that I had that he died of a fever.

ROXANA

[Roxana looks and sees nothing.] My lord, you are still dreaming. There is no one standing by my side. And last night—what dreams did you have? I heard you scream in terror!

ALEXANDER

(now genuinely angry) Roxana, it was nothing. Please do not mention it again. [Exit Roxana, pouting.]

ALEXANDER

[after a long, thoughtful pause] Bring in my beloved horse Bucephalus.
[Enter Bucephalus, also in the richest clothes possible. He is invisible except to Alexander.]

ALEXANDER

My most loyal companion! [Bucephalus moves closer.] Finally someone who understands my thoughts without hearing a word!

HEPHAESTION

Don't forget Alexander, it takes more than horses to win a war.

ALEXANDER

Quite right! However, horses are very necessary to win a battle.

HEPHAESTION

[anxious to focus the subject back on himself] Very true indeed my king.
[Moment of silence] I was thinking my king on one of your most significant moments of wisdom and compassion. [Pause for dramatic effect] I remember when you and I fought together at the siege of Tyre. You watched many of your soldiers fall but you would not let their deaths be in vain. You continued to fight and eventually took the city. After you had taken this city of insolent beggars, you felt such misery at the death of your friends that you struck a mighty blow that killed many of those worthless paupers. I felt so proud to be a Macedonian that day, that I cried tears of joy as we sang our songs of victory and marched the slaves along.

ALEXANDER

Those were the days! Nothing compares to a conquest in a foreign land and valiantly defeating opponents!

HEPHAESTION

You see, Alexander, you are greater than any man in the world because of your ability to defeat seemingly unbeatable opponents; and once you have done this, you show them great mercy because you find valuable traits in them, as in the case of Porus.

ALEXANDER

Thank you, Hephaestion. I am tired now and I must go to bed.] [Exit Hephaestion.]

ALEXANDER

(thinking out loud) How is it that after all this supposed comfort from the people closest to me, I feel no better about my nightmare of Clytus? My beloved friend Hephaestion is no comfort to me in my death, but seems only a vision, as my wife tells me he is. And my horse! I can no longer ride him. He is nothing to me now, and stood before me just now like a ghost. Perhaps everything is but a vision— all the countries I have conquered, all the beautiful things that were mine, and all the people who have bowed down to me as if I were a god are but dust to a dying man, no matter how great he is.