## GOSPEL OF THE OF

EPISODE SIX

IN THIS, THE SIXTH INSTALLMENT IN OUR ONGOING EXERCISE IN LITERARY NAVEL GAZING, YOUR PATIENCE IS ONCE MORE PUT TO THE TEST BY THE BELOVED AUTHOR'S RAMBLING PERSONAL ANECDOTES, TRITE IMAGERY, AND PONDEROUSVOCALIZATION MORE SUITED TO A BOMBASTIC SOAP OPERA VOICE OVER NARRATION DELIVERED BY AN ALCOHOLIC WILLIAM DOZIER IMPERSONATOR WITH LARYNGYTIS. SO, YOU HAVE THAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO, ALONG WITH A LENGTHY RAMBLE THROUGH THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL (AND POSSIBLY FETISHISTIC) MYTHOLOGIES WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF LONG-PAST MARITAL STRIFE, DUBIOUS THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS, DECIDEDLY SUSPECT ROMANTIC PROCLIVITIES, AS WELL AS A TIRESOME FIXATION ON EXOTIC SEA FOOD.

## ON THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE MOON, I WAKE

by T.M. Camp

on the bright side of the moon, I wake to your gentle kisses lying close together intertwined on the flat round stone that is our bed

you nuzzle my neck sending up a little plume of moondust

(we're covered in it saturated we've been here so long our pale skin glitters)

eventually we rise and dangle our legs over the edge of the stone side by side fingers intertwined staring up together at the silent sky

(we hardly even notice it anymore the mottled blue sphere we once called home we've been here so long)

then
another kiss or two
(lips powdered with sparkling dust)
and you rise ready to work
kneeling to smooth out a broad stretch of sand
leveling it off with the side of your hand
tossing aside the pale stones and rocks
clearing a space
a canvas
a blank page

you tilt your head and squint at the smooth pale space you have made looking for something even I cannot see

(you are still young my love so young but your hair is gray with dust we've been here so long)

and for the thousandth time I think

If I had a camera, I would capture her. I would fix that pose for all time, for eternity...

I love you so my sister but I do not have a camera and we do not need eternity not anymore not here

you kneel one finger tracing a long curve across the sand

your first line

and I leave you to your work making my way down to the shore

the wind blows down from the pale mountains that ring the crater stirring the dust into rippling waves across the face of our broad and tranquil sea

I watch the ripples
I reach out
reach in
drawing out pale lunar fish for our dinner

one by one they sparkle and flop gasping on the dusty shore starlight glittering on their oily scales

my catch complete I sit for a while and look out at our dark and lovely world

and maybe I cry for a while

I cry not for the lives we once had not because I would change anything not because I would return

no

I just cry I don't know why

maybe because it took us so long to make the trip bringing with us only the things we could not bear to leave behind bringing only each other finding everything else we need here on the bright side of the moon

after a while
I rise
my dusty cheeks streaked and pale
shrugging the fish over my shoulder
back to where you
put the finishing touches on your work

where once there was only smooth sand now crowds a menagerie a pantheon
gods and monsters and heroes and maidens
you sit back
looking over what you have made
reaching out to brush the sand
with your fingertips
making gentle adjustments and corrections
to the faces of our gods

I do not see them at first but I know they are coming they always do they always have ever since we first came here together

they come quietly
in groups of twos and threes
gliding over the soft sand on pale feet
that never quite touch the ground
to gather at the edge of your work
circling around you
looking down on what you have made
silent pale faces
unblinking
eyes dark as the shadows between the stars

they stand silently and they wait waiting for you to begin

they are so patient

then your head bowed you draw a breath

they do not move they do not lean in they show no expression and yet the moment fills you stretch it out as long as possible holding them there as long as you can bear it and then you lift your head and in that voice I love so much you speak

Sing to me, my muse...

and the old stories pour from you every day you give us a new one etched in pale sand brought to life by your words (your words, I love them so much) the shared mythologies of a thousand years come to life once again stories and songs transplanted here to our pale and dusty home long ago the only thing we brought with us besides our love

and even I cannot tell any longer I cannot tell where the stories stop and our love begins

we have been here so long we have become interchangeable with the gods

your story finished you lower your head silent

your pale audience drifts away silent moon faced no sign of comprehension or understanding or even appreciation

## on their faces

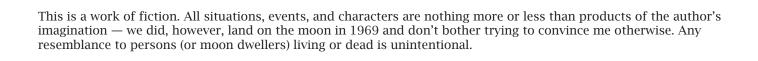
but still they return every day they come back to hear more always do always have ever since we first came here

alone
we sit together
looking over the tapestry you have traced in the dust
it will be gone in the morning
erased
by the gentle lunar winds

your palm pressed against the back of my hand our dusty fingers intertwined you lay your head on my shoulder I smell your skin sweet as the first time powdered with moon dust and memory and we look to the sky

a thousand stars are ours to wish on but we do not need wishes anymore not here

later
after our simple meal
(moon fish and rainwater)
we hold each other close
canopied by starlight and shadow
sleeping together
intertwined
on the bright side of the moon



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He's the one to blame.

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## NEXT UP,

WE SPEND SOME TIME WITH A MAN NAMED GAINES.



WHAT YOU DON'T BRING FORTH WILL DESTROY YOU.