

A DEAD MAN (Stephan McMahon)

Your name is Stephan McMahon. Alexander Clay is the love of your life. You are a homosexual, a man who likes other men, and you didn't care right up until it killed you.

In the slums of East London, you grew up near to starving. After that, nothing seemed so dire. When other boys wanted girls, you wanted other boys, and yah, it led to some teasing, but other people wanted and did much stupider things, so you figured you were all right.

It took you 'til you met Alexander to realize how lucky you were.

Alexander Clay had a face like broken glass. In East London, in a gutter, you tripped over his body and woke him from a stupor. You gave him your shoulder and helped him stutter-stumble to your shabby flat and fed him hot soup and crackers. For three days he whimpered and shivered in your bed. On the fourth, he asked if you wanted money or wanted to fuck him as payment. You gaped at him. You wanted nothing.

(You wanted him to stay.)

He called himself nasty bitter and vengeful; his kindness was clumsy, his words sharp and bruised. To you he looked ravaged, ripped into pieces by two stays in prison, his family, himself. Like you, he was a homosexual. Unlike you, he hated himself.

(You wanted him to stop hating himself. You wanted him to stay, and live.)

He stayed, and lived, and you were so lucky.

He did clerk-work, the bread and butter of disgraced gentry living in slums. You did day labor as a stevedore. He cooked and kissed you and wrote mediocre poetry.

You were never rich in money.

One day you discovered that he had stopped aging. You both agreed that this was alarming. You both agreed you had to do research. Neither of you really did any, though.

(To be honest, given the nature of the problem, it never seemed very urgent.)

The last thing you remember is dying.

You don't remember death -- you simply remember dreading it. You remember the crowd that choked you with bodies, the mob, the storm, blood pouring from your head, *my skull is cracked*, wetness on your skin, your heartbeat. Doubling over. Dying. Your heart beat.

You don't remember being dead, but you know you don't want to go back to where you were.

You want to find Alexander Clay.

(How long has it been since you died? He probably did something stupid. When he was hurt he could wring himself out, until he was as empty as a ghost, and attack other people. You could always calm him down -- he was always pliant with you -- but you've been dead, you know you've been dead. Who has he lashed out at? And how has he hurt himself?)

You need to find Alexander.

