

Dance of the Blood Moon:

Ferris Argensis

Written by Caleb “Mr. Turnip” Clanton



Dedicated to *The Duke* Connor, my family, and Tom “Brother of Markiplier” Fischbach
May your souls be crushed, your dreams thwarted, and *all* your ambitions toppled.

Chapter 1

I was richer and had more money than I'd ever need. There was so much to my name that I couldn't count it all myself, so I hired servants to count it for me, but they gave up after three days. They said I was worth more than The Emperor himself; they said I could buy an army of all the best soldiers, armorers, siege vehicles, and horses, and make an empire for myself, and still have plenty leftover to do it all again every day for the rest of my life. From that day forward, all the servants in my household dined with gold plates, as did the dogs in my yard and the rodents in my walls. They, the servants, were given mansions of their own, and servants as well. Even their servants had servants. As for myself, I had a palace built on top of my favorite hill. Music filled my halls, and sweet smokes lofted in the air, and beautiful women

of all walks and furs were summoned to stand close to me and be beautiful. My palace was a happy palace, and I was a happy stag with more than he needed.

As my riches grew, as did the population of my palace. My servants had offspring, as did their servant's servants. My little palace quickly became a town with over a hundred creatures, and new ones being born every day. I built walls around the town and even helped in their construction. At last, I put a sign above the town, naming it, "Ferristead," after myself.

Such a grand town quickly appeared on all the world maps. Merchants and other travelers came from all around to view its palaces and experience its populace. The land was ripe for profits and new travelers received my blessing to homestead every day. I put up a fence around my own palace so that tourists could look but not step any closer onto my property. When they asked about the governor of this place, the old servants and the present servants didn't know who to point to.

"This city doesn't have a governor," said Obi, a retired servant fennec now working as a potter.

The merchants and wanderers were in awe. They said, "So this place has no laws or rulers, then? You made it yourself?"

Again, Obi responded, "No."

"Then who do you serve?" they inquired.

"We serve Ferris Argensin." Then he pointed to the pink-marble palace atop the hill overlooking the village. "He is master over this land, and we all descended from his hand."

Beforehand, the merchants and travelers had easily noticed the palace, which could be seen more miles, and thought that somebody of some importance might live there. Then nearing closer to my city, they saw the manors surrounding it, and the city itself, and their impression of the mysterious stag living in that palace grew substantially. When they heard who lived in the palace; who ruled over the city, and heard my name, they knew to respond with awe. Already my name was a legend among merchants and the people of the oasis-lands, but to see what I'd made of the fortunes and fortunes accrued by me, they considered falling to their knees in respect. Many did, and others followed.

*

Though I'd lay with many beautiful and exotic females, had them in my households, and provided for them and their offspring, I had never considered getting married. Not into my late twenties did I consider the idea of finding a wife to rule this little city by my side. I didn't know just what kind of woman I wanted. Perhaps I'd end up choosing many women? The ones who graced my halls as testaments to my prestige were excellent indeed, but when I considered that one of them may lay in my bed at night and say sweet flirts to me, I became lackluster.

It wasn't because they were fools. Not one of them were; I would never employ a fool into my service. All members of my household were trained in the ways wisdom and the academy. They could read the great works of philosophers, write poetry, execute calculations, and knew the stars better than most sorcerers. And yet, when I spoke to them, I found that there was a barrier - moreso than mere sex, but on manners concerning thought and desires. They were beautiful, and brilliant, but I realized after many weeks of pondering that who I really wanted was a woman I could be neither of those things with.

If I were ever to achieve intimacy with anybody, it would have to be with a creature whom I could be neither beautiful nor brilliant with. We'd enjoy foolish jokes, and be raw around each other. All the while, her femininity would compliment my masculinity, and when we'd argue we'd only grow closer. We'd know each other's dark secrets, our misfortunes and failures, and be ugly with each other in a most passionate way.

I would meet her in a rural village during one of my travels to the north. I was riding by it in my caravan on the first day of winter; a cold wind had swept into the land, and the harvest fields were mutilated from their harvesting weeks before. I smelled a fresh pot of stew drifting through the air as I passed by a tavern hall. I called to my men to stop, and we stopped closeby to enjoy an early supper in the company of locals.

The tavern hall was a giant roof, standing three stories tall, with the cold wind blowing through. At the center of the floor was a great fire where they cooked the stew. Elder wolves with grey fur, growing into their winter coats, huddled around that fire for warmth. They drank mead, which steamed into the air from their pints. They watched with stolid faces, content in the company of the fire, the mead, the stew, and the wind.

We entered in and were received like specters; nobody realized that we'd entered. But the tavern owner's daughter saw us, and bid me and my servants a great welcome. We were given seats and we made our requests for the stew. There were 80 of us in total: 65 grown males and 15 females. The owner's daughter called to her father, and he saw us and left to fetch more supplies for another cauldron of stew. Half of our party was served in sparing portions before the cauldron ran empty. Then the elders with greyed fur took notice of us. They had haggard eyes.

The supper went late into the night, where around that time we decided we'd be camping nearby the town to spare us the harshness of dark travel. I found the mistress who had served our meals and made conversation with her. The night was dark but still young, and we were drawn to each other.

She was a young red panda, ten years before me, and her eyes were blue like the diamonds in my palace halls. Her world was small, but only for confinement to a single village since her birth. I asked, she said she'd only ever been as far as the next village to trade eggs for milk, but that was years ago. Her brothers had been away as doctors for the last six months, and so living was just her and her father, who was getting older and weaker faster than he'd like to. He married too late into his life, and so his young daughter may have bury an old man before too long. Her mother fell to a virus that passed through the village last year that killed all of the other mothers as well.

Moreso, she was a bit eccentric. I felt humbled that she acted so freely around me, as as if she hadn't noticed my silk robes and the jewels in my fur, and the perfumes I'd anointed to my head. She didn't act like I was of royal status at all, and while I could tell it disturbed her father (who spoke to us with careful tongue), he could understand there was a kindness between us that shouldn't be disturbed just yet.

We shared everything that could be spoken of. I was charmed by her, entirely seduced. She smiled and wringed her hands anxiously as she spoke. She was half my height, though I was tall to begin with, and I noticed time and time again how she'd stand to her tip-toes to get closer to my face. There was a still a youth within her, like a wind-up toy waiting years to finally

be let loose. She had so much to say to me. All the while, my caravan watched with their mead steaming in the cold air, and chuckled to themselves.

It wasn't until the moon started falling in the sky that the lady's father bid her to come to come to home and rest. He was in quite a hurry to have her leave. I hadn't realized it, but as farmers their lives began much earlier than when the sun rose in the sky, so I didn't fuss as they left. Before she left my sight, I beckoned out to her.

"What is your name, madam?"

"Alexis," she responded, and was guided out of my sight. She called back from a distance: "What's yours?"

I hollered, hoping my echoes would reach her, "Ferris!"

I lay in my bunk that night, pondering the right word to describe her. With my hands on the covers above my chest, I lay with wide eyes staring at the ceiling and passed through all the words I knew that would express whatever she was. At last, I figured her out: exotic. For everything that she was - her eccentricities, her habits, her interests of the simple things - I found her exotic. And exotic was the perfect kind of beauty to me. She wasn't brilliant, but she was relaxed, and so distant from the businessman-aura I surround myself with. Alexis was almost opposite to me, and that made her extraordinarily beautiful, wonderful to me.

*

Our caravan awoke after the sun had risen and I stopped momentarily to bid Alexis and her father farewell, and to promise that I'd pass again in a few weeks.

She asked where I was going, and I said, "Further north, towards Everlane. I'll be meeting a chancellor there to discuss trade routes." That's where her brothers were already, she informed us, and then asked that we say hello and bring back souvenirs. I promised I would. We departed.

Around eight hours later we crossed into Uran Valley. Pillars of harsh black smoke were rising from behind a hilltop where we estimated the next town was. The caravan came to a sudden halt when we saw the sign in the rode saying, "Kiile," which meant "Plague," in the native tongue. The fires must be from the plague doctors, I thought. We turned around for the last spotted fork in the road.

When we reached the fork - which our navigator said would take us around the plague - the boar in front yelled loud in order for us to stop again. I was at the front of the caravan, sitting on the coach to watch the birds, when we spotted the naked antelope crawling through the road.

The antelope wreaked like fecal matter; flies were buzzing around him. His fur fell off when he reached to grasp his skull and moan low. We don't believe he noticed our presence, for even when he looked in our direction and we saw his blood-burst eyes, he turned back and continued to writhe. Whenever he opened his mouth to moan, we could see his tongue flap around inside, and he looked bitter as he tried to form words but couldn't.

Before we could lay a hand on him, he collapsed onto his back, vomited blood then died. There were maggots in the contents of his refuse, to which we took as a sign. Very carefully, our caravan passed by him on the edge of the road, some even weaving through the trees to keep their distance. We all watched the body closely as we passed. I had a worried feeling watching what was left of him. I didn't say it, neither did my caravan, but when even the doctors refused to go near, I realized that this was only the beginning of something terrible.

Up the road from the fork we took we came across three more bodies, and figured they were the first victim's wife and two children. At which we stopped again and I called for our aviary - of whom was a cockatoo from the tropics. I told him to send a swift to South Everlane (north of our position) for the chancellor. The letter that would be tied to the eagle's talon should give our apologies and our circumstances: the land before us has become infected with plague, and we shall return his way when we're given confidence that it has subsided. As for now, my caravan will head back for Ferristead.

On our way back down the road, we passed by the crowded corpse of the antelope who died before us at the fork. Feral vultures jerked the corpse around as they hogged the carrion for themselves. From there on our caravan's pace hastened. We burned the clothes we were wearing in a heap by the road as we traveled back. In front of the heap we placed a new sign, which read in the common tongue: death.

*

We passed into Alexis's village in the late evening. We found Alexis back at the tavern hall serving as a waitress to the same haggard wolves as the night before. Unlike the previous night, they recognized our presence as we walked up and they glared for the sake of making it known that we were disliked. Alexis put down her ladle and sprinted for me when I appeared from the crowd. She almost embraced me in a hug, but refrained at the last moment and instead greeted me, "Good evening, Ferris." I think she remembered at the last moment that her father - a prudent and well mannered red panda - was still watching from the cauldron.

I took her with me and we sat down for a moment at one of the tables by ourselves. She was as happy as a lap-dog to see me, and inside I was more than ecstatic to see her again, though that ecstasy was overshadowed by a intensifying dread. I stopped her in the middle of a non-sense about corn stalks to ask, "Have you heard the news?"

She left her subject and asked me, "The news about what?"

When I'd finished retelling my account of the pillars of smoke and the interception of the plague victim, she was in horror. Her gaze fell away from mine to the floor and her tone fell to a stupor.

I took both of her hands in mine for the first time. She looked back up at me. "I want you to come with me," I said.

Her gaze fell away again. "I can't," she began, "this is my village..."

"They can come with us to my land," I said. "I control the whole valley, and there's plenty of room for everyone. They can have whatever they want and live like kings." Again, I asked her, "Please, come with me."

"There has to be a way around it," she suggested.

"It'll kill your whole village before a cure is found. Come with me, please." My hands were getting sweaty around hers, so I let go.

She stepped back away from me and looked back at her father stirring the stew. He noticed her from the stool he stood on, and smiled at us. I think he believed I was going to ask her to court me. Alexis smiled back, but she was thinking about what was left of her family now.

"My brothers are over there," she said as she turned back to me. "Can you save them as well?"

It must be why her brothers are doctors then, which means the plague must have spread as far as Uran Valley from where they started. They may already have died trying to stop it, but I wouldn't bring that up to her. "I'll find somebody to bring them back one day." I added after she stared at silently at me: "Soon."

"Tomorrow," she urged.

"When we get to Ferristead, my city, I will recruit a squad of guards-"

"Send a bird," she insisted then. "I don't want to risk them- d-..." She stammered.

I took her hands again and told her, "I promise I will instruct my men to send another swift back to Ferristead. It will arrive days before we do and we may even pass the party on our way back. Come with me and live."

Her mood brightened and Alexis embraced me in a hug. "Thank you, Ferris. You're really kind."

We gave the news to her father - who had been preoccupied with feeding my caravan - about the plague and the chance to move. He was skeptical at first, insisting that Alexis had done something to convince me. I argued against that, explaining I'm a very wealthy stag with land to spare; most importantly, I wanted to do my best keep creatures safe during the plague. Alexis added that I'd be sending men to go retrieve his sons from the land of Everlane. Her father abandoned the cauldron to hug me as well, where he cried into my shirt, "You're a very blessing, mister."

The old men overheard what we'd said. "You're not going to make us leave, are you?" one of them asked.

"You can leave with me if you'd like to survive with us."

A specifically frail old wolf, white-faced, ancient in his 90's stood up to me from the bench. He was livid and his eyebrows furled tight and brooded low. "My family's lived in this village since the beginning. I'll die and be buried here, just like my father and his father before him, all the way to the Durko family themselves."

"It will be painful." I couldn't think of anything else to offer towards advice.

"Doesn't matter," sternly resolved the elder. The other elders shared in his affirmation.

The father of Alexis consoled me. "I know some folks who will escape with you."

The ancient elder interrogated me, "If you're so rich, why can't you just build walls around the village?"

"Not enough time. I can't build you even a small wall of wood before the plague travels here." It would take at least a week to travel back to this village with all the wood required to build a wall.

I debated with the elders for fifteen minutes before giving up. I bid them goodnight and peace for their lives. I wish I was wrong and that the plague would go no further than the sign I posted, but the sick and the dying show little concern for warnings at times. I retired to bed soon after with the others.

*

Moving an entire town is a difficult process, and an incoming plague adds to the stress. I'd sent five guards to watch the roads. I and the others stayed in the village to help.

It was a small village in the middle an isolated valley, named two-hundred years ago after its founders: the Durko Family. Durko had 160 residents in all, many of which were older males. An illness swept through the town a few years ago that killed all of the mothers, leaving two-dozen of its families fractured. Almost of the families here had lived on the same land since its foundation; the others moved away to find better work and living. Primarily, the Durko citizens were farmers, while on the side they grew tobacco and marijuana as mercantile. Change is difficult for a town that always known itself and its way of life.

As we spread the news of the plague throughout Durko we received plenty of disagreement. Almost everyone rebuked our call to salvation from the plague. Twenty couples - mostly newly weds - insisted that they wanted to go with us. We accepted them in and I sent men to help move their things into their wagons.

By the early afternoon Durko appeared to have halved in population. Everyone but the two new venturers and my men were walking around; everyone else was inside (we could see them peeking from the windows every now again.) In the absence of the local populace, I felt a sting of judgement radiating from the houses and shacks. Alexis and her Father, Marty, finally appeared with their own cart packed with their few chosen possessions.

Alexis and Marty chose only the necessities: old bags of clothes, sleeping bags, caged chickens, preserved foodstuffs, and the family sword. Marty would later confess to me in Ferristead that he would never have left Durko if not for his hope that he could watch I and Alexis's relationship bloom.

I approached Marty mid-way through our caravan, who was sitting on his wagon that was hitched-up to a mule. He was waiting for Alexis to return from looking over her old home one last time.

I asked Marty, "Sir, may I make a request."

He was pleased to see me. He nodded as he responded, "You may."

"May I ask of your daughter in courtship when she returns?"

He grinned at my request, then answered, "Yes. I'd be honored. She seems to really like you - she can't stop talking about you when you're not around you know. And you're somebody who can offer her a wonderful life."

Those were the exact words I'd hope to hear from him. I thanked him and reached forward to shake his hand. He took my hand first and gripped it hard, then said lowly, "If you don't treat her right, I'll treat you wrong, alright?"

"Of course." I felt my throat tighten as he shook my hand.

He let go and laughed. "You're a great man, Ferris."

Alexis trotted back to the carriage where her mood brightened at my sighting. Her fur was a bright-red, striped around patches of black. She approached and greeted me good-morn. I wanted to make my request of courtship, but my chest tightened more and more the closer I got to speaking. Instead, I asked her if she would like to sit with me at the front of the caravan and watch the birds. She asked her father and he said yes, so we went.

At the front of the caravan we sat together with our hands in our laps. The driver noticed us together and took it upon himself to between us with the reins in our hands. I was embarrassed to have been caught like that. Alexis wasn't disturbed and happily shifted over for the driver.

"Sorry, lord," apologized the driver. "Got to keep it holy."

I looked away from him. "I understand. Thank you."

"Does he think we're together, Ferris?" inquired Alexis with incredulousness.

I couldn't bare to answer; I suddenly felt silly for having considered it in the first place. I pointed to the trees and said, "No, no. We're looking for a kind of bird in these parts of the mountains. It's a very pretty bird called the Yellow-breasted Eagle - they fly high but you'll know them immediately."

Our caravan left the town of Durko behind with a solemnness to it. Alexis watched the skies with the comfort of her father's presence and the promise of her brothers returning from danger to her in short time. I looked back down the road to Durko occasionally and couldn't help feel I was walking away from a funeral. Thinking about the town made my heart beat hard; I wondered if Alexis truly grasped that all of the people she was leaving behind - friends, relatives, enemies - were going to suffer a horrible death?

I insisted the men of my caravan take shifts that night to save us time - even the horses changed shifts in short pauses and were taken to their shedded carts to rest. Our caravan would travel non-stop, except in the short instances of relief breaks and to water the horses and ourselves, which only took ten minutes or less. I didn't have to assert myself for the men to understand themselves. When I told them that speed was imperative, they knew that I was inferring the victims down the road of Uran Valley.

I didn't know how long a person with the plague could go on before they died. What I did recall observing was that the plague will tug away at their capacities of perception and reason until there was nothing left. They will walk and writhe all in agony until they regurgitate their last meal and die. I studied a map of my own and estimated how long it would take a person to walk from the nearest town from our previous position at the fork in the road. The next town up the road was approximately four days away if taken on foot. But they could've paused along the way for a day before resuming their walk - they could've take a horse and buggy to try and escape before something happened and caused them to abandoned the it - but where would the horse be? I settled for a period of days, in which case, with horse and buggy, the plague could spread at an alarming rate. For all I knew, the plague would lay dormant inside a person for a two weeks before manifesting. My caravan was only certain that we just had to maintain haste and get to Ferristead and lock the gates as soon as possible.

The landscapes changed from thick trees to grassy hills as we traveled. Alexis watched and verbally awed at all new wildlife she saw. I realized that I'd been narrow-minded about her, and that for a girl her age it would be quite a brave act to leave home at all. I was taking her further away from her home than she'd ever been before, and then further after that.

All the time we traveled, I still couldn't find the courage to ask her to court me. I promised myself I'd have a courtship ring to present to her when I did ask. At the same time, I saw her father look at me when occasionally we stopped for water. At first he smiled, but then the expression fell into a flatness; I wasn't keeping my end of the promise. I realized I was being cowardly.

On the morning of our fourth day of traveling we saw the towers of Ferristead as we surmounted a hilltop. When it came into view I realized just how badly I missed my city. I thanked the forces that the plague hadn't somehow arrived before we did.

Alexis grabbed my side and exclaimed, "Wow! That's where we're going?"

I nodded. "Yes," then pointed to the large hill at the back side of the city. Overlooking the city was an enormous and beautiful palace of pink marble. "And that's where I live."

*

Once we were secured in the village I burdened my men the final task of escorting our twenty-and-two citizens to a hotel. There would be ten armed guards for an escort and two to represent the farmers who would be staying in the hotel's finest rooms. The farmers were quite lax about the transition; they were young and perceived it as an adventure. As for Alexis and her father, I offered them both a vacant room (one of hundreds) at my palace. Like I told the others and now her father: they'd stay here until the contractors finished their new homes. I'd even found a vacant 40 acres lot of land nearby ripe for farming.

Alexis's father (what was his name again? Marty-) shook his head to me when I offered him the new homes. He said, "Ferris, you have been generous to us, but as for the customs of my people, we would prefer to build our own homes."

I found it absurd that they would choose the newly built homes. I inquired, "May I at least provide you with timber and stone?"

He put his hand out and smiled. I hid a feeling of disgust against him when he smiled like that; that smile felt mocking. "We'll do it ourselves," he said.

I looked over to Alexis who was standing nearby and asked her, "What would you like? You are a woman now." Hopefully she'd choose my reasoning.

"I'll stay with my father," she said and joined beside him with a confident smile.

You daring bastard. How dare you deny my riches and generosity. I swallowed my frustration and resolved to them: "Marty, Alexis, thank you so much again for coming with us. Hopefully this caution hasn't truly been required and the plague won't go beyond the signs we've placed."

The father nodded again and almost shook my hand (I believe speaking of plague had made him self-conscious.) He said, "Maybe one day we'll return." He winked at me on the side of his face that wasn't facing his daughter.

"Perhaps one day." Then I said, "Let me show you to your land at least."

I took them in a horse and chariot with their things to the fields on the far eastern side of my city, where the essence of wilderness still existed there. The fields were green and the land was situated by the treeline of woods beyond. There would be plenty of hunting and a river for fishing. The roofs of huts and houses belonging to other citizens in my city could be seen over the slope of the field.

We stood there in the tall grass of the fields and I said to Marty with Alexis close by: "Make whatever you want of the land you see. Just be careful to respect the space of your neighbors. Others like yourself hunt here as well."

I'd hoped that Alexis had heard, but instead I and Marty looked off and saw Alexis twirling with outstretched arms in the tall grass. She sang a song of worship and joy to the god. I was furious in my heart for her act of betrayal; she should be singing to me.

"You've done more for us than we can offer you, lord Ferris," said Marty. I really wasn't interested in his praise anymore. "Alexis seems to like it," he added.

I watched her with a chill in my eyes. "It's my pleasure, papa."

They had a tent and everything required to camp while they produced their new home. Their new neighbors beyond the hill - former servants of my household gifted with land of

their own - offered them food and shelter should Marty's tent not be enough. Marty kept suggesting to them - though hinting to me with occasional winks - that the tent is comfy (even cramped) with the two of them sleeping in it. Alexis, I was told before I left for my own home, slept with the neighbors in a guest room under the armed watch of the household's father, and would continue to do so until their new home was built. It shouldn't be too long, I thought: Marty's old, but he's still strong and the neighbors are too courteous. When I returned home I arranged for Marty to receive a feral sheep as a housewarming present. Meanwhile its lamb was slaughtered and delivered to Alexis's residence for her and her chauffeurs to enjoy.

End of Chapter 1

[Chapter 2](#)