



THEY
STOLE
THE MOON



AVEN ELIA MCCONNAUGHEY



They Stole the Moon

by Aven Elia McConnaughey

To my dad, and quantum entanglement.

It's gone.

The moon is gone.

The MOON is FUCKING. GONE.

Has no one else noticed? Do they not see the void in the sky where it used to be, reflecting the sun's brilliance, creating pools of moonlight you could bathe in without worry, revealing the secrets that live in the night to those that sought them?

You ask a few strangers if they see what you see. Or what you don't see. Their eyes follow the line of your hand, your pointing finger, then return to you, filled with pity and confusion.

Inside your apartment, you can still feel the emptiness even though you no longer have that pitch black vacancy hanging over your head. You collapse into a chair, and you do not know if it is minutes or hours before you open your eyes. It is dark, still, and your fear returns. You quickly turn on every light in your apartment, trying to keep the shadows, and your fear, at bay.

A pile of old notebooks on a dusty shelf catches your attention. You begin flipping idly through the pages, stopping mindlessly on a page as the emptiness returns. You lose yourself in it for a moment, and when your senses return, your hand is resting on a list of instructions, numbered and annotated. It's a ritual you created, long ago, when you sought meaning in magic.

"The Glyph of Finding"

1. Find a book. A book that you have some connection to. Perhaps a book you have read many times, or one lent to you by a friend that you have been meaning to read. This will be your Oracle.

You scan your bookshelf and pull out a book. You realize it was the first book that ever made you cry. You realize you are crying now.

2. Find a place. It does not need to have any particular significance. It can be outside or in, as long as you can be safe there for about an hour and will not disturb anyone by taking notes and pictures.

You think about going to a nearby park. But then you remember the emptiness in the sky that you can't bear to behold and the pity in their eyes because they can't bear to comprehend.

You'll stay home, in the harsh light of your lamps, which hurts in its own way. Hurts because there is nowhere to hide from what is missing. Stolen. Stolen from you and the world. Stolen from the tides and time.

3. Find moments. Moments that speak to you. A rock can be a moment. A friendly word from a stranger can be a moment. A pattern of light can be a moment. A shitpost can definitely be a moment. Collect your moments either physically or by taking notes and pictures. You will need six moments to complete your glyph.

You may be unsure of a moment, unsure it is significant enough. What you should be looking for are things that probably only stand out to you. You know that stereotype about the ridiculous questions that people who are high ask? "How do we know that when you see blue, you are seeing the same color that I think is blue?" Apply this question to everything. That is how we construct reality. What soup means to you is an amalgamation of all the times you've eaten, smelled, seen, heard about, made, or otherwise experienced soup. The smell of cut grass fires different synapses depending on whether or not you've ever mown a lawn...

Ok, so this part definitely got away from you. It reads a little like college-freshman philosophy, and you're not sure if that makes it too high-minded or too basic for your needs. Probably the former, since a lot of witches don't go to college and don't give a shit about Kant. Not that you can blame them.

You collect your moments: a loose page from an old sketchbook, a picture of the view outside your window, the bark of your neighbor's dog Scout, a selfie from a friend, a text from your dad and a mug, stained with two-day old tea that you never dumped out. You feel like going out would have offered you more moments for discovery, but this is what you've got.

4. Find connections. Take your moments and your Oracle, along with a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Draw a large enough circle with twelve notches around the outside, marked like a clock, though they do not need to be spaced exactly. Write your first moment on the edge of the circle, positioned at one o'clock. At two o'clock, write the first full sentence from a page chosen randomly from your Oracle. Place your next moment at three o'clock and continue around the circle, alternating as you go until there are twelve things written around your circle.

This will be the map for your glyph of finding. The next step can be incredibly challenging or easy, depending on you. Find a moment that you recorded. Consider it for longer than you think you need to, then draw a line between it and another hour on the clock that relates somehow to that moment. Find ways the moments and words from your Oracle set before you resonate with each other and connect them with any kind of line you like.

As you consider the map laid out before you, your mind may also wander to that which you have lost, that which has compelled you to turn to this ritual. Allow these thoughts. Within them, you may find an immense and impossible loneliness. Allow this thought, for loneliness is natural after loss. So many things in life cause loneliness, but it is too often seen as a thing to fight against or escape. True, you cannot be lonely forever, but do not forget that you can find many things while alone. You can find a version of yourself that only exists when no one else is there.

Within your thoughts, or perhaps within your loneliness, you may also find love. Allow this thought, for the pain of loss is so often derived from love. This painful love can latch on to you, hooked under your skin like a burr. When this happens, tearing the love away from your heart, like tearing a burr away from your skin, will simply open new wounds and spill fresh blood. Over time, the hooks will release, and you can remove the pain and find solace in its place.

Whether you find love, loneliness, or something else entirely as you connect the spokes of your map, continue to weave these lines together until you are done. Only you will know when you are done.

You begin drawing a few straight lines between obvious shared characteristics. Your mind and your hand both begin to wander as you meditate on the words and images laid before you, and your line curves unexpectedly. You realize you have connected the sketch with your friend's selfie, rather than a line from your Oracle. Once you see that arc sweeping near the edge of the circle, your desire for even and orderly cuts across the page gives way to a more meandering approach. You lose yourself in the process to some minutes, and when you come to, you see a relaxed but intricate spiderweb of lines across the page. You realize its beauty at the same time you realize your heart has cleared somewhat, the dark and stormy ocean inside becoming clear and calm while remaining vast, powerful, and unknowable. The currents of your emotions seem to be mapped on the page in front of you.

5. Find your glyph. The crisscrossing lines before you hold within them your glyph of finding. Some section within holds the particular intersections that will lead you back to what you have lost. You can either select a circular area that speaks to you or place a round object at a random point and trace around it. Whatever area you outline is your glyph. Cut it out from the page.

You have now completed this ritual and made your glyph.

You stare down at the small circle in your hands, expecting it to glow or spin or rearrange the lines running across it or really do fucking anything as it sits in your hand, just a piece of paper with that you've just spent an hour scribbling on. The moon is still not hanging in the sky as it should; the shadows of the night are still far too deep and isolating. For a moment you can hardly bear to look and a few tears stain your glyph as the weight of failure settles in your chest. Exhausted, you realize it is too late, and so are you. The moon will never come back to you. You used to think magic was real, but clearly you were wrong.

The crumpled glyph calls as your clenched fingers uncurl. Your eyes close and your head falls to your pillow and you are asleep.

When you wake up, it is still dark outside. Still too dark. The pain begins to seep back in. Your eyes look to the window but the emptiness you saw in the sky before has been filled. Not by the moon, but by a familiar maze of lines, now thin and silvery. The moon is gone, but maybe the night doesn't need to feel quite so empty.

THE GLYPH OF FINDING

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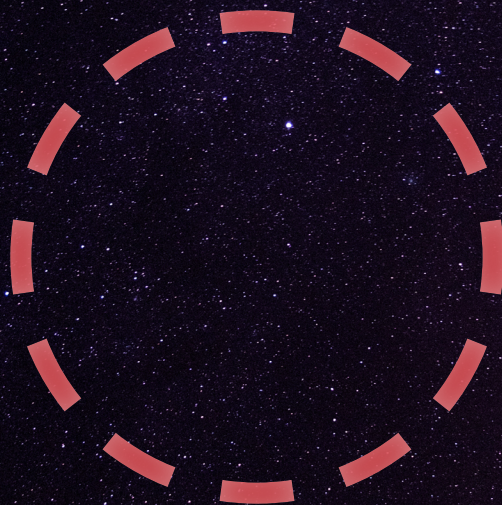
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