

Joseph Campbell by the Aloe Vera Plants

by Brian Michael Barbeito

There was man from antiquity that sat next to me. His belief in the healing qualities of Aloe Vera so pronounced, that the house brimmed with such. He had no use for modernity in any of its forms but was fond of supermarkets. When in one he was overwhelmed with an agitated joy. He ate whitefish from a frying pan with garlic and onion and strange salts too. If I was taken ill he gave me apple cider vinegar.

Well, we sat there in long afternoons. He with not much to do because he was old now. Me with not much to do because I was wayward, a lost soul.

There was a bible and books about the lives of the saints. We watched Joseph Campbell on public television. I was mesmerized and had a book also, a biography, called, *A Fire in the Mind*. In between sessions a lady would appear amidst telephones and talk without pause.

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The old man never said anything most of the time, but one time he spoke about the woman...

Boy she can taaaaaallllk. She can talk allllll the time.

EEEEeeee.....

And he had a great way, because his tone did not condemn or praise her, though if a judge had to decide it would be more of an indictment than not I suppose.

Boy she can taaaaallllk.

And the woman talked and then Joseph Campbell talked and the man tuned out and the world was quiet, strangely quiet those afternoons even for all that talking.

Modernity would never get us.

This I knew if nothing else. I and the old man were cut from a bit of the same cloth.

The apple cider was bitter and waited in cupboards for someone to become ill.

I liked it better than the world.

I continued to watch and watch and watch that old television that was more of a place to place aloe vera plants on than anything really.

When Campbell was done, I noticed that the old man had fallen asleep. I put a thick blanket over his arms and chest in order to keep him from catching a chill. He had a condition and was in his ninety second year.

I pressed the off button before the yappy broad could reappear.

Then I sat staring at the plants and the silence they made.

