

Songs of the Mad Dog

by

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STAGE IS DARK

SARAH:

Hello? Hello? Is anyone there? I
can't see. Can someone help me?
Please, someone help me. Oh please,
oh please... God. Oh God. Please! Does
anyone hear me?

Help me... please! I can't feel my
feet! I've lost the feeling in my
feet! Please! I can't feel the tips
of my fingers! I don't feel anything!

Someone help me, please! Please,
please - someone help me. Please,
please, please...

VOICE STOPS, VOICE-OVER COMES
IN, A MUFFLED/TIN SOUND LIKE
FROM A VOICE TRAPPED WITHIN A
BOX.

Oh God. I can't hear. I'm thinking
the words but I can't hear them. I
know that I'm opening my mouth to
shout these words - but I can't feel
my lips moving! I should be crying
but I don't feel the tears, I can't
feel my breath, I hear no sobbing.
What's happening to me? Oh God...
What's happening? Oh God... Oh God... I'm
dead.

LIGHTS UP. GIRL SITS UP
VIOLENTLY IN BED BREATHING HARSHLY.

Jesus! Breathe. Just breathe.
Breathe. See everything's okay.
You're hearing, you're talking, your
toes are wiggling.

This is what happens when I'm asleep?
I thought that I put in for nice
dreams. I mean, didn't the paper work
go through on that? When I filled out
that questionnaire, I asked for nice
dreams.

I'm going to have to talk to the
supervisor about this.

In no one's warped sense of reality
could that be described as a nice
dream. You could poll people around
the world and they would... all agree
that that was in fact a bad dream.
That's the kind of dream that good
dreams aren't allowed to hang out
with because they come from the wrong
side of the pillow. A bad dream. A
bad, bad dream...

2:48. What does one do at 2:48 a.m.
when the bad dream fairy comes for a
visit? Clocking the motherfucker
upside their head is my inclination,
but the bugger comes and goes so
damned quickly..

Why the hell is it always 2 something? I'd like a 3 something, just for variety. 3:17 would be nice. Tomorrow night let's try for 3:17 shall we? How's about I pencil you in for a 3:17? Would that work for you? I could even do a 4 something. Don't say that I'm not flexible.

And for the rest of your pre-dawn pleasure, you have seemingly endless options. Journal writing 101 is very popular, or there's always inspirational literature followed with a knock you out before you swallow it sleeping pill. And let's not forget the ever-challenging solitaire, cross word puzzles or just plain Netflix binging. Our judges are voting and...

Journal writing 101 wins as we are reminded that sleeping pill addiction is now considered a bad thing. Sorry guys, maybe tomorrow night.

(OUT)

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

DR:

Why do you think that you always wake up at this time?

SARAH:

How the hell should I know? Jupiter's aligning with Mars?

DR:

Sarah...

SARAH:

I'm telling you, it's the dawning of the Age of Aquarius Viv. And I have been chosen to deal with the little publicized negative aspects of this very cosmic occurrence.

DR:

Sarah why do you think you're dreaming these things?

SARAH:

You tell me, isn't that what you're getting paid for? I mean, you're making an astounding amount of cash between my contribution and my parents' supplements, and you can't tell me anything? I hate to say it out loud, but I think that maybe you're not really earning your keep.

DR:

You done playing Sarah?

SARAH:

No way, this is so much easier. No emotional outbursts, no queasiness, I have much more fun doing it this way.

What? Don't look at me like that.

DR:

Like what Sarah?

SARAH:

You're giving me that disappointed that I'm not facing things look.

DR:

Do you feel that you're not facing things Sarah?

SARAH:

Is that rhetorical? (pause) Are you trying to tell me that if I face up to things, if I delve, as you so often say, that I will feel better?

DR:

Sarah, I am telling you that delving into some dark places might lead to feeling better. You just need to lock onto whatever it is that will start the process.

SARAH:

You know what Viv? That's all fine and dandy in theory, but it's the practice part that's giving me a little trouble. 'Cause if I could *do* whatever it is that would supposedly make me feel "better," I would be doing it, don't you think?

Which would mean that I wouldn't be here every Tuesday and Thursday with you now would I? I'd be having a fucking life, or I'd be fucking in that life - either sounds appealing right now. But no, I'm not participating in "Life," Viv - I can't fucking face life. I can't face it and that's why I'm here so that you can give me some guidance so that I will be able to have a "Life."

DR:

Sarah, what scares you most about death?

SARAH:

Not getting any more mail.

DR:

You ready to end here?

SARAH:

A mere 15 minutes into our 50? Then me *slash* my parents really wouldn't be getting our money's worth. Why is it that a shrink's hour is 10 minutes shorter than everyone else's?

Are you guys in a separate time zone or something? Only in a shrink's office do you pay for 60 minutes but only get 50. And now you want to cut that down to 15, but hey - if you don't tell them, I won't. I mean, I could be talking to the benches in the park now...

DR:

Or maybe you could even tell me what scared you so much about this last dream.

SARAH:

You mean, distinguish it from the glut, the surfeit, nay even the PLETHORA of nightmares that I've been having over the last 15 months? Well, that would take some work...

DR:

So do some work Sarah. I can't earn the big bucks if you're only here to play.

SARAH:

(pause) It's safer to play, Viv.

DR:

I understand that Sarah, but do you want to know something? I'm right here with you and nothing is going to hurt you, I promise you that.

SARAH:

Sure, it won't hurt me now, but what about when you're not around? When it's just me in my head?

When it's 2:48 and I don't have a passport to get out of Nightmareland? (pause) I don't feel attached to reality Viv. Like I'm looking at you and I see you and you seem to be there, but I feel that even if I were to touch you, or this table or the window, that my hand would just slip through you - like some kind of phantom. It's like everything is an illusion.

DR:

Why do you think that is?

SARAH:

Because I'm disassociating...?

DR:

Are you asking me or telling me?

SARAH:

Telling you?

DR:

Why do you need to disassociate?

SARAH:

Viv, I have no fucking clue. I just know that I get so scared sometimes. So utterly terrified that I want to vomit all the bad things that I'm feeling out of me. Puke it all up, and then maybe the bad things would go away. I wouldn't have to deal with them and I could be me again. That's all I want, just to be me again.

I remember this person who loved to participate in life. I remember her Viv, but she's not here anymore. She's a memory. In her place there's this nutcase who can't deal with anything or anyone for extended periods of time and who can't even think about death for more than 3 seconds because it makes her hyperventilate and gag. And I don't like that person Viv. I mean, sure she's fun at parties...

DR:

What does death represent for you Sarah?

SARAH:

Are we talking in an existential kind of way here? (pause) Can we discuss something else today Viv? I don't think that I can do this. Not today. Okay? So please let's just talk about... hell, I don't know, how about feminism in the new millennia... What do you think of TERFs Viv?

DR:

TERFs?

SARAH:

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists.

DR:

I know what it stands for, I'm just wondering why you want to discuss it.

SARAH:

I'm thinking the "radical" should be replaced with "rabid" which is what I think of when I think of a gal who is freaked out over the concept of a trans woman 'infringing' on so called 'real' women. (pause) Thanks Viv.

DR:

Don't mention it.

SARAH:

Next session I'll bawl like a baby, I promise. I would have done it today, but I'm not wearing water-proof mascara and I've got that runway modelling gig after this.

DR:

(Pause) So what are your thoughts on JK Rowling's supposed involvement?

(OUT)

IN A PARK. SARAH IS SEATED ON A BENCH, READING A BOOK -SOMETHING SELF HELPY. MAN ENTERS.

JON:

Hi.

(pause, Sarah looks around, trying to see if he's addressing someone else.)

SARAH:

Was that directed at me?

JON:

Yes. (pause) Yes it, uh, was.

SARAH:

Why?

JON:

Why?

SARAH:

Yes, why?

JON:

Why did I say Hi, or why did I direct it at you?

SARAH:

Either. Take as much time as you need to answer. You should be aware however, that you will be graded on the content of said response.

JON:

Graded huh?

SARAH:

You betcha. Make it good, and you sir, get a gold star.

JON:

How 'bout honest?

SARAH:

Now there's a daring move. Few men make an attempt at honesty right off the bat. It's universally regarded as a risky maneuver. Now my curiosity has been piqued. Please proceed.

JON:

I've been watching you in this park for the past 2 months. From my office, up there.

SARAH:

(pause) And what is it that you do up there?

JON:

In my office? I draw a little.

SARAH:

And you would be watching me because...

JON:

Because for the past 2 months you've come here every day. Every single day. In the rain, in the sun, in the fog...

SARAH:

If there was fog, how could you tell it was me?

JON:

Your raincoat. It's very... distinct.

SARAH:

Don't you mean loud?

JON:

No, I mean distinct. If I wanted to say loud, I would have said loud.

SARAH:

Really. (pause) Continue.

JON:

You come here every day, and you sit on this bench and you read. And I wanted to know why.

SARAH:

Why this bench, or why do I read?

JON:

Either.

SARAH:

This bench, because it gives me a nice view. I read because I'm trying to gain knowledge. Why do you read?

JON:

Mostly for pleasure, to escape.

SARAH:

I used to do that.

JON:

Why did you stop?

SARAH:

Whoop, Whoop! You have just entered the TOO PERSONAL ZONE. Please back away from the last-mentioned subject. I know that you came down here because you're curious as to what I read, but let's not throw the boundaries of strangerdom to the wayside. I mean, you are a man, perhaps a sociopath, who has been watching me from a window for 2 months, we should really be thinking of the proper etiquette for this kind of situation...

JON:

I came down here because on those sunny days, you occasionally lift your face up to the sun and close your eyes and smile.

SARAH:

(pause) From that distance, how can you tell it's not a grimace? I tend to grimace a lot. See? Now squint. It'll probably look like a smile.

JON:

My name's Jon.

SARAH:

Jon, as in Jonathan? Or John, as in John?

JON:

As in Jonathan.

SARAH:

Well, Jon as in Jonathan, I must now leave. You see, we're getting to the part of the conversation where I'm supposed to tell you my name, then we go out for coffee.

Coffee maybe turns into dinner, dinner to your place, your place to sex, and sure, we'd be sated - I have no doubt that you're wonderful in the art of love, I myself am no slouch in that department... - but that can't

possibly happen, so I shall leave.
Your wits are ample, and you have
eyes to die for, but I'm not the girl
to waste them on, I can promise you.
Therefore, I must bid you farewell.

SARAH LEAVES.

(OUT)

DR'S OFFICE.

DR:

Did this man hurt you?

SARAH:

No, no, nothing like that. It's just
weird, that's all. What kind of guy
watches someone from a third story
window for two months? Doesn't that
strike you as strange?

DR:

Perhaps a little. Does it frighten
you to think that he's been watching
you?

SARAH:

Of course not. It's not frightening.
It's peculiar. I mean, why would I
hold somebody's interest like that?

DR:

Why do you think?

SARAH:

From that distance, he couldn't even tell if I was attractive, unless he had some kind of telescope... okay that thought does weird me out.

DR:

Do you feel that you're not attractive?

SARAH:

Oh, come on Viv! A strange, in, more than likely, every sense of the word - the jury is still out - man has been watching me for two months from his office, do you think that whether or not I'm attractive is first on my mind?

DR:

You tell me.

SARAH:

But I just sit there. It's not as if I do Tai Chi or some twisted form of mime. I read. Sometimes I eat a sandwich and have some coffee - maybe he likes to watch strangers eat.
(pause) Maybe I'm not the only person he watches. Maybe I'm the one to two thirty slot, and at three there's some old guy in a trench coat who flashes him up there...

DR:

Maybe he simply wanted to speak to you Sarah. Is it so hard to believe that he might be telling the truth?

SARAH:

Viv, how often do you talk to strange men in the park?

DR:

I can't recall.

SARAH:

Really? Or is that just what you have to say because you're the shrink and we should be focusing on my problems during this session? I think that you should know Viv, that other shrinks share their personal experiences, so that the bond they have with their patient becomes more secure.

DR:

That technique can work with people yes.

SARAH:

Meaning: Good try, but this is your therapy session...

DR:

Are you afraid to go back to the park now?

SARAH:

Of course, I'm not! It's my fucking park! And no psycho, confirmed or otherwise, is going to stop me from spending time there.

DR:

If you're not afraid of him, could it be that you're curious about him?

SARAH:

Well, that would be a little too logical a leap for me, don't you think?

DR:

Sometimes you don't really have to delve too deep to find answers Sarah.

SARAH:

God Viv, you're such a shrink.

(OUT)

SARAH IN A NIGHTGOWN, CRYING &
LAUGHING ON THE FLOOR.

SARAH:

Are you there God? It's me Margaret.
No seriously. Are you there? How does one actually do this praying thing?
(pause) You know the best thing about being terrified of death, God? You're never suicidal. (Lifts up her wrists to show) See? Nothing. Not a scratch, a mark, a line, a scar... My skin is