

Bedtime Cassandra

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Wright Now Play Later: January

Prompts:

Stephanie Rolland: "We both took aim, counted to three and swung. CLANG, WHOOSH. The shovel hit something hard and the sledgehammer went right through the wall and into the air outside. What had we just bought???" and "Skeletons in the closets. Literally. Skeletons in every closet."

Amy E. Witting: The church has renovated their spirit by calling in the dead on Tuesday afternoons.

Gabe Macedo: "The bourgeoisie have been living in decadent, disgusting luxury for far too long. They also have terrible taste. *Vive la renovation!*" and "After living in the house for 10 years, they decide to do some renovations, only to discover a small alcove in the basement that led to a secret room. What's inside?"

Scene

(at bedtime. PAPA speaks to an unseen CASSANDRA. a slight accent. PAPA could really be played by any man of a certain age, say somewhere between 40-65)

PAPA

one more?

you are insatiable.

you know what that means?

good! otherwise, what are we paying that english tutor for, uh?

your tutor, he too says you are insatiable!

"so many questions, that one!"

aaaah, that is my girl! that is my cassandra!

you know what happens to girls when they are insatiable?

they die.

well, we all die.

we all go sooner or later.

but little girls who are insatiable, they die SOONER than everyone else.

they get themselves in trouble, girls who ask questions.

you want to grow up to be that?

you do?

well! right now, no more questions. only stories!

what else do i have, uh?

first edition, fables.

stories from a long time ago.

he says it is valuable

he says no one has touched this book in three hundred years.

so old it will make you sneeze.

(he opens the book. no sneeze)

PAPA

but these diplomats, they are all liars.
they smile with their lips closed.

(PAPA opens the book, reads)

PAPA

once upon a time there was a lion, the strongest of all god's creatures
and he was in his den when he found the smallest, weakest mouse.
he raised his paw to swat the mouse, kill it right there.
but then the mouse said to the lion
"do not kill me! i may seem weak and small and helpless,
but really i am strong
and when you need me most, i will find you and i will help you."
the mouse's words made him roar with laughter
"you will help me? YOU will help me?"
"yes, i will."
so he said, "hey, maybe the rate of return, who knows!"
and the lion let him go.
but then the next day, the lion was walking along
--as he does, king of the jungle!--
when suddenly a net came out of nowhere:
"i am stuck! i am stuck! please help me, someone help me!"
when all of a sudden, he heard a small, tiny little voice that said
"i am here," said the mouse
and the little gray mouse he began to chew through the ropes of the net
gnawing, gnawing until the lion he was free.
the little gray mouse who had not made himself known until the very right moment.
just like my cassandra.
my little sad, smallest of my children cassandra.

(shift)

PAPA

you know why you are in here, uh?
your sister?
i saw that.
your mother she was distracted
your governess, she did not see, but me?
i see everything.
you push her and not two minutes later, the chandelier falls and i say to myself, my little
gray mouse,
why did you do that?
why did you push your sister?
you had a feeling?
i have feelings, but i do not push my sisters off the stairs.
i do not have sudden *premonitions*.
okay, if you see so much, you tell me,
what will happen?

what will happen to us?

(she tells him)

PAPA

horse? what horse?

we are all the way out here, you think i want a horse?

okay, okay, if there is a horse, we will set it on fire, yes yes.

don't worry! your popi, he keeps watch.

he sleeps with one eye open, always.

this is just how it is.

they will come

they will stay

they will shake hands and smile and plot ways to take what it is ours

but they will go

they always do

because for as terrible as they think i am

they know, it will be worse when i am gone.

so that will never happen.

they need me, beh beh.

they need me.

(shift)

PAPA

you were right!

they brought a horse

they said it was for you

all the girls your age, they want a horse.

it is true.

i have asked them, each and every single one of us.

and he's asked for you, this horse.

it's true!

he told me, "cassandra, cassandra, where is cassandra?"

but you don't want him?

never?

never never?

yes, how will that look, huh?

they have brought us a present and you will have me shoot in the back, uh?

that will go over well, now won't it?

that will be a great hit if we burn it in front of them.

yes. a horse.

a wooden horse.

what did you think i meant?

a real one?

aaah, you will keep it.

nothing to be worried about.

greeks, they bear gifts.

they cannot help it.

it is what they do.

they come over, they have gifts.
we take the gifts.
we give them our shit
they give us their shit back
this exchange of useless crap that neither of us wants?
it has been going on for years and years!
your crap, our crap, a lesson in diplomacy!
adults are crazy!
it gets no easier when you are older, bebe, i promise you.
all this? it is just diplomacy.
it is just the tide going in and out, nothing to be worried about.

(shift)

PAPA

the boy who cried wolf
there once was a boy
--spoiler alert, he is the boy who cried wolf--
but he didn't mean to do it.
it wasn't that he was a liar
it is that he was a coward
that he was always afraid.
his mother put him outside one night and said,
"okay, you are now a man, you will do man things.
you will sleep with the sheep, you will keep them safe from the wolf,"
and the boy said, "a wolf?! what is a wolf?"
and his mother said, "it is a beast with teeth and claws and a dark, shaggy coat. and if you
see him, the wolf, you will let me know and i will come out with the butcher's knife and we
will kill the wolf together"
--his mother, she was a badass, i have no idea why she did not just kill the wolf herself, but
hey, she wanted him to learn, i get that, okay--
and she went inside and she locked the door and the boy, well, he was terrified.
he had never seen a wolf before!
but he remembered what his mother told him
teeth
and claws
and a dark shaggy coat.
on the first night, he saw a creature lumbering towards him
teeth and claws and a dark shaggy coat.
he screamed out,
"mother, mother! i see him! i see the wolf!"
and his mother came out with the butcher knife and she looked up at the boy and at the
creature in front of her and said, "what is this?"
"it is the wolf! teeth and claws and a dark shaggy coat."
"foolish boy, this is a badger."
with teeth and claws and a dark shaggy coat.
and the boy looked and yes, it was a badger.
the next night, the same thing.
his mother came out, butcher knife, same thing:
"eh! what have i taught you, uh? that is a skunk! have i taught you nothing? do not say

anything until you are absolutely positively one hundred and ten percent sure it is a wolf!
you get this right."
and the boy said, "okay."
so next night, new moon
it was so dark the boy could not see two feet in front of him, but still he looked and he
waited
and then he heard a voice.
a friendly voice: "you are looking for the wolf?"
the boy said, "yes! have you seen him?"
"yes! i have."
"really?"
"and i can show him to you."
and the boy said, "yes, yes, please! i have heard about this wolf, but i do not know what he
looks like. it is very embarrassing."
and the voice said, "just look this way and i will show you."
and in front of him, the boy saw a figure
teeth
claws
and a dark shaggy coat
just as his mother had described.
"i am the wolf," the voice said. "and this is what i look like."
"mr. wolf, you are nothing like i thought you'd look like. it is very surprising to me."
"people always say that about me. i am never what they expect. it is very strange indeed."
the boy nodded and thought to himself, "i should call out. i should tell my mother."
but it was too late because the wolf had already sunk his jaws into the boy's throat
and the boy felt blood running down his neck, his chest, his legs
one day you will see the wolf, beh beh,
but the thing is, when you do, you will not see his teeth
his claws
his dark shaggy coat
you will not see him coming at all.
he will not show himself until it is too late.

(PAPA puts away the book of stories)

PAPA
we are sending you away
to the lion's den
in the last place they will look.
it is my birthday gift for you.
and there, there is a man who will take care of you.
he's a good man.
well, no. he is not.
but he will take you.
he owes us.
and when the time is right, i will come and i will get you and we will punish them all and we
will live happily ever after.
now blow out the candle.

(PAPA has a birthday candle for her. he blows it out. or she does)

end of play