

PLANTER'S
ISLAND

by

r o l a n d
r e y n o l d s

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PLANTER'S ISLAND *by Roland Reynolds*

Woman – I'm ready to hear your dreams now.

IT IS NIGHT IT HAS BEEN NIGHT FOR MANY HOURS THIS NIGHT IS COLD
YELLOW EDIBLE EVAPORATING

THIS HAS BEEN A LONG NIGHT AND A SHORT DAY WILL FOLLOW IT

PLOTTER SLEEPS IN A FOLD-UP OUTDOOR CHAIR IN HIS PANTS AND VEST
LAGER IN HAND

IN FRONT OF HIM AN 8MM FILM PROJECTION PLAYS – CHILDREN, A WOMAN

LIGHT ENTERS THE HOUSE LIKE A PIG'S HEAD AND BEGINS TO SETTLE ON
THE SHADOWS

PLUMPING THE CUSHIONS

FOLDING SHIRTS

POLISHING LAKE ISLAND MIASMA

PLOTTER'S BED STANDS ACROSS THE ROOM. AS LIGHT SNUFFLES AND
TRIPS CURSING

A FIGURE STIRS RISES

IT IS A WHORE SHE STEPS OUT OF THE BEDCLOTHES AND NIGHT
CLOTHES AND DRESSES

DRESSED SHE APPROACHES THE FIGURE OF PLOTTER

She wants money which is fair so she prods him. He eventually wakes startled changed

OUT OF BREATH

BREATHLESS = HE'S BEEN

BURSTING RUNNING

[FOR TOILET?]

He tries to slap away this new night terror but soon knows what she wants. He finds what she wants, gives her what she wants, lets her loose on the ham-pink world.

He drinks himself awake.

His mouth hangs open

[V/O:

Woman – What have you eaten today?

Plotter – 4 cafetieres of coffee, a bottle of whisky, half a bottle of sleeping pills, 2 lagers and 2 paracetamol.

Woman – What have you eaten?

Plotter – Some prawns?]

Awake Plotter returns to his work. The papers the photos the maps the charts the memos the accounts the facts the facts the facts

He is breathless

This puzzle is every superlative to solve – longest, hardest, largest, heaviest, slowest, toughest

= it grinds him for an ibrik

It is now that he realises the phone has been ringing since before he woke. It is muffled by clothes. Which clothes?? He goes searching as the phone has begun ringing again.

He finds it. Stares. It stops as he stares. He waits but soon returns to work again. It rings.

He picks up the receiver and places the heavy bit to his ear, the speaky bit some inches away from contact with his lips. He hears -

VOICE – Plotter.

The voice sends Plotter floating on his back through black water currents

He hangs up

Stares down

Phone rings. He's forgotten he answered before. Picks up. Waits.

VOICE – We've been trying to get you. You're coming in today. There's a crisis. We need you. Too much paper not enough hands. They said you were breaking through with your work. But there's no evidence. No evidence son. You're a good copper Plotter, we all know, but you're no animal. You think you'll find those kids? You don't have the nose. Don't rely on your instincts. That case has been taken on by the bureau and filed according to correct

procedure. We have a team on this investigation. It is not at this time your responsibility. I'll expect you in one hour. If you want to carry on, get a license.

I'll be seeing you.

Click

Silence } *bare teeth*

He puts the receiver back in its cradle

Plotter at a loss.

The images at his feet merge. The maps become trees branches. The words indecipherable symbols of indeterminate origin. He tries to teach himself Sanskrit as he runs his hands through the foliage. Fails.

He fixes a drink to clear his head. Looks again. His head is not clearer. Is it his head that needs clearing or what is beyond his head?

It, whichever, is not clearer.

He goes to the bath, strips.

The phone rings. He ignores her.

He is old. His muscles ache. His bones are sore. He has slept little and with no comfort. The clothes slip off his limbs like chains. They leave him unprepared for freedom.

He puts a foot in the bath. The phone rings. He picks up the phone and brings it beside the bath. While it rings he returns for a bottle and a glass and places them beside the phone. He gets in pours a drink drinks.

He sinks. He washes in blue strips of rag and silks

The phone rings. He answers.

P – Cohen.

[woman's?] VOICE – I have eaten your children. I'll be seeing you.

Click

Silence } *bare teeth*

He holds the receiver to his ear

He is truly sinking. He reaches for gestures and expressions of grief and rage. He wishes to demonstrate his responses he wishes to tear with his claws the blue flesh from the sky's ribs and to smash the moon with hammers and to swallow the sun and burn memory from his throat in space gases.

But he drinks and sinks.

He releases the receiver and closes

Schiller is in his apartment. Nervy. Plotter dozes dazed in the bath.

S – You're Plotter right? The private investigator.

P – I don't know about so private if you come barging in here, what's the big idea?

S – I hear about you all over, about your record, about

P – Cut it.

S – The even failures

P – Everybody got a few, I'm no different

S – Right.

P – I'm a one unit agency and a one case unit. I got my case already. Sorry not to be of use to you.

S – Now look here a minute

P – No you look. I'm busy son, you hear? So scram.

Schiller sees the piles of work. The film. Goes into the kids' photos. Grubby hands.

S – This the work huh

P – Those are my children.

S – They can't all be yours.

I see you, I see what kinda work you do but a collection like this could quite easily be misinterpreted. If you know what I mean.

P – I didn't catch your name first time out.

S – Schiller. Hampton Schiller.

P – What you after Schiller? Lay it straight.

S – Alright Plotter, I'll lay it straight with you. Two years ago I met a woman

P – It always starts with a woman.

S – a top-draw investigative journalist. We were both recently divorced so we hooked up for a while.

P – Dame got a name?

S – Sophie Tusk.

P – Sophie

S – You know her?

P – Know the name.

S – You should do. Her work is world famous. She'd got wind of some bad business going down on an island to the east. Hearsay. The entire population had been bumped off to lay the ground for converting the place into a huge tourist holiday resort. Around 50 people poisoned. Allegedly.

P – How?

S – Through the fresh water supply. Sophie went over there 18 months ago to investigate. We never heard from her again. Her father followed when it seemed suspicious. I haven't heard from him in over a year.

P – This is a vague story

S – Now wait a minute

P – but we can let that slide. So you're getting active 18 months after your girl disappears and a year after the old man sticks his neck out to get it broke. You never contacted the police

S – I didn't think anything of it

P – You're lying. Or not saying something. Bring it out straight or I'll beat you out.

S – It's too delicate to take to the police. I work for the tourist agency. A prospect scout.

I manage potential properties of clients, with a team of researchers. The island was a prospect I was working on at the time.

P – So that's your angle.

S – I want the truth.

P – Working on at what time?

S – The time before the alleged activity. As I say, I want the truth

P – Who for?

S – My interest in this could be misrepresented

P – You don't say.

S – so I came to you. As you might be more discrete.

P – Where is your interest?

S – With Sophie.

P – But as I see it you've come to me to see if it's still a legitimate enterprise for your company. 18 months is a nice latency period.

S – Hey now what are you suggesting?

P – I have two rules in this business. I won't work a crooked piece of line. If I'm going to this island it's for what happened and not corporation benefit.

There's somewhere between 2 and 50 bodies to be found by your count, all with their own story.

Where is this place anyhow?

S – It's called Planter's. Planter's Island. I got your ticket, the 4 o'clock train, just in time for the last evening boat at half six. Don't be late; there's only one boat.

P – I haven't said I'm going yet.

S – Bring her back to me Plotter. There's a lot in it for you.

P – And for you Schiller.

Schiller is gone. Plotter sinks in the warm swamp

A woman enters his room. His home. She carries a mop and bucket of water. Begins to tidy Plotter's work, arranging in piles the photos, documents, facts and files. Eventually she may be able to mop the floor.