

***This week on Strained Metaphor Theatre***

**Vague:**

**or**

**Arriving in the Middle of a Bad Noir Film**

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INT: A lush, oaky, large den with sofa and desk, bookcases. A woman is seated at the desk, not doing anything in particular. A man is on the couch doing much the same. They seem engaged in some thought, looking off and away. A silence hangs between them as the scene opens... we seem to be in the middle of something... whether it is serious or normal, we don't know. They are British upper class types, their annunciation like an early Hitchcock film. It is in ancient black and white with flawed lighting.

WOMAN

What time is it?

MAN (lights cigarette)

So we're back to that again.

Light drapes blow slightly in from a breeze.

WOMAN

Sam... The breeze. My God!  
You know. You've known this  
whole time.

SAM

I don't know anything ... stop  
.

WOMAN

Where's Loretta ?

SAM

She's a person... talk like  
she's a person, dammit.

WOMAN

Say it.

SAM

I'm afraid I don't know what  
you mean.

WOMAN

Then I will.

SAM

Sure you will... hahahahaha

WOMAN

This clock's wrong.. like the  
Gardener's.

SAM

The police have closed it.  
Leave it be for all our  
sakes. We all know, now. Play  
nice.

WOMAN

Do I know, Sam? Do I know  
EVERYTHING?

SAM breaks off dramatically and looks away in  
shame. Cannot look at her. He composes himself  
and re-engages.

SAM

Those are stories... like for  
little children. You like  
stories... don't you ... before  
bedtime.

WOMAN looks away in some shame, tears start be  
she holds them back, bites a knuckle, pulls  
together and re-engages with some new energy.

WOMAN

Hahahaha.. you're good...  
very good. Got change for a  
dollar, friend?

SAM

You leave New Haven out of  
this ! You promised.

WOMAN

Like the gardener's  
dog...right?

SAM

Your soul is black. So what  
is Tampa then? A plaything  
for your whim? They roll the  
fish there in yesterday's

news. Think about that.

WOMAN

You'll never convince me about those tracks in the lawn... or the silverware... so stop... just stop.

SAM

I would never think of it. Funny that *you* brought it up, though... *Hailey*.

HAILEY

Hailey's the name the state gave me. It means nothing.

SAM

You know he owns the estate now. Are you just going to sit there?!! He is God to everything.

HAILEY

He knows what he knows, paper is just paper, Sam. I'm not afraid. Let him clean the cages and euthanize the animals. It will probably rain ...like before... then he'll know.

SAM

Fantasies... and more stories. Stories for his little girl. Rain. HA! Now I know the voice on the phone. An old voice. It's all clear.

HAILEY

Ha! But you don't even know the time. Do you? Do you, Sam? What time is it, Sam?!! Tell me.

SAM

Careful. New Haven is hours behind... hours! Another time

zone!

HAILEY

But the gardener's not in New Haven... is he? Pity about his dog.

SAM

Like the old man. Sick, frail and on his way out anyway. It was a kindness ... a kindness for both of them.

HAILEY

You know where it is, don't you, Sam. Where the Spaniards hid it from Cortez? We're just like them aren't we? Running ...running and dying. New Haven and the clock were a ruse.

SAM

You've got me all wrong, Hailey. The rain could come but I never bet on the weather. Neither did your old man.

HAILEY

I have no father!!

HAILEY/The WOMAN stands and pulls out a pistol, trains it on SAM. He puts his hands up half heartedly.

SAM

Relax, Hailey. If it's the time you want, I've got all day. Ask... ask me again.

HAILEY

I'm sure. Loretta's late, Sam. Did she go shopping for clock's? Did you give her the time, too? Or is she self-winding? Clocks..clocks and rain... again.

SAM

I die and we never know about  
the King's letter.

HAILEY

Dogs know about rain, Sam...  
and they don't lie. Do they,  
Sam?

SAM (still emotional)

That damn dog..

HAILEY

Here's your chance,  
Sam...for the dog.. and the  
old man.

SAM (dramatically)

You want the time, Hailey?!  
Do you really want to know  
the time? Time is a killer.  
It comes for all of us. You  
don't want to know the time.  
You're just a child.

Just then, a footman/butler enters the room  
carrying a tea service. The woman moves the aim  
of the gun straight at him and fires instantly.  
He drops bloodlessly and the tea service crashes  
into pieces. SAM's face shows immense shock.

SAM

My God! That man was my  
friend since I was a boy!!

HAILEY

He interfered with me during  
my summers here as a young  
woman.

SAM

I must say, this is quite the  
tidying up day for you, isn't  
it. Bully for you.

Just then, we hear very distant thunder. HAILEY turns her ear to the sound and resumes back grimly at SAM.

HAILEY

Ha! The rain...now we'll see.

SAM (fear in his eyes)  
You don't know what you're stirring up... the danger.. Montezuma and all the souls of the accursed Spanish dead. But the dog knew... he wouldn't stop digging.. I offerend him treats . The old man would have figured it out. What do you want?! Do you want this?

He pulls out an ancient key, like a Piece of Eight, from his shirt pocket and offers it.

HAILEY

I want my name, that's all.

SAM

You had your chance... in Tampa.

HAILEY

Keep your trinket.. and to hell with the King and the Spaniards. They know about rain too and will sleep with that secret for the rest of time.

SAM

The rain washes things away ... but not everything. Take the key.

HAILEY

And end up like Lorretta? Not a chance. She's laughing at you Sam, from the Pearly Gates.. her and the dog. At what you've become. The deed to the building doesn't matter now. Keep your key. Say hi to the Gardener's dog. But wait.. All dogs go to heaven. You're going to the other place.

The woman fires a shot into SAM's gut and he crumples bloodlessly in the 40's style. She fire's again and he drops the key, crumples more and hits the carpet.

Just then the clock strikes 5 and chimes away in the stillness. The woman stares at the clock. She walks over, opens the face and moves the minute hand dramatically, slowly forward 20 min. The thunder gets louder and she turns to the breeze now blowing the gossimer drapes slightly. She walks over to the window.

Switch to side shot. The woman's hair is now blowing about slightly in the breeze, showing her face to the wind. We hear gales forming and more thunder.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK - THE END.