

The Billionaire Wolf's Baby

by T.S. Ryder

Chapter One - The Sleep Terrors

Harrod

I sat in the therapist's room, staring at the walls. The color was a soothing green. It felt like the place was filled with nature, even though the only signs of it in the room were the two plants: a bonsai tree on the coffee table and a money plant next to the door. I cracked my knuckles again. It was a nervous habit I had recently developed. My mind kept going back to last night's dream, giving me shivers over and over again. This was unusual for me. Nothing like this had ever happened before. It was almost as if I had hit puberty all over again.

The therapist knocked on the door and entered the room. She didn't really need permission; it was her office, after all. She sat behind the desk and focused her attention on me. Her clothes were casual, her manner formal. She pulled out a notepad from her desk, grabbed a pen and then looked at me.

"Hello," she finally said.

"Hello," I replied.

"Harrod, right?"

I nodded.

"Harrod, I am Dr. Parker."

I smiled, too nervous to speak.

"So," she began. "What brings you here?"

"Haven't you read my file yet?" I asked. My GP had asked me all sorts of questions before sending me here.

“I have, of course,” she smiled patiently. “But I want you to tell me what’s bothering you.”

I was sweating profusely. I lifted my arms, revealing the huge spots of moisture that had seeped into my shirt, and said, “This.”

“Right,” she said. “What we have to do is to get to the root of this. I am going to ask you some questions throughout the session. They may be of a personal nature. You’re free to not answer if you feel uncomfortable, but it would help me greatly if you do. Of course, everything you say will remain between us. I am sure you know about doctor-patient confidentiality.”

I nodded in agreement.

“Now, start at the beginning,” she said.

“Well,” I began. “As far as I remember, everything was fine up until a few days before my 25th birthday. Then I started having these dreams. It was the same dream every time. They have become more frequent now. In the beginning, it was nothing, but every dream progressed a little, showing something the previous dream didn’t. When I wake up, my heart is pounding, hammering in my chest. It feels like I can’t breathe...like I’m having a heart attack.”

“Was there something unusual in the weeks before all this started?”

I shook my head, “No.”

“Were the days preceding all this of any significant to you?”

“Nope.”

“Are you in a relationship?”

“No,” I said.

“Have you ever been in one?”

“I was kind of seeing someone, but it ended. That was three or four months before this. We ended things on pleasant terms, so that has nothing to do with it.”

“What about your sex life?”

I wasn't sure how to answer this, but I went on truthfully. "I just jerk off, or hook up with girls I meet at bars."

She paused for a moment and cleared her throat.

"Harrod, what you are experiencing are mild sleep terrors, coupled with panic attacks."

"But why is this happening?"

"Usually, some major change in life, something unexpected, catches your brain off guard. The defense mechanisms fail, or get bypassed, and the brain goes into an emergency mode. The result is what you are experiencing. The changes are always unanticipated, like the death of a loved one, a new job, getting fired from work, marriage, divorce, etc."

"Trust me, none of that is the case with me. I saw my breakup coming, we both did. We talked about it, lingered for a while, then let go. Neither of us has any regrets. Plus, I am interested in someone, but it's too soon to take that into account."

"How do you feel about it?" she asked, scribbling something on her notepad.

"I don't feel much about it. Like I said, there's this girl at my university that I am interested in, and we'll see how it goes. There's not much to add."

"Right," she said. "How is your relationship with your parents?"

"Well, my dad works for the government and holds an important position, one I am not allowed to tell you about, but our relationship is pretty good. We are not particularly close, but we are close enough. We talk when he's around and free, and play golf when we can. Other than that he's usually busy. My mother lives at a facility. A tragic incident during my childhood sent her into a trauma she hasn't been able to recover from."

"What happened?"

"I was only seven, so I don't remember much," I lied. I didn't want her to link my dreams to what had happened back then.

"Any siblings? How's your relationship with them?"

“I had a brother, but he died. His lungs weren't properly formed. I think he was about two or three then.” Another lie, but I had no choice here. Father had strictly warned me against speaking the truth.

“Do you visit your mom?”

“I used to visit her every week, then twice a month, but now I visit her once every month or two. She hardly ever talks, so there's no point really. She isn't quite there, you know, delusions and all.”

“Okay, Harrod,” she began. “This is your first session and I don't want to stress you out. I would like you to see me twice a week, and as we continue this, I would like you to open up slowly.” She held the pen in her fingers and pointed in the air, like a teacher in front of a whiteboard. “See, therapy takes time to work. I can't prescribe any medications to you. My job is to get to the root of the problem and fix it. This will take time and effort, and it won't work if you don't try. So, are you onboard?”

“Yes,” I lied for the last time.

She got up from her desk and sat on the chair beside me, and handed me a pamphlet. She recommended some breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, workouts, all the usual stuff. I nodded my head, said ‘yes’ over and over again, pretended I was listening and waited for the session to be over.

I wasn't going to come back to this. Therapy wasn't for me, it wasn't going to work. I knew what I had to do, so I thanked her and left the room.

Chapter Two - The Rich Dude

Siobhan

As I walked to the computer lab, I saw Harrod pacing the corridor. I knew who he was, everyone in the class did, but I doubted he knew who I was — it didn't bother me, though. He hung out with the people who were his type, children of the government big shots, politicians and billionaires. I preferred keeping a low profile, but I knew who everyone was. Not that I'm shrewd or anything, I just think it's safer that way, if you know what I mean. Girls are like that, they keep an eye on their surroundings and are well aware of everything happening around them. Well, some girls are.

“You must be Siobhan,” he said. He said it like *Si-aw-bhun*.

It sounded so ridiculous that I almost laughed out loud. I did laugh in my head, cackling boisterously. To him, I just nodded.

“Looks like we are partners in Programming,” he said, waving the list in the air. I wanted to take the list from his hands and read it myself, but I didn't. I didn't want him to know how I felt about being paired with him. For the time being, I didn't know how I felt about it. I knew what my friend Lana would say: “He's a catch.” She would have said it out loud if she were here, so I was glad she wasn't. There was no point in looking at the list anyway. If he was mistaken, my partner would call me out or come get me anyway. There weren't any other *Si-aw-bhuns* in my class, anyway.

I smiled tightly at him. He opened the door and went in, without holding it for me. *Jerk!* But then again, what was I expecting? I pushed open the door and joined him as he took a seat. I didn't look at him, though. I would do that on Facebook on my way home. We were both in our class' group on there.

“Sorry,” he said. “I'm a little under the weather. I don't know how to do this.”

“Oh,” I said. That was all I could say, to be honest. I finally looked at him. He appeared a bit frowzy, which was indeed unusual for him. He was usually very well dressed, neat and dapper — a politician in the making. “We can do this later,” I said.

“Oh no, I don’t mean that. We have to sit through this class. I just…” he trailed off. I didn’t bother asking him to finish saying whatever he had to say. He was probably having a hangover.

“You should take an aspirin or two,” I said. “It helps with the hangover.”

He looked at me as if I were a clown. His cold blue eyes turned almost white and his pupils dilated, giving me goosebumps on my arms. “I don’t have a hangover,” he said. “I don’t drink on weekdays.”

He said it with such ferocity that I was caught off guard. “Sorry,” I mumbled.

“It’s alright.”

“Show me your notes,” I said, reaching for the journal in his lap, “and let me see what we have and where we are. I’ll draw the —”

He reached for his journal at the same time as I did, and for the briefest instant our hands touched — or my fingers touched his hand. His skin was burning.

“You have a fever,” I said. “Harrod, you need to go see a doctor.”

“I am fine,” he said.

“No, you are not!” I don’t know what happened, maybe my maternal instincts took over. He looked like such a beaten dog.

“*Siawbhun*, let it go,” he said, as I reached for his hand.

“No,” I stated sternly, and grabbed his hand. I picked up his bag, stuffed his things in it, and led him out.

“Siobhan,” the professor called out from behind.

“He’s burning, professor. I’m taking him to the doctor,” I said. He nodded his approval. Once we got outside, he stopped and turned to look at me.

“So, *Shivon*,” he said.

“That’s close,” I said. “Better than *Siawbhun*.”

“Why didn’t you correct me?”

“I don’t really bother. Almost everyone gets it wrong. I only correct the ones who matter.”

“So I don’t matter,” he said, giving me half a smile.

“Of course you don’t,” I said, before I could think. “I mean...I don’t know you. I’m undecided.”

“What’s gonna help you decide?”

“Quit stalling,” I said. “You need to go see a doctor right now.”

“I just want to go home.”

“No, you need a doctor.”

“I’m fine,” he said, and walked off.

I stood by the window and watched him leave the main doors on the floor below. Light blue jeans, white tee-shirt, a black bag slung on his back. At the university gates, two men — dressed in black, wearing black shades — flanked him, and led him to the waiting car. There were two vans that accompanied his car from front and back. All three vehicles had black tinted glasses. I knew all this because I have seen him come and go several times. Like I said, I observe things. But I didn’t know what or who was in the vans; their doors never opened and the windows never rolled down. But all of this was enough to suggest that he was an important person, or his father was.

The contrast of the dark tinted cars was even more pronounced when put against the bright and cheery Christmas decorations along the corridors and halls of the school. All the Christmas spirit seemed like plastic to me. I looked up at the red paper cutouts of Santa Claus hanging from the walls and then back at the secret exit of the cavalcade of cars carrying my lab partner.

I thought I’d ask my mom about it. She knows so much stuff, I was sure she’d know about this, too. She’s a senator in Congress, but she also worked as the Chief of Staff for the former President. Back then, I had the chance to get similar protocol, but my mother wanted me to have a ‘normal’ upbringing and I agreed with her. I didn’t want to attract too much attention to myself. I still don’t. If I got any attention of that sort, it would be because of myself, because of what I had done or achieved, not because I was linked to someone in a higher position.

I wondered what was wrong with Harrod; I hoped he would get better soon. If I had his number, I would call him, but I didn't have it and I wouldn't ask anyone for it. A lot of girls asked his friends for his number under various pretenses, just as they did for the other guys in his group. I didn't want to appear clingy or attention hungry, or a gold-digger, as they call it. I knew because I heard them talking in the cafeteria once, right after a girl asked for Timothy's number.