

INSOMNIA

By Patrick Gabridge

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CAST: ANNA and MARY

SCENE: A bedroom, with a bed or cot, and a chair or stool. For contest purposes, the floor and two chairs will be adequate.

AT RISE: MARY, in a nightgown (if costumes are used), sitting up on the bed, facing the audience. ANNA, also wearing a nightgown, stands behind her, or perhaps is perched on a stool or chair.

ANNA: Insomnia. Noun. Chronic inability to fall asleep or remain asleep for a length of time. Insomniac. Noun. One who suffers from insomnia.

MARY: I am not an insomniac. Not by nature. I have always been a good sleeper, one of those people who doesn't linger or mull before drifting off at night. I may spend my day slogging through various mental mud pits, but when it comes time for sleep, I'm ready. I always felt that insomniacs didn't value sleep enough, that they were somehow weak.

(ANNA slumps into the chair in a fetal position. ANNA begins to cry, loudly, the cry of a young baby.)

MARY: I am now a mother, which by definition should read: Mother, see also: insomniac—one who suffers from the inability to remain asleep for a length of time. Every night.

(SHE rises from her bed and tenderly takes ANNA in her arms to comfort her. This takes a moment. MARY: disengages herself and tiptoes back to bed. The instant SHE is relaxed, ANNA begins to cry again.)

MARY: I don't understand it. It's as if she possesses a special sensor that informs her the instant that I'm on the edge of sleep again.

(SHE rises and comforts ANNA again. MARY returns to bed. Settles down. ANNA creeps to her side, as an older child now, and tugs on MARY's sleeve.)

ANNA: Mom. I have to pee. Mom. Mom, I have to pee!
(MARY opens an eye, sits up, and points.)

MARY: The bathroom is that way. Go. Don't stand there looking at me, go to the bathroom. Go on. Go!

(ANNA circles behind MARY, who relaxes again. ANNA comes and tugs on MARY's sleeve again.)

ANNA: Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom.

(repeatedly, until MARY addresses her directly)

MARY: I am awake. ***(to audience)*** She knows I am awake, since she woke me up only a few minutes ago. But she won't ask her question, and she won't go away. I'm a bad parent, because all I want from her, at this very moment, is for her to go away. I am filled with rage, and it is everything I can do to keep from leaping from bed and throttling the life out of her. ***(to ANNA)*** WHAT?

ANNA: There's a spider in my room.

MARY: No, there's not.

ANNA: Yes, there is.

MARY: No, there's not.

ANNA: Yes, there is.

MARY: How do you know?

ANNA: I saw it.

MARY: It's dark. How can you see a spider in the dark? Do you have magical spider detection vision?

ANNA: There's a spider in my room. I can't sleep with a spider in my room.

MARY: **(to audience)** Which means that I cannot sleep while there's a spider in her room. Which means that I will now annihilate the spider.

(MARY gets out of bed, pulls over ANNA's stool, stands on it, reaches up, at the very tips of her toes, swats the spider, then jumps down, and completely, violently, totally obliterates the spider with beating and kicking and stomping. ANNA is a little frightened.)

ANNA: Thanks, Mom.

(MARY returns to bed.)

MARY: I don't understand why the spiders seek out her room. Even if I do a preemptive spider sweep before bedtime, they congregate there at night. I am conspired against by arachnids.

(ANNA makes an awful retching sound, of a cat vomiting. MARY very slowly gets out of bed and cleans up after the cat. ANNA rubs against MARY's leg and purrs.)

MARY: And felines. I don't care if she throws up in any other room of the house, as long as I don't have to hear it. If I don't hear it, I will clean it in the morning. But if I hear it, then I'm burdened with an obligation to clean it up right away.

ANNA: Sleep. Noun. A natural periodic state of rest for the mind and body, in which the eyes usually close and consciousness is completely or partly lost, so that there is a decrease in bodily movement and responsiveness to external stimuli.

MARY: My lack of sleep at night has given way to partial sleep during the day. The decrease in bodily movement and responsiveness to external stimuli—I have that. I'm living my life underwater. Sometimes, it's as if I'm filled with water, or filled with bile, and the kids bump against me, and it blurps out all over them. ***(screaming at ANNA, who cowers)*** What the hell is the matter with you? There is maple syrup all over the table, the chair, the floor. Look, the baby is stuck in syrup, I am stuck in syrup. What is wrong with you?

ANNA: It was an accident.

MARY: I don't care. Did you clean it up? Did you clean it up? Why am I the designated cleaner of all messes. Clean it up. Clean it up and take a time out and you're grounded for the rest of the month and I'm throwing away all your toys and you're never going to taste syrup or sugar again for the rest of your natural life.

ANNA: That's not fair!

MARY: Or I will kill you.

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