

## ***Me and the Black Dog Script***

It comes at me like an explosion. Just when everything is blue and green and shiny, like a shimmering full stop it comes and blots out the sun, but I'm not scared.

My dog used to bite me as a child. Hair soft and matted, always full of spiky burrs and bits of this and that. I loved her because she was naughty and because she was my real walking woofing doll. But when the grown-ups left the room and the door clicked shut, her eyes narrowed, her silence became a snarl and her smile a snap – SNAP – snap – little bites and nips. She got a smack and was thrown out, but it never stopped her. Somewhere inside she hated us children. Maybe she was jealous or maybe she hated her dependence on us? Our smoothing and stroking, cooing and cooing. Treating her like a soft toy – a fool. She was no fool. She was a bitch. She was wild, forced to be tame.

Black dog, groggy black dog, down and down, shaggy black dog, where will you take me?

I remember once being in the woods. We were out walking. It was autumn because in my head everything was orange and brown and crunchy. Over to the left of the frame, a family with a black dog on a leash. The dog, happy enough snaffling about. And the family were talking. They didn't see me – my ten year old self sauntering over to pet their pooch. Big, lovely dog. Me all smiles, fluffy hair and glowing face. Here doggy, doggy here. I put my hand out to stroke it and as the owners turned around, it sprung up on to its towering hind legs – teeth bared viciously looming over me like a real monster about to rip my face apart when – snap – the leash flexed tight and the dog froze over me, angry and snarling...And me?... I was

beneath, cowering, terrified and then stumbling back red-faced and very small. Too shocked to cry.

They shot a wild dog in the forest around here. Some idiot probably acting like a hero – why couldn't they just ignore it? Let it rummage around and then wander off. With its big wet nose and its round, red eyes and fangs – big, globby pendulums of slobber – swinging and sticking. Why did they have to turn it into some bloody drama? Why are they so frightened of the wild things? I mean who got scared? I'm not scared. There are no monsters out there in the dark – in the trees. They're inside. In the air conditioned, anti bacterial interior. They're in me. I'm going to pull the monster out from deep inside and wear it like a big fur coat – I'll wrap the dog skin around me. I'll be the black dog – with teeth hovering over my head wrapped in a big furry blob black cape, scruffy and gone. The monster.

Me and the black dog and me and the black dog and me and the black dog and me and the black dog and me and the black dog and me and the black dog....

I'll jump into the hot tarmac whirlpool – and get to the bottom to where there are no stars – no pinpricks of light. Find myself submerged in the darkest tight night under the river bed with weeds and mud and pebbles. And if I'm there will I be able to work it through and out of me – shake off the black weight so I can float up to the blue. But looking down at me through circular ripples spiralling out is another great big groggy dog – paddling the water and blotting out the sun. Black scraggy mass, always blocking my way back to the sunshine.

There's something of the war in the black dog. Something evil. Showing the nastiest shadows and sides to our soul. The pools and cancers that grow there. The black dog will always be there with its crack empty eyes and salivating mouth – desperate

to hurt you. Seeing it is like peering into the darkest part of you where there's no fucking light or poetry. Just smudge and shit. Nastiness. All that stuff we do when crushed to extremes – taking light and life out of the world. Well fuck this and them.

I must try to clean my mind and my thoughts – to remove this stain. This bloody blot. I must try to remain pure and to flow through it all, but it's hard because stuff catches on the edges of me like sticky burrs. Spiky, matt 'sunshines' and stuff sticking to me and dragging lines through my skin and twisting my hair into wire grey. But I am told I must be like the sunshine for you. I won't be your cloud. I will smooth off my edges and become this ball of gas. Nothing sharp or dark so I cause you no pain. But becoming streamlined... it isn't much is it? Smoke, ash, a diamond even – isn't perfection some kind of death? I was perfect once. I'm not any more but I'm told I must still try. Either that or feel shame. Why must I turn on myself? Show no expression and hide from the sun. I must smile with my mouth.

But then comes the dog...

You see it is that, that makes me wild. I can appear soothed and smooth – Vaseline gives a good glow – but under that my skin is cracking and under that is my body, bones and blood – getting older, older, older. And sooner or later the cracks are going to show and I – ME – the wild one will come screaming through. And it will be bad. And then I really will be this wild dog for you.

I'm starting to feel strong again. Do you know what? The black dog can leap all over me for all I care. I'll cuddle it – huge big bear. Snuggle it and get lost in its fluff. It wouldn't dare eat me then. Great, big and silly. I'll just settle into its fluffy coat. Get absorbed – become one. Cosy and warm and the winter won't get to me then. I won't freeze – I'll be in the dog coat with its stupid face breathing its hot breath on

me. Me and the black dog forever. But then just while I'm all close and warm a smell, no, a bloody stench starts to seep out onto my skin and up my nose like rotten cabbage and turnips mixed with mildew and mouldy crusts and piss and just grotty grot oh it's so disappointing this mangy old mutt with it's stink, sweat and drool – I knew it was too good to be true. Why can't it smell sweet or just blank? But it can't. Nothing is ever perfect.

There's too much stuff in my head now. Trees quaking and moving, shuffling, rustling. I always think of wildness – the woods, peat bogs and the dark black hole in the middle of the bottom of the sea so far down it would crush the breath and life out of you where the pure weight of the water would squash you to death down there where not much lives – I don't think even sharks. That's where the black dogs are – places where there's no light. Dark places and beautiful places where nothing much shivers and it's wild and wonderful and a little bit eerie. It's pure where the mind has gone all the way – into some sort of madness. One way and it's like some sort of beautiful mathematical formula – a pure chord or a piece of whale song that the human ear can't pick up. But it's all one way and maybe too perfect so that you can't recognise how perfect it is anymore until it becomes scary and liquid and then sticky and horrid and evil and runs over you and through you until you can't look up. Scary eh?

A dog bit me the other day. Just a nip you say. But when will it sink its fangs right in? Better to be aware. To beware. To not even put ones hand in to stroke it. To be safe, safe, safe... to disappear.

Do you want another dog tale? Shall I tell you one?

There was this little girl – she found an old black dog on her way to school. It had a matted and mangy coat and rabid orange eyes and red – out of a wild lost face – all fucked up and screwy. She took the dog home and built a kennel about it. She put carpet on the floor and put out an earthenware bowl for its food. She gave it a perfect bone and brushed its hair 100 times until it shone and it was smooth and sleek and soft. And she petted it and cared for it but it never lost its orange and red eyes. And it got bored. And crazy. And one day it spat out its bone and shaggy dog food and hurumph – ate the little girl up – finger nails and all. Munch, munch for his lunch.

Your black dog got too much really. It grew in you until it squeezed out all of the light. So what did you do? Jump off the bridge? Is that actually what you did? And for you so sad because your coat and shirt tails didn't become your parachute, circling you through the sky to safety. You went down like a bomb. How did it feel torpedoing through the sky and into the river? How was it to burst into the water? And then crash, deep, deep into the mud. That's where I am now. You could be only metres from me.

Beep

It's dusk. I can hear the owl. My reminder that night is coming. Regular as a heartbeat.

Beep

Night is creeping into the air like a dust cloud rising from the green and colouring it grey and then sludgy and then black bloody black night.

Beep

Have I had an awakening, an enlightenment? I don't think so because the splinter is still there at the top of my ribcage.

Beep

Beep

But what's new and different about that? It's all part of the process of course. Tides and all that. The pull of the moon or whatever.

Beep

I ran along the river today. Happily jogging along plinkety plonk plinkety plonk in my own little rhythmic world in between the sky and the green grass and the prickly brambles and thistles when this bloody dog ran straight at me. I jumped into the air and whooped and it ran away – but it had brought me out of my rhythm and made my adrenaline pump. The owner laughed. Maybe one day I'll run at her. Suddenly break into a sprint at the sight of her and run straight at her, a wild fucking woman on the river bank running at full pelt. Give her the fright of her life.

Beep