

SHORT FICTION/ESSAYS

Some Encounters With Dinosaurs

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1.

Amy Pointer slumps against the deformed back of a sadistically designed bench on the eastbound platform. She is trying to imagine flinging herself onto the tracks of the Long Island Rail Road, but it's hopeless. Even if she could drag her exhausted butt off the seat, she would never be allowed to proceed as far as the satisfying crunch. The environs are infested with predators, budding therapists longing to pounce on an unsuspecting depressive and force her to process her pain. She will have to cross —romantic heroine off of her diminishing list of possible career paths.

After nine months of graduate school, it is clear to Amy that —clinical psychologist does not belong on this list either. She is aware that her motives in applying to this program were not pure—a case of —moving away rather than —moving toward, as her Karen-Horney-obsessed Theories of Personality professor would label it. She did not entertain high hopes of passionate engagement, on any level—romantic, professional, or social. But she had searched for, and assumed she had found, a safe haven in this, what must be, at her age and with two failed careers behind her, the last stop on this train. She had anticipated performance anxiety, returning to school after nearly 15 years of independent and lazy thinking, and perhaps a measure of social awkwardness, but she has been blindsided, and possibly derailed, by the depth and constancy of her alienation.

And loneliness, she thinks, then immediately regrets the thought, because the moment she entertains it she sees, like divine punishment for her complaint, the Impresario striding purposefully toward her.

Amy keeps herself awake during lecture classes by concocting, in the pages of her notebook, a series of Tarot cards—Jungian analysis being the only branch of psychology that continues to fascinate her, uncontaminated as it is by any regard or even notice by her smug and authoritative professors—employing new archetypes inspired by her classmates. So far, she has completed the Sycophant, the Browbeater, the Parvenu, and the Recreant in the Major Arcana, and applied herself to the Impresario for the whole of her Intelligence Testing seminar this afternoon.

He is almost too easy to caricature. A light-skinned African-American, he has the bland good looks and superficial geniality of a mid-level salesman or the leading man in a soap opera—and the buzz about him is that he did, indeed, act in the soaps before landing here. His clothes appear parodic, as well. In

contrast to the standard-issue Spandex of the multiply-pierced younger students, and Amy's Salvation Army finds, his wardrobe includes oxford shirts, ties, and, on a rotating basis, cardigan sweaters and sport jackets. *I'm not a psychologist, but I play one on TV.* In class, his questions are considered, organized, and delivered in reasonable and well-modulated tones calculated to inspire admiration for the soundness of his thought processes and the breadth of his knowledge. He sets her teeth on edge.

She pulls her notebook out of her backpack and pretends to study, hoping to discourage any attempt at social intercourse, but he eases himself gracefully onto the impossible bench and smiles at her. —You're here late, he comments.

Amy decided early on that making enemies here would create an excessive drain on her already limited energy, so she no longer offers snide retorts to moronic comments. She agrees that, yes, she is here late, and observes that he is, too.

—I always leave around this time. I've never seen you here at this hour

The statement seems to require a response, so she says, —I had a testing that ran late

—Oh, shoot me now Amy stares. —A testing session that runs into overtime? I'd have to throw myself in front of that train He gestures toward the approaching eastbound engine.

She is astonished. The power and fascination of psychological testing is a given among students and faculty alike. That mastering the interpretation of responses to a series of questions, exercises, and projective stimuli confers the capacity to *actually see inside the client's psyche* is discussed in tones of reverence and awe. Amy thinks this is garbage, but the few mild comments she has ventured regarding the sadism of testing children, the arrogance of presuming equal access to the information on assessed IQ tests, and the tedium of recording and transcribing meandering responses to Rorschach blots when one could glean equivalent information simply by asking the client directly about her thoughts and fears (all right, the comments were comparatively mild, for Amy) have been answered with patronizing smiles and assurances that once she has been truly initiated into the subtleties involved, she will find the process more comprehensible and rewarding.

So, when their car turns out to be practically deserted, leaving her no civil option but to settle with him into the facing seats he chooses for them, she is not as discomfited as she might have been.

—How far do you go? he asks.

—Penn. You?

—Jamaica. I change for the E, and then the 4, to the Upper East Side

You would, she thinks. Aloud, she says, —I'm on West Fourth

—By NYU? He starts to ask a question, then stops himself. She surmises, accurately, that he wonders why she bothers commuting to Long

Island with an equivalent program down the street, but has declined to pursue the question in case she did not get into NYU.

As it happens, his delicacy is misplaced, but it touches Amy, so she offers: —It was a child, the testing. His mother wants to get him into a gifted program. If this kid is gifted, so is my brother's dog, who barks at the washing machine. He knew he wasn't giving me the right answers, so of course he got frustrated, and after a while everything was doodoo and peepee, and the blocks ended up on the floor. I tried to cut it short, but his mother got mad, first at him and then at me. She threatened to complain to Brenda, so I dragged him through the whole battery. I'm a spineless wimp Brenda is the testing supervisor, and so far she has —counseled out (i.e., expelled) two students this year.

—At my field placement, he says, —I had to test this woman who was having a possible psychotic episode. You know how before you give the Rorschach you have to say, 'There are no right or wrong answers to this test'? She said, 'Uh-huh, But some answers land you in the hospital, right?' They laugh at the accuracy of her perception. —So who's out of touch with reality here?

—I can't believe you're saying these things. Everybody else is so—

—Dreadful?

Well, yes. But this conversation is veering so rapidly into intimacy she can't help suspecting his motives. Early in her tenure here, she would go out drinking after classes with a group of other students. A pattern of social interaction emerged fairly quickly. The group would target one member, drawing the student out with intense empathy and leading questions, until blood was drawn. This information would then be filed away, to be used for the competitive advantage of other group members.

One night, after too many beers, a young woman named Marcy revealed an episode of molestation by an older relative. A few weeks later, after their Child Development teacher had praised Marcy for a particularly astute comment, one of her interlocutors raised his hand and asked earnestly, —I just wondered whether you have any insight into the question of whether childhood sexual abuse causes people to become exhibitionists. I mean, I can't help noticing that people who've had this experience seem to need to talk about it in inappropriate settings, and to try to turn you on with it, if you know what I mean. There had then ensued a lively discussion about the pathology of sexual abuse victims, in which the rathskeller crowd participated with pointed enthusiasm while Marcy sat silent with trembling hands. Amy went out of her way to be friendly toward Marcy for a few weeks, until she saw Marcy play the same trick on another student. Now she heads for the train the moment her last class is dismissed.

So, in the present situation, she chooses discretion, employing the classic therapeutic intervention of turning the tables. —Is that how they seem to you? Dreadful?

—Honestly? It reminds me of a cult. I'm freaked out

He has revealed himself to her, shown his belly first, as it were. She decides it is safe to respond in kind, and is about to do so when the conductor arrives for their tickets.

—Hey, bro, the conductor says. —That tie be fine

—Yours be fine, too. Them little LIRR's be cute They laugh.

The guy's a chameleon. —So, who do you sound like when you stub your toe in the middle of the night?

His face no longer open to her, he responds, —That's my native language.

You have to be bilingual to make it outside the neighborhood

They are silent for a moment as the conductor concludes a conversation, in standard English, with the white woman across the aisle.

—Sorry, she says. —Really. I haven't had an actual conversation since before I came here. I've lost the knack

—No problem But his eyes remain distant.

—I'm so out of it, I don't even know your name, she says, and extends her hand. —I'm Amy Pointer, campus idiot

He laughs then, and grasps her hand. —Jake Green, token minority and a little sensitive about it. I know who you are. I watch you

—Jake? For Jacob? You don't look... She trails off, afraid of offending him again.

—For John Kennedy, J.K

—Kennedy? You're older than you look

—Thirty-seven in August

—No joke. Me, too. The eighteenth

—Oh, my god, we're astral twins

—Wow. It's fate. Um, what did you mean, you watch me?

—In class. Whenever somebody makes a particularly inane remark, your eyebrows shoot up past your hairline. I like to watch you, it makes me feel less, well, lonely.

—I hang out in the library after class. I don't want to ride back and make small talk with them. But when I saw you on the platform, I was glad

Amy catches her breath. She has been observed, unmasked. She is unable to discern whether the pounding of her heart is due to panic or excitement. She decides for the latter, and as the train pulls into the Jamaica station, she blurts, —Would you like to go out sometime?

—I'd love it. This weekend? Maybe a movie?

—Saturday night? She imagines their hands touching lightly in the darkened theater. She wonders how he will dress for a date, what his apartment is like.

—Sounds good. Let me check with my wife He gathers his things.

—Great. I'll talk to my boyfriend Her voice has gone tinny, her face stiff. She suddenly imagines herself as a villager in the Japanese monster movies she and her brother were addicted to as children. They would roll on the couch,

convulsing in silence so as not to wake their father, passed out in his easy chair. The hilarity derived from the discrepancy between content and form; from the stilted English delivered in a Minnie Mouse squeak asynchronous with the panicked expressions of an overacting extra. And now the Godzilla of her need has been exposed in the light of the villagers' torches, and he will flee in panic.

He is heading for the doors, but he turns and says, —I'll look for you Friday, then. So glad we started talking

Amy's breath returns to normal. She has escaped detection. She opens her notebook and resumes work on the Impresario. She sticks a pipe in his mouth as the train begins its descent into the cavernous void of Penn Station.

2.

As you might have deduced from the foregoing, Amy does not have a boyfriend. She does, however, have an ex-husband, who is amenable to filling the role as an as-needed basis, and she dutifully calls him the following afternoon from her office in the dingy and overcrowded city hospital where she has her field placement.

Amy and Brendan met in a literature class at NYU and married shortly after graduation. Early passion faded into comfortable partnership that might have bobbed along to this day had Brendan not published a novel that conferred unexpected celebrity and rendered him too sensitive to pick up his own socks. He parlayed this success into a position teaching creative writing at their alma mater, where Amy was burning out of a job writing fundraising material. Brendan's post gave him access to a seemingly unlimited supply of attractive undergraduate women eager to experience Life under the tutelage of a true artist. It was when Amy realized that she was more distressed over the laundry than the infidelities that she acknowledged the marriage was over.

In their amicable division of property, Amy took custody of the apartment and cat, while Brendan retained rights to NYU and all of its programs. On the surface, this arrangement would seem to favor Amy. The apartment is a co-op studio inherited from Brendan's great-aunt; though dark and minuscule, its location ensures her a steady stream of phone messages from real-estate brokers promising deep-pocketed buyers. Furthermore, agreeing to leave NYU was not a sacrifice. She had spent the afternoon before the appointment retching in the women's room of the Development Office after turning in a requisitely fawning citation for a playwright whose work she despises. Besides, she has no desire to run into Brendan and his latest in the library or the gym.

On Amy's side, though, is the fact that she supported Brendan through his MFA program by performing just such wretched feats, first as an actress in television commercials (she enjoyed some brief notoriety as the Carter's Peanut Butter Lady, the soccer mom who betrays a salacious satisfaction in licking her fingers after the kids trot off to school, lunchboxes in hand, before admitting that

this capacity for shameless mugging was not equivalent to thespian gifts) and then in the Development Office. Brendan is cognizant of this, both of the appearance his defection creates that he used her and tossed her aside when success beckoned, and of Amy's real loyalty and dedication to him through the years, which he did not wish to repay by kicking her out of their home and depriving her of her income with one gesture. He was able to find a reasonable sublet nearby, and so their only point of contention was the cat. Amy persuaded him that Theodore, their 11-year-old tabby, would be disoriented by a move and probably pee all over the sublet, and so won this not inconsiderable point.

Amy then cast about for an alternative career. She felt she needed a complete change. The couples therapist they engaged to supervise the demise of their marriage suggested that her verbal facility, as well as her unusual tendency to actually listen to what people said to her (which previously had only landed her in trouble) might equip her for a career in his line of work. No sooner had he made the suggestion that it seemed obvious to Amy. She had a lifelong fascination with what lay under the surface, and she attributed the success she enjoyed at her job to her ability, fine-tuned by the necessity to evade her father's heavy hand, to discern the hidden desires of others (in this case, potential donors) and hand these back in acceptable, even attractive form. *If only her gifts could be channeled for the greater good, Dr. Harebrain!*

So, Amy spent her last months at NYU taking psychology classes during her lunch hour, studying for the GREs, and applying to every local school except NYU. Her acceptance into the Long Island program seemed at the time a stroke of great luck, enabling her to enter a different social and cultural sphere while commuting back to her familiar environs each night. She had hoped to make a complete break with Brendan, filling the void with the new friendships and interests that would flow naturally now that she had discovered her true callings. She even imagined subletting the co-op and relocating to the bucolic surrounds of her new graduate school, beginning afresh as a suburban dweller, savoring her morning coffee from her deck, barbecuing with friends, and perhaps even taking up tennis.

We can see how well that worked out. Since September, Brendan has become her primary conduit back to her old, underappreciated life, her old self, and has accompanied her to two weddings and a horrendous but mandatory holiday party hosted by her mother and her mother's new husband. Brendan doesn't mind. He is glad to be useful to Amy, after years of feeling diminished by her disparaged but lucrative vocational pragmatism and refusal to be snowed by his vaunted poetic sensibility. And he misses the cat.

This afternoon, he not only agrees to accompany her on Saturday, but offers to make dinner for the foursome in Amy's apartment. Interpenetrating his acknowledged wishes to help Amy out and catch up with Theodore, Amy senses a more primitive desire, to stake his prior claim on her against an intruder he perceives as a threat, wife or no wife.

Amy does not wish to encourage him in this alpha-male-in-the-manger role. She knows she is in danger of backsliding, of agreeing to overlook the un-overlookable out of disappointment and cowardice. She has no intention of resuming a relationship with Brendan. If she is not yet ready to go forward, she knows she can't go back. Still, she is aware of the need to mount a defense against the very enemy Brendan has sniffed out, so she decides that joining forces on this one occasion will not constitute capitulation. She accepts his offer with mixed emotions and descends into the ward to fetch her last patient of the day, a new arrival named Pierre Louis.

Amy is marginally more comfortable at the hospital than at school. The rawness of the problems presented demands a response of answering intensity, precluding much of the theoretical pretentiousness that drives her mad the rest of the week. Even so, the revealed pain feels overwhelming and unhealable, and the psychologists, though more supportive than her university colleagues, appear to suffer from depression and anhedonia to a degree nearly equal to that of the patients.

She had hoped that her current assignment, on the medical rehabilitation unit, would prove more benign than her previous post in a locked psychiatric ward, given that her function here is merely to identify and assuage the normal distress associated with physical trauma rather than to help manage the anguish of psychosis. This has not turned out to be the case. The demons that haunt the city's poorer neighborhoods are, she has learned, at least as malevolent as those that lurk inside the well-medicated heads of her psychiatric patients. Amy has listened to countless chronicles of drive-by shootings, of stabbings by jealous lovers, of children flung from fire escapes.

That her patients seem to find solace in her attentiveness to their stories, in her manifest grief at the unfairness of their fates, and request to speak with her again, Amy attributes to the poverty of their resources rather than to any personal virtues or the healing properties of the process itself. A client's disclosure that Amy is known on the ward as —the nice lady engenders despair at the implied contrast with the treatment usually accorded these inmates, whose crimes, for the most part, consist of bad timing and lack of health insurance; as well as renewed impatience with the certainty of her professors that the analytical theories of Melanie Klein and Heinz Kohut, honed as they were on the neuroses of the middle and leisured classes, provide all the necessary tools to deal with the world's ills.

Mr. Louis appears at first to be a representative, if sad, case. A gunshot wound has left his right kneecap shattered, and he walks with excruciating slowness, leaning on a cane. He is, as she duly records, alert and oriented to person, place, and time; polite and cooperative; and in physical pain. His vagueness about the source of his wound she initially attributes to a sense of delicacy or shame; perhaps it was the result of a failed drug deal or an encounter with a vengeful prostitute. As she asks further questions designed to put him at

ease, though, in the hope of eliciting more information, he breaks into a sweat and his hands begin to shake noticeably.

She says, —Mr. Louis, I'm sorry if I'm making you uncomfortable. I have to ask you these questions, but I don't want to cause you any more pain. Let's just go down the list as quickly as we can, and then we can talk about something more interesting, like what you do for fun

—Miss, he says, —I will tell you what I'm going to do, but it's not fun

—What's that?

—I'm going to kill the person who did this to me

Hoping this is a figure of speech, she asks, —Who might that be?

—Dr. Irwin Clatanoff

Amy stares at him. Dr. Clatanoff is the orthopedic specialist on the unit.

—Dr. Clatanoff? she repeats, imagining a misdiagnosis leading to complications, or perhaps delayed examination that allowed infection to set in. Such calamities are not unheard of on this overcrowded unit, and Dr. Clatanoff, whose bedside manner is unfortunate, tends to be blamed for many mishaps not of his making.

—What did Dr. Clatanoff do exactly?

—Miss, I see you are a good person. You need to know that Dr. Clatanoff is an evil man. He hates the godly. He plots the downfall of the righteous. He is set on crippling my people

—Dr. Clatanoff shot you?

—Miss, I see you are not wise in the ways of the world. Satan does not do his evil work directly, but through his agents. He is a crafty one, bringing us here as his subjects, each through his own supposed accident, but his true nature has been revealed to the Son of Man

Now Amy is the one who is sweating. She hopes he does not hear her knees knocking behind her desk. She reflects for the first time that this office is in an isolated corner, next to a supply closet and across from a seldom-used seminar room. She wonders how quickly he can move when aroused, and who would hear her if she screamed. She gauges her chances of pushing past him to the door without getting clobbered by the cane. She feels he is expecting her to respond, and is afraid that continued silence will arouse a suspicion that she is part of the plot. All she can think to say, though is, —Gosh

He takes it in the proper spirit. —Fear not. The Son of Man is chosen to avenge the wounds of his people. The righteous shall triumph

She forces herself to breathe. *Please*, she thinks, wondering to whom the prayer is addressed. The ghost of Freud?

—Um, has the —have you been chosen for this sort of thing before?

—Many times, Miss

—Can you tell me about the last one? She tries to write the words —Prior psych. history, but the pen veers off the page.

—Satan's agent was crafty, but the Son of Man triumphed at last

—Did Satan's agent—live?

—No, he did not, Miss. And the Son of Man was tortured for his righteousness, at Fishkill Correctional Facility

—Um She tries to recall the inventory for homicidal potential delineated in her Interviewing class. Ideation? *Check*. Intent? *Check*. Plan? —How will you go about, ah, killing Dr. Clatanoff?

He flashes her a conspiratorial smile. —The Children of Light are cunning as foxes He unzips his fanny pack and pulls out a Bible, from the spine of which he removes a gleaming, six-inch blade.

Amy can feel the blood drain from her head. —Doesn't the Bible say, 'Thou shalt not kill?' Do you really think this is what God wants you to do?

—The minions of Satan use the Lord's words against him he says, and Amy understands that she has been reclassified. But why? Where was her mistake?

And, as if the ghost of Freud were indeed hovering in the wings awaiting Amy's summons, she is visited by what she will be able to refer to afterwards (and not to everyone) only as a revelation.

Time slows. She sees, in her mind's eye, a diagram scrawled on the chalkboard of her Fundamentals class; hears as vividly as an auditory hallucination Bob Halloran lecturing, —The superego is referred to in common parlance as the 'conscience,' but Freud envisioned it as a subsection of the id, fueled by the same primal energy. It is no more subject to rule by reason than the id, although it may present itself in sheep's clothing. The ego is the mediator, the reality principle

She has all the time in the world. He waits. Finally she says, —Um, how do you think that will affect your parole status, killing Dr. Clatanoff?

—The Son of Man is prepared for crucifixion at the hands of the ignorant But he says it gently, and he puts away the knife.

She stands, speaking softly and clearly, searching for words that are true, reasonable, and emotionally neutral. —Mr. Louis, I am going to ask you to wait in the hall for a few minutes. What you've told me is very important, too important to keep to myself. I need to make a few phone calls, and ask you to tell your story to some other people She walks purposefully past him to the door, and opens it.

He rises slowly and painfully, but obediently, walks out. —What will happen to me, Miss?

—I don't know. But you know I can't allow you to kill Dr. Clatanoff

—No, Miss

She pulls a chair into the hall for him and retreats to her office, leaving the door ajar in order to keep an eye on him. He sits quiet as a lamb. Carol, her supervisor, answers on the first ring. —I'm with someone, can I call you back?

—No, I have an emergency She explains the situation.

—Do you want me to come over?

—I'm okay. Just tell me what to do. I'll come by afterwards

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Following Carol's instructions, she phones the front desk and is connected to the psychiatrist on call, Dr. Fanfan, a charming resident from Haiti.

—I have Mr. Louis here, she begins.

—Ah, my compatriot. A fine gentleman

—Yes. Well, the fine gentlemen has knife, and he says he's going to kill Dr. Clatanoff

—This ideation is not so unusual, but the knife, that we must take seriously. Shall I call security?

—Don't scare him. The knife is in a Bible, in his pack. I don't think he wants to use it

—I should think not, if he showed it to you. Your office is up by the seminar room? I'll be there in just a minute

After Mr. Louis has left, chatting in Creole with Dr. Fanfan, Amy makes her way to Carol's office. —Do you want to talk about it? her supervisor asks.

—I will tomorrow, Amy says. —Can you clear some time in the morning?

Right now I'm burned. I couldn't even find the words

—I understand. Drop by tomorrow before your first patient. Are you OK to go home?

—I'm fine, really, just exhausted

—Call a friend and go out for a drink

Amy realizes, once home, that she has no one to call. For once she has no desire to confide in Brendan, to listen to his confident analysis of the situation, to provide material for one of his stories. She unearths a bottle of wine and silently toasts Freud, then her own ego, superego, and id. She falls, fully clothed on the couch, into a deep, protracted sleep.

From which she wakes in a sweat, gasping, at first light. She was on a picnic with Bob Halloran and the Rathskeller crowd. Halloran had opened his briefcase and pulled out a claret-colored dinosaur, which clambered onto Amy's shoulder. The dinosaur was tiny and cute, and the others tried to pet it, but, with the logic of dreams, Amy alone could see that it was actually huge and menacing. She awoke as the dinosaur pressed its face against hers and opened its mouth to reveal a gleaming set of pointed, silver daggers.

Amy scrambles into her clothes and heads for the hospital. She waits in the hall until Carol arrives. Carol is surprised to see her so early, but she ushers her in and offers her half of a muffin.

Amy is aware that Carol finds her a difficult supervisee, sensing in Amy's bland docility a rebellious refusal to be known. Amy has regretted this in the past as she feels she could like Carol under different conditions. She knows, though, that Carol's friendly probing, benign though it may be, of Amy's experiences in school and on the unit, is also an assessment tool. Carol reports back to Amy's program on Amy's progress, and Amy is not included to feed her any possibly incriminating material. *There are no right or wrong answers, but some answers land you in the hospital.*

So she is grateful for a genuine experience to hand Carol, one that does not reflect her ambivalence with the program or the field, and she delivers the interview and the dream with the satisfaction she once observed in Theodore as he dropped on her pillow an offering of two dead field mice.

Carol accepts her beneficence with the same mixture of appreciation for the intent and confusion regarding the disposition of the actuality that Amy recalls in herself. Carol finally clears her throat and says, —You know, of course, that Freud's metapsychology has been disproved——

—I know that, Amy interrupts. (Amy has never interrupted Carol before.) —I'm not talking about bumps in his head that would show up on an MRI. It's a construct, and I just realized how useful it is. It doesn't explain everything Freud thought it did, but it saved my butt

—And Dr. Clatanoff's, Carol adds. —So the dinosaur would represent id energy, unleashed and destructive. Mr. Louis's id

—No. Or not just that. It's some kind of primal wisdom

—But it was going to kill you

—Maybe. It might have eaten me, but it was also going to talk to me

—To talk to you?

—To tell me the most important thing I've ever heard Amy is certain of this.

—You're different today, Carol says, —Less...deferential

Get used to it, Amy thinks. I'm here. I'm back. I am the dinosaur. She smiles.

—What?

—I was just thinking, I've been living my life like Mr. Louis. Letting my fears dictate my perceptions. I—I had a rough time right before I came here

—So I imagined

—And my program is—well Carol nods. —Frankly, I've felt like a failure at everything. I've been operating from inside a hole. But I'm in the room now

—Welcome to the room

—Thanks Amy turns to leave.

—And, Amy? I'm not sure I agree with your theoretical interpretations, but you did good work yesterday

—What's going to happen to him—Mr. Louis?

—He's over in Forensic for observation Amy winces. —It's better than prison. Your intervention, for whatever reason you made it, stopped him from committing a crime, Amy. That may have saved his life. And Clatanoff's, though you won't necessarily be thanked for that

Amy understands from Carol's last remark that she has passed some sort of initiation rite; that she has crossed an invisible line separating Them from Us. This apperception is reinforced when an intern in orthopedics remarks to her, —I hear you almost had us singing, 'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead,' and, later, when a nurse, berated by Dr. Clatanoff for tardiness, turns to her and mutters,

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—Where's Mr. Louis when we need him? She sees that there are potential drinking buddies here in this building, should she require them again, and for the first time she does not count the hours until the end of the day. She is here. She is back. She is the dinosaur.

So she is surprised to wake that night, sobbing, from a dream in which Jake Green, who was her husband, told her he had found a better wife and was leaving her. She sits up in bed and turns on the light. *It's the wanting*, she realizes. It's not a specific desire that pains her, but the experience of desire itself, after all these months of aiming only to escape the radar. She burrows back under the covers. She curls her tongue and laps saltwater from her cheek, savoring it. She wonders many things: what Mr. Louis's mother was like, whether the orthopedic resident is married, whether Carol has children. Whether she will be kissed in the kitchen on Saturday night, and, if so, by whom. And so she drifts off, and so we leave her, luxuriating in uncertainty, wondering what her mysterious, miraculous psyche will thi