

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

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Last night, another dream.

BONOBO in black and white letters.

The monkey?

Jump cut, 2002 maybe. First dream on the analytic couch. I am deeply ashamed in that way one can feel early in psychoanalysis. Whatever reveals itself feels so unbelievably foreign. My analyst is in a building looking out the window. There is a woman next to him with large blonde hair like you only see in Texas. He is there looking down on me. I'm in a circle of people who are watching an organ grinder with his monkey. The monkey is a baby. It jumps onto me and pulls down my shirt and starts breast feeding. I'm ashamed of the pleasure and curiosity, but also by exposure of my body. The analyst and the blonde woman have witnessed this. To have to say it, on top of experience it, feels unbearable. Stranger still to look back and realize nothing was said about organ grinding.

Bonobo. Beaunobea. Boy no boy. Boyfriend no boyfriend. Not wanting the division to be yes/no, it could be read rather with three beats — boyfriend, no, boyfriend — leaving you with a final affirmation. I remember a conversation with a friend about relationships. I was trying to argue that there can be a resolution, a way of tying things together. She said no, ambivalence is eternal. Love is an illusion or illness. The joke was on us.

Isn't it rich?

Aren't we a pair?

Me here at last on the ground.

You in mid-air.

Clown dream number 1: My former analyst and his wife are in the front of the car, I'm in the back. I'm trying to entertain them anxiously with stories about a conference I just attended. I'm annoyed at having to do this, but I'm doing it compulsively nonetheless, probably more to ease my anxiety than anything else. My analyst turns around, putting his back to the road as he drives. I start back-seat driving, but then relinquish this attempt at control. If he thinks it's fine, it must be.

Scene changes. I'm in a house. I make coffee and as I spoon the milk it seems to curdle. I taste the coffee and the curdled milk is in fact slices of banana, which I hate. I walk into a room and my analyst is wearing ridiculous clothes: lime green suspenders that crisscross in front, large pants rolled up, giant jacket. I had told the comical memory of when he asked me why I had no complaints about him when I had so many for just about everyone else. I asked what he meant — *his lime green socks?* In the dream I tried not to hate his clothes, not to ask questions about why he wanted to look like this. I wanted to stop fighting with him. Second analyst appears and asks why, after my former analyst had failed to protect me in the car, I turned him into a clown?

First as tragedy, then as clowns. 18th Brumaire, blah blah blah.

My son asked me twice during the week about how to look at the expiration date on food. He kept saying he couldn't see it. Somehow the expired butter in the fridge from 2014 made him paranoid. I had bought cinnamon bread for him, a food from our past, out of the blue, and the old butter ruined

the nostalgic moment. The whole scene made me feel like a bad mother. But I got to teach him how to read the expiration date. Childhood needs an expiration date.

I mean what kind of unconscious joke is this, really? Bananas and clowns, fall on the ground. When I thought about bananas, I started to think that they aren't really that bad. I had tolerated them on recent occasion. The clown song, on the other hand, is terrible. It shocked me to hear it again, this brutal disappointment of a woman. I remembered that when I was little I thought she was singing "send in the clouds," a nice song about trying to land an airplane, which doesn't make a huge amount of sense except that my father is a pilot and I suppose I heard the lines about being on the ground and in the air. Lady analyst chimes in again: So what you thought is bad isn't so bad, and what you thought was nice is actually terrible?

Isn't it rich?

Isn't it queer?

Losing my timing this late in my career.

But where are the clowns?

Quick, send in the clowns.

Don't bother.

They're here.

Clown dream number 2: I'm driving and see a mechanical device pulling a hot air balloon. It's a new way of launching them, without pilots. There's always something so claustrophobic about being in that basket with a stranger. This balloon seems to be late. The rest are already in the air, at some distance. It's the moment in the early morning when they all go up. I'm trying to look at the others as I drive, which are so small and far away. I'm late to where I'm going, but I'm not aware of this.

When I arrive, there is a long line and I manage to push to the front. I'm worried about getting a seat, and who I'll sit with. I walk in and see a colleague whose name has "ana" in it, as in — I need to sit somewhere else. I catch a glimpse of my friend in the front and run to her with joy. She tells me that she and her husband and two children are moving to Japan. Sadness suddenly washes over me. I see a screen, a virtual platform to click on their pictures, and I'm brought to a live video feed. They are in the forest in Japan, playing in a snow storm. They seem like a happy family and the atmosphere is ethereal, like one might imagine Japan, with an air of death. Atomic bomb, he said. Maybe snow is ashes?

My friend is moving. Who is going to save me from the academy? My colleague with "ana" in her last name believes in the judgment of intellectuals, only she didn't get tenure. This brutalized her. Will she make a good psychoanalyst with all this resentment? I was told twice to eat bananas in the past two days as if this is some kind of remedy for my problems.

Suddenly I know where I am. I'm at a tenure meeting which has somehow become an idiotic beauty pageant. The candidates walk onto the stage in sequined dresses and too much make-up. They give speeches. It is something between a debate and a Miss America pageant. They speak about how they can't wait for this moment when they have a job that they know will be forever. Forever is said again and again like a marriage vow, until death do us part. A patient who got tenure recently spoke about being unable to metabolize the false forever aspect of relationships. Under what pretext would you engage with a lover, she asked me, when forever seems too long? I have no map,



she said, and started crying.

BEAUNOBEAU.

I can't bear this performance of monkeys.

The end of the dream is fragmented. I'm somewhere with my son and I am stealing gold foil to wrap around coins, which are like a puzzle in four parts. They are in stacks in a basket beneath a man who is some kind of security guard. My son, who bears the name Soren, used to say Soren Security Guard instead of Kierkegaard. In the dream, what isn't clear is if this guard would even care about what we are doing. But it seems more fun to make-believe that he would, to make the game transgressive, a secret between the two of us, lying on the ground playing with fool's gold, pretending that we know how to solve the puzzle, that this counts in our favor, collecting coins like monkeys for an organ grinder.



A second fragment: I'm in the hot air balloon and the wind has picked up. It feels very dangerous because, in order to land, a hot air balloon requires the dissipation of hot air over time and the speed of the wind will always be faster than hot air cooling. Something here about my anger, which is linked to the speed at which I move. Intense volatility, volatile intensity. With this conundrum, the dream recedes into the word BONOBO without me knowing what this word means. The dream itself is this voracious terror of non-comprehension. Childhood clouds. This is the second dream in a short time that has disappeared into a word that I can't understand. The other word was REDACT. An impossible word whose meaning, once looked up, still didn't make sense to me: to make publishable, to censor or obscure a part of, and to make the definitive version of a story, combining many versions or threads.

Finally, I hear red act.

I realize this is my election dream. Behind this word REDACT there were so many bombings, miscarriages, lies, denials, there was the censor-

ship and propaganda, the sense of unreality that paves the way to this moment and the election of this president. That night I had been watching *Hypernormalization* and it scared me half to death. The opening shot is a floor smeared with blood. Trump is prophetically placed in a long line of events that make this feel inevitable and not simply an anomaly, or a joke. It's a mistake to see him as a clown. A childhood redaction.

You have to link the two dreams, bound in any case formalistically: BONOBO / REDACT. Between these two words stretches a world of clowns, monkeys, fools, pageantry, and the reality of violence. The message is aimed at childhood illusions, and tells me, sometimes comically, sometimes brutally, that no one will save me from any of this. There is no pilot. No security guard. No money.

Later the same day, I found a note in a drawer. I have no idea who wrote it or when it was written. It places me in the third person, though the handwriting is mine:

Jamie left town suddenly and got on her email. A note from her to someone she works with... They met in Austin, Texas. Nothing happened, but there was a moment. She was walking away from it frightened. I confronted her. She said it wasn't physical but it was something. Pinged back.

You shouldn't be in my stuff.
Unstable ground.

And now she's pulling parachute. Now she's saying she's unhappy. It scares me. I feel her pulling away and I'm on an island waiting. I've never been codependent but it feels like that, "I need her here," even though I'm ambivalent.

Radio silence.

It must be difficult for her. I thought I had more time.

Out of left field.

You said she has a lot of issues confronting problems. She withdraws or flees? Is she or isn't she unhappy? Is she or isn't she doing something about it? She doesn't speak and I have to fill in the gaps. Revisionist history.

On your own. All this work on your own.

Is it supposed to take so much work? None of my married friends feel like relationships need this much work. But then I have other friends who say the opposite. I don't know how to have that conversation.

If that's what you want to find out
she's going to cut you off.

I feel like I didn't do enough. Didn't do it fast enough for her. I was supposed to change. Now I'm in therapy. It feels unfair. I can rattle off fifteen things that suck about me. Sex came up. I said to her — you don't try. You don't initiate.

Who is at fault? Who is to blame?

Powerless. To see it end because of this? Be anyway. Wish I could be angry. I'm just scared. Scared of losing what I thought I was happy to have back. The failure is mine.

Is it fair to ask for the right
kind of ending?

I've never been to Austin, Texas. Bearing the name Jamie the note is either from before 2002 or after 2014. Move quickly. I would like the right kind of ending. You and me both.

The question of truth that hangs over this election is the same question that all lovers ask themselves at the end of a relationship. The two sides don't add up — there are the actions that were taken, and the ones that were not. Everything comes down to a question of timing. Red act.