

**AFTER THE NEW COUPLES  
THERAPIST OR ‘TO SPEAK OF  
WOE THAT IS IN MARRIAGE’**

Is it going to be a problem, you said, if I pass out after reading this article about Trump?

Well, I said, Why don't you spend the time you would have spent with Trump with me instead and then pass out? which was we both knew almost the same as saying, "we're alone in the apartment would you consider fucking me?" Almost, but not quite the same as saying that.

You got into bed, positioning your pillows while scrolling & swiping. I said, I know you're less interested in me than in Trump or Sanders because they're so obviously exasperating, but where do I stand in relation to Hillary, you know, interest-level-wise? which was almost the same as saying "please stop looking at that racist fuckwad and that finger-wagging old man on your phone and fuck me"—almost the same, but not quite.

You said, Well, you're exasperating too & smiled, put the phone down & closed your eyes.

Just so you know, I said, The Philosopher emailed me an MV4 this morning. I only heard the first few sentences, didn't have time to listen to the rest. Guess I'll listen now it's about a dream he had—

M4V is a movie, you said, He sent you a movie?

M4A, I said. Or whatever, I said. It's a sound file of him telling me about a dream he had, I guess about me?

You opened your eyes. And was this, you asked, Before or after you *you know* and then couldn't sleep all night last night? Your eyes closed again.

After, I said. Or, who knows, maybe before? Maybe he was having his dream *while* I was *you know*. I turned on my side & wondered if you were looking at the space between the bottom of my T-shirt & the top of my tight jeans that were giving me a backache. Rolling over like that was almost the same as saying "put your hand on my ass, put your hand on my ass, put your hand for fuck's sake on my ass." Almost, but not quite.

I'm so glad you're jealous, I said.

I'm not jealous, you said, That guy's a freak.

He's a *philosopher*, I said, which was almost the same, we both knew, as saying, "I still remember how he, that he, how he ..."

Whatever, you said, putting in your sound-canceling headphones.

Fine, I said, putting in my earbuds which was almost the same as saying "I'm going to listen to the voice of a man who twenty-three years ago, but who's counting ... I'm going to put these small white buds in my ears & listen to the voice of a man ... I'm going to let his voice into me, even though I do not know what he is going to say only that he starts out: *Rachel I just had this dream it ended ... with me ... running into you ...*" which is almost the same as a man saying "I remember what you remember twenty-three, but who's counting, years later ... I remember you & the dim light, what it felt like ..." Almost like that, but not quite.

Whatever he was going to say, I was going to let him. Unless you—which was almost the same as saying "do anything ...

something ... call for a contested election." Instead, your breathing became regular & rote while the Philosopher's voice said & said, this & that, the dream went here & there. It was a big audio file.

The Philosopher said: *you were sitting at the bar looking bemused ... seeing you was like seeing ... an old friend ... that was the feeling I had when I saw you. You said hey how's it going? and I suddenly just told you ... I told you what I was actually feeling ...*

The Philosopher's voice was full of sleep. What was he trying to tell me? He said: *in the dream you leaned in ... and with my head, I put it ... on your shoulder ... it was a gesture of ... and I said I'm tired of this ... it's been a long time to be out here ... I meant a long time to be out in the water, out at sea, away from shore ...*

By then you were snoring. No one was touching my anything, or talking to me, except the Philosopher whose voice went on & on inside my ears.

The Philosopher said: *you'd just had an argument like you talk about in some of your poems with Josh but you guys were made*

*up and happy and it was just part of your normal life ... there was a sense of you as a person who had figured out how to get through things in life ... The feeling I had ... I thought you should know ... you were a person who exuded a kind of ... you were someone I could say something like that to ... you just ... when I looked at you ... you were—*

He called me *motherly*?! I said aloud. You didn't move. Guy fucking called me *motherly*, I muttered, which is the same as saying "it's a long time to be swimming ... a long time to be so far from shore." Or was it more like saying, "it's a long time to be stuck on shore"? I didn't know anymore.

All too soon it was time for Hebrew school pickup, dinner & back home so sad-sack son could write a paper on *Invisible Man* while the other one played the same song over & over, each time louder. I finally found the tincture that doesn't do anything to put on the little boy's wart & answered emails [not the Philosopher's] until it was still somehow early enough to—even after reading/brushing/flossing goodnight & goodnight & "turn out that light" "turn down, actually turn *off* the music" "pick a passage in the book that didn't get discussed in class or a quote you loved—really you didn't underline *anything*?"—back in bed together—

How? you asked, Are we ever going to have sex again? which was, we both knew, a cry for help, or simply a way of asking “do you want to?”

Are you gun shy? I asked, which was almost the same as saying “there’s almost nothing you could do to fuck this up other than do nothing.” But how could you know that, how could you not know? Which was almost like saying “yes” to a question you hadn’t quite asked.

I’m locking the door, you said.

I said absolutely nothing, which was my way of saying “stop talking,” which I had said so many times before, even in poems. We’d said enough for one day, a week, maybe forever.

I honestly don’t know, I’d said, when that therapist had asked, And what’s been going on that made you, as you say, *almost break up?*

You’d said, It’s not just the snoring, when the therapist had asked about our separate beds.

I don't want to break up, I'd said, But don't want to be this unhappy either, which was almost the same as saying what I didn't have words for, still don't.

You finally, after all, touched me, which was almost the same as not saying anything, which was what I wanted, except, did I?

How is it possible after twenty-two years to know so little about everything? I had said in the new therapist's office. No one had answered & you had said & I had said which was almost the same as saying ... almost but not quite. My voice always or never full of sleep is a way of saying "I want to be more in my body and less in my mind" or "less in my body and not so out-of-my-mind."

When you'd said to the therapist, I am not sure I can get what I want, I realized I had no idea what you wanted.

At least we don't disagree, you'd said, when I'd asked, as we'd left the new therapist's office, what you thought of him. Because, I'd said, I thought he was *terrible*.

I'd said, I hope there's value in telling the same story over again to a new person, because it sure as hell costs a lot. I don't know

why, but I was angry about the small hand towel neatly draped over the head of the leather couch that neither of us would ever lie down on.

To say it felt good in the almost dark, in the same bed, is not the same as saying it was what I wanted or what you wanted.

I was trying not to remember the Philosopher saying: *you just ... you were ... motherly ... a person who exuded a kind of ... you were someone I could say something like that to*, as he had said into my ear from whatever thank god faraway place he lives in. He'd said: *I thought it was a really cool dream ... I thought you'd want to know that according to my unconscious you'd done really well in life in the things that matter ...*

To say how I would afterward lie in bed listening to you sleeping, how I would ask you to leave by sitting up for a long time saying nothing, until you asked did I want you to leave, how I would say I don't care, which was a way of saying or a way of saying ...

To say how you gathered your pillows & wordlessly left the room & how I stayed up all night writing which is to say a way of leaving or staying full of you but not enough. More alone



than ever, not alone enough. Swimming, as I was, for so long so far from shore. Longing to be anywhere but shorelined. My motherly body a beatific disappointment. To say anything of any of this is almost the same as saying “this long marriage” which is almost the same as saying “what brings us here today is” which is almost the same as saying nothing & too much.