

Begin to Live

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Begin to Live

by [thedevilchicken](#)

Summary

Lex was right: it was time.

Notes

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When Ellie dreamed, she knew who to call.

Her husband understood. She talked to him at first, told him the story when she woke him up the first time and he had to shake her awake from it. He knew, of course, because the whole thing had come out after the San Diego incident, but he didn't *know*. There was just no way he could, not really, not the way that they did, and he understood that. When she woke up terrified, he didn't ask if she wanted to talk because she never did. He held her if that was what she needed, and if it wasn't, he let her leave the room alone.

She didn't call Alan. She could have, and she knew he'd have understood, he'd have made the right noises at the right time and she'd even have felt better afterwards because she knew he knew. He knew better than most because he'd been to both islands, he'd been through it all twice over, but Alan never talked about it himself. He thanked her for what she'd done for him, for sending in the cavalry when he'd needed it the most and for all the late nights and article edits even after they weren't together, and summers spent at the dig site where they taught Ellie's kids as much as they taught Alan's students. But he never talked about it.

Sometimes when she dreamed, all it took was Mark's concerned smile or the glass of water she kept by the bed each night, or maybe she'd peek into the kids' rooms and make sure they were safe, that they were really there. But when the dreams were bad, when they were worst, she went out into the kitchen. She took the phone from its cradle, and she called Ian.

He never minded. Not when he was three time zones behind her and she caught him at dinner, not when he was on the same coast as she was and she caught him in bed with the next future ex-Mrs. Malcolm. He didn't mind, not years later when midnight for her was 5am for him and he picked up the phone sounding like he needed three days' more sleep at least. They'd had something between them once, after it had all fallen through with Alan, but that was never why she called. He understood. He *knew*. That was the important thing.

Back when they were together, they'd both had dreams and she'd wondered whose were worse but in the end she'd realized that didn't matter. He'd wake in the middle of the night or she would and then they'd talk for hours even though they'd said it all before or they'd shower together without a word because he knew the hot water calmed her and calming her calmed him. He'd kiss her neck and brush back her wet hair and if his leg wasn't bad that day they'd make love right there in the shower, breathless under the spray, her back pressed tight to the tiled wall and her legs wrapped tight around his waist. After, they'd dry each other off and they'd go back to bed and she'd put her hands on his scarred skin. He'd always let her, because she knew. He understood.

She married Mark because she loved him, simply, because she could see herself spending the rest of her life with him, because he wanted the same things that she did: kids, and a successful career, in that particular order. She still lectured part-time after Charlie was born, after the baby was born three years later. She still researched, still consulted on Alan's papers and his books and that wasn't just to keep her busy but because she wanted it. She still read Ian's articles, too, though sometimes his math made her squint till Mark snickered and called it her Ian Malcolm face, called it adorable and kissed her forehead and her cheeks and the corners of her mouth and made her laugh. Sometimes, that was exactly what she needed.

But, most of all, she married Mark because he'd never seen a dinosaur. She married him because he would never understand. It took her a long time to realize that she didn't want him to.

When Lex called, Charlie was seventeen years old. He played high school football just like his dad had done years before, got good grades in school and liked zoology of all things, thought he might want to be a veterinarian or some kind of conservationist and she encouraged that. Her daughter was fourteen and on the swim team, doing well in school, and all Ellie could think, when Lex called, was *she was my daughter's age when we were there*. It paralyzed her. And then she knew.

"Think of the kids, would you?" Mark said to her, after, when she told him what she'd planned.

She should have said no, but Lex was right: it was time. Her kids were the reason she said yes.

After San Diego, they believed him. The whole damn world had seen the T-Rex on TV, after all, so even the monumental assholes at InGen couldn't cover it up this time. Everyone knew, even if they didn't really *know*.

After that, his good reputation - as far as it had ever really been *good* - had an overnight recovery. It pissed him off but his bank balance didn't complain when his book sales quadrupled overnight, and he got a kind of perverse satisfaction from knowing they'd find nothing in there except math. It was pop math, sure, math with acres of window dressing, but he'd never written about the park. And he'd sure as hell never written about the dinosaurs.

He did the TV interviews so they'd leave Sarah and Kelly alone and it even worked up to a point, sat in makeup chairs and under hot studio lights and smiled and laughed and flirted with the other guests like maybe he was his old self again. But when the conversation turned to the tyrannosaur and the camera turned to him, he got serious in a way he never had before. He told them how many people had died and how many had gotten out alive - the math was bleak. He told them about being so close to a T-Rex you could feel its breath, so close you could feel its teeth. Sometimes, at night, when he dreamed, he could still feel it.

Of course, eventually, the shine wore off of dinosaurs and somehow everyone forgot about T-Rexes in San Diego and an island chain filled with velociraptors, like they knew what they were anyway. People bought his new book, of course, the one that *did* talk about the park, that *did* talk about the dinosaurs, but eventually they forgot about the people who'd died as well as the people who'd lived. Ian found out every name of everyone who'd died on Isla Sorna. He already knew who'd died on Isla Nublar. Even if no one else would, Ian swore he'd remember.

He remembered. He took a new job on the east coast and taught math to overachievers and when it got really cold in winter or sometimes just because, his leg ached like a son of a bitch. He put up the names of those people on the wall of his office and that first semester, in

his first class, Lex was there in the lecture hall; he saw her in the third row on the very first day, found her name there on the attendance list: Alexis Murphy. It was really her.

"What are you doing here, Lex?" he asked, when she stopped by the front after class.

"Making my family proud, I hope," she replied, not quite earnest, and she flashed him a grin that said she'd changed and hadn't at all. He was pretty sure her family was already proud.

And four years later, four years of study that said she'd've made one hell of a mathematician though her focus was still tight on computers, he went to her college graduation and he sat with Tim who'd started his own undergrad degree by then. He was on his way to Alan Grant's dig site in the middle of nowhere after that afternoon, meeting Ellie and her kids there and Ian knew that already because she'd called two nights before. They'd probably all love every minute of it. Of course, Alan had just had his own trip to Isla Sorna. Ian couldn't help but think maybe that would've knocked the wind out of his curmudgeonly sails, but he hadn't seen him since John Hammond's funeral; he'd turned up with Lex, and Kelly and Sarah had met them there with Alan and Ellie and Tim. They'd invited Nick Van Owen but he'd been somewhere in South Africa doing who the hell knew what. It was like a goddamned reunion as much as a funeral.

"We need to stop going back," Ian said said to Tim after graduation, at the restaurant with Lex and their parents, cousins, Lex's friends. But Tim just shrugged and so he let it drop.

He could've understood if it had been Tim but fourteen years later, it was Lex that called. He'd moved to Oxford by then and kept up with Alan and Ellie and Tim via some kind of academic circle jerk where they all critiqued each other's books and journal articles even though paleontology was about as interesting to Ian as math was to the rest of them. Keeping up with Lex was something else again, something unexpected, something that meant he didn't expect her to say what she said.

"I need to ask you something," Lex told him, and then she asked the question. He hung up on her for the very first time in eighteen years.

Three days later, he called her back. He'd changed his mind, though it made him feel sick right to his stomach.

She was right: it was time.

Tim's whole life, he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

He'd known from the day his grandfather gave him his first toy dinosaur, from the first time he heard that they'd all died out so long ago that the years didn't make any sense to him at all. He made his parents take him to the museum and he wandered around, staring in slack-jawed awe. Dinosaurs were amazing.

Pretty soon, he could imagine what they must've been like just from their skeletons and illustrations just kinda got in the way. He read books. He read journals. He pretty much

devoured every piece of information he could gather on every one of them, memorized facts and figures and dates and places and in his head in bed at night, he closed his eyes and he imagined he could see them, like a fly on the wall of the Cretaceous, like a window into the past. He imagined the leathery wings of the pterodactyl. He imagined the ivory-smooth horns of the triceratops. He imagined their habitats, the plains and forests and rivers and lakes, imagined the tyrannosaurus rex and its height and its weight and its teeth, living and not just a wire-strung skeleton that no one even really cared about anymore. But he did.

Then came Jurassic Park. They were just like he'd always imagined but ten times better and ten times worse and ten times scarier. He'd never imagined himself there with them, not really, not in person, not *him*. He'd never imagined being trampled or hunted or eaten alive, never imagined interaction. And when they got out, somehow still living, when he went to sleep exhausted in a hospital bed on the mainland, he had to try really hard *not* to imagine them. He wasn't sure he'd ever see dinosaurs the same way again.

When they got home, he went into his bedroom and found they'd cleared all the toys and models and books and fossils away, just in case. It made sense at first, even though his room was pretty bare without it all, but as a week became a month, as one month became two, he got angry. He missed his things and he missed how things had been before, but whenever he went to the boxes in his closet he couldn't make himself open them. Sometimes he could barely even open the closet door, like he was half expecting a velociraptor waiting on the other side, incongruous, just the way they'd been in that shiny metallic kitchen back at Jurassic Park, where he and Lex had almost died.

They put the boxes away in the attic at the end of the first year, over the summer, almost the anniversary right down to the day. Over the next year, his room filled up with other things his mom and his new stepdad bought for him, things his dad shipped in for birthdays and for holidays - he had a globe on the window sill and an orrery on his desk with spinning planets, a huge wall chart of the periodic table by the closet door like he could fight a T-Rex armed with just the knowledge of the atomic weight of the lanthanides and actinides. All his high school teachers said he was exceptional but he needed to apply himself; that was all well and good, sure, but he had no idea what to apply himself *to*. He'd had a purpose, and he'd lost it.

Then, on his sixteenth birthday, one of his cards had a college address and it wasn't Lex's out at MIT. He knew who it was from without opening it and so he didn't, he just left it sitting there on the edge of his desk tucked inside a copy of Scientific American like a bookmark though he'd finished reading. He left it there for three weeks and then he picked it up and he grimaced and he tore it in half, screamed into his pillow the way that really worried his mom sometimes, and then he pulled the two halves of the birthday card out of the two halves of the envelope. It was signed *Dr. Alan Grant*. It couldn't have been anyone else.

Three days later, Tim called Dr. Grant from a payphone on the way home from school. When he got home, he went up into the attic.

"What did he say to you?" Lex asked when she came home for the holidays and found the dinosaurs back on his shelves. It was the globe that was in a box in the attic instead, with the orrery and the periodic table.

Tim shrugged. "Heisenberg," he said.

Lex laughed and she ruffled his hair. "Heisenberg," she said, and Tim knew she understood. Eighteen years later, when she called, she still did. Tim was always going to say yes.

What he loved had died sixty-five million years ago. Alan Grant told him so, and he believed it every day that came after. What Tim loved wasn't living on Isla Nublar or on Isla Sorna; what lived there was the thing he feared. People had watched, people had meddled, and they'd made something that should never have been.

Lex was right: it was time.

Lex had been a vegetarian since she was ten years old.

They'd watched a movie in class one rainy April day and she'd been glued to the screen in utter, abject horror the whole way through, and when she'd gotten home from school she'd told her mom she was never eating meat again. Her dad tried to feed her a hamburger for dinner that night and she stared at it wide-eyed until she actually burst right into tears. He tried it a few more times, till tears gave way to a stony ten-year-old glare, and then accepted it: Lex was a vegetarian.

After the divorce, Lex and Tim moved to California to live with their mom and her new partner. Lex wasn't crazy about the place, though the house was nice - California was too hot most of the time and she burned so easily she practically had to bathe in sun lotion all year round. When the time came, all the colleges she applied to were back east, Harvard and Princeton and MIT. Her GPA was excellent, her SAT scores the highest in three counties, she'd already sold her first piece of hand-coded software and she taught a computer class for over-sixties who wanted to email their grandkids in Florida: she was a shoo-in. The family money didn't hurt either, she guessed rather cynically, when all her applications were accepted. She chose MIT. She liked the winter chill in Massachusetts.

Her grandfather died in the middle of her freshman year. She flew out to the funeral with her college professor, though that made a strange kind of sense when her professor was Dr. Ian Malcolm. She made her mom invite him to stay in the family home they'd inherited, where John Hammond had lived and then died, and she flew back with Ian three days later, trying not to cry. He lent her his pocket handkerchief and said nothing about it at all. She liked that about him: not everything needed to be said out loud. That meant something to her.

They ate lunch together in Ian's office the day after they got back. They ate lunch together at least once every week from then on after that, and they never talked about the past, not even once, not even when it got really cold outside and Ian walked around campus with a limp. They talked math. They talked computers and she fixed his for him a couple of times, whipped up a couple of scripts for him, talked him through the process. It was easier to talk to him sometimes that it was to talk to people her own age. He understood.

There were rumors, of course. Ian wasn't married then and Lex sure wasn't dating so of course there were rumors about the two of them, not that either of them paid it much attention. It was never like that between them, not at all, not even a hint, though she guessed Ian was attractive enough for a guy who was twice her age. And when the head of their

department called them into his office one over-sunny afternoon, looking deathly serious, Lex was the one who told him the rumors were ridiculous, because they were. Ian was her friend and her teacher and he'd never so much as made a pass at her.

"Should I do that sometime?" Ian asked with a smile, as the department head looked on across his desk.

"Only if you want me to laugh at you," she replied. Apparently, that was all they needed to say to convince him.

The summer of her graduation, she found out Alan Grant had been to Isla Sorna. Three days later, she accepted a place with the MIT Computer Science grad program, though it was hard to see how the two things were related. Three days after that, she went out to dinner with Ian and it wasn't until the steak was sitting on the table in front of her that he really seemed to realize what she'd ordered. He watched her eat, watched her cut the meat meticulously, spear it with her fork and lift it to her mouth and chew and swallow. He didn't say a word about it, not even when they were back in her apartment after and she threw it all back up in the bathroom, on her knees. He made tea and they sat down at her kitchen table and she didn't have to explain herself. He didn't have to ask. He understood implicitly, the way none of her other friends did at all. The park had changed them all.

Dr. Alexis Murphy sounded good to her. Dr. Timothy Murphy followed soon after. Pretty soon after that, almost everyone she knew had a doctorate, everyone worked in a field that excited them, and Ian moved to England but that didn't mean they didn't keep in touch. They sent each other crappy postcards from conferences and wrote their messages in math. She wrote a virus that played obnoxious music and a 60th birthday message in the middle of his afternoon lecture because she knew he'd laugh. He dedicated one of his pop math potboilers to her, the ones she'd always teased him about, in retaliation. She'd never had a better friend, and hadn't wanted one.

For years, they told each other everything. She knew when he remarried, and when he divorced. He knew when she met someone, and when it didn't last. They talked about work. They talked art and literature and science, for hours at a time, and they told each other *everything*. Except for that one thing she couldn't tell him, at least not right away.

She didn't tell him when she quit teaching, when she left the college. She didn't tell him when she took the job she'd turned down three times already, and then seven months passed, eight. She didn't tell him in the start but when it was time, he was the first one she called.

Ten days later, Lex met them at the dock. It was time to face their fears. Maybe, just maybe, they'd come out stronger; maybe, just maybe, they'd come out alive. And maybe, just *maybe*, so would everyone else.

Lex smiled tightly. "Welcome to Jurassic World," she said. "We've got work to do."

End Notes

Title from a Dorothy Thompson quote: "Only when we are no longer afraid do we begin to live".

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