

AI – Architectural Intuitive

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Patient Initial Interview 7/15/2019: Patient is Estelle Donatello, 36, who is referred by her psychiatrist, Dr. James Bienvenu. She reports a long family history of mental illness. Mother was diagnosed as schizophrenic when Estelle was 12, hospitalized at DePaul's on numerous occasions. Her mother committed suicide when Estelle was a college student. She reports her father used alcohol to cope but was never hospitalized. She has an older brother who left home at 18 and with whom she has no contact. She has a younger sister with whom she has a problematic relationship. Estelle sought treatment for depression and has been under medical supervision by Dr. B for three plus years. She is referred for analysis through dream interpretation. Indicates she has a general awareness of Jung's ideas about the psyche but has never tracked her dreams. She expresses optimism at a new approach. Her main concern is her experience of a series of what she describes to me as waking auditory and tactile perceptions arising out of her work as an architectural historian and journalist. Estelle works for the Times Picayune as a columnist and writes about the history of both residential and commercial architectural styles throughout the city. Recently, she has begun to hear the voices of those whom she believes to be the former residents of these buildings. On occasion, the words she hears appear to match the histories of these buildings. Estelle is concerned that she is experiencing the beginning phase of schizophrenia, much as her mother at a similar age.

Dr. Henry: Ok, I'll begin our time together. I'm recording this for my records.
Estelle, tell me what brings you here today?

Estelle: A few months ago, I was touring a beautiful Greek Revival home on Fourth Street, built around 1850 and beautifully restored and modernized. The owner was excited to show it since she hoped to sell it and move to be closer to her daughter in North Carolina. My column was very popular. This was a few years back when the Picayune was still the paper of record here. The owner wanted me to see the new pool house and gardens. She had to take a phone call and asked me to explore for myself. Everything was lovely. As I passed my hand across the refinished cypress siding inside the pool house, I heard a young woman's voice, at first just a moan. I couldn't make out any words. It scared me. Then a phrase, "Don't die on us, Mr. Russ."

She sounded like a slave girl, or what I imagined one to sound like. Then, "Bring him some water, and a rag." I felt unsettled, but I knew I heard something. Maybe it was with my ears. It could've been in my brain, but it was as clear as if I heard you say something. The girl was attending a man named Russ, and he was near death. I wrapped up my inspection of the pool house and said goodbye to the owner.

My first thoughts were of my mother. Those years she spent at DePaul's. My father took us there as children. It was horrible. The drugs they gave her. Sometimes she was like a zombie. I know she heard voices. She told me herself. Horrible, threatening voices. Demons she called them. I was afraid this was the start for me. So, I had to find out about that voice I heard on Fourth Street.

Dr. H: How did you go about that?

E: As soon as I got home, I jumped on my computer to look at the history of the property. I suspected the voice had something to do with something which occurred at the home I was inspecting. I knew there had been outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera in the city. I made note of the dates. The next day I went down to the Clerk of Court's office to check the property's history. From 1844 to 1854, this property was owned by Russell Walker. He died in 1853, the same year as a vicious yellow fever epidemic.

Dr. H: What did you conclude?

E: The fact that this voice was somehow anchored in the history of the property was a relief. But maybe this was just the beginning of something bad, so I was still concerned.

Dr. H: Did you tell anyone?

E: Oh, God no! Only Dr. Bienvenu.

Dr. H: And as I understand it, Dr. Bienvenu has not diagnosed you with schizophrenia. Correct?

E: That's correct. We're still working with Dysthymia, Persistent Depressive Disorder. You know these classifications. All I know is that the meds seem to work, but I have these episodes every few weeks. I'm getting used to them, at least they don't scare me.

Dr. H: Tell me about another one.

E: I was photographing the exterior of a Mediterranean Revival style home on Fontainebleau Drive, not far off Carrollton. The owner saw me and asked me in for a walk around. I was in one of the back bedrooms when I felt a hand grab my wrist. Luckily, I was alone, so the owner didn't hear my startled cry. I heard a male voice, "You

fucking whore!” Then a woman, “He laughed at you behind your back for years.” The grip released. I muttered a quick thanks to the owner and left.

Dr. H: Did you have a sense of why the tactile grab occurred?

E: It seemed like the woman was asking for help. I thought it was a husband and wife having it out, and maybe there were blows involved.

Dr. H: Could this in any way represent events or a relationship in your own life or in your family history?

E: I can’t think of any. But there was no way to link this to any actual history of that home. It fits in with other episodes which I have experienced while doing my architectural research.

Dr. H: Have there been other tactile events?

E: Not that profound, but I have sensed smells and temperature changes along with hearing the phrases and even full sentences.

Dr. H: Jung recognized that many of his patients experienced what he termed as waking dreams. He had some himself. These patients access their unconscious even while awake. You speculated that you may have heard not with your ears, but with your brain. That’s ultimately where all sound and other sensory perceptions are processed and understood – the brain.

E: So, I understand others have waking visions. That’s some comfort, but how can I hear the voices of other people, and why the locus of the buildings?

Dr. H: Estelle, do you know of Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious?

E: Vaguely. He found there was a level where all human consciousness coalesced. Is that it?

Dr. H: Yes, Jung thought that it was the sum of all human consciousness, containing all memories, dreams and archetypes. He felt that each of us inherits this collective imprint, kind of like our DNA. Like much depth psychology, there is little empirical proof. Perhaps these events represent your unique ability to perceive specific memories from the collective unconscious. Here, take this book and read it. It's Jung's autobiographical book, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. I'd like you to read it before our next session. Also, keep a notebook by your bed and jot down whatever you can about your dreams. We'll go over those and any new waking dreams you might have.

E: So, Dr. Henry, you don't think this represents the beginning of a long slide into madness?

Dr. H: No, Estelle. You have none of the typical symptoms of schizophrenia other than these very unusual visions. I think we can use depth psychology to explore where these come from, and what they represent to your psyche. I'll see you next month. And don't worry too much if some of Jung's writing is a little dense. I need help myself understanding him.

Dr. H: Estelle, tell me about your past month. Do you have dreams to discuss? Any more experiences with houses?

E: Yes, I have one very vivid dream I wrote down in my notebook. And yes, another encounter at a home Uptown.

Dr. H: Let's get to the dream first. That's why you're here.

E: This one occurred last week. I was travelling in a Mediterranean country, Italy or Greece. I came to a city which had been devastated by an earthquake. Everyone was rebuilding their homes. The city lay at the foot of a huge volcano, like Pompeii. One man, an architect, insisted I see his work. He said it was different from those of his neighbors. He took me down a staircase into a cave below his home. A concrete truck was pumping wet concrete into the cave. The man said it would be six feet thick and would guarantee that his house would withstand the next quake. He said all the other homes would fall because they all had hidden weaknesses.

Dr. H: Let's parse out the different symbols here. There is a devastated city in a foreign land, an earthquake, a volcano looming over it all. People are rebuilding, and of course, the architect who is building a more solid house. Which one of these seems to take precedence?

E: The volcano, for sure. I've always wondered about Mt. Vesuvius. How can all those people still live there after seeing Pompeii? The volcano in my dream was belching smoke.

Dr. H: Now, about that smoking volcano, ponder it. Tell me right now, what do you associate with this? Don't think too much. Feelings, images, past experiences, words, phrases. Just get them out, and I'll list them for you.

E: Ok – frightening power, being overwhelmed, panic, nowhere to hide, can't resist it, it's always there, running away, can't breathe.

Dr. H: Any images, sounds, smells, colors?

E: Burning sulfur. It's always there in the city, that strong smell. Like rotten eggs.

Dr. H: The volcano represents the power of nature does it not?

E: Yes, something deep within the earth, but it can't be contained any longer. The people there all knew an eruption was coming, but they hoped it would occur in another time, not in their lifetimes.

Dr. H: Is there another symbol which speaks to you? The houses, the other owners, the foundation?

E: Yes, it's the owner who is building his home differently. He's so confident. He knows his home will survive. He's not afraid to tell others and make that clear.

Dr. H: Does he appeal to you?

E: Oh yes, he's got the answer, and he knows it.

Dr. H: Where did that answer come from?

E: He seems like an architect, or maybe an engineer. He has specialized knowledge. He's made his calculations, and he's not afraid of the volcano. He knows how to survive.

Dr. H: So, all the other people are afraid, but not the architect. Estelle, there's a lot of messages about fear in this dream, do you agree? Are there issues in your conscious life that have to do with fear?

E: Sure, mainly the reason I came here – I'm afraid I might be sliding into schizophrenia, like my mother. I've read that it may be hereditary, or at least there's a statistical correlation.

Dr. H: I want you to think about that cave to where you were led, and the thick concrete foundation. Tell me now what thoughts or associations come to mind.

E: Deep underground, immovable, huge work, hard to understand how it got there, it's lit by torches, the architect is very proud of his work.

Dr. H: Is the architect afraid of the volcano?

E: No, not in the least. He knows his foundation will stand the next eruption.

Dr. H: Estelle, I want you to consider the commonalities between the volcano and the cave.

E: They are both under the surface of the earth.

Dr. H: Yes. Perhaps both bear messages from your subconscious – one of fear and destruction, the other an antidote to fear and a path to survival.

E: So, Dr. Henry, how do I build such a foundation?

Dr. H: That may take time. As you said, the architect's work was significant. At first, it seems nearly impossible. Yet, the message your subconscious is sending you today is that such a solution is psychically possible. You must do the work. Work like this. Very good, Estelle. Your first dream interpretation. Now, can you tell me about the encounter at the home Uptown?

E: This has another Mediterranean connection, at least the street name does. Do you know Octavia Street?

Dr. H: Sure, quite lovely as I recall.

E: The wife of Nero was named Octavia. He had her murdered after exiling her to a remote island, but he murdered his own mother. I read that in a history book.

Dr. H: I see.

E: I was walking on Octavia, taking a few photos, not for a specific column. I stood in front of a huge craftsman style home with two large dormers and lovely stained-glass panels. One of the owners, a lady, was watering her flower beds. We started chatting about her home, and after I told her about my job, she asked me to come in and

look around. The home extended deep into the lot and there was a long center hall with bedrooms on both sides. She and her husband had remodeled it a couple of years back. When we got to the end of the hall, I first smelled cigar smoke before we entered the last bedroom. When I stepped through the door, I saw a round card table with men playing poker and smoking cigars and cigarettes. They were wearing fedoras and white cotton shirts with their sleeves rolled up. A ceiling fan slowly moved the smoky air. They cracked jokes and gossiped. It seemed like a scene from the thirties or forties. Since this type of thing happens often, I wasn't alarmed. I so wanted to tell the owner who loved her home and its history, but I was afraid she'd think I was crazy. You understand.

Dr. H: Estelle, I want you to think about this vision as a manifestation of what Jung termed "active imagination." This may be likened to a waking dream. A person sits quietly and relaxes, away from outside stimuli. They invite their imaginations to flow and try to note images or symbols which appear. Then we can see if any of those items carry significance and may be messages from your subconscious. Now, what images from this vision seem significant to you?

E: The smell was strong; I smelled it in the hallway. The hats, old style, pulled down at angles so you could see only part of their faces, like they were hiding them from sight.

Dr. H: There was a strong smell in your dream of the volcano. Now it's cigar smoke. Can you think of a link to your subconscious?

E: The men in that room wanted to be left alone. It was being played in the back bedroom. I had the impression it was hidden from others. Maybe it was illegal or

dangerous, or maybe the men playing the game were dangerous. But the smell gave them away, so strong. The smell of the volcano warned of its danger.

Dr. H: Could your subconscious be telling you that you can sense danger and thereby protect yourself? I think it's already clear from your dreams that you can find a solution to the fear of your mother's fate.

E: So, Dr Henry, do you believe that these visions are simply manifestations from my subconscious?

Dr. H: Yes, Estelle, I think the symbols you find in your dreams and visions are closely linked to the issues in the forefront of your conscious mind. I think they are emanating from your subconscious. Can I explain the links to the homes you study? No, but I can't rationally explain the workings of either the personal or collective unconscious. There are so many things in this world we can't empirically explain. We call those mysteries, and frankly our culture needs more mystery. But do these visions represent precursors of serious mental illness? No. I don't think so.

Estelle continued to work with Dr. Henry for several months. Together they continued to analyze both her dreams and the visions she experienced while touring homes in the New Orleans area. As she gained more familiarity with her subconscious and the messages it was sending to her, she began to relax and grew more confident that the visions she experienced were more of a special talent emerging in her life rather than the first signs of schizophrenia. She shared the content of her visions with several of the

homeowners and was quite happy with their responses. Rather than dismissing her visions or judging her insane, the owners wanted to learn more about the history of their homes. Many of the owners had been able to establish a historical link between her vision and an event which had transpired in their home. Word of her talent spread among real estate agents and developers whose clients want to know more about the homes and properties their clients were buying, selling or developing. Estelle was glad to help them. Eventually, she decided to charge the prospective buyers or sellers a fee for her services. She made up business cards which identified her as an “architectural intuitive.” Her story was featured on the local TV news, and she was interviewed on a podcast featuring supernatural phenomena.

Her psychic investigations of a home were deliberate and lengthier. She made detailed notes on her perceptions which she used to prepare a report for her client. Clients were particularly interested in whether murders or suicides occurred in the house under consideration. On occasion, the proposed sale would be cancelled based on her findings. Estelle’s consulting business thrived, so much so that she quit writing her column for the newspaper.

Estelle was asked by a commercial real estate agent to perform an analysis of a large commercial property in the Central Business District located on Poydras Street. The parcel was the site of a multistory office building which was near the Superdome. A sale was pending with the buyer trying to secure financing. She met the buyer’s representative on the sidewalk on a hot summer day. They took the elevator to the top floor and were going to walk around each floor to see if any images or scenes appeared. Estelle carried her notebook but made no entries while walking the upper floors. When

they exited the elevator on the fourth floor, Estelle's attention was drawn toward the floor. She had a vision that she was suspended over another building below. The building was massive, maybe three or four stories tall. There were huge crowds of men outside. They appeared to be shouting. Many carried signs.

"I need to go down to the ground floor," said Estelle. "I'm seeing scenes, but it's like I'm flying over them. I need to see the details from the ground level."

"Of course," said the agent. "Let's go."

As they walked out into the foyer of the building, Estelle saw men running by her holding handguns and clubs. Others were shouting, "Kill the Dagos!" Estelle was writing intently in her notebook. She walked outside onto the small plaza and sidewalk area. She saw a man hanging from a lamppost, a rope around his neck. Someone had scrawled a primitive sign, "A Good Dago." His body was riddled with bullet holes, and his now dead eyes bulged with pathos. Surrounding the lynching scene were hundreds of men wearing black bowlers, many holding clubs, sticks, and American flags. She saw one holding a sign, "Avenge the Chief!" She walked toward the river a bit and saw another body suspended from a tree. The body was bleeding profusely from bullet fire.

"What are you seeing? You look upset," said the agent.

"I'm sorry. I need to go back and do some research. I don't like to comment onsite. I need to try and put images or scenes in historical context, if possible."

Returning to her home computer, Estelle quickly found the event she witnessed. The site she inspected that afternoon was the location of a notorious lynching of eleven Italians who were acquitted of the murder of New Orleans police chief, David Hennessy. On March 14, 1891, a mob, incensed by the jury verdicts, broke into the Orleans Parish

Prison, pulled two defendants out of the prison and hung them. Rioters killed an additional nine men inside the prison by gunfire or clubbing. This event commanded the attention of the nation and adversely impacted relations between Italy and the United States.

Estelle prepared a report for the buyer's agent, and her consultation for the client ended. However, the sordid scenes of murder and mayhem continued to flash before her eyes both day and night. Estelle again worried about the schizophrenia which claimed her mother. After several weeks of sleep deprivation, she was consumed by fear and her thinking was foggy.

To clear her mind, she rode the streetcar down to the French Quarter for a walk early one Saturday morning. She stepped off the car at the foot of Canal Street. The Quarter was still asleep. The smell of stale beer wafted into her nostrils from Bourbon Street. Street sweepers sucked up the refuse generated by thousands of curious tourists. Trucks trundled down Decatur Street to the French Market bearing fresh fruit and vegetables. She walked through the park along the riverfront and sat quietly on a park bench staring out at the muddy water flowing by to the Gulf. Freighters and tugs glided past. She walked the remaining riverfront, turned and crossed Decatur and into Jackson Square. Buskers supplied a soundtrack to a sunny summer morning. Portrait painters were busy setting up for the day

Estelle never tired of admiring the colonial styles of architecture surrounding the square. She once had a close friend who lived on the second floor of the Pontalba Apartments and recalled sipping cocktails while watching the world swirl by below. She sauntered toward Chartres Street, heading back toward Canal. Her love of the city, its

structures and its people sustained her and were the driving force behind her work. She began to reconsider her work as an intuitive. Had her role as a psychic investigator drawn her too close to the past lives of the buildings which she admired? Perhaps instead she could write a book on architectural styles in the city, one with lots of color photography. That might provide some distance between her psyche and the objects of her study. Something a little less intense.

As she walked by the side of the Royal Orleans Hotel, she saw a huge dome inside the hotel, beautifully decorated. The space was filled with White men yelling numbers out to an auctioneer, who yelled in response. She saw a young Black girl standing under an arch on a flat base of concrete. An adult Black woman was crying and begging for the return of her daughter. She heard the clinking of chains and shackles from men and women bunched together. The smells of tobacco smoke and sweat filled her nostrils. More and louder shrieks came from the back of the dome. Estelle knew what she was seeing, but why was it emanating from the hotel? She hurried back toward Canal, trying to remain calm.

Recalling that a Depression era mural had recently been cleaned and restored in Union Train Terminal, Estelle made her way to Loyola Boulevard and headed toward the station. As she walked by a Holiday Inn, she heard shrieks and saw bloody bodies in the hotel lobby. She stood in awe and horror as a young Black man with a rifle wheeled around looking for more victims. Finding none, he ran to the elevator and disappeared. Just as she turned to run, she saw swarms of New Orleans Police cars pull up. Officers jumped from the cars with guns drawn. A fire engine with a huge ladder arrived at the scene. Estelle ran in a panic down Loyola. She didn't look back until she crossed

Poydras. Then she saw two helicopters circling the top of the hotel. Smoke spilled out from two upper floor windows. She thought she saw gunfire coming from the top of the hotel and saw more bodies lying on the street bleeding. She turned away from the scene, ran to the taxi stand by the station, and took a cab home. Once inside the cab, her breathing returned to normal. She was once again grounded in her reality. What she was seeing was real. She was back in her time and place, but for how long?

Once again, she went straight to her computer. She learned that the site of the Royal Orleans was formerly the St. Louis Hotel and Exchange. It had a beautifully adorned dome serving as a lobby, but also one of the major slave auction sites. She learned that the Quarter was riddled with slave exchanges and slave pens. Of course, Estelle was aware of the presence and selling of slaves in the city, but she had given no thought to the exact whereabouts of the slave auctions. The pitiful cries of the mother at her daughter being sold echoed in her mind.

The incident on Loyola Boulevard was equally distressing. It dated to January 1973. A young Black man, Mark Essex, had been radicalized by discrimination he experienced while serving in the U.S. Navy and by violent events in the culture toward Blacks. He murdered nine victims over several days while holding the nation's attention as a sniper on the top of the hotel, then a Howard Johnson's Hotel. Estelle had not known of this event. It occurred several years before her birth. For a few minutes on Loyola, she felt the fear and shock of being in the presence and under the gun of a murderer. Her panic while fleeing the scene was engraved on her psyche, as was the blood spilled out on the lobby floor. So much blood in the city. So many shrieks of horror. So much hate. Why did she have to be the one to bear witness? Where was the

beauty she admired? She needed to see Dr. Bienvenu. Maybe there was a medication for this. Perhaps Dr. Henry might help her.

A few days later, Estelle took the streetcar down St. Charles to Audubon Park. She walked down Exposition Place toward the river. She was bound for the old site of DePaul Hospital where her mother Lucy had been hospitalized. She was following her intuition. The oaks shaded her from the late morning sun. Their ancient roots pushed up sections of the concrete sidewalk which fronted the grand houses lining the park. She passed two new mothers pushing baby strollers. She wondered what their lives would be like. Would they struggle like Lucy? Or would they blithely dance through life holding their babies to their breasts, not a care in the world? Lucy had given life her best, but she had been stricken just as her family most needed her. Where those demons came from, Estelle didn't know. They whispered to Lucy, horrible things. Had they ordered her to take her own life? Estelle would never know. So far, she had not been targeted. She was being asked to bear witness to the city's hidden history, dark and bloody. But who was asking? Why?

The old hospital stood abandoned. A huge gray building stood on the site at Camp and Calhoun with a large green space adjacent. Estelle sat on a park bench at the edge of the space and stared at the empty building. Many windows were gone, so the wind could rush through. Many interior walls were missing. It was ready for either the wrecking ball, or a major renovation.

Estelle felt two hands on her shoulders. Lucy's voice whispered in her ear, "Darlin' I see you came to see me, but this ain't my home. I came to see you, my baby."

“Momma, I need you. I’m afraid I’m losing it. I’ve been seeing things, all around the city.”

“I know my love. You don’t have what I had. Those demons ain’t after you. You’ve been blessed, not cursed like me. Those skeletons of history they tried to bury, they’re coming up. They won’t stay buried. It’s up to you to tell their stories. You’re a witness, not a victim.”

“What am I supposed to do with what I’m seeing and hearing? It’s frightening, Momma. Repulsive. The violence, the wailing, the pain. I don’t know when it will hit me, when I’ll see something horrible.”

Estelle felt the arms of her mother wrap around her, and felt her mother’s cheek press against hers. “The more you accept the gift, and work with it, the better you will feel. Just like you did with the houses, you can learn to control it. You can help other folks. They all need to know. Can’t heal from the past until you know it. You’re their witness.” Estelle felt alone once more.

She walked back to the park, headed for the river, and crossed over the railroad tracks to the huge open space on the batture area called The Fly. Soccer games were ongoing. Families were visiting under the shelters while their burgers cooked on barbeque pits. The heat of the day was breaking as the sun was down a bit.

Estelle sat down on a bench located near the cusp of a bluff above the Mississippi. The river was noticeably absent of traffic. After a few minutes, a crude wooden watercraft rounded the bend from upriver. There were men on its sides with long poles and a huge wooden rudder extended from its stern. From downriver, an ancient

paddlewheel steamer made its way against the muddy current, belching thick black smoke.

Yes, maybe it's a gift, she thought. Like letters to the present from the collective unconscious. The least she could do was to deliver them. What did Faulkner say? "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Maybe those two boats have always been plying the river, crossing at this precise point. Maybe they will go on, crossing paths forever.

