

you look at them like, *why did I pick that up?*”

Yes—the beginning of fossil hunting is always a mix of thrill and desperation. You believe that if you don’t pick it up, you’ll regret it. The problem with the Monday Bum is not really the fact that you end up with too many fossils. The problem is the indifference you feel, sometimes the disdain, for something that once brought you joy. You’re too scared to leave the fossil behind because you’re worried you’ll regret it, but you end up regretting picking it up. The fossil hunting paradox.

I am a worrier, a planner, a bit of a pessimist. I will do almost anything to avoid regret. I will pick up the crappy fossils. I will save money instead of spending it. I will make the safe decision. I have always been this way.

Even now, I’m asking David to tell me which *Triceratops* fossil is better. I must consult the expert.

He tells me that the taller fossil has a nicer color. I don’t know what that means, but I do like it. It’s darker. More like a rock and less like a bone. More like what it is and less like what it was. “Then I’ll take that one,” I say. I’m smiling now. A flicker. David wraps up the *Triceratops* in paper towels. I don’t need this, I know. But I don’t know how I’ll get through life without it.

When I return to my apartment, I will place the fossil next to my bed. If I squint, it will float. This piece of rock will be over a thousand miles away and over 65 million years removed from where it began. It will look good where I’ve placed it, like it belongs there.