

nightmares of the sick and somnolent



Written by bubba

9:47a.m.

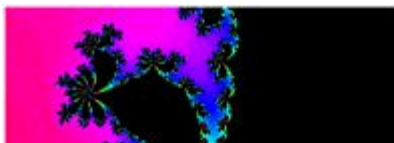


I walked outside to see what the mailman wanted. He'd been honking for a few minutes, which is neither annoying or strange; he's afraid of the dogs, Chole in particular. When I got to the end of the driveway I saw that it was a new delivery man, bigger than the old guy with a bushy moustache and no uniform. I ask how he's doing. Fine. *It's time for you to deal with the mailbox though.* I don't understand. *Show me what you're talking about,* I ask. He walks me to the box and asks me to open it and pull out all the mail. I do. *You've been here long enough that your name should be on the mailbox,* he says. *Now sort that mail and put all the pieces that don't belong to someone in this house in this new box, here.* He opens the door on a larger, new wooden box. I begin leafing through the envelopes, trying to find those that don't belong. I recognize many of the names as people from my past, some from Colorado, some from California. There's a girl named Deliah that I used to work with who received two pieces of the same mail. I put one in the new box and keep one telling the postman that I'm keeping it because it's about a mental health conference I am interested in. *Besides, it's a duplicate,* I say. He finally seems satisfied that I understand the new process. He leaves.

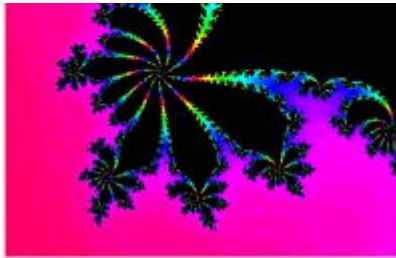
Before I walk back to the house, I realize I've lost the remote control. Looking around on the ground I realize that it is on the edge of a small hole I've never seen before. A closer look shows that a large rat is on the other side, in the hole and gnawing on the end of the remote. I can't decide if I should let it go or make an effort to save it. I'm not worried about buying another remote because we have lost or destroyed many and I know they cost ten dollars from the cable company. But a passing fear of getting rabies causes me to leave and I decide to tell Rhonda about it instead. Inside, she rolls her eyes and heads out to see what I'm talking about. She uses a long, claw-like tool to get the remote from the rat (more)



There's a stranger in our kitchen, young male. Someone else is here to meet Rhonda, romantically. It's an older man who I've never seen or met. He's in a back bedroom waiting for her and she leaves to meet him without saying a word. I sit at the bar in our kitchen and let the young guy make me a drink, uncomfortable, thinking about Rhonda in the bedroom with someone else. The young kid tells me my wife is hot. *So, you guys swing?* He asks. *No,* I say, thinking through the implications. He frowns, then looks confused. *No, I am just the guy who lets someone else fuck my wife,* I think. He asks if we'd be into that kind of thing, says he and his wife are. I smile politely, uncomfortable for a variety of reasons, and say I don't know even though there isn't a chance in hell we ever would. He gives me a card. *If you ever change your mind.* For a second I had forgotten where Rhonda is. It comes rushing back and I'm nauseous, wondering how we got into this situation, why this is all going on in our own house and how much worse my life is going to be. I start to pace. When I see the guest bedroom door closed but cracked my brain goes into a frenzy. They're in there. Should I look? I wonder what she's thinking and pace faster, looking for a phone to call her. What's going through her head while panic and shiver are shaking through me? Is she as confused as I am? Does she know this is a dream and I don't? We never talked about this. I have no idea how we reached this point. Is it a surprise for her too? I think of how crazy Juan gets in jail when he thinks about what Jen is doing on the outside and realize I know far too well what it's like to lose all impulse control with a simple flick of a switch. (I wake)



I started writing my dreams down when I was eighteen. I had a professor that got me interested during my freshman year of college - Psych. 100. The guy was absolutely insane. He was some ex-hippy type and, as we all know, being an ex-hippy who fried his brains out on mickey

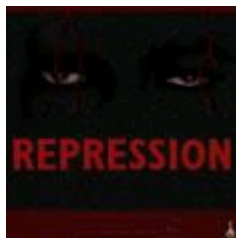


mouse acid blotters while trying to 'get real' made him a superior candidate to teach college level psychology. He got me interested in writing down my dreams purely out of curiosity. So that's what I did, sporadically, for a few years. I trained myself to get up every few hours, generally in synch with trips to the bathroom. Fortunately I have a small bladder so it wasn't too difficult a task to master. Before too long, it wouldn't even disrupt my sleep. I'd wake on some mornings without any recollection of filling two or three pages of text just hours earlier. In my

mid-twenties various personal change/crisis prompted me to pay attention more closely. Rather than just know what I was dreaming about, I wanted to know why. I began to keep simultaneous nocturnal and daytime journals, overlaying the two to see how anxiety in the day translated into dreams at night, how happiness made me sleep and anger made me restless. Earning a graduate degree in a psych.-heavy field really pushed me to get personal with myself and get honest about my motives. Whether or not I ever shared it with anyone else, I wanted to be in touch with myself and know all my inner tickings...good and bad. Through that process I formed the opinion that pretty much all dreams can all be sorted into two major categories:



1. Those that are related to buried core character issues
2. Those that seek to burn the daily residue off the brain



The first group is obvious I guess. It assumes there are things going on in our brain that we don't necessarily deal with in our day-to-day living...i.e. repression. I believe this to be absolutely true and if you disagree with me you only serve to reinforce my position (see d-e-n-i-al). You're a serious case too. Seek help. But I should add that, in my theory, these issues don't necessarily have to be subconscious. Maybe they are internal struggles that are very apparent in life but get manifested in some symbolic fashion at night, while our brains are chewing through through and trying to digest and

process them (take my alligator dream from the other night for example). Here are a few good examples from a period of my life where I was feeling exceptionally directionless and out of control, with no sense of how the future of my recently fractured family might resemble the past time that we all spent together growing up. Three dreams, one night:

1:14am

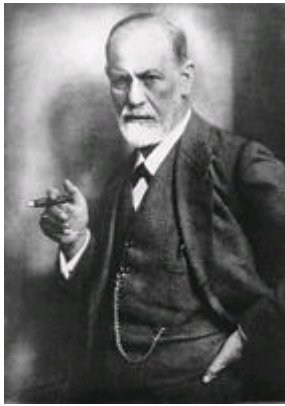
I'm driving on a windy road across a hilly green belt that extends as far as I can see. I'm far away from the steering wheel, and back, barely able to see where I'm going. The tips of my fingers can only brush the leather from the wheel; they can't get enough tread to cause direction. 90 miles an hour without turning...the winds in the road seem subtle so that I take corners of earth only to rejoin the road at it's next turn in the opposite direction. When it becomes obvious that I'll surely wreck, I close my eyes and cease trying anymore. (I wake)

3:43am

Somewhere beneath 3 feet of murky green water - moving. I struggle to be in motion, bending with my body as I reach for the surface that gleams a dull light on me. I can breathe. Daylight. Red picnic table from my youth have been drug onto the grass. I am still and seated at the table as my family moves about in the yard. My father is preoccupied with me, wants to educate me some, is much animated. I can't speak, so I nod feverishly and gulp down bits of steak as they're tossed to me off the grill.

6:15:am

Kim is crying. She had a rabbit and it's grown too old for her to keep. She asks for a baby, but my parents insist that the rabbit will again become young. I brush my hand across the top of my thighs and realize that layers of me disintegrate with too much friction. I'm looking for rabbits now. I'm sure I can find what we're looking for.



I don't want to make this an exercise in analyzing each layer of this particular dream because I already said what it was about – me growing up. But I do want to make the point that there is a ton going on in each of these dreams and, if someone wanted to, you could actually pull apart each piece and consider it by itself, within the rest of the dream and within my daily life. Example – what's going on with this rabbit in dream three? Weird. Could it as easily been a cat or a dog? Is the fact that it was a rabbit significant? Maybe. It has been said that rabbits are symbols of fertility and springtime and that they teach us groundedness and humility, to listen to our instincts to be quick-thinking and to move through our fears. That would certainly fit within my general impression of the dream. Then again Chinese superstition claims that the hare is impregnated through gazing at the moon and if a pregnant woman is touched by moonlight, her unborn child will grow a harelip, so

what the fuck. So the important part for me is being able to use symbolism in the context of the unique circumstances of a person's life. I understand and support some universal symbolic dream definitions (losing teeth = concerns about physical appearance and losing control, drowning = being overwhelmed, etc.) But I pushback strongly against those that believe dreams can be interpreted accurately without knowing what is going on in the daily life of the dreamer.

So the second type – the dream that exists to burn off all the thoughts you didn't get to before you fell asleep. I picture this type of dream as similar to the eternal flame that burns outside of refineries, effectively doing away with the excess and extraneous gasses generated during a hard day's work. Sometimes there are little bits and pieces of several different occurrences from the day all smashed together in one sequence. Generally speaking, these dreams are pretty vacuous. They are the dreams when you can't help but obsess over work, think over a conversation you had, relive some event that actually occurred. You can wake up from a daily residue dream feeling pretty exhausted.



Here's an example from one of my journals:

5:22am

Mimi tells me of a wedding shower she's going to so I decide to go out with my friends. She's mad at me and I can't figure out why. While I'm waiting to leave the house, I look through some new cd's I have and accidentally pick Counting Crows first album for the car.

I won't belabor the rest of the dream because it's as uninteresting as the first three sentences. But that's the point. Not much hidden meaning there. I was dating a girl named Mimi. We often did things separately which was a point of contention in the relationship. I was obsessed with the Counting Crows during this time. This dream was simply a reenactment of my daily life.



So I won't lie, I have no idea how the dream from this morning fits into my fun little model. On one hand, it could be a residue dream. We actually lost the remote yesterday and we actually set several mousetraps around the house last night. But clearly there are some core issues in this dream too – there are people from my past, jobs referenced from my past and me feeling anxious about my relationship in my own house. Now, now, don't get filthy. I polished off this little window into my forehead to share what I'm thinking about this morning, not to warrant speculation into the plausibility that the Nunnery's are swingers or that I think my wife is having an affair (or that I want her to). But seeing as I've filled a page talking about unrealized motives, let me lay down the basic facts: We don't swing, never have, never would. We're not arguing, don't have issues with intimacy or infidelity on either side of the fence. Things are as good as they've ever been. That's my

context. Remember how big a role symbolism plays in dreams. Otherwise, you'll be left thinking my dad throwing me bits of steak was about me being hungry and not about my anxiety towards having to find my strength from within once he left our family.

I mean, let's face it, it's all bullshit. No one on earth can conclusively say why we dream what we do. The point is to connect with what influences our thoughts and behaviors and fully tap into our true motives, realized and unrealized. Thinking and being honest, there's a concept. And no, you can't fuck my wife.



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