

Past and Present in Lucid Dreams

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People would be disturbed to see a cat with its whiskers clipped off. Whiskers are part of a cat's sensory perceptions, a vital part of how it collects information and makes sense of it. Our dreams are similar to cat's whiskers, and when we cut ourselves off from the information they provide us, when we ignore what they have the power to tell us, we cripple ourselves. No cat, large or small, should have to live without its whiskers. It is just as unnatural, sometimes even dangerous, for human beings to ignore their dreams. Everything we see and experience in our dreams is part of the knowledge available to us. Dreams are an important part of our innate survival mechanism. Our dream whiskers possess the ability to touch upon points in space time we cannot perceive with our waking mind. Dreams can sense probabilities, experience them, and bring them to our attention, enabling us to act in full consciousness with all the perceptive faculties truly available to us.

For example, dreams can tell us when our body is becoming ill; when a life threatening condition has germinated inside us we should strive to uproot before it continues to grow. Dreams, especially lucid dreams, can also often provide us with a means to heal ourselves, both emotionally and physically. Dreams can also hold our hand in difficult times as they reassure us all will be well.

On August 21, 2013, I had a long lucid dream, the different sections of which are in italics with comments inserted between them:

My husband, Stinger is wearing a dark suit as I follow him to the front desk in a well lit corridor. I look around me, feeling very present in what feels like a hotel. When I make some comment, he barely glances at me because he's preoccupied filling out a form. I smile and, once more looking around me, say—You know what, I'm going out flying, because this is a dream. I head for one of the exits and am somewhat amazed, as well as very pleased, when he follows me!

I have had many lucid dreams with Stinger he doesn't remember, but this was the first time he followed me in one without my encouragement, a detail that seems to have foretold the long and vivid lucid dreams he would have in the hospital.

The double doors open onto a rural landscape and an open field that looks as though it was recently covered with wildflowers but has since been hayed and is now brownish gold. I exclaim—This is

perfect! and break into a run as I fly Superman style up into the sky, with Stinger following me up! We're flying through the sky together! It's wonderful, and a little funny too because he's still wearing a business suit. There is a flock of large white and golden-brown geese on the ground below us, and some of them take wing now to fly up around us. They are very intent on us, and one of them flies right up to Stinger and latches onto the back of his neck with its beak, pulling his flesh out slightly while applying a firm pressure. I worry it might be hurting him but I don't interfere, sensing this might be a very good thing; the goose might be healing or energizing him because I recognize the area the ancient Egyptians believed was where the soul enters the body. I'm very curious, watching to see how Stinger will react, but he merely accepts it. The goose finally releases him, but now Stinger is holding it in his arms. I say—Okay, let go of it and let's keep flying. We're thousands of feet above the ground, the earth is a flat map of marshy land, vivid greens and narrower strips of blue, very much like a river delta. Stinger releases the goose and we watch it plummet like a rock straight down toward the ground. I worry the poor thing won't be able to get it's wings working before it makes impact. We watch it falling and when it's far, far below is, we at last see it spread its wings and begin placidly flying again, which is a big relief.

I made the mistake of ignoring the dream as a warning. If I had dared to face it as such, I would most likely have remembered that twelve years ago, shortly before we met, Stinger's right lung had collapsed. He suffered a spontaneous Pneumothorax caused by little blisters on his lung known as blebs. When one of them bursts, the lung collapses rather like a popped balloon. If I had remembered this, I would have understood the symbolism of the dream. Almost exactly one month later, on September 23, Stinger and I went to the emergency room because his breathing was not getting any better after three days on bronchitis medication. We knew we had reason to worry, and it turns out that his right lung had, in fact, collapsed again. If not treated in time, it cannot be re-inflated. The doctors were able to re-inflate it.



In my dream, the goose that I perceived as being linked with his life force plummeted downward, just like his lung. Then, when it almost seemed too late, the goose caught the wind beneath its wings, rose up, and began flying normally again. In the dream, we were high up in the atmosphere, which is what enables us all to breathe. When I woke, I described what I had seen in the dream as a view of a river delta, but the photo I chose to illustrate it also evoked an artery and veins, the inside of a body, which the striking dream image also resembled.

As we soar together through the blue sky... we're suddenly just a few yards above the ground, and there are a lot of animals down there (it looks like African wildlife) congregating around a tree. Stinger isn't wearing a suit anymore; he's dressed in his field clothes and a hat, the kind he might have worn when he was working on his dissertation in Africa. He touches ground and says something to the effect of—Go away, to which I reply happily—Okay! and take off on my own.

The first time his lung collapsed, Stinger was obliged to spend a week in the hospital, but technology has improved such that this time the doctors were able to re-inflate his lung and leave a temporary tube in his chest attached to a small device that lets air out but not in. It meant he could go home, even though he would have to return two days later to have the device removed. I was feeling intense relief and gratitude at the moment when Stinger, checking his email while we waited in the emergency room for his release papers, informed me that the magazine *Wildlife Professional* had just published the interview they had done with him several months ago. A mysterious feedback loop seemed to be in effect and illustrating the non-linear nature of time:

Intense emotion in the present = **Vivid dream details** in the past

Three days later, after the tube in his chest was removed, my husband's lung collapsed again. A CT scan revealed he had multiple blebs on his lung. The only treatment is to do a single incision VATS: Video Assisted Thoracic Surgery, and he opted for the procedure. The surgeon took two pieces out of his lung where all the blebs were concentrated and sewed them back up with titanium staples. He then performed Mechanical Pleurodesis, where he used something akin to a Brillo pad to scratch up the inside of Stinger's chest wall, and then the outside of his lung. The idea was they would heal together so his lung can't collapse again.

In Stinger's own words:

“The odd thing about my lucid dreams in the hospital was that I was completely sure I had experienced all this before, and had made plans on how to deal with it now. It was very complex. There were algorithms as to how all the numbers on the machine I was hooked up to would work. There were requirements for my recovery, and two levels I had to monitor and deal with—the machine I was hooked up to showing how much blood I was losing and how well I was breathing, and a higher level that had to do with my higher functioning. I remembered three different scenarios, A, B and C. There were many factors I had to calculate and take action on to make sure everything worked. I had tried A first, but that hadn't work, and I knew B hadn't worked in the past either. Then I had figured out that C, the third scenario, was the one which was going to work. I had done all this before, I had it all planned out. I wasn't going to make that mistake again. I was here before, it didn't work, but now I was going to do this right. I knew how the machine worked, I knew all the parameters around it and what the numbers should be saying. And in real life, I had never seen such a machine before.

“When I was in the Step Down Unit, and later when I was moved to a room, where I lay in the hospital bed was transformed into a kind of vestibule, and before me was an altar, with red lights on it, which I knew was fashioned from the red clock and other machines in the room. The outside world was over where the door was in reality, a darker, recessed area in which I could see a glass wall with a door in it. I saw the same scene in both hospital rooms even though in reality the rooms were different. The interesting thing is that I knew I was asleep and completely lucid. I knew what was going on. I knew how to manipulate it. I knew that every night the white area of the room would turn into an altar, I was totally aware of it. I thought, *yep, it's doing it again, I can see that, it's cool, I'm totally lucid.* I could

look around and know that the three different scenarios, and the algorithms relating to numbers on the machine, were something I had been dealing with and calculating for years. I felt, in these dreams, that it was instrumental I keep a handle on them and make everything all right. I was consciously influencing everything. This happened every night I was in the hospital, although it was especially intense on the first two nights after the surgery.”

Everything went exceptionally well. While in the hospital, Stinger took only about half of the painkillers he was allowed. It seems that normally people who have this procedure are still in a lot of pain, and either on percocet or a morphine drip, two to three weeks later. His first night home, four days after the surgery, he took two percocet but he hasn't had any since, only an occasional Advil. The incision in his chest also healed very quickly; the bandage came off after the second day and stayed off. I was immensely relieved and grateful, yet I wasn't really surprised. I knew that Shelli, a nurse and fellow lucid dreamer friend, had been doing long distance Therapeutic Touch on Stinger in an effort to assist in his recovery. Also, two nights before his surgery, I had had a reassuring dream:

I enter the kitchen. The lighting is dim, almost dark, and I seem to hear the sound of rain. I open a cabinet on the right, where I'm intensely dismayed to see two large square Tupperware containers filled with seafood rice I completely forgot all about! I put them there to heat them up, or something, but they've been unrefrigerated more than 24 hours and are past saving. In fact, they're already swarming with tiny maggots that sprinkle out of them as I pick up one of the containers. This is awful! I pull the trash can closer to try and minimize the mess, but it's such a waste! My dog Arthur is observing me dispassionately. I'm almost crying when suddenly the sun room door opens in time with a distant rumble of thunder, and I see Stinger standing there wearing the blue shirt he packed to take to the hospital. He's home early. This is a pleasant surprise, but I'm too caught up in my drama to greet him. He enters the kitchen and, standing very close to me, smiles as he points at a picture I have hanging on the fridge—a lucid dreaming woman in ecstatic flight—as if to say, “Why are you ignoring her?” He is smiling and making fun of me in that positive good-natured way he adopts when I'm overreacting to something and getting really upset for no good reason. His whole attitude radiates, “These things happen but everything is fine.”

In the dream, I hadn't expected Stinger home so soon, and in waking life I hadn't expected him to recover so quickly. Interestingly, I did not realize, until Shelli told me, that maggots are still used in some places to help heal old necrotic wounds.

Did Stinger's nightly lucid dreams in the hospital affect how well, and how fast, he recovered from the surgery with a minimum of pain? Did Shelli's long distance Therapeutic Touch also contribute to his remarkably swift and pain free recovery? Stinger distinctly remembered having dealt with this same exact experience in the past, where he experimented with three different scenarios to deal with it, but only one of which he knew would work and which he implemented in the present. Does a part of us, our Inner Self, plan and choreograph our life experiences? There is no way to answer these questions, not yet, but when it comes to quality of life and happiness, results are all the proof I, personally, need.

On Stinger's last day in the hospital, in search of some ice tea for him, I ended up in a part of the complex I had never been in before, on a second floor walking along a window overlooking a long brick patio with black wrought iron tables, and a brick wall with an arched opening leading into it. I wondered why it looked so familiar, and then suddenly I realized I was seeing the location from my dream of August 21, which had gone on for some time after I left Stinger surrounded by wildlife and flew off on my own. The brick courtyard looked exactly as it had appeared to me in the dream, sunny and deserted:

...After a short while, a scene literally forms out of the blue as below me I see two very real looking brick fences or walls parallel to each other, the outer one slightly taller, which seem to front a long structure. I'm able to quickly fly between them and through an opening in the innermost one. I land in a very pleasant and very long open air brick courtyard area of sorts. I remember seeing, but can't identify, elegant black wrought iron details. The clear sunny atmosphere is part of this location's elegant wealth...



Winchester Medical Center, Winchester Virginia

I was definitely in a heightened state during Stinger's time in the hospital, which hadn't happened yet when I dreamed this dream, but which got broadcast loud and clear to my consciousness less than two months before it all began happening. My Inner Self seems to have sent me dream postcards that metaphorically summarized the ordeal, and also imbued it with a time-transcending, life-affirming magic.