
Dream Control Experiments

Over time, my dreams became more the stuff of reality than fantasy, at least in terms of vivacity. Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, I actively sought insights and answers to questions while dreaming. I also developed increasing control of the dream state, and became able to manipulate objects and even change settings. The nocturnal experiences became as rich and elaborate as anything in the waking world. I felt the breeze, the sun's warmth, and witnessed nature's vivid colors in all their glorious hues. I could examine intricate objects in detail, and contemplate what unfolding dream metaphors might mean. I experienced thoughts that emanated from within, yet touched what is from without. All the while, there was a constant desire to expand this cognitive power, to stretch and test its limits.

There is no better word than "experimentation" to describe this exciting period. However, these experiments could only be conducted when I was in a particular state—that cusp between sleep and wakefulness wherein dreams are especially vivid. As will be demonstrated in the *Neurophysiological Dream Concepts* section of Part 3, this is a period that is often associated with late sleep-cycle REM dream states—the contents of which are often committed to memory. My capacity to manipulate these states started during my college years, and one event stands out from the others. Unlike many previous dream experiences, there was no precursor or building sense that I was becoming aware within a dream. Instead, I suddenly and unexpectedly found myself on the back seat of a red convertible, a powerful and sleek car racing up a winding road hugging a steep mountainside. The details remain fresh.

It's late, perhaps one in the morning or so. Hmmm, this car's motion and speed are palpable. Yeah, this is one of those special dreams. The night air is warm, almost uncomfortably so. Whew, these turns are making me a bit dizzy, but it's an invigorating ride. I don't much like this slope we're driving on, though. It's a long way down to the canyon floor. Yeah, we're in a desert of some sort—or so the terrain appears.

Wow, the woman beside me is gorgeous! It's dark, but she's a brunette, wearing her hair up in a nice 'do. A white gown accentuates her figure, and she's beyond beautiful. How sweet is this? Elegant, stunning beauty, with earrings that glisten in the moonlight.

But I'm not dressed properly to be with her! I'm wearing sweats and training shoes, typical coaching attire! It's like being a barbarian among the cultured elite. Of course, that's what I am. How the hell did I end up in this situation?

Hey, I can hear fragments of chatter and laughter coming from the couple in the front seat. They're talking about what a good time they had. These people must have come from a

formal party or some similar event. Fine evening apparel garbs the woman, and the driver is in a tuxedo. Yeah, I'm definitely out of place here.

I know we're all within a dream, even though it's very realistic. Oh, I'm loving this! And my awareness is becoming more acute by the second. Hmmm, I should take advantage of this state while it lasts.

"This is quite a dream."

No reply, but let it rest for the moment. This is different from previous dreams, not so much a fantasy as an actual experience—perhaps here I'm free of all constraints. And there's this odd sense of power, a kind of energy that feeds into conscious thought. It's unique, but the state might not last. This could be the right time to ask a question that's been bugging me.

"I know we're in a dream. I'm not sure where you people come from or why I'm here, but there's a question that's been haunting me. I want to know if God exists."

They're surprised, and no one's answering. The evening's gaiety is evaporating. How do I go about this?

"I'm not trying to wreck anyone's good time. All I'm looking for is an answer. It doesn't have to be right."

"I'm not sure," replies the lady in the front seat.

"Who is?" the driver adds with a shrug.

*"Perhaps **he** knows," she replies.*

"We're not going there! It's a long way from here."

I lean forward. "Who is this guy?"

"He knows everything," the lady notes.

"But his place is out of our way," the driver adds.

"Please take me there! My time here might not last."

"We may as well."

"If we must," the driver says. "But it's a long drive."

"Thanks for helping me."

The girl beside me looks angry. She won't even glance my way. Man, I've wrecked the festive mood, but what choice is there? It's an important question. It's the question, yet this trip is taking a while. The drive goes on and on, although this landscape is beautiful! Perhaps I should say something. Nah, these people seem upset enough. I hate imposing on them. And the beauty beside me is still ticked off—wearing a silent frown.

Ah, we're taking a side road and ascending a steep grade. Man, this reminds me of the road up Mount Washington, minus the trees. Lots of twists and turns, and precarious slopes. I don't like this part of the ride at all! Oh, there's an elegant house ahead built into the side of the mountain we're on. But this is a sheer landscape! It doesn't seem like the best place to put a home, although this is more of an estate than a house. The driver parks on a big lot in front of the home.

Hmmm, real nice place.

The building's lights are on, and it's a low set, rambling, single-floor structure with lots of windows and dark-stained woodwork. Part of it overhangs the slope, rather perilously so.

"There you go," the driver says.

"You guys want me to go in there?"

"We don't have the answers," the girl in the front seat explains.

"What if you guys take off, and I get stranded?"

"You wanted to come here," she replies.

The woman beside me says with a pout, "Just go in."

Perhaps a greater effort should have been made to communicate with her. No time to fret about that. I could get stranded, that's for sure. But I might as well see this fellow and get some answers.

Damn, this car isn't easy to exit. It's built low to the ground, which is great for navigating turns, but lousy for much else. Clunk. There we go. Stretch the legs a bit.

"Don't be shy," the driver says.

"I won't be."

Nice stonework on the walkway, but I'd better check out the car. Yeah, it's still there. The woman who was beside me is sitting on the fender. She still looks sad, and I feel guilty as hell. What the heck? Why is she putting on sunglasses at night? They're milling around the vehicle and chattering—seems they'll be here for awhile.

Hmmm, the door is wide open. I wonder what to do.

"Is anyone here?"

No answer. What to do? I wonder what my friends think.

The driver's gesturing me to go in.

Well, faint heart wins naught, but let's look before we leap. There's track-lighting in the ceiling, modern-looking stainless steel chairs with leather-covered seats, and a big glass-surfaced coffee table. The scene is so real, so tangible.

"Is anyone here?"

No answer, but what a place! Look at the landscapes outside those windows—moonlight bouncing off desert slopes, towering buttes. Oh, and we are up there. Goodness, I was right about part of this place hanging over the slope. It's a long way down to the valley's floor, but what a perch. This place is unbelievable!

Maybe someone's inside one of the rooms, so I might as well check it out. There're lots of rooms here, and a few long hallways. The kitchen sprawls on the left, and this must be the living room. These windows are a rush! They're huge, and the carpet feels soft under my feet. If I can find the guy who lives here, there'll be a lot to discuss. Wow, I hear my footsteps while walking on the hallway's wooden floor. The soles of my sneaker's squeak when I turn, though they aren't marking the floor. This dream is a blast, but finding this dude is a problem.

"Please, is anyone here?"

There are still no replies, but this is a big place! Here I am, checking out all these rooms in a home that isn't mine. What happens if I walk in on someone's bedroom? And what if the owner returns? It wouldn't be good if he finds me rummaging through his home uninvited, but there's no other reason the door would have been left open. So, here I am, full of power and ability. Everything in this state is clear and detailed. But there are no answers!

Well, it's probably best to go back to the living room and wait for this answer guy. Yeah, sit on that leather chair and think about all this. Ah, there we go.

It isn't easy to fathom what this experience means, other than finding out whether God exists is difficult. This mystery guy was supposed to know the answer, though he's not even here! You know, that might mean something in itself. Perhaps it is futile to depend on wise men for insights. Hmmm, maybe my companions will know where the owner is. Yeah, asking them seems like a good idea. This is a great place to hang out, but it's time to go back to the car.

Damn it! They've taken off—just as I feared. Son of a bitch! I've been abandoned, lost in a desert at night. Well, that's okay. Let's just keep walking until I awake. Going down a dark,

deserted road, but there's nothing to be upset about—unless some damn demonic dream coyote attacks me. It's not a complete loss, though. A conceptual bridge has been crossed, and I can now bring full consciousness into a dream. I'm no longer bound to one reality, one sense of perspective. There's no knowing where this will lead. I hear my feet striking the pavement, am aware of the sound, and keep going.

This sure feels like a long walk, and I can barely see. Hot as hell out here, too. I wonder if these experiences come from without or from within. I'm always wondering about that, but the answer doesn't matter. These kinds of dreams will eventually provide insights, though this one has failed so far. Perhaps it's the act of looking that allows one to see. If so, I'm on the right track to find our Maker—it's just a matter of time.

When this notion comes to mind, I am flung back into consciousness. I was tossed from one reality to another without any transition whatsoever. It was a strange, detached sensation, waking up as though I had never been asleep. What was particularly odd about the experience was that I saw the hilly nocturnal landscape we traversed about ten years later while living in southern California in 1985. It was unlike anything one finds in New Hampshire, which added to the sense of *déjà vu*.

Thus began a period in which I made several attempts to push these dream states to their limits, even to the extent of conducting metaphysical experiments when the dreams occurred. One in particular stands out from the others. At the time, I was a resident of UNH's Congreve Hall, and was fast asleep in my ground floor room. Like others in this series, this dream didn't have any precursor indicating a lucid state was unfolding. Instead, I abruptly came to awareness that I'm having a conscious dream.

Gosh, I'm holding a beer and listening to tunes. This is my dorm room, but who are these guys I'm partying with? One has an unkempt beard and wears a red flannel shirt and blue jeans. He's tall and has broad facial features. The other dude has dark hair, a preppy white sweater, and is a slight fellow. They're sitting on chairs, sucking down brews, and smoking some weed. I have no idea who these guys are, but they seem pleasant enough. I can taste the tang of this beer, smell the sweet marijuana, and feel the speakers' vibrations while they pound out Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds. Wow, this is a cool experience.

"Hey, this is a great! I'm getting buzzed in a dream!"

"Yeah, it's a good time." The bearded guy takes a long drag from the joint, and then passes it to his friend. He reaches for his pack of cigarettes and taps them on the desk.

The preppy takes a hit and then sips at his drink. "And we're just getting started."

"Shouldn't I know your names?" I ask while taking the joint.

"You'd just forget them," one replies.

"You're probably right—especially if I keep puffing on this."

"It's kick-ass stuff."

"That's for sure. You know, I was wondering if you guys are creations I made up in my mind. Or are you external souls who found their way into my imagination?"

"I was wondering the same thing about you," the short guy replies.

"But this is a dream," I observe.

"Hey, it's all a big dream, man," the bearded fellow rumbles. He yanks out a cigarette and lights it. "It doesn't begin or end, or come from the outside or inside."

“Ah, this is great. I’m not sure how long we’ve got together, but I’m going to remember you two—even if I don’t know your names.”

“What’s in a name? I read that somewhere,” the preppy dude says.

“It couldn’t have been for any of our classes!” Through puffs of smoke, our furry friend laughs a deep guffaw, and both the willowy guy and I crack grins.

We talk for a long time, but the dream is a transient experience, which we each realize. I lament that our time together is short.

“I’m going to wake up in a bit, and then you guys will be gone—maybe for good.”

My pal waves a broad hand through the smoke filtering from his mouth and squints at me, his eyes reduced to slits and his cheeks red as cherries. “But it’s been a good time, though, and time is all we got!”

“Usually, I ask about God in these kinds of things. But let’s try something different.”

“Why?” the small man asks.

“Well, I’ve been doing dream experiments, and I noticed our furry friend here is a chain smoker. I’d like to borrow a pack of your cigarettes, if you don’t mind. I’ll put them under my pillow, and see if they’re still there after this dream ends.”

“Hey, this is my last pack, but here you go.”

“That’s kind of you. I’ll just tuck them right in here.”

“It isn’t going to work.” He scratches his dark, curly beard. “It’s the wrong time and the wrong place.”

“Well, this is my room, so we’re all set spatially.”

“But since this is a dream, those butts are thoughts,” the small guy says. “A thought might have a pattern, but it’s not tangible.”

“It must take a shit-load of energy to make a thought real,” our shaggy friend comments. “And you’re only going to remember about half of what we’ve talked about.” He snubs out his last cigarette.

“You guys are probably right, but it’s worth a shot.”

“Yeah, but they’re my cigarettes. And now I’m butt-less!”

We laugh, and go on to talk of things that elude my memory. I awoke a short while later, and the experiment had indeed failed. Still, most of those semi-philosophical dreams were enjoyable experiences.