

An Interview with Melinda Powell on Lucid Surrender: Interviewer Robert Waggoner¹

1. How did you become interested in lucid dreaming?

Lucid dreaming as a concept came to my attention in 2006. Prior to that, I did not realise that the dreams I'd had since childhood skirted the edges of what I'd now call lucidity. From the onset, lucidity involved a strange kind of Black Light that frightened me terribly (given my fear of the dark). Besides that, given the emotional turmoil of my everyday life in childhood, I did not trust the overpowering feelings that came with the dreams. Even so, in second-grade, I do recall writing a story about a lucid dream in which, after many adventures, a prince and princess fly on a 'Lunderbird' to a magical castle in the clouds. The teacher had my mother come to school for a conference because she felt concerned about the 'precocious' nature of the story, wondering how I ever thought to write such a thing. After that, I kept the dreams to myself.

By my teens (when I no longer feared the dark so much), I associated the strong winds, flight, levitation and whirring sounds that often accompanied approaching lucidity with demonic or evil powers – an idea rooted in the belief that it was permissible for biblical characters to have visions, but not a girl from Garfield Street! Because of all this, I stopped the lucid dreams from happening. However, I still paid enough attention to my dreams to move from the United States to Europe in 1990, based largely, on the semi-lucid dream, in which, for the first time, I felt truly safe in the dark.

I often wonder at how an apparently simple dream could have changed the trajectory of my life in such a profound way. Before this dream, I had spent 25 years growing up in Southern California and went by the name of Melinda. After this dream, I spent the next twenty-five years plus of my life living in Europe, where my name became Mary – both Mary and Melinda comprise the name on my birth certificate Mary Melinda Ziemer. (In 2014, I returned to using Melinda with my now married name of Powell.)

I still recall the exact circumstance of the day I had the dream. At that time, I had to make up my mind whether to accept an offer from the United States Peace Corps to go to Poland as part of the first group to enter the newly independent Eastern Europe or whether to stay in California and pursue my doctorate in English Literature.

My mother especially had taken the news that I might go away quite hard. The day I told her of my plans she said, "But if you go to Europe, you'll never come back!" I told her that she exaggerated, but this far, her words have proven true. While I have visited, I have not yet returned to live.

On that day, she and I had a tearful conversation. To clear my mind and heart, I took a walk in the California foothills not far from home. Walking there, I found a bright yellow flower called a Brown-eyed Susan tucked within the brush, which I took to be a good omen. I stopped to eye the flower, then stood overlooking the ravine I knew and loved so well and called out to the Lord to send me a dream to help me with the decision that loomed before me. Poland felt completely unknown to me (I had minored in Spanish, taught in a bilingual school, and studied Flamenco, so I had imagined myself going to Spain or South America). Nonetheless, the year before, I had watched on the television as the Berlin Wall came down, feeling very curious about life behind the former Iron Curtain. At the University where I had

finished my MA and now taught, I came across an advert for new recruits for the Peace Corps entry into Poland and Hungary. Shortly after that, a former boyfriend told me he would be going to Hungary and that they were looking for people with MA's to help set up Teacher Training Colleges in Eastern Europe.

The night of that walk in the foothills, I had the following dream:

At the base of the golden, California foothills, I wander through crowded carnival grounds, feeling alone. I only want a friend to go walking with me in the hills. The pressure of the crowds pushes me out into the hills where a man approaches me saying, "I've heard that you've been looking for a friend." His gentleness reassures me. I feel I can trust this stranger who wears a royal-blue poet's blouse and has wavy shoulder-length blond hair. His fine features and form radiate beauty.

As we walk in the hills, we communicate without words. The sea-washed breeze cools us. I ask him his name. He answers, "Gabriel." I turn to him and say, "You know, that name means 'Child of God'." He turns to me with a healing smile and says, "I know."

He invites me home to meet his family. His elderly parents and three sisters greet me warmly. A gentle fire burns in the hearth. They feed me freshly baked bread and fresh milk. I feel the meal makes me whole and gives me new life. After supper, Gabriel tells me we will take a journey into the night. (Since childhood, I had been terribly afraid of the dark, but now it feels a friend.) Gabriel and I get into his invisible "car" and disappear at an incredible speed into a velvety blackness. With this I awake.

This dream foreshadowed my eventual experience of full lucidity. But only later, in 2006, when I started a psychotherapy training program in London at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education (CCPE), did I begin to understand the emotional issues and misconceptions that had kept me from trusting the lucid dreams. At CCPE, we practiced a dream re-entry technique developed by Dr Nigel Hamilton, CCPE's Director, called the Waking Dream Process, in which we learned how to consciously re-experience our dreams with therapeutic guidance. This practice quickly transferred over to my dreams as in the following dream entitled 'Rainbow Trout':

I walk waist-deep in a creek at the base of the Eastern Sierras. The fish looks exhausted. Sunlight filters through the leafy covering, glimmering on the water's surface and the creek's golden sands. A few feet in front of me, a massive rainbow trout swims to the surface and then remains still. The trout looks too large to be a creek fish. I decide to catch the fish with my hands, the way my father and I used to do when I was young, but then I realise that the fish represents Spirit and stop myself. I noticed that the trout has turned on its side, revealing a rainbow. The fish looks exhausted. "How," I wonder, "can the Spirit be weary?" Then it occurs to me that the fish also represents me. The thought comes to me that if I were awake and entering the dream through the waking dream process, then my dream guide would invite

me to touch the fish. At that point, just as my finger comes to within a hair's breadth, the trout darts down into the water. Feeling disappointed, I awake.

2. What do you recall of your first lucid dreams? Anything odd, unusual, or unexpected?

Allowing lucidity to continue beyond the initial rush of energy came as a new experience to me, so I had no idea of what to expect. One of my early lucid dreams from April 2007 conveys this feeling.

Driving through the California foothills on a windy summer's day, I lose control of the car. It veers off the side of the road at high speed. After a number of futile attempts to keep the car on the road, I become aware I am dreaming and calmly make the decision to give up trying to control the car.

The car goes faster and faster until it feels as if it has become a particle of light. At what seems the speed of light, the car hurtles towards a golden hillside and everything blurs together. When the car slams into the hillside, my body and the dreamscape disappear. Everywhere becomes an expansive luminous blackness. An incredible pressure and noise centres between my 'brows'. Then all goes very silent and still. I know I have been dreaming, and I wonder if I have actually died during the dream. Although I am drawn to this infinite space, with this thought, I wake up.

Since that time, in lucidity, I consciously chosen to surrender to a force larger than my own. To my mind, wind signified the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as the body of the car disappeared along with the dreamscape, giving way to a Black Light, so my dream body and the dreamscape dissolved in the experience of lucidity that I call 'Lucid Surrender'.

3. What did you make of that?

It felt like dying before my waking death. I didn't quite know what to make of it when my dream body and the dreamscape disappeared. Over time, I have come to realize that an invisible, subtle body of light with enhanced sensorial and intuitive capacities replaces my usual dream body and mind. Similarly, the light of the new dreamscape shines luminously like a black void.

Although the void has a black and empty appearance, my experience tells me that an invisible, living light fills the void. I describe this invisible light as living because the light possesses a range of emotional tonalities. Out of this apparent void, the Black Light takes manifold forms: mineral, vegetable, animal, human, mental, angelic, Divine. Sometimes, when my being gets taken into new dimensions of light, then a new, visible dream body of light takes shape.

Three years later, I had a more direct apprehension of this light as in the following lucid dream excerpt:

After being carried a long distance on the luminescent black winds, I see before me three long, very fine, beams of golden, laser light radiating out from a vanishing point far off in the infinite blackness. The golden beams cross through four fine arching beams of gold. At the points where the straight and curved beams meet, flashes of shimmering, diaphanous mist rises up. "What is this?" I wonder. The answer nearly takes my breath away: "This is the structure of light and I am travelling on light!" The beauty and truth of this vision fill me with a deep devotional humility. In this state, I feel carried to the vanishing point. And then the thought comes: "If I am travelling on light, then I must also be light!"

4. What about lucid dreaming caught your interest and attention? What made you want to have another lucid dream and pursue it further?

I'm not sure I'd say I pursued the dreams as much as I longed for the Spirit and the dreams I felt the dreams vibrant with Spirit. Also, I have a special interest in the appearance of light and color in dreams because I associate both with the presence of Spirit as in this dream from 2008, 'The Market Opens':

I stand at the checkout counter in a family market set in Lone Pine, California, at the base of Mt. Whitney. An elderly female cashier smiles at me as she tallies up the fresh bread and red wine I'd like to buy. When I notice the love in her eyes, I become aware the scene has become illuminated from within, bringing semi-lucidity. The woman turns left to look where a young man unpacks rainbow and golden trout for display. Watching the young man, I see a piercing white circle of light dance around him and the fish. The light follows my eye movement, not his, so I deduce it comes from me. With this, full lucidity comes, and I recognise the market as an image of my ego, mind, or body. I feel jubilant as I bow my head and wait. The walls of the shop fall away and open into stars. I hear a familiar rush of powerful wind and feel my being lifted onto the Black Light....

5. When you become lucid, does it result from a particular induction or incubation technique? Or have you simply trained yourself to notice the unusual when dreaming?

Practising the Waking Dream Technique certainly helped. Also, in my waking life, I had long cultivated an attentive eye for what I think of as signs of the Spirit – hidden beauty, kindness, delightful incongruity and humour. Often in dreams, I recognise these signs as revealing of the Spirit, and which initiate lucidity.

When I pray before falling asleep, I sometimes enter lucidity through the prayers. By prayer, I mean a kind of song of the heart akin to the idea of 'Centering Prayer' as taught by Father Keating – taking a sacred hymn or name and repeating it in tandem with the breath, syllable by syllable. Sufis say that when you find the breath, you find God. This feels true. The names and songs I call on in prayer, and in my dreams, come from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In one of Teresa of Avila's poems, she describes how she found completeness when with each breath, she repeats the name of the Lord. This name, her conception of God, takes her to a place where only light exists. There she asks the Lord if his Holy name serves as the only 'key' to this place. The answer comes that 'every prophet's name is a key as is every heart full of forgiveness and love.' I believe the same applies in my own experience, as illustrate in this dream, 'Two Unicorns', from January 2009:

I am awakened at 4:00 a.m. and pray. I start the repetition of the Holy Names with the breath. At some point, I feel a deepening shift in my mind. Suddenly, I find myself in the back garden of a friend from my teens. I walk towards the edge of the swimming pool and climb up on the back of creature that I sense but do not see. As I sit there, a dark-haired man enters through the gate, backing a white horse into the space next to me. When the horse draws up next to me, I see it is a unicorn! With amazement, I think, "But unicorns don't exist, or do they?" And then I lean forward and see a massive white horse's head with a single horn and realize I'm sitting on a unicorn!

With this, lucidity comes. I say, "Okay God, here I am." Suddenly, with a whoosh, my being, alive with the ecstatic pleasure of the winds, is swept along a black tunnel. At last, I begin to see bright, pulsing lights ahead. They radiate out like enormous white orchid petals in a swirl of bloom. "This time," I think, "I won't be afraid."

Getting taken through the pulsing light takes a long time. Eventually, my being enters an immense, black-grey maelstrom that moves so fast I experience a tremendous pressure that makes it hard to find my breath. The cloud has a beautiful texture with flecks of light in it. In response to the cloud's presence, I can only repeat "Oh Holy One, Oh Holy One!" Then my being moves into a small incredibly black silent space, where the pressure of the maelstrom eases. In the holiness of this space, I continue to repeat, "Oh Holy One, Oh Holy One." Then, after a time, I begin to wonder if I can get back, and in that instants, I am taken back horizontally through the maelstrom, light and tunnel at an amazing speed until I find myself back in the original dream, flat on my back on a green yoga mat next to the pool. As I lie there, the thought comes that I need to rest after such an experience, which I do so in the dream until I wake up.

6. Does dreaming does dreaming exist as a closed state or closed mirror system?

I can say that, in dreams, mirrors within mirrors appear, and the mirrors have a kind of active magical essence. But this doesn't necessarily mean one can't get to the bottom of the rabbit hole, so to speak, because I have found that in the heart of the dream, as in the holy tabernacle, there resides a Holy of Holies. When we reach this point, the dream opens its central teaching to us.

To my mind, doors, veils, tunnels, mirrors etc. suggest crossings into new dimensions of Being. These dimensions exist experientially, and they all share a commonality: the mystery and magic of light.

Here's a dream from 2011 that I called 'New Morning' in which I found myself and one with the light:

I am carried a long way down a tunnel illuminated with Black Light. Finally, the movement stops, and it feels as if my body rests on Holy ground in a foetal position on my right side. The black lays heavy over me like a thick blanket. My position has the feel of total and complete surrender. A part of me thinks, "I guess life knows I need this."

Then a morning light surrounds me. It feels like pure light, somehow full of life's forms and contains the sky, trees, birds, the earth and my being. The light has the musicality of water and air. I think for a brief moment that I've awakened to a bright spring day and that I must be hearing sounds from outside. But then I understand the experience to be an actual awakening to what light truly is, and all that it contains. I feel like an apple on a grassy field, a creation of light, in the lucid space until the alarm wakes me up.

This dream depicts what I believe the poet Hafiz to mean when he says: 'I am just a shadow. I wish I could show you the Infinite Incandescence that has cast my brilliant image!' Alchemists equated light's shadow with God's. To this, though, I would add that colours form the shadow of light.

7. Reading your lucid dreams suggests that your spiritual values and aspirations have played a strong role in your life from early childhood. Can you tell us more about this, and how your early religious experiences may have altered your approach towards dreamwork?

As a child, I always felt the world and myself as fundamentally religious in the word's etymological sense of yoked to the Divine. You might as well ask, "Could you tell us more about your early experiences of air?" But, just as important was my early childhood experience of light – for instance, I clearly remember the light on my blonde mother's hair and on her joyful face as she bathed me in the kitchen sink.

My mother took me to a Baptist Church and sent me to a Christian kindergarten where we learned to read in order to memorise scripture – a process I relished. In school, I learned a host of sacred hymns and verses that I would repeat when afraid, sad or simply joyful. I loved Psalms like 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want....' and felt the words as a continuation of beauty and light. This practice has carried over into the dreams.

I feel deeply grateful for such grounding in a sacred tradition – though I regret that I allowed some of the more dogmatic teachings of the church to close my heart to lucidity for so many years. I would say that Bible stories about such characters as Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Moses, Mary, and Gabriel awakened my imagination. They taught me lessons about life and dreams, as well as inspiring a life-long study of Comparative Religion. Yet, even

without access to the rich archetypal treasures of the different Wisdom Traditions, I believe the world of Nature, dreams, the imagination, intellect and Spirit can help each one of us to create our own meaningful symbolic life.

Finding a psychotherapy training that suited me took me a long time. Eventually, I chose the transpersonal approach, one that importantly takes spirituality – one’s sense of values, purpose, and meaning – into account. Life crises and challenges become opportunities for creative change and growth. In this approach, dreams and the imagination serve as a way to understand our inner world, our essential nature, the world of Spirit.

8. How would you describe yourself in a spiritual-religious sense today? Has this affected your lucid dreaming practices and goals?

I would hope that the feeling-tone of my ‘spiritual-religious sense’ permeates my responses to your questions. When a reporter once asked Bob Dylan a similar question, he said he believed in the songs. I would say I believe in the dreams. They are my lexicon and my liturgy. My lucid dreaming practice hasn’t changed much for many years. However, with the help of the dreams’ teachings, my capacity to hold them and work with them has expanded.

9. You frequently speak and write on the idea of ‘Lucid Surrender’. What do you mean by “surrender” in the context of lucid dreaming?

I’ll give you an answer by way of a dream I had 2010:

After popping out of the original lucid dream, I find myself semi-lucid in another dream, feeling rather desultory as I walk on an empty city street. Shining objects in a shop window catch my eye. I turn and see hundreds of hanging heart crystals of various sizes radiating white light. The beauty brings lucidity.

Again, the black winds seize my being. This time, it feels as if I am swimming horizontally in a stream of Black Light like a still fish suspended in time and space within a gentle current. My being feels cleansed in this current that suffuses me with both delicate pleasure and purification, reminding me vaguely of what George MacDonald calls a ‘Good Death’. It feels like taking a bath in God, and God taking a bath in me! I wonder if this happens to each of us every night but we usually we just don’t remember.

Eventually, I find myself curled up on a braided rug at the feet of a matronly woman who sits in a rocking chair next to a cosy fire. I rest there, taking in the lucid experience. The woman looks puzzled and impatiently asks me, “What kind of lucid dreams are those when you let yourself be taken to God in this way?” I tell her, “Surrender, the Path of Surrender.”

10. So how does a lucid dreamer surrender? And what do you feel they surrender to – dream randomness, their Self, a Higher Power, God? And towards what end – how can surrender benefit a lucid dreamer?

That is like asking a songwriter how she writes her songs. As with any other art form, I've learned from the dreams. Over the past six years, I have become more comfortable with Lucid Surrender, although I still find such dreams challenging. This approach may not appeal to everyone. After all, how many of us would truly like to attempt jumping to the earth from the stratosphere, while breaking the sound barrier in the process? Felix Baumgartner did this on Oct. 14, 2012 from a height of nearly 40,000 metres. His return to earth took around ten minutes. At one point he spun out of control and blacked out momentarily, but then landed on earth safely. When I watched a recording of his jump, I thought, "Yes! That comes close to how it feels in the dreams!"

So, when I describe a dream as breathtakingly beautiful or powerful, I mean it in ways that that is hard to couch in everyday language. The energy of the dreams can feel nuclear. In a manner not unlike the five years Baumgartner spent doing test jumps and learning to trust his helium-filled balloon, space suit and parachute, I feel as if I have been in training too.

Perhaps this early dream from August 2007, would help to outline the fundamentals of the approach:

Before sleep, I pray as I reflect with deep feeling on event that have been taking place in my life. Upon falling asleep, I find myself in sitting in a white chair outside a building that looks like my training institute, writing in my pink dream notebook. Another chair sits opposite me, empty. I hear a sound and turn to see my dream teacher walking towards me. He sits down opposite me and when I look up at him, it feels as if a metal band about four inches wide snaps open across my chest. Suddenly, I feel my being leaves my body, lifting out of my chest and hovering over my bed. I remember what my teacher had said in a lecture the evening before, that if you feel up out of your body in a dream, you can fly around and see the world. But I have done that in life. I want to learn something here! What I really want is for my teacher to give me spiritual guidance, and I call out his name two or three times.

As I do so, a clear, five-pointed star appears in each of my eyes and expands to fill me with a powerful light. Eventually, I think my eyes must be open because bright, white sunlight enters the window and fills the room. Then I realise that I am still in my dream, until I wake up some time later.

To me, this dream encapsulates some requisite qualities of Lucid Surrender that – with practice and much guidance from the dreams themselves – I have developed inwardly:

- 1) Opening of the heart and intuitive mind (in this case, assisted by my prayers before sleep and in the dream by the metal band snapping open across my heart).
- 2) Courage to take a leap into the unknown and mysterious.
- 3) Deep desire to learn of spiritual truth.

- 4) Discerning a guiding presence, spirit, or quality to call on in the dreams (in this instance embodied as my teacher, although, over time I have found that such guidance often arises from within.)
- 5) Willingness to surrender to the irrational and paradoxical aspects of experience and a curiosity about this.
- 6) Honest acknowledgement of feelings in the dream.
- 7) Patience to wait while nothing apparently happens.
- 8) Sensitivity towards light as an active, transformative essence.
- 9) Capacity to awake to light inwardly while remaining in the lucid state.

These fundamental attributes appear more fully developed in the following dreams which I had five years later:

I wake up around 4:30a.m. Spontaneously, a sacred song arises. As I sing silently repeating the song with the breath, a whirring sound around my head starts up and I enter lucidity. For some time, my being hovers suspended in an intermediary space of Black Light, tugged at by an unseen strong current. I call out, "Take me to you, Lord!" Suddenly, my being releases onto the rushing Black Light and winds.

I see before me a new light structure, a V-shape of blue and white effervescent light lit up like a sparkler on New Year's Eve. As I approach this vortex of light, I feel unsure of what to do with my invisible arms, whether to open them to the light or bring my hands together in prayer. A voice says, "Just be," so I remain still while carried on the winds. Then the Lord's Prayer bubbles up inside of me as I burst into a realm of gold.

The golden radiance has unusual dimensions, akin to being inside a limitless, bright piece of amber. In the distance, I see an immense golden cloud, the richness of which stands out even against the backdrop of gold. The cloud hovers over the horizon expectantly. I know it is the Lord, and my heart leaps up. Two immense, silhouetted angelic guardians open up a golden path between them. The holy winds carry my being through innumerable worshipful shadows ever nearer to the golden cloud.

Approaching the cloud, I become aware of an achingly beautiful piece of music. It feels both unknown to me and yet strangely familiar, full of layered harmonies and motifs. Nothing I have ever heard before shares its texture or depth, as the music seemingly arises from the very fabric of the space and golden light around me. I am surrounded by a perfect balance of paradoxical qualities: tremendous power and petal-soft tenderness, simplicity and profundity, mercy and might, justice and compassion, longing and fulfilment, immanence and transcendence. But the dominant quality within this golden cloud feels like a mysterious richness, in the shadows of which rests deep humility. Suddenly, I realise that music sounds like a variation of a tune I sing to the Lord's Prayer while I am praying. I wonder if the Spirit hears my simple rendition this way. I am filled with the desire to create a musical score so that others can share in this rendition of the prayer, but since I lack the ability to do that, it strikes me that I'll just have to bring this music into life through my actions. The music accompanies me back towards waking consciousness.

This dream highlights the importance of focusing in Lucid Surrender, an alignment of one's deepest desire with what the Kabbalistic tradition calls 'The Highest Will', this must remain the central intention both before and during the dream. With such inner alignment, a reciprocal relationship between the dreamer and dream appears.

If you don't feel drawn to the idea of the Divine as portrayed in the dreams I've shared, you can call instead on someone whose qualities you admire such as their love, joy, peace, gratitude and curiosity. Or else you can sing a song that puts you in touch with deep heartfelt feelings. Because of the revelatory nature of Lucid Surrender, which can be overwhelming, I would advise entering such lucid dreams with the support of a dream guide or dream group or your preferred faith tradition.

11. As a psychotherapist and counsellor, you work with a lot of people. Have you ever used lucid dreaming to assist with personal healing? Have lucid dreams given you insights into therapeutic practice?

As my capacity to hold the dreams was expanded, my capacity to hold life's complexities was similarly awakened, all of which has profoundly influenced my work as a director of the charity I direct, HELP Counselling Centre, which serves 150 clients each week. The Dream Research Institute, which I co-founded, has taken shape in tandem with the dreams, offering seminars, teaching programs and an internet-based resource or the wider public.

Like dreams, therapeutic work provides mirroring for clients so that they can see into themselves more lucidly, with new light, experiencing healing inwardly and outwardly. In my own practice, dream work is a pivotal part of this process.

Through my lucid dreams, I've had the opportunity to receive healing not only for myself but also for people in the waking world. I must admit I sometimes fall short and am very conscious that there is always more to learn and I am reminded of one lucid dream in which a Tibetan Buddhist, dream yoga teacher appeared. He explains that dreams unfold according to our capacity and what we bring to them. We can also build up our capacity for dreaming in order to both give and receive. Once established, the dreams continue to develop, bringing greater depth of understanding to the dreamer.

13. As with extra-sensory perception, have you had lucid dreams that provided you with unknown information that you later validated?

Yes. But, because the dreams speak in signs, symbols, and subtle feelings, it may take some time for me to recognise the psychic aspects. However, I can include a number of instances here:

- 1) opening dream letters containing written information
- 2) being shown paintings portraying guidance
- 3) being inspired by dream scenes to take a particular course of action, for example how to raise £10,000 in 10 days for Help when we were facing financial hardship.
- 4) meaningful number sequences
- 5) verbal guidance

6) teachings transmitted via beams, chords, or quanta of light

7) teachings transmitted by Holy beings from different Wisdom Traditions through touch or presence.

12. In some lucid dreams, you report encounters with benevolent, seemingly divine beings, who appear to guide you or help you, ranging from angelic to historic spiritual figures. Do you believe these encounters deal with aspects of yourself, or are they archetypal forces, as a Jungian might see them or do you feel that these entities sometimes have an existence independent of your own?

The choice 'All of the above' works here. These holy beings appear to me as embodiments of truth, compassion, clarity, wisdom and beauty. If we return to the idea of mirrors, such holy beings reflect and emanate more clearly the attributes of the Divine. In the dreams, they exist independently, as well as in relation to one another. And, much to my surprise, in relation to me, too. An excerpt from a dream in 2012 speaks to this more clearly, coming at a time when in waking life challenges at work were mounting up, on top of which one of the toilets broke, creating quite a mess (symbolically very apt!):

In the night, deep prayers move me. Spontaneously, I ask to be taken to the realm where spiritual beings dwell in order to learn from them. I'd be honoured to meet one such being, but most of all to meet with Jesus, Ibn al-'Arabi, and Elisha (although Jesus has appeared a few times in non-lucid and lucid dreams, it hasn't ever occurred to me that I might actually ask for this.)

When I fall asleep, I dream the toilet at work has backed up again. But then I realize this must be a dream! With lucidity, the ecstatic black winds take hold of me. The journey continues with sharp sudden changes that disorientate me, until a sung version of a psalm springs to mind: 'You are my hiding place, you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I feel afraid I will trust in you, I will trust in you, let the weak say I am strong in the strength of your love.' Finally, I pop into a space full of people wearing solid, coloured robes. They open a path between them leading to a quiet space where three men in coloured robes sit expectantly. I seem to know who they are. They exude a holy wisdom and appear to be awaiting me. Amidst their deep holiness, humanity, intelligence and love, I feel their interest and attentiveness. A sense of deep, timeless communion arises between us.

Upon waking, I am amazed at the power that simply asking for something holds. I am also struck by how a backed-up toilet opened the way to lucidity! Most importantly, I would say while the light of guidance may take embodied forms, the dreams themselves *are* the guides, serving like lanterns to light our path.

In lucid dreams, I have also experienced some rather ‘unholy’ beings. Some of them feel like aspects of my own mind and they disperse when recognised as such; appear to exist independently and disperse when I call on the holy names of Gabriel, Jesus, or Elohim.

13. I know you have written academic books. Do you plan to write a book on lucid dreaming? Any idea on the theme or a possible title?

The dreams have told me to “Finish the book” and that is still to come. (In March 2020, I published *The Hidden Lives of Dreams*.)

In my early twenties, one of my professors introduced to John Sanford’s *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language*. I was so impressed, I sent Sandford one of my dreams, whose strange beauty had haunted me, asking him for help. Dr Sanford kindly rang and told me that based on the dream he thought I ought to work with dreams and write about them. It has taken twenty years to follow up on his encouragement but probably for good reason. Everything happens in its own time. Thank you for this opportunity to shed some light on the subject of Lucid Surrender.

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