

## **Dreamed Last Night I was Dreaming**

The mind is a strange thing when you think about it.

How do we know things? If somebody asks me the capital of Botswana, I respond Gabrone. How do I know that? Where does that piece of information come from?

I was thinking about this in the Slug and Fiddle on Wednesday night. I was sat with Dave and Guinness and few other regulars and was wondering how I knew these people. Both Dave and Guinness were teachers, in fact they were both very similar people in a lot of ways. Both were called Dave, so we called one Guinness to distinguish between the two. Both were educated, both were gregarious, but Guinness was the lighter of the two. These are facts I am sure of, but I had no idea how I knew this fact. I knew they were both married (not to each other, obviously) but their wives didn't get on which was why you would only see them together mid week. Again, I knew this, but how?

What had started me thinking along these metaphysical lines? Well, we were talking about dreams. At that moment Guinness was holding forth.

"Dreams do come true, you know," he was saying.

"Yes?"

"Oh yes. The other day I dreamt I was awake, and when I woke up I was."

"My God," I said, sarcastically. "That's frightening."

"And , I'll tell you something else. Yesterday I dreamt it was Thursday and tomorrow it will be."

Dave stopped this idiocy by announcing that he had a story to tell about dreams. This elicited groans from the gathered throng as Dave was famous for long stories that didn't go anywhere.

"I better get the beers in then," said Guinness. As he was being served, I noticed him putting some money in the jukebox. As it burst into life I recognised "Daydream Believer" by the Monkeys. Guinness came back with the beer and Dave set off.

"I used to live on the top floor of a tower block and every morning I used to wake up at two minutes to eight.

"My alarm actually used to go off at eight o'clock, but something about my internal clock used to wake me up two minutes before. I'd wake up, stare myopically at the alarm clock, realise it was early and lay back until the alarm went off.

"Then I'd find a pair on specs and pull back the curtain to have a look at what the weather was like.

"I had to be careful, because the windows in the flat went all the way to the ground and I sleep in the niff. Having said that, I lived on the thirteenth floor and at that height I was only likely to be seen by the pilot of the local radio traffic helicopter or a seagull with a magnifying glass.

"This particular morning was no different, I woke up and realised the clock said 7.58. I waited until the alarm went off - in those days, I listened to Radio Two, and Derek Jameson was playing 'Take a Walk on the Wild Side' by Lou Reed. Bit of an odd choice considering the dodgy nature of the lyrics."

"Pity I didn't put that on the Juke box," said Guinness.

"No, it's something of a mercy that you didn't." Dave shrugged. "Eventually, I decided it was time to get up. I found my bins and pulled back the curtain.

"Then things changed. The glass had gone from the window. In fact, the whole window had gone as well as bits of the wall.

"I was so surprised, I fell out of the window.

"I plummeted towards the ground and I screamed and screamed and screamed." He paused to take a sip from his pint.

"Then I woke up."

There was a disappointed pause.

"The weird thing was that when I woke up, it was 7.58. The alarm went off and it was Derek Jameson. And he was playing 'Walk on the Wild Side'. Explain that."

"Perhaps you got confused. Perhaps you woke up, heard Sid Yobbo but were still dozing. Then you dreamt about the fall and the order all gets mixed up in your head." said Guinness.

"Perhaps, but you've got to admit it's weird."

This followed my reasoning, as I said earlier, I'd been thinking about the mind.

"The mind is a curious thing." I chimed in.

"Yeah," said Guinness. "Mine certainly is."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, for starters, I dream about lobsters."

"Lobsters?"

"Yeah, lobsters. Man sized lobsters. Wearing hats."

"Man sized lobsters wearing hats?"

"Do you mind not repeating everything I say. This is a pub not an echo chamber."

"Sorry, but I was wondering about the hats."

"In what way?"

"Well, what sort of hats?"

"Anything, bowlers, trilbies, top hats."

"How do they get them to fit?"

"They're special lobster hats."

"And where do they get those from?"

"I've never thought to ask."

"As I was saying, whenever I'm ill or under pressure I dream of lobsters. I'll dream that I'm doing something perfectly normal, walking down a street or standing in a pub and a man sized lobster will be there, wearing a hat.

"And he'll say 'Hello Guinness,' and I'll say 'Hello Lobster,' and then the dream will continue as normal."

"I don't believe it."

"I don't care, it's true."

"Why do you dream of lobsters?"

"Dunno. I tried looking it up in one of those dream dictionaries."

"And what did it say?"

"Apparently dreaming of lobsters means fear of castration."

"I'm scared of castration but I don't dream of lobsters."

"Well, neither do I under normal circumstances. It's only when I'm ill or when I'm under some type of stress."

"How do you mean?"

"Let me give you an example. Back in the days before I was teaching, I'd got an interview for a computing job. I'd never had a technical interview and I was very nervous about it. I was having great difficulty sleeping and that was making me more nervous.

"So there I was at the interview. It was a panel, three blokes. One was asking about hardware and systems, one was asking me programming questions and one was asking me personal questions, you know, hobbies and interests, that sort of thing.

"The questions were real buggers. It was as if they were going out of their way to be difficult.

"But I aced everyone. Perfect answers to every question. They were so pleased with me they offered me the job there and then. They told me there hadn't been another candidate who came anywhere near. They decided to introduce me to my new boss.

"But before my new boss came in the guy who was asking the personal bits and bobs had one last question. He said:

"How do you get on with lobsters?"

"And in came a large red lobster, claws clicking in the air, wearing a neat little bowler hat.

"And he said 'Hello, Dave.' And I said 'Hello Lobster'.

"Then I woke up."

There were more groans from around the table and a general pause while everyone took a swig from their pints.

"Do you know that lobsters aren't red when they're in the water?" asked Dave to no-one in particular, proving that he's a mine of useless information. "They only become red when they're cooked."

"Well this one couldn't have known that, because he was definitely red."

"Perhaps it had a suntan."

The juke box was changing its tune. This time it was Silver Dream Machine by David Essex.

"Did any of that dream come true?"

"Well, the bit about the giant lobsters bloody well didn't that's for sure."

"I know that."

"The bit about it being a three person panel turned out to be true, as did the bit about the questions being complete beggars. I'm sure some of them were in a combination of machine code and Serbo Croat, but that's where the coincidence ends. I didn't answer any of the questions, I mumbled or gibbered throughout and I tried a couple of jokes that fell as flat as this beer. At the start of the interview they'd said if I done badly I'd hear within a couple of days, but if I'd done well, it would be a couple of weeks while they took up references."

"And.."

"They told me I'd hear from them tomorrow."

It was time for another drink, then Guinness had another story.

"It's funny, I always have the weirdest lobster dreams when I can't sleep.

"I remember when I was doing my teacher training and my tutor was coming in to observe my lessons for the first time.

"I dreamt that I was going to have to teach a class full of lobsters and that I'd had to stay up all night to learn the lobster language.

"Then I dreamt that I was sitting in the staff room talking to my tutor. We didn't really get on and he seemed to sense my unease and take a slight pleasure in it. I told him that I was tired because I'd stayed up all night learning the lobster language.

"'Oh,' he said. 'Which one of them have you learned?'"

"It turned out there are two lobster languages. So I spoke a little bit of the one I'd learned. My tutor shook his head and spoke a little of lobster language I should have learned.

*"I'd learned the wrong one!"*

He took a long sup from his drink.

"So there I was, ten minutes to go, a class full of lobsters to teach and I'd learned the wrong language.

"There was nothing else to do. I had to try and busk it.

"I walked into the classroom and all the lobsters were sat on stools with their claws in the air, all wearing school caps. My tutor followed me in, enjoying my discomfort.

"As we entered I heard somebody playing a radio. It wasn't Radio Lobster, it was in English! I suddenly realised that the lobsters had to be bi-lingual. All the other man-sized lobsters had talked to me in English, even if it was just 'Hello Dave'.

"I started an investigation find to find out which of the lobsters had got a radio when I realised that it was my radio alarm that had gone off and it was time to get up."

There was a long pause after this story.

"Lobster language, eh?" said one of the lads.

"Yes," said Guinness.

"Has anyone ever told you that you're not normal?"

"Often."

"I'm not the least bit surprised."

Dave downed the last of his pint and looked at the bar. He was sandwiched between two other people and so he leaned over to Guinness.

"Get 'em in for me, will you Guinness. I'll give you the money," he asked.

Guinness chuntered a bit, but he'd got no beer either, so he headed to the bar.

The juke box was playing the opening bars of a track I recognised as Tom Robinson's "Too Good to be True". I wondered why Guinness had put on this particular track, the others had followed the dream theme. I looked over to Guinness.

"Dreamed last night I was dreaming," sang Tom from the juke box.

But I wasn't too sure I heard him. I'd seen something at the bar that had stunned me. Guinness was talking to someone, *something*, at the bar.

"Hello, Lobster," he said.

In front of him stood a six foot tall lobster. It had a suntan and was wearing a sombrero.

"Hello, Dave," it said.

The other Dave had seen the lobster too.

"Oi Guinness," he said. "For Gods sake, don't wake up."

The lobster looked at him and clicked it's claws.

"Ah," it said. "But who's dreaming who."

And I found myself wondering what would happen if the alarm didn't go off.