



LDDE
LUCID DREAM EXCHANGE

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FEATURING

DREAMSPEAK

CHASING VENUS

“EVERYTHING’S ALL RIGHT”

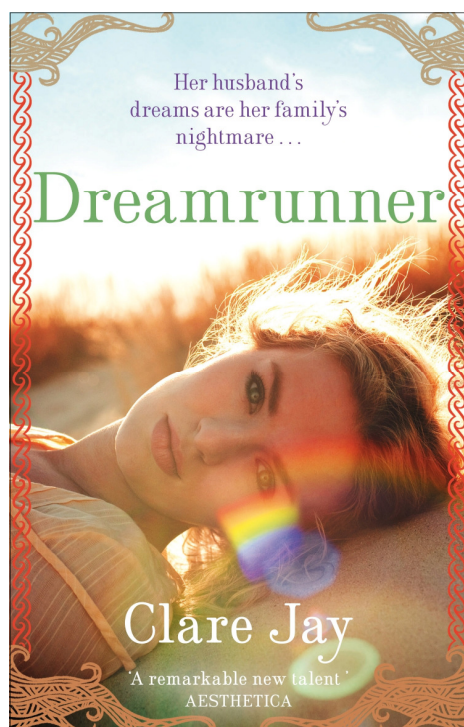
FROM DREAM WARRIOR TO AUTHOR

LUCID DREAMING, WRITING AND SLEEP DISORDERS

LUCID DREAMING, WRITING & SLEEP DISORDERS

Imagine you have lovely neighbours, a happy couple with a young son. One night you are woken by the most horrendous screams and thuds coming from their apartment. Certain they must be being attacked, you rush over to help them. But although the wife opens the door a crack, she won't let you in, and you see that her face is bashed up. A clear-cut case of domestic violence? She insists that it is no such thing, but that her husband did this to her unwittingly, in his sleep, while acting out a nightmare. Now, we all know dreams can seem very real, even more real than reality at times, but isn't this stretching credibility a little?

Unfortunately, violent sleep disorders are a very real problem, affecting millions of people. The natural paralysis we all experience during sleep is lifted and dreams are physically enacted. People have jumped out of high windows while dreaming they are fleeing a burning building, they have driven vehicles while fast asleep, they have beaten up or even killed loved ones while dreaming they are defending themselves from intruders. Sufferers wake up with lacerations, broken bones, blood all over them, only to have a hysterical relative tell them what they've been doing – grabbing knives from the kitchen and chasing their bed partner around the house, kicking the furniture to pieces... Often, their peculiar actions are explained when they recount their dream: 'There was this rabid dog trying to bite me. I was kicking it away as hard as I could but it just kept coming.'



In all of these cases, at the time of the action, the dreamer is *not* aware that he is dreaming. Indeed, it takes a lot of persuasion to make him realise that what he is seeing is in fact 'just a dream'. So although these dreams seem astonishingly real in their clarity and detail, they are far from lucid.

When I first talked with other dream researchers about violent sleep behaviours, at a regional IASD conference in the UK, the conversation turned to speculation about what would happen if sufferers could train themselves to become lucid in the midst of a violent, moving nightmare. Surely lucidity would stop them in their tracks as they realised that the intruder with the machine gun, the rabid dog, the fire devouring the walls, were in fact instances of incredibly powerful dream imagery, and therefore there was no need to react violently?

Long after the conference, the images of violent sleep behaviours stayed with me, reinforced by a chance meeting with a former school friend who told me he had recently dragged his girlfriend around the room by her hair while dreaming she was an intruder.

He was very worried that she was going to leave him as this wasn't the first time he'd been violent while asleep and she was now understandably terrified of sleeping in the same room as him. I started thinking about the impact sleep disorders must have on a relationship, and that's when I knew I was going to write a novel about it.

Dreamrunner, set in the summer heat of Lisbon, Portugal, is the story of a loving family man whose violent nightmares endanger his artist wife and their little son, and put his marriage in jeopardy. It's a novel about the far-reaching effects of childhood trauma, and a family's determination to stick together, no matter what secrets the past might reveal. ***Dreamrunner*** describes a journey towards lucidity on several levels, charting the move from unconscious to conscious as repressed memories are recalled and the main character struggles to become lucid in his recurrent nightmare.

While I was working on my PhD thesis, I developed ways of drawing on lucid dreams to enhance and encourage the creative writing process. My first novel, ***Breathing in Colour***, is packed with my own lucid dream imagery and I deliberately pursued an experience of synaesthesia, the mingling of the senses, during lucid dreams, to help me write in the voice of a character who had this multi-sensory condition. With ***Dreamrunner***, the whole idea of 'lucid dreaming into a subject' seemed a little riskier. Just the fact of thinking long and hard about sleep violence resulted in an increase of violent dreams for me: writing vivid, violent scenes in the semi-dream state of the creative trance was bound to affect my own dreamlife, and lucidity was an even deeper step into this.

In one semi-lucid dream, I was asleep next to a man who went into a violent dream-enactment scenario, smashing into wardrobes, yelling and screaming. Part of me knew I was dreaming this and that I was witnessing the effects of a sleep disorder on a bed partner. I also experienced some literal examples of how it feels to wake up enacting a dream movement – once I woke in a sitting position, my arm outstretched, and experienced disorientation as I tried to reconcile the dream reality with waking reality. These examples were very helpful in the writing of the nightmare scenes in the novel, but I was relieved when they stopped, as they made me sense how easily sleep disorders could happen to anyone.

I wrote ***Dreamrunner*** partly out of curiosity, and partly out of a desire to 'spread the news' about sleep disorders. So many sufferers are misdiagnosed or led to think they are going crazy, when in fact the majority of sleep disorders can be controlled, either through medication, or possibly through techniques such as self-hypnosis, meditation, dream replay, psychotherapy... or the potentially healing and positive state of lucid dreaming.

Author Bio

Clare Jay is a British dream researcher and novelist. Her PhD examined the link between lucid dreaming and creative writing and she has led 'Dreaming into Writing' workshops at international conferences. Her novels, ***Breathing in Colour*** and ***Dreamrunner***, are both published by Little, Brown and are available via the UK version of Amazon: www.amazon.co.uk Visit Clare at www.clarejay.com

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