

LAKSHMI and the RIVER OF TRUTH

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INTRODUCTION

FELLOW TRAVELERS, let us embark upon a journey into obscure caverns, steep ravines, unconscious mysteries, and cryptic conundrums that constitute the dream world of Lakshmi Jackson. Before we set sail into her deep domain, it will be useful to survey the seaworthiness of our vessel, plug the leaks, check the tarps, test for rope frays, and, as they say, batten down the hatches. If we are to achieve a thorough illumination of Ms. Jackson's inner landscape, we must take inventory of the various constructs we may encounter along the way.

For you 21st century anglophones who pursue the illusive vapor that is the human psyche, Sigmund Freud possessed the keys to the kingdom with which he opened the doors to understanding. In Freud's view, all human experience, including dreams, could be viewed through the lens of sexuality. If, for example, Lakshmi dreamed of eating a carrot, Freud would stroke his beard and explain that the carrot represented a penis. On the other hand, if Lakshmi were to report a dream about sniffing a rose, Freud would certainly interpret the rose as a symbol for...a penis. Even the above-mentioned boat, tarps, rope, hatches, as well as Freud's beard and the act of stroking it, are clearly metaphors representing the ubiquitous penis.

Freud's disciple and colleague, Carl Jung, broke with his mentor when he hypothesized that our dreams delve into the "collective unconscious." Jung posited that many icons we see and events we experience in dreams are universal symbols shared by all humanity. To illustrate the schism between Freud and Jung, if Lakshmi Jackson were to have a baby and the next night she dreamed about it, one might imagine the following dialogue between the two eminent psychologists:

Jung: My patient just gave birth to a baby.

Freud: *Mazel tov!* Please extend my warmest regards and give her this cigar as a token of my congratulations. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, although in this case, probably not.

Jung: She reports that last night she had a dream about her baby's birth. No doubt, she was tapping into the collective unconscious, summoning the universal metaphor of child birth to represent her personal metamorphosis from meek little clerk at the In 'n 'Out Market to courageous national leader.

Freud: Nonsense! Dreams about childbirth clearly represent the penis!

Jung: I'll see you in the Court of Collective Unconscious!

(Author's note: The hypothetical example of Lakshmi bearing a child has no basis in reality. At this embryonic stage of our tale, Lakshmi Jackson has not given birth to a child, nor has she dreamed about it. These images are solely the author's musings employed as devices to illustrate the differences between Freud and Jung's thinking. However, they may lead the reader to

speculate on this author's preoccupation with child birth, personal growth, and penises. To answer these complex questions would require years of analysis.)

Before Freud and Jung contributed scientific thought to Western dream doctrine, indigenous cultures throughout the world relied on shamans to guide them through a practice known as "vision quest." While it is impossible for us in the "civilized" world to wrap our rational minds around the concept of a vision quest, suffice to say it involves a spiritual guide who meditates, drums, chants, and personally enters the dreamer's nocturnal wanderings. We are left to speculate on how Freud and Jung would interpret a shaman in full spirit-warrior regalia, chanting and drumming as he makes his grand entrance into Lakshmi Jackson's aforementioned dream via her birth canal.

Freud's famous statement, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," is only partially true. When we view a cigar under a microscope or under the influence of psychedelics, it is evident that a cigar is not a cigar at all. Rather, it is a living, breathing, floating universe of molecules; expanding, contracting, nudging one another, transforming, and creating the illusion of solidity. It is only a cigar because we have learned to identify it as such.

The point being, after 70 years of intense study which has included sleeping every night and dreaming during many of them, this author has determined that dreams are the figurative cigar under the microscope. Dreams are thought molecules that live, breathe, and float in the brain; expanding, contracting, and fluidly melding into one another to create new thought molecules.

How else to explain the conclusion of Lakshmi's aforementioned dream in which she was not visited by a shaman at all; rather, after giving birth to a baby girl, her thought molecules merged to transform her baby into an old man who, stroking his beard and lighting a cigar, declared, "Welcome to our collective unconscious."

With that, we are now sufficiently equipped to accompany Lakshmi Jackson on her epic quest to discover the River of Truth. Let us begin.

