

Chapter 1 The Dream

Waiting to walk through a door, a man passes time impatiently. He flips through a magazine or two and looks up frequently, waiting for the wood paneled door with the brass handle to swing open on brass hinges. A nurse would then announce, "The doctor will see you now Mr. Sullivan." When this happens, Shaun Sullivan follows the receptionist into the inner chambers of the doctor's office. She states, "Please sit here and recline on the couch." She fluffs the pillow and waits for the patient to lie down. Shaun Sullivan, the leader of men, obeys like a trained dog.

It was like being in the middle of a coastal river with the tide going out and then the boat engine quit. This is how I felt. You're in this room, but what is happening doesn't depend on you. Someone else is pulling the strings. It's not quite like being a victim of an evil person.. It is more like being caught in an organized something or other. The something or other was Dr. Alfred P. Weed, and I was on my back on a couch telling the doctor about my dream.

But should I be here? I needed someone or something to help me with my insomnia from the dream that refused to stop or go away. I thought maybe I was going nuts. There was the night dream problem, but I also had a day dream problem. I was a bastard child raised in a foster home. I knew who my biological parents were, and I spent my life trying to get their attention. One of my day dreams involved running against my father who was a U.S. senator from New Mexico. In a political race for the senate, he would have to recognize me as his son.

I thought about another politician who ran for vice president. He had political problems when his opponents revealed he visited a psychiatrist. I was setting myself up for future political disaster if anyone found out I was here lying on the shrink's couch. *Maybe I should get out of here.*

Mr. Sullivan why are you here?". What's your problem?"

I was in Dr. Weed's office, and it was a little too late to claim I was never here. What hurt could it do? Who would find out? I could answer a few of his questions. I could put a political spin on the visit. I'd claimed to be doing dream research for an article I never would write.

"Well... Where do I start? The dream started months ago. I don't know how important the date is to your analysis because I can't tell you the exact date. I didn't go write it down the first time the dream showed up in my bedroom." I took a deep breath and continued. "At first, I didn't think anything about it. It wasn't scary, and I didn't kill anyone. I didn't fall off a cliff. It was not a nightmare. Unfortunately, there was no sex involved." I laughed a fake laugh to indicate to the doctor this was a joke. "I had the first dream, and then it was about a week or so before I had another. Gradually, the frequency of the dream picked up. Finally, I had the thing every night. I would wake suddenly, and I always heard something,

which sounded like a startled 'Oh.' I am reasonably sure the sound came from me. I would rear up in bed and stare into the darkness listening for sounds. I had been in the military, and sounds in the night could mean your impending death by the enemy. I just didn't know where I was at for a few seconds, which was very disturbing. I solved this problem by sleeping with a night light on in my bedroom. As soon as I could get my bearings, I would then get up and sit in the front room in the dark or get on the computer in my study. After awhile, I would get sleepy again and return to bed. Sometimes, I couldn't get back to sleep. Sometimes, I would toss and turn the rest of the night with my mind spinning. I usually awoke in the morning tired. As the dream's frequency picked up, I started looking for solutions. I have tried just about everything, and I am getting to the end of my ability to cope with the dream."

"Was this a single dream or a series of different dreams?" Dr. Weed asked as he yawned with boredom. "I'm not clear on this point."

"It was the same dream over and over and over," I said. "I started to panic over this reoccurring dream," I explained to the Doctor. "I wondered if I were losing my sanity. When I was at my computer in the middle of the night, I started searching the internet answers. I went to the library and checked out books on dreams. I bought books on dreams. I even got a concordance of the Bible where I researched all the Biblical dreams.

"Doctor, that's why I'm here. I don't think I'm going crazy, but anything is possible. I'm not too sure you can help me, but it's worth a try if my visit doesn't become public in some way. I want to get into politics, and my visits to a psychiatrist would not help the cause."

"Your visits are strictly confidential."

I took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. I kept my eyes shut until I heard the doctor shift in his chair. I opened my eyes to an off-white colored ceiling. I turned my head on the pillow to look at the doctor as he spoke.

"Why did you say it was unfortunate sex wasn't involved?" The doctor asked peering over half glasses perched upon the end of his nose. He apparently didn't notice the laugh after the statement about the lack of sex in the dream.

"It was just a joke. I try to be funny sometimes. I try to make people laugh."

"Why do you try to be funny and make people laugh?" He asked in a very professional voice.

"It's a hell of a lot better than trying to make people cry," I said sardonically. "I am not in my comfort zone lying here on your couch. Maybe that is why I joke around."

The doctor's office looked like a movie set. The bookshelf was full of books with identical covers. The mahogany books with gold leaf printing looked like soldiers lined up on a parade ground. The couch was covered with black leather and dimpled with buttons. The large white pillow did not belong if this were a

movie set. Each patient apparently got a clean white pillowcase. The dark shades were pulled, and several table lamps completed the appearance of a warm and relaxing place.

I was anything but relaxed. I really didn't believe in this therapy stuff. I wanted an instant fix if possible, and then I wanted to leave the doctor's office before anyone found out I was here. It occurred to me that a good bartender could help me as much as this doctor. However, I realized I knew absolutely nothing about helping people with mental problems. In case I did have mental problems, I would give this shrink a few minutes. It couldn't hurt.

"Why all the books?" I asked. "Hard to believe you read all of these."

The psychiatrist didn't reply. Anyway, I thought I knew the answer. The books were to impress the patients. He may get into fifty textbooks in a lifetime, but not a whole wall of the same looking books. It reminded me of a lawyer's office. Lawyers have walls of books. I knew case studies were in the lawyer's books. Maybe these books held case studies of people like me. The books didn't look like they had ever been touched, let alone read.

"Tell me specifically about the dreams. Give me the details," said the doctor, flipping to another page in his note pad and clearing his throat.

"That's the funny part of this whole mess. The dream is simple. I'm driving down an interstate and suddenly I drive past the intersection where I want to turn. It is flat country, and there are cornfields. I see the exit number just as I go shooting by. That's when I wake up. Every night I drive past my Exit 59, and I want to turn so badly it wakes me up."

"You say you drive by Exit 59 where you want to turn, and there are cornfields?"

"Yep. That's what I said."

My expensive psychiatrist started in with the questions. Actually, I didn't know how much he charged, but I estimated the fee at \$300 per hour. I did a quick head calculation with the doctor in his office for 20 hours per week of billable time. He had a receptionist, and I knew about what landlords charged for offices. There was no high tech equipment to run up the costs. I gave him a living salary and came up with \$300 per hour, but I knew I could be way off. Crunching numbers to reach a logical conclusion had been a forte of mine.

I asked him again, "Have you read all the books?" There was no immediate response.

"Please focus on my questions, and do not interrupt. I'm not the one being interviewed."

Well, screw you, doctor, I thought. I had a flash of anger when he ignored my question. As a child growing up in New Mexico, the community ignored and looked down upon me. Popeye once said, "That's all I can stand. I can't stand no more." I just about got up and walked out. This condescending jerk didn't want to

be interrupted, and he didn't answer my question about the books. I was madder than hell over this arrogant doctor's attitude. If anyone showed the slightest bit of disrespect toward me, I was ready to fight.

"Freud tried to connect everything with sex, which is a little overly simplified. Symbols such as a pole or tree represent an erected penis, and a box or a room might represent a vagina. Anyway," he mused, staring at his notepad, "the remembered part of your dream or the manifest, which is Exit 59 and cornfields, probably has no meaning. It is the latent part of the dream you cannot remember that holds the true meaning of the dream."

"Do you believe that crap?" I asked in disbelief. I wanted to pick a fight.

Dr. Weed didn't answer. He cleared his throat and asked another question.

"What was your relationship with your mother?"

"I didn't have one."

"You didn't have a mother? Everybody has a mother. Or did you mean you have a mother, but there was no relationship with her?" The doctor punctuated his question with a disgusted sigh.

"Both," I said.

"How'd you get born without a mother? Even Jesus had a mother," the doctor said raising his voice.

"When I tell you I didn't have a mother, I didn't have a mother." I decided to get off the shrink train. I would give him something to ponder. "You see, I was never born. I am God. I am the Great I Am. I was always around. Do you understand?"

"Wow! I rarely get God in my office as a patient. Ah... This sounds pretty serious." He looked at his watch and said, "Time's up, Mr. Sullivan. See my receptionist to get you started on regular visits. See me at least once a week for a while. I'll write you a prescription. Bye." The doctor went to his prescription pad and scrawled something unreadable.

The abrupt "Bye" jarred me into action. I jumped up and faced Doctor Weed. "Doctor forget the prescription. A woman gave me birth. She was not a mother. She was a birthing machine. My father filled her with little wiggly things, and I became a reality. So you don't start praying to me, I am not God. It was just bull s---." I reached over, slapped him on the shoulder, and headed out the door while laughing.

I stopped at the desk and looked across at a young shapely woman in her late twenties. She turned to the computer and began typing.

"Can you come in on Tuesdays in the afternoon?" She asked looking up and smiling a semi-fake smile.

"Nope. I cannot come in on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. How much do I owe you?"

"We can make evening appointments if it is absolutely necessary, but the rate is higher for evening visits."

"I guess I'll have to be direct with you. I'm not coming back. How much do I owe you?"

She looked up for the second time. "Is there a problem?" She wrinkled her brow.

"Yup, there is a problem. I don't like the doctor. I don't really believe he will come up with anything except big bills for the visits. It's the 'come back repeatedly' thing. I don't feel desperately anxious about the dream, yet. I'm not going crazy, maybe. I'm not on drugs. What will he find? I don't feel guilty. I don't exactly hate my parents. What? He'll find out I had a hellish childhood. But who didn't? The only thing that is going to happen here is I am going to spend a lot of money. So, I'll see you around."

"I could refer you to another doctor. We do it all the time. Can I do that? It's no problem."

"Thanks, but not now." I turned to leave, but then turned back to the woman. "I'd come back for a date."

She laughed. "I don't date the crazies. Anyway, see this ring?" She held up her left hand and rotated the ring around her finger. She laughed some more and shook her head.

"How about this idea? We could hock the ring and party it up on the money," I said, rubbing my thumb and index finger together to indicate a money gesture.

"Get out of here," she said waving her hand toward me. She kept laughing as I walked out the door.

The human mind rewinds the scene, and plays it again. Each act must be justified to protect the self. Anger fights embarrassment; rudeness wars against politeness.

I was glad the elevator was empty on my ride down because I needed time to think. When you are riding an elevator with strangers, it is an awkward experience. You cannot stare or talk. You just ride in silence. It's sort of like standing at a public urinal. Look straight ahead and keep your mouth shut.

Between the time I stepped on the elevator and when the door opened on the ground floor, I briefly reviewed what I had done thus far. I'd searched the web, checked out library books, bought books, read about Biblical dreams, and visited a psychiatrist, whom I didn't like. I always felt better about unresolved problems if I tried all the options. Maybe there was something I am missing.

I thought about the nice receptionist's parting comment, "no problem." It would be refreshing to find someone who would say it was a terrible problem. I would have been more impressed if she said, "Sir, you make my life harder than it has to be. In fact, you are a pain." I chuckled at my own humor.

I was out in the street heading for my car. No thinking then, as I drove through traffic. I just wanted to beat the lights and push the speed limit a little bit. Then I remembered I had forgotten to pay. *The hell with it*, I thought. *They'll send me a bill.*

I decided to have a glass or two of wine when I got home and to listen to CD's of folk music. Folk music was my choice because the songs felt like my reality. I enjoyed visualizing myself on stage singing sad folk songs. I think I am a good musician, but my life sucks. I feel sorry for myself, and I have the perfect background to be a folk and country performer. My accountant tells me to be happy because my net worth is over 35 million. He doesn't know the green stuff can't fill the lonely places. *The only way*, I thought, *to be more miserable is to be poor*.

Maybe booze and music would solve the dream problem and the melancholy. What happens if I go to sleep in the recliner half drunk? Maybe I wouldn't have the old dream. With a little folk music playing background and the brain a little fogged with alcohol, I would seek out some relief without professional help. Like Frankie Sinatra singing his song, I too would do it my way.

I was driving home and singing sad songs. "I'll never will marry. I'll be no man's wife. I expect to live single. All the days of my life." Before I got to the sad part where she kills herself, the cell phone vibrates and rings. I play loud music in the car so I can miss the ringing, but the vibration still startles me. It is almost like being snake bit. When I was kid, I stepped on a rattlesnake. Lucky for me, it was cool outside and the snake was not able to move fast. I was barefoot when I stepped on the rattler. I heard the snake rattle, and I felt the vibration of the snake's rattles. Now I connect any vibration with the presence of a snake. Often, I will inadvertently shout "snakebite" when the phone vibrates. I should have told the shrink about that.

I invariably fumble to get this latest technological curse out of the holder before I lose the call. It was my secretary telling me to return to the office for a critical meeting about the Danderday Deal, which was a code-name to prevent unwanted publicity getting on the street. The company was in deep financial trouble, and I had offered \$2.5 million for it. The owners were having second thoughts, and they wanted to meet. They had long ago lost the founder's vision. They didn't have a competent engineer on staff, and in my opinion, the CEO was a typical 'look good and do nothing' type.

The Danderday failure had its roots in political policy. Politicians have the idea America will provide service jobs, and someone else will do the dirty manufacturing. Let the Chinese do it. We, the people of the United States of America, will flip hamburgers, play with computers, and consult to the manufacturers overseas. The problem is manufacturers end up with all the knowledge, and the consultants soon become ineffectual.

These thoughts raced around in my head as I drove. I knew that I could turn the Danderday Deal around if there was some talent hidden under the proverbial rock somewhere. Anyway, I'd automate the entire production facility. Metal would come in one end of the factory and product out the other, with a minimum of people in between. The workers will have to stop fighting automation or all the jobs will be moved off-shore.

All my thoughts about political policy left as I was trapped behind a slow moving vehicle. Every time I have some crisis or am late for a meeting, someone

ahead is poking along. I wanted to honk my horn. When I got the chance to pass, I did. I looked at the driver expecting to see an old man or woman. It was a young male. So much for my preconceived ideas, I thought.

When I got to my office, the owners of the Danderday Deal were already in the conference room. I asked my secretary to get the marketing and engineering vice presidents to meet me in my office. Fortunately, they had not yet gone home.

I walked into the conference room and said to the owners. "Nothing like you guys showing up unannounced. What's the deal?"

"We have got some problems. Basically, we want more money if we are going to stay in the plant a year."

"So that's it. I will be back in a few minutes with my marketing and engineering people." I left and let them cool their heels for 15 minutes. This gave me time to meet with my two vice presidents so we could develop a strategy. We wouldn't argue with the buyers directly, but we would argue with each other. One would nail down the declining market share. Another would discuss the safety issues and the competitors. The two would argue with me about going ahead with the sale. My role would be to ponder their input and verbalize other negative facts. Reluctantly, I then would proceed to go forth.

I found the visual presentation, which was a Power-Point CD we had prepared for our own internal use. With my two VP's, I headed back toward the conference room.

My secretary intercepted me and asked if I wanted our lawyer there.

"No," I said. "We can get her involved later. One lawyer can start more fights than a drunk in a barroom. Let's do the 'good cop-bad cop' routine."

As we entered the conference room, the future Danderday CEO, and a couple of his staff members rose to shake hands. I introduced everyone even though we all had met on previous occasions. "You remember Halyard and Okie?" I said, thinking *Hand shaking is a stupid gesture in our culture. How many fewer colds would we have?* Cough and sneeze. Then cover your mouth. The handshake becomes an effective transfer mechanism for colds and flu. I had an engineer who had quit and started driving truck. After three years of being on the road, I got him back. I met him in the hall and noted he had a cold. He told me, "Truck drivers never shake hands. I never had a cold for three years. I'm back here in the office shaking hands, and I have had cold after cold."

I wanted to go wash my hands after the hand shake, but I stuck it out. "OK, I'm still interested in our original agreement," I said as I entered the conference room and sat down. I made eye contact with them all. I let silence soak the room for a very long minute. The CEO was obviously nervous. The other two were there as support to say "yes" to whatever the potentate wanted. I turned to my marketing guy and nodded my head slightly. This was the signal for him to jump in the conversation.

"Not so fast," said Halyard, marketing vice-president, as the sellers tried to break the silence. Halyard was the nickname I gave him last summer when we were

sailing on Lake Erie. The name fit, and he liked it better than his given first name of Cecil. We were moving out of the marina when I gave the order to raise the mainsail. Cecil grabbed the halyard and pulled up the mainsail. When Cecil pulled the mainsail up and the boat caught the wind, I nicknamed him Halyard. He was a genius when it came to taking stalled projects and moving them to full speed ahead. Renaming people is an old Native American trick I learned as I grew up with the Indians.

“Can you put the projected market share up on the screen?” Halyard said. “It’s the second or third slide in the presentation. Thanks. There it is. Dr. Sullivan, the market share of Danderday’s material handling equipment is going into the cellar. If the trend continues, they should pay us for taking the company. I was against the buy-out in the first place.” Halyard, the marketing VP, the person who was the most interested in this buyout, was now the actor playing the part of the opposition, and he was lying through his teeth.

“From the engineering perspective, I am worried about lawsuits,” said my rural raised Oklahoma engineer. I love hearing his thick Okie accent. “There isn’t a single interlock on any of the guards. The machines are slower than Oklahoma farmers driving in Chicago. Have you seen the Chinese version of some of Danderday’s products?” The engineering vice president ranted. He was even able to make the veins on his neck stand out with pseudo-anger. “Mark my words, we will have lawsuits with people cutting off their ‘fine-geers.’” I wasn’t too sure the buyers knew that a ‘fine-geer’ was a finger when translated from Okie to English.

I spoke as a minister interested in hearing Danderday’s side of the story. Actually, this was an act. I wanted to buy the company. “Now gentlemen, let’s hear what the owners had in mind when they came here. True, we could start over from scratch and be just about up to speed in one year, but a deal is a deal. Let’s hear what they want.”

Basically, the owners of Danderday wanted more money. They were tired of the business and did not want to stay the one year as we previously agreed. They reminded me of weak people from the right side of the tracks. I thought, *I could whip’em all in a fistfight*. One of the advantages or disadvantages of being raised on the wrong side of the tracks was physical violence was always just an emotion away. I tried to cover up my contempt for them.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” I said, tapping my pen on the blank legal pad in front of me. “You spend one month with the team and then walk. As far as any more money, I can’t really justify doing, but I am willing to change our agreement about your working here after the buyout. Instead of the agreed 2000 hours or one year, you all would work here for 160 hours or one month actually in the plant to help with the transition. This will be a requirement. So you will go from working every day for a year to working one month as a requirement. We will extend your consulting service to 4000 hours or two years at 150 dollars per hour. The consulting service will be on an ‘as needed’ basis with the option of you declining any consulting request.

Danderday's future owners and their CEO huddled, considering my offer. They countered with two years severance with one month actually working at the plant..

I stared at them for a minute and said, "Nope."

They asked all of us to leave the conference room, and they shut the door. I could see them through the glass wall. It was an animated discussion. They were calculating something. The CEO took a deep breath and looked up at me through the glass wall. He motioned for the three of us to come in.

We went inside and sat across from the sellers. I looked at the pictures on the wall of our conference room, and made a mental note to change to some abstract art. The landscape pictures always soon went unnoticed by everybody. I was taken out of my art muse by the sellers.

"OK," he said. "When can we close?"

"How about two weeks from this Thursday?"

"OK," the future Danderday CEO said. "Are you going to draw up the contract? I'll need some time for our lawyer to go over the documents. We are supposed to give you an environmental impact statement. Abstracts, insurance, survey, and an inspection will take some time."

"Will two weeks from Thursday take care of the details? Surely, you all must of done something since we made the offer," I stated with some frustration beginning to show. I didn't want to give them another chance to back out.

"Let's try," he said. "If there are problems, we can just extend the closing."

"OK," I said, "but we need to move on this deal. I am beginning to add up the financial losses for us. I don't want to get involved in any legal stuff." This was a veiled threat of a possible law suit. "Tentatively, closing is two weeks from this coming Thursday. If there are problems needing a delay, our lawyers can work it out. Where do we close?"

"Would you like to close at our place?" The Danderday buyer said.

"Yes, I would," I said. "I hope there are no more basic problems like we had today."

We all shook hands as if we were the greatest of friends, and they left. My 15-minute preplanning with the two vice presidents worked well. I thought I would go to the trophy shop downtown and get the trophy that looked like an Oscar. My people were great, and I wasn't bad myself.

"Are they out of the building?" I asked.

"Yep. They're gone," Halyard said after looking out the window.

"Do you guys know what we just did?" I asked. "They came in here wanting more money, and they went out with less. We just won't call them in as consultants." We gave each other a high-five and left the building.

