



ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

"I'm coming into a modern city and the buildings are charging each other with electricity, like big Tesla coils. Then I go on a date with two twins and they kill me at the end. Analyse *that*."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "This sounds like the dream of a maniacal super-hero! Or someone with extraordinary creative talents he struggles to control. Or perhaps just someone who's pulling our leg. As a brief set of images, whether from a dream or not, it does accurately portray the up-and-down psychology of a manic episode. During such episodes the cognitive line between waking and dreaming can effectively disappear."

14 WEIRDEST DREAMS IN HOLLYWOOD

...and what they mean. From Robert Downey Jr.'s Tesla-coil skyscrapers to Kate Winslet's baby-eating hamsters, Empire reveals what really boils in those creative subconsciouses, while dream expert Kelly Bulkeley PhD provides analysis — without us telling him who's enjoying the in-sleep entertainment...

Dream Wrangler:
Nick de Semlyen

PETER JACKSON

"One night, years ago, I dreamt an entire storyline for a sequel to Meet The Feebles. It was based on the idea that in New Zealand there's no law saying you have to be human to stand for parliament. So someone comes up with the idea of the Feebles running in the election. Heidi the Hippo becomes Prime Minister and they all become the government of New Zealand. Then the dream continued with everyone realising that the puppets haven't actually been voted in — what's been voted in are the puppeteers, these terribly difficult prima donnas who now have control over the country. I woke up thinking, 'Wow, that would be a really cool movie!' Ever since I've wished I'd dream another movie plot."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "Even though this is a very weird dream, it does include a great deal of complicated mental activity directly related to the kind of mental activity used by this individual in waking life. If nothing else, it suggests the person is a passionate worker who never stops thinking, planning and creating."

STEVEN SODERBERGH

"I remember when we were shooting Kafka I had a dream in which I'd cast Paul Hogan as Kafka. This was back during the whole Crocodile Dundee thing, when he was a huge star. I was standing there looking at him going, 'He's blond, he's tanned... how am I going to convince people that this is a viable creative decision on my part?' As it turned out, commercially it probably would have been a better idea to have put Hogan in it."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "This is a perfect example of a work-related nightmare. Dreams like this can sometimes be a source of creative problem-solving. If dreaming does nothing else for the human mind, it forces us to explore alternative paths of thinking and feeling. The director seems to admit as much at the end."

RACHEL BILSON

"When I was nine years old, I dreamt I was a hippo in a ballerina skirt, like the one in Fantasia. It got worse, because I had to pee in my dream and when I woke up, I'd wet my bed. That's pretty embarrassing, right?"

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "It shouldn't be embarrassing. Bedwetting in childhood is a fairly common occurrence, and it's certainly nothing to be ashamed of. A precocious desire to perform in the movies comes through in this dream, and also perhaps a warning that too much 'fantasy' can interfere with impulse control and taking care of one's basic physical needs."

GILLIAN ANDERSON

"I dreamt that I was a homeless person on a bridge, wearing very tattered layers of clothing and the world was cast in this sepia tone. I was fishing for worms on the Thames with a long piece of string. Then I would pull the worms out and put them in my mouth."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "It's a remarkable image of elemental symmetry, with the dreamer positioned at the very centre. Then there's the strange business of backwards fishing — as if she were the one *being* fished. It sounds to me like the first chapter of a heroic myth: the youth who begins as the lowest of the low is drawing strength from the waters of her ancestors, getting ready to seek fame, fortune and adventure out in the wide world."

"I dreamt an entire sequel to Meet The Feebles. Heidi the Hippo was voted as Prime Minister and all the puppets became the government of New Zealand."

SAMUEL L. JACKSON

"I have this dream about falling. People say that if you ever hit the ground you'll have a heart attack and die. So I try to stay with the dream and see what happens. I've actually hit the ground, gone through and ended up in water. Then I start flying. It's a very cool dream. I look forward to it now."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "One of the functions of dreaming is to expand our conscious sense of possibility. In this case, the dreamer pushes the process further than most people. In many religious traditions these would be seen as mystical experiences, and the dreamer might be taken aside for training as a healer or shaman."

JUDD APATOW

"I've had a lot of incredibly vivid aircraft-about-to-crash dreams. You know, when you wake up and it feels like it happened — a lot of airplanes narrowly avoiding things, coming down fast. I'm never flying the plane. I'm always freaking out in the back."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "Plane-crash dreams can be rather obvious symbols of a fear of 'falling', whether in one's career, relationships, or personal behaviour. The dreams don't necessarily mean the person actually *has* fallen in waking life, just that the *danger* of falling is something the person worries about a great deal."

"I kept dreaming my dog fell apart like a hotdog, and I had to put him back together with toothpicks."

ROBERT CARLYLE

"Everything's white and blurry, with a shrill, high-pitched noise. Then slowly things come into focus and I see there's a wee ballet dancer standing there. The noise gets louder, the whiteness gets more intense, and the ballet dancer keeps getting bigger and bigger. Then she goes, 'POP!' and becomes a pair of shoes!"

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "It sounds like a scary dream, though maybe it wasn't for the dreamer. The Alice In Wonderland surge of sound, light and size produces a surprisingly mundane result: shoes. Shoes are our point of physical contact with the Earth and with gravity. If the 'wee ballet dancer' represents the artistry of freedom from gravity, the shoes might symbolise the possibility of bringing the dancer's strange energy into the pedestrian reality of the dreamer's waking life."

KATE WINSLET

"When I was a kid, one of our hamsters suddenly gave birth; we didn't even know she was pregnant. We phoned the pet shop and they said, 'Take the babies away — hamsters get very frightened after they've given birth and you don't want her to eat the babies.' We didn't listen and that's exactly what happened. This obviously affected me badly as I had a recurring dream about hamsters gobbling up [their] babies until I was about 15."

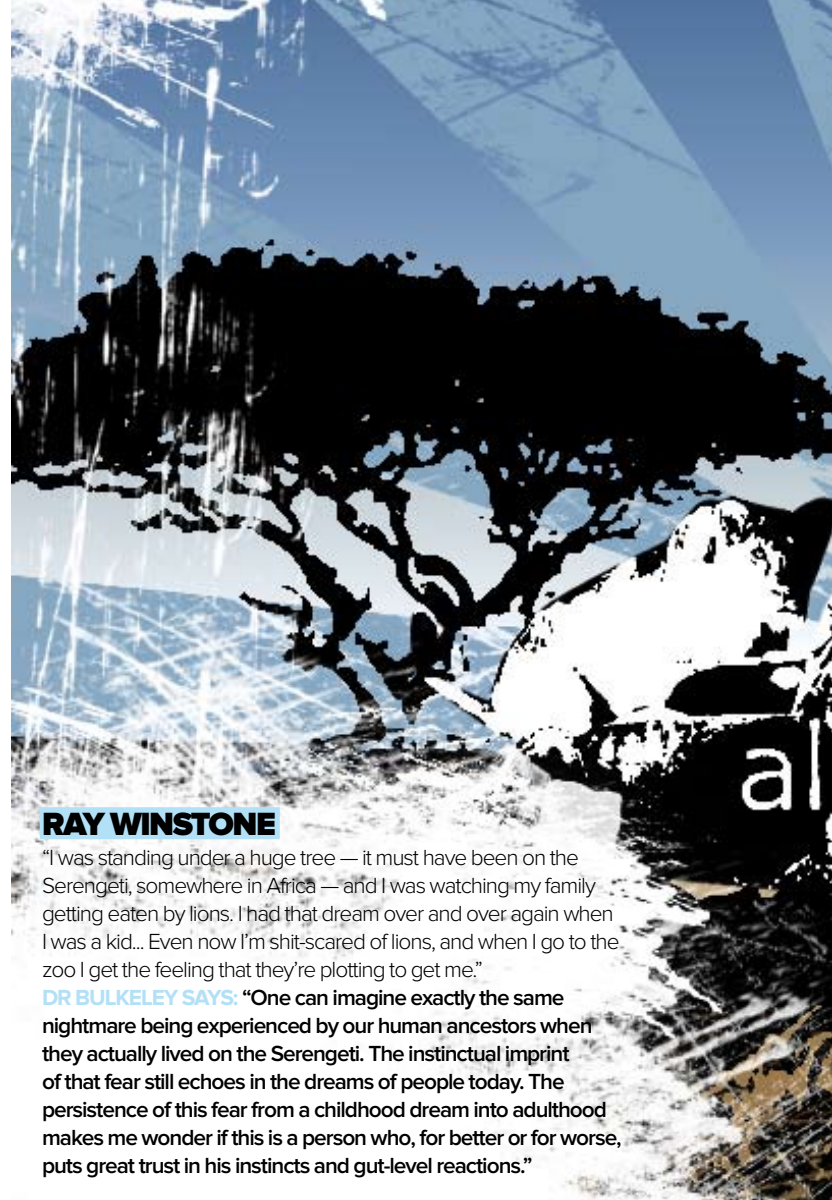
DR BULKELEY SAYS: "Although they were probably never diagnosed as such, these dreams fit the bill of post-traumatic nightmares. Studies of PTSD suggest that people who have suffered traumas in the past are more vulnerable when new traumas occur. The specific image is both mundane and mythic. Many people have grown up with pet rodents, but the horrifying act of a mother devouring her young is a primordial theme of mythology. No wonder the hamster carnage was so disturbing!"



MILLA JOVOVICH

"I had a really cool dream that I was doing a scene with the young Jack Nicholson. We were in the desert with this really rad-looking '70s car, and I was really killing this scene, being super-great in it. And then the wardrobe people came over and said, 'He's wearing the wrong colour shirt,' and I was really upset — all this good work I'd done was ruined because Jack's shirt wasn't the right colour."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "The theme of time-travel suggests a quest for a deeper connection, something akin to what Australian Aborigines seek in the Dreamtime, when the ancestors still walked through a freshly created world. An actor's version today might be something like this; going back to a legendary time when film-making was a daring, creative adventure. The dream turns into a nightmare, however, when the dreamer is confronted with the brutal fact of her lower status on the actor's totem pole."



RAY WINSTONE

"I was standing under a huge tree — it must have been on the Serengeti, somewhere in Africa — and I was watching my family getting eaten by lions. I had that dream over and over again when I was a kid... Even now I'm shit-scared of lions, and when I go to the zoo I get the feeling that they're plotting to get me."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "One can imagine exactly the same nightmare being experienced by our human ancestors when they actually lived on the Serengeti. The instinctual imprint of that fear still echoes in the dreams of people today. The persistence of this fear from a childhood dream into adulthood makes me wonder if this is a person who, for better or for worse, puts great trust in his instincts and gut-level reactions."

DREAM FACTORY

So that's Hollywood's dreams. But what about **Empire** readers' dreams about Hollywood?

"I dreamt I was on a ship. Steve Zissou was captain. The rest of the crew were all my ex-girlfriends. Weird!"
Patrick Montgomery

"Me and Steve Buscemi were the last people on Earth fighting werewolves. We got weapons from a lecturer at my university."
Aled Mills

"I was on a date with Spike Lee. He wanted to get off with me, but I made him go to Woolies. I needed a Biro."
Wendy Roby

"I dreamt I was fighting Darth Vader with my toy lightsaber, while a gorilla in a rocking chair laughed."
Jamie Roberts

"Ernie Hudson, the forgotten Ghostbuster, sat on my bed and told me the facts of life."
Steve Willingham

"John Malkovich was staring at me from a loveseat in my garden. It was so creepy."
Amy Barker

"I have a recurring dream that Steve Martin and I are a crime fighting duo..."
Rebecca Rothon

"I dream about Jason Reitman about three times a month. And he's always wearing a hat of some sort."
Elle Smith

"I got married to Kristen Bell at my school. Mickey Mouse was the priest."
Mark Arellano

"I dreamt I was stealing seats from Old Trafford with Nic Cage and Terry-Thomas during a zombie apocalypse."
Paul Wilson

"I dreamt I was standing under a huge tree somewhere in Africa, watching my family getting eaten by lions."

MARION COTILLARD

"I'm in a hotel room with a very close girlfriend of mine, except now she's a famous actress and has all these people around her. We're arguing about things, how close we used to be, then she starts crying and I take her in my arms. I say, 'Don't be sad — we had an amazing time.' Then, suddenly, we're in bed together, but we've turned into men. I'm Thomas Magnum and she's Mike Hammer, but we're really fat and hairy and have moustaches. Then we run through a jungle, jump off a cliff and get freeze-framed in the air, as a title card in big red letters flashes up. I woke up and couldn't stop laughing."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "This dream is very bizarre and ridiculous, yet it has interesting patterns, too. We would really need her personal associations about these famous fictional detectives, even though their hyper-masculine personalities are clear. At a minimum, these strange metamorphoses suggest new stages and unexpected developments in her relationship with this friend."

KRISTEN BELL

"I once had a dream that happened quite a few times, where my dog fell apart like a hot dog and I had to put him back together with toothpicks. I don't know what it means."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "Assuming this came during childhood, it's another example of an existential problem that children sometimes find themselves confronting in their dreams. At some point in early life, children discover the ultimate frailty of life and the fact that all we know and love will eventually fall apart and die. I would say the dream means nothing more or less than, 'This is the way life is.'"

SAM MENDES

"The recurring dream from my childhood was the Wicked Witch Of The West walking up my road, bending each lamp post over and blowing out each lamp one by one as she got closer and closer, and when she blew out the last lamp I woke up... like, *wailing*."

DR BULKELEY SAYS: "I don't know anything about the dreamer's personal life, but his nightmares reveal a painful truth: death is coming to get us. The reference to the Wicked Witch Of The West from *The Wizard Of Oz* indicates an early turn to movies as a refuge from this fear. Movies offer the fantasy of immortality — if death is cast as the Wicked Witch, perhaps the dreamer can be like Dorothy and escape her clutches."

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Kelly Bulkeley PhD is author of *Dreaming In The World's Religions: A Comparative History, and An Introduction To The Psychology Of Dreaming*. www.kellybulkeley.com