

# Casual Gamer Dream Incorporation: First Person Observation After Decades of Research

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One activity that has increased in my retirement is my personal video game play. While I am a casual genre gamer, the increased hours of such play have impacted my dream content in ways that I only saw in hard core gamers in my research. This poster is a first-person observation of this process. As my time has allowed more gaming, I have found various dream incorporations over these early years of retirement. But some of these incorporations seem to point to not only the game play, but also offer insights into current personal issues. One dream which followed long periods of trying to beat a level in a game is discussed and informed by decades of research into such dream events (Gackenbach & Hakopdjanian, 2016; Bown & Gackenbach, 2019).

After hours in one day of trying to beat a level in a game, which had combat and fiery enemies, I dreamt:

*I was being chased by two enemies who were male. They were on horseback galloping through the forest. We were on a trail and the forest was on fire in various places. I was in a clearing and hid from them. Then they rode off, but they came back and I ducked behind a big square object in the clearing. It was also partly on fire, but they did not see me and they rode off again.*

This is exactly the game play. After making moves through open paths in the field of play (a 7 x 7 square), the enemies begin to burst into flame (see red circles in screenshot), so if one lands next to such a fiery target one loses a life. Below is a screen shot of the game play in this Apple Arcade game called *Grindstone*. Is this straightforward incorporation or is there more to it? The day before I also spent hours working on a mosaic art piece, which seemed to have flames, of a sort, in the composition. Here is an image of the mosaic's status upon going to bed. The final actual mosaic is displayed next to the poster.



Are the fiery parts of the dream indicative of real physical body inflammation in the age of COVID where I am a high risk candidate (i.e., senior, diabetes, overweight) or are the fiery woods representative of the deaths and tragedies that have happened to me in the last year (i.e. deaths of a sort of several family members) and/or are they simply game play learning to beat a difficult level? This presentation will explore the roles of direct incorporation in the psychological and physical health concerns of the dreamer within the context of a Jungian analysis of the dream.

In an email exchange about the dream, my Jungian therapist wrote:

*Theoretically, the idea is that we first try and look at the dream within its own logic, i.e.. following Jung's idea that in a dream, as in myth and fairy tales, the psyche is "talking with and about itself". We try and take the perspective that the dream is displaying, through images, the psyche's own movement, what it is dealing with and where it wants to go. With this perspective "Jayne" in the dream can be seen as the psyche's own sense of subjectivity. In your dream, the movement might be that the psyche is trying to escape from something but at the same time be "caught" by it, which would be like having to deal with what is chasing it.*

*Then, after this "immersion" in the dream, from "outside" the dream and being affected by the experience of seeing the dream from the "inside", we ask, "Why am I having this dream? Why now? What effect does it want to have on me? What does it want to expose me to? And so on. Here's where one tries to use one's feeling function to get a sense of what "clicks" so that it is not only a rational connecting from the ego's perspective between the dream and one's waking life...it's interesting how dreams use images from waking life, vestiges of the day (video games, for example) as "paint" so to speak,*

*in order to tell a story about what the psyche is "thinking". In general, that is what all symbols are. It is the use of an object in real life for a psychological purpose... Jung would say the unconscious uses the object to display something about itself.*

I responded to his comments saying, "your conceptual framing is useful and interesting and I certainly agree but how do I connect those general rules of imagery meaning to my life circumstance? I've only known to use associations, which I assume we would do were we in session face to face." I then brought up some of my concerns about my sisters care. "I'm at her house now and one thing is clear, she is deeply damaged from her stroke and profoundly sad at the passing of her husband of 52 years. I really can't do much for her except in the most superficial way and find it even hard to be here after the year of tragedies." My sister had a stroke and our mother passed away within weeks of her husband's passing. I suggested that "perhaps in the dream it may be me needing to hide away from the trauma of the deaths including in some real ways my sisters 'death'. I'm facing the reality of how distant we had become over our lifetime despite the closeness of the last year. Ultimately you die alone and cope with death alone."

My therapist responded:

*I get that it is difficult to be with your sister, for all the reasons you wrote about. You are dealing with or hiding away from all the deaths and her "death" as well... And perhaps even the concept and reality of death itself as well. I would just say that even though you feel that you "...can't do much for her except in the most superficial way..." that just being there, with your body, in person, is a lot. ... at a funeral or after a death people seem to never know what to do for the bereaved.*

*When something is chasing you in a dream, it's usually an insight or a truth that wants to catch up to (ego) consciousness. The clarification of the image, whether through its "humanization" or just being able to make out what it is, is a move toward understanding what it might be. Interesting to me in this regard is that [in the dream] you shows signs that [you] actually "want" to get caught. For example, it [dream "I"] stays on the path while running. One might think that ducking into the forest would be a better way to evade the riders and their horses. Also, it hides "in the clearing" where there is presumably open space and less cover. This could tell us that there is an inherent desire within the dream to allow the thought, represented by the enemy attackers, to catch up to consciousness, represented by you in the dream. Catching up to consciousness is of course the whole point, but the thought or insight is not yet palatable enough for consciousness, which makes it appear frightening so that you in the dream naturally want to escape from it.*

*The fire in the forest makes me think of natural moments of awareness or insights clearing the space of unconsciousness, symbolized by the forest: Another image of the dream showing the mind's movement toward awareness. Very interesting that you hide behind this square object. Square objects can be thought of as images of wholeness, having 4 equal sides, etc. ... [Similar to the mandalas that you make](#). And it is on fire, fire here again an image of consciousness....*

The waking presleep experience in part frames the dream, video game play, but is not really what its about. It provided along with the mosaic work the "paint" of the dream. This I have found in many ways in dreams which present in gaming form but are not games. Also as I now spend many hours a day in visual artistic creation, almost all of my dreams highlight one or another color. The square in the middle of the final mosaic mandala aligns with the dream but that was not a conscious design decision. Mandala's I make are most often emergent no matter the medium.

When I awoke, I was able to pass the level in two tries while I had tried 30+ times the day before to pass it. This was the classic learning effect. In previous research our team has also shown some evidence that the fighting so characteristic of many combat centric games, provides rehearsal in the skill set of fighting back in later dreams (Bown & Gackenbach, 2019). So while I did not fight back I did hide which is often how I get through a level in this combat game. In summary, this dream illustrates the multiplicity of influences and results of our dreams ranging from pure incorporation to learning to meaning making for the self.

## References

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