

# When Your Calling Beckons From The Road Less Traveled

An intriguing account of sleep paralysis, dreams and the search for belonging

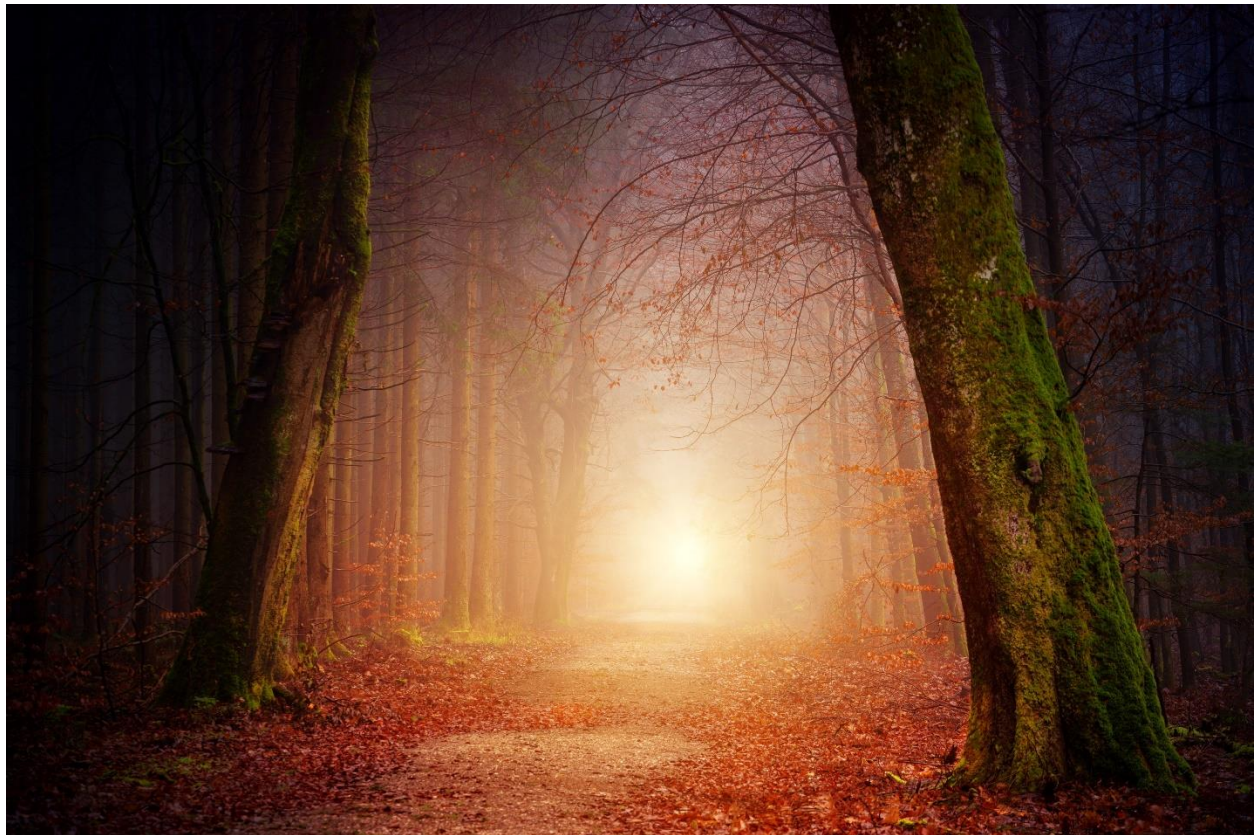


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Have you ever noticed how a person's calling will often haunt their childhood? Perhaps you've experienced some haunts of your own...

With subtle prophetic tendencies, the elements and contours of a future's past seem to weave in and around life events as they unfold. Like bread

crumbs lain on a forest path, we get clues that lead us along the way to who and what we will become.

But still, we often don't see it for what it is. There's no telling the forest for the trees. Until one day, through no fault of our own, it rises up and smacks us square in the face.

*My calling's arrival was no different.*

From the time I was a young girl I'd been prone to vivid, sometimes strange dreams — dreams that occasionally showed me things I had no rational explanation for.

When I was 9, I'd been startled awake by an image of my best friend, Abby, surrounded in darkness. She was naked, alone, and crying...

The next morning, when I called her on the phone, Abby told me her mother had walked out on her. She didn't know when, if ever, she'd be back. She was alone and scared and wanted my help.

Such was the life of my dreams.

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**Then shortly after turning sixteen, something quite unexpected happened.**

I lay beneath my sheets one night, slumbering soundly. I was already adrift in a lucid array of colors and shapes, when suddenly everything went black. The whole scope of my dreaming vision became a black void.

Off in the distance a center point of color began to emerge, as if moving nearer and nearer to my point of reference until I could clearly make out what it was — a parrot. A very colorful Amazon parrot. There was only a split second of recognition, before everything went black again...

And *that's* when I felt it.

The strangest sensation, as if a pressure were being applied from behind my head, shoulders and back. Then the clear gripping feeling of hands on my shoulders, pulling me upward as if to force me to sit up in bed. I tried to scream, but I was paralyzed, unable to move my mouth or my voice-box.

I felt pressure in my throat like a tremendous weight that I could not overcome. I struggled to open my eyes, barely managing a sliver in each, but I couldn't see anyone there in the darkness. Yet, the very distinct sensation of hands pulling me up by the shoulders continued, pulling me upright, as if to pull me out of the bed.

I felt as if my body was going to rise completely off the bed. I continued to struggle, as if through thickening tar to get my voice out. Something inside kept telling me to get my voice out. I reasoned that if I could only scream someone might hear me and come to my aid.

What the hell was happening to me? What was pulling on me? Who was in my room? Why couldn't I see anybody there? I struggled to see, to get my voice out... Darkness. There was only darkness.

*I had to get my voice out...*

Slowly, a low, rumbling, muffled sound began to make its way up from my throat. "That's it!" Something inside me seemed to say, "Louder. You must get louder, try harder!"

Like a strange creature who'd lost its tongue, I slurred and groaned through a fog of paralysis. I summoned every bit of strength I had to manage a barely audible moan, "Nnnnnn... Nnn... Nnnooo... Nnoo..." Until finally, as if bursting through a barrier, the full force and sound of my emotion erupted into a wailing howl, "Nnooooo!!!" And whatever it was that held me captive, instantly disappeared. It had simply vanished.

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All at once I was released and the full weight of my body crashed back down to the bed — *whumpf!* Alone and petrified in the darkness, I lay motionless, afraid to move or breathe. My eyes now open completely, darted rapidly around my room to be sure the intruder was gone.

I saw nothing, no one.

All at once, like a dam crumbling to the ground, I broke the silence. Raucous sobs escaped my lips as my parents came clamoring through the door, with my older brother fast on their heels.

My mother sat down on the bed next to me and tried to comprehend what had happened. I couldn't speak right. My voice seemed not my own. I was shuttering and shaking, and stammering through my tears. It was plain that my Mother could see how frightened I was. I kept mumbling inaudibly through broken sobs.

My father, perplexed by all the commotion, finally ventured a query. "What's wrong with her?" he probed.

My mother, who'd been a registered nurse, steeped in medical science most of her life, surprised us all. Catching my father's eyes, her words were plainly stated, "She's had a supernatural experience. Now please go and get her a cup of water."

*Dead silence.*

My father paused, the color drained from his face. Not a word between them. He gave my mother one last look, then turned and made way for the door.

My Mother and I had a moment then. With my Father off down the hall for water, and my brother returned to his own bedroom, our eyes met. She

wiped the long wet tendrils of hair from my face, my sobs now low murmurs.

I felt recognized in that moment in a way I'd never known. I had expressed something that seemed for all rational purposes, not believable. Yet my Mother's eyes, her tone of voice, and her body language said otherwise.

She could have insisted that I was imagining things and refused to hear of it any further. She could have tried to convince me that my own senses were not trustworthy, and sought to shut me down, the way so many parents of intuitive, mystically inclined children do.

But she didn't. Instead she validated me.

She knew me well enough to know that what she was witnessing in me was real and authentic and not made up, and she chose to support me, mystifying as it was. And my Father, who was as rational as they come — a senior executive for a large corporation — supported my Mother's assessment of things. He simply accepted it without debate.

How stunning is that? Granted, it was the 80's and people were opening up a bit by then, but still today, there are many the world over who would doubt such a thing as true. Perhaps you are having your own doubts now? Well, I don't blame you if you do. But stick around, it gets even more interesting....

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The following night, my older brother, Mathew also experienced what he termed a “visitation.” He said that he was not quite asleep, when his body in a semi-fetal position, became paralyzed and he felt a large humanoid-type presence looming over him, as if examining him as he lay in bed.

The room was dark and he had his head under the covers and his eyes shut and found it difficult to open them due to the paralysis, so he didn’t get a look at whatever it was. But he “knew” it was there and an ominous feeling came over him. Whatever it was, he didn’t feel it was there as a friend.

The interesting thing is that I had not described the details of my own event to my brother. He still didn’t know exactly what had happened to me, yet his experience was so similar.

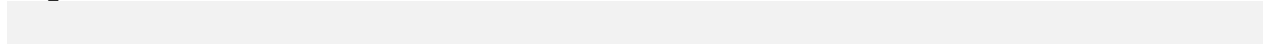






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From that point on I sought out anything I could get my hands on to do with the “world unseen.” Just what on Earth was going on here? What had happened to me, to my brother? How is it that I could feel and experience a presence affecting me emotionally and physically — something I was not able to see with my own eyes? It, whatever it was, seemed invisible, yet had the power to paralyze and immobilize a person?

In my research I learned about sleep paralysis (a feeling of being conscious but unable to move when passing through stages of wakefulness to sleep). One could also argue for a hypnagogic hallucination event, had my brother not followed up with a *visitation* of his own the following night.



What are the chances that my brother and I, having no previous knowledge of sleep paralysis and hypnagogia, would suddenly, out of the blue, experience the same brain rhythm irregularity while in bed at night, without any previous tendencies towards those sleep patterns?

The chances are slim. I'll tell you that much. There is a good deal of controversy around the medical science and personal experiences of hypnagogia sufferers, and I do not lean entirely towards one camp or the other.

My college education is in the psychological sciences and human development, so I have a healthy respect for the brain functions connected with certain psychological sleep states. I am also a lucid dreamer, so I am no stranger to the drifty, groggy, sometimes immobilizing state that arises between wakefulness and sleep.

Yet I have not found anything in my research to adequately explain the fact that I was actually physically lifted into the air and dropped back down on my bed.

*I mean, what does that?*

I'm sure at some point in your life, you've had your own "what the hell is going on here?" moments, even if only fleeting. Perhaps a time when all the hair on the back of your neck stood up and you knew, just *knew* that something was there, or that something was watching you, but you couldn't see who (or what).

The problem is not our senses. The problem is that we over-rationalize. The tendency of the mind is to come rushing in to discount what doesn't make sense to our intellect. Intuition, however, is an entirely different sensory organ, and everybody has it. It just tends to go unacknowledged so much of the time that it becomes atrophied and dormant.

That night when I was 16, something in me that I didn't understand had been activated, and I wanted answers. I dove headfirst into metaphysics and by the time I was 23, I was participating in a dream circle and training with a Native American shaman woman in the Hawaiian Islands. Some of what I experienced there would make your skin turn white.

In many indigenous cultures, to have strength in dreaming indicates a destiny as tribal shaman. The shamans of a tribe are spiritual medicine men and women — healers with the ability to *move between the worlds*.

I eventually learned that shamans often *travel* in a hypnotic-like state called *hypnagogia* — that strange word I mentioned earlier that depicts the experience of the transitional state from wakefulness to sleep.

According to western science, hypnagogia is an hallucinatory state brought on by certain processes of the brain and nothing more. But to the *shaman*, it's a gateway into other dimensions, *no less real than this one*.



Photo by [Scott Umstattd](#) on [Unsplash](#)

*The world unseen was calling me.*

I kept having “supernatural” experiences and an endless array of mystical events with an increased ability to *sense* or intuit certain things, especially through my dreams at night. So, naturally I leaned towards an exploration of the meaning of dreams and symbolic language in the development of my life path.

Eventually, I began to teach and work with other people through various healing modalities and consciousness practices, including dream work and partnership with spiritual animal allies — two primary methodologies for

shamanic healers. I did not technically become a shaman, per se (in the tribal sense) but I found my own western way with it.

There is a notable difference between a *calling* and a career. Most people tend to choose a career, but a *calling* chooses you.

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If you are lucky enough to have chosen a career that has also turned out to be your life's calling, then I congratulate you on your great find. Truly, that is wonderful news. To have two things that are often so challenging for people to figure out and reconcile, discovered beneath the same stone is a gift indeed.

For many people, though, a life's calling is something veiled in ambiguity that only comes along for the fortunate few. I mean what is that anyway? A life calling? You may be wondering, do I need to have one?

Short answer? No. You don't. But, guaranteed, if you're knee-deep in your life's calling, there's a sense of purpose and meaning in your life that you know you never want to live without. You simply *must* do it, whatever it is, or die.

It's not physical death I'm talking about either. The kind of death that occurs in a person not answering their calling is like a slow smothering of your soul. It's like a light in you that can't be lit any other way, and it begins to go out for lack of a place to shine.

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Answering your life's calling is akin to *following your heart*. The heart's intelligence is something we can't live without for very long and expect to be happy.

In my opinion, everyone has a life calling. And some people have more than one. If you wonder if you've found yours, put your hand on your heart, close your eyes, drop your attention into your chest where your heart lives, and earnestly seek to know.

Ask yourself, "If money was no object and no one could stand in my way or be made to suffer from my choices, and I could do anything I wanted with my time, where would I be? What would I be doing? And who would I be doing it with?"

Give yourself full flamboyant permission to be who you really are, doing what you really love. Then have the guts to tell the truth about it. The "*you*" you meet in this exercise is the one you need to answer to.

For most people that have found their calling, there's no question. It's a kind of *coming home* to yourself that can't be denied.

When you're answering your calling, you know who you are, and nothing anybody else has to say about it is going to sway you. Your calling is your gift. It's who you're here to be, for your sake and everybody else's. You being truly *you* moves *all* of us forward.

That's how important your life's calling is. It's about honoring yourself and everyone else, by showing up fully for this life you're living. And when you do *that*, people around you feel permission to do the same.