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what your dreams
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tell you
» PAGE 180

JULY 2010
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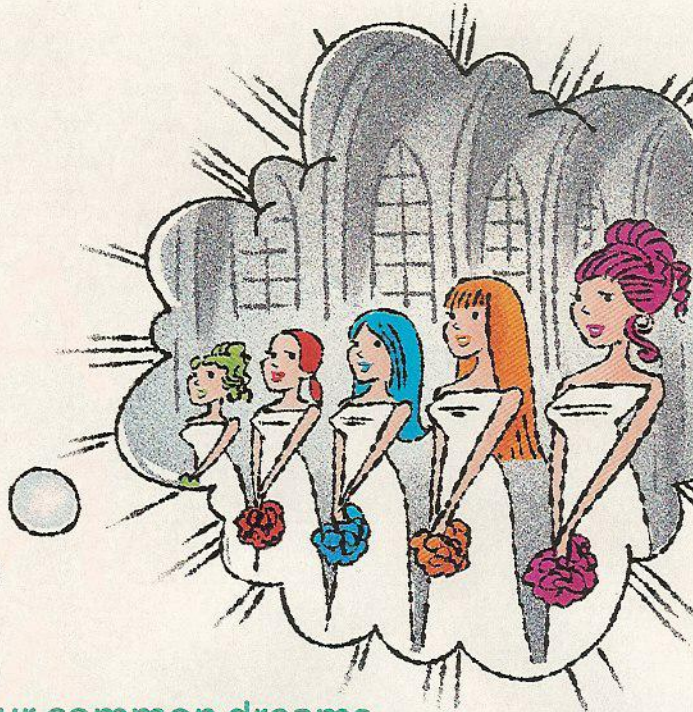
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FROM THE PUBLISHERS
OF VOGUE & GLAMOUR

It's the big day,

you're naked, and the bridesmaids have green hair. Sound familiar? Bizarre wedding dreams are almost universal among engaged women. "Even if

you're happily anticipating the wedding, you're stirred up inside," says Patricia Garfield, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and author of *The Universal Dream Key* (HarperOne). "It's a major rite of passage, and the issues it raises—family, trust—inspire vivid dreams."

As unsettling as these dreams can be, they're ultimately healthy. "Like the wedding rehearsal, your dreams help you practice," says Robert Waggoner, president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. Though we may not recall all the dreams we have, they help us process emotional issues and prepare for challenges. They can also reveal anxieties. So rather than hitting a mental "delete" button after dreaming that Kanye West was your officiant, consider what it might reveal. You may need to talk about it. "Conversation allows us to flesh out a dream and figure it out," says Gillian Holloway, Ph.D., a psychologist and author of *The Complete Dream Book of Love and Relationships* (Sourcebooks Casablanca). "Ignore a disturbing dream and it's almost guaranteed to come back."



four common dreams

Been dreaming about the wedding? Odds are you've experienced one of these scenarios.

You're naked at the altar.

A dream that you're in the buff or wearing something embarrassing may indicate that you're nervous about being the center of attention. It can also mean that you're still coming to terms with the changes marriage will bring. "This dream is typical of someone who's embarking on an enormous change," says Holloway. "It can reflect that you're feeling vulnerable." If your dream-self isn't embarrassed about being naked, though, relax. This can mean you're at peace with both the attention and the upcoming life changes.

You're missing something.

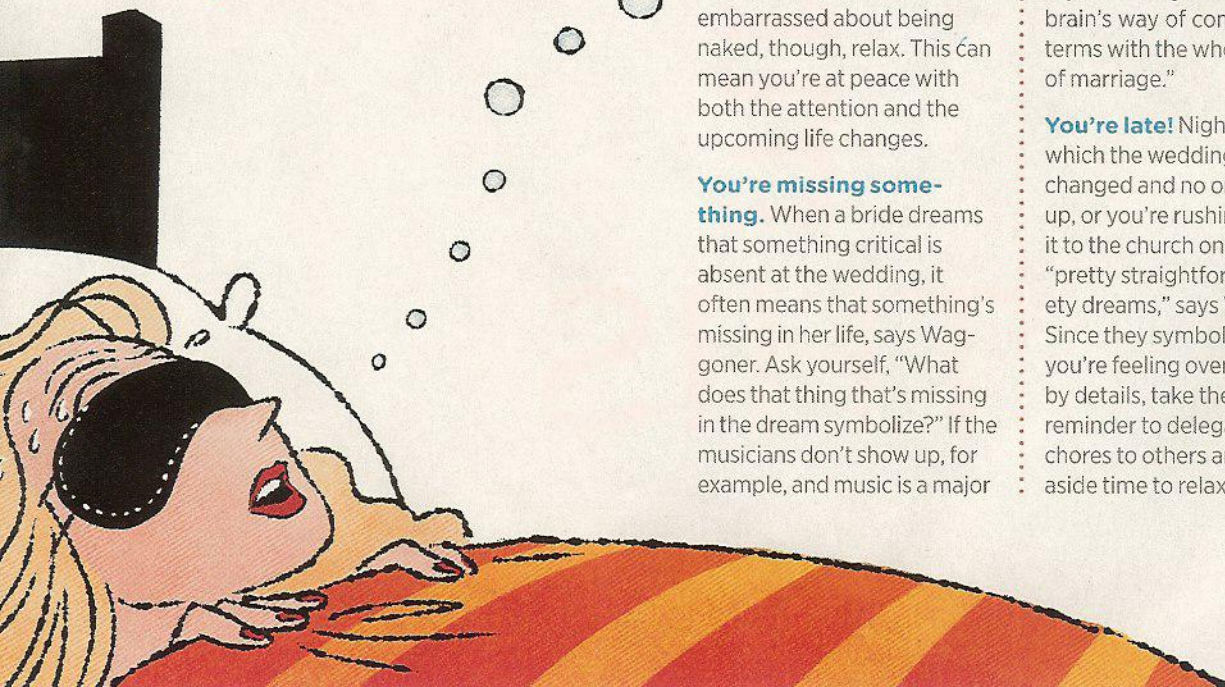
When a bride dreams that something critical is absent at the wedding, it often means that something's missing in her life, says Waggoner. Ask yourself, "What does that thing that's missing in the dream symbolize?" If the musicians don't show up, for example, and music is a major

source of happiness for you, the dream may be trying to tell you that your hectic schedule has cost you some joy. If your fiancé is MIA in the dream, it may be a sign that you need to spend more time together.

You're marrying the wrong guy.

This can be a particularly upsetting dream, but—breathe a sigh of relief—it almost never means you think you're marrying the wrong person. "Whether you're marrying your fiancé's best friend or Simon Cowell, I wouldn't read too much into this one," says Holloway. "It's likely your brain's way of coming to terms with the whole gamble of marriage."

You're late! Nightmares in which the wedding date has changed and no one shows up, or you're rushing to make it to the church on time, are "pretty straightforward anxiety dreams," says Waggoner. Since they symbolize that you're feeling overwhelmed by details, take them as a reminder to delegate some chores to others and to set aside time to relax.



reader report: strange dreams

Real brides share details of their most memorable wedding dreams—some of which they haven't even revealed to their fiancés!

"I was at the entry to the church and could see all my relatives and friends staring at me. As I began to walk, I looked down and noticed that my feet were bare. As I looked farther up my body, I realized I was completely naked except for my bouquet and veil!" —Karen P., 39, Atlanta

"I've had several dreams about teeth. When I open my mouth to talk—at the wedding, at the grocery store—my teeth turn to rocks and crumble." —Lindsay W., 29, Noblesville, IN

"I've had a few dreams about my engagement ring. In one dream, it split in half, so I essentially had two rings. In another, the stone came loose and I was trying to find a jeweler who could fix it before my fiancé found out." —Brigette G., 31, Chicago

"I dreamt that I showed up at my wedding, and it was like something out of a movie—a perfect church, with everyone in white—but my fiancé wasn't there. What worried me was having to do the ceremony all alone, with no one at the altar for moral support." —Joyce B., 36, Brooklyn

"The morning of the wedding, I go into the kitchen and find all eighty invitations in a neat stack, unmailed." —Noelle K., 27, Miami

sleep sources

dreammoods.com This free site offers interpretations of the most common dreams, as well as a discussion forum and a glossary of more than 5,000 symbols.

sawlogs.net This well-organized website lets you keep a dream journal online, with the option to share and discuss your dreams with other members.

10,000 Dreams Explained, by Pamela J. Ball (Arcturus). From abacus to zoo, dream symbols are explained in easy-to-browse alphabetical order.

decoding dreams

Not every wedding dream involves a walk down the aisle. Here are some symbols that you may see while you sleep, along with common interpretations, from *I Had the Strangest Dream*, by Kelly Sullivan Walden (Hachette Book Group). To determine what a particular image in your dream probably represents, think about the emotions and associations it brings up for you personally.

Hills, mountains = struggles and challenges

Ring = permanence, partnership, and unity

Teeth falling out = insecurity and powerlessness

Cake = reward for your hard work and accomplishments

Long hair = an increase in personal power

Short hair = fear of losing your power

Falling = loss of control and confidence

Father = support, protection, and heroism (or lack thereof)

Mother = unconditional love (or lack thereof)

Water = healing, cleansing, and sexuality

Aisle = order and a need for symmetry

Flying = freedom and joy

"I must be dreaming..."

If you've ever been asleep and realized you were dreaming, you were having a lucid dream. Lucid dreaming comes naturally to some; others have to work at it.

But being a lucid dreamer gives you the chance to change the course of distressing dreams. "Once you become aware of what you're dreaming, you can do whatever you want," says Waggoner, who wrote *Lucid Dreaming* (Moment Point Press). "Lucid dreamers can experience euphoria when they realize it's just a dream."

While it may take months of practice to become a lucid

dreamer, Waggoner swears by this tip: Before you go to sleep, look at your hands or another visual cue, like a mirror, that will later trigger awareness that you're dreaming. "Say, 'Tonight, when I sleep, I'll visualize my hands and realize I'm dreaming,'" Waggoner says. He also recommends that upon waking after a particularly vivid dream, you relax while thinking about the scenario and what you would have changed about it. You may drift back to sleep and into the same dream, but with greater conscious awareness that what's happening isn't real.