

Dream Journal

2026

Table of Contents

Rules of Society.....	1
Oldskool.....	5
Claw.....	13

Rules of Society

31st August 2026

I'm in some kind of hybrid of nightclub and indoor market.

I am vaguely with a friend, though their physical presence feels somewhat indirect. [Similar feeling to as if I was playing a one-player video game with a friend.]

We find a multipack of unopened beer bottles on the ground. Upon trying one, it tastes a bit odd. It seems apparent that they came from one of the nearby market stalls. We take the pack back to the beer stall to verify if its supposed to taste this way. They confirm that these ones are off and they replace them with another pack that tastes much better.

The vague friend eventually becomes Grace, and becomes more physically present with me in the environment.

There are characters/performers integrated into the environment, kind of like immersive theatre.

One performer would select people at a distance and randomly throw an animal at them to see how they respond.

It is learnt that Grace and I had been considered as a target, and was just about to have a tiger cub thrown at us, but we had moved away from where we were before it could happen.

Grace had previously had a small cheetah thrown at her.

* * *

I'm in a night club, there by myself, but there are plenty of other people there.

I'm about to leave and am heading towards the exit.

It is known that there's been an incident. Perhaps a fight has broken out, or there are some violent people up ahead in one of the dance floors that I have to walk through on my way out. I am warned by bouncers, but they don't stop me. They also do not seem to be specifically doing anything to address what is happening. The dance floor has thinned out a bit, and people are generally standing around looking worried. I don't actually encounter the violent people as I leave, but there is an awareness that they were nearby.

I head up the street to a bus stop. I had multiple cat sitting bookings to do, in different areas on the same night and had asked Grace to do one of them for me. It turns out however, that from where I am, I can get to the booking that Grace is about to do in one direct bus journey, so I decide to go and meet her there.

Gbenga [a service user at Sound Minds that I used to record hip-hop songs for] gets on the bus. We go up stairs near the front of the bus that (perhaps defying any real world logic) lead us to the back of the top deck, still facing forwards! Gbenga sits down on a seat on the left side near the back. He seems to be writing lyrics or poetry on his phone. I sit on a nearby seat on the right hand side. We non-verbally acknowledge one another's presence.

A bit later he moves down to another seat. It doesn't feel like this is with the intention of moving away from me, but simply because he wanted to sit somewhere different.

* * *

Gambling With Royalty

[For some reason, this section makes me think of Queen Snoolaroo-- a fictional snail queen character that Grace and I came up with.]

I'm playing a gambling game with a member of royalty [not necessarily a snail].

It involves rolling two dice.

One is a D20 with standard numbers, and the other is an odd shaped die with strange symbols.

The symbols in themselves seem three dimensional, and appear similar to elaborate pronged Tetris blocks. The number of protrusions on each block seems to represent the number.

I'm trying to find the correct side but none of the edges/prongs add up.

Then I notice on one concave surface, faintly written (in blood?), "That's right, you can't win."

* * *

The perspective is that of a 2D/isometric point-and-click adventure game.

I'm by a river. I see some people and talk to them. This appears to be the incorrect thing to do, as it provokes some seemingly unconnected disaster to happen. There is a hybrid of explosion and electrical storm, and I get electrocuted. The scene starts over, like in a video game. This time I move far away, taking a long route around the south side of the river and watch from upon a hill.

I survive this time and somehow end up in a bank, in a meeting with the manager.

I am quizzing him, subtly interrogating him, trying to find something out.

Additional Material

Hidden Rules

ChatGPT read the dream as a series of encounters with systems whose rules become progressively less visible and less reasonable. The opening exchange over the spoiled beer represented an almost ideal social process: I noticed that something was wrong, consulted the relevant authority, had my judgement validated and received a replacement. Later authorities behaved very differently. The immersive-theatre performer could impose an experience without consent; the nightclub bouncers warned me of danger but did not intervene; the royal figure presided over an unwinnable game; and the bank manager possessed information that I had to extract indirectly.

The animal-throwing scene was compared with my earlier dream involving Paul K: in both cases, somebody else had decided that I was participating. Here, however, Grace and I escaped the imposed role simply by no longer being where the system expected us to be.

The bus journey introduced a more intelligible kind of system, based on routes and practical coordination. ChatGPT found the encounter with Gbenga significant because neither of us demanded anything from the other. We acknowledged one another while he continued writing and later changed seats for reasons that did not feel like rejection. We could occupy the same world without either of us owing the other anything. The impossible architecture of the bus—going upstairs near the front and arriving at the back while still facing forwards—was suggested as a miniature version of the dream as a whole: I followed a route whose geometry made no rational sense, yet remained oriented forwards.

The Unwinnable Game

“Gambling With Royalty” made the dream’s concern with rules particularly explicit. Gambling ordinarily combines uncertainty with an agreed and comprehensible structure. I therefore treated the strange die as something that should be decipherable, counting its protrusions and trying to determine how its symbols represented numbers. The hidden inscription revealed that the apparent puzzle was fraudulent: I was not failing to understand a solvable system; the impossibility of winning was itself one of its concealed rules.

The royal opponent added hierarchy and privilege to this structure. ChatGPT observed that the true rule appeared on a concave surface, somewhere not ordinarily visible, and summarised the problem as spending enormous effort learning how to win before discovering that the more important task is to inspect the dice.

The final videogame sequence presented another hidden rule. An apparently innocent action produced a catastrophic and disproportionate consequence. After restarting with knowledge acquired through failure, I did not need to understand why the world behaved that way; I adapted, took the long route around the river and observed from a hill. ChatGPT suggested that this reflected the logic of navigating an arbitrary system: the world does not have to make sense if experience has already established which actions it rewards and punishes. By the final scene, I was no longer merely following or discovering rules but subtly interrogating someone within the institution that might know what remained hidden.

This led me to the more difficult question:

What are you supposed to do when you realise the game is rigged, but not playing is not an option?

ChatGPT proposed several partial answers. One was to stop confusing winning with playing well: if the system is structurally unwinnable, failing to meet its victory conditions does not mean that I have failed. Another was to learn the actual rules rather than the stated ones and, where necessary, route around their consequences. The hill introduced the possibility of preserving some internal distance from the system's values even while remaining compelled to participate in it—complying strategically without granting it philosophical legitimacy.

Other possible responses included cooperation, exploiting contradictions, collective refusal, changing rules where possible, finding protected spaces, humour, art, documentation and protest. Making a hidden rule visible could itself matter, even without guaranteeing victory. ChatGPT framed the remaining question as not simply whether the game could be won, but what kind of player a person would become while trapped inside it.

John Wick and Compulsory Systems

I found it particularly interesting that the dream followed shortly after my viewing of the *John Wick* series. ChatGPT suggested that the films may have supplied a symbolic vocabulary for something I was already considering: life inside a compulsory system of arbitrary rules. John repeatedly tries to withdraw, but the system treats withdrawal as an impermissible move. Its authority operates through ritualised procedures, obligations, currencies and punishments, creating an elaborate appearance of order without fairness.

This made “Gambling With Royalty” especially resonant. The High Table represents an aristocratic hierarchy whose power is expressed through ceremonial objects and rules, while my dream presented a strange ceremonial die that appeared to encode a legitimate game but secretly made victory impossible. The comparison emphasised that a system being highly rule-bound does not make it just; elaborate rules may instead legitimise power.

The video game catastrophe also resembled the institutional causality of the *John Wick* world. An ordinary action can produce a wildly disproportionate consequence, not because the consequence is natural, but because the system collectively recognises a hidden rule connecting the two. My dream, unlike John's world, provided a restart: once I knew the consequence, I could take an apparently absurd detour to avoid it.

ChatGPT also connected the dream's unreliable officials with the films' governed spaces. The bouncers, performer, royalty and bank manager all occupied authorised roles without necessarily acting for my benefit. This resembled the Continental, where safety exists because the current rules provide it rather than because the institution values anyone's life.

The dream's final movement was therefore compared with John Wick's expanding understanding of his predicament. The problem gradually shifts from navigating individual threats to investigating the system that continually produces them. At some point, dealing with the next immediate danger is no longer a solution; the object of inquiry becomes the authority behind the game—the Table itself.

Oldskool

1st September 2026

I'm thinking about 'Sound System' culture. I think about being a member of a sound system crew, and what I might contribute.

There is some kind of event that involves competing sound systems hosted in some kind of market area. I am a member of one of the crews. It feels like being in a tank! Except that there are vinyl records everywhere. I think my responsibility is something technical.

[For context, I'm having this dream on the Monday night/Tuesday morning after Notting Hill Carnival weekend.]

* * *

I'm in a group activity that involves airplane rides. One group has already gone up in a small passenger jet and I'm in the second group waiting for the first group to return from their flight in a waiting room. There is a really long delay. It feels like the second group isn't going to get their ride.

Sarah [my old Taekwondo friend] steps in as a pilot, and we finally get the prospect of our flight. But there is the sense that she isn't quite qualified and we'd be taking a bit of a risk. What we think of as a flight is more like a car ride. Sarah is a terrible driver. The ride feels dangerous. She knocks over an old man.

* * *

I'm watching the television show '24'. My mother is there. She ends up passively watching with me.

* * *

I get an old style telephone that is mixed with a record player that plays 45s.

Andrew wants to test it with a vinyl of his, but in doing so, there's a sense that he is inadvertently claiming the device as his.

We call the number to test it. The vinyl starts playing as expected. But it doesn't stop playing upon someone answering the phone.

I look at the vinyl record and see that it's damaged. It is significantly scratched. It's unclear if was scratched to begin with or whether it was the telephone that scratched it.

Either way, I decide to test it with another vinyl. I to get a small 'Hello Kitty' vinyl from my bedroom. The bedroom is shared with my brother, Daniel, who is currently in bed sleeping. I have to awkwardly reach across for the record, trying not to wake him.

The record is small, pink and feels a bit toy-like.

While replacing the vinyl in the telephone, Andrew gets annoyed and insults me. He calls me an 'abortion'.

* * *

I'm driving with my dad into a school protest route. There is significant political upheaval.

Ar first its nit clear whay is being protested, but eventually it is revealed that the school plans to install

'x-ray tunnels' on its premises to check all students every day for contraband. This obviously would incur a massive invasion of privacy.

The school has also installed a new game-like digital system. It is a mix of augmented reality and social media.

Instead of going to classes, you complete tasks by wondering around the school grounds and classrooms completing different assignments, drawing connections between people and things and repairing things with key items.

Required items can be found in designated areas and are usually searchable on a built in database.

The classrooms felt a bit like art gallery spaces, with works of art and maybe other significant artifacts displayed on the walls.

One assignment has something to do with The Smashing Pumpkins and potentially other bands such as Nirvana and R.E.M.

One of the clues is something like:

"Jimmy Chamberlain saw what they were playing and called it 'alternative rock'. Other people were calling it grunge."

* * *

I am talking to my ex, Liam [Liam is their post-transition name. We were in a relationship before they transitioned], and we were sharing an anecdote with his sister Hayley about a time that we was on holiday in a forest and the roads around us were flood. We were trapped in a raised area of forest.

* * *

Returning to the school scene, it was possible to use the newly installed system to prank other students or teachers.

You could intercept and take items from where they are supposed to be/where they are listed in the database, and hold onto them so that no one else could use them, or put them somewhere unexpected.

I crash a small electric car into a classroom table and intentionally blame a young girl student. She tries to appear unrelated to the incident, but I look for her ID number that's on a lanyard card she is wearing, with the intention of reporting her to school authorities.

She tries to evade me, but I follow her. We end up in another section where there is a rickety ladder stairway over water. She falls in, and there is no easy way for her to escape. It seems likely that she will drown.

Additional Material

Systems, Rules and Representations

ChatGPT identified a recurring concern running through the dream: systems establish rules for participation, but those rules may fail, become oppressive or be exploited. The sound-system crew represented a relatively positive version of a system, with specialised members contributing different functions; I imagined my own contribution as technical rather than performative. The aeroplane activity instead offered a system that failed to deliver what it had promised. Sarah's improvised solution bypassed that failure, but introduced new dangers because she was not properly qualified. ChatGPT connected this with the question raised by my previous dream, "Rules of Society": what happens when the game is rigged and not playing is not an option? Circumventing a dysfunctional system does not remove the need for competence or responsibility, and the consequences may fall upon somebody who did not create the problem.

The telephone-record player combined two old communication and media systems, but failed to recognise when the interaction had changed state: the record continued playing after somebody answered the telephone. There was also uncertainty about whether the record had already been damaged or whether the machine had damaged it, raising the question of where responsibility resides when something goes wrong within a system. Andrew's involvement introduced a dispute over possession, as his contribution of a record seemed to become an implicit claim upon my device. His later insult transformed a technical disagreement into a judgement upon my existence.

ChatGPT regarded the school as the conceptual centre of the dream. The x-ray tunnels represented an institution attempting to prevent prohibited behaviour by treating every student as a potential offender and demanding a massive surrender of privacy. The game-like educational system was more ambiguous: its emphasis on exploration, connections, research and problem-solving sounded genuinely appealing, but it depended upon the database's representation of reality remaining accurate. Moving an object away from its recorded location allowed the system to be sabotaged.

This developed into a broader distinction between what something actually is and what a system says it is. The database could list an object in a place where it no longer existed; the girl's ID number could identify her without proving that she had crashed the car; and music could be categorised as "alternative rock" or "grunge." Rules and systems do not merely regulate reality, but create representations of it which can acquire power independently of whether they remain true.

Impunity, Sadism and Embodied Consequences

The ending initially appeared to ask what responsibility somebody has not to exploit a system once they understand how it can be gamed. I then clarified that I crashed the car deliberately for fun, while knowing that I would face no consequences if I admitted responsibility. Framing and pursuing the girl was therefore not an attempt to protect myself. I was already safe; the entire interaction was undertaken for amusement.

ChatGPT described the important element here as impunity. The school was intensely concerned with identifying wrongdoing, yet its rules could not meaningfully constrain the person who had actually done something wrong. The innocent girl, meanwhile, was highly vulnerable to being falsely identified

as the offender. The system was therefore asymmetrically authoritarian: surveillance and identification gave me power over her while offering her no corresponding protection from me.

I was comfortable acknowledging that I have sadistic tendencies, something I also recognise in my enjoyment of violent films and video games. The important distinction is that in waking life I am disciplined about not using those tendencies intentionally to harm people or gain an advantage over them. ChatGPT suggested that the dream temporarily combined sadistic enjoyment, impunity, institutional power and gamification while removing the internal ethical rule that would normally constrain them. This contrasted external surveillance with self-regulation: no amount of inspection, identification or record-keeping could make an immune person behave ethically. The necessary boundary would have to be supplied internally.

I added that my dream-self did eventually feel bad, but only when the girl fell into the water and her suffering became physical. ChatGPT interpreted this as empathy being activated at a threshold rather than being absent altogether. Before that point, the girl's situation remained mediated through accusations, pursuit, identification and game mechanics. Once she was physically trapped and potentially drowning, the consequence acquired a body and she became fully real again. The playful frame collapsed into the recognition that I had actually harmed somebody.

This offered a possible connection with the difference between fictional violence and real suffering. Fiction and games allow aggression, domination and cruelty to be enjoyed within a bounded space where no conscious victim is actually suffering. The dream blurred that boundary by beginning with something experienced as gameplay and then introducing an unmistakably vulnerable human being. ChatGPT proposed that self-restraint becomes more difficult when the consequences of our actions have been converted into abstractions: the dream repeatedly dealt in databases, classifications, roles and identifiers, but ended with the material reality of a person drowning.

Courtship Without Mutuality

I described the "gaming" of the girl as having something of the texture of flirting, despite there being no clear romantic interest and no expectation that my behaviour would endear me to her. ChatGPT suggested that the interaction retained the structure of flirting—singling somebody out, provoking them, pursuing them and finding their responses interesting—while removing its affiliative purpose. The girl became somebody I had chosen to play with, and the false accusation created an interpersonal tether which her resistance helped to sustain.

This was not necessarily pleasure in suffering as an end in itself. It could be understood as enjoying interpersonal leverage and the reactions it produced. The crucial missing element was reciprocity. Healthy teasing or flirtatious antagonism depends upon both people understanding and enjoying the frame, with each retaining meaningful power to disengage. In the dream, the playfulness existed only on my side. The drowning finally made it impossible for my dream-self to continue interpreting the interaction as a shared game. My intention to play could not determine the reality of her experience. This connected with my early adulthood. Being autistic, I did not find flirting intuitive, and it was not something anybody taught explicitly. I read a great deal of pickup-artist literature because it appeared to offer rules for social mechanics that other people seemed to understand naturally. I now find that culture cringeworthy and recognise the disrespect within it. Its methods often felt more like victimisation than a healthy expression of interest.

At times, desperation led me to experiment with some of its milder advice. The techniques did not work as described, but more importantly, using them left me feeling worse about myself because I had crossed one of my own boundaries of respect. I am now glad those experiments failed. If violating my values felt bad even without producing “results,” successfully exploiting somebody would have felt considerably worse.

ChatGPT observed that pickup material promised to make implicit social rules explicit, but substituted manipulation rules for genuine social understanding. It treated interaction as something that could be reverse-engineered to produce desired responses. Yet producing a reaction is not the same as creating connection: irritation, anxiety, defensiveness and attempts to escape are all forms of engagement, but none amount to intimacy.

My real experience and the dream formed an interesting inversion. In waking life, the manipulative techniques failed and my values pushed back anyway. In the dream, manipulation worked, the system offered no consequences, and the behaviour escalated until somebody was physically endangered. ChatGPT raised the possibility that the dream was exploring a counterfactual question: what might happen if manipulation were rewarded?

Discovering My Own Rules of Courtship

The discussion led me to consider writing a series of blog articles aimed primarily at autistic people, or others who are socially challenged, offering constructive and respectful advice about finding meaningful connections. It could provide the kind of explicit guidance I had once been seeking without turning other people into systems to manipulate.

One of the central things I would want to teach is that finding somebody physically attractive does not mean that they are right for you or that there is any meaningful basis for a physical connection.

Appearance may be important to attraction, but it is not sufficient to sustain a meaningful relationship. Compatibility depends upon many other factors.

ChatGPT distinguished finding somebody attractive from knowing that I would enjoy a relationship with them. Attraction does not automatically create an objective or require pursuit. It can simply be noticed. Rather than asking how to make an attractive person like me, a healthier question would be what happens as we actually get to know one another. This replaces pursuit with discovery:

compatibility is not something inferred from wanting somebody, but something learned together.

I eventually had to discover my own rules of courtship, none of which resemble those promoted by pickup culture. They revolve around asking myself what I actually want instead of accepting advice about what I am supposed to want. ChatGPT developed this into the idea that courtship begins with self-knowledge rather than technique. Wanting somebody can be confused with wanting sex, companionship, affection, relief from loneliness, the experience of being desired, or the social validation associated with having a partner. None of these necessarily means wanting a relationship with that particular person.

The alternative to a conquest model is not the absence of learnable social understanding. It is an approach based upon curiosity rather than acquisition: understanding what I want, meeting people rather than treating them as targets, discovering compatibility rather than assuming it, and allowing mutuality to determine what develops. People are not puzzles to solve, but social interaction can still be learned and understood.

Claw

24th November 2025

There was a record player. It had been altered. The arm weight was heavier, and pushed down with a lot of pressure. The intention was to change it's function from playing records, to somehow having influence over a rhinoceros.

I was in a large chamber. The rhinoceros was sleeping near an open cage up ahead. I tried out the record player. It worked! The rhinoceros got up and skipped happily away to play with a ball.

I tried to use the record player to play a record, but the pressure was too strong. If I wanted to use it as a record player, I'd have to undo the modification.

Somehow the record player was loading a ZX Spectrum game on a television screen. The loading picture had come up. I was particularly surprised as the ZX Spectrum's power wasn't even on. I showed my mother and older brother, Andrew.

* * *

There was a night club. There was some kind of competition behind held to find a hidden claw. I had hidden it on one of the top floors, underneath a later of rostra. I was pretty confident no one would find it.

There was a kind of 'holiday' energy in the crowd.

There was a train station. Talk of going away on holiday. To Scotland! It was a joke at first, but the more we talked about it, the more it just became what we were doing. The conversation was amongst my family, but it was Andrew and I that seemed committed to going.

No one had found my claw. No one seemed even to be aware who it was that was responsible for planting the claw. I told a bouncer it was me, and where I'd hidden it. We went together to check that no one had found it yet.

The journey took us across a pixel-art style game, where there where islands that looked like, or actually were, large fish.

Andrew was talking about wanting to try out some games.

There was some talk of Dizzy games amongst my family. It was mentioned that Fantastic Dizzy must have been the last Dizzy game ever released, but I mentioned that the Oliver twins actually released relatively recently, 'Wonderland Dizzy', on the ZX Spectrum, a game that has been in development back in the day, but previously never came to fruition.

Additional Material

Jungian Reading

ChatGPT offered a Jungian reading centred on the relationship between instinct, creativity and recovered agency. The record player was interpreted as representing memory, continuity and artistic expression, while its heavy stylus and altered purpose suggested that something originally intended for creativity had been repurposed to influence a powerful instinctual force. The rhinoceros was read as a grounded, ancient and potentially formidable aspect of instinct; its playful response was important, suggesting instinct being guided towards joy rather than suppressed. The record player's inability to perform both functions at once introduced a tension between using a tool to manage instinct and using it for creative expression.

The ZX Spectrum loading despite having no power was interpreted as the psyche bypassing ordinary logical constraints and producing meaning without a conventional source of energy. Its connection with childhood technology also placed it within a recurring imaginative and nostalgic vocabulary.

ChatGPT treated the hidden claw as a possible symbol of concealed power, agency, protection or shadow material. I had deliberately hidden it, nobody knew that I was responsible, and nobody had succeeded in finding it. Telling the bouncer and taking him to inspect its hiding place was interpreted as approaching a hidden part of myself in the company of a threshold guardian: someone whose role concerns admission, exclusion and access.

The proposed journey to Scotland was read as movement towards somewhere new that begins playfully and then acquires its own momentum. The train suggested movement along an established track, while Scotland was associated with distance, wildness and the north. Andrew's presence was interpreted as that of an accompanying or stabilising brother figure.

The pixel-art landscape and fish-like islands were understood as unconscious material made into navigable terrain. Rather than appearing as an overwhelming or hostile depth, it had become stylised, structured and traversable in the form of a game world.

The discussion of *Fantastic Dizzy* and the later recovery and release of *Wonderland Dizzy* produced another possible theme: the apparent ending of a story being contradicted by the return of something unfinished from the past. ChatGPT connected this with lost chapters, abandoned creative material and earlier parts of the self becoming available again.

Taken together, ChatGPT presented the dream as a possible account of integrating creativity with instinct, approaching hidden power, and revisiting childhood imaginative material. Its central formulation was that the unconscious was becoming less like a battlefield and more like a game map: strange and symbolically rich, but increasingly navigable.

Dream Recall and Attentiveness

I do not always record dreams immediately after waking, although I try to. I am sure that what I eventually remember and write contains distortions compared with the original experience. I wondered whether this matters very much for most purposes, since remembering and reconstructing the dream still gives me access to aspects of my subconscious.

ChatGPT suggested that a dream record need not be an exact reconstruction to remain meaningful. What survives in memory still preserves emotional tone, striking symbols, relationships and patterns. It also raised the possibility that alterations introduced during recall may themselves be psychologically interesting, because the remembered version has passed through my present mind rather than functioning as a literal transcript of the original experience.

Over the last year, my attentiveness to dreams has strengthened considerably. My recall seems to be improving, and I am increasingly beginning to notice patterns and meanings before reflecting on them through ChatGPT.

ChatGPT described this as a reinforcing loop: remembering, recording, valuing and examining dreams teaches the mind to attend to them more closely. It also suggested that I am becoming more fluent in my own symbolic language and developing an “inner analyst,” so that ChatGPT’s role can sometimes become one of reflecting or extending meanings I have already begun to notice for myself.

Welcoming Intensity

I said that I would welcome greater intensity in my dreams. This was not because there was too little to unpack, but because I find dreams exciting. Even the darkest recesses of my psyche can feel safer and more comforting than the systems I have to contend with in waking life.

ChatGPT suggested that dream intensity need not be equivalent to threat. Darkness, strangeness and emotional force can instead provide depth, revelation and symbolic richness. It proposed that the dream world may feel safer because, however disturbing its imagery becomes, it remains an internal terrain shaped by my own psyche rather than an external institution or system imposing somebody else’s rules and agenda.

ChatGPT characterised this relationship with dreaming as a form of dialogue rather than combat. It also raised the possibility that dreams serve as a counterweight to waking life: offering refuge, narrative, continuity and meaning amid external pressures. On this reading, my attraction to the dream world need not be understood simply as escape, but as engagement with an inner landscape that feels intimate, alive and possible to explore.