

—THE—
BECKONING
ROOMS

*Deal With Them or They'll
Deal With You*

KARIN BRAUNER

Author of 20 Self-Care Habits

Endorsements and Reviews

Our past can keep us imprisoned. Dealing with our emotional past is important to move forward in life. In *The Beckoning Rooms*, Karin takes her reader on a journey from hurt to healing.

—Kary Oberbrunner, CEO of Igniting Souls Publishing Agency

Author of *Unhackable*, *Day Job to Dream Job*, and *Elixir Project*

Understanding the origin of our pain is the start of our personal evolution into achieving happiness. In order to find this light, we need to look no further than ourselves. We are our best friends in this journey. The Beckoning Rooms help us explore this through fictional characters, who are beckoned to search deep within themselves as they go through the rooms.

—Andrea Musso, M.A.

“To die, per chance to dream...” Famous words indeed. But let us leave the question of dying for another occasion and let us focus on the issue of dreaming.

Everybody dreams, no question about that. But what do we do with our dreams? Some people remember them a little bit but don't do anything with them. Some people remember them and are able to talk about them, with spouse, family and friends, or perhaps with their analyst. Others simply forget them. Others, like S. Freud, write them down, reflect upon them, and try to understand them. In fact, thanks to the genius of Freud and his work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, we now have a better way to understand the nature of dreams.

According to him, the origins of our dreams can be found in events that occurred during the day, or in events occurring in our own Unconscious. Usually, these have to do with

basic impulses that are unacceptable to us, due to our own upbringing, our values, our beliefs and so on. Because of this, we tend to *repress* our dreams, and that is why we forget them. In fact, according to his view, the content of dreams constitutes the basis of anxiety, which is the direct result of the *sinister* (Das Umheimliche), which refers to that which is supposed to remain permanently hidden, suddenly seeking to manifest itself to Consciousness. In fact, in this sense, the *sinister*, that which is frightful, that which is dreadful, usually relates to many things familiar to us since childhood but that have been repressed. This “known but unknown” biographical material (“There is a lot we don’t know that we know,” says Jenna in p.87), returns in our dreams and is then experienced as something strange, as something *sinister*.

This is why, from the beginning, Jenna says to herself: “Maybe I’m not supposed to remember...maybe I am just supposed to figure it out. But with what purpose?” With what purpose indeed! And that is precisely what makes this book worth reading. It will invite us, through the dreams of Jenna, Jeremiah, and Jacob, to face a number of strange situations which will force them to ask themselves very pertinent questions regarding their own inner truth, questions which, I am sure, the reader has also asked himself at some point in life. These are *The Beckoning Rooms*, which, as author Karin Brauner suggests, we either deal with them, or they will deal with us.

Very entertaining reading, with a very important message throughout, which has to do with the quest of self-discovery: “True knowledge comes from within,” she says; “Look inward for knowledge...own your truth...trust your truth...explore it and act accordingly”.

And that makes the book worth reading!

—Luis A. Recinos (Guatemala, January 12, 2021)

Excellent! Sort life out, or it will sort you out.

The Beckoning Rooms is a fast-moving work of fiction that had me gripped from the outset. More to the point, the moral of the book is crucial: that problems, even if unpleasant, need to be dealt with rather than hidden from. One way to do this is to examine one’s past: what formative experiences have led you to this point? Are you depressed, addicted, lacking in confidence, etc.? What has caused you to feel this way, and—above all—how do you fix it and move on? How do you become the best version of yourself?

Meet Jenna, Jeremiah, and Jacob, three characters with traumatic pasts who find themselves thrust into an unexpected but very necessary situation. They must now confront their demons in order for life as they know it to resume. I found each of the protagonists to be relatable and unique in voice, especially Jacob (owing to my own experiences of therapy). However, Jeremiah’s story also made me emotional.

All in all, [this book is] definitely a page-turner, and one that—in spite of being the author’s first attempt at fiction—sits finely among my other collection about a troubled adult’s relationship to their tortured ego.

—Andy Beck, musician, multilingualist, and author of *Folk Springs Eternal*

Reading the Beckoning rooms was quite an experience. Karin Brauner Hollman skilfully draws you into a world, where you're unsure whether the characters are actually living through their experiences or are in a dream world.

I found myself identifying with the characters to differing degrees, and learning new things about myself in the process.

I could sense the influence of the author's counselling background, but she doesn't bash you on the head with it; its in keeping with the flow of the story

A fascinating book, that will speak to ever who reads it.

Highly recommended.

—Tayo Igbintade, BSL/English Interpreter, Parent Advocate, Author of *Adventures at the Seaside: A Children's Book About Sibling Relationships, Empathy, Tolerance and Acceptance of Difference*

Jenna

Chapter 1

Unfamiliar Surroundings

Jenna woke up feeling refreshed. She hadn't slept like that in a long time. As her eyes adjusted to the darkened room, using the sliver of light coming in through the blinds to her advantage, she rubbed her eyes and tried to focus her sight. The blackout blinds blocked most of the sunlight. Stretching, Jenna thought, *I have to go to the shop today, or I will have nothing to eat, and more importantly, no toilet paper—now that could be a catastrophe!* Attempting to get her still-drowsy self up and ready for the day, she started to get up on the left side of the bed, as usual, but her momentum came to an unexpected stop. “Ouch!” Paralysed by the pain inflicted by the unexpected thump, Jenna managed to refrain from shouting expletives while she rubbed her head.

What is that doing there?! Jenna reached out her hand and felt a cold, solid structure before her, which stretched as wide as she could reach. *What? A wall? That's not meant to be there! The wall is on the other side. I better turn on a light, but if my bed isn't in the right place . . . where will the light switch be?*

Jenna cautiously rose from the bed. With one hand in continual contact with the wall-like fixture, she noticed the cold that was radiating from the wall to her hand as she slid it across while searching for the lightswitch. It took a moment for her eyes to adjust when the bright light flooded the room, but she immediately realised she wasn't in the room she went to sleep in the night before. She narrowed her eyes as she looked around, brows furrowed in confusion. Despite not knowing where she was, she felt amazed at how familiar the room looked.

She knew all of the items that were there—some of them she hadn't seen in years. *Teddy! Oh, how I used to love making imaginary tea for you! My old skates, now that brings back memories.*

A bit puzzled by it all, Jenna paused to ground herself. She was confused, but she was experiencing so many feelings and had so many questions. *Why am I here? How did I get here? Am I still asleep right now?* These thoughts bubbled in the back of her mind.

Somehow, though, she wasn't scared at the idea of not knowing where in the world she was.

The familiarity of the long-lost treasures she was reacquainting herself with helped, for sure. But how was this even possible?

There has to be some explanation for this!

Jenna looked out the window, hoping to see her lovely landscaped garden that backed to the neighbour's garden, but she was surprised by what she saw: a vast field, nothing else in sight.

How did this happen? I haven't been drinking, and I wouldn't end up in a completely different part of the country or anywhere but my own home anyway if I had been drinking. I came home and went to bed in my own bed, in my own house . . .

Where is this place? And how did I get here?

Jenna realised as soon as her stomach made an empty grumbling sound that she was going to have to leave that room and find food. *Leaving this room would be an interesting concept, indeed.* She checked herself again and gave her forearm a pinch. *Nope, still not drunk, and ouch! I felt that.* Standing in the middle of the room, Jenna looked around and discovered more and more items she'd sent to the memory bin of her somewhat-uncomfortable past. Touching the objects brought back memories of the good times she'd had with them. A slight smile formed as a tear simultaneously fell down her cheek. *Well, nothing has happened yet, except that bump on my head from hitting the wall.* She reflexively rubbed her forehead again; it still hurt.

The door beckoned to Jenna. She tiptoed over and rested her ear against the wood. Silence.

Hmm, it might be ok to go out there. I don't know whose house this is, but then again, it's the only place for miles, by the looks of it. I can always replace the food I eat. Whoever—or whatever—put me here had to know I'd get hungry and need the essentials.

Jenna shook her head and chuckled silently. *Wait a minute, replacing used items is what I'm thinking about? I should be worrying more about how I got here and why I'm here! Maybe there's a letter somewhere for me. Maybe I need to figure this out on my own. Oh my, what did I get myself into this time? Wait a minute. I know I didn't get myself into anything. I went to bed—in my bed—and woke up here. Wherever here is.*

The door propped Jenna up while she spent another few minutes pondering her predicament, considering her options. There didn't seem to be any from her standing point in that strange-but-familiar room.

I could stay here until night-time, go back to sleep, and hope I wake up in my own bed in the city.

Time will pass very slowly if I do that, she thought, and what if there's no way out of here, and I wake up here again tomorrow morning?

The only immediate choice was to open the door and hope for the best.

When Jenna opened the door, she felt an immediate sense of *déjà vu*. But that phrase didn't quite describe what she was feeling. It wasn't simply a feeling of having lived this already. She felt a sense of remembering, like a "tip of the tongue" kind of thing, but with a whole experience rather than not being able to make a word materialise. She had really been there before.

Jenna wracked her brain, thinking about whose house this might be and when she might have visited. Why did this house seem to be somewhere she spent a lot of time in the past?

I wish I could find my phone! But would it work in this place? I could ask my mum or dad where I was. But would they be able to tell me? Have I been here with them? Did I have a holiday with friends here? It just doesn't make sense. Why can't I remember?

Jenna's mind was racing, trying to make sense of her strange situation. *Maybe I'm not supposed to remember; maybe I'm just supposed to figure it out. But with what purpose? What is going on? What am I meant to figure out?*

She paced behind the still-closed door, practically fuming. *This is all nonsense, figuring things out, calling my parents, remembering . . .* Jenna paused with a sigh and turned the doorknob. *Maybe I'll feel better once I've eaten something.*

The dimly lit hallway had little side tables on either side, coated with thick layers of dust. It was obvious that things were missing, as there were less dusty parts of the tables. While Jenna thought it was odd, she kept walking, not able to come up with a reasonable explanation. *Nothing's sensible about this place so far.*

The hallway was also lined with closed doors. Curiosity got the best of Jenna, and she grabbed one of the door handles. Suddenly, she had an overwhelming feeling in her gut—a warning—that told her to be cautious, as she didn't know what might be behind that door. Did she really want to find out yet—or ever?

As she stood there, contemplating the caution feeling, her body suddenly felt weak and frail. She pressed her hand against the wall for support; it felt cold on her hand, just like the wall she'd banged her head on earlier.

What did that mean? Was she supposed to open or not open doors in this place? There was too much to think about and so many questions creeping over her.

She remembered the same feeling in grade school when she was made to feel she shouldn't question what her parents and teachers told her. She felt that whatever she said was either wrong, not quite right, or laughable. The message was: don't ask any questions; just follow the rules.

Wow! Where did that come from?

Jenna realised the feeling that she couldn't ask questions made her feel as small as she was back in grade school. It was a debilitating feeling which frustrated the heck out of her. But of course, she had been told not to challenge the adults in her life by any means.

Awful! How dare they dictate over my life like that?

Jenna felt exactly that—dictated over like she was unable to decide for herself what was right, what was wrong, or what rules she could choose to follow. She wasn't even clear as a child about what the rules were, and she certainly had no clue what the rules were at this house with its closed doors and no other people to ask or talk to.

How very bizarre.

She wondered if there was any tea—that might help calm her down and give her time to think about what she'd woken up to. But where was the kitchen? Jenna remembered having the last teabag the previous night at home, and there wasn't much milk left either. *Ah well, if this isn't my house, maybe it's at least well-stocked.* She stared at the door a moment longer before leaving to find the kitchen.

Inside the kitchen, she found everything she needed, including food for lunch and dinner—no need for her to go to the shop for now. She paused with a sudden realization. *Would I even know where the shop was? There were only fields all around me.*

As she poured water into the kettle and found the teabag, milk, and sugar for her drink, Jenna felt as if in a dream state. She recalled having dreams about unicorns and fantastic lands back in grade school. *Dreaming and daydreaming about fantastic lands really helped me survive that time.* She let her tea brew for a few minutes, patiently waiting for the right colour, well aware of the situation she was in, but at the same time trying to ignore it for a little bit. *Just for a little bit.*

The tea was nice. Jenna pushed away from the table, ready to find the answers to some of her questions. *I need to find something out about this place and why I woke up here.*

As she walked back to the bedroom, the only familiar room so far, apart from the kitchen, she passed the front door. Jenna checked and it. *No way I'm getting out of here with that door locked and no key in sight.* As she continued down the hallway with those mysterious closed doors, she had another memory. This time the feeling was more like when she was going to university for the first time. She had left the comforts of her familiar school—with all her friends and classrooms.

Walking towards the front door of the school, she remembered walking with trepidation, slowly counting her steps as a distraction to what she would find inside.

It was a scary prospect to be the new kid, to meet new people and make new friends.

But why do I need to make new friends? I like the ones I've had all my life. Oh, right, they're moving away soon to university. Maybe I can see them after my last class. But some might not finish until later or finish even earlier and are already busy with their new friends. Will they forget me? Will they want to meet with me to catch up? This is horrible and exciting all at once.

Jenna remembered feeling guilty about wanting to meet new people and make new friends. She felt guilty about expanding her horizons, about learning new things about life and in her classes, without the usual bunch of people she'd been doing that with all her life.

A feeling of shame for feeling so scared was also forever present during this time. Jenna could almost hear her parents and teachers—those same ones who told her to follow the rules and look pretty: *"It's time for you to grow up, go to college, and choose what you're going to do with the rest of your life. Go on, just get on with it, will you?"*

It seemed like this time she had to tell herself to *go on, just get on with it*, and it made her cringe. Resentment arose even at the feeling of having to force herself to open those doors, with finding out why she was there, and what she was going to do with the rest of her time there.

Was she annoyed at herself for feeling this way or at the adults in her past who made her think that was the only choice back then? Now, she was thinking as they did—she

couldn't help it and felt powerless even at that moment when nobody was telling her that anymore. Jenna was overtaken by the voices of her past. *Get on with it; you have to get on with it. Everyone does it. Why are you so worried? Just follow the rules!*

More thoughts flooded her already confused mind—thoughts she'd buried deep down years ago. She didn't want to think about these things. *Ugh, too much. Stop that. La la la la. Don't go there. I'll deal with that later.*

As she arrived back in the bedroom, Jenna shook the feeling off; she didn't like them. She focused on the beckoning doors instead.

Epilogue

What is in a dream? That is the question that I pose to you today. Not as a random question, but as one that would trigger your thoughts and lead you to delve into the exploration of the meaning of dreams and how this relates to therapy and therefore to the unconscious. More importantly, how dreams and therapy relate to the book you're holding in your hands right now – *The Beckoning Rooms*.

My counselling training has been covered by a blanket of psychoanalytic theories and wonderful tutors that made these theories come alive. I am integrative in practice, but at my core I will always have an analytical mind when it comes to exploring the unconscious and the issues my clients bring me.

Let me take you back to 2003-2004. I started seeing my very first clients at the University clinic in Guatemala, and therefore also decided to start my own therapy process. There were personal and professional reasons for this. I won't go into details as that's between me and my therapist.

I had about a year of sessions with this therapist. She was very traditionally psychoanalytic, so she didn't say much to me, which suited me just fine. The things she did say stick to my mind even now, and have been a great source of comfort to me ever since. That's the power of therapy. At the end of this batch of therapeutic work, I started talking about a particular topic (again, I won't disclose what it was, sorry), and tried to open up about it, but it was still not time. So I "legged" it out of there to never return.

In 2009, I embarked on another counselling course so I could work in the United Kingdom as a therapist - I do believe now, looking back, my counselling training in Guatemala would have been enough to start, but I needed to find my way around the UK way of life and working. Taking on this course meant another batch of therapy, this time for the duration of the course, as a requirement to graduate. That was fine by me as there were things I needed to work on.

There always is something to work on as the unconscious material from our past beckons us. Sometimes gently. Sometimes more forcefully. There came a point where the aforementioned "particular topic" came up again, and it was hard. I believe my words to my therapist were "I really don't want to go there, but here we are, we might as well do it". She checked with me (This one also didn't say much, but what she said is still having an impact to this day): "are you sure you want to talk about that?"

I said yes, probably a crying blubbery mess at that point. What happened during the next few weeks of opening the proverbial Pandora's box, was quite something!

I used to have a recurring dream, where I'd always appear in a house. The house was familiar to me. I wasn't in a strange place or anything. I knew the place I was in. It was either my house or a friend's house. Lurking somewhere in the building, there was always a room, a door that I was weary of.

What made me weary of it was a mystery to me, in the years that I had the dream, I couldn't figure it out! I could never go into that room, or even go near it. It gave me the creeps. I felt really anxious and had a sense of dread about what I might find if I did open that door. I'm unsure of what else happened in those recurring dreams. It felt like I was in the house for a long time. Maybe a normal day, with normal things going on.

It's been a while since I've had that dream. I know what stopped it was talking about "that topic" in therapy. Hence, as I mentioned before, the power of therapy! I've not dreamt that dream ever since those hard sessions, where everything in life felt surreal for a few weeks, but something released.

That unconscious part of myself had lost its power. It had lost its ability to haunt me, in my waking and sleeping hours. I know that there are lots of more things to explore about "the topic" as there always will be - the unconscious is vast, and will strike whenever and however it wants. This is why I find therapy so precious - as a process I've gone through myself - and as a process I support my counselling clients with.

In the story I've just told you, talking through something in therapy made a recurring dream stop. The symbolism in dreams is truly incredible. I've seen it in my own dreams and life, and also in my clients' dreams and lives. What we dream says something about who we are, what we've sent to the repressed bin of our minds, and what we must deal with before it deals with us.

The end of my recurring dream after that batch of therapy led me to write *The Beckoning Rooms*. The idea first came to me a few months after that therapy process.

