Who's Dale, and why are you asking for him in your sleep?

[1]

Dear Alice,

I have been married almost two years now. My wife sometimes talks in her sleep, but usually it is about nothing. Well, last night I went to get into bed and I rolled over her and she sputtered some words. She said, "Where is my partner?" I asked her while she was still asleep, what partner? She said, "My sleeping partner." I asked her what is his name and she gave me one. She said "Dale" and I asked her what his last name was and she said "Sommers" or something like that. Is it common for someone who talks in their sleep to be so precise? We both love each other and she told me that she didn't know what I was talking about. Do I have anything to worry about? If you could please help on what I should be thinking.

Answer

Dear Reader,

You said a couple of important things: you and your wife love each other, and she doesn't know what you're talking about. If you trust her, you probably don't need to lose any sleep over this Dale fella who appears to be a figment of your partner's imagination.

The stuff that dreams are made of is rarely a carbon copy of what takes place in our waking lives. Just think about your very own dreams: are all those who star in them actual people with whom you hang in real, waking life? Are all the places you travel to in your sleep the exact places you've been to before? If you said "yes" to these questions, you must have one interesting existence. Since our dreams are a giant mix of fragments of our memories and imagination, this Dale Sommers dude that your wife mentioned in her sleep could have been a wacky combo of childhood Chipmunk memories and the anticipation of longer, warmer days.

If you continue to feel uneasy about dreamy Dale, despite your wife's claim of ignorance about him, you might ask yourself why this one-time name dropping is making you feel uncomfortable or insecure in your relationship. Have you questioned your wife's honesty about other things? Do you get enough reassurance from her that she, indeed, loves and is committed to you? There's nothing wrong with using the Dale dilemma to start a conversation about how you're feeling, and how she can help you dump Dale along with the concerns that your wife's sleep-talking have triggered. Just think, "Mr. Sommers" might end up helping you and your wife love each other even more.
Here's to counting sheep and not losing sleep,

Alice!

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