

MARC STEINBERG

THE JOURNEY

THE TRUE STORY OF ONE MAN'S
SEARCH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT



The Journey

The true story of one man's search for enlightenment

Marc Steinberg

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Publisher: 3rd Millennium INC, Nevis

Editors: Gina Hayden and Rowan Gillies

Cover Design by: Carol Hampshire & Andrew Franks

Typesetting: Natalie McCulloch

ISBN-13: 978-1-9804706-5-6

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Foreword by the Author

It is a true privilege to dare to live a life devoted to making a difference. I discovered this life through resisting what didn't make sense to me. I didn't know what I wanted. I only discovered step by step what I didn't want.

It was through other people that I stumbled into my destiny. "The other" is a mirror that reflects who we are. And when the others started to feedback to me what value they got by interacting with me, I started to see. I saw THE JOURNEY. And ever since I help people on their journey.

In the mirror of those shining eyes and a smiling soul when another starts seeing their journey and if needed receives guidance and support my life recognizes its purpose.

With deep gratitude to all beings and existence I wish you a most blessed JOURNEY.

Foreword by Professor Elemer Rosinger, University of Pretoria

"**T**he land of truth is a pathless land" said Krishnamurti. An earlier Zen Buddhist saying states, "You show the fool the moon, and he is looking at your finger." But then, the still more ancient Chinese "Book of Tao" starts with the sentences, "The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name. The unnamable is the eternally real. Naming is the origin of all particular things." And yet after such an ultimate warning, it goes on for many pages trying to point to that most elusive and fundamental Tao. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, ends his "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" with the sentence "What one cannot speak about, one must keep silent".

"THE JOURNEY" is among those rare books which not only try to point to that proverbial moon, Tao or pathlessness, but try in our so thoroughly down-to-earth times to make us aware of the very existence of that ultimate ineffability and its fundamental and overriding importance in our lives. Creative Consciousness® is a new approach, and unlike traditional authoritarian teachings, it is a way to free us from the conditionings, limitations, and the variety of handicaps we usually end up with. It does so without making big waves, yet with grave consequences. A famous ancient precedent is the Socratic method, which does not deliver statements that must be accepted, but instead, establishes series of appropriate enquiries which may lead to enlightenment.

Freedom has two variants: "freedom from" and "freedom". The former is much easier to acquire than the latter, since it can happen by both mere accident or good luck, or by sheer mindless violence. However, rather without exception, "freedom from" is a reaction and still binds us in consciousness to the former binding condition. Thus, once

attained, its potential benefits can only be achieved by sustained efforts.

Where there is effort, there is no freedom. This hard fact is often lost upon those who so ardently devote themselves to one or another venture to become "free from".

Creative Consciousness®, therefore, places a significant importance on making us not only "free from" the usual countless variety of handicaps we end up with even before properly starting adult life, but also strives to equip us with the yet more valuable and absolutely indispensable "freedom". Without which there is no, and cannot be any true liberation.

Karl Jaspers saw the history of the human spiritual venture divided in two vast stages: the ancient Era of Magic, followed by the present Era of Myth.

In simple terms, the Era of Magic was characterized by the overwhelming predominance of an approach based on the ongoing cycle of "doing-feeling", with its rituals, ceremonies, traditions and, of course, a variety of sacrifices, not least, of humans.

Then, with the wider development of human mental abilities, what post-modernism likes to call mega-narratives appeared in the form of foundational myths. These were long and detailed enough to encompass an amount of spiritual, ethical, moral and practical teachings, teaching sufficient for the running of civilized human societies. Thus the predominant approach became the cycle of "thinking-feeling". The transition into the Era of Myth happened during the so-called Axial Age, several millennia ago, when most of the presently known great religions started, among them Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and, more recently, Islam. And yet, what Jaspers did not seem to focus enough upon, even if Krishnamurti, Zen Buddhism, the Book of Tao, Wittgenstein and others do, is the inherent limitation of the Era of Myth as well - or more precisely, the inherent limitation of human thinking ...

"THE JOURNEY" presents an intimate personal life account which is most vivid and rather mercilessly honest in its surprisingly relevant insights. And it takes the reader through a fascinating and captivating succession of events and sudden turns of events, described in a crisp and

poignant style which makes the book into an irresistible page-turner.

As a whole, however, it may rather recall Wittgenstein, since the book leads to the same kind of end, an end which is beyond both the Era of Magic, as well as the Era of Myth.

Well, fortunately, the hero in "THE JOURNEY", like all heroes in good stories, manages to survive it all. And there is a whole lot to survive and learn from. By the time one reaches the end of the book, both the hero and the reader may indeed acquire a far better realization of Krishnamurti's classic warning that the land of truth is a pathless land.

The hero brings to mind the famous Renaissance adventures of Baron von Munchausen. Riding his horse, the baron accidentally gets bogged down in some marsh where he is on the verge of getting drowned. Being endlessly resourceful, however, he simply grabs his own wig with one hand and keeps firmly pulling it upwards, while at the same time holding his horse tightly between his knees. And lo and behold, he gets out of that rather messy situation.

Our hero in "THE JOURNEY" performs just about the same sort of feats. Just as each and every one of us who are embarked on the same pathless venture are supposed to do.

And needless to say, it is often rather messy to get out of a messy situation. Not so surprising, therefore, we may carry all sorts of ideas, views, visions, practices, and other unseemly ballast for longer than necessary. And when the book "THE JOURNEY" ends, the hero is still not completely out of the woods, or rather, the marsh. However, his record more than reassures us that he will no doubt make it in the end. This choice of avoiding a trivial Hollywood type happy ending is in itself a further instance of the wisdom "THE JOURNEY" offers us.

But then, there may be other interpretations of such a venture. Maharishi admonishes, "In order to become enlightened, one has to get from here to here." And this is indeed extremely surprising and difficult, since we only seem to know about getting from "here" to some "there" which we have made up in our imagination.

Creative Consciousness® thus can face a truly daunting task ... But then, just about each and every one of us can do with someone's adroit finger pointing to the moon. And "THE JOURNEY " does just that.

And does it in a most refreshing and impressive manner.

A Postcard from God

"Sinclair! Focus!" Benn's voice pulled me back into the Here and Now.

"Alertness and awareness training are the most important exercises on the journey to consciousness. When the student of consciousness does not fight for alertness as if it means his own survival, he may perhaps reach occasional moments of revelation, but he does not remain in this heightened state. When the student of consciousness does not manage to get to deeper and deeper and wider and wider levels of awareness, he will not feel he has arrived. He may become somewhat wiser, but he is not fully awake. In your efforts to reach full awakening, perhaps you already sense that you have to surrender to this journey completely. Every master of consciousness knows that it requires consistent and absolutely dedicated engagement to arrive. No matter how many books you

read or how many teachers you see – at the end of the day, it is awareness and alertness only that will set you free.”

Benn paused.

“Are you listening?” he checked.

“Yes Benn, I am!” I yelled back, enjoying the intensity of the drill.

Benn continued.

“The four sequential levels to follow in your alertness training are:

Level 1 24/7 awareness of your heartbeat, your breathing and all sensations of the 5 senses, i.e. sound, light, touch.

Level 2 24/7 level 1 awareness plus simultaneous awareness of every thought and every feeling.

Level 3 24/7 levels 1 and 2 awareness plus the observation of the observer, the one who is aware.”

Level 4 24/7 on the foundation of a solidly established level 3 awareness, you let go, completely. Then the observer, the meditator will disappear - and what is left is the presence of awareness and the movement of existence, the Whole, with which you have merged.”

Benn politely checked: “Any questions?”

“Nope.” My voice was dry and sharp.

“We can learn alertness the same way as we can learn to play a piano or ride a horse: through exercise and constant repetition until it becomes our second nature. Playing the scales for two weeks however does not make you a maestro. So Sinclair, you have

achieved level 1, now it's time to move on to level 2: start by observing your thinking like you would observe the clouds in the sky. Just watch thought after thought entering and leaving your consciousness. Imagine yourself standing in a Stock Exchange watching the latest share prices appear on the overhead screen. The share prices are your thoughts. Do nothing with your thoughts – do not try to either suppress them or chase them away or engage in them. Let them come, let them go, while you stay unattached, aware, just observing."

Benn paused.

"Oh, before I forget: you will, initially often be caught up in your thoughts. This is quite normal, and you won't even register when you are being carried away. Only when you become conscious of your exercise again will you realize that you lost yourself in your thoughts. Just take note of it and continue with the exercise."

I tried to get it all neatly lined up in my mind.

"Ok, I think I've got it Benn. Thank you. I am grateful. So, how long shall I practice this for?"

"Practise until it becomes uncomfortable. However you should not force yourself. Force produces resistance, and this you do not want. Be gentle with yourself. Embrace yourself. You have made an extraordinary and the only intelligent decision a human being can

make: to actively strive to awaken consciousness. Every step you achieve will make way for the emergence of the powers of consciousness. An awakened consciousness is superior in every aspect."

I looked at Benn indicating that I still needed to hear more.

"A clear indication of a successful progression in consciousness will be the progressively longer periods of being fully present and awake. And by the same measure, there will be a reduction of the times of blurred sensation and confusion.

Persevere. Observe how you go about your work, how you behave and how you feel, how you act in the company of certain people, how your body moves, how your left toe feels and so on. Do not put this exercise aside until you are effortlessly the permanent observer, everywhere and always.

Yes, there are other methods trying to reach consciousness. There are many different ways promoted. You can walk on hot coals, chant or contort your body. I maintain that none of these will bring you a lasting effect nor fundamentally change or improve your consciousness.

You will know that you are within reach of your goal when you no longer note the phases of alertness but rather the moments and periods of unconsciousness – thirty minutes, one minute, one second, zero. Then you have established the first two levels. But be

aware: you can't reverse the process. Once you woken up, you're awake."

Awake? I was so absorbed in the incomplete contemplation of Catherine that I didn't see Benn disappearing. My mind slipped back to the time when Benn first came into my life.

I stood, letting the rushing water wash the dust from my mind. The river would never let me down. Not like Catherine.

I threw a stone into the water, anger growing with the memories. The stone hit the water and sank. My heart felt the same way, and I sat down heavily on the rocks at the edge. Dangling my feet into the water, my mind rolled back to school and to that day not so long ago when I first noticed the newcomer in the hall.

It was half term when she and her brother arrived. She walked past me, radiating an intimidating maturity, her hair flowing behind her as if tossed by a magical wind. A group of girls swirled around her, hanging on her every word.

At the time I had already achieved quite a renowned reputation, but she never even noticed me. I guess she was

in another bracket: two years older, which makes a big difference for an eleven year old.

At school I was known as the kid who asks the questions that the teachers often can't answer. My mother said that I must stop 'menacing the teachers with questions their curriculum cannot account for'. The questions came naturally, I never did it to cause trouble and I had no problem with discipline, but I did have a problem with authority: even then I queried why they should have authority over me when all they had to teach was stuff, that had nothing to do with my real life? They certainly didn't teach me about love. But then no one believed that at age eleven and a half one could really be in love!

Yet I was supposed to obey these people blindly, these teachers, just because? That's their argument, because? Well that was not good enough for me and I didn't care if I was always known as a 'unique kind of rebel' I would not deny what I felt in my heart. I would stand up for myself and for my friends, without hesitation, which also got me frequently into trouble.

The day Catherine walked in I had no words to describe my feelings. I had nothing to stand up for. I stood watching her in a trance and I sensed from that moment I had to make friends with her brother Freddie, in order to get closer to her.

Surprisingly, Freddie and I hit it off immediately. He was of a very different breed. But I was flexible and very determined to not mess up this opportunity. Pretty soon I was part of the gang that hung out at their house. Catherine was always somewhere in the background, and she always greeted me with a smile that made me feel weak in my knees. Obviously she thought I was special or odd, whatever.

We spent our afternoons in the basement listening to Jimi Hendricks, Janis Joplin and Led Zeppelin, as loudly as possible, and she made a point of sitting next to me. Some of the older kids passed around the smokes, but for me, the excitement of being introduced to Rock 'n Roll went hand in hand with falling more and more in love with Catherine, and I didn't need any distractions.

There was a smoky haze in the basement on that fiery afternoon as we all sat in a circle on the floor. I spun the empty 2-litre red wine bottle. Round and round in slow motion it spun, until it stopped, pointing gracefully at

Catherine. The smile on her face was to die for. My heart was racing a million beats a second and my awe covered my face. I tried to avoid eye contact and the dimmed light of this basement room helped me. She leant forward on her knees as I crawled across the floor. Thank god the music was so loud that I didn't have to hear the others comments. These fellows were not taking prisoners.

And then it happened.

We kissed.

What a decade later in the monastery was referred to as '*satori*' must have happened in this moment: time stood still, space expanded and a strange silence forced its presence into the Here and Now, while Deep Purple's 'Highway Star' was playing full throttle.

Roger pulled me back into the game, away from Catherine.

The others also wanted to get their chances.

Later that night I lay in bed, bemused

"What is THIS?" I scribbled on the back of my headboard. Nothing else seemed of any importance any longer, but 'THIS'.

That weekend dragged. I had to go away into the country for our weekly visit to my grandparents, when all I longed to do was to be close to her! I spent the weekend writing about Catherine, exploring my feelings and sensations.

I left the house early on Monday, racing down the street to the school grounds. I naively thought she'd be waiting for me, but she was standing outside with the ninth graders. Slowing down, I walked across the street with my backpack slung over my shoulder, pretending nonchalance, but sneaking glances at her. I wondered if she saw me and stopped a way off to stare. No, she didn't see me, nor was she waiting for me. She was staring at a motorbike, and laughing up at the boy who owned it. As I watched, he swung his leg over the seat, and she steadied herself against his shoulder as she climbed astride. In seconds, they were gone.

I had no bike, no cool leather jacket, nor would I have these in the near future. My heart was broken.

I threw another moody stone forward into the air and it landed with a splash.

"But you have experienced an awakening!"

The voice appeared to be coming from the river, and I jumped out of the water and stood a good few feet away looking around.

“Who said that?”

My heart pounded in my throat. I heard rustling on the other side, but the sun was shining into my eyes and the glare blinded me. Suddenly a boy about my age stepped out of the shadow so that I could see him clearly. Bright brown eyes and very dark hair. I could see his defined straight face lines as he stood, looking down at the ground, kicking the shore stones.

“Did you say that?”

He looked up and smiled.

“Well who else?”

“How did you know what I was thinking, I mean about love and everything?”

“I didn’t have to; it’s written all over your face. But seriously, you were thinking out loud.”

“Me? Never! That’s crazy, I would never speak aloud to myself!” I laughed.

"You should see how bewildered you look! I'm Benn."

"Sinclair," I introduced myself.

"Sinclair! SIN-Clair" he repeated. "Cool name."

"Yes it is, no one else I know has it."

"It's a French name, and you're in Germany, of course no one else has it."

"Really? I thought it was English."

"No, it's French and it means 'prayer'" Benn lectured me.

"Well your name is Latin," I said.

"It is. And how do you know that?"

"They make us do Latin at school, and in class we like to look up names. I think yours means blessed."

"Touché!" he laughed, and we both stood skipping stones into the water.

Finally he looked across at me.

"So what are you doing down here by the river?"

"My parents are up at the house. We come here at the weekends to see my grandparents and normally I hate it, but this time I didn't resist coming. Because of Catherine, you know. I'm in love with her."

Benn nodded his head in agreement, but said nothing.

"When I think about her the world seems better and brighter. I feel alive! And strong and determined and unbeatable!"

"So why you are here then?"

"I don't feel that way now. They call it heartbroken.

Inside I felt so complete. Not like I feel now, lost, without a reason to be."

And now I've lost her. Before I ever really had her!"

"Like I said before, Sinclair, you have experienced an awakening!"

"What's with this 'awakening' stuff?! I shouted, powered by the pain of images of Catherine in my memory.

Silence.

I looked up, but Benn has disappeared.

"BENN!" I shouted, looking across the river. "Hello!" I shouted again and threw a stone to where he had been standing. Nothing moved except a breeze that came through and shook the trees. I got goose bumps all over my arms and turned back for the house. Strangely, I didn't wonder where he had gone, but I did wonder about what he had said.

I slept dreamlessly that night. The next morning I woke with the sun barely showing through the curtains. I jumped out of bed and ran down to the river. My father was sitting on a rock with a fishing rod perched beside him.

"Hey Dad, I didn't know there were any fish here big enough to catch!"

"I don't think there are, but I like to come down here, and this way your mother thinks I'm doing something constructive!"

We shared a conspiratorial laugh as I sat down beside him. He passed me the sausages that he had brought down in a plastic tub.

I kept an eye across the river, looking out for Benn. I craved to speak to him. I had spent much of last night thinking about our conversation, and I couldn't wait to tell him what I had discovered.

My father was not one for small talk so we sat in silence until I couldn't keep still any more.

"Dad, I'm going to go over the river to find my friend Benn."

"Over the river, Sinclair? You can't go over the river, there is nothing there! We are the only house around here."

I looked at him, my eyes squinting against the glare. I didn't believe him but I didn't want to argue, so I nodded in agreement.

"Oh. Well then, I'm just going to go for a walk then."

"Ok, but don't try cross the river, that's dangerous and stupid."

"Ok."

I dragged my feet over the grass as I walked. How could there be no one else around? I spoke to Benn here yesterday. And he spoke to me. And I needed to speak to him today!

"So speak to me."

"Benn!" I spun around, looking for him.

"Benn, is that you?"

He walked out from behind a tree and laughed as he said hello. He seemed to have aged a couple of years since yesterday.

"How are you, Sinclair?" he asked, genuinely curious.

I launched straight in.

"I've been thinking about what you said Benn, and I know now that I am lucky because I have experienced something extraordinary, right?" "Right, Sinclair."

We stood in easy silence for a while.

"So tell me Benn, what is THIS?"

I didn't need to explain 'THIS'. Benn understood.

"'THIS' was a postcard from god" Benn smiled, "you will understand everything in a few years. For now, see it as a gift of life, a kiss from existence."

"English Benn, please!" I begged, feeling tortured by the gap between his knowledge and my ignorance.

"It's too early for this. We will meet again, many times. When the student is ready, the teacher appears."

"Sinclair! Clarke! Come up for breakfast!" I heard my mother shouting.

"I'll see you around, Benn?" I questioned as I turned to leave.

"Yes you will," he replied. "And if it is really urgent, meet me at a river!"

After breakfast we packed up to go back to the city. I didn't really understand what Benn was telling me, but I wrote it down on the back of my maths book:

When the student is ready, the teacher appears.

“Student of what!?” my mind raced in circles.

As we drove away from the house, my father looked at me in the rear-view mirror.

“The river runs from where we were sitting this morning, along the highway, all the way with us. You can’t see it behind the trees, but at the end of the forest it turns down and runs away from the city. Once you are out of the city, it only takes twenty minutes to get to the river.”

I smiled. That was exactly what I needed to hear. The rest of the drive was in silence and I stared out at the river, even though I couldn’t see it.

A Dialogue with Death

It was only five weeks ago when I graduated from school.

The villages I passed became part of the night, their flickering lights dwarfed by the enormity of the Milky Way. The road was lit only by the car's lights, and all I could see was what was narrowly defined in front of me. It was a reflection of my situation: all I could do was trust the road and trust the journey.

It was exactly midnight when I turned off the main road and drove my scooter through the valley, my heart aching and my mind racing. I parked just off the dirt road, took off my shoes and walked the rest of the distance through the long grass. The air was fresh and clean, every breath was deep and awakening, the grass was damp and soft against my feet.

I could hear the running waters of the river, and already I felt safe. The majestic volume of powerful streams all united into one unstoppable force. I picked up the pace, starting to run through the starlit forest, and as I left the last tree behind me, there it was. The river.

I stopped at the edge looking into the night waters. I bowed my head in deep gratitude, knowing that I was already beginning to feel united again. Even if I did not speak to Benn, the river was powerful and inspiring; a source of energy that bestows clarity. As the famous philosopher Heraclitus says, "Everything flows; you cannot step into the same river twice".

Whenever I've been unclear or stuck or confused over the years, I've come here: smelt the river, felt it, heard it, listened to it with all my being. And now here I was again, years later, at the river, waiting for Benn.

Benn always understood. Even when I had been so young, he could see me for who I already was. He respected the insights I already had, and over time he has always been there for me. He gave me the space to grow and learn on my own, and if I could not come here to the river, he would always find me, in some way or another, and he would teach me.

I stepped carefully into the water and sank my feet into the mud, squishing it between my toes.

“Welcome back Sinclair!”

The sound of his voice rang through me as I smiled.

“Hey Benn,” is all I could say as I waded a little deeper into the water.

I was sixteen and bordering on suicidal. I had finished school with good results and, for lack of a better idea, followed my family’s advice. My father wanted me to eventually take over his small carpentry company, and he managed to get me a job at BMW, where I was working and training at one of the biggest factories in Munich.

Life had become a routine of monotony. My day was uninspiring and depressing. I had this constant dialogue with death running around in my mind.

At 5am every morning the alarm screeched, and I smacked it off with my eyes still closed. When I smudged the sleep off my eyes and slowly opened them, I was once again disappointed that it was still dark outside.

“Ludicrous,” I whispered as I slowly got dressed.

I followed my daily pattern.

I grabbed a cup of coffee in the kitchen, wrapped myself in my coat then mounted my bicycle for the ride to the bus stop. "This is not me, it just isn't me!" I complained as I waited for the bus, hopping from foot to foot to avoid the cold. The bus took me to the subway where I spent the rest of the journey leaning against the window, mindlessly reading the passing billboards. I arrived in time for work at 7am, and the rest of my day was spent dealing with a piece of wood and an electrical sand paper machine, surrounded by eight colleagues, all between sixteen and eighteen, all dressed in blue overalls, all working with their piece of wood.

Could I do this for the next three and a half years?

Every single day was identical to the one before, utterly unpleasant. Day in and day out, I was locked into a working environment that removed all daylight and sunshine from my life. I arrived before the sun rose, and spent the day covered in dusty blue overalls with a mask over my mouth and goggles over my eyes. Even if I left early at 4pm, I missed the scarce winter sun.

"Is this it?" I asked myself as I stood waiting for the bus, shivering on the cold street after another dull day at the factory. The sky was grey; I could hardly remember a time when I had last felt the sun. I stood on the bus without

bothering to look for a seat. My mind was numb. This was not the life that I wanted to live, but I didn't know what else I should do with this life. The bus pulled into my stop and like a machine I automatically stepped off, picked up my bicycle and rode home.

My spirit was staring into a funnel of darkness trying to see some light. But there wasn't any. Three years of this vocational training, then a professional world that was exactly the same, just a better wage. After another six or seven years gathering experience in the field, I could do my master of carpentry, and that would allow me to take over my father's small company. And I'd still be doing what I am doing today, slightly modified, for another 30 years, until retirement stretched out its arms.

"There must be something else, God damn it!"

I hit the pedals of the bicycle hard, as if to break them. Would it be a more inspiring future to be a dentist? Back to school, then university, and then when I am thirty I could start working inside people's mouths - for the rest of my life?

"Jesus, who wants that!"

Lawyer? Being clever and getting paid for it? What for? Same procedure, same utter waste, different format.

"What is worth living for?"

“What would I love waking up for in the morning?”

“What is it I want to use my life for?”

Nothing came up for me. I was seriously depressed. I was unhappy, and I longed for happiness. I had no desire for this life, in fact, no desire at all. Work in the morning, home at night, work in the morning, home at night.

I couldn't see any reason to continue living. I didn't know what to do; I only knew that I was completely unhappy. Hope did not work for me: I saw no point in spending an existence waiting for something to happen in a future I felt no connection to.

After a dozen moons circulating within my self-created catch-22, I was on my knees, ready to give up. At 16 years of age, I lay on my bed in the silence, wondering about suicide.

My parents didn't know how to deal with me, so they tried to send me to see a psychologist. I didn't want to go, and found myself back at the river, speaking to Benn.

“In the end every life, including mine, ends in death,” I said to Benn. “Surely death is nothing to be afraid of, it is simply a fact. We have to leave the body and nobody knows what happens afterwards, we can only speculate. It doesn't matter

whether you are rich or poor, black or white, whether you have lived a good life or not, the result is the same for everyone. Nobody can escape. So if it all ends anyway the same way, for God's sake, why should I suffer through 60 years of misery only to harvest the same result? So I might as well die tomorrow! At least I'll skip the suffering."

I looked at Benn defiantly. The rebel in me had found a cause again. This was very logical I thought, and it made more sense to me than any other thoughts I had had over the past winter months while working at the BMW factory training to be a carpenter.

Benn seemed to know exactly what I was talking about.

"How would you do it?" he asked.

"I'd jump off a cliff. I don't want to fall asleep or be unconscious, I want to be fully alert until the last second, fully aware of what's happening when the ultimate transition takes place."

I imagined the rock-faced cliff, and suddenly that was all I could see, not the sun and the clouds, the sky, the grass, the trees, the flowers, all I saw was the ground, the unknown solution to the tormenting redundancy that was my life. A

strange fascination, mixed with curiosity, gathered momentum.

"What will happen afterwards? What will I be? Where will I go? How will I feel?" I turned to Benn and the words tumbled out in excitement.

"I could uncover this mystery in just a few hours. It takes two hours to drive to the mountains, another two hours to climb, and then ... the jump!"

I felt a rush of power. Four hours and I could force life to reveal its most protected secret. Four hours and I would know what nobody could tell me.

Four hours and I would move on. I was just four hours away from liberty.

Benn was smiling.

"What's the joke?" I asked, confused.

"Sinclair," he asked seriously, "what are you waiting for?"

His impersonal empowerment hit me like a crack to the skull.

In my head I was screaming, "Because I'm not sure if I hadn't missed anything!"

In my heart strangely I was not afraid.

Benn's unattached attitude towards my suicidal considerations was the opposite of what I would expect from anybody I would share these innermost thoughts. I expected

sympathy, solace, encouragement, rescue. Death was a taboo in my environment, especially for a sixteen year old! Taboos have the effect to amplify the forbidden. Taboos only create steam boilers.

The space Benn provided for me was an unrestricted judgement free space. There was nothing to oppose or to rebel against. It was the presence of pure compassion. In this unconditional space of acceptance and love, I felt free. Free to die and free to live.

And it was undoubtedly up to me to decide. The stars didn't give me an answer. Nor did my river. Nor did Benn. I wasn't lonely, but I was completely alone.

I could end my life right then if I wanted to. Quite a responsibility, I thought to myself. Not choosing to die, means choosing to live. But who does actually live!? They all seem to be victims of living!

"Sin, stick to your own cause!" Benn pulled me back into the Here and Now. He was there, sitting on a rock. I felt his immense presence and how it embraced my entire being.

"Benn, the only thing that's clear to me is: I will not continue another day living like a victim to my own fate!" I cried.

"Excellent Sin, that's the right spirit. Go on."

I had never thought about taking full ownership of my life. I lived the obvious like everybody else. All of us thrown into 'life' and left with no option but to live it, without a manual, without true clarity. And nobody seemed to question it! All my friends went into the at-hand avenues of prepared options: the next generation of doctors, managers, social workers, mothers, politicians and so on and so forth. Only I seemed to have a problem with that!

"So you're clear not to continue with your life as you're currently living it" Benn paraphrased.

I nodded.

Benn's face was bright, and I believed I saw a light around his head against the contrast of the pitch black night surrounding us.

My mind raced up and down, left and right, back and forth through thousands and thousands of life choice options, just like a roulette ball hopping from one number slot to the next and the next, undecided where to settle.

Sure, I made decisions every day and from afar it looked like I was doing something with my life, but I was not. As a matter of fact, I was treading the mill like everyone else.

"What are you waiting for, Sin?"

I stared at Benn as my mind did its spinning. Slowly I started a new conversation.

"Well, I suppose since I'm in the power to leave, I could actually as well stay. And *if* I stayed..." I hesitated, trying to feel my way into the next moment of contemplation "...what would I devote my existence to? What would be worth living for? What would I be excited about getting up for in the morning? What would I be proud of living for? What would be a real contribution to the world? What kind of life would make a real difference?"

I looked at Benn and he was smiling, radiating his spirit and heart. I carried on, digging deeper.

"What is the scarcest good in this world? What is missing?"

A picture of Catherine flashed through my mind, and the so obvious insight slapped me gently.

"Love!

Love's missing.

Love is scarce.

Who's training to become a bringer of love? We've already got bakers and butchers and God knows everything else, but what about love?"

My youthful experience of those moments of love had taught me, that love is the most extraordinary thing of all, and it had been the most important and purposeful experience in my life so far. The only bitch was that I couldn't find the path to love's residence. Every attempt I made ended in disappointment. The day I gave up looking for love was also the day when my depression started.

Benn's voice broke the silence.

"Happiness and love inevitably go together. One isn't without the other. How could anybody who is unhappy possibly love? How could anybody who loves possibly be unhappy? When there is happiness, a happy society will emerge. Unhappy people can never create a happy world. We inevitably create what we are. As within so without."

"Wow, that was a handful, Benn!"

In my mind a set of new doors opened seeing. Looking is one thing, seeing quite another. I started to see!

"So if I decide to live, it is for this one purpose only: to find happiness and to be and give love." I shouted out loud, as if I wanted god to hear me.

I felt my life energy flooding back, like the waters rushing through a broken dam, and with it came the passionate rich

excitement of being alive with a purpose worth living for. I had left the dark caves of unconscious existence, and now I felt hungry to step out into the bright light of a purposeful future.

My soul was smiling. The clearing around Benn and me seemed suddenly to be softly enlightened. I searched for the moon, but wasn't able to locate it.

I looked at Benn.

"It's new moon, Sin" Benn smiled.

"Happiness. It's so simple, Benn! Why didn't I see that?!" I shouted in excitement.

Benn took me by the shoulders.

"Commit 100%, Sinclair, and you will find happiness.

"There's nothing more powerful in the universe than absolute commitment. But for absoluteness to occur, meeting and defying death is the ticket.

"Well done my friend."

Benn was right. I was not kidding. I was ready to spit death in the face and throw myself down a cliff. Not so any more, now I had a reason worth living for.

My Outer Million

The commitment to find happiness was rock solid. Just the “how” was a mystery still. Intuitively I felt I needed first hand experiences in my search. Second hand knowledge is for the spectators. I was a player.

My family was average middle class and although we had no survival problems, we were far from being rich. And all the papers and movies were worshipping the rich and famous. Were they happy? On the pictures they looked like they were.

There was only one way to find out.

The view from my Cologne penthouse was still somewhat foreign to me. A thousand lights faded the stars and even more people were out walking the streets and enjoying the

night life. From the top floor, people looked like ants and I felt like a giant. I wondered what my old friends were doing. It was Sunday evening and I was bored so I decided to visit home. I never managed to make friends with Sundays. "What's with these holidays? The sun doesn't take holidays!" I argued in my mind. I was certain that man created holidays to give himself a frequent temporarily break from the chronic depression of living an unnatural life. I picked up my keys, walked out the door and drove straight back to Munich.

The streets were empty there and as I drove around aimlessly it was obvious that none of my old hangouts were open. I had driven all the way from Cologne, sure I wasn't expecting a welcome back party, but surely someone had to be out and about, something had to be open!

The P1- of course the P1 would be open, the only place I had never frequented. The parking lot was full to capacity and I could hear the music from my car.

The bouncer at Germany's 'hardest door' watched suspiciously as I handed the car keys to the valet. Probably wondering who I was. But he greeted me with a suave nod and opened the door for me without saying a word. I nodded back and walked in slowly.

The place was busy, but not overwhelmingly so. I saw a few familiar faces as I walked towards the bar; they smiled and mouthed 'Hey' as they raised their glasses. It had been a long time! Even though I had made it big now, I still didn't feel as if I belonged here amongst all the fancy décor and expensively dressed drunks desperately looking for someone to take home. Yep, I had a car now, a Mercedes SEL 350, and I was wearing an Armani suit and had a Cartier watch strapped to my arm. I had enough cash in my pocket to buy everyone in there a round. For the first time I qualified as one of 'them'. But was I? It was all so plastic.

I took a seat at the bar, and wondered who I would have seen at the bar my friends and I used to go to. It had been six months, and I hadn't kept contact with any of the old crowd. If the bar had been open tonight, and I had seen them, I wondered, what would we have done? I smiled to myself. I'd probably have done just this, sat at the bar, drunk a diet coke, and reflected on where I was and where I was set to arrive. I had dubbed this 'The consciousness inventory'.

Had I changed? I looked at my drink, which they'd put in a glass with an umbrella, a cherry, a slice of pineapple and

lemon. Why did they do that to a coke? I threw out the umbrella kebab, and took a sip.

I looked down at my new shoes.

“Is this where you want to be?” I asked myself.

No.

I didn't feel happy. I didn't feel I'd arrived. I felt exactly the same as before I had the riches.

I was on my way to becoming a corporate millionaire, I had made some nice money already and I enjoyed the vanity that comes with it. Yet inside I still felt empty, totally unfulfilled. Inside I was still the same young rebel, searching for the real thing, the unquestionable presence of happiness.

I couldn't believe it: this much money, this much success in such a short time and nothing, nada. The money had not made one ounce of a difference inside me. This millionaire's life style was no different to the one without money, except for the distractions of what money can buy. And happiness was not on that list. There was no pay-rise in happiness.

Only my exterior existence had changed. I was a millionaire, but not inside.

Strobe lights were turned on as a slow song wooed dancers to the floor. Complete strangers exchanged glances and clung to each other as if they were lovers, yet they were only

holding on to some fantasy they couldn't share and refused to let live. I watched, detached. Happiness obviously did not wait for me on the path of mundane achievements. Here I was in the presence of extreme wealth; I had experienced this life and it had not satisfied me yet. So when would it?

The walls of the nightclub were eating me up inside. Suddenly I couldn't sit there any longer. I threw the money on the counter, and rushed out.

Leaning against the hood of my Merc, watching the busy in and out of the P1 in front of me, lighting a cigarette, I knew I had just hit another cross road.

It was the perfect moment for Benn to make his mysterious appearances.

"Remember what I told you then?" he asked. *"The problems we have cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them,"* Sinclair. That's from my friend Einstein," Benn smiled.

I did not remember Benn having shared that with me.

I took a deep breath as I started to think about my life now, about working on the 22nd floor of *J Finance*, and how I'd come to feel exactly the same as I did working at the factory two years ago.

I thought back to the day a few months ago when I was introduced to the money game.

It had been a cold Saturday morning, and my girlfriend Veronica and I were sharing the weekend paper over a cappuccino in our favorite café.

A tap on the window caught my attention, and I waved a greeting to Robert, a casual acquaintance from school.

"Hi there Sinclair, I've been looking for you because I want to invite you to a meeting that could open up some new job prospects, maybe earn you an extra income if you are interested?" Robert spoke quickly as if he had other things to do. "No big deal."

"Sure, I'll be there," I replied.

Veronica raised her head like a startled filly, surprised by my prompt response.

Strolling through the city park later, I tried to define the strange and powerful attraction I had felt when Robert mentioned the moneymaking possibility. My mind works best when my body is moving, and my Mom used to joke that in order to think I had to take my body for a walk. I could not quite process the being-rich possibility, and I tried to grasp what it would feel like to be rich. Would having lots

of money give me happiness? Would it change me? Would I feel different? Would I feel I'd arrived, and ultimately happy? I gave up after a while, but did end up with an insight, namely that in order to feel something I must be in the presence of it. I don't mean the artificial emotion that gets triggered when I fantasise about something. No, I wanted to feel the *being* of being wealthy, not the imagination of it. I saw clearly that I could never be sure of anything if I hadn't felt and experienced it fully.

Was the universe knocking on my door with an entry ticket to wealth?

Before I knew it, I was walking into the biggest conference center I had yet seen. An exquisite red carpet led into the foyer. Champagne greeted the guests inside, and we were ushered into a well-appointed hall. A quick estimate counted well over six hundred guests, each with a name badge. There was a buzz of luxury that reminded me of the agreement I had just recently made with myself: to get rich as quickly as possible, even if only to experience its impact on my state of happiness!

The presentation began, an energetic proposal on a tedious subject. The subject was a financial package, consisting of

insurance deals and tax deductions and all the like. The scheme was multi-level marketing; you sign up under an agent, then you bring a certain number of people to your agent's table, and then you can become an agent yourself. Then you can bring people to your own table, thereby making some serious money.

I signed up straight away.

Even though I had now jumped feet first into the Financial Club, I didn't lose sight of my commitment to complete the carpentry training I had started. To honor my dad and to prove a point, I decided to complete the carpentry training that got me into my depression in the first place. But on my terms! As Benn had once said, *"From two possible options, choose the third."* On the one hand I only showed up at work half of the time and on the other hand I made sure to perform so well that I earned the premature completion of the training: graduation after three years already, and not after the standard three and a half years.

I found my first prospect the very next day. Some said it was beginners' luck, but by the next presentation I had already brought the required number of guests to become an agent myself, and I signed them all up. I walked away excited at

having created my first down-line. Suddenly being in charge of other people's success didn't feel so foreign: two weeks into the game and I was grinning from ear to ear. I had no idea it would be so easy for me! I had never been able to put my charm to use, and now here I was, charming my way to the top.

After only 5 weeks, I was called onto the podium and introduced as 'newcomer of the month'. I received my first cheque in public, shamelessly exploited as a marketing tool by the company, but I had no problems with being in the limelight. I actually loved the hype. And flush with my first real own money in my pockets, I could then go and enjoy my first small experiences of the rich, young-and-beautiful lifestyle.

My favorite ploy was to go into investment car dealers. I'd unbutton my top shirt button and start chatting up all the young secretaries, admiring the powerful cars, and as a neat side-effect, sell five customers onto the scheme.

Within two and a half months, I was again on stage, this time in front of hundreds of new agents, being praised as one of the top five of them. As I stood there, I looked over to Richard Linden, chairman of the *Financial Club*. I summed

up his obvious worth; a red Ferrari 512, an Italian De Tomaso limo, a gold Breitling on his wrist, a tailored suit and alligator skin shoes. And a tan as if he just came back from the Seychelles.

I wanted to know how much Richard Linden earned, and how.

Research showed me Richard earned five times what I earned on a sale, and he earned that from every single agent in a room of over five hundred agents. I studied the company profile and database, learning as much as I could. My mind ticked, inspiration boiled. I did the math and it became very clear to me that it would take me years to get to Richard's level. And I didn't want to wait years.

I can do this too. I can start the same business someplace else. Then *I am* the one on top. And that's the only place I want to be. Then I know how it feels to be top brass. Besides I'd have the money for my own Ferrari I thought, as I browsed the last few pages.

The decision was made, and it led the universe into action. I invited some friends home for a meeting, sure they would be interested in starting a partnership with me. After a lot of talking, none of them seemed to be willing to take the risk. I

was disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm, and sat slumped on the couch after they'd left.

Veronica walked out of the bedroom in nothing but panties and kissed me.

"I hope you don't mind, but I listened in on your meeting?" she asked.

"Not at all, I was planning to tell you about it anyway," I replied.

"Well good, because my father is the CEO of *J Investments* and he is always looking for new business ventures. And," she said while making herself coffee, "he lives in between here and Cologne."

She gestured to the coffee.

"Do you want some, babe?"

"Are you serious?"

"About the coffee or my dad?"

"Your father, *J Investments*, that's huge! I didn't know..."

"Yeah apparently. And he makes tons of money!" she said smiling. "He called while you were in your meeting. I told him we would visit him this evening. Are you up for that?"

"Absolutely!" I shouted, throwing my arms around her.

"I'm not sure if you will like him," she said and then burst out laughing at the expression on my face. She jumped on

me and we kissed, her legs wrapped around my waist as I walked us into the bedroom.

“Please, call me Jack,” Mr. Julianne said after I’d spent a good half hour briefing him on the business that I was intending to launch.

“Why don’t you start this business with me? Forget the others. I have big offices, I’ll give you a car, a nice apartment and I will finance the whole start-up. You’ll have 50% partnership in a holding company that we will found in Switzerland.”

I heard the words but I couldn’t quite believe them. Here I was being offered a silver platter, with only a small scratch on it, that of being a 50% partner.

“Mr. Julianne, Jack, thank you, your offer astounds me and I find it very hard to resist. But 50% is a lot. May I dare ask to get back to you with my answer at further notice?”

“Sinclair, it has been a pleasure meeting you.”

Back in the car Veronica lashed out on me: “Are you nuts? I don’t remember my dad having made anybody a partnership offer for years!”

“Appreciated!” I snapped back “but he wants 50%!

“And it is my idea and it will be my sweat!”

Veronica laughed “You are really naive, aren’t you my dear?!

“Under normal circumstances you could be glad if you would get a 40% offer!”

“What!?”

“See, money talks. Ideas many have, but only money can make them real. No money, no game.”

She spoke words from a different world. This was no carpenter talk. This was a very different game. And I knew I had to show myself worth.

“Of course,” I pretended “Just wanted to make it a bit more interesting for your dad!”

We both laughed.

Although I hated the 50% condition, I was intelligent enough to not let this golden opportunity pass by. The next morning I phoned Jack and accepted.

A week later, he collected Veronica and I in a white limo for a trip to downtown Cologne. I stepped into the limo as a man with a vision, and I stepped out as a man with the world at my feet!

We greeted the receptionist in a marble-plated lobby, took the lift to the top floor and stood in the elegant lounge of an

upmarket bachelor penthouse. I tossed my new Mercedes keys in my hand, checking out the generous windows and the two wide terraces overlooking the bright lights of Cologne. I sat back on my leather recliner and was about to kick off my shoes when I became aware that Veronica and Jack were watching me in great amusement.

"I see you like it!" Jack laughed.

"I do," I agreed without hesitation.

But I also heard the warning in his voice, a subliminal message saying "*and now you better show me what you've got!*"

I walked Jack to the door engaging in some practical business talk.

"Good night and see you tomorrow morning in the office!"

Veronica and I were alone in my new apartment, and we scattered clothes behind us on our rush to the bedroom.

The next morning I familiarized myself with the city as I drove to work. Here I was, nineteen years young, sitting behind the steering wheel of this awesome eight-cylinder Mercedes limo, an advance from Jack.

My new office building was so tall that I couldn't see the top of it, but I could see my reflection in the walls. My office was

on the top floor, my name emblazoned on a brass plaque on the door. I grinned, loosened my tie, and walked in. Through a door at the far end I could see a conference room, big enough for mass presentations. I shut the door again, sat at my desk, picked up the phone, and started getting my new business off the ground.

The first conversation I had with a potential affiliate gave me the name.

“So you’re saying I’d be a Millionaire’s Partner?” he asked.

“That’s exactly it,” I replied, and that’s the name that stuck.

Jack loved it.

Pretty soon I had full presentations nightly. Big corporations started phoning, wanting to be affiliated. My wallet was doubling in size, and I was soon checking out an additional car for the weekends, a used Porsche 911. The Ferrari was still out of reach.

So here I was now, nineteen years old, driving awesome luxury cars and living in a penthouse, with no financial worries in the world, and it had taken as little as six months for me to achieve these implausible heights. Oh, I forgot: Jack made me sign a staple of papers. I knew,

any objections from my side would be an immediate deal breaker. So I decided not even to read what I signed.

“Sinclair, what do you want now?”

As the picture faded and I focused on Benn’s question it all became so clear. Money could buy me anything material that I desired, but it didn’t cause happiness in me. I hated the insight, but it became also clear to me that a Ferrari wouldn’t give me happiness either.

I looked up at the stars. They shone with no regard for my dilemma.

“Oh you cold hearted, magnificent bastards!” I laughed out loud and sarcastically. A split second later I became aware that for outsiders I’m a guy, alone, leaning against my car having loud self-talk. They must think I’ve had a few drinks too many!

I didn’t know which direction to travel, but it was clear that going north, the way of money, was not leading me to my desired destination, so I needed to stop going north. I had explored money and riches; I understood it now, and how it was great at distracting me and it was great at making me look good, but inside it did nothing for me. And it brought

nothing for the world. So my relationship to money was in direct proportion to my relationship to reality.

"Don't go for the same insight twice," Benn said.

"I don't plan to!" I replied, having been through my consciousness inventory, I found that my mind was clear and peaceful.

I woke up before my alarm and it was still dark outside as I went for a run. The sun was just starting to peak behind the buildings and the skyline was blood red and orange, scraping the clouds with dappled pink. I ran as fast as my legs would take me, and only when the sun had completely risen did I stop and run back. It was eight o'clock when I left my penthouse and drove to work: everything felt different and calm. The calm before the storm.

I took the elevator to the top floor and walked straight into Jack's office.

Surprised, he stood up as I entered. His hand came out to shake mine.

"Good morning, Sinclair."

"Good morning Jack, excuse me for barging in like this, but it couldn't wait."

"Have a seat, is everything alright?"

"Fine thank you, but I have something important to discuss. Do you have some time now?"

"Sure, go on."

Go on – yes ok, I'd like to do that. Where to begin, where to begin?

I cleared my throat and then did just that. I began.

"Jack, I will be leaving the company at the end of the month. This is not for me. I will give you my two weeks' notice in writing by the end of the day, and I'll have a replacement by the end of the week who I'll train until I leave," I gabbled.

That went well, and he didn't cut in, I thought, so now I guess I should wait for him to speak. He was taking a little too long to reply. Why was he looking so blankly into the distance? I'd give him a few minutes.

I started tapping my foot, waiting.

Finally he looked at me.

"No," he said.

I was silent, waiting for him to continue, but he didn't.

"What do you mean, no?" I asked eventually.

"Just that. No. If you think you can just pack up and leave, then you have another think coming! I did not start this company with a rookie because I thought that after six

months he'd, what, get bored? Are you kidding? Is this some sort of joke?"

I shook my head, but said nothing.

"You signed a contract. I gave you a company, plus a car and a penthouse and a five-figure monthly income, so what is it? What more do you want, Sinclair?"

I did not show signs of reconsidering.

"I did not finance this so that you could just run off! I will sue you for everything! What are you going to do now, run off and become a fucking carpenter again? Well, you will have nothing, you will be nothing and you will walk out of here with nothing!" he barked devilishly.

I sat silently, waiting for him to calm down.

"Jack, I had an idea, an idea to make a lot of money, and you made that real for me. But I am not happy. This life is not meaningful. Money is great, but it doesn't free my mind. And it doesn't change the world."

"Oh, so now you wanna change the world?"

I assumed that question was rhetoric and so I continued.

"If you knew that the road you were on would not take you to the destination you had chosen, would you continue down it knowing that you are lost?"

"I am a grown man, Sinclair! Of course I would continue down it, because I would eventually find my way. Sinclair, you cannot choose your destiny, it's in the stars and it's chosen for us..."

"That's where you are wrong, Jack, the stars do not blink for us."

There was a long silence.

Finally he said, "You can leave now. I expect your resignation on my desk by lunchtime and a replacement by Friday."

As I reached the door, he called.

"Sinclair."

I turned, but he was looking at his computer screen.

"This is madness!"

I nodded.

"You better find a good replacement or I will sue you!"

I closed the door behind me.

In the elevator down I thought to myself "Unhappiness is an incredible, powerful wildfire; it burns down anything untrue."

Two weeks later I had nowhere to go. I had a Merc and some money and all the time in the world, but where to from here?

God, are You there?

"Sinclair, what's up?"

"Dad, hey, I'm good, excellent actually. And you: how are you?"

"Well, I saw Veronica this morning and she didn't look too happy. She says you broke up, and that you have lost your mind and are running away to some island! Doesn't sound 'good' to me."

He was a little out of breath on the phone and obviously concerned.

"I tried to call you earlier. Yes, we have broken up, but that's because she gave me an ultimatum and I couldn't accept having to choose between two things that I wanted. So I chose to not choose and she couldn't accept that... it was an

either-or situation and you know how I always make it as-well-as...”

“I’m not concerned about that, Sinclair, but you also left your job and the company you started, what are you doing?”

he cut in.

“Dad, I realized that I was going down the wrong path and I had to change it. So, yes, I have left the job that I created at the company but it’s all fine, everything is sorted out...”

“Do you plan to come back to the factory?”

“No, Dad. That’s not an option for me. I am glad I have this qualification behind me, but you know how miserable I was at the factory, I couldn’t go back there.”

“When are you coming home then?”

“I first have to speak to god, Dad.”

“Huh?”

“Well, I’m leaving for Tunisia. A friend of mine has a holiday bungalow down there and gave me his keys.”

“Where on earth is Tunisia? And what do you plan to do there?” he asked, almost laughing.

“It’s actually an island off Tunisia, and I am going for an indefinite period. I have no clue where to from here. I’m out of options. So I bank on god bailing me out of this deadlock!”

“Have you become religious all of a sudden?”

"No Dad, but that doesn't mean that I don't feel that there's an intelligence behind the curtain."

Silence. I knew Clarke couldn't possibly follow my thoughts.

"I'll call again when I'm half way there!"

"Ok son, do what you need to do." Clarke lovingly replied. He never threw stones in my way.

"Right now I'm somewhere in France, about an hour from the Riviera where I'll be catching the ferry to Tunisia." I explained to my mom the next day, taking a rest in a motel.

"And how long do you plan on being there?"

"I haven't set a date yet. I have a lot to figure out and I want no pressures, hence the island get-away. "

"Son, are we going to be able to contact you on this island?"

Although I was on the phone, I rolled my eyes back.

"I'm not sure, I don't think so, but I'll be fine and I'll keep in touch."

"Oh yes, and an agent called at the house looking for you the other day, about modelling I think, and I told him you would be in touch because apparently they make lots of cash and get to travel?" she said, quite pleased with having this information for me.

"An agent, I don't know of any agent? Oh wait a minute, yes ... I was approached a few months ago when I was in Munich. Agghh anyway, I'll think about that when I get back.

"I love you, bye."

"You too."

For the rest of the drive to the ferry, I wondered how I should approach god once I arrived at my enclave. "I will wait for God to speak with me, and he has to give me direction!" I had stated. I made him responsible for my dilemma and now he has to fix it. Who else!?

Making myself believing in the success of this approach I put my mind to rest and listened to music and sang along to ACDC's *"It's a long way to the top..."*. Some things change, some things don't; and my love for good Rock'n Roll belonged to the latter.

I arrived at the ferry expecting to queue, but I literally just drove straight on, parked my car and paid on board. Such a pleasure. But it was a horrific two day trip across the Mediterranean before I was dropped off in Tunisia. The long

rolling waves turned my stomach upside down and I was sick to the bone half way through the trip.

Once on dry land again, the sea sickness loosened its brutal grip on me, leaving me exhausted but ecstatic that it was over. What had taken me five minutes to load in Europe now took me four hours to offload in Africa! I had not been expecting the wait, and spent most of the time melting in the sun trying unsuccessfully to light my cigarette with a match in heavy winds. Finally my car came off the back and I was able to get going. The first thing I did when I stepped in was to push in the lighter and light a smoke. Then I started the engine, put in a tape, and headed east along the coast.

600km later I was still driving, except now in total silence. Every time a traffic cop pulled me over, (and every traffic cop I passed pulled me over!) they were open about looking for a little baksheesh. Are they to blame? A young hunk, alone in a Merc limo? I'd given away nine tapes already. I felt like live bait to the tigers. The dirt road was deserted, but I was hardly moving! In Germany I would have caused a traffic jam at this speed.

Much frustration and a lot of sand later I arrived at the right spot, a village where the island and the mainland almost

meet. And, just like the road, it was deserted. After knocking on the doors of five empty grass shanties, I found a lone African man sleeping under a tree. I woke him up gently, by staring at him persistently and whispering, "Wake up, wake up."

Joyous had a bright white smile and beaming eyes. Without saying a word, he showed me where to park my car and gestured his promise to personally look after it. He then took me to the boats that were anchored in the still water of the bay; the ocean here had no waves, not even ripples. He tapped a boat to show it was for me to use: well, boat might be exaggerating ... it was a small wooden box with an engine! Then he pointed me to the island, sitting about 500m away.

Joyous helped me unload my belongings from the car and onto the boat. He also sold me some supplies from his stall, a straw mat covered with coconuts and cashew nuts. I bought everything he had, as I thought I might not get back here until I was ready to leave. I got into the shaky contraption, and Joyous pushed me out into the deep clear water. He stopped when the level reached his knees, and waved heartily until I could see him no more.

I approached the island leisurely, feeling no need to rush to jump onto its shores: I was enjoying the silence of being calm in the middle of the sea. When I finally got to the shore, I revved the engine as hard as I could, then switched off the motor. The sun was slowly setting and the clean white sand was warm from the long sunny day. I looked up at the secluded island, drowned by the off-season silence, and I knew I was definitely alone.

It didn't take long to find number 9. The cottages were scattered amongst the palm trees, a fair distance apart from each other. I walked onto the wooden patio and unlocked the front door feeling I'd been here a thousand times. Then I opened the door and the stale unwelcoming smell of dust made me sneeze. This was no penthouse, but it was perfect for what I needed; one big room consisting of a kitchen, dinette and bedroom, with a toilet and shower tucked discretely away behind a door.

I carried up the few simple belongings I had brought and unpacked them straight away, throwing clothes into a drawer, placing books on the table and coconuts in the kitchen. I found a hammock, and hung it up between two palm trees. I lay down on it to relax, alone with the stars.

Darkness fell without me even noticing, but the stars and the moon and the bright horizon made it feel light all the time. The sea stretched 200m away and from the hammock the walk looked pleasant.

I put my hands behind my head and looked up, because that is where everybody looks when they speak to God, and I spoke to him in my mind.

“God I’m all yours, alone on this island, ready to receive your advice, so what is it? I’m looking for a word or a sign or a dream or vision or whatever you it is you do, and I will wait patiently. Even though that is not one of my strengths, I will be patient for your word.”

The days idled by with the passing of the tide; the full moon peaked and then turned into a smile that said nothing, and I waited. I waited, and I watched, and waited, and the sun rose and set, and the wind blew, and I waited and I watched. Out of sheer boredom I used some of my daily time to learn horse riding on a genuine Arabian. The rest of the time I spent waiting.

And nothing happened.

No voice from above, no dreams, no visions, no movements, no signs. Nothing but a pure and simple life in that distant

hideaway from the world. And that life also failed to make me happy.

The days started to drone with boredom. I had played my one last tape to death and I was tired of relaxing on the hammock and the silence was just getting too loud.

Three weeks passed without a single word from God.

Late one boring evening, I was sitting on the bed with nothing specific to do, tapping my hands to a tune that I was playing in my head. I looked across at the pile of books I had brought with me. There were only three that I hadn't read. These were unusual antiques, all on black magic, that I had bought purely for the curiosity they stirred in me. I hadn't really planned on reading them, but now they caught my attention.

I picked up the top one from the pile, and lay back on my bed, knees folded. The house was open, the lights were all on, and the air was muggy and warm. I flipped the pages randomly without bothering to read the prelude or any other introductions. I simply picked a page in the middle, and found verse after verse written down.

These verses didn't make sense to me, but since it was a book on magic I assumed that they were some kind of

superstitious invocation. In my naive ignorance, I started reading the verse out loud.

I got caught up in the act, and was soon fully absorbed in what I sounded and looked like. "Sinclair the magician: act 1!" I smiled. Standing in front of an imaginary audience, I read sentence after sentence as good as I could in an unknown strange language.

I read an entire page without understanding a word of it, and finished with a nod. The paper was coarse and I was about to turn the page when I felt a heavy weight thud onto my left shoulder.

FUCK!

It was extremely warm, and it felt like a claw burning into my shoulder: it was the weight of an owl or small cat or a heavy hand. Frozen in shock, I stopped turning the page, attempting to focus on the feeling of this presence. But I looked straight at the book and not at my shoulder, afraid that if I saw it, it might become something very real and much scarier than just a hot claw. Do not look at it, look away, it'll go away, I told myself. I stopped breathing, and my neck was stiff with fear. The weight moved, cautiously, as if to find its balance. Or to see whatever it was looking for! I may not have been breathing, but my blood was pumping

through my veins so hard I could see it. There was tension on my shoulder and a breeze against my face. I dared not flinch as this strange weight settled heavier, somehow getting hotter.

It moved. I felt it scrape across my chin and I instinctively slammed the book shut and bolted outside.

I ran as if a lion was about to pounce on me, sprinting straight towards the sea, thrashing my arms and groaning with disgust. Without hesitation I ran straight into the waves and dived into the water head first. I stayed under for as long as I could, doing somersaults and beating at my shoulder, trying to wash myself free of whatever it was that had positioned itself on me. I finally had to come up for air, and only then did I look at my shoulder.

There was nothing on it.

I slapped at my body roughly, looking around into the dark water and towards the shore, splashing hard, both for balance and out of fear.

I'm in the water, and so could it be, I thought. I slowly turned towards the horizon and looked out along the moonlit coast. Then I did quick circles, again and again, looking everywhere, until I was certain that I had lost it.

With a dash of speed I surged out of the water. I stood on the shore, my vest and tracksuit pants totally soaked, dripping like a wet dog, too petrified to move. Although I appeared to be free of this thing, I was very apprehensive about going back to the house. Breathing in the night air and studying the surroundings only helped to calm my heart rate slightly. Every couple of seconds I checked over my shoulder and behind me. I didn't trust anything just yet.

What the hell had it been? It surely wasn't a dream; I was too alert for daydreaming. I couldn't believe the eerie feeling of black magic nonsense. The island had never been so noisy. Crickets and bats and the wind: everything was out tonight, probably hiding behind the palm trees laughing at me.

Well I'll show you! I muttered. I crept back to the house on tiptoe, aware of every movement, listening out for any sound. Just before the house I stopped and took a few breaths. After a minute or two I sneaked in quietly, hardly stepping on the floorboards. I cautiously picked up the three books and ran straight out the house again, back in the direction I had come from. Once I was satisfyingly far enough away from the house, near a clean area on the beach, I threw these books into a pile on the beach. I found some

damp matches in my pocket and managed to light one page. From that page I lit all the others, and as they started burning, I stood back. As soon as the fire was clearly well under way, I sat down far enough away to avoid being burnt but close enough to control it if anything should happen. I sat staring into the flames, hugging my knees, my shadow the only thing behind me, the firelight across my face.

Watching the pages burn to ashes, I wondered what I had read. If I had read the English foreword and the English preparations, things would have been very different, I thought. I had vaguely heard about what you should do to prepare for an invocation, protective things like oiling the body, filling the air with incense, drawing chalk symbols onto the floor. And I probably would not have bothered with all that anyway.

Besides that, it probably would have been as boring as everything else was on this island.

"Well, that's it with black magic. Not up my alley at all."

"Thought so!"

"Benn?!"

"Indeed, my sorcerer's apprentice!" he laughed.

"Benn, can we connect later? I want HIM to rock up. HE needs to show if HE'S for real!"

"As you wish, Sin. Good luck!" and Benn dissolved himself as swift as he appeared.

I looked up to the sky and sighed; I was still waiting for a sign. I sat with the fire until it had completely died down. I lay on my back and watched the stars, counting four that were shooting. I wondered where they were off to.

"So God, what hah? What am I to do?"

Nothing. I got nothing and heard nothing and felt nothing. So I went to bed and the night ended as it had every other night. I fell asleep.

The whole of the next week dragged on until the day I celebrated my nineteenth birthday; another day, another week, another year. I was tired of waiting, anxiously waiting for some communication, something from God for god's sake!

"I'm nineteen years old! Happy Birthday Sinclair!" I said to myself as I scrounged through the fridge trying to find something to eat. I went for a swim, a run along the shore

and then took the boat out with an umbrella to avoid getting any darker from the sun.

The peace reminded me of the deep relaxation exercises I was introduced to by Dr. Weiss three years ago. His deep and clear voice had led me effortlessly into a conscious trance, whose effect was to lose all body consciousness and experience myself as spirit only. Although these sessions had lasted only 45 minutes a day, I had felt great relief from the blues I was burdened with back then. Floating on the water in a wooden boat, far from anything and feeling frustrated, isolated and ignored, I wished I had those tapes with me now.

The day had ended and I had had no contact with the outer world, but I was nineteen now. And still God was ignoring me! The night fell and the mosquitoes came out to bother me, and I couldn't take the never ending silence anymore.

"Enough Q-U-I-E-T-!!!" I shouted up at the sky, my arms wide open.

"Why don't you answer me? Why? Why?" I screamed from the pit of my stomach.

My fists pounded the air. There was some relief in expressing myself like this.

"You should help! Where are you when you're needed? Huh?"

My voice roared around the trees, and then there was silence. Nothing moved, nothing changed. All was as hushed as it had been before. There was no burning bush, no Hollywood moment, with a furious flash falling out of the sky hitting the outrageous rookie hard enough to make him shut up.

Nothing happened.

"This is all your fault! Why did I believe that you would SHOW ME THE WAY!" I shouted up to the stars.

"You should be a little clearer, you know! Throw a man a bone here, the world should be a better place, it's supposed to be easy! God, dammit, you should be here, if you exist you should be approachable! You have a million ways of punishing us and when we need you, hah, what about those who ask for just some little advice?"

I continued with less volume in my voice; in fact my throat was getting croaky.

"Life is supposed to be happy! We're supposed to love and live in peace and understand and not be so confused all the time and so alone! Why have you left us? You should write a new book, one that makes sense and isn't a bunch of men

whining about their issues back however many thousands of years ago!”

I gulped a breath of air, and bitched on.

“Why are you so stubborn? You could say something, right? Wouldn’t cost you much, huh? So why are you hiding? Or are you too busy elsewhere? I thought you were omnipresent!”

I was on a roll.

“You let your own son wait for 40 days too, didn’t you?! Is that a divine policy? What kind of attitude is that?

Why must you make it so bloody difficult for us to find you? I thought hide and seek was for children only! Why can’t you just drop this attitude and show up?”

“H-E-L-L-O-!!!!”

Standing alone amongst the trees I was scrupulously searching the sky for any sign. Slowly, very slowly, I became aware of the undeniable indifference the universe has for my needs, grievances, opinions and questions.

Not a single star cared to move for my most precious stuff! Outrageous!

The scene was so desperate, and so ridiculous at the same time that I started to laugh.

“Ok Benn, I’m done here!”

Silence.

“Benn, apologies for having pushed you aside, but I needed to find out if there’s a big boss up there!”

“I know, Sinclair” Benn laughed, having appeared on my left “No offense taken!

“I understand only too well.”

“Benn, I’ve been giving it my all. For five weeks by now. But not even a single star is moving for my most important existential concerns!”

I sensed that Benn is holding his laughter back, feeling my underlying pain.

“Sin, what have you got that’d make the stars move?” he asked implying that there was in fact something.

The question hit me profoundly. I lay down on the sand, my mind blank.

Lying there on the beach, my consciousness processed the impressions of these days in solitude. On my inner screen,

the image of me shouting at and blaming first God and then the stars for my misery started replaying, and I grinned.

"Quite some bombastic drama you have staged there, haven't you!? Maybe one day you should try acting?"

Benn made me always laugh, no matter how much I was sucked up in my own dramas.

"So, there's no God? Is that what you're saying?"

"You're looking out for an image of god that has been invented by the minds of your ancestors."

"Hmmm."

"If it would be up to you, how would you create an image of god?"

"Hmmm, deep stuff Benn!" I chirped, buying myself some time to think about his question.

"Actually, I would imagine him just like you!" I laughed, not really knowing what I was saying there.

"You're welcome!" Benn replied as if it would be the most normal thing in the world.

It was only later that day, that it actually hit me what he was saying.

For now, I changed the subject slightly: "I feel as if I've been cured of an illness, the unconscious assumption that there's power in our opinions.

"Jesus, how many thousands of hours have I wasted other people's time in sharing my opinions with them, being so ignorant of the fact that it wouldn't and couldn't make a bloody difference!" I admitted to Benn.

I thought about the larger scale of the world and its leaders' approaches to the myriads of problems needing to be solved. I thought about the billions of dollars companies waste on management meetings where their participants exchange endless opinions, expecting the listeners to be impacted by them. I thought about the arguments I have had with the few women in my life, and saw clearly why it always ended up in vain.

For the next hour or so, my mind was astonishingly quiet. I had no questions, no theories, and no opinions. I smiled as I made up my mind. I was ready to go home.

I didn't need to think about it, I wasn't declaring defeat, but my time on the island was up. I fell asleep on the beach under the stars with Benn sitting quietly by. 'The Master',

the wizard: no, the spirit of the river, the universe divine, God.

I woke to heat beating down on me and struggled to open my eyes against the sun. I sat up with them closed, feeling extremely fresh and free. Benn was no longer around, and I ran into the sea to wash the sleep away. For the first time, I appreciated in full the glorious surroundings of this secluded island in the Med.

I took one photo of the island as I motored away in the boat I'd become so fond of. Approaching the mainland felt strange.

I kept expecting a parade for my arrival, or at least just some people. Still no one was around. I found my Mercedes in the same condition I had left it, except for a finger-thick layer of Sahara sand giving it a new color. I dusted my hands and looked around.

"Ah here you are, Joyous! How is it, my friend?" Joyous had not moved in the three weeks I'd been away; he was still sleeping under the same tree.

"If you clean the sand off my car, I'll pay twice what you earn in a month!"

Within seconds, the car was shining. Done! You see, money does talk.

I shook his hand, and took a picture of the biggest smile I have ever seen. Joyous, what an appropriate name.

I got in my car, and the familiar scent of fine leather was such a welcome change of the rather monotonous menu of sensations I had to endure for the last 6 weeks.

I wasn't stopped once on the way back: the same traffic cops were there and I drove at the same speed, but no one stopped me.

It just goes to show that it's true: whatever goes on outside is a reflection of what's going on inside. I came as a taker and left as a giver.

Instead of going straight back to Munich, I decided to make a stop at Monte Carlo, one of my favorite cities. For me Christmas was the best time to visit, so I spent the festive winter season in Monaco with my money melting away faster than the snow on the chimneys. In two weeks, I had done everything there was to do, and I was flat broke and ready to get going.

On my way back to good ol' Munich I reflected the Sinclair way: fancy car, fast speed, sunroof open, Ray Bans on,

cappuccino to go in the cup holder, menthol cigarette cooling my mouth. "There's magic in living shamelessly and in absolutely what's present, no matter what it is. In 100% going through a life theme, any experience, it dies away once it's complete. It's gone forever. So interesting! No regrets, no residues. Finished, basta, gone. And the feeling left is nothing less than freedom. And space! Space for the next to come. And it doesn't seem to matter whether it makes sense or not. Life only can move on with me full throttle if I don't carry any excess baggage. Most people live life with resistance, they never get their foot off the brake. That's why they go into the same experience time and again, because they never really finish it. Finishing is the opposite of avoiding. Finishing is a natural result of a total surrender to the experiences as they present themselves, whatever they are. Not to speak of the fun that comes with living absolutely! Fear is always the ultimate spoilsport. I'm not living for making it into tomorrow. I'm living for the sake of living. Tomorrow is for the faint-hearted.

So, dear life, what have you got in mind next for me?"

The 8 cylinders did a fantastic job. The highway through the Alps became a sexy moving snake, and I was its rushing blood pumping towards the next unknown destination.

First Awakening

I had not been back in the country for long when the modelling agent called again.

"Sinclair, Sinclair!" he said, pouring on the charm. "I have had a good feeling about you, ever since I saw you at the café that day."

I remembered him only vaguely, but listened anyway: I had nothing else to do and nothing to lose.

"I can get you bookings straight away," he continued. "You'll be making big cash in no time! Just one audition so my partners can meet you, and I promise - you'll have the jobs coming in immediately!"

Well, who wouldn't feel flattered? I made an appointment for 1 o'clock that afternoon. It was a cold but sunny day, and with a few hours to kill, I walked to the café down the road

and ordered a proper German breakfast. Not once in Tunisia had I had a decent meal. Now I feasted my eyes on a plate of fried eggs, ham, sausages and bacon accompanied by that delicious dark sour dough bread only the Germans can make really well. Half-way through everything, I was stuffed, and placing my knife and fork together, leaned back in the chair. Just in time to focus on my cappuccino and in watching the street life in this trendy part of the city. Art, fashion, media were the name of the game here. A vibe I thoroughly enjoyed.

Having plenty of time to bridge until the appointment in the agency, I got myself today's newspaper to catch up with things. Nothing had changed. The same dilemmas, the same format, the same reports filled the pages. I hadn't missed anything in my time on the island. Things don't change fast, if at all!

My route to *Act Models* passed the only esoteric bookstore in this neighborhood, Akasha Books. This was usually a favorite hang-out of mine, but today I just glanced in the windows, resisting the seductive atmosphere with its promising scent of revelation.

The main window was plastered with bright red billboard posters. A poster with the picture of a bright smiling monk in the lotus position caught my attention. *Mantra Yoga – Swami Sityanoda – Monday 7pm* I read. I stared at the poster. Why did I feel excited at the thought of trying this out? I repeated under my breath “Swami Sityanoda... Sityanoda. Mantra Yoga!” I memorized the when and where and hurried on.

I went into the audition like a tiger walking unknowingly into the waves. A team of photographers and agents laughed, joked and chatted briefly, all the while carefully studying me from all angles. They asked me to walk up and down. How awkward! Then they took a few Polaroid head shots and gathered to evaluate them while I was checking out the gorgeous female model who just came in. “Brazilian!” I thought. As the man’s mind does, I started to undress her in my mind but couldn’t get to the interesting part of that, because suddenly my name was called. “Sinclair! we like you.” My agent called across the room. I got up, smiled, walked over to the booking table of the agency and was offered to take seat. I looked at the contract they handed to me, and I signed it happily.

"You're going to pay me to just hang around and be photographed?" I asked.

I couldn't believe I was going to make money so easily. Well it wasn't that easy as I found out later.

"We are not a little agency," the photographer laughed. "We do commercials and promotions and magazine campaigns as well as catwalk shows. Our clients are plenty, and you, my friend, are the epiphany of the young successful father image."

I smiled. But I didn't know whether I like that kind of image. Family, father, conventional success were so not my cup of tea.

But hey, I just got accepted by an international modelling agency! I was a nobody in the industry and in no position to make any demands.

I felt 10 feet tall as I walked down the street. Enthusiasm is infectious and I was very aware that many of the women passing by were checking me out. I was alight with expectation. Something new was happening in my life.

That night I stood in front of the mirror, and for the first time in my life took serious stock of what I looked like. Never before had I seen what these professionals were seeing. My

Mom had always told me that I was attractive, and certainly the girls seemed to like me, but I had never studied my nose and my jaw line, my hair and my hands, my abs and my biceps with professional eyes. Now I was going to be paid for having these attributes.

Nice, I thought, this is a charming way to make money.

The foyer of the hotel was huge, draped with elegant woman and sleek businessmen. The concierge materialized discreetly at my side.

"May I help you, sir?"

"The conference room where Swami Sityanoda is?"

"Of course, sir. Right this way."

"Thank you."

I smiled as I followed him down the lush red-carpeted passage. I still found something exciting about the aura of wealth portrayed by places like these.

The ballroom door stood wide open, spilling the intense sweet smell of Indian incense as I entered.

A short man glided up to me.

"Good evening! I'm Kumar. Please, come right in. And put your shoes there" he pointed to a huge shoe rack with a sign on top saying 'Leave your ego with your shoes'.

A Caucasian despite the exotic name, with piercing blue eyes above an almost suspicious smile, Kumar bustled across the room full of people, and showed me to a vacant spot.

The seats were large brightly-colored cushions on the floor, and I subsided rather awkwardly onto mine. Surreptitiously looking around, I re-arranged my legs into a semblance of comfort, and began to absorb the surroundings. The lights were on, but the impression was one of dim candlelight. There was a slight background murmur of soft voices, but no real conversation. The incense wafted across my nostrils as I slowly relaxed, and I felt a sense of calm filter through me as I took on the essence of the room.

Only after a few minutes did I realize that there were only men around me. A middle aisle separated us from the women. It felt strange, but I realized it was of no importance. I settled back to digest all the new impressions.

At precisely 7o'clock, the room fell suddenly silent and Swami Sityanoda entered. An imposing man, he was dressed in a full burgundy robe. Three white lines were painted horizontally across his forehead and a third eye painted in dark red.

There was a stillness in the room as he took his place on a small platform at the front of the room. With consummate ease he folded his legs into the double-lotus posture as if it was the most casual thing to do. There was no fuss, no vanity, only an irresistible presence radiated from Swami Sityanoda. To say the least, I was impressed.

The Swami sat silently for a full moment, taking the time to look slowly around the audience. For a flash of time his eyes met mine and I felt I had been recognized. How could that possibly be? I'd never met this Swami before in my life. I'd never met any Swami at all! But for the first time ever, I experienced that someone actually saw me.

"Good evening!" he broke the silence with his bright smile confirming a youthful charm.

I couldn't quite distinguish his accent, although I thought I could detect a mixture of Australian and Hungarian intonation in his voice. And I couldn't quite define his appearance either. Very short dark gray hair, with emerald green eyes and a pale skin, his features were neither Caucasian nor Mongolian.

Swami Sityanoda started his lecture. He spoke clearly and confidently, without pause and without referring to notes,

pronouncing each word with a resonance that rung around the room as if amplified electronically.

“Mantra Yoga is a union of voice and sound.

“Yoga means to unite with our Origin, and the word *mantra* is made up of two syllables, *man* & *tra*, which in Sanskrit is *Mananat Trayate*, meaning advice or suggestion.

“Mantras are psychically powerful sound syllables capable of exciting emotions and evoking powerful suggestions in the mind.

“And they affect both the person who speaks them and the person who hears them.”

He paused in his measured speech, and looked right at me. Again there was this intense intimacy that now got my defense system alarmed. Heat and energy started to rush wildly through my body. What is this!?

“Each mantra is a sound pattern that suggests to the mind the meanings inherent in it.

“And the mind immediately responds.”

He looked away, into the distance.

“Through the repetition of a mantra, a higher state of deep contemplation can be reached. In this state, the divine essence embedded in the mantra becomes manifest.”

His voice filled with passion.

"Mantra Yoga has its origin in the Vedic Sciences, and in fact all the verses in the Vedas are called mantras. Any person who can chant or sing the Vedas can achieve the ultimate union with supreme consciousness only by chanting the mantras. This union is the aim of Mantra Yoga.

"Just by chanting, one can liberate oneself from *maya* and at the same time achieve great success in the material world.

"Mantras are sometimes applied to change circumstances, for example to regain a healthy state or to complete successfully a challenging project."

"But the essence of all the thousands of mantras is the three letter word *AUM*, written and used however as *OM*.

An assistant wrote on the board behind the Swami: *OM*.

"Our universe is made up of vibration energy. Atoms and electrons are energy concentrations with a certain vibration pattern, and everything that vibrates emanates sound."

"Pure physics!" I recognized, enthralled.

"In the Yoga philosophies, *OM* is considered to be the original vibration and all other mantras are derived from this one master mantra. This cosmic vibration is the word of God".

Oh lord! I thought. After weeks of waiting on an island for a small word from God, now I get told that it's right here in

front of me written at the board! Question after question started to pile up as the Swami continued to talk.

The assistant wrote further on the board OM NAMA H SHIVAYA while a lady sitting at the Indian piano started playing a tune.

“It is important that the proper pronunciation is imparted here. OM can be perceived during meditation, but sounds more like the o-sound in ball without the 'b'. It is a deep roaring sound and much closer to the Tibetan mountain trumpets, which are used to reproduce the OM sound that she is imitating on the piano.”

He smiled at the pianist.

“If you are a newcomer this evening, sing the melody first until you are able to sing the words. Move at your own pace.”

The room was flooded with a tune that appeared eccentric at first, and the sound was shaky. But as the melody sunk in, the volume rose, and with it the energy. The mantra began.

I started singing the words immediately. I was comfortable with it, as if I had been using this language all my life.

“O-M N-A-M-A-H S-H-I-V-A-Y-A!!!” I sang, losing myself in the sounds.

The chant swarmed around the room like a tornado. There was a feeling of heat burning inside my mouth, and the energy rang around in spirals, a noise similar to the one my grandfather used to make with the rim of his glass. The noise was electric, and the heat was magnetic: it felt surreal. My eyes and mouth were open, but I couldn't comprehend the sound or the heat or the balance of this new energy.

Mesmerized by the energy created from this mantra, I had no clue what I was actually doing. I had no idea of the consequences and the dimension of this energy I was creating, but I continued singing with all the passion and veracity of a gospel choirboy.

Soon the chant slowed down, and at the same time everyone faded out into silence. No one was making a sound, but the energy continued to ring around us until it too slowly faded, leaving us in a moment of quiet bliss.

I sat with the silence of the room. Also the Swami just sat, reflecting on the vibe. This moment was my first real awakening. It was not as spectacular as a firework display, but my consciousness was ignited, and sitting in that dim room, a new awareness arose - for the first time, I was experiencing being aware of being aware.

Immediately I started looking at how I had lived. I had always taken everything for granted. One of my biggest weaknesses was cars: I loved driving, but suddenly I realized that I did everything just robotically. I'd stop at a red light, but not even see the colors of the traffic light. I would change gear with no regard for the gears. I never thought about driving while I drove, I never was conscious about anything in comparison to *this*.

I saw it was the same with eating, reading, walking, speaking, everything! I was in deep sleep and didn't know it. Quite a miracle that I made it so far alive, I thought to myself. But now, uninvited, I had been awakened. I felt like newly born as if I had been beamed to this planet for the very first time just a moment ago. It was too big, too overwhelming, too far out for the moment to do anything with it.

The evening ended and Kumar handed me some information on the follow up meditation weekend the Swami was scheduled to lead.

I drove home, for the first time aware of what I was doing. To my instant amusement, I found myself driving at a ridiculously low 100km/h, with no desire to go a single kilometer faster. I drove admiring the calm I could now see

in the universe; I saw me seeing the stars high above the city, the dark silhouettes of the trees along the highway, the shadows of the buildings in the far distance. A long-lost happiness filled me. It had been a long time since I had felt fulfilment and happiness of this kind.

"This is it!" I shouted out loud. "This is what I was looking for! No direction with desire pulling me here and there, no false pretenses of happiness."

"Oh my word, this is the real deal!" I rejoiced.

Was this Benn up there? For a moment I believed I had seen the night sky clouds forming the face of Benn.

Just yet I didn't understand the potential of all that, but I was clear that it is real. I longed to go deeper into the study of this yoga, and I decided to sign up for the weekend seminar.

Little did I know I was setting the foundation for the destiny I had chosen to find.

Joining *Act Models* turned out to be one of the best decisions I could have made, as my daily life as a model gave me the financial and geographical freedom I needed to explore the new spiritual world I had discovered.

Not only had I started taking part in all the seminars and functions that came about, but I also started studying yoga in general. I focused on the four main traditions, Hatha yoga, Laya yoga, Raja yoga and Mantra yoga. I devoured all the books I could find, and spent hours in the bookstore. I also began learning Sanskrit, the holy Indian language that most of the mantras use, and started meditating and chanting at home.

To my surprise, in a very short time I could sit in the lotus position with ease. In fact, I could perform many of the yoga movements. Doing yoga strengthened not only my physique but also my presence, and I became even more desirable at the agency. Now I was being paid for one shooting day what I used to earn in a week.

A month into basic yoga practices and readings, I started to experience things that I couldn't understand. After meditation, I began seeing blue lights emanating from my core. In my morning Sun-Salute yoga, my tongue would roll back into my throat as if pulled by a magnet. Often in meditation my head would fall and hit my back so hard that it made a noise, but there were no after-effects. When my meditation time was finished, I would feel fine.

I had become friends with Rachana, the woman who owned the bookstore. She was sophisticated, with greying hair and an exuberant passion for her work. Over coffee in the back of the shop, she would ask me a hundred questions, and then spend hours looking for the answers with me. Walking up and down with a book in her hand, she admitted that she too thought best when she was moving. It must have looked strange, two people reading while prancing up and down the small green room!

"How about coming with me to the meeting in Luxembourg?" I asked her one day.

"Wonderful!" she squealed, jumping up and down like a child accepting an ice-cream. I was working with such pretentious people at the agency that her response was a breath of fresh air.

The function was basically a lot of yoga people gathered together because they could, including several Swamis dressed in orange robes with burgundy ropes. I looked at the colors of their 'uniform' and it unleashed the desire in me to do alike.

When we got back to Munich, I dyed all my clothes: my jeans, my shirts, my shorts, my jackets, my socks and even my underwear, a variety of colors from orange to burgundy. When I walked into the shop in my orange and burgundy outfit, Rachana fell on the floor laughing.

"You're not actually wearing that to work?" she giggled.

I didn't appreciate this and stood with my hands on my hips waiting for her to get over it.

"You're not actually wearing that at work?" I replied hysterically laughing.

She studied me for a few minutes, head to one side.

"OK, I think you can actually pull it off," she smiled.

"Thank you!" I joked. "Glad I passed the test!"

The next day I strode into the photographer's studio as if I owned the place, and no one flinched. I sat down at the make-up table, expecting some chirps and comments.

Nothing.

After a while I turned to my make-up artist somewhat bewildered "I've dyed all my clothes in a range of unfashionable colors, why has no-one said anything yet? She looked me up and down with a weird look on her face and then smiled.

"You look good, that color suits you, brings out your eyes," she said and then continued with her work.

Obviously I was the only one who wondered.

My dreams started to become vividly real, peopled by actual saints, and I had long conversations with them. I met all the wise men of the core yoga movements, and they enhanced my journey and determined my chosen path. I resonated effortlessly with this movement, and I understood deep down that this was not the first time I'd been on this path, and certainly not the first time I had done yoga.

I was inspired to start an official journal of these new insights, to store all this newly acquired wisdom. I went to see what Rachana thought, and as I walked in she came out from behind the counter with a present.

I unwrapped it carefully, and held it for a minute. It felt precious to touch.

"Thank you Rach!" I said looking at her, "this is exactly what I came in here for."

I opened the silk woven ornamented cover, to see blank gold-framed beige pages. The paper was coarse and the pages finely lined: perfect, because otherwise I would be writing all over the place.

We sat together in the back drinking a cappuccino, and Rachana handed me a thick calligraphy pen. I opened the empty journal, and carefully marked it with its purpose.

MY INNER MILLION

I have never been a heavy smoker, so it was not difficult for me to abide by the yogic system of not smoking. Not drinking I did anyway.

I had no problem with also giving up meat, as I wanted to explore the impact on my body and mind by quitting animal protein all together. It always was my policy to either do something in totality or not do it at all. Soy and vegetables became my source for food.

I was in the supermarket deciding between the tofu in the can or the tofu in the packet when a nice young couple approached me.

“Definitely the packet, never buy anything out of a can, you never know what poisons you’re eating off the tin,” he laughed somewhat arrogantly.

"Thanks for the tip" I said and threw in the packet and placed the can back on the shelf.

The couple just stood there looking at me. I smiled at them awkwardly and tried to carry on down the aisle, but they obviously wanted to talk.

"Are you a vegetarian?" she asked me.

"Just became one! I'm cutting out animal protein all together."

You would have thought I told them they had won the lottery! Their smiles flashed.

"My name is Stephanie and this is my boyfriend Johan," she said, smiling broadly. "We are part of a group that follow a macrobiotic diet, eating according to Dr. Kushi's nutritional philosophy. We would like to invite you for dinner tonight, will you come?"

She spoke with missionary earnestness, her hand on her chest. He just nodded at everything she said. It freaked me out a little, but still I said yes. They gave me their address and left straight away, as if they had achieved what they were there for in the first place.

That evening I was welcomed with a lot of excitement as the new candidate. The table was set, and a group of eleven

people were standing around holding non-alcoholic drinks. Stephanie introduced me to everyone, and then gave us all an elaborate lecture on the benefits of this way of eating. Of the twenty or so reasons she listed, I really remembered only one: that to prolong life it was important to eat a perfect balance between the yin and yang of foods. Apparently brown rice is one food that has the perfect balance.

Dinner comprised of an assortment of sample dishes, each one smaller than a nouveau cuisine hors d'oeuvre. We sat around being served tiny tastes of purely macrobiotic food. The name made it sound so scientific, but I didn't know why it wasn't called "the rice diet" because that was all we seemed to eat. After a rice ball, a rice cake, a rice spoon, and several other rice something's, we were finally given a vegetable: steamed and totally devoid of any additional flavour, especially salt. I did not enjoy my meal, although I did learn some fancy ways to serve stuff.

The mouthful servings of food came at 10 minute intervals, and in between servings the conversation at the table was enough to drive me crazy.

It was as if each one was competing to speak as much as possible, hardly pausing for breath, and topping anyone else's input. I am by nature more of a listener than a talker,

and as soon as people find that I don't take up any space for myself to talk, they all too happily use the opportunity to speak themselves. So I sat silently amongst a chattering of people putting out eagerly what came to their lips while totally ignoring each other. Why did nobody there ask themselves if anyone else was actually interested in hearing what they were saying? It was as if they were unconscious while they spoke.

What they were telling me was of no interest to me at all. I listened to everyone speaking, and came to the conclusion that there was nothing in it that resonated with me. The endless rambling at this specific table was simply a group of macrobiotic dieters confirming for themselves just how much better they were compared to the masses who eat 'dead things'. There was a sense of great righteousness in the air.

I didn't agree nor disagree. I noticed - that's all. My aim was to live in the present moment, and I couldn't grasp why anyone would want to get lost in stories, interpretations, opinions and descriptions? It's like eating the menu while the meal is right in front of one.

Patience, however, has never been a strength of mine, and the point came when I had had enough of this riveting conversation and I found an excuse to leave them to their 'eat right' banter.

Thanking for the occasion, I left.

"I would rather spend 3 hours with an unconscious but non-pretentious meat eater at McDonalds than another minute with these vain, pale, dry plums," I shared with Rachana later, unaware of the fact that I was now the one being righteous.

That night I wrote into my new notebook:

**One can go weeks without food, days without water,
minutes without air, but who can go seconds
without thought? What's the point in detoxifying
one's body when the mind stays polluted?**

I enthusiastically continued with my experiment of not eating any animal protein, however. I felt good, my mind was sharper and I had a lot of energy.

Although my mother was concerned that this diet would not be good for me in the long run.

"Vegetarians are skinny and pale and weak," she worried.

To prove these assumptions were rubbish, I joined a gym and started pumping iron followed by using their sun tanning beds. A few weeks at the gym, and I was already proudly noticing impressive results.

Not so my booker at the agency!

"You better not get any bigger than that, Sinclair!" she said amongst the whistling when I took my shirt off for a shoot.

"And what's with the tan?!"

"Seriously, I forbid it!"

"But I've only been weight lifting for three weeks!" I protested but she didn't care.

"No more weights Sin, I don't want a bodybuilder scaring off my clients and make-up artists calling me about their despair with your tanned skin!"

"Oh come on," I chuckled. "You know it's me who pulls every major national advertising campaign from credit cards to chocolate, from banks to shower gels. Despite my screaming orange outfits and my rice cooker and my packs of smelly algae! I pranced around her jokingly, flexing my muscles.

She looked at me, a frown wrinkling her forehead.

"You want to travel all over the world with all your yoga stuff, going to all these courses and digging deeper and

deeper into the mysteries of the unknown called 'Enlightenment, Nirvana, Moksha, Satori'? You love all that hocus-pocus, and guess what - this job pays for it. The money you earn allows you to dictate your own schedule and to move in this world as you want. So stay humble. Also in your body!"

I shut my mouth. I also stopped weight-lifting, and didn't get any bigger.

I focused on living the simple way, meditating and doing yoga. It wasn't long before I realized that it wasn't the attraction to arrive at some distant paradise that was driving me, but the fact that I enjoyed this way of life.

It began to dawn on me that I might have found my true vocation.

I desired to become a monk.

MARC STEINBERG

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"THE JOURNEY" is based on the life journey of Marc Steinberg, MCC Master Certified Coach, International Coach Federation and Chief Executive Visionary of CCI Creative Consciousness International.

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ISBN 9780981418308



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