

MARC STEINBERG

SINCLAIR

THE TRUE STORY OF ONE MAN'S
SEARCH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT



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Foreword by the Author for the 2nd edition

It was the right time to review *Sinclair* and to add in the story of the last three years. I haven't taken time out for myself for a very long time until this recent festive season. Five weeks in India allowed me the space to dive deeply into my life once more as it has unfolded in this incarnation.

I came upon memories of dialogues with Benn that I had not been present to when I wrote the first edition of *Sinclair*. I also remembered small but precious details that asked to be told, too. So I decided to revisit and refine the whole book and not only add the recent chapters since the time of *Sinclair's* first publication.

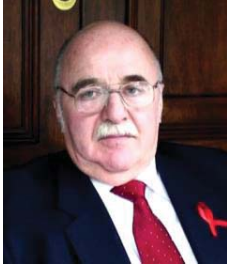
The intention of this book has not changed. It is an authentic story of an unusual life, acting out the core themes of everyone's psychology, reflecting upon life's up and downs from an enlightened perspective and drawing conclusions that can serve readers in their own journey.

The feedback I received from the first edition greatly encouraged me in my purpose to provide continuous support, service and inspiration for those who share the same passion: the passion for finding the truth, liberating themselves from all self-deception and conditioning, and stepping into a life dedicated to serving the Whole and making Love a worldwide reality.

May your journey be blessed.

Love, Marc

Foreword by Professor Elemer Rosinger, University of Pretoria



"The 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 unnameable 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".

"Sinclair" 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. Consciousness Coaching® 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".

Consciousness Coaching®, 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 ...

"Sinclair" 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 "Sinclair", 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 "Sinclair" 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 "Sinclair" 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 "Sinclair" 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.

Consciousness Coaching® 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 "Sinclair" does just that.

And does it in a most refreshing and impressive manner.

Chapter 1

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.

Chapter 2

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 everyday 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.

Chapter 3

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 favourite 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 centre 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 honour 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 favourite 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 familiarised 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?