

JEVON PERRA



THE
CAPTAIN

A TALE OF SELF-DISCOVERY, AWAKENING
AND THE HIDDEN ATLANTIS



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This year is thus the time to make the easiest decision that ever confronted you, and also the only one. You will cross the bridge into reality simply because you will recognize that God is on the other side, and nothing at all is here. It is impossible not to make the natural decision as this is realized.

- A Course in Miracles - The Choice for Completion

PROLOGUE



A GLIMPSE

Most think this life on planet Earth is the only reality. Yet it is a grand illusion: the training grounds for The Chosen to experience and prepare themselves and then move on to deeper waters... a deeper world. There are those on the surface who have already graduated, finished their training, but are still here sent by the creator, the Deep One, to guide us back to the deep. One such man, a weather-beaten sea captain, takes one disciple at a time and prepares them to be able to reach millions. His story throughout the millennium has been to guide the next readied one and clear the connection to Source power. Once they have freed themselves, they have the power to free the world from the painful illusion plaguing the land.

See this sea captain, with his weathered face and sparkling eyes, as he teaches his newest young guest on his fishing boat. All that is heard are the gentle waves lapping the boat as they float out in the darkness before the sun has risen: You can almost hear his gravelly voice as he says, "Son of Man, look out into the vastness of the sea. You have heard there is magic in those waters, within this ship, and

with me. Now you've finally made it here to go fishing with the famous sea captain." He grunts with a chuckle of amusement at the stories. "But there is just as much magic here as there is in your breath going in and out. Magic... hmmm... no. Power, yes. You think these waters are just the hunting grounds for the big fish that bring in our livelihood, but below the surface are hidden longings and truly powerful treasures."

His young guest, wearing new fishing garb, looks confused as this captain stares motionless out into the ocean. Without having moved his gaze from the open ocean, the old man continues with amusement in his voice, "Magic they say... It's magic to those on the surface... but for those connected to its Source... for those who have a knowing, it is not magic."

The old man turns to look his young disciple in the eyes, and the young man is terrified to behold the sea captain glowing with a light that is increasing with intensity as he talks. "It is the power source that runs this whole show of lights," the sea captain says with increasing volume to speak over the wind that was just picking up. Fear rises and grips the young man as it seems there is a sudden typhoon overtaking them as the winds swirl around the boat, making it rock and pitch to the point he hears the cracking of old wood yielding to the strength of newly risen waves of the sudden squall. The sea captain's guest would have run if he had somewhere to go, but he was frozen in amazement and fear. The one he thought was just an old sea captain then boomed loudly in a way that sounded amplified, like it came from a sound system all around him, "The light that makes this whole existence you know is not an inanimate backdrop as you may think. The light itself is alive. If the world decided to be still and listen, it is a beacon perpetually calling them to a deeper place. This place I will show you."

The old man, now glowing with brilliant power, made it seem as if it were midday, not the pitch-black predawn hours. He reached out his hand toward his frozen guest and gently touched him on his forehead. With the contact, there was an eruption of new swirling light out of nowhere that encircled them. The sparkling energy

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sped up in a whirlpool of luminescence that was strong enough to pick up both men. Now hovering above the deck of the ship, the young man groaned, as what felt like currents of electricity flowing through every part of his being. Torrents of energy were now flowing in and flowing out of this new disciple, and he passed out from the intensity of the whole experience. The light increased almost to the point of whiting out the whole boat. Then as if it were unplugged, it quickly faded.

The sea captain gently grabbed hold of the young man as the circling power released them. They lowered to the ship again and the captain laid his unconscious guest down to rest on the deck. “Rest well, Son of Man. Your training continues tomorrow.” The winds and the waves ceased as the light disappeared. The old man then went to the bow of the ship and sat in a meditative posture to quietly watch the sun rise.



THE LOST CITY

Legend tells us of an ocean city from 12,000 years ago whose people influenced the great Egyptian empire in their acquisition of world-dominating power. The city has gone by many names in surface records. The Hebrew people called it Tarshish; the Greeks knew it as Tartessos. The eminent island city was known for its abundant wealth and precious metals. The rest of the known world would travel as long as three years by boat to trade and partake in its great fortune. The famous King Solomon of the ancient Middle East was said to have his main source of opulence from this magical kingdom. As the tales go, these people and their technologies were so highly advanced that compared to the average man today, they were superhuman.

Westerners know the city by a different name. They call it Atlantis.

The age-old stories of this magical place have been altered and woven into fairy tales—made up to be read before bedtime to little ones. The more far-fetched ones tell of these mystical inhabitants being capable of simultaneously living on the surface and in an otherworldly dimension by being able to access their energetic subtle bodies. This subtle ability enabled them to have a secret city beside the jostling port city known to the world. From the surface perspective, the secret Atlantis seemed close but out of reach, hidden beneath the surface of the water, covered by the waves of the deep. There, the advanced citizens and leaders of Atlantis had an entire life built underneath. Stories are told from the perspective of the teller and filtered through their limited experiences and understanding. This place is said to be too wondrous to put into words. That said, some far-fetched tales of this energetic city have survived through the years.

Atlantis had astounding creatures that were a common part of life. There were animals similar to seahorses, as fast and as big as wild moose. Herds of these sea creatures were kept near the main city hubs, readily available for the citizens' enjoyment. These majestic marine animals were not owned by anyone. They were there of their own accord, honoring a call that all the sentient beings there could make. Every person and animal—and even objects there in Atlantis—had an instant connection to each other so that each could know and fulfill the other's desires. It was like the whole community was all hardwired together. Everything and everyone knew what everyone was doing and needing. This may sound intrusive, like having a world of nosy neighbors, but people didn't feel a need to hide, isolate, or protect themselves from being found out in the deep. They felt complete and whole because of the Source inside of themselves, so there was no fear of being fully known by others. Instead of feeling like you had to close the blinds to limit what the busybody neighbor could see, life was more like having your best friends constantly surrounding you and knowing

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what you really need and want. The society was operating as one organism. It was instant and required no thinking. A woman could think it enjoyable to ride a seahorse, and without a call or waiting, it would be there to pick her up. A man could desire a committee of peers to create a particular undertaking, and they would just start showing up, each having received the same knowing, the same call to act. To an outsider, this could have seemed like magic, yet this was natural to an Atlantean. It was just the One Mind of their world working as it should.

All life worked together in intricate ways in Atlantis. Along with the seahorses, there were intelligent pools of thousands of tiny fishlike sea animals that acted as one organism. Swirling and spinning in synchronized ways, they could transport Atlanteans to places and even undertake menial tasks for its people. You would see pools of these fish-creatures regularly going over the underwater structures and eating off the growing algae with thousands of micro bites. From a distance, they looked like a shapeshifting ball that just magically and perfectly cleaned and even updated all the stone infrastructure as it was needed. There were many variations of manta ray-like creatures used to transport individuals and groups. Many other fantastic sea creatures lived there in connected harmony, directed by the loving citizens of Atlantis. Like the thousands of European starlings that fly and move as one in the air, this whole underwater city had the function of a single entity. They were all connected.

There seemed to be different physics there in Atlantis. Even though one might guess they were under the water by appearances, they did not swim, for they did not need to. There was not even the experience of being wet, and vision was crystal clear. In this world, the connection was almost entirely to the energetic body and not limited to the physical one that the surface holds onto. In this powerful place, intention alone created. It created all things, action and form alike. All that was needed to be done in Atlantis to travel somewhere else was to simply intend to be there. Once that intention was clear, you would either appear there or, for the

enjoyment of the journey, start to move in that direction. It was not swimming, just intention. This same intention enabled them to live in that underwater place as if on the surface with the power to engage with their energetic bodies and not just the crude physical bodies like the rest of the surface dwellers.

It was also said to be possible to will the water into forms that could complete any task. The water could be used as if it were a robotic arm: used for anything from baby carriages to a chiseling device to sculpt the many statues of the city.

Some of the Atlanteans had specialized windows that were portals to all known surface lands. They were used to instantly scan these towns for unrest with the intention of bringing peace and support. During the hundreds of years of the height of Atlantic rule, it was commonplace for an Atlantean to appear at the perfect time during a great crisis and save the day. Even though Atlantis could have easily conquered the world by force, the inhabitants only existed for peace. These angelic warrior ambassadors would show up to serve and then leave just as fast as they had come after the disaster was averted.

In Atlantis, the ocean and Earth itself were part of the community and functioned as One Mind—which could be called on for help whenever it was needed. This incredible power wasn't taken for granted. There was an instant knowing and usually a thankful surrender to that knowledge of what supported the greater good, and what did not.

As the stories go, the main calling for the citizens of Atlantis was to find those on the surface who were ready to hear their invitation to come. All were invited, but few could hear the call because only those who had raised enough awareness within could receive this vibrational summons. The call was being sent out by the Atlantean leader, called the Deep One, and was always available. The key to entrance into this promised land was a recognition that all that was needed was already available and within each of them. This recognition was part of the evolution that allowed surface dwellers to unblock their senses. One would need to be evolved and at a high

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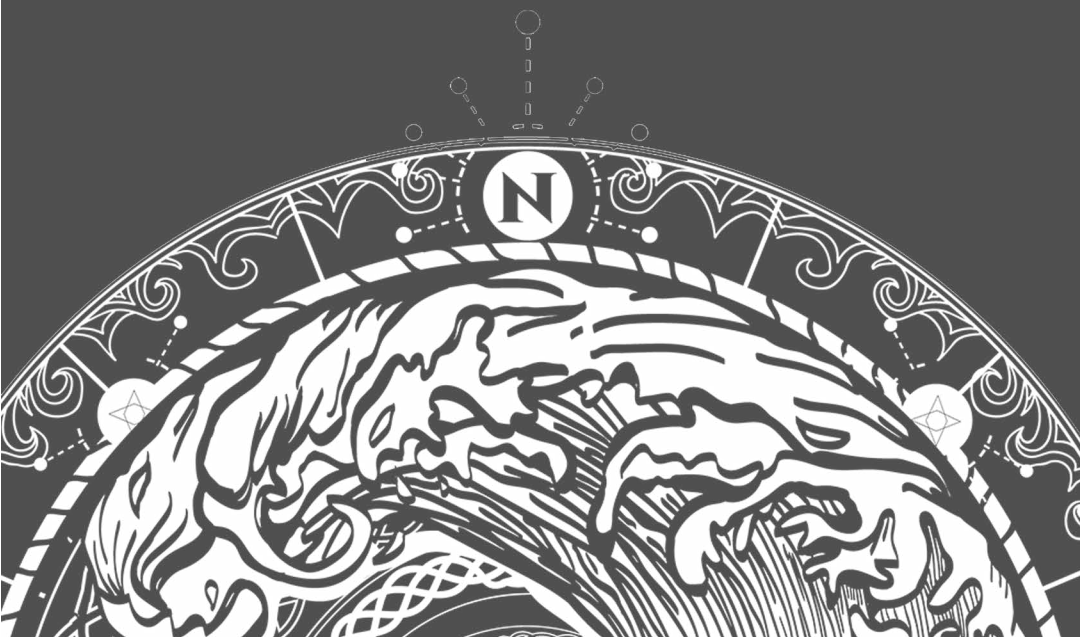
frequency, laying aside harmful surface-based desires, to be able to even hear the call, and even more so to actually get to Atlantis.

All were welcome there and nothing was forced, but if a resident did not continue to operate with the intention for the greater good, they could not continue to resonate with the energy there in Atlantis. It would grow internally uncomfortable for that individual, and like a magnet coming against a similar pole, they would be propelled away by their own changing frequency. But those outside, who were readied, would be like the opposite pole and be drawn directly to this great city.

The leaders of the city were that of civil servants, existing in Atlantis for the sole purpose of bringing their brothers and sisters to the next level of interconnection so that they might someday meet their awe-inspiring Deep One. The Deep One was more than just the ruler of Atlantis, and so much more than a normal being: The Deep One was the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present ruler, said to be the energetic Source of power that made existence possible for all who were on the surface and the deep worlds alike. Everyone was held close to the Deep One by an unseen connection. There was only one who had ever met this majestic ruler and come back to tell. This Atlantean had other names that were given to him in different worlds as time went on, but there in the deep, they just called him Elder. Aging didn't affect people the same in the deep, so all people usually looked like kids or young adults—everyone but Elder. He chose to have an age of a healthy and vibrant mid-60-year-old man with a face that had been wrinkled up by the sun. Elder was the revered and loved mentor and wise man of the kingdom.

Maybe Atlantis was, as some history books say, just a mundane city that was destroyed overnight by tidal waves. But the ancient Greek city of Troy, from Homer's *Iliad*, was thought to be fictional too, that is until it was found. The city of Atlantis is similar to the ancient city of Troy. Similar save one main distinction: this city is not lost.

It is just unseen by those who do not have eyes to see. This is a story of one who found the way back to this lost home.



PART I



THE STORY OF ADAM

Adam opened his eyes, still feeling the vivid dream that he repeatedly had of that wonderful underwater city. As he lay in bed, he didn't want to move and risk losing that sleepy state where the fantastic water world was still real for him. He loved that dream because it always felt so good to be there. He missed it when he had to wake up because the imagined world was so much better than normal life.

No one could have guessed that Adam was the one, especially Adam, since his story started like anybody's story, and that is the point of this story. There is power and perfection hidden in the ebb and flow of normal life. And like most, Adam just needed to learn how to see it.

ADAM'S FAMILY RULES

Young Adam grew up in small-town Missouri. He was never noticed out of the crowd. Brown hair. Brown eyes with a sliver of emerald green in the right one that would appear when the sunlight hit it at just the right angle. He had a sweet, shy smile and a kind demeanor. He mostly kept to himself because his family was very religious and forbade him from having friends who were his age for fear of them negatively influencing or even hurting their "special boy." Adam's grandparents were the authority for his whole family. What they said was usually obeyed. Growing up, he spent most of his youth with them since his parents weren't always around. Grandma was the spiritual head and matriarch of the clan. She had a gentle demeanor and yet was cunning with her wisdom and could outwit Socrates and Mark Twain combined if she had to. You'd never see Grandma without Grandfather. They were insepa-

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rable. Where Grandma's style was finesse, Grandfather's style was more sledgehammer.

Those who knew Grandfather well saw his big heart and intentions of gold to help his loved ones and his community. He'd even take in the down-and-out from the street to nurse them back to health. But his intentions often fell short of the results he wanted. He was willing to give his all in fighting for the focus of his goodwill, but it was through a fearful lens.

When love was ruling Grandfather's heart and mind, he was a gracious do-gooder and a loving grandfather. The contrast came when fear had the upper hand; he'd become an angry bull that ended up accidentally trampling those he had sworn to protect. But Adam's whole family, even Grandfather, would submit to *The Prophet*, the name they often called Grandma. She had earned that name due to her gift of wisdom and the natural ability to just know answers to life's questions that were asked of her.

On the other hand, Adam's mom had been a rebellious child since she was a teenager. There she was—13 and full of teenage angst and frustration. Grandfather's possessiveness was in effect back then too. It suffocated her. She wanted freedom; Grandfather wanted control. It wasn't pretty. A pattern emerged: an emotional explosion would occur between them, and she would just up and run away for days or months or longer. She'd eventually return like the prodigal child, but instead of just her tail between her legs, there was usually a guy tagging along behind her whom she had found to take care of her while she was away. She was still in this same pattern after having her baby boy, Adam, in her early twenties. Then, in between husbands, even the very young Adam was left to wonder when she would leave again and who his next stepdad might be.

In this unstable environment, Adam's world became mostly dictated by the grandparents. The people allowed in were his mom, the current (soon to be ex) stepdad, his local cousins, and a revolving door of others taken in off the street to be helped by Grandfather. This changing group either permanently moved in to get their life right or came to be at the grandparents' home daily

for shared meals and life messages from Grandma. At Grandfather's request, Adam lived there much of the time since his mom would regularly leave to go *find herself* again. Grandfather felt safer having him near.

Grandfather had been on his holy crusade of saving a few from the dangerous world for Adam's whole life. His intense behavior had left a few wounded and some forever outcast from the family. One of those forcefully removed when Adam was just three years old was his biological father. Adam's young dad had been one of the down-and-outs taken in by the good-natured grandparents with the goal of getting him on his feet financially. There he met his benefactor's beautiful daughter. They fell in love. They married within months, and she got pregnant with Adam on their honeymoon: a honeymoon chaperoned by the grandparents, of course. Adam's birth was the highlight of Grandfather's life, since he saw Adam as the son he had never had. Fast-forward three years: like any capable man, Adam's dad wanted to move out of his in-laws' home and provide his family with a home of their own. This young father was hopeful, kind, loving, and wanted to do all he could to build a life for his new family. However, the grandparents thought the world was too perilous a place for him to make it on his own. They felt that they were better protectors of Adam than his own dad, so they did what was *necessary* for the safety of the family. They convinced his mom to stay and got a legal restraining order on the young inexperienced dad whom they kicked out of the house and forbade to return.

This was one example, among others, that made it known that if you did not go along with the program, you were against the higher good of the family, and you were treated as an enemy. Enemies were dangerous for the family and were to be attacked. In this environment where disobedience was met with severe resistance, Adam learned to never directly resist and instead overtly be a subservient peacemaker. He would not fight those furies with fury because he learned that his thoughts and opinions did not matter. It was his job to obey, submit, and keep the peace.

ADAM'S AWKWARD TEENS

By the time Adam reached his teen years, a world of dichotomy was all he knew. His family with their protective, fearful clutches tried to paint a picture of evil and danger and filth outside their walls, yet it seemed like everything that Adam longed for was “out there” in those forbidden enemy territories.

Adam was often told the story that his birth was prophesied by an angel and that he was a specially chosen child to do something good for the world. Special for what, he didn't know. Those details were always left out. He would have much rather been the un-special kid who got to join the Little League team with the friends he wasn't allowed to have. At home, he felt almost worshiped as their “prophesied child” but not in a good way. It was more like the unlucky obsession of the aborigines who were going to throw someone into the volcano to appease their fiery god. Their attention was similar to what the unlucky chap got who was plumped up to then be thrown into the volcano as a molten lava meal. Adam felt their concern more like a last meal than VIP treatment. It seemed they cherished the idea of this prophesied “special child” and not the real boy before them.

Despite all this, he did love his unique family. He knew they were trying the best they could. Yet still, starting at the time of junior high school, there was something about being home that left him feeling suffocated—just as his mother had felt when she was around the same age long ago. He knew he was unable to grow there and could not become who he needed to be. He was the caged bird stuck inside, overlooking the forbidden vast sky.

Without any outside social influence, Adam was a textbook outcast in junior high: thick glasses, awkward, and unaware of current trends. Since school was the only interaction he was allowed to have with kids his own age, Adam wished he could make friends with classmates. But the years of being stifled from the inability

to have extracurricular relationships usually left him more scared and self-conscious than friendly. He wished he could say the right thing, but when presented with an opportunity to engage with his peers, he would go blank. All through elementary, junior high, and the beginning of high school, he felt such pressure to present himself perfectly. He'd be in the midst of the friends he wished he could have, but instead of talking, he'd cogitate on contributing something substantial. By the time he was ready to share his perfectly crafted comment, the conversation would be so long over he'd be in bed for the night with nothing but his thoughts of missed opportunities for company.

Adam couldn't visit his classmates' homes either; his grandparents deemed it way too dangerous. And inviting someone over was never an option because he never felt close enough or comfortable to invite someone into his complicated environment. His orders from the grandparents were to walk straight to and from school with no extra stops. Despite an occasional disobedient stop at the popular donut shop on his walk after school to glimpse the other kids having fun, his only companions were the people he was related to and a few others that his grandparents had saved, scrubbed, and let in from the *filthy world*.

But what no one in school knew was that Adam was good-natured, considerate, and kind. He had a secret clever wit and a sense of humor that his family loved, but never came out around the other kids. Even so, he had a different guard up at home. It only took one wrong statement to set off Grandfather's raging-bull side, so he got good at editing all things uttered there as well.

ADAM FINDS FREEDOM IN HIGH SCHOOL

This internal pressure went on until high school when everything changed for Adam. His mother was back, but had decided to run away from the grandparents' velvet-gloved iron-fist control, this

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time to the west coast with a new guy for another new life. Even though Adam was terrified of being disobedient to the grandparents' direction as well as being thrust into what he'd always been told was a dangerous world, he was a teenager now and was secretly excited to be away from his grandparents' protective reach. And like most teenagers, Adam longed for freedom. So, in the cloak of the night to avoid any conflict, they packed up and drove from Missouri to central California to his mom's new guy's hometown.

The grandparents found out quickly and gave their disappointed and dismal opinion about the move. And despite the warnings from the grandparents back in the Midwest, Adam's mom left him without supervision and free to do as he pleased. He was thrilled to finally get a chance to try to be a normal fifteen-year-old boy. Later when Adam got a car to drive himself to school, the world opened up for him. Despite still working out his own awkwardness, he was able to finish his sophomore year in high school without any restraints from home. By Adam's junior year, it was all coming together for him. It felt as if he had been born again and was living a whole new life.

Compared to his social life before, this was a dream come true. Adam figured out his own way to socialize with kids his age. He discovered that asking questions was a fantastic way to engage and hide his own insecurities at the same time. He still didn't have the skill to perfectly craft the right statement on the fly, so instead he settled for being insatiably curious. Questions gave him the contribution he needed to start a conversation. Within a year's time from when he started in his new high school, he had honed his interpersonal questioning skills to a science. He knew how to befriend anyone—from the sports star and popular cheerleader, to the drama kid and band-o, and even the nerd and misfit in between. Even though he was new to this school, by the time he had graduated, he was known and liked by most of the student body. The miracle for Adam was that he finally felt he had friends, and it was amazing. In contrast to the last six years of social struggle, he was in heaven.

He had never written down his system, but it was basically the same thing each time he'd make a new addition to his friend collection:

Step one would be to literally throw himself into the interaction and blurt out a greeting.

"Hello there! I'm Adam; what's your name?"

Introduce myself and ask their name. Check.

"Come here often?"

He'd say in his math class.

Say something funny or witty. Check.

"Hey, nice jacket! Where did you get that? How do you have such good style?"

Ask complementary questions until they start talking freely. Check.

Friend acquired. Check.

But Adam's method was not without challenges. He thought he was building relationships, but really he was just collecting friends. He felt if he just had enough of them, like arrows in his quiver, he'd somehow become a different person who was more acceptable. But as he got to know more and more kids, he was disillusioned to find he hadn't changed. He was still the same Adam now hoping to be approved of by even more people. No matter how many friends he collected in his quiver, he still had an empty feeling of separation, like he was missing something or someone. It was a feeling of unrest—a lack of peace within himself. This wasn't the experience others had of him though.

Adam's curiosity was usually well received, so most opened up and shared their real thoughts and experiences, yet Adam didn't know how to reciprocate the intimacy. Occasionally, someone would turn the curiosity back at him. Feeling the social anxiety start to swell, Adam would quickly answer questions and turn the interview back to them. He didn't reciprocate the transparency for fear of people finding out that he was just pretending to be the interesting guy he wished he could be. He didn't have anything to offer but his own conjured fascination having spent most of his life obediently following the family orders. It petrified him to think of

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being put on the spot to share his own true thoughts and feelings. He honestly didn't know if he even had any. So, he continued to push deep into others. This tactic made Adam temporarily endearing to whoever had his attention, but it had a surprising side effect of loneliness. He often felt as though he was standing all alone along the sidelines watching his happy avatar in the middle of a smiling crowd.

SAVING THE DAY—ADAM'S NEW OCCUPATION

It would be years later before Adam could look back at his childhood and see the intricately woven tapestry from the beautiful design side, instead of the jumbled mess he thought was his life. The stories Adam had been told from early youth that he was special and here on the planet to do something great for others gave him the hope that it was somehow true. The part he didn't see was that he had been training for this end his whole life. He had learned to navigate and even truly love the most difficult of personalities from an early age. Because of the household he grew up in, there was really no one in the world that Adam wasn't equipped to engage with. It was like his whole childhood and every painful experience were all an intensive training ground for a great purpose. His life had not been comfortable, but being great never is.

Adam wasn't aware of his true identity yet, but he was clear about one thing—helping others felt good. He often found himself in a position of solving some problem he had dug up with all of his questions. Whenever he would “save the day,” the fulfillment he felt gave him momentary reprieve from his own lost feelings and made his world seem right. Adam quickly took on the role of an “emotional lifeguard” of sorts. Instead of the classic red trunks and flotation device, he wore his open posture and tell-me-everything attitude.

If anyone at his school had a problem, he was there to solve it. He'd listen to sad breakup stories and give his best platitudes that it

would be okay. He'd be the kid who volunteered to help the teacher contain unruly students by talking to each individually about the problems they had with the class they were in. Adam saw kids by themselves on the campus and made sure they got a few minutes of his time so they didn't feel lonely. Being like this even got him enrolled into an official school program as a school-sponsored peer counselor. He would regularly be pulled out of class by the administration to bring some peace and comfort to a distressed fellow student. It felt so awesome when it worked. Over time, Adam felt he was really taking ground in becoming worthy of the love and acceptance he was finding. He was so busy in his saving business that the sinking-lost ache had nearly gone away.

Adam saw so many people that were searching and struggling and suffering—he felt he should step up his game even more, but he was aware that he didn't really know what he was doing. He didn't *really* have the answers. He was just saying what he thought sounded good, not accessing lessons or internal truths that he had embodied. If someone had real problems his, “I know how you feel” or “Don't worry; everything will work out” didn't work every time. In those times when he failed to be someone's savior, his own internal pain would reappear. In order to keep his own peace, he wanted to learn how to say the right things to fix other people's problems. He found himself desperate to learn this since it was the only time he found shelter from his own storm. Adam didn't know who could help him, but his best guess outside of school was to find a local church.

Towards the end of his senior year, in spite of his grandparents' warnings of an outsider's church, he joined one with a lot of people his own age. With his pleasant presence and personality, he was soon elevated to one of the key student leaders. People loved Adam, and despite his strange discomfort from too much eye contact, he was very engaging and helpful to everyone. As soon as he graduated from high school, the church offered him a job as an official youth minister. He was thrilled with the opportunity and accepted.

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Adam poured himself out to do his best and play his role as a youth leader. After some years of successful church service, he was recruited to start some new churches where he was the head pastor. During these years, Adam stayed in touch but kept his own protective distance from his ever-concerned grandparents and distant mother. Adam wished he could have pleased them along with everyone else. He wished they could have been proud of him. But he saw it would not be possible with anything less than being a permanent resident of Grandfather's basement like when he was a kid, so instead he just forged ahead on his own path. Adam never was able to fully reconcile pursuing his own life with pleasing his grandparents. They ended up passing away from old age within a few months of each other, both still disappointed that Adam didn't move back and live with them. Adam just loved them the best he could and tried even harder to be a better servant. And so, wherever he went, he became a light in the community he stepped into.

It was after some success at building up a new church in the Midwest that Adam was noticed and offered a small salary to go work with the Hawaiian people in a newly formed church on the garden isle of Kauai. The thought of *suffering* for the cause in a tropical paradise sounded pretty good to him. So, after considering the offer for a solid three minutes, Adam accepted the invitation, packed his bags, and moved to Kauai.

This is when his problem became more acute. Even though life was unfolding well for Adam, whenever he slowed down enough to feel, he would still have that internal void. As time went on and he achieved more of his goals and got more new opportunities, the void started to become more noticeable instead of less. He had been looking for a thing or person that could permanently fill his emptiness. As a kid, he had thought that just being able to have one friend at school would make him feel complete. Then after he had made a friend but continued to feel that same void, he thought having lots of friends would solve his problem. In high school, after being friends with practically the whole student body and still feeling that void, he thought perhaps he just needed to help more

people. Then after becoming a pastor where his occupation was all about helping people and still having that void, now he hoped just expanding his surroundings and creating some adventure would help. He'd soon find out that just speeding up the treadmill does not equate to taking new ground.

So, there he was in the tropical paradise of Kauai, yet he still had the sinking feeling like when he was trapped in his Midwest Missouri prison that he had grown up in. No matter what he did, that void seemed to follow him. Even in Kauai, which was like paradise, beautiful beyond words, all he saw was another small town, old and run down. And the people there seemed to have stopped challenging the ideas of what was possible... like they had given up on everything else but the disappointment in the life they had settled for while labeling it "happiness." What Adam didn't realize yet was that the world was just a mirror. He had a deeper issue to correct before he could see anything but his own disappointment. Adam had traded in the lie that the world was dangerous, for a bigger lie that it needed to be saved. At this point, he was beginning to experience the limits of the rewards of the saving-business.

SAFE AND ALONE

With no idea of what else to do there on that island, Adam pushed down the feeling of the void and continued with the obsessively curious work of people-pleasing. Having the introduction from some local trusted leaders gave Adam all the credibility he needed to be a full-time savior. Still, similar to the other small communities he had stepped into, there was some well-natured skepticism in Kauai about this newcomer's concern and charm. Adam might have been new there, but he wasn't new to stepping into an unfamiliar group and going from a stranger to a hero. Adam was not surprised by the skepticism to his consistent offers of service.

"Is this new pastor guy real?"

THE CAPTAIN

“Does he really care or is he just acting like it?”

“What’s in it for him?”

If you asked him, Adam would say all he wanted was to help others and then witness their appreciation for what he had done for them. On the surface, this seemed benevolent, but below it was much more than that. In truth, Adam was bartering for his own unmet longings as he engaged with the people to get something without clearly stating that purpose. Another way to say it: he was manipulating.

And Adam was the nicest manipulator there was. He was unassuming since he didn’t know on a conscious level what he was doing. But most people knew that something was off. People generally cared for this young man who fully gave himself, but even with the love and appreciation they had for him, no one could fully relax and be themselves around Adam, mostly because it seemed like Adam never really relaxed. Adam’s grandparents’ unreasonable expectations of him to be “perfect” stayed with him throughout his life. Usually once a person got to know him a little, they were left with a feeling that they needed to be on their best behavior too.

In Adam’s mind, other people’s poor choices were his responsibility, since he was the pastor and thus their self-appointed *savior*. He could never let down his act of perfection and happiness for fear that someone might emulate a bad behavior of his and be doomed by its consequences. Their choices would then be his fault. Even though still young and strong, taking the responsibility of the world was becoming far too heavy to carry. His worry then immediately caused him the kind of suffering he was attempting to save others from.

What he was unknowingly doing was becoming a master puppeteer, pulling the strings to make others happy so that he could try to be happy. Sympathetic, if others were hurting, he hurt; concerned, if others were angry, he stressed, toiled, and didn’t rest until he was able to make them look happy. Vigilant, if there was a need, he would fulfill it. He had a big community to take care of. So, he worked and worked hard to take on the burden for the spiritual

and emotional evolution of the community. He became whatever he needed to become to meet people where they were and give them the answers he thought they were after. Adam had become the ultimate performer.

Adam had been surfing every day since some locals taught him four months earlier. The community seemed more loving and accepting of him, including a new friend he had made who looked like a beautiful Hawaiian princess. Adam was in the best shape of his life and never felt more welcomed by any other new community he had been in. Yet even with all this, Adam was completely miserable.

It was Sunday night, and as always, he held a Bible study in his home. The study was about the bible verse, *Be still and know that I am God.*¹ Adam would put on his pastor face so his students would see faith instead of his interpersonal struggles. Having spent eight hours reading commentaries and books on this topic in hopes of finding something worthy of saying to the people who needed answers, he decided to read a passage from a commentary he found and expound on it.

Stillness is a quality that reveals the illusions and distractions that take the place of the true reality of the peace of God.

The peace of God pours forth from the nothingness of stillness.

Stillness does not create peace.

Stillness reveals the peace that is always available.

This peace is available as a by-product of being a part of God.

1 Psalm 46:10 NIV

THE CAPTAIN

This peace is our True Identity. It is the deep well that has been capped by virtuous activities waiting to be unblocked and let to flow.

This peace is here now for us, if we dare be still long enough to allow God to move on our behalf.

After Adam finished the passage, he didn't really know how to expound on it, so he suggested they sit in silence for five minutes and practice being still. The small group agreed and a timer was set. Adam closed his eyes and fired up his mind. His thoughts raged.

Peace of God. Peace of God... Peace of God? What am I talking about? This passage was a poor choice. I don't even know what to say to get these guys fired up about peace. Shoot, this study sucks. I need to make sure to prepare more next time to get my calls to action more clear.

The timer went off.

Adam ended their meeting with a prayer and everyone went home.

Adam tormented himself. He kept going over and over in his mind about how he hadn't kept everyone's attention or motivated them to a clear next action.

These guys need me. They'll be back to hear how we should live our lives. I need to be more clear next time. Next time. Next time, I'll prepare more.

More and more, he ended his teaching times feeling disconnected to what he was talking about. Adam's internal void continued to get bigger, not smaller. He was despairing and lonely, and he couldn't figure out why.

He went to bed early that night just to get a break from his own conflict. Adam got up at dawn the next day to head out for an early surf session out in the ocean, the only place which gave him respite from his burden. He had no idea that he was progressing perfectly in the plan.

THE STORY OF MAYA

Maya was born in a small rural town just outside Milan, Italy. The family was poor, living day by day. Maya's dad, Antonio, worked for a small car manufacturer that rebuilt used truck bodies into small passenger cars. He worked alongside a man that introduced him to racing. Antonio became enamored by the fast-car world and ended up in a fatal crash. Maya was too young to remember the loss of her dad. A year after his death, Maya's mother, Pita, met an American soldier temporarily stationed a walking distance from the market Pita frequented. His name was Henry.

Health and food were life and tradition for Pita. Before it was popular and well known, she was instilling in Maya the importance of eating vegetables and farm-fresh foods that didn't come in wrappers from the store. This served Maya well, and she continued this as she grew older and stayed vibrant and healthy. Food is how Pita met Henry. In one of her daily trips to the market, she bumped into Henry when they both reached for the same apple. They locked eyes, and later, both reminisced that they felt they had always known each other. After a few weeks of nightly rendezvous, and against all counsel, they found a priest who secretly married them. Pita agreed to move back to America with Henry, but couldn't until he finished his military assignment there in Italy, which took six months.

When Maya was seven years old, she and her mom found themselves in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, in America. Henry was still stationed abroad, so they fell in the best they could with their new Southern family. Henry's family was very hospitable, but also very poor. They could only do so much, so being the industrious mother that she was, Pita decided to get a job. This was to be the first job outside the home in her life.

The landscape of what was available for Pita was opening up for her in America, especially compared to the rural area she came

To Be Continued...