Foreword: W.L. Hoffman, J.D.

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Author’s Preface:

Jessep: You want answers?
Kaffee: I think I'm entitled to them.
Jessep: You want answers?
Kaffee: I want the truth!
Jessep: You can't handle the truth!

Son, we live in a world that has walls. And those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? You? You, Lt. Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom. You weep for Santiago and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know: that Santiago's death, while tragic, probably saved lives. And my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, saves lives ... You don't want the truth. Because deep down, in places you don't talk about at parties, you want me on that wall. You need me on that wall. We use words like honor, code, loyalty...we use these words as the backbone to a life spent defending something. You use 'em as a punchline. I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom I provide, then questions the manner in which I provide it! I'd rather you just said thank you and went on your way. Otherwise, I suggest you pick up a weapon and stand a post. Either way, I don't give a damn what you think you're entitled to!

From: “A Few Good Men” by Aaron Sorkin

This is a storybook. All I really ever speak or write about are stories. Do not waste your time looking for truth. But, like any good story, it has the potential to transform. As the renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell taught us, ultimately every story told is a story about Adventure. When the story is well told it depersonalizes the individual dream, transforming it to myth ... and transforming us in turn.

The kind of story I tell here has transformational power because it is not written in a way that makes ordinary sense. It is not even written for your ordinary mind.

This story is written for your “Silent Mind.”

Your “Silent Mind” is poetic, not prosaic. Consider what you are about to read like you would an ancient epic poem, like Homer's “The Iliad” or “The Odyssey” ... or Dante's “Divine Comedy.” There are more modern versions of the epic like Joyce's revolutionary “Ulysses” or his impenetrable “Finnegan's Wake.” Maybe you would prefer something more specifically cultural, like Germany's “Doctor Faust” by Thomas Mann ... Russia's “The Brother's Karamozov” by Dostoevesky ... or America's “The Great Gatsby” by Fitzgerald.
Each of these stories flows within the structure of mythic form ... making sense at the surface level by speaking to our conscious mind, and also stirring something more primitive and primal in our sub-conscious mind. These stories are designed to reawaken something in us, and the best of them reawaken us to ourselves.

While I cannot claim to stand in the ranks of the great author’s like those I mention above, I am aiming to copy what they have done through the ages for readers ... to write a story that satisfies your conscious mind, while stirring something deeper, to help you awaken to yourself again. This is the magic of myth, and the mythic form on which it is based. Myth reawakens you to yourself in new ways that are familiar to you because they are really old ways for you. Though it may seem nonsensical, the new ways I refer to are in reality ways that were familiar to you before they were eradicated by what I call “bad learning.”

Bad learning is everything that forces us to ignore our deepest intuitions. We are born with the ability to learn how to survive, prosper and thrive. This ability is literally our birthright as human beings, but it comes with a caveat ... we must choose to become fully human. Our species made a deal with nature. Unlike insects or reptiles emerging from their eggs ready to live out their life “as is,” humans sacrifice coming out of the womb fully formed and complete for the ability to learn from birth to death. We are capable of becoming what we will in our lives by virtue of our ability to learn, each generation seemingly able to move beyond the limits of the past, by learning from it.

As we create progress, building on the learning of the past, we also create complexity. The solution we came up with to the problem of greater complexity has been to tap into our natural capacity to learn. We built schools and formalized the learning process. Today children are forced to learn what they need to know to become productive members of society. Because of the complex systems we now live in, rather than just letting our children explore their world and find their way, we constrain children to learning along the lines that serve society best ... not necessarily themselves. After many years of this kind of conditioning, and the natural instincts it extinguishes, most people respond to life in a lock-step, knee jerk fashion ... stuck in place by the learning they were led to believe would free them.

I wrote this book to open up the pathways that will allow you to regain access to your earliest instincts and intuitions. When you know how the learning you have received ... and have probably come to think represents reality as you know it ... is coded, you can choose what to keep and what to update. Maybe for the first time, since you were an infant, you will be free to choose how to think for yourself. This is part of the gift of becoming fully human ... the freedom to choose for yourself.

The freedom to choose for yourself is a magnificent gift life bestows upon you
at birth. The gift of learning to choose is often wrenched away before you can grasp it for yourself. Seeing your way clear to having the experience of your life, as you want it to be and not as others have designed and imposed it upon you, is like literally receiving a new lease on life. My writing is based on the years I spent in my own journey, the learning I received from many masters, including one remarkable teacher in particular ... and it is also supported by the latest findings in neuroscience.

If you read this book with a mind open to change you may find that it speaks to you in ways you would not have imagined could be possible from a mere book. It may seem unbelievable to think that reading a storybook could do all that I am suggesting, but it has been this way since our first ancestors emerged from the primordial forests and savannahs. Every culture, from time immemorial, has used stories to shape and change minds. The most powerful of these stores use mythic form. I have organized the stories you will read about in this book using mythic form too. While I was not the one to come up with the structure of myth, I am clever enough to use it to make my writing far more powerful than it could possibly be otherwise.

So here you are ... at the start of my story of transformation, beginning with my descent into insanity. Through the multiple twists and turns of my story, including virtually meeting many of the characters I came across, you may be reminded of your own journey ... one you had, the one you are on, or one you are about to undertake. In any case you are likely to find moments that resonate with you, when you do stop for a moment and ask yourself the question, “Why does this particular thing seem to stand out from the background of the story for me?” Do not worry about answering the question; any answer you come up with will be processed consciously. I am pointing you toward your Silent Brian, outside of your ordinary conscious awareness. I am hoping to open you again to instincts and intuitions repressed by years of “bad learning” ... to take back control of your own story ... to regain the poetry in your life.

Since this is just a storybook anyway, allow yourself to read it like one, without any expectation of it “making sense” beyond the story it tells. You will not find a profound step-by-step process you can use to transform your life. You will not find clever examples or anecdotes that make my point clear. I have not used little life vignettes to convince you that what I am presenting works using social proof. There are not any glowing testimonials about how wonderful my work or I am. You will just have to read it, get what you get, and trust yourself ... it is a lot to ask, I know, but when you have you will no longer need the experts who would tell you otherwise.

It would be more than presumptuous to assume that anyone could be a greater expert on you than yourself, and I am not that presumptuous. Instead of trying to reveal you to you, I will stick with an area where I am an expert, revealing me to you. In sharing a part of my story with you maybe you will
discover a hidden bit of your own story. By the time you have finished reading my story you will also know something about the process that led me from my presumed sanity into a descent to a kind of social insanity. From my time spent being “insane” we will travel back again together to a what I now thing of as a remarkably sane state … maybe even more sane than society tells us is possible.

Along the way, as we journey together in this book, in revealing the process I experienced … the twists, turns and the details … you will learn something about what story is and how it works. While there were more moments than I wish to remember where the process seemed to be utterly chaotic at the time, I realize now, looking back on them, that most of those moments were perfectly choreographed. By stepping beyond my story I will include some of what I have learned as a result of living it. Between reading about me in my tale … and about some of the learning I accumulated along the way … you will have everything you need to revisit, refine and rewrite your own story. A huge boon that you will get as well, will be that you will be able to use the learning you gain about storytelling for yourself … and with others too … if you choose it.

One final thing and I’ll set you free to experience the Adventure for yourself. I cannot strongly enough recommend that simply let yourself be taken by my story as you would any piece of fictional prose. Just like every good story ever told, my loosely formed memoir, contains the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth … or at least it points to it directly even when as the author I did not know that myself. Of course, the trick to making the story work for you is finding the truth within yourself … especially if the truth is a story you have been avoiding for too long.

Joseph Riggio, Ph.D.
Princeton, New Jersey 2013
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction - The Journey Begins
The Blue Dell Farm "Hypnotorium"

There I was, sitting with my eyes closed on a stool in front of a room full of strangers in the “Hypnotorium” at the Blue Dell Farm in Pemberton, N.J. situated on the edge of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, my head lolling forward and possibly even drooling a bit ... completely at peace and feeling great ... even grateful. Next to me was a man, a little larger than life, whom I just met a few minutes before ... Roye, a South-African Jew who had spent the last twenty-five years or so as an Israeli commando. It was quite a scene I had gotten myself into ... more than I could have possibly guessed at the time.

The group in the hypnotorium was about as varied as I could imagine any group could get and still remain in the same room together. I remember the woman who prompted me to show up, a dark haired pleasant lady, “Linda,” who was a true believer as far as I could tell. There was also the Upper East Side New York City investment banker who seemed alternately agitated and remarkably peaceful in turns. Also, from New York City, but from down in the East Village, was the gay man struggling with relationship issues.

There were folks from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, Texas, Canada, London, Israel and South Africa ... about twenty in all as I remember it now. The group in total was a global gang of true characters, each and every one. I met another woman who there who was a yoga instructor. A little later on, I met a couple of others as well ... an Orthodox Jewish diamond merchant, and a young Israeli solider visiting the U.S. who had come specifically to do private work with Roye. There was a beautiful, young blond woman in the room too, though I never quite got where she was from or why she was there. Truly it was a varied and sundry group, all seemingly intent on staring at me with my mouth hanging open, drooling in the front of the room as Roye went on and on.

I could not tell you what he was talking about today if my life depended on it. I recall rousing myself every once in a while and lifting my head up, beginning to open my eyes to look about. Each time I lifted my head up, Roye would reach over, slide his hand down from my forehead to my chin, barely an inch or two in front of my face. As he did this he would gently speak, telling me things like, "Just close your eyes, relax ... sleep if you like ... there is nothing you need to do out here with us ... everything you want is all on the inside ... for you to find." This was my introduction to working with Roye Fraser, Master NLP Trainer and Hypnotist, in his "Hypnotorium" ... the space he had built for “doing work” with people and running programs like the one I was now in the midst of myself.
Preppy to Iconoclastic Outcast

While I could not tell you what Roye said to me on that first day with him, I can tell you why I was in the Hypnotorium at the Blue Dell Farm in Pemberton. I had come to learn more about NLP*, a powerful personal change technology, developed by two geniuses who met at the University of California - Santa Cruz. The year before I had participated in an NLP Practitioner Certification training with two other trainers. In the world of NLP, practitioner training is the basic starting point. I was now on a mission to complete Master Practitioner Certification, on my way to earning full NLP Trainer Certification ... what I assumed would be a two year journey, give or take a couple of months ...

The reason I was on the journey was because I was lost.

I would now argue, after more than two decades of guiding people in their own journeys, that realizing you're lost is often the perfect place to begin.

Keeping what could be a long history short, I was the product of a good middle class upbringing from a blue collar neighborhood in NJ. A bit unusual for the neighborhood I grew up in, I had the privilege of a high-quality Catholic college preparatory secondary school education designed to prepare me to get into the university of my choice. Many of my peers from high-school went onto Ivy League universities, and a few went onto the elite U.S. Military Academies ... West Point, Annapolis, the U.S. Air Force Academy ... a rather extraordinary and impressive group of young men.

Seton Hall Preparatory High School was an all boys school ... in those days it was on the campus of Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J. To make up for any lack of girls present in the school itself there were plenty of co-eds ... if you knew how to make that situation work for you. The fact that I noticed there were "older" woman around, some of them who were interested in "younger" men, probably had something to do with my lack of interest in pursuing my education to the fullest at that time. I was a great student at the start, finishing my first year near the very top of my class. From that point on it was pretty much all downhill as I continued to lose interest in schooling with each passing year. Despite my grand lack of interest I still managed to finish in the top quarter of my class, and was a National Merit Scholar finalist, but I was totally uninterested in school. Nonetheless, I did what everyone expected of me and applied to college. I got accepted where I applied, and began relatively enthusiastically despite my general disinterest in getting any more formal education under my belt.

I was the typical American kid, from a stable working class family, who had the opportunities to "get ahead in life" presented to me. I believed, "getting a good education" was the path to creating a good life for myself ... but my attention kept getting diverted, mostly by the girls. By the time I was in my last
years of high school I was way more interested girls than in my education. Lucky me … the girls were interested too. That of course was only part of the problem. In my last year at "The Prep," my senior year, I was cruising and prancing through life at one level ... popular, doing well-enough to get by in all my classes, an active athlete who was also involved in multiple extracurricular activities. One of the most notable of my extracurricular activities in my senior year was starring in a spoof movie made by the drama department satirizing the incredibly successful Rocky film with Sylvester Stallone. They choose me because I bore a striking resemblance to the actor, and I was boxing competitively at the time. It also helped that I had a body like a young Adonis (it is hard to be humble when it is true ... but, that was a very long time ago now, so I can say it with a straight face and gracious humility).

What I did not know was that all the schooling in the world could not and would not save me from myself. There is no way to avoid walking your own path. There are really only two fundamental choices, 1) finding yourself and your way, or 2) living a life that is not your own. Partly by choice, and partly because I was thrust into it, I stepped off the pristine path presented to me and onto to another that led directly into the wilderness of uncertainty. University never really worked so well for me. While my friends were completing degrees, beginning their careers, or planning on attending a graduate school, I was mostly floundering. I began a degree program in architecture that I never completed, but I was a quick enough study to pick up what I needed to get hired as an architectural draftsman by the time I was just eighteen going on nineteen.

By then I had already dropped out of college for all intents and purposes, although I was still registered for classes. I decided that although college was not for me, real education was, so I attended the classes I liked. I did this regardless of the application of the course to any degree program. I read the books assigned, asked a lot of questions, engaged in class discussions and debates, and did little else, i.e.: I neither took the tests, nor did the homework required to pass any of the classes I was taking. As a result I have an impressive list of diverse and varied university classes I have attended and failed ... at an equally impressive list of diverse and varied institutions. However, no one could stop me from benefiting from the education I was orchestrating for myself, despite their ability to grade me a failure and deny me a precious degree from their prestigious institute.

Believe me, there was a price to pay for the arrogance I displayed in my college years. A degree if nothing else is a ticket that opens doors that could otherwise remain locked to you. I found that out multiple times, and had to perform a bit of song and dance magic, and use my trickster ways to get those doors to open. One of those doors was getting hired as an architectural draftsman, then later on as an interior designer, and finally as an apprentice architect. All that occurred within the space of about four years. By the end of that span of time I was architecturally skilled. It seems what I lacked in my
nature to submit to a formal education I more than made up for in my ability to absorb information and learn informally.

At the tender age of twenty-two, I was one of the founders of an interior design firm with two partners. My specialty was doing interior architecture. Our practice, JS Randolph Associates, Inc. in Hackensack, N.J. did remarkably well. I was designing office spaces in some of the most prestigious buildings in New York City, including many, many commissions at Black Rock, the iconic CBS building on Sixth Avenue and 51st. I was also designing interiors for some of the most expensive apartments in New York City and homes along the bluffs overlooking the Hudson River in New Jersey, as well as others scattered throughout the area. These were productive, prosperous, good years. I was a full partner in a successful design firm, and I thought I was on top of the world, laughing all the way to the bank ... the joke however was on me.

In the next few years I broke up with a long-standing girlfriend that I wanted to marry, left the design firm I had founded with my partners, met another girl and was married within a year, stumbled around the design community for a couple of more years trying to find a place where I could settle down, had a beautiful baby boy, separated from my wife, moved back in with my parents, and started training dogs to pay the bills.

What a long, strange ride the few years from “successful young architect” to “failure at life” were ... a seismic event that shook the foundation of my life as I knew it. The feeling as I slid down the slope from what seemed to be enormous success to what seemed to be cataclysmic failure was like standing on unstable ground, unable to find my footing, as though the earth beneath my feet was constantly shifting offering me no place to stand securely for more than a few minutes at a time.

It was during this time that I found myself on that stool at the front of the room sitting next to Roye.

Note: *NLP = Neurolinguistic Programming
Waking From The Dream …

What I had thought was going to be a two year journey to obtaining an NLP Trainer Certification became a seven-year apprenticeship sitting at the knee of the master. From my point of view it was more like Army Ranger training, or Navy Seal boot camp, substituting the physical agony with mental and emotional agony. Of course there were a few intermittent “Hell Weeks” on occasion as well, for seven years running, but worth every minute looking back on it now. For thirteen years, after the initial seven years of intense apprenticing with him, I kept my relationship with Roye intact. I continued to benefit from his experience and wisdom … as well as his friendship. From my side of the bargain Roye got to share his ideas with an able and willing student who had become a colleague. Along the way, Roye got to vicariously experience some of the rewards of my journey presenting what I had been learning with him to audiences internationally.

Over those next thirteen years, while Roye was still with us, I built a business taking the work into the highest level offices in business, government and non-profits internationally. I was invited to speak to groups as varied as an ASEAN economic development committee to the directors of summer camps at the American Camp Association’s annual meeting. During this time I was writing articles for magazines, speaking on the radio and being interviewed on television. I presented at more NLP conferences and groups around the world than I can remember. I was also working privately, one-on-one, with individuals worldwide who wanted what I had to offer. The experience I was having led me to be constantly re-thinking everything I had learned and believed, including the model of work I was engaged in developing. Revisiting and refining the model continuously over the next ten years or so led to numerous interesting and deep conversations with Roye over many slices of pizza and countless cups of dark, hot coffee.

One of the outcomes of my learning with Roye, and working with clients worldwide, was the development the model I originally called the Mythogenic Self Process and later shortened to the MythoSelf Process. The MythoSelf Process is a powerful, transformational changework model for individuals and organizations in transition. In part, I choose the name, “MythoSelf,” as an homage to the renowned mythologist, Joseph Campbell. I did this because a significant part of my work was predicated on the Hero's Journey model that he had delineated years before. While my work was not directly mythological, i.e.: based on using the ancient myths that Joseph Campbell so masterfully told and used, it was - and is - definitely mythologically informed and organized. Rather than talking about mythology per se, I often refer to mythological or mythic form … the essential way we know, understand and organize our subjective, phenomenological realities. The most obvious aspect of mythological or mythic form can be found in our autobiographic narrative … what I call “The Story of Your Life” … in which we contain our life experience metaphorically.
The MythoSelf Process model and work addresses how people organize the story of their lives as a "fictional autobiography," or more precisely a "fictional autobiographical narrative," that they then believe represents reality or truth as they know it. Their fiction becomes the basis of their perceptions, judgements, decision-making and behaviors. Anyone who believes their own autobiographical narrative lives a fool's dream.

Nothing wrong with believing your own fictions per se, except when you can no longer tell the dream from being awake.

My "job" has largely become helping folks wake up and develop the strategies and skills they need to function, prosper and thrive in the world, while remaining fully awake ... in essence to become a “Wise Fool” living beyond the boundaries of the dream that constrains most folks to living “lives of quiet desperation.”

People ask me why I use the phrase “Wise Fool” to refer to folks who have escaped the trap of the trivial that contains most folks in their day to day lives to “lives of quiet desperation” and there are many reasons I could give, but maybe the best reply was penned by Henry David Thoreau in, “Walden” the book he wrote as a record of his own transformational journey at Walden Pond in Massachusettes:

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and you have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.” - Henry David Thoreau, “Walden” 1854

I love Thoreau’s phrase, “... wisdom not to do desperate things.” Henry David Thoreau was many things, among them an author, poet, philosopher, naturalistic, transcendentalist and maybe known most of all for his moral opposition and civil disobedience in resisting what he believed was an “unjust state.” After he woke up from the dream most of us are led to and entranced by, he found a way to walk on a path that was distinctly his own. In waking from the dream that becomes our lives as we know them, Thoreau decided to live a life informed by a manifest wisdom he found within himself and reflected in the world around him ... rather than one organized in desperation.

Now if you do not know what I mean by "the dream," and the difference between that and being “awake,” not much of this will make sense to you so far. Let me bring you back for a moment to something I said earlier ... that my own journey began because I was lost. That moment, when I realized I was lost, was
the moment when I first recognized that I had been asleep for the past twenty-five years or so. I am giving myself the benefit of the doubt that I made it to five awake, when I say twenty-five years. I was following the set of hypnotic commands installed in me by society, and just about everyone I had encountered up until then. The suggestions I received as a child, beginning from the moment I was born, continued to deepen and get reinforced by an endless repetition of the same messages coming in from every quarter imaginable. As I stated in my earlier book, *The State of Perfection: Your Hidden Code to Personal Mastery* the message of society can be summed up as, "Be Good and Fit In."

Even well meaning folks ... my parents, my aunts and uncles, grandparents, teachers, friends (and their parents too) ... were all under the same spell, and installing it in others like a virus. The social virus we are taught to live by in almost any "civilized" culture ... "Be Good and Fit In" ... replicates in virtually everyone it touches. The entire system I was raised within was designed and organized to deliver this message, "Be Good and Fit In."

The bait to take the poison pill is the prize offered to those who willingly submit ... achievement and success ... beginning with praise lauded on us at the start when we learn to babble out our first few words. The process continues to condition us from before we can think for ourselves to desire the “prize.” The conditioning to want to be noticed and well regarded by others continues from our earliest days in school with the gold stars we earn, and the stroking that comes along with them. On the other hand we also learn that when we "fail" we will be summarily punished with a harsh look, a word or more extreme physical intervention or punishment. The least physical punishment is being constrained, from there it may move to a pat on the behind, and in some instances works up to a significant beating. Worse than physical punishment, even more than a beating which may injure us, is banishment ... emotional or literal.

We learn early on to please others, striving at all costs to "Be Good and Fit In."

This is the major process we accommodate and absorb during our schooling years to "Be Good and Fit In." We learn to remain quiet, not to challenge authority, to do what we're told, to sit still - ignoring our own body's demands and its pleas that we move and remain free. We yearn to get the gold star ... the perfect grade in class, the "100%" ... the "A" ... the "4.0" ... and even that's not good enough. We do the extra credit work so we can graduate with better than perfect grades, "110%" ... "A+" ... a "4.3" GPA on a "4.0" scale. Along the way we learn that all we have to do to achieve greatness is to submit to the requests of authority and do what we are told. As a result we learn to do things like blindly submit to the "Rule of Law" as though it is cosmic order and not man-made fabrication ... and for the most part we learn and do our part well. Thoreau's lessons on the obligation of civil disobedience seem to be lost in our
By the time I was thirty years old, I had learned all these lessons well. I had both experienced the reward of doing what I was told and excelling ... and also stepping off the bus and hitting the ground hard, without anyone there to pick me up. I had one advantage, I was like a pit bull with a bone ... tenacious, reluctant to give up what I held to be mine and a bit pugnacious if I had to be to protect and keep it. That is how I wound up on the stool, eyes mostly closed in profound trance, sitting next to Roye. I knew the beliefs I had accumulated were "real" and that I had to unwind them from my psyche if I ever wanted to be free and have "the experience of my life." I also knew from long experience, trial and error, that I either could not or would not do this on my own ... not easily, or maybe not at all. I was on that stool, sitting next to Roye, because I was ready to allow a master guide me over the threshold beyond the beliefs I had that held reality intact as I knew it to be. I was ready, willing and grateful to have found someone to help me go "insane" by any definition of that word I could apply from the position I then held.

This rest of this book is a tale of the journey I took into what can only be called utter social insanity, and my return to the world proper profoundly sane by every measure.