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lead great lives' —PAULO COELHO

Robin Sharma

The 5 AM Club

«HarperCollins»

Sharma R.

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Legendary leadership and elite performance expert Robin Sharma introduced The 5am Club concept over twenty years ago, based on a revolutionary morning routine that has helped his clients maximize their productivity, activate their best health and bulletproof their serenity in this age of overwhelming complexity. Now, in this life-changing book, handcrafted by the author over a rigorous four-year period, you will discover the early-rising habit that has helped so many accomplish epic results while upgrading their happiness, helpfulness and feelings of aliveness. Through an enchanting—and often amusing—story about two struggling strangers who meet an eccentric tycoon who becomes their secret mentor, The 5am Club will walk you through: How great geniuses, business titans and the world's wisest people start their mornings to produce astonishing achievements A little-known formula you can use instantly to wake up early feeling inspired, focused and flooded with a fiery drive to get the most out of each day A step-by-step method to protect the quietest hours of daybreak so you have time for exercise, self-renewal and personal growth A neuroscience-based practice proven to help make it easy to rise while most people are sleeping, giving you precious time for yourself to think, express your creativity and begin the day peacefully instead of being rushed 'Insider-only' tactics to defend your gifts, talents and dreams against digital distraction and trivial diversions so you enjoy fortune, influence and a magnificent impact on the world Part manifesto for mastery, part playbook for genius-grade productivity and part companion for a life lived beautifully, The 5am Club is a work that will transform your life. Forever.

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MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR + DEDICATION

I'm immensely grateful that this book is in your hands. My deep hope is that it serves the full expression of your gifts and talents beautifully. And causes revolutions of heroic transformation within your creativity, productivity, prosperity and service to the world.

The 5 AM Club is based on a concept and method that I've been teaching to celebrated entrepreneurs, CEOs of legendary companies, sports superstars, music icons and members of royalty – with extraordinary success – for over twenty years.

I wrote this book over a four-year period, in Italy, South Africa, Canada, Switzerland, Russia, Brazil and Mauritius. Sometimes the words flowed effortlessly as if a gentle summer breeze was at my back and at other times, I struggled to move ahead. Sometimes I felt like waving the white flag of creative depletion and during other periods of this intensely spiritual process, a responsibility higher than my own needs encouraged me to continue.

I've given all I have to give in the writing of this book for you. And I greatly thank all the very good people from around the planet who have stood with me to the completion of The 5 AM Club.

And so, with a full heart, I humbly dedicate this work to you, the reader. The world needs more heroes and why wait for them – when you have it in you to become one. Starting today.

With love + respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' followed by a horizontal line.

EPIGRAPH

“We will have eternity to celebrate the victories but only a few hours before sunset to win them.”

Amy Carmichael

“For what it’s worth, it’s never too late or, in my case, too early to be whoever you want to be ... I hope you live a life you’re proud of. If you find that you’re not, I hope you have the strength to start all over again.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald

“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

CHAPTER 1

The Dangerous Deed

A gun would be too violent. A noose would be too ancient. And a knife blade to the wrist would be too silent. So, the question became, *How could a once-glorious life be ended swiftly and precisely, with minimum mess yet maximum impact?*

Only a year ago, circumstances had been dramatically more hopeful. The entrepreneur had been widely celebrated as a titan of her industry, a leader of society and a philanthropist. She was in her late thirties, steering the technology company she founded in her dorm room in college to ever-increasing levels of marketplace dominance while producing products that her customers revered.

Yet now she was being blindsided, facing a mean-spirited and jealousy-fueled coup that would significantly dilute her ownership stake in the business she'd invested most of her life building, forcing her to find a new job.

The cruelty of this remarkable turn of events was proving to be unbearable for the entrepreneur. Beneath her regularly icy exterior beat a caring, compassionate and deeply loving heart. She felt life itself had betrayed her. And that she deserved so much better.

She considered swallowing a gigantic bottle of sleeping pills. The dangerous deed would be cleaner this way. Just take them all and get the job done fast, she thought. I need to escape this pain.

Then, she spotted something on the stylish oak dresser in her all-white bedroom – a ticket to a personal optimization conference that her mother had given her. The entrepreneur usually laughed at people who attended such events, calling them “broken winged” and saying they were seeking the answers of a pseudo guru when everything they needed to live a prolific and successful life was already within them.

Maybe it was time to rethink her opinion. She couldn't see many options. Either she'd go to the seminar – and experience some breakthrough that would save her life. Or she'd find her peace. Via a quick death.

CHAPTER 2

A Daily Philosophy on Becoming Legendary

“Do not allow your fire to go out, spark by irreplaceable spark in the hopeless swamps of the not-quite, the not-yet, and the not at all. Do not let the hero in your soul perish in lonely frustration for the life you deserved and have never been able to reach. The world you desire can be won. It exists. It is real. It is possible. It is yours.”

Ayn Rand

He was a speaker of the finest kind. A genuine Spellbinder.

Nearing the end of a fabled career and now in his eighties, he had become revered throughout the world as a grandmaster of inspiration, a legend of leadership and a sincere statesman helping everyday people realize their greatest gifts.

In a culture filled with volatility, uncertainty and insecurity, The Spellbinder’s events drew stadium-sized numbers of human beings who longed not only to lead masterful lives filled with creativity, productivity and prosperity but also to exist in a way that passionately elevated humanity. So that, at the end, they would feel confident they had left a wonderful legacy and made their mark on the generations that would follow.

This man’s work was unique. It blended insights that fortified the warrior within our characters with ideas that honored the soulful poet who resides inside the heart. His messaging showed ordinary individuals how to succeed at the highest levels of the business realm yet reclaim the magic of a life richly lived. So, we return to the sense of awe we once knew before a hard and cold world placed our natural genius into bondage by an orgy of complexity, superficiality and technological distraction.

Though The Spellbinder was tall, his advanced years left him slightly bent over. As he walked the platform, he stepped carefully yet gracefully. A precisely fitted charcoal gray suit with soft white pinstripes gave him an elegant look. And a pair of blue-tinted eyeglasses added just the right amount of cool.

“Life’s too short to play small with your talents,” The Spellbinder spoke to the room of thousands. “You were born into the opportunity as well as the responsibility to become legendary. You’ve been built to achieve masterwork-level projects, designed to realize unusually important pursuits and constructed to be a force for good on this tiny planet. You have it in you to reclaim sovereignty over your primal greatness in a civilization that has become fairly uncivilized. To restore your nobility in a global community where the majority shops for nice shoes and acquires expensive things yet rarely invests in a better self. Your personal leadership requires – no, demands – that you stop being a cyber-zombie relentlessly attracted to digital devices and restructure your life to model mastery, exemplify decency and relinquish the self-centeredness that keeps good people limited. The great women and men of the world were all givers, not takers. Renounce the common delusion that those who accumulate the most win. Instead, do work that is heroic – that staggers your marketplace by the quality of its originality as well as from the helpfulness it provides. While you do so, my recommendation is that you also create a private life strong in ethics, rich with marvelous beauty and unyielding when it comes to the protection of your inner peace. This, my friends, is how you soar with the angels. And walk alongside the gods.”

The Spellbinder paused. He drew in a gulp of air, as big as a mountain. His breathing grew strained and made a *whooshing* noise as he inhaled. He looked down at his stylish black boots that had been polished up to a military grade.

Those in the front row saw a single tear drizzle down the timeworn yet once-handsome face.

His gaze remained downward. His silence was thunderous. The Spellbinder appeared unsteady.

After a series of stressful moments that had some in the audience shifting in their seats, The Spellbinder put down the microphone he had been holding in his left hand. With his free hand, he tenderly reached into a pocket of his trousers and pulled out a crisply folded linen handkerchief. He wiped his cheek.

“Each of you has a call on your lives. Every one of you carries an instinct for excellence within your spirits. No one in this room needs to stay frozen in average and succumb to the mass mediocratization of behavior evident in society along with the collective de-professionalization of business so apparent in industry. Limitation is nothing more than a mentality that too many good people practice daily until they believe it’s reality. It breaks my heart to see so many potentially powerful human beings stuck in a story about why they can’t be extraordinary, professionally and personally. You need to remember that your excuses are seducers, your fears are liars and your doubts are thieves.”

Many nodded. A few clapped. Then many more applauded.

“I understand you. I really do,” continued The Spellbinder.

“I know you’ve had some difficult times in your life. We all have. I get that you might be feeling things haven’t turned out the way you thought they would when you were a little kid, full of fire, desire and wonder. You didn’t plan on each day looking the same, did you? In a job that might be smothering your soul. Dealing with stressful worries and endless responsibilities that stifle your originality and steal your energy. Lusting after unimportant pursuits and hungry for the instant fulfillment of trivial desires, often driven by a technology that enslaves us instead of liberating us. Living the same week a few thousand times and calling it a life. I need to tell you that too many among us die at thirty and are buried at eighty. So, I do get you. You hoped things would be different. More interesting. More exciting. More fulfilling, special and magical.”

The Spellbinder’s voice trembled as he spoke these last words. He struggled to breathe for an instant. A look of concern caused his brow to crinkle. He sat down on a cream-colored chair that had been carefully placed at the side of the stage by one of his assistants.

“And, yes, I am aware that there are also many in this room who are currently leading lives you love. You’re an epic success in the world, fully on your game and enriching your families and communities with an electricity that borders on otherworldly. Nice work. Bravo. And, yet, you too have experienced seasons where you’ve been lost in the frigid and dangerous valley of darkness. You, too, have known the collapse of your creative magnificence as well as your productive eminence into a tiny circle of comfortableness, fearfulness and numbness that betrayed the mansions of mastery and reservoirs of bravery inside of you. You, too, have been disappointed by the barren winters of a life weakly lived. You, too, have been denied many of your most inspired childhood dreams. You, too, have been hurt by people you trusted. You, too, have had your ideals destroyed. You, too, have had your innocent heart devastated, leaving your life decimated, like a ruined country after ambitious foreign invaders infiltrated it.”

The cavernous conference hall was severely still.

“No matter where you are on the pathway of your life, please don’t let the pain of an imperfect past hinder the glory of your fabulous future. You are so much more powerful than you may currently understand. Splendid victories – and outright blessings – are coming your way. And you’re exactly where you need to be to receive the growth necessary for you to lead the unusually productive, extremely prodigious and exceptionally influential life that you’ve earned through your harshest trials. Nothing is wrong at this moment, even if it feels like everything’s falling apart. If you sense your life’s a mess right now, this is simply because your fears are just a little stronger than your faith. With practice, you can turn down the volume of the voice of your scared self. And increase the tone of your most triumphant side. The truth is that every challenging event you’ve experienced, each toxic person that you’ve encountered and all the trials you’ve endured have been perfect preparation to make you into the person that you now are. You needed these lessons to activate the treasures, talents

and powers that are now awakening within you. Nothing was an accident. Zero was a waste. You're definitely exactly where you need to be to begin the life of your most supreme desires. One that can make you an empire-builder along with a world-changer. And perhaps even a history-maker."

"This all sounds easy but it's a lot harder in reality," shouted a man in a red baseball cap, seated in the fifth row. He sported a gray t-shirt and ripped jeans, the type you can buy torn at your local shopping mall. Though this outburst could have seemed disrespectful, the pitch of the participant's voice and his body language displayed genuine admiration for The Spellbinder.

"I agree with you, you wonderful human being," responded The Spellbinder, his grace influencing all participants and his voice sounding somewhat stronger, as he stood up from his chair. "Ideas are worth nothing unless backed by application. The smallest of implementations is always worth more than the grandest of intentions. And if being an amazing person and developing a legendary life was easy, everyone would be doing it. Know what I mean?"

"Sure, dude," replied the man in the red cap as he rubbed his lower lip with a finger.

"Society has sold us a series of mistruths," The Spellbinder continued. "That pleasure is preferable to the terrifying yet majestic fact that all possibility requires hard work, regular reinvention and a dedication as deep as the sea to leaving our harbors of safety, daily. I believe that the seduction of complacency and an easy life is one hundred times more brutal, ultimately, than a life where you go all in and take an unconquerable stand for your brightest dreams. *World-class begins where your comfort zone ends* is a rule the successful, the influential and the happiest always remember."

The man nodded. Groups of people in the audience were doing the same.

"From a young age, we are programmed into thinking that moving through life loyal to the values of mastery, ingenuity and decency should need little effort. And so, if the road gets tough and requires some patience, we think we're on the wrong path," commented The Spellbinder as he grasped an arm of the wooden chair and folded his thin frame into the seat again.

"We've encouraged a culture of soft, weak and delicate people who can't keep promises, who bail on commitments and who quit on their aspirations the moment the smallest obstacle shows up."

The orator then sighed loudly.

"Hard is good. Real greatness and the realization of your inherent genius is meant to be a difficult sport. Only those devoted enough to go to the fiery edges of their highest limits will expand them. And the suffering that happens along the journey of materializing your special powers, strongest abilities and most inspiring ambitions is one of the largest sources of human satisfaction. A major key to happiness – and internal peace – is knowing you've done whatever it took to earn your rewards and passionately invested the effortful audacity to become your best. Jazz legend Miles Davis stretched himself ferociously past the normal his field knew to fully exploit his magnificent potential. Michelangelo sacrificed enormously mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually as he produced his awesome art. Rosa Parks, a simple seamstress with outstanding courage, endured blunt humiliation when she was arrested for not giving up her seat on a segregated bus, igniting the civil rights movement. Charles Darwin demonstrated the kind of resolve that virtuosity demands by studying barnacles – yes, barnacles – for eight long years as he formulated his famed Theory of Evolution. This kind of dedication to the optimization of expertise would now be labeled as 'crazy' by the majority in our modern world that spends huge amounts of their irreplaceable lifetime watching streams of selfies, the breakfasts of virtual friends and violent video games," noted The Spellbinder as he peered around the hall as if committed to looking each of the attendees straight in the eye.

"Stephen King worked as a high school writing teacher and in an industrial laundry before selling *Carrie*, the novel that made him famous," the aging presenter continued. "Oh, and please know that King was so discouraged by the rejections and denials that he threw the manuscript he wrote in his rundown trailer into the garbage, surrendering to the struggle. It was only when his wife, Tabitha, discovered the work while her husband was away, wiped off his cigarette ashes, read the book and

then told its author that it was brilliant that King submitted it for publication. Even then, his advance for hardcover rights was a paltry twenty-five hundred dollars.”

“Are you serious?” murmured a woman seated near the stage. She wore a lush green hat with a big scarlet feather sticking out of it and was clearly content with marching to her own drumbeat.

“I am,” said The Spellbinder. “And while Vincent van Gogh created nine hundred paintings and over one thousand drawings in his lifetime, his celebrity started after his death. His drive to produce wasn’t inspired by the ego fuel of popular applause but by a wiser instinct that enticed him to see just how much of his creative power he could unlock, no matter how much hardship he had to endure. Becoming legendary is never easy. But I’d prefer that journey to the heartbreak of being stuck in ordinary that so many potentially heroic people deal with constantly,” articulated The Spellbinder firmly.

“Anyway, let me simply say that the place where your greatest discomfort lies is also the spot where your largest opportunity lives. The beliefs that disturb you, the feelings that threaten you, the projects that unnerve you and the unfoldments of your talents that the insecure part of you is resisting are precisely where you need to go to. Lean deeply toward these doorways into your bigness as a creative producer, seeker of personal freedom and possibilitarian. And then embrace these beliefs, feelings and projects quickly instead of structuring your life in a way that’s designed to dismiss them. Walking into the very things that scare you is how you reclaim your forgotten power. And how you get back the innocence and awe you lost after childhood.”

Suddenly, The Spellbinder started to cough. Mildly at first. Then violently, like he’d been possessed by a demon hell-bent on revenge.

In the wings, a man in a black suit with an aggressive crew cut spoke into a mouthpiece tucked discreetly into his shirt cuff. The lights began to flicker, then dim. A few audience members who were located near the platform stood, unsure of what to do.

A uniquely pretty woman with her hair in a crisp bun, a clenched smile and a tight black dress with an embroidered white collar rushed up the metal staircase that The Spellbinder had ascended at the beginning of his talk. She carried a phone in one hand and a well-worn notebook in another. Her red high heels made a “click clack, click clack” sound as she raced toward her employer.

Yet, the woman was too late.

The Spellbinder crumpled to the floor like a punch-drunk boxer with a large heart but weak skills in the final round of a once-glorious career that he should have ended many years earlier. The old presenter lay still. A tiny river of blood escaped from a cut to his head, sustained on his fall. His glasses sat next to him. The handkerchief was still in his hand. His once-sparkling eyes remained closed.

CHAPTER 3

An Unexpected Encounter with a Surprising Stranger

“Do not live as if you have ten thousand years left. Your fate hangs over you. While you are still living, while you still exist on this Earth, strive to become a genuinely great person.”

Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor

The entrepreneur lied to the people she met at the seminar, telling them she was in the room to learn The Spellbinder’s fabulous formulas for exponential productivity as well as to discover the neuroscience beneath personal mastery that he had been sharing with leaders of industry. She mused that her expectation was that the guru’s methodology would give her an unmatched edge over her firm’s competition, allowing the business to swiftly scale toward indisputable dominance. You know the real reason she was there: she needed her hope restored. And her life saved.

The artist had come to the event to understand how to fuel his creativity and multiply his capability so he could make an enduring mark on his field by the paintings he generated.

And the homeless man appeared to have sneaked into the conference hall while no one was watching.

The entrepreneur and the artist had been seated together. This was the first time they’d met.

“Do you think he’s dead?” she asked as the artist fidgeted with his dangling Bob Marley dreadlocks.

The entrepreneur’s face was angular and long. A wealth of wrinkles and weighty crevices ran along her forehead like ruts in a farmer’s fresh field. Her brown hair was medium in length and styled in an “I mean business and dare not mess with me” kind of a way. She was lean, like a long-distance runner, with thin arms and lithe legs that emerged from a sensible blue designer skirt. Her eyes looked sad, from old hurts that had never been healed. And from the current chaos that was infecting her beloved company.

“Not sure. He’s old. He fell hard. God, that was wild. Never seen anything like it,” the artist said anxiously as he tugged on an earring.

“I’m new to his work. I’m not into this sort of thing,” the entrepreneur explained. She stayed seated, her arms folded over a cream-colored blouse with a colossal floppy black bow tie perched fashionably at the neckline. “But I liked a lot of his information on productivity in this era of devices destroying our focus and our ability to think deeply. His words made me realize I have to guard my cognitive assets in a far better way,” she carried on, fairly formally. She had no real interest in sharing what she was going through, and she obviously wanted to protect her facade of an illustrious businesswoman ready to rise to the next level.

“Yeah, he’s def hip,” said the artist, looking nervous. “He’s helped me so much. Can’t believe what just went down. Surreal, right?”

He was a painter. Because he wanted to elevate his craft as well as improve his personal life, he followed The Spellbinder’s work. But, for whatever reason, the demons within him seemed to hold power over his greater nature. So, he’d inevitably sabotage his Herculean ambitions and wonderfully original ideas.

The artist was heavy. A goatee jutted out from under his chin. He wore a black t-shirt and long black shorts that fell below his knobby knees. Black boots with rubber soles, the kind you may have seen Australians wear, completed the creative uniform. A fascinating cascade of tattoos rolled down both arms and across his left leg. One said, “Rich People Are Fakers.” Another stole a line from Salvador Dalí, the famed Spanish artist. It read simply, “I don’t do drugs. I am drugs.”

“Hi, guys,” the homeless man spoke inappropriately loudly from a few rows behind the entrepreneur and the artist. The auditorium was still emptying, and the audiovisual crew was noisily tearing down the staging. Event staff swept the floor. A Nightmares on Wax song played soothingly in the background.

The two new acquaintances turned around to see a tangled mess of wild-person hair, a face that looked like it hadn’t been shaved in decades and a tattered arrangement of terrifically stained clothing.

“Yes?” asked the entrepreneur in a tone as cold as an ice cube in the Arctic. “Can I help you?”

“Hey, brother, what’s up?” offered the artist, more compassionately.

The homeless man got up, shuffled over and sat next to the two.

“Do you think the guru’s croaked?” he asked as he picked at a scab on one of his wrists.

“Not sure,” the artist replied as he twirled another dreadlock. “Hope not.”

“Did you guys like the seminar? You into what the old-timer said?” continued the scruffy stranger.

“Def,” said the artist. “I love his work. I have a hard time living it all, but what he says is profound. And powerful.”

“I’m not so sure,” the entrepreneur said cynically. “I like a lot of what I heard today, but I’m still not convinced on some other things. I’ll need some time to process it all.”

“Well, I think he’s numero uno,” stated the homeless man with a burp. “I made my fortune thanks to the teachings of The Spellbinder. And have enjoyed a pretty world-class life because of him, too. Most people wish for phenomenal things to happen to them. He taught me that exceptional performers *make* phenomenal things happen to them. And the great thing is, he not only gave me a secret philosophy to get my big dreams done but he taught me the technology – the tactics and tools – to translate the information into results. His revolutionary insights on how to install a fiercely productive morning routine alone transformed the impact I’ve had on my marketplace.”

A jagged scar ran along the homeless man’s forehead, just above his right eye. His threatening beard was gray. Around his neck he sported a beaded necklace, like the ones Indian holy men wear at their temples. Though his hyperbole made him sound unstable and his visage made it appear that he’d lived on the streets for many years, his voice displayed an irregular sense of authority. And his eyes revealed the confidence of a lion.

“Total crackpot,” the entrepreneur whispered to the artist. “If he’s got a fortune, I’m Mother Teresa.”

“Got you. He seems insane,” the artist replied. “But check out his humungous watch.”

On the left wrist of the homeless man, who seemed to be in his late sixties, was one of those massive timepieces that British hedge fund managers are prone to wear when they go out to dinner in Mayfair. It had a dial the color of a revolver surrounded by a stainless-steel rim, a red needle-thin hour hand and a sunset orange minute hand. This noteworthy badge of honor was united with a wide black rubber strap, lending a diver-like feel to the whole luxurious look.

“A hundred grand, easily,” said the entrepreneur discreetly. “Some of the people at my shop bought watches like that the day after our IPO. Unfortunately, our share price plummeted. But they kept their damn timepieces.”

“So, what part of The Spellbinder’s talk did you cats like best?” the vagabond asked, still scratching his wrist. “Was it all the stuff about the psychology of genius that he started out with? Or maybe those incredible models he taught on the productivity hacks of billionaires that he jammed on in the middle? Maybe you were stoked by all the neurobiology that creates top performance. Or did you vibe with his theory on our responsibility to reach legendary while serving as an instrument for the benefit of humanity that he walked us through before that dramatic finish?” The homeless man then winked. And glanced at his big watch.

“Hey, dudes, this has been fun. But time is one of the most precious commodities I’ve learned to bulletproof. Warren Buffett, the brilliant investor, said the rich invest in time. The poor invest in

money. So I can't hang with you humans too long. Got a meeting with a jet and a runway. Know what I mean?"

"He seems to be delusional," thought the entrepreneur.

"Buffett also said, 'I buy expensive suits. They just look cheap on me.' Maybe you'll remember that quote, too. And," she continued, "I really don't mean to be rude, but I'm not sure how you got in here. And I have no idea where you got that fat watch from or what jet you're talking about. And please stop speaking the way you do about what happened at the presentation. Nothing funny about it. Seriously, I'm not sure the gentleman's still breathing."

"Def true," the artist agreed as he stroked his goatee. "Not cool. And why do you talk like a surfer?"

"Hey guys, chill," said the homeless man. "First, I *am* a surfer. I spent my teenage years on a board in Malibu. Used to ride near a point where the rad breaks are. Now I surf the smaller waves in Tamarin Bay, a spot you cats have probably never been to."

"Never heard of the place. You're fairly outrageous," the entrepreneur said frostily.

The homeless man was unstoppable.

"And second, I *have* been very successful in the business world. I've built a bunch of companies that are extremely profitable in this age of firms making billions in income yet nothing on their bottom line. What a joke. The world's going a little berserk. Too much greed and not enough good sense. And third, if I may," he added as his gravelly voice grew stronger, "there *is* a plane waiting for me. On a tarmac not so far from here. So, before I go, I'll ask you again – because I want to know. What part of The Spellbinder's presentation did you two like best?"

"Pretty much the whole thing," the artist answered. "Loved it all so much, I recorded every word the old legend said."

"That's illegal," cautioned the homeless man, crossing his arms firmly. "You could get into serious lawyer trouble doing that."

"It is against the law," confirmed the entrepreneur. "Why would you do that?"

"Because I wanted to. Just felt like it. I do what I want to do. Rules are made for destruction, you know? Picasso said you should learn the rules like a pro so you can break them like an artist. Need to be myself and not some sheep with no balls, blindly following the flock down a path that leads to nowhere. Most people, especially people with cash, are nothing but a bunch of frauds," declared the artist. "It's like The Spellbinder sometimes says: 'You can fit in. Or you can change the world. You don't get to do both.' So, I recorded the whole thing. Shoot me. And jail would be interesting. I'd probably meet some cool people in there."

"Um, okay," said the homeless man. "I don't like your decision. But I do love your passion. So, go ahead. Bring it on. Play the parts of the seminar that turned you on."

"Everything I recorded will blow your mind!" The artist raised his arm to reveal a detailed tattoo of guitar virtuoso Jimi Hendrix. The phrase "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace" appeared over the dead superstar's face. "You're about to hear something special," he added.

"Yes. Go ahead and play the parts you liked," encouraged the entrepreneur as she stood up. She wasn't quite sure why but, ever so slightly, something was beginning to shift deep within her core. "Maybe life has been breaking me down," she thought. "So I can make some sort of a breakthrough."

Being at this event, meeting the artist, hearing The Spellbinder's words, even if she didn't agree with all he said, was giving her the feeling that what she was experiencing at her firm just might be some form of preparation demanded by her greatness. The entrepreneur was still skeptical. But she sensed she was opening. And possibly growing. So, she promised herself she'd keep following this process instead of retreating. Her former way of existing no longer served her. It was time for a change.

The entrepreneur thought about a quote she loved from Theodore Roosevelt: “It’s not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

She also recalled the phrase she’d learned from The Spellbinder’s address – something like “The moment when you most feel like giving up is the instant when you must find it in you to press ahead.” And so, the businesswoman reached deep within herself and made a vow to continue her quest to find her answers, solve her problems and experience vastly better days. Her hope was gradually expanding, and her worries were slowly shrinking. And the small, still voice of her finest self was beginning to whisper that a very special adventure was about to begin.

CHAPTER 4

Letting Go of Mediocrity and All That's Ordinary

"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

"You're a painter, right?" the homeless man asked as he toyed with a loose button on his shabby shirt.

"Yeah," mumbled the artist. "Sort of a frustrated one. I'm good. But not great."

"I have a lot of art at my flat in Zurich," said the homeless man, smiling indulgently. "Bought a place right on the Bahnhofstrasse just before the prices skyrocketed. I've learned the importance of being around only the highest quality, wherever I go. That's one of the best winning moves I've made to create the life I've crafted. In my businesses, I only allow in top players, because you can't have an A-level company with C-level performers. We only release products that totally disrupt our market and then absolutely change the field by how valuable they are. My enterprises only offer services that ethically enrich our clients, deliver a breathtaking user experience and breed fanatical followers who couldn't imagine doing business with anyone else. And in my personal life, it's the same thing: I only eat the best food, though I don't eat a lot of it. I only read the most original and thoughtful books, spend my time in the most light-filled and inspiring of spaces and visit the most enchanting of places. And when it comes to relationships, I only surround myself with human beings who fuel my joy, stoke my peace and excite me to become a better man. Life's way too valuable to hang with people who don't get you. Who you just don't vibe with. Who have different values and lower standards than you do. Who have different Mindsets, Heartsets, Healthsets and Soulsets. It's a little miracle how powerfully and profoundly our influences and environments shape our productivity as well as our impact."

"Interesting," noted the entrepreneur as she stared at her phone. "He does seem to know what he's talking about," she muttered softly to the artist, her eyes still down on the screen.

The spider's web of wrinkles on her face relaxed further. On one wrist dangled two immaculate silver bracelets. One bore the phrase "Turn I can't's into I cans," while the other was engraved with "Done Is Better Than Perfect." The entrepreneur had purchased these presents for herself when her company was in its startup phase and she'd been in a highly confident mood.

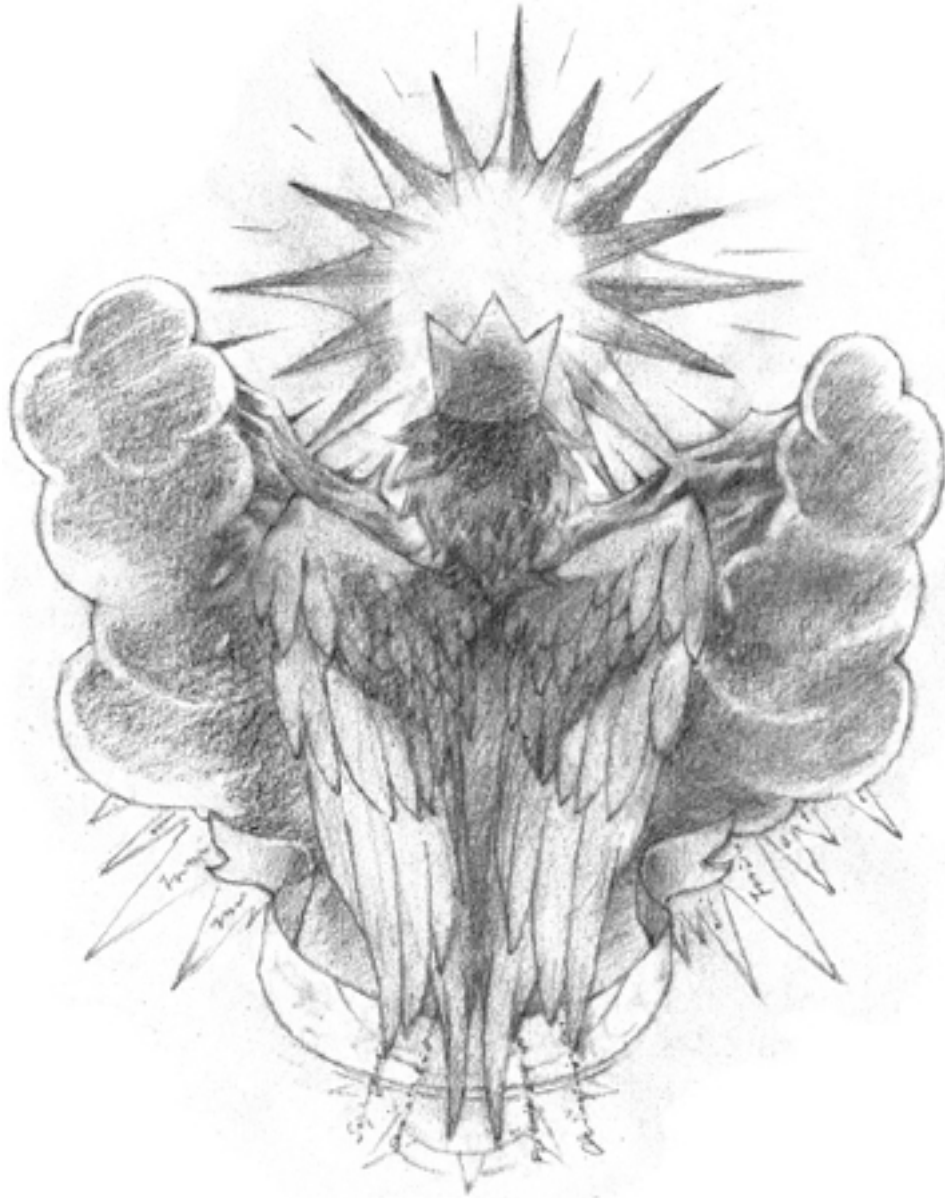
"I know about Mindsets," said the artist. "Never heard of Heartsets, Healthsets and Soulsets, man."

"You will," suggested the homeless man. "And once you do, the way you create, produce and show up in your world will never be the same. Seriously revolutionary concepts for any empire-maker and world-builder. And so few businesspeople and other human beings on the planet currently know about them. If they did, every important element of their lives would increase rapidly. For now, I just wanted to keep jamming on my personal commitment to ultra-high quality, in everything around me. Your surroundings really do shape your perceptions, your inspirations and your implementations. Art feeds my soul. Great books battleproof my hope. Rich conversations magnify my creativity. Wonderful music uplifts my heart. Beautiful sights fortify my spirit. And all it takes is a single morning filled with positivity to deliver a monumental download of inventive ideas that elevate an entire generation, you know. And I need to say that uplifting humankind is the master sport of business that The Top 5 % play. The real purpose of commerce is not only to make your personal fortune. The true reason to be in the game is to be helpful to society. My main focus in business is to serve. Money, power and prestige are just the inevitable by-products that have shown up for me along the way. An old and remarkable friend taught me this way of operating when I was a young man. It totally transformed the state of my prosperity and the magnitude of my private freedom. And this

contrarian business philosophy has dominated my way of doing things ever since. Who knows, maybe I'll introduce my mentor to you sometime.”

The vagrant paused. He studied his large watch. Next he closed his eyes and said these words: “Own your morning. Elevate your life.” As if by magic, a fairly small and quite thick piece of white paper appeared in the palm of his outstretched left hand. It was quite a trick. You would have been exceedingly impressed if you were standing there with these three souls.

Here’s what the image on the paper looked like:



Mae Besom

The entrepreneur and the artist both had their mouths open at this point, appearing to be both confused and mesmerized.

“You two each have a hero inside of you. You knew this as a child before adults told you to limit your powers, shackle your genius and betray the truths of your heart,” the homeless man told them, sounding a lot like The Spellbinder.

“Adults are deteriorated children,” he went on. “When you were much younger, you understood how to live. Staring at stars filled you with delight. Running in a park made you feel alive. And

chasing butterflies flooded you with joy. Oh, how I adore butterflies. Then, as you grew up, you forgot how to be human. You forgot how to be bold and enthusiastic and loving and wildly alive. Your precious reservoirs of hope faded. Being ordinary became acceptable. The lamp of your creativity, your positivity and your intimacy with your greatness grew dim as you began to worry about fitting in, having more than others and being popular. Well, here's what I say: participate not in the world of numbed-out grownups, with its scarcity, apathy and limitation. I'm inviting you to enter a secret reality known only to the true masters, great geniuses and genuine legends of history. And to discover primal powers within you that you never knew were there. You can create magic in your work and personal lives. I sure have. And I'm here to help you do so."

Before the entrepreneur and the artist could utter even a word, the homeless man continued his discourse. "Oh, I was jamming on the importance of art. And the ecosystem that your life is built within. Makes me think of the awesome words of the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa: 'Art frees us, through illusion, from the squalor of being. While feeling the wrongs and sufferings endured by Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, we don't feel our own, which are vile because they're ours and vile because they're vile.' Also reminds me of what Vincent van Gogh said: 'For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream.'"

The homeless man swallowed hard. His eyes darted away. He cleared his throat nervously.

"Guys, I've been through a lot. Been knocked down and kicked around a ton by life. Been sick. Been attacked. Been abused. Been misused. Hey, I'm sounding like a country song. If my gal cheated on me and my dog died, I'd have a hit single."

The homeless man laughed. An odd, guttural, circus clown on acid sort of laugh. He carried on. "Anyway, it's all good. Pain is the doorway into deep. Know what I mean? And tragedy is nature's great purifier. It burns away the fakeness, fear and arrogance that is of the ego. Returns us to our brilliance and genius, if you have the courage to go into that which wounds you. Suffering yields many rewards, including empathy, originality, relatability and authenticity. Jonas Salk said, 'I have had dreams and I've had nightmares, but I have conquered my nightmares because of my dreams,'" the uninvited vagabond added wistfully.

"He's super-weird. Incredibly eccentric. But there's something special to him," admitted the entrepreneur quietly to the artist, removing just a little more of the armor of cynicism that had protected her over her stellar career. "What he just said is exactly what I've needed to hear. I get that he looks like he lives in a cardboard box on the streets. But listen to his words. Sometimes he speaks like a poet. How could he be so articulate? Where did his depth come from? And who is this 'old friend' he says has taught him so much? He also has a warmth that reminds me of my dad. I still miss him. He was my confidant. My top supporter. And my best friend. I think of him every day."

"Okay," said the artist to the quirky stranger. "You asked me what I liked best from the talk. I def liked the part where The Spellbinder talked about the Spartan warrior credo that says, 'one who sweats more in training bleeds less in war.' And I liked his line 'high victory is made in those early morning hours when no one's watching and while everyone else is sleeping.' His teachings on the value of a world-class morning routine were great."

The entrepreneur glanced down at her device. "I've taken some good notes. But I didn't pick up those gems," she said as she captured what she had just heard.

"We only hear what we're ready to hear," observed the homeless man sagely. "All learning meets us exactly where we're at. And as we grow greater, we understand better."

The voice of The Spellbinder suddenly rang out. The homeless man's eyes looked as huge as the Taj Mahal. One could see he was terrifically surprised to hear that famous tone. He spun around – seeking the source. Quickly, all became clear.

The artist was playing his illicit recording from the seminar.

"Here's the part I liked most, to fully answer your question, brother," he stated, staring directly into the eyes of the shabby tramp.

In a culture of cyber-zombies, addicted to distraction and afflicted with interruption, the wisest way to guarantee that you consistently produce mastery-level results in the most important areas of your professional and personal life is to install a world-class morning routine. Winning starts at your beginning. And your first hours are when heroes are made.

Wage a war against weakness and launch a campaign against fearfulness. You truly can get up early. And doing so is a necessity in your awesome pursuit toward legendary.

Take excellent care of the front end of your day, and the rest of your day will pretty much take care of itself. Own your morning. Elevate your life.

The Spellbinder could be heard wheezing like a novice swimmer who went too far, too fast. The artist continued presenting his recording, turning up the volume so the sound was blaring.

Here's the precious little secret that the titans of industry, the standout performers of artistry and the ultra-achievers of humanity will never share with you: gargantuan results are much less about your inherited genetics and far more about your daily habits. And your morning ritual is by far the most essential one to calibrate. And then automate.

When we see the icons in action, the forceful seduction sold to us by our civilization is to believe they were always that great. That they were born into their exceptionalism. That they won the fortunate DNA lottery. That their genius was inherited. Yet the truth is that we are watching them in their full blazing glory after years of following a process, one that involved ceaseless hours of practice. When we observe magnificent players in business, sport, science and the arts we are observing the earned results of a monomaniacal concentration around a single pursuit, astronomical focus on one skill, intensity of sacrifice applied to one aim, unusual levels of deep preparation and extreme amounts of solid patience. Remember, every professional was once an amateur, and every master started as a beginner. Ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary feats, once they've routinized the right habits.

"This cat is so solid," said the homeless man. He clapped his dirty hands like a kid at a carnival. He checked his watch yet again. Then he began to shuffle his feet while swaying his hips forward then backward. His hands were now waving in the air and he was snapping his fingers, with closed eyes again. Sounds like the early rappers used to make without their boom boxes emerged from his cracked lips. You would have been astonished to watch him in action.

"What the hell are you doing?" shouted the artist.

"Dancing," replied the homeless man, moving gloriously. "Keep bringing me this beautiful knowledge. Socrates said, 'Education is the kindling of a flame.' And Isaac Asimov wrote 'Self-education is, I believe, the only kind of education there is.' So, keep playing the old guru's words, dude. It's all so gnarly."

The artist resumed the recording:

Heavily resist all piracy of your mastery from this world tempting you into distractibility and causing digital dementia. Force your attention back to the Everests of potential aching for fuller expression and, today, release all reasons that feed any stagnation of your strengths. Start being an imaginalist – one of those rare individuals who leads from the nobility of your future versus via the prison bars of your past. Each of us thirsts for days filled with tiny bursts of the miraculous. Every one of us wishes to own our pure heroism and step into unchained exceptionalism.

All human beings alive at this moment have a primitive psychological need to produce masterworks that wow, live daily amidst uncommon awe and know that we are somehow spending our hours in a way that enriches the lives of others. The poet Thomas Campbell said it beautifully when he observed, “To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.”

Each of us – truly – has been built to make history, in our own authentic way. For one, this might mean being an excellent coder or a fine teacher who lifts young minds. For another, this opportunity could mean becoming a tremendous mother or a magnificent manager. To yet another, this good fortune may mean growing a great business or being a fantastic salesperson who serves customers superbly. This chance to be remembered by future generations and lead a life that truly matters is not some platitude. This is, in fact, a truth. Yet, so few of us have discovered, and then installed, the very mentalities, morning practices and consistent conditions that will guarantee these results appear for us. We all want to reaccess our birthright of towering talent, limitless joy and freedom from fear, but few of us are willing to do the very things that would cause our hidden genius to present itself. Strange, right? And it’s very sad. The majority of us have been hypnotized out of the luminosity that is our essence. Most of us in this age spend our most valuable hours being busy being busy. Chasing trivial pursuits and artificial amusements while neglecting living a real life. This is a formula for heartbreak at the end. What’s the point of spending your best mornings and potentially productive days climbing mountains that you realize were the wrong ones when you are frail and wrinkled? Very sad.

“That part really resonated with me,” interjected the entrepreneur, slightly emotionally. “I’m definitely addicted to my technology. Can’t stop checking everything. First thing in the morning and last thing at night. It’s draining my concentration. I can hardly focus on the important deliverables my team and I have committed to. And all the noise in my life is taking my energy. It all feels so complicated. I just don’t feel I have any time for myself anymore. It’s fairly overwhelming, all the messages and notifications and ads and diversions. And what The Spellbinder said is also so helpful to me as I raise my standards as a leader. I’ve sort of hit a wall. My company has grown faster than I ever expected. I’ve become more successful than I ever imagined. But there are some things causing me a ton of stress.” She looked away and crossed her arms again.

“I can’t tell them what I’m really dealing with,” thought the entrepreneur.

Then she continued: “I’ve had to let go of people I really liked because I’ve learned people who fit at one stage of a business’s lifecycle may not work as the firm evolves. That’s been hard. They were the right employees for an earlier time but they don’t belong now. And some things are unfolding at my shop that have turned my life upside down. I don’t really want to get into it. It’s just a very shaky time for me.”

“Well, on your point about elevating your leadership game,” responded the homeless man, “please remember that the job of the leader is to help disbelievers embrace your vision, the powerless to overcome their weaknesses and the hopeless to develop faith. And what you said on letting go of employees you liked but who no longer fit where your business is now at – that’s a normal part of growing a business. And it happened because they failed to grow as your enterprise rose. They started coasting. They stopped learning, inventing and making everything they touched better than they found it. And as a result they stopped being awesome value incubators for your venture. They likely blamed you. But they did it to themselves,” the uninvited stranger indicated, surprising his listeners by the sophistication of his insights on team-building and winning in commerce.

“Uh. Exactly,” replied the entrepreneur. “So we had to leave them behind since they no longer delivered the results we were paying them for. A lot of nights I wake up at 2 AM soaked in steamy sweat. Maybe it’s like what F1 racer Mario Andretti said: ‘If everything seems under control you’re

not going fast enough.’ That’s how I seem to feel most days. We’re blowing past our key performance indicators so quickly it makes my head spin. New teammates to mentor, new brands to manage, new markets to penetrate, new suppliers to watch, new products to refine, new investors and shareholders to impress and a thousand new responsibilities to handle. It really does feel like it’s a lot. I have a huge capacity to get big things done. But there’s a lot on my shoulders.”

The entrepreneur tightened her arms and scrunched her forehead together absentmindedly. Her thin lips pulled together like a sea anemone shutting on sensing a fatal predator. And her eyes suggested she was suffering. Intensely.

“And, about your point about being addicted to technology, just remember that *intelligently* used, it advances human progress. Through using technology wisely our lives become better, our knowledge becomes richer and our wonderful world becomes smaller. It’s the *misuse* of technology that’s ruining people’s minds, damaging their productivity and destroying the very fabric of our society. Your phone is costing you your fortune, you know? If you’re playing with it all day long. And what you just said about all the pressure on you, how fantastic. ‘Pressure is a privilege,’ said tennis legend Billie Jean King,” the homeless man shared. “You get to grow. And ascending as a person is one of the smartest ways to spend the rest of your life. With every challenge comes the gorgeous opportunity to rise into your next level as a leader, performer and human being. Obstacles are nothing more than tests designed to measure how seriously you want the rewards that your ambitions seek. They show up to determine how willing you are to improve into the kind of person who can hold that amount of success. Failure’s just growth in wolf’s clothing. And pretty much nothing else is as important in life as personal expansion, the unfoldment of your potential. Tolstoy wrote, ‘Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself.’ Become a bigger person and you’ll also automatically become a better leader – and a greater producer. And yes, I agree that growth can be scary. But my mentor once taught me that ‘the part of you that clings to fear must experience a sort of crucifixion so that the portion of you that deserves high honor undergoes a kind of reincarnation.’ Those are the exact words he shared with me. Freaky and deep, right?” said the hobo as he rubbed the holy-man beads he was wearing.

He kept going without waiting for an answer.

“My special teacher also told me that ‘to find your best self you must lose your weak self.’ And that only happens through relentless improvement, continuous reflection and ongoing self-excavation. If you don’t keep rising daily you’ll get stuck in your life, for the rest of your life. Makes me consider what the journalist Norman Cousins said: ‘The tragedy of life is not death but what we let die inside of us while we live.’”

The homeless man raised his raspy voice and observed, “My special teacher taught me that once we transform the primary relationship with ourselves, we’ll find that our relationships with other people, our work, our income and our impact transform. Most people can’t stand themselves. So, they can never be alone. And silent. They need to constantly be with other people to escape their feelings of self-hatred over all their wasted potential, missing the wonders and wisdom that solitude and quiet bring. Or they watch TV endlessly, not realizing it’s eroding their imagination as well as bankrupting their bank account.”

“My life feels so complicated. I feel so overwhelmed. I don’t have any time for myself,” the entrepreneur repeated. “Not sure what’s happened to my life. Things have just become hard.”

“I understand you,” the artist said as he placed an arm over his new friend’s shoulder. “My intuition tells me that you’re going through a lot more than you’re sharing. And that’s okay. You know, some days life seems so messy that I can’t get out of bed. I just lie there, man. I close my eyes and wish the fog in my head would just go away. Even for a day. I can’t think straight some of the time. And on those days, my heart has no hope in it at all. It sucks. And a lot of people suck, too, man. I’m not anti-social. I’m just anti-moron. Too many dumb people around these days. Taking stupid fashion pictures of themselves with pouty lips in clothes they can’t afford. Hanging with people they

don't even like. I'd rather live a thoughtful life. A risky life. A real life. An artist's life. Drives me crazy how superficial people have become."

The artist then punched one fist into his other hand. Unyielding creases appeared along his jawline and a blue vein twitched in his thick neck.

"Sure. I got you," said the homeless man. "Life isn't easy, people. Tough slog a lot of the time. But like John Lennon said: 'Everything will be okay in the end. And if it's not okay, it's not the end,'" he offered kindly, spouting yet another quote from what seemed to be an unlimited supply in his brain.

The artist softened instantly, smiling in a way that looked almost sweet. He exhaled mightily. He liked what he'd just heard.

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