

## **Train of Transformation**

**By David K. Scheiner**

### **Chapter One – Empty Feeling Inside**

As I sit, this late Friday afternoon, in the tiny 10-by-12 office behind my beautifully painted light blue, chocolate brown, and pine green antique knee-holed Blue Mazarin wooden desk, that familiar pit at the bottom of my stomach began shouting at me.

“There’s a bigger purpose for us in this mad world. Let’s get busy finding what it is!”

Typically, I’d shrug that voice off and dive deeper into making my outdoor enthusiast customers more inspired, empowered, and motivated to go off into the great outdoors and soak up everything this beautiful world has to offer. I’d recommend adrenaline-rushing trips for them, like trekking on Everest in Nepal, where they’d pass by the magical Gokyo lakes at the foot of the Ngozumpa Glacier or soar over the Tungurahua volcano while paragliding in Ecuador.

I’d book meetings with them months in advance where we’d sit together in this tiny room scouring online over the multitude of excursion opportunities while sipping hot green tea and delighting in a variety of toasted bagel options with their accompanying cream-cheese shmear. We’d sit back, relax, make jokes, and plan their dream trip of a lifetime. Then I’d sell them the necessary equipment for their voyage and they’d email me photos while on their unforgettable journeys.

I was quite happy for the first four or five years clicking the left button on my mouse, scrolling through emailed photos of their dream trips to the rainforest in Borneo, diving with the great whites in Australia, or rushing down the grand white frothy rapids of the Mae Taeng River

in Thailand. Then something began to shift in me, a deep knowing that if I continued to live my life through my customers' dreams, that mine will become more deeply embedded in my soul and eventually become lost in there forever.

This shift in me created a feeling of despondency where I lost interest and became complacent. I stopped sitting with my customers in my office, hired Audrey as a store manager, and trained her to have those planning sessions with them. She became a natural and they loved her. They asked about me for a while, and eventually stopped. The store hasn't skipped a business beat but the outdoor enthusiast beat inside me slowed and eventually came to a halt.

I now sit for eight-to-ten hours each day behind this desk watching as the multiple and varied stacks of bills, invoices, and flyers continue to fill up every square inch of this tiny room. I do take several breaks a day and step outside the office door into the large supply storage room where I keep the excess apparel, footwear, bicycles, ropes, and fitness gear.

Today was no exception. I got up from behind the desk and piles of paper, walked carefully through the maze of manila envelopes and beige file folders built up on the floor, and drifted out onto the cement floor of the storage room. I grabbed my lavender foam yoga mat off the metal storage shelf just outside and to the left of my office door and unrolled it.

I stood lightly on the purple foam and went deeply into a tree pose and then warrior. These were gradually followed by mountain, down dog, warrior II, and bridge. The beads of sweat built up as did the invigoration and momentum. After 30 minutes of this ancient practice, I laid on my back with arms and legs spread slightly in Savasana pose.

I continued my deep breathing, the sweat intensified, and I sank into the relaxing yoga nidra meditation. In my rooted state, I visualized and sensed the store, the customers, my office, and my life in totality. A realization and knowing that a shift was about to occur in my life,

traveled up through the floor, into the bottom of my feet, and coursed over my entire nervous system.

I felt a new excitement I had not known for some time. My mind brought me to the multiple personal-growth seminars I had attended over the past 12-months. These seminars and workshops brought me a sense of creativity and varied opportunities to create a future life of my own design.

This recollection jolted me into remembering the seminar I had coming up this evening, which continued throughout the weekend. The two-hour introductory session at the renowned Javits Center in Manhattan began at 6:30 p.m., and if I was going to make it on time, I'd have to get up now, shower in my personal bathroom next to my office, and arrive at the train station to catch the 5:15 p.m. express into Grand Central Station.

I opened my eyes from the deep meditative state, looked around the storage room, and took a visual sensory impression of my surroundings. This practice kept me grounded firmly in the grasp of the present moment. I observed mountain bikes on high-shelf racks, various colored kayaks, roller blades, paddle boards, hiking equipment, clothing, and men's and women's footwear.

The storage room also had a uniquely distinct odor, which reminded me of when I'd walk in and out of the warehouses of the Garment District in Manhattan. It was a smell I greatly enjoyed and in this moment added additional excitement to get into the city that never sleeps.

I rolled up the lavender yoga mat, tucked it neatly onto the silver metal shelving next to my office door, and went back through the paper maze office to buzz Audrey up front.

Sitting with my knees in the hole of the Blue Mazarin desk, I pressed the intercom button on the phone and said to Audrey, "Hey A, I almost forgot about the intro-evening session of the

personal-growth workshop in the city tonight. I'm going to grab a shower back here and ride my Cannondale CX-3 to the train station. So no need to be concerned when you see my car out back after you close the shop."

"Okay, sounds great, David. I have everything covered. Enjoy the seminar and I'll look forward to hearing all about it tomorrow."

I kept a change of clothing in my personal bathroom in case something came up and I had to leave from the store. I showered quickly, threw on my 20-year-old tough resilient Levi button-fly faded blue jeans, solid black V-neck T-shirt, Adidas Terrex blue hiking shoes, and grabbed my bike off the storage room floor.

I slipped my backpack over my shoulders, exited my store through the solid heavy grey metal door, and pressed on the two lightweight aluminum magnesium alloy black pedals. I felt the efficient transfer of power from my legs to the bicycle wheels while quickly making my way through the damp neighborhood streets. I deeply inhaled the pleasant aromatic earthy scent generated by the recent rainfall, prompting my quads to pump harder.

That aroma, combined with the airborne mix of green leaf volatiles from the freshly cut neighborhood lawns, made for an extremely pleasant and invigorating fall late-afternoon ride to the town train station. I approached the street corner at Maple and Elm and let go of the brakes slowly through the turn to maintain proper traction and control the bike on these wet grounds.

I caught a quick glimpse of Joe, the owner of the best pizza joint in town, up ahead sweeping the sidewalk in front of his shop. I heard the sweet sounds of his perfectly harmonized whistling to Frank Sinatra's hit *New York, New York* blaring from inside his restaurant. I turned my face to the right as I passed by and called out, "Hey, Joe, smells great as always!"

"Hey, kid, stop by for a slice on your way back, capisce?"

I locked my bike to the newly installed green bikekeep bike dock, which allowed me peace of mind when leaving my bike out in the open at the station.

The loud calls of “All Aboard,” came from the tracks above me. I briskly slid my yellow and blue Metro card through the turnstile slot, ran up the dirty wrought-iron flight of steps, and onto the concrete train platform. With the shiny double metal train doors coming to a slow close, I ran at them, turned my body sideways, and squeezed right through. The doors closed onto my backpack, then opened slightly, allowing me to yank the pack through.

## **Chapter Two – The City That Sometimes Sleeps**

The train immediately began to roll forward across the steel beam tracks and I grabbed hold of a rigidly-mounted silver handle above me to keep from falling onto the floor. I slowly glanced my eyes across the car to target my seat and noticed there was an empty row straight ahead on the right side. I walked across the inside of the moving car toward my row, as the soles of my hiking shoes suctioned across the humid and sticky metal floor.

I sat on the forward-facing hard plastic beige seat, propped my backpack up on the one next to me, and inhaled through my nose deeply into my abdomen. Looking out the blurry window to my right, I saw the New York City skyline appearing to smile, knowing I was coming to pay her a visit.

*What a long day,* I thought as I started thinking about my life purpose and what the reason is for my being here. I again thought about my store, my seven hard-working years where I was completely committed and obsessed to its success. I felt a sense of accomplishment while the familiar pit-in-the-stomach sensation lurked in the background.

*No use in focusing on the past*, I thought to myself. It was time to reinvent my life and live it with all-out purpose and passion.

I relaxed into the plastic beige frame beneath my body and with heavy eyelids, I felt myself doze off. For a few minutes, while I was transitioning between wakefulness and sleep, I sensed deep within my soul that there was still much more for me to accomplish and bring to the world this lifetime.

The next thing I knew, the air compression underneath produced a loud hostile train-track screeching. Then a large hand palmed my left shoulder and began shaking me out of my dense stupor.

“Wake up son, we’re at Grand Central. I need you off the train, I have a tight schedule to keep.” I opened my eyes and felt dazed. Hovering over me was a tall train attendant dressed in a navy-blue three-piece suit. The coat, vest, and trousers were ironed to perfection and his black front-brimmed cap fit snugly on his head. His fair skin was freckled, slightly blushed, and his upper lip was entirely covered by his ginger handlebar moustache.

I looked to the left and right of him and noticed the car had completely emptied out. “You were zonked out the entire trip into the City, young man. I waited as long as I could. Time to get a move on.”

“I’m on my way, pal. Thanks for the extra few minutes of shut-eye.” He took the brim of his black cap between his right thumb and index finger and tipped it down in approval.

The nap was just what I needed. I felt refreshed, enlivened and ready to soak in two-hours of positivity, purpose-finding, and possibility. I grabbed my backpack, exited the already opened steel double doors, and walked briskly through the underground catacomb passageways of Grand Central Station.

The white ceramic rectangular subway tiles enveloped me and straight ahead, embedded in the center of the large tiled white wall, was large black lettering that read, “← EXIT LEFT.”

I hooked to the left at the broad white tiled wall, followed the long concrete hallway straight up a small incline, and walked out through the propped open glass and metal doors into the breathtakingly cool and crisp fall day in New York City.

The smell of dry leaves and a slight firewood *odor drifted into my nostrils, followed by the incredible aroma of* hot pretzels cooking over fire briquettes in a shiny metal shopping cart. Saliva pooled up at the inside corners of my mouth. Alas! It was my turn to order.

“I’ll take one with mustard, please.”

“You want packets or want me to lather on a thick layer of Gulden’s?”

“Lather away, my friend. I’m a long-time mustard lover.”

“Here ya go. That’ll be four dollars and twenty-five cents.”

I handed him a five-dollar bill and told him to keep the change. I grabbed a couple of white paper napkins out of the black and silver holder and wrapped my lips across the middle of the baked dough, sinking my teeth deep into the spicy brown deli mustard.

The combination of perfectly baked crispy hot dough, salt, mustard, and crunch propelled me right into that New York state of mind I was longing for. I pressed on in the direction of Central Park and noticed that the people and streets of the city seemed somehow “off.” A variety of weeds were growing out of the cracks in the busy streets and the windows of the tall buildings were covered in fine layers of dirt, dust, and mud splotches.

Everyone was walking with their heads down, even those people who were not staring at their not-so-smartphones. Their strides appeared to take on a robotic and machine-like quality.

Even with their eyes open, it was as if they were sleep-walking. I walked up to one of them and they did not even stop or notice me. I said, “Yo, do you not even see me over here?”

I brushed off the silence, continued toward Central Park, and enjoyed the next bite of my amazing salted delicacy. This was an appetizer for me at best. My favorite diner was next door to the Javits Center and this is where my internal GPS was guiding me tonight for the pre-event food festivities. My mouth began to water once more as I started to think about their vegan jambalaya that would be in my stomach within a matter of minutes. First, I’d have to get through Central Park.

My two favorite New York City parks are Central Park and Washington Square Park. For me, Washington Square has the best people-watching and Central has more things to do, by far. I’d spend hours at a time there roller blading, watching chess matches, and breathing in the wonderful air on a cool fall late afternoon. There were even picnics on plaid red, black, and white blankets on several occasions with various dinner dates.

I took the final bite of my pretzel, threw the white paper I held it in into the dark green rubber receptacle, and entered the park. I noticed taller and unkempt grass, weeds sprawling in every direction, and huge cracks along the walk paths. Hordes of pigeons surrounded each passerby, and their collective smell was suffocating. The scene was something out of a Twilight Zone episode and I felt like the main character.

A large concrete footbridge was up ahead and several homeless individuals were blocking anyone from passing underneath. I heard them saying, “It’ll cost you if you’re gonna get by here,” and “This is our territory, there’s a fee to enter our home.” They, like the pigeons, had a horrible odor and perhaps it wasn’t such a bad idea to go around them. I simply couldn’t, though, because I’d miss my amazingly delicious jambalaya and arrive late to the seminar.



I mustered up some courage, came upon the group and asked, “How much to get by?” “It’ll cost ya a hundred dollars,” said the person who appeared to represent the entire lot. “How about fifty?” I asked.

“Done,” said the leader.

Remember, I’m thinking Twilight Zone and this was playing out exactly that way. After I handed over the cash, everything turned to black and white. It made me feel uneasy and beads of sweat began to collect in the small of my back while others trickled down the sides of my forehead onto my face. I looked around me in a fresh panic and all the other people who were not with the homeless were suddenly dressed in 1950’s clothing.

I excused myself from the pack of homeless, and walked under the high-arching bridge. The panic and anxiety left as I glanced at the fancy curved stone architectural walls surrounding me. I was amazed they were graffiti-free and with each stride forward I marveled at the beautiful architectural symbols and mythological characters. Gargoyles and dragons popped out from the stone every few feet where the roof and curved walls met.

It looked and felt as though I was walking through a Norman-esque medieval tunnel, represented by all of the semi-circular arches. When I arrived at the other end and emerged out of the tunnel, the sunlight hit my face and the energy of its rays warmed through me. I became excited when I saw my exit from the park far off to my right but the immediate problem I faced was getting to it. My strides had become super heavy and each one gave me the feeling that I was walking through thick deep mud. I wondered, “Were they working on the bridge above and spilled some wet cement below?”

I saw my feet in front of me but walking became virtually impossible as the feeling of sinking into cement intensified. I reached down and grabbed my right foot with my right hand. It

felt normal but for some reason I couldn't get two steps ahead without using all of my strength. I took my hydroflask out of my backpack and poured some water onto my head to cool off and wake me out of this weird state. It felt amazing but my steps stayed the same.

My breathing became short and labored. Panic started to set in, so I closed my eyes where I stood and practiced deep breathing that I had learned at another recent personal-growth seminar. After a few moments a renewed sense of calm came over me so I opened my eyes and set my sights on the exit to my right. I had to get out of this park now and into the diner. Just standing here and thinking about it, I could literally taste the amazing vegan jambalaya.

*Okay, now we're getting somewhere,* or so I thought. My mind tricked me into feeling I was moving toward the exit when my body wasn't moving at all. I lifted my right thigh with both hands and placed that leg ahead. I then did the same with my left leg. "C'mon legs," I yelled and when I picked my right leg up once more and placed it ahead of the left leg, I was sucked halfway through a portal into another dimension.