



PAULO COELHO



TRANSLATED BY ALAN R. CLARKE



DISCLAIMER:

ReadMe website is intended for academic and demonstration purposes only.
We're only showing a preview of the book to respect the author's copyright.
Thank you for your understanding!

- Group 4: The Classified

Contents

[International Acclaim for Paulo Coelho's](#)
[Foreword](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Part One](#)

[Part Two](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[A Preview of Paulo Coelho's: Warrior of the Light](#)
[Warrior of the Light: Prologue](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Paulo Coelho](#)

[Back Ads](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

leaving the White House with a copy. Then Madonna raved about the book to *Vanity Fair*, and people from different walks of life—from Rush Limbaugh and Will Smith to college students and soccer moms—were suddenly talking about it.

The Alchemist became a spontaneous—and organic—Phenomenon. The book hit the *New York Times* bestseller list, an important milestone for any author, and stayed there for more than three hundred weeks. It has since been translated into more than eighty different languages, the most translated book by any living author, and is widely considered one of the ten best books of the twentieth century.

People continue to ask me if I knew *The Alchemist* would be such a huge success. The answer is no. I had no idea. How could I? When I sat down to write *The Alchemist*, all I knew is that I wanted to write about my soul. I wanted to write about my quest to find my treasure. I wanted to follow the omens, because I knew even then that the omens are the language of God.

Though *The Alchemist* is now celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, it is no relic of the past. The book is still very much alive. Like my heart and like my soul, it continues to live every day, because my heart and soul are in it. And my heart and soul is your heart and soul. I am Santiago the shepherd boy in search of my treasure, just as you are Santiago the shepherd boy in search of your own. The story of one person is the story of everyone, and one man's quest is the quest of all of humanity, which is why I believe *The Alchemist* continues all these years later to resonate with people from different cultures all around the world, touching them emotionally and spiritually, equally, without prejudice.

I re-read *The Alchemist* regularly and every time I do I experience the same sensations I felt when I wrote it. And here is what I feel. I feel happiness, because it is all of me, and all of you simultaneously. I feel happiness, too, because I know I can never be alone. Wherever I go, people understand me. They understand my soul. This continues to give me hope. When I read about clashes around the world—political clashes, economic clashes, cultural clashes—I am reminded that it is within our power to build a bridge to be crossed. Even if my neighbor doesn't understand my religion or understand my politics, he can understand my story. If he can understand my story, then he's never too far from me. It is always within my power to build a bridge. There is always a chance for reconciliation, a chance that one day he and I will sit around a table together and put an end to our history of clashes. And on this day, he will tell me his story and I will tell him mine.

But for the past few days he had spoken to them about only one thing: the girl, the daughter of a merchant who lived in the village they would reach in about four days. He had been to the village only once, the year before. The merchant was the proprietor of a dry goods shop, and he always demanded that the sheep be sheared in his presence, so that he would not be cheated. A friend had told the boy about the shop, and he had taken his sheep there.



“I need to sell some wool,” the boy told the merchant.

The shop was busy, and the man asked the shepherd to wait until the afternoon. So the boy sat on the steps of the shop and took a book from his bag.

“I didn’t know shepherds knew how to read,” said a girl’s voice behind him.

The girl was typical of the region of Andalusia, with flowing black hair, and eyes that vaguely recalled the Moorish conquerors.



“Well, usually I learn more from my sheep than from books,” he answered. During the two hours that they talked, she told him she was the merchant’s daughter, and spoke of life in the village, where each day was like all the others. The shepherd told her of the Andalusian countryside, and related the news from the other towns where he had stopped. It was a pleasant change from talking to his sheep.

“How did you learn to read?” the girl asked at one point.

“Like everybody learns,” he said. “In school.”

The woman was silent for some time. Then she again took his hands and studied them carefully.

“I’m not going to charge you anything now,” she said. “But I want one-tenth of the treasure, if you find it.”

The boy laughed—out of happiness. He was going to be able to save the little money he had because of a dream about hidden treasure!

“Well, interpret the dream,” he said.

“First, swear to me. Swear that you will give me one-tenth of your treasure in exchange for what I am going to tell you.”

The shepherd swore that he would. The old woman asked him to swear again while looking at the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“It’s a dream in the language of the world,” she said. “I can interpret it, but the interpretation is very difficult. That’s why I feel that I deserve a part of what you find.

“And this is my interpretation: you must go to the Pyramids in Egypt. I have never heard of them, but, if it was a child who showed them to you, they exist. There you will find a treasure that will make you a rich man.”

The boy was surprised, and then irritated. He didn’t need to seek out the old woman for this! But then he remembered that he wasn’t going to have to pay anything.

“I didn’t need to waste my time just for this,” he said.

“I told you that your dream was a difficult one. It’s the simple things in life that are the most extraordinary; only wise men are able to understand them. And since I am not wise, I have had to learn other arts, such as the reading of palms.”

“Well, how am I going to get to Egypt?”

“I only interpret dreams. I don’t know how to turn them into reality. That’s why I have to live off what my daughters provide me with.”

“And what if I never get to Egypt?”

“Then I don’t get paid. It wouldn’t be the first time.”

And the woman told the boy to leave, saying she had already wasted too much time with him.

So the boy was disappointed; he decided that he would never again believe in dreams. He remembered that he had a number of things he had to take care of: he went to the market for something to eat, he traded his book for one that was thicker, and he found a bench in the plaza where he could sample the new wine he had bought. The day was hot, and the wine was refreshing. The sheep were at the gates of the city, in a stable that belonged to a friend. The boy knew a lot of

to examine just one more stone—just *one more*—he would find his emerald. Since the miner had sacrificed everything to his Personal Legend, the old man decided to become involved. He transformed himself into a stone that rolled up to the miner's foot. The miner, with all the anger and frustration of his five fruitless years, picked up the stone and threw it aside. But he had thrown it with such force that it broke the stone it fell upon, and there, embedded in the broken stone, was the most beautiful emerald in the world.

"People learn, early in their lives, what is their reason for being," said the old man, with a certain bitterness. "Maybe that's why they give up on it so early, too. But that's the way it is."

The boy reminded the old man that he had said something about hidden treasure.

"Treasure is uncovered by the force of flowing water, and it is buried by the same currents," said the old man. "If you want to learn about your own treasure, you will have to give me one-tenth of your flock."

"What about one-tenth of my treasure?"

The old man looked disappointed. "If you start out by promising what you don't even have yet, you'll lose your desire to work toward getting it."

The boy told him that he had already promised to give one-tenth of his treasure to the Gypsy.

"Gypsies are experts at getting people to do that," sighed the old man. "In any case, it's good that you've learned that everything in life has its price. This is what the Warriors of the Light try to teach."

The old man returned the book to the boy.

"Tomorrow, at this same time, bring me a tenth of your flock. And I will tell you how to find the hidden treasure. Good afternoon."

And he vanished around the corner of the plaza.



The boy began again to read his book, but he was no longer able to concentrate. He was tense and upset, because he knew that the old man was right. He went over to the bakery and bought a loaf of bread, thinking about whether or not he should tell the baker what the old man had said about him. Sometimes it's better to leave things as they are, he thought to himself, and decided to say nothing. If he were to say anything, the baker would spend three days thinking about giving it all up, even though he had gotten used to the way things were. The boy could

pride in himself.”



How strange Africa is, thought the boy.

He was sitting in a bar very much like the other bars he had seen along the narrow streets of Tangier. Some men were smoking from a gigantic pipe that they passed from one to the other. In just a few hours he had seen men walking hand in hand, women with their faces covered, and priests that climbed to the tops of towers and chanted—as everyone about him went to their knees and placed their foreheads on the ground.

“A practice of infidels,” he said to himself. As a child in church, he had always looked at the image of Saint Santiago Matamoros on his white horse, his sword unsheathed, and figures such as these kneeling at his feet. The boy felt ill and terribly alone. The infidels had an evil look about them.

Besides this, in the rush of his travels he had forgotten a detail, just one detail, which could keep him from his treasure for a long time: only Arabic was spoken in this country.

The owner of the bar approached him, and the boy pointed to a drink that had been served at the next table. It turned out to be a bitter tea. The boy preferred wine.

But he didn’t need to worry about that right now. What he had to be concerned about was his treasure, and how he was going to go about getting it. The sale of his sheep had left him with enough money in his pouch, and the boy knew that in money there was magic; whoever has money is never really alone. Before long, maybe in just a few days, he would be at the Pyramids. An old man, with a breastplate of gold, wouldn’t have lied just to acquire six sheep.

The old man had spoken about signs and omens, and, as the boy was crossing the strait, he had thought about omens. Yes, the old man had known what he was talking about: during the time the boy had spent in the fields of Andalusia, he had become used to learning which path he should take by observing the ground and the sky. He had discovered that the presence of a certain bird meant that a snake was nearby, and that a certain shrub was a sign that there was water in the area. The sheep had taught him that.

If God leads the sheep so well, he will also lead a man, he thought, and that made him feel better. The tea seemed less bitter.

“Who are you?” he heard a voice ask him in Spanish.

erecting the stall, one of them had spoken Arabic and the other Spanish.

And they had understood each other perfectly well.

There must be a language that doesn't depend on words, the boy thought. I've already had that experience with my sheep, and now it's happening with people.

He was learning a lot of new things. Some of them were things that he had already experienced, and weren't really new, but that he had never perceived before. And he hadn't perceived them because he had become accustomed to them. He realized: If I can learn to understand this language without words, I can learn to understand the world.

Relaxed and unhurried, he resolved that he would walk through the narrow streets of Tangier. Only in that way would he be able to read the omens. He knew it would require a lot of patience, but shepherds know all about patience. Once again he saw that, in that strange land, he was applying the same lessons he had learned with his sheep.

"All things are one," the old man had said.



The crystal merchant awoke with the day, and felt the same anxiety that he felt every morning. He had been in the same place for thirty years: a shop at the top of a hilly street where few customers passed. Now it was too late to change anything—the only thing he had ever learned to do was to buy and sell crystal glassware. There had been a time when many people knew of his shop: Arab merchants, French and English geologists, German soldiers who were always well-heeled. In those days it had been wonderful to be selling crystal, and he had thought how he would become rich, and have beautiful women at his side as he grew older.

But, as time passed, Tangier had changed. The nearby city of Ceuta had grown faster than Tangier, and business had fallen off. Neighbors moved away, and there remained only a few small shops on the hill. And no one was going to climb the hill just to browse through a few small shops.

But the crystal merchant had no choice. He had lived thirty years of his life buying and selling crystal pieces, and now it was too late to do anything else.

He spent the entire morning observing the infrequent comings and goings in the street. He had done this for years, and knew the schedule of everyone who passed. But, just before lunchtime, a boy stopped in front of the shop. He was

someday I'd be rich, and could go to Mecca. I began to make some money, but I could never bring myself to leave someone in charge of the shop; the crystals are delicate things. At the same time, people were passing my shop all the time, heading for Mecca. Some of them were rich pilgrims, traveling in caravans with servants and camels, but most of the people making the pilgrimage were poorer than I.

"All who went there were happy at having done so. They placed the symbols of the pilgrimage on the doors of their houses. One of them, a cobbler who made his living mending boots, said that he had traveled for almost a year through the desert, but that he got more tired when he had to walk through the streets of Tangier buying his leather."

"Well, why don't you go to Mecca now?" asked the boy.

"Because it's the thought of Mecca that keeps me alive. That's what helps me face these days that are all the same, these mute crystals on the shelves, and lunch and dinner at that same horrible café. I'm afraid that if my dream is realized, I'll have no reason to go on living.

"You dream about your sheep and the Pyramids, but you're different from me, because you want to realize your dreams. I just want to dream about Mecca. I've already imagined a thousand times crossing the desert, arriving at the Plaza of the Sacred Stone, the seven times I walk around it before allowing myself to touch it. I've already imagined the people who would be at my side, and those in front of me, and the conversations and prayers we would share. But I'm afraid that it would all be a disappointment, so I prefer just to dream about it."

That day, the merchant gave the boy permission to build the display. Not everyone can see his dreams come true in the same way.



Two more months passed, and the shelf brought many customers into the crystal shop. The boy estimated that, if he worked for six more months, he could return to Spain and buy sixty sheep, and yet another sixty. In less than a year, he would have doubled his flock, and he would be able to do business with the Arabs, because he was now able to speak their strange language. Since that morning in the marketplace, he had never again made use of Urim and Thummim, because Egypt was now just as distant a dream for him as was Mecca for the merchant. Anyway, the boy had become happy in his work, and thought all the time about the day when he would disembark at Tarifa as a winner.

Who knows . . . maybe it's better to be like the crystal merchant: never go to Mecca, and just go through life wanting to do so, he thought, again trying to convince himself. But as he held Urim and Thummim in his hand, they had transmitted to him the strength and will of the old king. By coincidence—or maybe it was an omen, the boy thought—he came to the bar he had entered on his first day there. The thief wasn't there, and the owner brought him a cup of tea.

I can always go back to being a shepherd, the boy thought. I learned how to care for sheep, and I haven't forgotten how that's done. But maybe I'll never have another chance to get to the Pyramids in Egypt. The old man wore a breastplate of gold, and he knew about my past. He really was a king, a wise king.

The hills of Andalusia were only two hours away, but there was an entire desert between him and the Pyramids. Yet the boy felt that there was another way to regard his situation: he was actually two hours closer to his treasure . . . the fact that the two hours had stretched into an entire year didn't matter.

I know why I want to get back to my flock, he thought. I understand sheep; they're no longer a problem, and they can be good friends. On the other hand, I don't know if the desert can be a friend, and it's in the desert that I have to search for my treasure. If I don't find it, I can always go home. I finally have enough money, and all the time I need. Why not?

He suddenly felt tremendously happy. He could always go back to being a shepherd. He could always become a crystal salesman again. Maybe the world had other hidden treasures, but he had a dream, and he had met with a king. That doesn't happen to just anyone!

He was planning as he left the bar. He had remembered that one of the crystal merchant's suppliers transported his crystal by means of caravans that crossed the desert. He held Urim and Thummim in his hand; because of those two stones, he was once again on the way to his treasure.

"I am always nearby, when someone wants to realize their Personal Legend," the old king had told him.

What could it cost to go over to the supplier's warehouse and find out if the Pyramids were really that far away?



The Englishman was sitting on a bench in a structure that smelled of animals,

fort in Tarifa with this same wind blowing in his face. It reminded him of the wool from his sheep . . . his sheep who were now seeking food and water in the fields of Andalusia, as they always had.

“They’re not my sheep anymore,” he said to himself, without nostalgia. “They must be used to their new shepherd, and have probably already forgotten me. That’s good. Creatures like the sheep, that are used to traveling, know about moving on.”

He thought of the merchant’s daughter, and was sure that she had probably married. Perhaps to a baker, or to another shepherd who could read and could tell her exciting stories—after all, he probably wasn’t the only one. But he was excited at his intuitive understanding of the camel driver’s comment: maybe he was also learning the universal language that deals with the past and the present of all people. “Hunches,” his mother used to call them. The boy was beginning to understand that intuition is really a sudden immersion of the soul into the universal current of life, where the histories of all people are connected, and we are able to know everything, because it’s all written there.

“*Maktub*,” the boy said, remembering the crystal merchant.

The desert was all sand in some stretches, and rocky in others. When the caravan was blocked by a boulder, it had to go around it; if there was a large rocky area, they had to make a major detour. If the sand was too fine for the animals’ hooves, they sought a way where the sand was more substantial. In some places, the ground was covered with the salt of dried-up lakes. The animals balked at such places, and the camel drivers were forced to dismount and unburden their charges. The drivers carried the freight themselves over such treacherous footing, and then reloaded the camels. If a guide were to fall ill or die, the camel drivers would draw lots and appoint a new one.

But all this happened for one basic reason: no matter how many detours and adjustments it made, the caravan moved toward the same compass point. Once obstacles were overcome, it returned to its course, sighting on a star that indicated the location of the oasis. When the people saw that star shining in the morning sky, they knew they were on the right course toward water, palm trees, shelter, and other people. It was only the Englishman who was unaware of all this; he was, for the most part, immersed in reading his books.

raised by the animals. “Everyone has his or her own way of learning things,” he said to himself. “His way isn’t the same as mine, nor mine as his. But we’re both in search of our Personal Legends, and I respect him for that.”



The caravan began to travel day and night. The hooded Bedouins reappeared more and more frequently, and the camel driver—who had become a good friend of the boy’s—explained that the war between the tribes had already begun. The caravan would be very lucky to reach the oasis.

The animals were exhausted, and the men talked among themselves less and less. The silence was the worst aspect of the night, when the mere groan of a camel—which before had been nothing but the groan of a camel—now frightened everyone, because it might signal a raid.

The camel driver, though, seemed not to be very concerned with the threat of war.

“I’m alive,” he said to the boy, as they ate a bunch of dates one night, with no fires and no moon. “When I’m eating, that’s all I think about. If I’m on the march, I just concentrate on marching. If I have to fight, it will be just as good a day to die as any other.

“Because I don’t live in either my past or my future. I’m interested only in the present. If you can concentrate always on the present, you’ll be a happy man. You’ll see that there is life in the desert, that there are stars in the heavens, and that tribesmen fight because they are part of the human race. Life will be a party for you, a grand festival, because life is the moment we’re living right now.”

Two nights later, as he was getting ready to bed down, the boy looked for the star they followed every night. He thought that the horizon was a bit lower than it had been, because he seemed to see stars on the desert itself.

“It’s the oasis,” said the camel driver.

“Well, why don’t we go there right now?” the boy asked.

“Because we have to sleep.”

that was certainly an omen—the omen he had been awaiting, without even knowing he was, for all his life. The omen he had sought to find with his sheep and in his books, in the crystals and in the silence of the desert.

It was the pure Language of the World. It required no explanation, just as the universe needs none as it travels through endless time. What the boy felt at that moment was that he was in the presence of the only woman in his life, and that, with no need for words, she recognized the same thing. He was more certain of it than of anything in the world. He had been told by his parents and grandparents that he must fall in love and really know a person before becoming committed. But maybe people who felt that way had never learned the universal language. Because, when you know that language, it's easy to understand that someone in the world awaits you, whether it's in the middle of the desert or in some great city. And when two such people encounter each other, and their eyes meet, the past and the future become unimportant. There is only that moment, and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun has been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, and creates a twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one's dreams would have no meaning.

Maktub, thought the boy.

The Englishman shook the boy: "Come on, ask her!"

The boy stepped closer to the girl, and when she smiled, he did the same.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Fatima," the girl said, averting her eyes.

"That's what some women in my country are called."

"It's the name of the Prophet's daughter," Fatima said. "The invaders carried the name everywhere." The beautiful girl spoke of the invaders with pride.

The Englishman prodded him, and the boy asked her about the man who cured people's illnesses.

"That's the man who knows all the secrets of the world," she said. "He communicates with the genies of the desert."

The genies were the spirits of good and evil. And the girl pointed to the south, indicating that it was there the strange man lived. Then she filled her vessel with water and left.

The Englishman vanished, too, gone to find the alchemist. And the boy sat there by the well for a long time, remembering that one day in Tarifa the levanter had brought to him the perfume of that woman, and realizing that he had loved her before he even knew she existed. He knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world.

all is written. There, I can read the past, discover what has already been forgotten, and understand the omens that are here in the present.

“When people consult me, it’s not that I’m reading the future; I am guessing at the future. The future belongs to God, and it is only he who reveals it, under extraordinary circumstances. How do I guess at the future? Based on the omens of the present. The secret is here in the present. If you pay attention to the present, you can improve upon it. And, if you improve on the present, what comes later will also be better. Forget about the future, and live each day according to the teachings, confident that God loves his children. Each day, in itself, brings with it an eternity.”

The camel driver had asked what the circumstances were under which God would allow him to see the future.

“Only when he, himself, reveals it. And God only rarely reveals the future. When he does so, it is for only one reason: it’s a future that was written so as to be altered.”

God had shown the boy a part of the future, the camel driver thought. Why was it that he wanted the boy to serve as his instrument?

“Go and speak to the tribal chieftains,” said the camel driver. “Tell them about the armies that are approaching.”

“They’ll laugh at me.”

“They are men of the desert, and the men of the desert are used to dealing with omens.”

“Well, then, they probably already know.”

“They’re not concerned with that right now. They believe that if they have to know about something Allah wants them to know, someone will tell them about it. It has happened many times before. But, this time, the person is you.”

The boy thought of Fatima. And he decided he would go to see the chiefs of the tribes.



The boy approached the guard at the front of the huge white tent at the center of the oasis.

“I want to see the chieftains. I’ve brought omens from the desert.”

Without responding, the guard entered the tent, where he remained for some time. When he emerged, it was with a young Arab, dressed in white and gold. The boy told the younger man what he had seen, and the man asked him to wait

Next morning, there were two thousand armed men scattered throughout the palm trees at Al-Fayoum. Before the sun had reached its high point, five hundred tribesmen appeared on the horizon. The mounted troops entered the oasis from the north; it appeared to be a peaceful expedition, but they all carried arms hidden in their robes. When they reached the white tent at the center of Al-Fayoum, they withdrew their scimitars and rifles. And they attacked an empty tent.

The men of the oasis surrounded the horsemen from the desert and within half an hour all but one of the intruders were dead. The children had been kept at the other side of a grove of palm trees, and saw nothing of what had happened. The women had remained in their tents, praying for the safekeeping of their husbands, and saw nothing of the battle, either. Were it not for the bodies there on the ground, it would have appeared to be a normal day at the oasis.

The only tribesman spared was the commander of the battalion. That afternoon, he was brought before the tribal chieftains, who asked him why he had violated the Tradition. The commander said that his men had been starving and thirsty, exhausted from many days of battle, and had decided to take the oasis so as to be able to return to the war.

The tribal chieftain said that he felt sorry for the tribesmen, but that the Tradition was sacred. He condemned the commander to death without honor. Rather than being killed by a blade or a bullet, he was hanged from a dead palm tree, where his body twisted in the desert wind.

The tribal chieftain called for the boy, and presented him with fifty pieces of gold. He repeated his story about Joseph of Egypt, and asked the boy to become the counselor of the oasis.



When the sun had set, and the first stars made their appearance, the boy started to walk to the south. He eventually sighted a single tent, and a group of Arabs passing by told the boy that it was a place inhabited by genies. But the boy sat down and waited.

Not until the moon was high did the alchemist ride into view. He carried two dead hawks over his shoulder.

“I am here,” the boy said.

“You shouldn’t be here,” the alchemist answered. “Or is it your Personal Legend that brings you here?”

"I'll be back," the boy said.

"Before this, I always looked to the desert with longing," said Fatima. "Now it will be with hope. My father went away one day, but he returned to my mother, and he has always come back since then."

They said nothing else. They walked a bit farther among the palms, and then the boy left her at the entrance to her tent.

"I'll return, just as your father came back to your mother," he said.

He saw that Fatima's eyes were filled with tears.

"You're crying?"

"I'm a woman of the desert," she said, averting her face. "But above all, I'm a woman."

Fatima went back to her tent, and, when daylight came, she went out to do the chores she had done for years. But everything had changed. The boy was no longer at the oasis, and the oasis would never again have the same meaning it had had only yesterday. It would no longer be a place with fifty thousand palm trees and three hundred wells, where the pilgrims arrived, relieved at the end of their long journeys. From that day on, the oasis would be an empty place for her.

From that day on, it was the desert that would be important. She would look to it every day, and would try to guess which star the boy was following in search of his treasure. She would have to send her kisses on the wind, hoping that the wind would touch the boy's face, and would tell him that she was alive. That she was waiting for him, a woman awaiting a courageous man in search of his treasure. From that day on, the desert would represent only one thing to her: the hope for his return.



"Don't think about what you've left behind," the alchemist said to the boy as they began to ride across the sands of the desert. "Everything is written in the Soul of the World, and there it will stay forever."

"Men dream more about coming home than about leaving," the boy said. He was already reaccustomed to the desert's silence.

"If what one finds is made of pure matter, it will never spoil. And one can always come back. If what you had found was only a moment of light, like the explosion of a star, you would find nothing on your return."

The man was speaking the language of alchemy. But the boy knew that he was referring to Fatima.

That night, he told all of this to the alchemist. And the alchemist understood that the boy's heart had returned to the Soul of the World.

"So what should I do now?" the boy asked.

"Continue in the direction of the Pyramids," said the alchemist. "And continue to pay heed to the omens. Your heart is still capable of showing you where the treasure is."

"Is that the one thing I still needed to know?"

"No," the alchemist answered. "What you still need to know is this: before a dream is realized, the Soul of the World tests everything that was learned along the way. It does this not because it is evil, but so that we can, in addition to realizing our dreams, master the lessons we've learned as we've moved toward that dream. That's the point at which most people give up. It's the point at which, as we say in the language of the desert, one 'dies of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared on the horizon.'

"Every search begins with beginner's luck. And every search ends with the victor's being severely tested."

The boy remembered an old proverb from his country. It said that the darkest hour of the night came just before the dawn.



On the following day, the first clear sign of danger appeared. Three armed tribesmen approached, and asked what the boy and the alchemist were doing there.

"I'm hunting with my falcon," the alchemist answered.

"We're going to have to search you to see whether you're armed," one of the tribesmen said.

The alchemist dismounted slowly, and the boy did the same.

"Why are you carrying money?" asked the tribesman, when he had searched the boy's bag.

"I need it to get to the Pyramids," he said.

The tribesman who was searching the alchemist's belongings found a small crystal flask filled with a liquid, and a yellow glass egg that was slightly larger than a chicken's egg.

"What are these things?" he asked.

to know. There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure.”

“I’m not afraid of failing. It’s just that I don’t know how to turn myself into the wind.”

“Well, you’ll have to learn; your life depends on it.”

“But what if I can’t?”

“Then you’ll die in the midst of trying to realize your Personal Legend. That’s a lot better than dying like millions of other people, who never even knew what their Personal Legends were.

“But don’t worry,” the alchemist continued. “Usually the threat of death makes people a lot more aware of their lives.”



The first day passed. There was a major battle nearby, and a number of wounded were brought back to the camp. The dead soldiers were replaced by others, and life went on. Death doesn’t change anything, the boy thought.

“You could have died later on,” a soldier said to the body of one of his companions. “You could have died after peace had been declared. But, in any case, you were going to die.”

At the end of the day, the boy went looking for the alchemist, who had taken his falcon out into the desert.

“I still have no idea how to turn myself into the wind,” the boy repeated.

“Remember what I told you: the world is only the visible aspect of God. And that what alchemy does is to bring spiritual perfection into contact with the material plane.”

“What are you doing?”

“Feeding my falcon.”

“If I’m not able to turn myself into the wind, we’re going to die,” the boy said. “Why feed your falcon?”

“You’re the one who may die,” the alchemist said. “I already know how to turn myself into the wind.”



On the second day, the boy climbed to the top of a cliff near the camp. The sentinels allowed him to go; they had already heard about the sorcerer who could

The boy turned to the hand that wrote all. As he did so, he sensed that the universe had fallen silent, and he decided not to speak.

A current of love rushed from his heart, and the boy began to pray. It was a prayer that he had never said before, because it was a prayer without words or pleas. His prayer didn't give thanks for his sheep having found new pastures; it didn't ask that the boy be able to sell more crystal; and it didn't beseech that the woman he had met continue to await his return. In the silence, the boy understood that the desert, the wind, and the sun were also trying to understand the signs written by the hand, and were seeking to follow their paths, and to understand what had been written on a single emerald. He saw that omens were scattered throughout the earth and in space, and that there was no reason or significance attached to their appearance; he could see that not the deserts, nor the winds, nor the sun, nor people knew why they had been created. But that the hand had a reason for all of this, and that only the hand could perform miracles, or transform the sea into a desert . . . or a man into the wind. Because only the hand understood that it was a larger design that had moved the universe to the point at which six days of creation had evolved into a Master Work.

The boy reached through to the Soul of the World, and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God. And he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles.



The *simum* blew that day as it had never blown before. For generations thereafter, the Arabs recounted the legend of a boy who had turned himself into the wind, almost destroying a military camp, in defiance of the most powerful chief in the desert.

When the *simum* ceased to blow, everyone looked to the place where the boy had been. But he was no longer there; he was standing next to a sand-covered sentinel, on the far side of the camp.

The men were terrified at his sorcery. But there were two people who were smiling: the alchemist, because he had found his perfect disciple, and the chief, because that disciple had understood the glory of God.

The following day, the general bade the boy and the alchemist farewell, and provided them with an escort party to accompany them as far as they chose.

