

## *Chapter 8: T*

### Take the First Step

#### **Let me tell you a story**

In a mountain range high above a village, a young peasant boy stood at the foot of a staircase. This was no ordinary staircase. Carved out of the stone itself, and reaching high up into the mountains, it offered any traveller the chance to walk to the top. But in doing so, they would be faced with walking up ten thousand steps. The belief of the village was that no one had ever made it to the top. Apparently, many had tried but all would give up; most just stood at the bottom looking up but never moving. Those who took the first step would either turn back after the first few steps, go back just halfway up or even stop completely when they were just a few steps from the top.

The reason most never braved the steps was because they couldn't see the whole staircase. Apparently there was a sacred treasure up there, which could be claimed by whoever reached it. This treasure was not one of gold or jewels or precious stones, but whatever the traveller wanted it to be. Once at the top of the staircase, their own personal treasure would appear right before them. Staring up at this long, seemingly never-ending set of steps overwhelmed and excited the boy all at once. As he contemplated walking up it, a low, deep voice surprised him from behind.

"Will you take the first step?" the voice asked. Startled, the boy whipped around to see an elderly man. Wearing robes that were tattered, with a long grey beard, and holding a walking stick the old man stared with the wisest eyes the boy had ever seen. He seemed to have appeared out of thin air.

"I'm not sure. It's a long way up, and I can't see the top" answered the boy.

"Is that all that's stopping you. Don't you know what awaits the person who reaches the top?"

"Yes"

"Then go" the old man gestured

The old man moved closer to the boy, who to his own surprise felt comfortably safe in this stranger's presence.

"But I don't know if I can make it"

"Yes, that's right. You don't know . . . until you try"

"It's a long way up. It's going to take a lot of time and energy. Can I do it?" the boy asked.

"If claiming your own sacred treasure is important enough to you, then yes, you *can* do it"

"I've also heard . . ." cautioned the boy " . . . that the steps are shrouded in mystery"

"That is true"

"And what is that mystery?"

"It will be different for each person who walks up the steps. But for anyone who even reached that part of the journey, they were so overcome with worry and fear of the unknown, they all turned back"

"Is the unknown where it gets foggy up there?" the boy asked, pointing up the staircase to where a constant cloud hung over the steps.

"Yes"

"What do I when I come to that?"

"You will be faced with a choice; turn back or face the unknown and take the next step"

"How do I know there really is a treasure up there?" challenged the boy to the old man "If no one has ever made it to the top, how do you know there is treasure there?". The old man smiled, amused at all the questions.

"Legend tells of a young boy, like you, who made it to the top. He did return eventually, but not for many years. He came back an old man; feeble and slow, but wise and powerful. He remained at the top of the staircase, looking down over all below. Once he had reaped all the rewards of his treasure, he returned to the world below. After returning, he vowed to wait for the right person to come along and pass the secret onto them. This secret would help that person walk up the steps. And now, that old man stands before you"