

Aloha, brave souls!

If you've arrived here it's because you enthusiastically answered YES to Allan's final question. On behalf of Allan, Catherine, Ethel, Faery (and myself) let's get started.

First things first...

The purpose of the following exercises and contemplative questions is to guide you deeper into yourself. We'll be working with different aspects of Allan's journey to hopefully awaken or clarify feelings, beliefs, and ideas that perhaps we weren't aware of. The bottom line is to have fun! Use these exercises to explore and discover. You'll need paper and pen, or a journal, or a computer. While pondering and reflecting, without writing, is certainly valuable, setting actual words, thoughts, and feelings down on actual paper does something magical to your brain. In my experience as a life-long writer and creativity coach, writing things down can have a transformative effect on your life.

Let the journey begin...



PHASE 1:

Your Personal Quest

We all came here, to this earth, for a reason. Our life, no matter what it looks like or what has happened, is not an accident. Then the big, \$64,000 question is... why? Why are we here? Even if we don't think about this consciously, it's always moving and flowing beneath us, like a divine river. So let's leap in!

The first series of questions to play with...

- *Why are you here, on earth?*
- *What do you think/feel your purpose is?*
- *What's your mission in life?*
- *What do you think your quest is about?*
- *What were you chosen for?*

Answer in as much detail as you want. And it's perfectly okay not to know, to be confused or unsure. Use your imagination! You can make up answers! Be silly, be a child, write down whatever pops into your head or heart. I would bet money you have a sense, an inkling, a feeling, an idea. Follow that still small voice and scribble away. Or, if you're more visual, draw, cut out/print out images – whatever feels good!

Remember to always take your whole body along!

This exploration is not solely a mental or intellectual one. In fact, you'll receive much greater benefit if you connect with your body as you read the questions and answer them. Don't try to figure things out with the mind. *Feel your way* into the "answers." There are no right or wrong ones. Take all the time you need, don't rush, listen for whatever bubbles up.

For Allan, it certainly appeared as if the true QUEST was to find the book. But in the end, finding the book was just the outer journey, wasn't it? The inner quest for Allan went far beyond the ancient pages. His inner journey involved so many things, didn't it? Facing and healing his past. Opening his heart. Embracing what he's always known and felt about Nature.

The second series of questions to reflect upon...

- *What do you think your inner quest is about?*
- *Having trouble with an answer? List the outer things you desire – money, success, love, etc. – then contemplate what you “have” once you achieved them, I.E. security, peace, joy.*
- *Imagine what might happen if you never “manifested” your outer quest?*
- *Or, if you did, but then it crumbled or disappeared, how would you feel? What would you do?*

Perhaps you believe you were put on earth to build or create something – a business, a product, a charity, a service, a great work of art. Yet remember, what happened to Allan in the end - the sacred book disintegrated in his hands. And Ethel Goodwoman assured him that it was his own experience and everything he recorded in the journal that mattered most of all.

The last series of questions to reflect upon...

- *What lessons have you learned from great disappointments or challenges in your life?*
- *What secret treasure or wisdom might be hidden within that seeming outer failure?*
- *Based on these two reflections, what do you think your true inner quest is really all about?*



PHASE 2:

The Three Sacred Branches

The purpose of this section is to investigate the three main teachings from the ancient forest book. To sink deeper into understanding these ineffable truths. Once again, there are no mistakes or wrong turns when you're in a discovery phase. Even going down so-called "dead ends" offer valuable lessons, pointing us to a better path. Try to leave those critical or judgmental voices behind (give them some mint chip ice cream and a stack of board games to keep them busy!)

PRAISE:

Witness Life & Praise All Things

Sometimes words and their superficial meanings get in our way. Praise can be one of those words that can trigger people. Initially, it was for Allan. So it's certainly worth exploring.

- *What does Praise mean to you?*
- *How do you understand this sacred branch?*
- *Do you agree, disagree? How would you rewrite this sacred law?*
- *What areas in your life (or in yourself) do you tend to overlook, dismiss, or take for granted?*
- *How often do you deeply acknowledge your natural surroundings? The lone sparrow, a tulip, clouds, the blades of grass?*
- *What in your life needs more Praise?*

Spend some focused time in nature. Whether you live in a crowded city, the suburbs, or a rural area, the Hidden Kingdom is there, calling out to you! Practice feeling that presence and praising (aloud or silently) the beauty all around you!

COMPASSION:
The Willingness to Include All Things

The second sacred branch can be a bit more challenging at times. Allan struggled with embracing his own wounds and failings. And he had great difficulty accepting and forgiving his father as well. In the end, though, his heart opened.

- *Who or what in your life needs more genuine acceptance?*
- *Where do you still judge yourself and under what specific circumstances?*
- *What is stopping you from showing and experiencing more authentic compassion for yourself?*
- *What might be standing in your way?*

If you hit or notice some resistance when considering these questions, can you find a tiny bit of compassion for even that?

SURRENDER
To Kneel in Reverence
Before That Which Cannot Be Controlled

This sacred branch has many layers. It celebrates the relationship between beauty and impermanence. It also honors a Higher Power, or something much greater than ourselves.

- *What is your understanding of this third law of Nature? Rewrite it in your own words.*
- *Sit quietly in a park or garden, or beside a pet or living plant. Contemplate its beauty and vulnerability. Journal about it.*
- *Describe a time or event in your life when you let go or surrendered? What did that feel like? What did you learn?*
- *What simple practice or activity can you bring into your daily life that might support you connecting more to this sacred branch?*



PHASE 3:

The Attitude

Consider Faery's advice to Allan when he was devastated. "Words are like magic," she said. So let's play with The Attitude that Nature embraces: Hope, Possibility, Growth. Each word has a different meaning and a different feeling or vibration, depending on your own life experience.

- *Describe on paper what each of the words mean to you.*
- *Choose a challenging situation in your life. Notice how your body feels as you think about that challenge. Where do those feelings live in your body? (I.E., chest, stomach, throat, etc.)*
- *Describe the situation on paper. Use sentences, phrases, or images, whatever helps focus more on the challenge (I.E., It feels dense, heavy, like a boulder. Or it's scary, like a charging rhino!)*
- *Close your eyes and think about The Attitude: Hope, Possibility, Growth. Say each word aloud. Which word feels good in your body? Which word tickles or vibrates or resonates?*
- *Spend a day with that specific word. Journal about the experience.*

A Final Note:

Wherever these exercises led you, my hope is that you'll keep going. Our journey in life doesn't end. There's always new vistas, new places to explore, new ways to look at and understand things. Perhaps one of the most helpful truths to contemplate is this: We'll never really know who else has accepted the QUEST. Allan, Ethel Goodwoman, Catherine, Mrs.

O'Sullivan – they were only a few. Yet everyone, in some way, whether they're aware of it consciously or not, is searching, seeking, hoping for something deeper and larger than themselves. The next time you're out in the world – at the supermarket, in an airport, or sitting in a coffee shop, glance around at the people there. Ponder, for even a moment, what they may be looking for, what they may be desperately hoping to find. Because just like you, that man or woman or child could be smack in the middle of their own challenging journey of self-discovery. Allow your heart to open to that true and tender possibility.