

AN EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY
TO AN UNKNOWN-FAMILIAR WORLD

MINI
BOOK
—
EDITION

INNER UNIVERSE

SURPRISES FROM WITHIN

TOM MILLAR

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INNER UNIVERSE

Mini Book Edition: A Glimpse into the Writing Studio

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Inner Universe
Surprises from within

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An extraordinary journey
to an unknown-familiar world

Tom Millar

INNER
UNIVERSE

SURPRISES FROM WITHIN

MINI BOOK EDITION:
A GLIMPSE INTO THE WRITING STUDIO



Dear reader,

With this little book you hold a door handle in your hand.
Ready to open the door?

Then do it, turn the page and step in.



Welcome to the writing studio of Tom Millar and his team.

My name is Dirk. Tom has asked me if I would join him on a book project. As I have already written a book myself, I was interested, though not entirely sure. Even though I knew a bit about what Manú and he were into, I was more than surprised when he told me in detail about the incredible things they had experienced. So I couldn't resist, I had to accept. It also turned out that I am able to use my writing experience in the project, too.

So we started talking, writing, rewriting. I listened to him and Manú. Other people started to help us.

There's Tanja, an editor. She's a real detective when it comes to finding mistakes in content.

Then there's Katrin: picking up on the story while traveling the world, and translating it with heart and humor.

Anna, is an actress from L.A. She puts all her effort into bringing the story to life.

Manú, one of the participants at the workshop and now a dear friend of Tom. She helps us with her writing skills and checks the story. Sometimes it's necessary to shift things to a different perspective – to stay close enough to reality.

Ash is an artist and designer. She has the incredible ability to make The inner Universe project visible in terms of colours, images and forms.

And then there's me, Dirk. I ended up being the project

manager and writing assistant. Keeping the gang together, threatening everyone with mad ideas—I love it.

But none of this would be possible without Michael: “The Green Artist”, as he calls himself. He’s into sculpting and drawing and is so excited about the story that he committed to finance it as much as he can.

So—we have a story, a project, many ideas, and an investor. It could be worse.

After going in circles for a while, it became clear that Tom and the iU Project needed real commitment: trust, clarity, awareness, fun, love. Sounds fantastic right? It’s hard work too. You better believe it.

But anyway. It is time for YOU to find out about the iU for yourself. There will be a book coming to life at the end of this year. With this minibook you have an advantage. It’s going to enlighten you on some background information. It will also give you a glimpse into the writing studio. You even have the chance to read snippets of the full story. And if you enjoy this mini-expedition, please share it!

Oh, by the way. If you have any questions, want to know more, or can’t wait to criticize what we’re doing—reach out to us (but don’t bother the artists, you know):

mail@theinneruniverse.com

So, what will you find in this little book?

1. The beginning of the story. Tom's so excited to find out what you think of it.

2. Then there's "The Big Picture", a bit of scientific and secret wisdom. Being a bit of a smartass, I like it to have some sort of connection to deeper knowledge.

3. The interview was with Anna, who wanted to know a bit more about the inner Universe project. Since I was available at the time, it was up to me to answer her questions.

4. At the end you'll find some voices. Fans already, I would say. People who came across the deeper meaning of the iU method. They have been kind enough to share their experience. Thank you so much for doing that.

I hope you enjoy the little taster of this incredible book that Tom is writing. Stay tuned for more to come and take care in the meantime.

Warm wishes,

Tom Millar and the iU-Team

Now for a bit of the story...

STUCK ON REPEAT

I'm hanging out with Eric – my oldest friend. We're sipping coffee, talking about yoga. Well, actually, we're talking about the lack of women in my life. He thinks I subconsciously avoid women, which is nonsense. Meeting new people is just not on the cards right now. Going to clubs? Those times are long gone. Also, it seems highly unlikely that that's a place where a genuine conversation could blossom. "Ah, you like rock climbing? Tell me more!" I yell, while she screams the details of her last climbing tour into my right ear. Thanks, but no thanks.

Eric knows about my dilemma and understands the gravity of the situation. His solution? Yoga. He's well aware of my thoughts on this half-naked stretching orgy. Just the other day, I saw a poster advertising AcroYoga: 'Let your souls dance together.' According to the picture, I'm supposed to balance a woman on my feet and make her feel like she's flying. In my case, the woman would be a complete stranger – absolutely insane! And yet, here's Eric, trying to convince me otherwise.

"Why do you get so angry when we talk about this?" asks Eric.

"I'm not angry!" I respond, a little too quickly.

Eric doesn't say anything and I take a gulp of coffee. I miss my mouth and it lands in an unfortunate place on my pants.

“Let’s talk about something else.”

“I think you should attend the workshop.”

I scratch the back of my head: “That’s not what I meant when I said, let’s talk about something else.” I go to take another sip of my coffee, but the cup is empty. “Another latte, please.”

“I feel like the workshop could make a real difference.”

“You and your mysterious prophecies. Is that some spiritual vice you’re suffering from?”

We both laugh and do end up changing the subject. Now we’re talking about shamanism. The things Eric knows are absolutely fascinating. My own shamanistic journey comes back to mind.

“So how do I find my spirit animal?” I ask. “Wait, and what are aid animals? This other world seems to be more populated than the zoo!” My flippant comment doesn’t land well with the master. Still, Eric patiently explains what the animals stand for and how the different metaphors can act as guides. As I said, fascinating.

Later, on my way home, I can’t seem to forget one of Eric’s comments. “Do it, Tom,” he cleverly weaved into our goodbyes. I arrive home and a flyer catches my eye. Eric likes placing these things in my apartment when he visits. ‘Navigate your emotions,’ the bright, bold letters instruct.

I’d love to be as relaxed as Eric when it comes to feelings

and women, but his athletic and slender looks make things so much easier for him. Me, on the other hand... plus all the sweating. “How is that supposed to work?” I ask myself in the mirror. I haven’t even gotten close enough to a woman recently to be rejected.

My reflection speaks to me. This time, more insistently: ‘Tom, something has to change.’

“But what?” I reply. I go back to the kitchen to see what my fridge has in store for dinner. I’ll skip the beer this time. I set the table with the usual butter-cheese-lettuce ensemble and pull some bread out of my backpack. Netflix keeps me company as a bowl of chocolate pudding vanishes for dessert. And then another one.

Two days later, I’m not sure how much voodoo magic Eric has used to lead me to this moment. He swears he has nothing to do with the fact that I’m holding a booking confirmation for a 4-day workshop in southern Germany in my hands. The sweaty map that has transferred itself onto my shirt proves how serious the situation is.

‘Invite your tears,’ I read, getting hot again. Are my drips of sweat really tears? Thankfully, I have an appointment, which means I get to put all the questions and the workshop brochure aside, change my shirt, and leave the apartment.

Manú – A Day Out of the Book

'And send,' she whispers to herself. Then she smiles and contentedly closes her laptop. She slips on her shoes, shoves the yoga mat into her backpack, and slams the door behind her. Her steps follow a quick rhythm, and the sound in the staircase soon fades away.

The yoga sequence is going extraordinarily well today. Why is that? Inhale, looking towards the sun, and exhale. Who is moving my body? Jump, focus my gaze. This tingling, of course I am smiling. Is that God touching me?

Without a doubt, today will be a good day, Manú decides after her shower.

The people are smiling, more than ever. Colors appear brighter. Green lights, even when I don't want to cross over.

It was a good day, she confirms to her friend that evening. They're sitting comfortably in the corner of the Klunkerkranich rooftop cafe.

"I did it", Manú says finally.

"Did what?"

"I booked the workshop about emotions."

"Are you sure you're ready?"

"Yes, I am. Well, I think I am."

Her friend still seems skeptical. Then she leans over to Manú, gives her a hug and says: "Have fun! I'm crossing my fingers for your exploration of emotions."

“I wish you could come.”

“The universe wants to see you there alone.”

“Don’t be silly,” Manú laughs. Her mind jumps to the yoga teacher who preached compassion, but decided to ‘practice asanas’ with another woman. It wasn’t enough that she fell for a total macho. No, it had to be a fake guru, as Manú’s friend had called him before asking “Do normal men even exist?”

Manú stares at her almost empty glass. “Why do I always meet these idiots? I probably have some cryptic invitation for these guys printed on my forehead.”

They both laugh and her friend moves a little closer. “Ah, yes, I see something there,” she says. “Smart and funny. What’s not to like?”

They spend the rest of the evening laughing. Life feels good. “An excellent day today,” she confirms to her reflection as she brushes her teeth. She’ll soon be traveling to southern Germany to have her emotions explained to her. In the meantime, she’ll enjoy what Berlin has to offer. Still, every once in a while, she lets her thoughts drift away to imagine a life away from all the hustle and bustle and sensory overload of a big city.

Once Upon a Time – or – How it All Began

I'm peeling carrots. Lunch is supposed to be served in 45 minutes, so everyone in the little kitchen of the seminar house is in a hurry. Four people are cutting, chopping, and stirring – and give it a final taste.

In the midst of all this, there's a pink and brown, wide-legged pair of trousers, appropriate for meditation sessions. The trousers are flowing playfully along with the quick movements of its owner. She's also wearing a yellow t-shirt that reads: "It's never wrong to do the right thing." The young woman in these clothes offers up an amusing commentary on the proceedings in the kitchen. This encourages me to drop a quip in here and there. Over time, a conversation that'd be worthy of the stage develops. If only we weren't pressured for time to get lunch on the table.

"I'd be very grateful if you'd be so kind as to pass me the cucumber."

"Very well, but lettuce not forget the tomatoes."

"What an egg-celent thought! I'd appreciate it berry much if you'd stir the sauce for a second."

"Ah, yes, but let me ketchup on chopping the parsley first."

"Orange you glad we're almost done here?"

"I've never bean this hungry before."

Lunch is served and after a short break, all the participants gather in the workshop room for the next part of the

workshop. Everyone searches for a partner, and we start cursing at each other. At first, I find it pretty funny, but then my partner insults me so severely that something like anger begins to arise. I force myself to react more resolutely on my part, but my voice sounds like it's coming out of a broken speaker and I have a hard time coming up with mean things to say. My partner seems to be made for it, because my comparatively mild and hesitant comebacks encourage him to really get into his rage: "You think that's funny, asshole?!"

I am about to fire back, because "asshole" crossed a line, but our workshop leader stops us and asks for absolute silence. We're now supposed to express the energy of anger in the form of dance. A shiver runs down my back. I am furious now – and specifically at Eric, for talking me into this. I move somewhat mechanically and fight the urge to leave the room.

The woman from the kitchen dances without a care. I don't want to know what people think about my awkward movements. Incredible. Even her wild dancing looks good.

I start thinking about Eric. He would tell me that the experience is expanding my horizon. Looking south from here, the horizon is dominated by the Alps. Can I move these mountains? Two days to go. The music stops. I'm relieved. I haven't looked forward to a 15-minute meditation this much in a long time. We're supposed to investigate our feelings, review, and appreciate them. For the first 5 minutes, all I feel is sweat running down my body. Then the sweating stops and I begin to slow down.

My gaze wanders outside. What used to be a farm has been transformed into a workshop venue and guest house with a little community garden, a cat, 26 chickens, and seven ducks – none of which are intended for slaughter. There are people too, of course – twelve personalities who work together to cultivate clarity and humanity. I'm impressed.

I started reminiscing about a visit to this community last year. Naturally, Eric was the one who brought me here. So I am familiar with this setting, in which shared resources, open conversations, and an otherwise rarely encountered culture of appreciation are commonplace. I feel comfortable in this kind of environment. But I am skeptical when it comes to overly interdependent decision making and when the community's interest very much determines one's everyday life.

The exercise in the workshop room is ending. More than I've anticipated, I've been able to show my anger – “made space for my inner rage” – as the workshop facilitator would say. I feel satisfied, no, I feel excellent, and I'm excited for what's to come.

All of this leaves me exhausted at the end of the day. The desire to withdraw to my room, for a probably dream-laden night, hits me early. Going up the stairs, the woman from the kitchen crosses my path. “Ready to count sheep?” she asks unexpectedly. She catches me off guard while I was still thinking about what to say to her.

“Yes, definitely. And you?”

“I’ll read a little bit first to wind down.”

My brain is still trying to figure out what to ask her next. She didn’t mention where she’s from during the introduction circle, right?

“Well, good night. Sleep well.” She looks at me and then disappears into one of the few single bedrooms.

What’s her name? Has she visited other workshops like this one? Who is her t-shirt quoting? Now the questions can’t stop coming.

The sound of snoring from my roommate reminds me to wander back to one of the bathrooms down the hallway. Equipped with earplugs, the world of dreams beckons.

A single bedroom doesn’t prevent short nights and intense dreams, as my new acquaintance confirms the next morning. At seven o’clock sharp, all of us gather for the morning meditation. Some uncategorizable movement exercises in the dewy grass are followed by breakfast.

We eat porridge. Not the kind that’s served at every pretentious vegan hipster cafe in Berlin but a bland, slimy, textureless version. Buddha pushed his suffering to the limit to gain self-awareness. Jesus suffered, not only on the cross but also in quite earthly situations. Strange thoughts this morning, but they somehow help me to enrich the porridge with some acceptance and to look forward to the day ahead.

As I will find out later, my new acquaintance feels similarly about the porridge. But we jump right into the next topic

of our workshop: sadness. The first exercise is to “hold my energetic center at my core.” The core sits right below the belly button as Josua demonstrates by casually showing us his six-pack. We’re supposed to imagine an object that represents our energetic center. I choose a mango.

Some of the female workshop participants show admiration for this six-pack by looking dreamy and giving their ‘centers’ to the handsome fellow. To recognize these shifts of our centers, we’re supposed to practice in pairs. Walter, my not entirely voluntary choice of partner, is supposed to act silly, and I have to be careful that my center stays below the navel.

I manage quite well to keep my attention on the mango and am not impressed as my partner clumsily makes a fool out of himself. The fact that his cheap cologne stinks up half of the room, on the other hand, occupies my mind and soon I can’t think about anything else. It’s possible that I let my “center” slip away. At least, that’s what I suspect if I understood Josua correctly.

The break comes at the perfect time and I go outside. When I come back, my new acquaintance is standing at the door of the workshop room. “What was your name?” I ask and take a big sip of water from my glass.

“Manú. And you, Tom?”

I inhale deeply and exhale with a laugh before I fall for her little trick.

This surprise attack erases all the questions I have prepared.

“Did you understand the center exercise?” I ask, after what seems an eternity.

“Yes.”

The other participants gently push us back into the room. I finish my water and sit down.

“Invite your tears.” Josua begins the meditations with his soft and melancholic voice. It’s quiet and I start sweating.

“A child that happily dances on the grass. The person who looks happy – is that your father?” The room is silent.

“It’s the love that lives inside of you. A child’s laugh – follow it. Do you see the child standing in the grass? Go there and take her by the hand.”

Her? I ask myself. Next to me, I notice a quiet sob. I inhale deeply and hold my breath. My heart starts beating loudly. Sitting here is starting to make me uncomfortable, and I can’t get the image of my dad out of my head. He’s wearing this particular shirt – the one where he always had to roll up his sleeves. Yes, he’s laughing. My throat is dry and I try again to find a comfortable seated position.

Then I hear Josua say: “It is you – the laughter behind those walls. Behind the walls, where you can smell the blooming flowers. Imagine how your tears melt those walls. Brick by brick, with every tear, the walls dissolve...”

Once Walter starts crying and other men follow, I get incredibly hot. I suddenly feel the urge to use the bathroom. I stand up silently and sneak outside. The fresh breeze that

comes through the bathroom window cools me down. Three of the seven ducks seem to be looking at me from the garden. I would love to run around the house as carelessly.

I take a deep breath and get the unfortunate feeling that I should go back to the workshop room. Inside, everyone is hugging each other. My first impulse to turn around immediately is interrupted by Josua, who softly, yet determinately pulls me back into the circle.

Arms start wrapping around my shoulders from all sides and I try to stare at a spot on the floor with my eyes. The violin music, which the entire group is swaying to, ends up filling my eyes with tears.

I'm confused because no one seems offended by the tears. Fascinating. I'm still glad when the workshop is over. The rest of the afternoon is more relaxed. In the evening, we sit around the fire and talk about life. Josua joins with his guitar and plays some songs. My first thought is: Oh no, now I have to sing?! He asks for song suggestions. My eyes are burning and I don't know any songs, but the evening was beautiful. I yawn for the third time in a row and leave the fireplace. Tired and a little drowsy, I fall into bed.

On Sunday, the workshop continues cheerfully. We celebrate joy. In the afternoon, we clean and polish the house, and Josua addresses us with a heartfelt, loving message.

“We've truly emotionally connected with each other in the past days. Some of you have experienced changes in surprising

ways. And I can speak for everyone when I say, you got to know yourselves a little better. This feeds the soul and shows me what we are capable of if we are brave enough.”

These closing remarks by our workshop leader leave me incredibly proud. I really did it. I went through the workshop. I could hug the entire world. I feel strong and profoundly happy.

I stay on the farm for a few extra days and enthusiastically lend a helping hand to the community. I especially enjoy the sustainable agriculture and the delicious, fresh vegetables we get to eat with our meals. Talking to the people here is different. Something makes them extraordinary. I feel comfortable and I'm in a good mood. I do feel a little bit weird about the level of intensity with which people seem to stare back when talking to them. If I did that in Berlin, I'd probably get some snarky comment.

My new acquaintance stays too. We work together in the garden, where our conversation gets a bit deeper. But I still have to overcome a hurdle that keeps getting in the way – thanks to my insufficient interest in names. I have forgotten hers again. Another evening of cooking offers an opportunity.

“I know this might sound strange, but can you tell me your name again? I kind of forgot it, sorry.” As I stammer these words, it becomes clear that the myth of women's gift for multi-tasking is shaking. Completely immersed in the spicy flavor of a soup, she says, “Em...” (pause), “Manú” (another

pause).

“Is that it?” I ask.

“Well, it’s not like you’re going to remember much more!” She looks at me amused with her dark brown eyes. “Memory lapses almost always come after a successful moment of surprise,” explains a tall fellow chef. “In such a perceptual vacuum, I could, for example, drink your last sip of coffee, and you’d just watch without really noticing.”

“So let me recap: We now know that the name ’Em Manú’ exists for me and ’Tom’ for you. Was that formulated appropriately for your male brain?” Manú asks curiously.

“I bet we could renovate half of the kitchen in the time it takes you to recover from your ’moment’ of surprise,” Manú continues.

“Is that your observation?” the tall chef asks Manú. Meaningful silence is the answer and the kitchen crew enters the dining area. I am determined not to give this Manú the field without some sort of come-back. I follow the group and as we sit down, I am ready to fire back a brilliant comment. She smiles reassuringly. I let it go.

The next day, we’re busy with gardening again. The workshop we attended is a welcome conversation topic, because for Manú too some of the words and terminology raise questions. We had talked about four basic emotions, an energetic center and a ’gremlin’ that represents the selfish behavior of our egos.

Anyway, we notice that somehow it’s always this energy we

are supposed to perceive in ourselves. I had heard about this many times before. From my father, I know that Buddhism is about energies. Yoga is too, as Manú explains to me. There are energy centers called chakras. But when the conversation turns to bad vibes and good vibes, I have to pass. She's lost me.

"Well, have you never been to a party you really enjoyed because you got along with most of the people there?" Manú asks.

"I can recall a situation recently where I made an escape plan 15 minutes into the event because the people were so unpleasant."

"Those are bad vibes, or you can call it oscillatory instability if you want to get really scientific."

"So right now, are we experiencing good vibes?" I ask.

"I hope so." Manú blinks because of the sun in her eyes and moves on to the lettuce.

"You should put on some sunscreen, your face is pretty red already."

I nod. "Yes, thanks." I'm not quite sure whether the sun or my question about the good vibes is responsible for the red color.

During dinner, we again talk about energies. This time, however, we discuss alternative energy production utilizing a locally operated kinetic power plant.

Air-filled hollow chambers are connected one after another if I understand correctly.

“And how does the power generation work, then?” I ask the group.

“A vertical pipe is filled with water and floating containers on a conveyor belt,” explains a smaller, bearded resident who has passed the 60-year mark – at least.

“The containers fill up with water on their way to the bottom of the pipe.” His eyes glow with enthusiasm.

“Then water gets pumped out of the containers at the bottom of the pipe and the buoyancy forces them upwards. This drives a generator and in the end we have enough energy for our entire farm here.” The opinions and ideas for implementing such a project go back and forth. I find it challenging to keep up.

My thoughts stray a little when the expert discussion exceeds my receptiveness, and I remember our conversation in the garden, when Manú explained the good and bad vibes to me, which was also about energy. Could the production of sustainable energy be similar to good vibes? I ask myself. And what about the chakras? Is that the same as electricity?

“Hello, Major Tom. Are you receiving?” I hear someone calling. I’m startled.

“Yeah, yes...everything’s fine.” I look at their grinning faces.

“A daydream?” Jolina asks. Her long, dark hair reveals some of the mandala-like tattoos on her strong shoulders. “Maybe,” I answer, still not entirely present.

“Follow your train of thought. It could be important,” she adds a little mysteriously before the conversation turns back

to the gardening work that has been done.

A little later, I'm in my bed. A few random thoughts about the energies inside me and out there keep me awake for a little while. This happy mood and a smile, combined with the idea of 'good vibes', is the last thing I remember before a conscientious rooster wakes me the next morning. Its crow resounds repeatedly throughout the farm grounds. It wins. At 6:20, I get up. I grab a cup of coffee from the kitchen and go outside. Dew on the grass reflects the low-standing sun in countless glittering spots. Two bees are busy flying from flower to flower during their morning shift. A cat patrols the vegetable garden. Then my gaze rests on an unbelievable alpine panorama, opening up on the horizon for the first time today. Wow. I take off my shoes and socks and walk through the dewy grass. Only gradually do the soles of my feet report a low temperature to my brain. They decide 'cold' and recommend 'dryness and warmth'. All this freshness and morning magic makes me hungry. In a good mood, I set off for breakfast – fortunately, this time without porridge.

After this delicious morning meal, I pack my things. Soon after, my rental car, including two sentimental looking people, backs out the driveway. Because Manú is also from Berlin, we have decided to drive back together.

On the way, we agree that an observed ambiguity can be attributed to the topic of energy. The grey-blue ambience of

the German Autobahn probably makes passengers sleepy, because Manú's eyes fall shut from time to time. Perhaps the rather intense workshop days are also partly to blame.

Now the signs for Berlin are showing double digits and I have gone through at least five variations: How can I ask Manú if we could see each other again? When she suddenly wakes up, I seize the moderately good opportunity.

"Manú, I have a question."

She stretches, looks at me, and says, "Go ahead."

Suddenly the brilliant formulation disappears from my head and I'm left with: "We have a lot to talk about, you know, personal development and spirituality."

"Okay," Manú replies.

I feel like I've played myself into a corner. At least that's what I think when I feel a certain warmth creeping up inside of me.

"Well, we've talked about energy. Don't you think it's strange that completely different things like chakras and power plants use a very similar terminology?"

"Yeah, it's crazy how many metaphors are used in spirituality. I feel like sometimes people have no idea what they're talking about." Manú looks ahead at the road and then gazes out the passenger window.

"How about we clarify things a bit, over breakfast, for example?"

Now she looks at me as I wait anxiously for her reaction.

"Okay, let's serve the spiritual and scientific worlds and

clarify the subject of energy,” she says in a heroic voice. I’m not quite sure if that’s a yes or a no. But then she laughs: “Sure, I’d love to. I look forward to it.”

Joy rushes through my system, much like a long-awaited 1-0 in a football stadium.

“A breakfast together best suits our conversation. The tomato sunflower seed spread I brought with me will serve as the perfect addition to reminisce,” I add.

“Wonderful! I’ll eagerly await your message.”

The second Mexican wave storms through my system, as I take the exit towards Friedrichshain. I am satisfied with myself, the workshop, and the entertaining drive back to the big city. Eric once talked about a spiritual high that can occur after such intense workshops. I think I know what he means now.

However, he didn’t say anything about the spiritual hangover that would develop from this in the following two days. I do know its big brother, who you sometimes bring home as a souvenir from a night out, but not with so much heaviness, lethargy, and doubt. Eric gladly helps me out of this mood. Since yoga is still on my not-to-do-list, we go running. We meditate in the forest and he enlightens me once more about the widespread phenomenon of the spiritual hangover.

“Acceptance has a lot to do with understanding,” he says.

“Well, at least I feel much better now.”

Breakfast – To Lighten Things Up

It's a Saturday in May – like any other, it seems – when the doorbell rings at number 80 Erich-Weinert-Strasse. Next to the little white button, the sign reads Manú S. Kaytoni. The door swings open with, “Greetings, stranger.” Manú has set the table abundantly. Coffee, cheese, and jam. I add the handmade spreads from the farm and arrange the rolls and croissants from the bakery. Manú immediately jumps in with our question: “So, what is energy?”

“A little heat, a few particles or waves, depending on the weather. The rest falls under the ‘I don't know’ category, and in the end, there is light.”

“True, it's a small light,” Manú says.

“We should try to make it brighter.”

“Coffee?” I try to keep the conversation going without spending too much time on my small knowledge of light. She nods and hands me the cup.

I am fascinated by this porcelain pot, which reminds me of sophisticated English tea culture and somehow doesn't fit this endearing DIY-style apartment.

“We've already discovered that energy has to do with electricity,” Manú continues thoughtfully. “Perhaps it would help to first see how electricity works? I know, for example, that there's sometimes a plus or a minus and that I will have a funny expression if I touch the wrong place.”

“Yes, other people look funny too, even when they know what just happened.” I remember a moment like that when I wanted to wire up a light in my kitchen. “In any case, it’s a long story that begins in the 18th century with Benjamin Franklin and Alessandro Volta and continues in the 19th century with Nicola Tesla.”

Manú’s eyes open wide in feigned horror: “Maybe we should stick to energy itself a little more. Life is short, and history is long. I think we need to prioritize.” She presses her lips together and nods her head several times.

What am I supposed to say to that? “Okay, let me fast-forward.” I make what I imagine to be fast-forwarding sounds. Manú has to laugh. This gives me time to put the essentials together in my head.

“Alternating current. The plus and minus poles are exchanged back and forth at terrific speed, like greased lightning. 50 times a second, therefore 50 hertz.”

Manú makes a surprised face while she sips her coffee.

“And still, we talk about plus and minus, or rather neutral conductors. In school, you may have learned that the current flows from plus to minus. But it’s exactly the other way around because the so-called free electrons fly towards the positive pole in the current conductor.”

“How are these electrons supposed to manage if the plus pole consistently changes?”

“Well, they’re not even aware because they just do what the moment demands.”

“So, what’s the energy of electricity?” Manú asks.

“I asked myself the same question, as science has, with one difference: they found answers.”

“So? Did you cheat in science?”

“I did: energy use is only possible if two different energy levels exist. For example, if one part of the current conductor has 0 volts and another has 230. Then we have what’s called potential.”

“Incredible!” Manú shouts. “Does that have anything to do with the unleashing of inner potential? Like we talked about in the workshop?” A whole tomato disappears in her mouth and I’m not sure how seriously she’s taking me.

“So this potential is a deliberate imbalance. Electrons are missing on this point of potential. There’s too much positivity. That’s what it takes to get the current flowing when you turn on the light. Do you get it?” I ask.

“Yes, sure: I heard everything you said and I mostly understand.” As she nods, a strand of light brown hair sneaks out of her ponytail and partly covers her eyes. She strokes it back with her left hand and simultaneously brings the coffee cup to her mouth with her right hand. Phenomenal.

“This potential corresponds to positional energy. It can be converted into kinetic energy when the potential reaches the neutral pole, so when the circuit is closed. Electricity flows as the electrons rush to the plus side, towards the +230V potential.”

“I have one more question for you, professor: Why does

a light bulb glow when electrons travel towards the plus?”

Blushing, I take a deep breath. “Professor? Is it really that bad?”

“No, no, no,” Manú reassures me. “It’s all good. I’m just sensitive when it comes to explanations. With my mother being a teacher, her entire idea of parenting consisted of them.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I say. “I hereby announce the imminent end of the powerline.” To my satisfaction, this amuses Manú.

“The conductor, for example the copper wire, is something like a well-developed road and the light bulb is a narrow path leading through the dense forest. There’s an electron crowd on that narrow forest path now. The electrons rub against each other and the branches, which generates heat and light. If the glow is supported a little bit by a vacuum or certain gases, we have a suitable light bulb at the end.”

“How do you know all this?” murmurs Manú.

“Google and Wikipedia are two of my closest friends and sometimes we mingle with educational TV shows. I prepared for our breakfast.”

“Exemplary.”

We chew on our breakfast rolls, as we let the information work its magic. Later, we agree that there should be another energetic breakfast. The front door of number 80 at Erich-Weinert-Strasse falls shut and I go home – touched, somehow.

Breakfast and a Quantum of Amazement

I sit on the rather uncomfortable cafe chair and bump my knee for the second time against the crossbar of the stylish looking table, wondering who builds something like this, when Manú comes through the door. She's wearing an orange top, blue denim shorts, and black flip-flops. Her hair is tied to a ponytail, which bounces over her left and right shoulder in turn as she walks.

She greets me with an exuberant "Wow, I'm hungry. And hello, first of all," she says, seemingly in a bubbly mood. I have no idea why, but I stand up. Manú looks at me somewhat questioningly. I explain clumsily: "Please sit down," pointing to the chair to my left.

She looks and says: "Sure, gladly. That's why I'm here."

What kind of performance was that? My internal commentator voice reproachfully asks. I'd love to be a mole now and burrow myself into the ground, but Manú asks if I've ever tried the matcha latte here. I haven't, which prompts her to order two from the waitress.

"You just have to try this!"

"Okay, I can't wait."

"And a large vegan breakfast," she adds promptly.

The klutz commentator from before calls out to say, "For me too, please." Only then do I realize my beloved cheese has just been voted out of this breakfast. I must regain control of my speech center. Whoever is speaking, go away!

Meanwhile, Manú begins: “I’ve looked at some things regarding quantum mechanics, and I’m fascinated by this tiny little world. Somehow the subject of electricity seems to play a role as well.”

“How so?” I ask.

“I read that things in the quantum world are different from what we know here in the macro cosmos.”

In the meantime, two greenish shimmering hot drinks are placed on our table – surprisingly, to me at least – mine smells of grains.

“So, what was the final outcome of your paper on quantum mechanics?” I ask, and feel a smile play on my lips.

“What’s so funny?” Manú asks immediately.

“Mmh, I just thought of the professor criticism the other day.”

“And now you’re wondering whether I can explain without sounding like one.”

I shrug.

“Well then, be my guest as I present my semi-knowledge in the service of the energy topic to you, without sounding like a professor.”

I lean back and wait for the performance to start.

“19th century: the discovery of atoms. Not of hard matter, no, of soft consistency – doubts!”

I also have doubts. Our vegan breakfast is being served and the veggie garden on my plate looks completely different from my usual dietary choice.

“Attention!” Manú raises her right hand, in which she holds a grape from the breakfast platter. She points at the grape: “This atom consists of an incredibly small, positively charged core – the nucleus, and a kind of shell, where the electrons we already know of float around.”

“That’s what I remember from school,” I confirm.

“Well, here comes the surprise! The nucleus and the electrons are so much smaller than the atoms that we could easily say, they’re empty.”

“Empty?”

“Imagine the atom has the radius of the city of Hamburg, and you’re sitting in a cafe on the river Elbe. Your height would be approximately the size of the atomic nucleus, and somewhere in the city, a few bacteria are floating around. Those would be the electrons. At the same time, you represent more than 99% of the mass of the entire atom, meaning of all of Hamburg.”

“With or without coffee?” I ask.

“What?”

“Am I sitting there with coffee and cheesecake?”

“With coffee, but without cake.”

“Too bad. I’m not available as an exemplary object then.”

“You are silly and unfocused!”

“I am not,” I protest. “And I like Hamburg as an example. I used to be an apprentice there.”

“An apprentice to do what?” asks Manú.

“To be a chef.”

“Really? I couldn’t tell when we were working in the kitchen.”

“I wanted to fit in.”

Manú rolls her eyes. “You can cook for me sometime. I will gladly invite 30 friends and colleagues to eat à la carte. Does that inspire the master chef in you?”

There’s no way out. I nod.

“Great,” Manú responds, and my commentator voice adds a little “Well.”

“Where were we?” I deflect.

“With you as a possible atomic nucleus.”

“Ah true, the cheesecake issue. For the record: I love cake. In any situation.”

“Noted.”

“So, Hamburg is almost empty while I sip my coffee by the river?”

“Exactly. And the shocking news isn’t over. More particles were found in the nucleus: positively charged protons and neutral neutrons. These, on the other hand, consist of elemental particles, the quarks.” Manú has pulled a little sheet of paper from her pocket and is reading from it. “As I said, absolutely shocking, since everybody believed in matter as the basis of our world.”

“And now?” I ask.

Manú swallows a giant piece of avocado. “Now, we believe that everything is energy. That’s the reason I find it so fascinating. I’m familiar with the concept from my yoga teacher

training – the concept that we’re all connected and that energy is the basis of the universe.”

I’m amazed because I hadn’t heard of the similarity between these views. I take a sip of the matcha latte and finish the underripe fruit from my vegan breakfast platter. In the meantime, Manú has managed to reposition herself on her chair, which must be as uncomfortable as mine. Her left foot lies on her right thigh and vice versa.

“What are you doing?” I ask.

“What do you mean?”

I’m impressed and can’t stop looking, which she notices, of course.

“Do I understand correctly? You’re saying, while these spiritual teachings explain it differently, they explain what science has found out through quantum physics?”

“Exactly. My yoga teacher always says, ‘If there’s something you want to know, search within yourself.’ The method is called awareness of the conscious mind.”

Although I don’t fully understand what Manú means, I have the feeling that unlike many spiritual delusions, there seems to be profound wisdom to this that can be scientifically proven.

“Yes, I get the same impression,” Manú agrees.

“How do you know what I’m thinking?” I ask in surprise.

“A shot in the dark,” she laughs.

“Are you’re doing this Hatha Yoga thing?” I ask with a mixture of horror and curiosity, and without really knowing

what it is exactly.

“Basically, yes, but what I do is called Ashtanga yoga. It consists of a fixed sequence of exercises. How about you?”

“I haven’t been able to talk myself into it.”

“What’s stopping you?”

“Well, maybe I find it too soft. Besides, I only know women who do yoga – this Hatha thing.”

“Well, why don’t you try an hour of Ashtanga and find out for yourself if it’s too soft?”

“I’ll think about it,” I answer half-heartedly. The idea of doing yoga with Manú horrifies me. I’m not able to do anything while she floats in front of me like a feather.

I take a deep breath – to be safe – and then I start speaking: “By employing the scientific methods so sacred to us, we have studied more and more details. For centuries we have walked the world with a flashlight and have found truths in the macro world, our everyday environment.”

“What are you talking about?” asks Manú, perplexed.

“I’m not exactly sure.”

Manú laughs.

“Sorry, I’m out. I lost my train of thought.”

“Now what?” asks Manú.

I don’t know how to go on and I start feeling hot. An unfamiliar part of me suddenly says: “Tell me about this Ash...Yoga.”

“Ashtanga Yoga?”

“Yes.”

“Well, when I get on the mat for my practice, it’s a date with myself. I am forced to listen to myself.”

“What do you mean? Do you meditate on the yoga mat?” I ask.

“Actually, yoga is a preliminary stage of meditation. Especially for brainiacs like us, it helps to calm the mind. The mind is busy coordinating movements with breaths and it doesn’t have time to think uncontrollably.”

“To me, yoga feels pretentious. On social media, I only ever see athletic, flexible, women in the most impossible contortions, smiling into the camera as if they were lazing around on the couch.”

Manú rests her head on her hands as she thinks. Was I too harsh? I wasn’t talking about her, just generally speaking. But it’s the truth. The tight outfits and movements that no average person can do. Manú takes a deep breath and says, “You’re absolutely right.”

I’m surprised and don’t know what to say. “Mmm,” I hear myself respond.

“The scenarios you just described exist. And whatever else you thought is probably true too.”

I swallow audibly and absentmindedly reach for my glass of water.

“But as it is,” she continues, “there may be other examples. Just as there may be people who have a strong opinion about something, say yoga, and then change their mind.”

I can’t think of a reply.

“My wish would be for more people to have the courage and willingness to practice yoga in the way it has been practiced for thousands of years.”

“And what’s that like?” I inquire, curious about the answer.

“It directs your attention inwards, towards yourself and your inner world. It doesn’t even require the physical exercises. Funny, isn’t it?” She pauses and then:

“Just imagine that all this movement yoga doesn’t make up more than a tiny part of what people have been practicing in temples and far away from civilization in nature, for ages. Devotion to the present moment, no matter what the outside world wants, that’s what it’s all about.”

“Then why are there so many people who practice in specific outfits?”

Manú shrugs her shoulders. “Why do people drive fancy cars? Why do others shop in organic grocery stores? And what does knowledge mean to me? Doesn’t it all touch two things? Functionality and prestige?”

“I never thought of it that way.” A big grin appears on my face.

“What is it?” Manú wants to know.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

IN TOM'S WORDS:

Why am I writing this book?

With this book, I'd like to embolden you to look inwards in a new way, into your own world of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. If we can manage to better understand the inner world, then it's easier to navigate these feelings and emotions, and to find out what goes on in the psyche. This will then support you even further in assuming responsibility for your life and your work.

This act of looking inwards often leads to painful memories and emotions, which most people would prefer to avoid. But the lightness and the humor I tried to integrate into the story will help you to look there too. People that have made the choice to look inside report again and again that they feel relieved and that their life has increasingly become a beautiful journey. I can confirm that to be true. And, you have to stay alert. You have to practice earnestly towards yourself, every day.

What's important to me:

The story that I'm telling is based on my own experiences and realizations I have had in the inner universe. On the

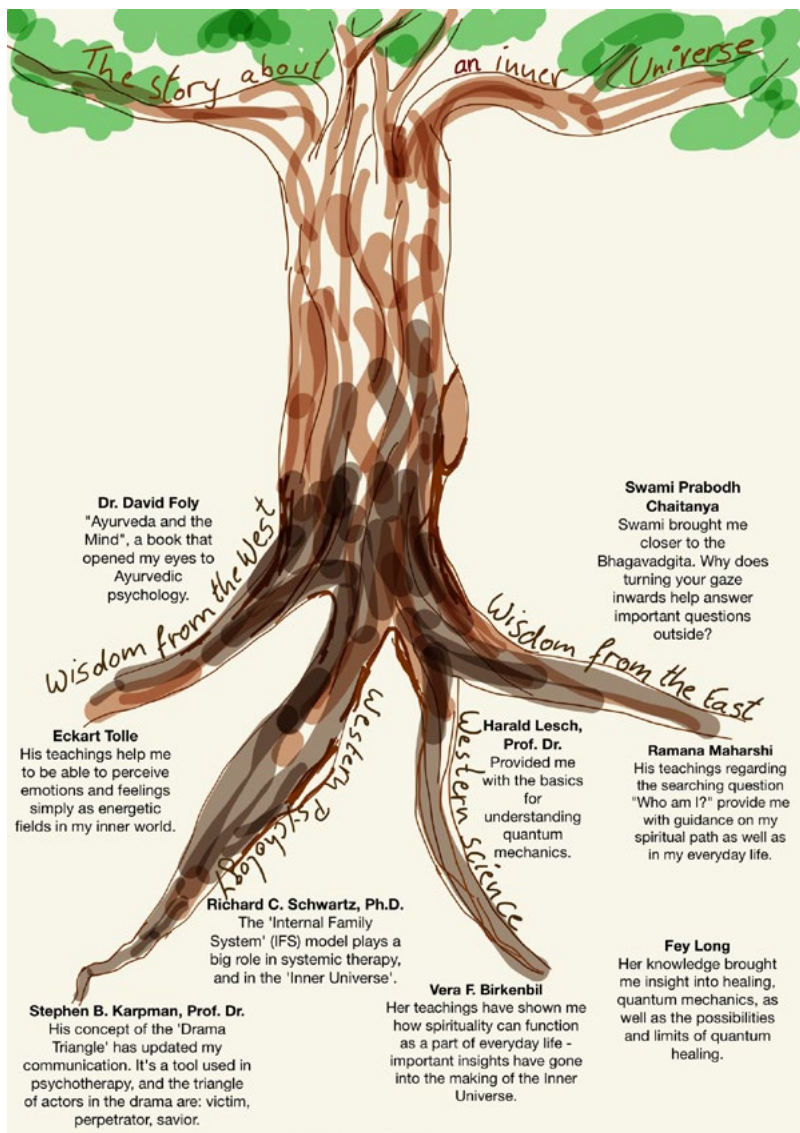
other hand I am lucky enough to be working together with Dirk. His knowledge and experience is supporting the story in a very big way.

Equal amounts of Western and Eastern science, philosophy and teachings make up the foundation on which the concept of the inner universe rests. In the following section, Dirk will briefly introduce his most important teachers, whose work make up this foundation and have simultaneously helped him on his own way.

IN DIRK'S WORDS:

Knowledge from East and West

With my tree of knowledge, I feel honoured to provide shelter for the story Tom is writing about his inner Universe. It grew out of the knowledge and wisdom these teachers have passed on to support freedom from suffering.



Eastern and Western Thinking

Two completely different paths, one goal, and an obvious mutual skepticism have shaped the relationship between Eastern and Western thinking in the past. All too quickly, the notion that there is a right and a wrong way of thinking kills the possibility of something wonderfully connected and expansive potentially evolving from them joining forces.

If Western science is based on the verification of theories by means of mathematical proof, observations and experiments, then the Eastern teachings rely on 'lineage', the long and successful application and transfer of knowledge and wealth of experience. In both approaches, humanity has the possibility of making great discoveries. In both approaches there's also the potential for error.

I gain a lot from both sides having reached out to one another more and more in the past decades. Perhaps it's possible, for the first time, to think about a fusion of both traditions and look at the world from a completely new perspective? Borders on both sides could perhaps be broken down in a new state of togetherness.

Spiritual Supermarket

I heard this story from Vera F. Birkenbil (a visionary on learning methods and expert scientist on brain-related learning). I liked it so much that I wanted to share it with you.

Imagine that you're in a supermarket. On the many shelves you can find all kinds of different products. Some of the products catch your attention, so you pick them up and look at them. Others don't, so you don't pick those up. Then there's some products that you find so great and helpful that you buy them. Other people go into this same supermarket to shop, but they find other products interesting and buy those.

I'd like to invite you to treat the themes that Tom has picked and the stories that he'll tell you the same as the products in the supermarket. Look at the things that you find interesting and take the ones that'll serve you well. The rest you can just leave, or put back on the shelf, respectively. There's no reason to fight over what's good, better or right. Perhaps that thing is just there for someone else.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRK

Anna, now a team member of our project, had a brilliant idea. To get to know more about the iU Project, she asked Tom for an interview. He was very enthusiastic about the idea and accepted. Unfortunately, he was very busy at that time so I jumped in to help him out.

Prepared with some questions, Anna interviewed me on the 11th of May. It was so much fun. Tom was impressed by the outcome and wanted some of the interview to be in here.

Q: How did the idea for the inner Universe project originate, and what were the early conversations about this project like?

Michael and I went to a workshop centre in Southern Germany. There we met Tom and Manú. They were participants in the workshop too.

Since we were practicing being introspective with ourselves after the workshop, Tom and Manú must have done the same. Michael and I came up with the idea that there's something like an office inside all of us. And in this office there's a team working.

I shared that with Tom and he told me about what Manú and him were doing. The conversations they had on energy for example. I liked that very much.

And then he told me about other experiences, about the

journey. It was unbelievable. I mean it took some time to understand what he was talking about. And it helped very much that I had done some spiritual work already.

Q: *What's your relationship to spirituality?*

I'm open to new things when it comes to spirituality. I've travelled to other countries for the sole purpose of getting to know spiritual behaviours, spiritual practices there. I went to India, so did Manú, as we found out. And I went to Thailand, for a meditation retreat in a Buddhist temple.

And that's where I really learned about spirituality and what it actually means to practice it in your daily life, to have an everyday practice.

I've also been to workshops. As I said, in one of them I met Tom and Manú. I had a very interesting conversation with Manú about what is real in spirituality. She told me about spiritual pop, spiritual teachings that don't go too deep.

I started digging a bit more on that and I came across something called spiritual bypassing. And that helped me to understand the teachings I encountered in India even better. They come from a lineage that goes back hundreds or thousands of years.

Q: *Are there any parallels you can draw between your own life and Tom and Manú's journey?*

Well, I know what it's like to have wonderful and deep

conversations like they do. And I recognize some of the issues that Tom struggles with. For example, we both have to deal with the cake thing. We love cakes and Manú knows that. That's why the writing studio has been declared a cake-free zone.

And as for Manú, I like her as a friend. We are different in character, that's for sure. Tom keeps saying we are both a bit intense, well connected with the element fire. I don't know.

Q: What is it like writing with Tom?

Tom already had the idea to write the book. We talked and came up with some ideas. The adventures they had, I mean it's hard to believe that something like this happened. So how can you write about it?

Manú was not keen on the idea of just telling people. She's right. For this reason it's an adventure that has to be a story that many people can relate to. It is very much a journey of discovery. In the beginning, we started to structure the story, sketched different aspects. Whole posters developed. Like here:



The writing is very much his task. He likes writing outside. Being in nature, diving deep into the writing process. That's why I'm here now talking to you.

Q: **What was it like getting to know each other?**

We didn't know each other well. We just met not so long ago. In fact, Tom and I were a little skeptical of each other in the beginning. Nevertheless he asked me to join the project.

Over time and through challenges, we found out more about each other. When you work together, intensely, you build up a relationship. Sooner or later it feels like being married. The same issues arise. There are funny moments, there are disagreements and there's deep understanding and caring.

Q: **You work daily with the relationship between someone's physical surroundings and their inner life. Did you have any idea what Tom's living space would look like?**

It's a bit of a delicate question. He asked me for some consultation on his flat. I ended up doing a 'dancing spaces' project. That's what I call my services. I rearranged his kitchen and we did some transformational processes, some inner work as well. He has a cool flat, nicely set up. But I think it's good to keep it private.

Manú seems to have been quite impressed with what we did with his kitchen. She has asked him later for some ideas on her bathroom. We sat together and had fun talking about crazy ideas. I couldn't believe it, but one of those ideas really turned into reality. Manú was so impressed with the whole thing, she insisted on putting it in the book. It's an inspiration for others, she said.

Saying that means you'll find out more about Manú's place once the book is out. All I can say now is that she is very much into DIY and she loves vintage style.

Q: **What does Tom hope that people will take away from having read the book?**

First of all, we hope people enjoy the story and want to read more. We hope that they get curious about looking inside themselves to see what's going on there. Is it anything like Tom and Manú experienced?

Another thing would be to understand that change is possible and that change can actually be done with joy. He hopes that the reader takes a little bit of the humor with them and realizes that they can look at themselves and still laugh about it. Because that's the first step of transformation, right?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

Voices of people who have gotten in touch with the story:

“Contemporary sweet story about self-development and meaning of life. Refreshing style to write about big topics like energy or consciousness.”

- LUISA FROM DRESDEN, GERMANY

“Since knowing a bit about the inner Universe, I recognize those concepts in many aspects of my life. As it already helped me to understand and handle certain situations, thoughts and emotions, I’m very curiously looking forward to learn more about it.”

- JULIA FROM STAUFF, GERMANY

“The inner Universe has already been eye-opening for me and my family. We’re able to name our parts, better understand how we’re feeling, and then communicate about what we each need. I’m so grateful for these teachings!”

- ANNIE FROM BERKELEY, USA

*“Board the train. Enter the tunnel without a torch.
Forget the map and the compass. The journey starts now,
without shoes and without a net”*

- JONAS FROM HELSINKI, FINLAND

*“Because I am fascinated by the connection between
consciousness, awareness and energy, I’d really like
to know what happens next. And understanding yoga
as a preliminary stage to meditation opens up an almost
forgotten perspective for me, which may enrich
my quality of life.”*

- MARIO FROM BERLIN, GERMANY

*“I think what the Inner Universe project does is make
spirituality and the quest for a deeper knowledge
of oneself accessible on a whole new level. Through being
able to follow Tom and Manú on their journey inwards,
we’re able to feel what it’s like to work on our shadow
sides, but in the company of what soon feels like very good
friends who support us throughout the process.
I think that no matter if you’re experienced in the subject
of spirituality or if this is the first book that you’re picking
up, you’ll enjoy getting to know Tom and Manú,
and recognize a lot of yourself in them!”*

- ANNA FROM LOS ANGELES, USA