

UbU

UNTITLED *by Unknown*

FATHER

SON

HUSBAND

PROVIDER

THE ROCK

THE FIXER

JOB

THE ONE WHO
WAS FINE

MOTHER

DAUGHTER

WIFE

CARER

THE STRONG ONE

THE ONE WHO
STAYED

THE ONE EVERYONE
LEANS ON

THE ONE WHO KEPT
GOING



When You Lose Your Title, *This Is the Map*

ARUN KUMAR

UbU

UNTITLED BY UNKNOWN

When You Lose Your Title,
This Is the Map

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For Deeksha. For Kyra and Anika.

And for the person who needed this book and couldn't find it.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a true story, told from memory and from the journals I kept while it was happening. Some names, organisations, characteristics, and identifying details have been changed or omitted — some out of respect for the privacy of others, and some because certain doors are meant to close behind you. What it felt like has not been changed anywhere.

HOW TO READ THIS

This book doesn't need to be read in order. It was written in the order that things happened, which is not always the order in which they make sense. If something calls to you before you've reached it, follow it. The map works however you hold it.

Terms used throughout this book are defined in the *Glossary* on page 247.

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Introduction

Let me start by asking you the same question I had to ask myself.

Who are you?

Sounds easy enough. You have got it on LinkedIn. The commercial excellence leader who excels in rapid commercial and people growth. I have grinned writing that, because I am not entirely sure what half of it means — but somewhere along the way we were told that is the right way to describe ourselves. So that is what we put.

Now take it away. Take away the title, the roles, the LinkedIn summary. Take away husband, father, son, director, provider — all of it.

Who are you?

Harder, isn't it.

* * *

Here is who I was.

I was a man desperate for success. And yes, the car was nice. The house was nice. The watch was nice. But the truth

is none of it was really about the thing. It was about what the thing said to other people.

I am worthy.

If any of that sounds familiar, this book might give you a viewpoint I was forced to live.

Because when the job was taken, and I couldn't get another one — when the title disappeared, and the inbox went quiet, and the roles stopped telling me who I was — the question became unavoidable.

Who am I?

And I had no answer.

* * *

I should tell you something about the man who wrote this book.

He was never going to write a book. In his imagined future he would have worked, got frustrated with company after company, earned a good salary, provided his children with a life he didn't have. Comfortable. Respectable. Quietly impressive. That was the plan.

A series of events had other ideas.

What followed was the loss of the identity I thought I had built — and, eventually, the most important question I have ever asked. Not who I was supposed to be. Who I actually am.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

As I found my way through, I noticed that what I was living had a shape.

A fall. A discovery. An integration.

And I needed to know whether I could trust it. So, I looked at it through three lenses.

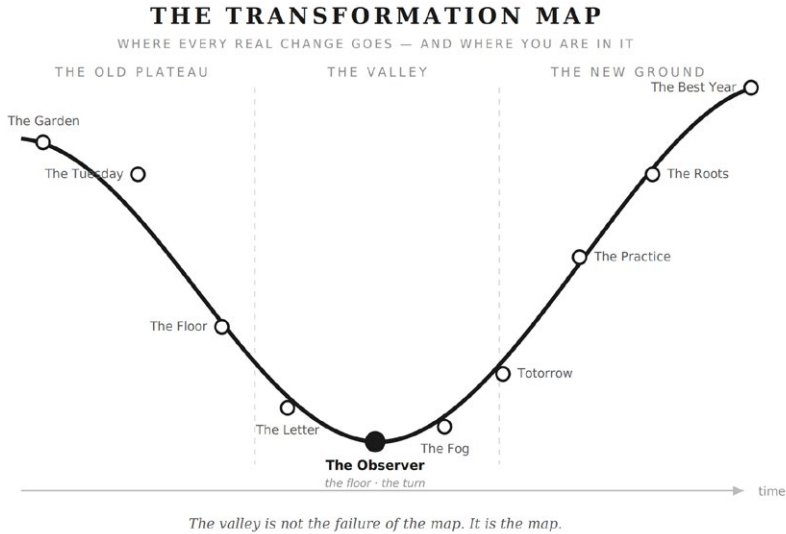
My own experience first — the most important lens. This requires your honesty, not mine. Everything in this book is true. But it is only useful if it prompts you to look at yours.

An ancient map second. I was born into an Indian household, but I want to be precise: what I found in the Vedic tradition is not a religion. It is a psychological map. Drawn thousands of years ago by people who examined the human mind with extraordinary rigour — the reactive part, the intelligent part, the part that builds identity, and the part that watches all of it. My parents knew none of it. I found it through research. And what struck me was not that it was Indian. It was that it was accurate.

Modern science third. The narrative mind the Vedics called *Manas* — neuroscience calls it the Default Mode Network, the brain's inner narrator. The amygdala is the alarm system that this narrator triggers. The intelligent mind they called *Buddhi* — the prefrontal cortex, which can override the alarm if given enough time. The identity-builder, the I-maker — what psychology calls the ego. The witness that watches without being swept away — metacognition. Thousands of years of human observation and contemporary brain science, arriving independently at the same map.

And then further: the same arc appears in Joseph Campbell, in Jung, in a twelfth-century Persian Sufi poem, in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Different traditions, different centuries, different cultures, separated by everything. One map.

The pattern has been repeated across millennia because it describes something true.



* * *

Everything in this book happened. The stories are mine. But they are not about me. They are a proven map — for you to walk your own version of.

It does not require redundancy. For me it was that. But it can be divorce, death, loss, illness — any break that makes you stop and ask: why me? What I realised is that the question is the point. The break is the door.

Untitled, because this story is not one person's. You have heard it called midlife crisis, burnout, identity crisis, depression. Different words for the same thing: the moment the person you thought you were couldn't carry on any longer.

And untitled, because I lost my job title. That is where this

INTRODUCTION

started — not with a grand existential crisis, but with the removal of the word that had told me, and everyone else, who I was. I only understood that afterwards. Maybe you have lost a title too. Maybe that is why you are here.

By Unknown, because — as I said at the start — who are you? I was unknown to myself. Genuinely. For forty years.

* * *

I get it. If you are anything like me, you are already calculating whether this is worth your time. You read books that improve performance or results. Everything else is a luxury.

Here is my honest answer: this does improve performance. Just not in the way you are expecting.

The man on the other side of this journey makes better decisions. Stays calmer under pressure. Stops wasting energy on battles that were never really about what he thought they were about. Leads differently. Loves differently. Shows up differently.

Not because he became someone else. Because he finally became himself.

* * *

I am you, a few steps further along a path I did not choose and could not avoid.

I hope this book about U gives you what I had to find the hard way.

Everything behind the door was already waiting.

PART ONE

The Fall

CHAPTER ONE

The Changing Room

What is he wearing?

He looks like a snob.

He'd drive a Range Rover.

He didn't even hold the door open for someone. What an idiot.

Those headphones are rubbish.

This is the narration in the changing room of my gym.

Ooh, look at him in his fancy car.

Why can't old people drive?

Why does that woman look so miserable?

This is the car park. Five minutes later.

* * *

Pause.

* * *

That was it. A simple pause.

And funnily enough — this single pause changed my life, changed my mind, and changed the trajectory of everything that came after.

Why do I feel sad? Why am I so negative? Why am I being so judgemental?

I don't like this feeling. I don't like these thoughts.

* * *

Have you ever wished that thoughts could just stop?

Especially those ones in the middle of the night that led you somewhere you did not want to go — that spiral into exhaustion, into fear, into the specific dread of nothing in particular and everything at once.

Have you ever had a really bad thought? A genuinely bad one. Like: I hate them. I wish they were gone. Why is everything always like this. I am such a victim in all of this.

Have you ever done something — snapped at someone you love, said the thing you knew you should not say, reacted in a way that surprised even you — and then afterwards, when you had cooled down, sat there and thought: what on earth was I thinking?

Of course you have. We all have.

Here is the part I am not sure anyone ever told me clearly. But you know it. On some level, underneath everything, you already know it.

Not every thought in your head is actually you.

How do I know you know this?

THE CHANGING ROOM

That really bad thought you had. The one you did not act on. There it is. It was a thought — and some part of you chose not to follow it. Some people call that a moral compass. Some call it a conscience. Some call it something they cannot name but have always felt was there, watching.

The fact that you did not act on that thought is the proof that the thought was not the whole of you. Something in you was already watching it. Already choosing. Already free.

That strange exhausting feeling — the weight of your own narration, the commentary that runs from morning to night without being asked to — that feeling you got in the changing room or the car park or the kitchen or wherever your version of this moment happened?

That exhaustion is the beginning. That pause is the door.

It introduced me to one simple truth that changed everything.

I am not my thoughts.

And if I am not my thoughts — then who am I?

That is the question this book is about. Not in an abstract philosophical sense. In the most ordinary, Monday-morning, changing-room, car-park-argument, three-in-the-morning sense.

Who are you, behind the narration that runs without your permission?

* * *

I am writing this as a companion. Not from above. From alongside. One step further along a path you may already be on, turning back to say: I know where you are. I was there. Here is what I found when I stayed.

The pause in the changing room was not the answer.
It was the door.
Everything behind it was already waiting.

*Somewhere in the early months
I asked myself today who the voice in my head belongs to.
I have been listening to it my whole life.
I never thought to ask.
It has opinions about everyone in this changing room.
Strong opinions.
And then I noticed it.
Just noticed.
And it went quiet.
For a moment there was just the room.
No commentary.
Just the room.
I think that moment was the beginning.*

Sample Chapters

These are sample chapters from
UbU — Untitled by Unknown.

If these pages connect with you, the full
book is available from Amazon.

And if these chapters make you think of
someone who might need them, please
feel free to forward this to them.

Arun
ubuobserver.com