

The Alchemist

What happens when you literally follow your dream?

Adapted by Bryon Cahill from the novel by Paulo Coelho • Illustrations by Phil Parks

CHARACTERS

(main characters in **boldface**)

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Santiago, a shepherd boy
seeking his Personal Legend

Santiago's Father

Old Woman, a Gypsy who can
interpret dreams

Old Man, a king

Crystal Merchant

Englishman

Camel Driver

Fatima, a girl at an oasis

The Alchemist, a learned man

Santiago's Heart

Boy 1

Boy 2

God

SCENE 1

Narrator 1: It is dusk. A boy is waking up inside an old, abandoned church. A book is his pillow. His flock of sheep is just outside by a sycamore tree in Andalusia, Spain. This region at the southernmost tip of the country has mountainous areas as well as desert plains.

Narrator 2: Santiago is a simple shepherd boy. He travels the countryside shearing and selling the wool of his sheep.

Santiago (to himself): Look how they rise at the same time as I do. It is amazing how their schedule is now my schedule. Or maybe it is I who has taken theirs?

Narrator 3: Last evening, the boy had a dream. It was the second

time he'd had the dream, and its possible meaning was beginning to weigh on him.

Santiago (to his sheep): Ah, but I suppose it is just a dream, and I shall continue to let it lie.

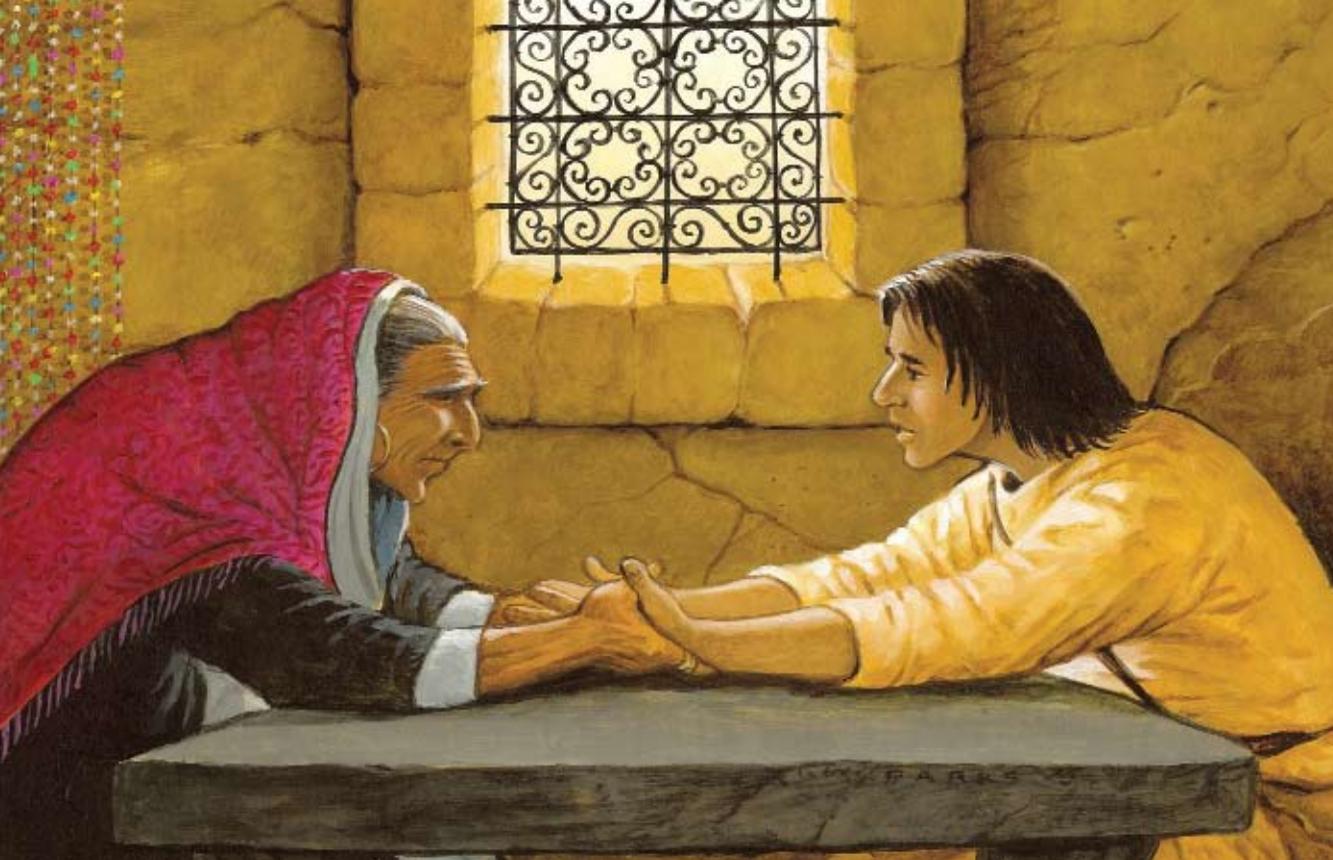
Narr 1: As the boy walks, he recalls the day he left his own village and how he had to convince his father to let him go.

Santiago's Father: People from all over the world have passed through our village, son. They come in search of new things, but when they leave, they are basically the same people they were when they arrived.

Santiago: But I would like to see the castles in the towns where they live.

Santiago's Father: Those people, when they see our land, say





that they would like to live here forever.

Santiago: Well, I'd like to see their land and see how they live.

Santiago's Father: The people who come here have a lot of money to spend, so they can afford to travel. Among us, the only ones who travel are shepherds.

Santiago: Well, then I'll be a shepherd!

Narr 2: His father said no more. Instead, he handed Santiago three ancient Spanish gold coins and gave the boy his blessing.

Santiago: (to his sheep) In his eyes, I saw his desire to travel the world himself.

Narr 3: As the happy memory fades, the boy thinks of how far he has come. He has already seen many castles and met many

women. He owns a jacket, a book that he could trade for another, and a flock of sheep. But, most important, he is able every day to live out his dream.

Narr 1: On the outskirts of the village of Tarifa, the boy is reminded of his recurring dream. He hurries his pace and his flock as he remembers that there is an old Gypsy woman in the village who can interpret dreams.

SCENE 2

Narr 2: The Old Woman leads the boy into a room at the back of her house. It is separated from her living room by a curtain of colored beads. The woman and the boy sit down at a table, and she takes both of his hands in hers while the sheep wait patiently just outside.

Old Woman: Very interesting ...

Santiago: I didn't come here for you to read my palm.

Old Woman: No. You came so that you could learn about your dreams. And dreams are the language of God.

Santiago: I have had the same dream twice. I dreamed I was in a field with my sheep when a child appeared and began to play with the animals. Suddenly, the child took me by both hands and transported me to the Egyptian Pyramids. Then, at the Pyramids, the child said to me, "If you come here, you will find a hidden treasure." And just as she was about to show me the location, I woke up. Both times.

Old Woman: I'm not going to charge you anything now. But I want one-tenth of the treasure, if you find it.

Narr 3: The boy laughs—out of happiness. He was going to save what little money he had because of a dream about a hidden treasure!

Santiago: Well, interpret the dream.

Old Woman: First, swear to me that you will give me what I ask.

Santiago: I swear it.

Old Woman: Very well. It is a dream in the language of the world. You must go to the Pyramids in Egypt. If it was a child who showed you the way in your dream, then the treasure *does* exist.

Santiago: Is that all? I didn't need to waste my time for this!

Old Woman: It is the simple things in life that are the most extraordinary.

Santiago: Well, how am I supposed to get to Egypt?

Old Woman: I only interpret dreams. I don't know how to turn them into reality.

Santiago: And what if I never get to Egypt?

Old Woman: Then I don't get paid. It wouldn't be the first time.

Narr 1: With that, the Old Woman escorts the boy out of her home and back to his sheep. Disappointed, the boy decides to make the most of the remainder of the day in Tarifa. He goes to the market for something to eat. He trades in his book for another, a thicker one that will also make a better pillow than the last, finds a bench in the plaza, and begins to read.

Narr 2: With his small flock of sheep at his feet, the boy looks up from his book to see many people he remembers from his last visit to Tarifa. This is what makes traveling appealing to him: making new friends in new places.

Narr 3: A few hours pass before an Old Man comes and sits next to the boy on the bench. He looks at the boy's book and sighs.

Old Man: Hmm... this is an important book, but it's really irritating. It's a book that says the same thing almost all the other books in the world say. It describes people's **inability** to choose their own Personal Legends. And it ends up saying that everyone believes the world's greatest lie.

Santiago: What's the world's greatest lie?

Old Man: It is this: that at a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what's happening to us and our lives become controlled by fate.

Santiago: Where are you from?

Old Man: Salem.

Santiago: I have never been to Salem. What is it like?

Old Man: It's like what it has always been.

Santiago: And what do you do in Salem?

Old Man: What do I do? Well, I'm the king of Salem!

Santiago: And why would a king be talking with a shepherd?

Old Man: For several reasons. But let's just say that the most important thing is that you have

succeeded in discovering your Personal Legend.

Santiago: What do you mean?

Old Man: Everyone, when they are young, knows what their Personal Legend is. At that point in their lives, everything is clear and everything is possible. But as time passes, a mysterious force begins to convince them that it will be impossible for them to realize their Personal Legend.

Narr 1: None of what the Old Man was saying made any sense to the boy.

Santiago: All I want to do is travel.

Old Man: Yes, or even search for treasure perhaps? All things are one. The Soul of the World is nourished by people's happiness. And when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.

Santiago: Why are you telling me all this?

Old Man: Because you are trying to realize your Personal Legend, and you are at the point where you're about to give it all up.

Narr 2: The boy reminds the Old Man that he had spoken something about treasure.

Old Man: If you want to learn more about your treasure, you will have to give me one-tenth of your flock.

Santiago: Very well. I have already promised one-tenth of my treasure to an old Gypsy woman.

* vocab

INABILITY: lack of power or resources to do something

You may have one-tenth of my flock. Now, where is the treasure?

Old Man: It's in Egypt, near the Pyramids.

Narr 3: The boy once again remembers his dream.

Old Man: God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You must follow the **omens**.

Narr 1: Just then, a butterfly appears and flutters between the boy and the Old Man.

Santiago: My grandfather once told me that butterflies are good omens.

Old Man: That's right. Just as your grandfather taught you. Here, take these.

Narr 2: The Old Man holds out two stones for the boy. One white and one black.

Old Man: They are called Urim and Thummim. The black signifies "yes" and the white "no." When you are unable to read omens, they will help you to do so. But if you can, try to make your own decisions.

Narr 3: The Old Man takes his payment of sheep and walks away.

Narr 1: That night, the Old Man sits on a wall and watches a ship leave Tarifa, heading for Africa. Santiago is on the ship.

Narr 2: Santiago has sold his remaining sheep and has left in search of his treasure at the great Pyramids of Egypt.

SCENE 3

Narr 3: Santiago is in the African port of Tangier by morning. It is

not long before the boy is robbed of the few coins he has.

Narr 1: Feeling awful, the boy walks around town wondering how he will ever get to his treasure now that he has no money.

Narr 2: He comes to a Crystal Merchant's shop. In the window are rows of dirty glasses. Santiago is inspired by an idea and enters.

Santiago: I can clean up those glasses in the window if you want. The way they look now, nobody is going to want to buy them. In exchange, you could give me something to eat.

Narr 3: The Crystal Merchant agrees, and after half an hour of work, Santiago is given lunch.

Crystal Merchant: You know, you didn't have to do any cleaning. My religion requires me to feed a hungry person.

Santiago: Well then, why did you let me do it?

Crystal Merchant: Because the crystal was dirty. And both you and I needed to cleanse our minds of negative thoughts.

Narr 1: The boy continues to eat his lunch and is grateful for it.

Crystal Merchant: I'd like you to work in my shop. Two customers came in today while you were working, and that's a good omen.

Santiago: I can work for the rest of today. I'll work all night, until dawn, and I'll clean every piece of crystal in your shop. In return, I need money to get to Egypt tomorrow.

Crystal Merchant: (*laughing*) Ha! Even if you cleaned my crystal

for an entire year ... even if you earned a good **commission** selling every piece, you would still have to borrow more money to get to Egypt. There are thousands of kilometers of desert between here and there.

Narr 2: A moment of silence passes that is so profound that it seems the city is asleep. No hope, no adventure, no old kings or Personal Legends, no treasure, and no Pyramids. It is as if the world has fallen silent because the boy's soul has.

Crystal Merchant: I can give you the money you need to get back to your own country, son.

Narr 3: But that is not what the boy wants. He does not want to go back to his homeland, and he has no desire to accept charity. He wants to move forward and seek out his treasure, as well as his own Personal Legend.

Santiago: I'll work for you. For as long as it takes.

Narr 1: Santiago works in the Crystal Merchant's shop for about a year. In that time, he makes many helpful suggestions and business picks up. In fact, it has never been so good.

Narr 2: He saves up the money he earns, and on the day he is ready to leave, the merchant gives him his blessing.

SCENE 4

Narr 3: Santiago must cross the great Sahara desert to reach the Pyramids. He meets an Englishman who is headed into the desert with a **caravan**. The boy seizes the opportunity, pays for a



camel of his own, and joins the great troupe of travelers.

Narr 1: When the Englishman sees Santiago pull out his two precious stones, he recognizes them immediately.

Englishman: You have Urim and Thummim. I didn't know they had them in this part of the world.

Santiago: They were given to me by a king. They are not for sale.

Englishman: Perhaps this is an omen. I myself am traveling to find a great **alchemist**. It is said that he is more than 200 years old and that he discovered the Philosopher's Stone, the elixir of life, and how to turn metal into gold.

Santiago: Who told you about omens?

Englishman: Everything in life is an omen. There is a universal language, but it is already forgotten. I am in search of that universal language, among other things. I believe that this alchemist speaks this universal language.

Santiago: I'm looking for a treasure.

Englishman: In a way, so am I.

Santiago: I don't even know what alchemy is.

Narr 2: The Englishman smiles at the boy kindly and hands him a book.

Englishman: Read this and you will understand.

Narr 3: The book is about alchemy. Santiago reads the beginning out loud.

Santiago: (*reading*) All things are the **manifestation** of one

thing only. The great alchemists believe that if a metal were to be heated for many years, it would free itself of all its individual

* vocab

OMENS: objects or occurrences that are believed to foretell a good or evil event

COMMISSION: a percentage of the money received for goods that is paid to the employee who sold to them

CARAVAN: a group of travelers journeying together for safety through deserts or hostile territory

ALCHEMIST: in medieval times, a scientist-philosopher who practiced alchemy—a mysterious process of attempting to transform common materials into precious ones

MANIFESTATION: a display or a materialization of an invisible quality in a form that can be perceived by the senses



properties, and what would be left would be the Soul of the World.

Narr 1: The boy becomes fascinated by the ideas in the book. He sets off on a journey with his new friend, the Englishman, to seek the legendary Alchemist.

Narr 2: They travel for many weeks and are often met by other caravans passing in the opposite direction. They share news of weather and war. There are many tribes of different peoples in the desert, and there is much fighting.

Narr 3: One day, Santiago asks the leader of the caravan (known as the Camel Driver) whether he is worried about getting caught in the middle of a war.

Camel Driver: I'm alive. 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. If you can concentrate only 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.

Narr 1: The boy nods.

Camel Driver: Life will be a party for you, a grand festival, because life is the moment we're living right now.

Narr 2: The caravan stops to rest as the sun starts to go down. The boy looks ahead. Far off in the distance he can see something shimmering.

Camel Driver: It is the **oasis** we have been seeking. It will provide

for us food, water, shelter, and most important, safety from the tribal wars.

Santiago: Then why don't we go there right now?

Camel Driver: Because right now we have to sleep.

Narr 3: In the morning, the caravan once again heads out. In a few hours, the group arrives at the oasis. It is a war-free zone, and there are hundreds and hundreds of people there, all resting from their long travels before they pick up and leave again.

Narr 1: During their stay at the oasis, the boy goes to the well to fetch some water for himself and the Englishman. At the well, he meets a girl whom he is immediately enchanted by.

Santiago: What's your name?

Fatima: Fatima.

Narr 2: The boy realizes that he has loved her forever, since before he even knew she existed. He knows that his love for her will enable him to discover every treasure in the world.

Santiago: I want to tell you just one thing. I want you to be my wife. I love you.

Narr 3: The girl drops her bucket of water in surprise.

Fatima: I have been waiting for you here at this oasis for a long time. Ever since I was a child, I dreamed the desert would bring me a wonderful present. Now, my present has arrived, and it's you.

Santiago: I have crossed the desert in search of a treasure that is somewhere near the Pyramids. There is a war there that is very dangerous and seems to me to be a curse. But now it's a blessing because it brought me to you.

Fatima: The war is going to end someday.

Santiago: I will visit you here every day.

Narr 1: The boy and the girl see much of each other for weeks. They meet at the well daily and talk of the war and of life and of their passions. Santiago tells Fatima of his dream, and she urges him to continue seeking his treasure.

Santiago: I had a dream, and I met with a king. I sold crystal and crossed the desert. And because the tribes declared war, I went to the well, seeking the Alchemist. And that is where I found you. So, I love you because the entire universe **conspired** to help me find you.

Fatima: That's why I want you to continue toward your goal. The dunes are changed by the wind, but the desert never changes. That's the way it will be with our love for each other. If I really am part of your dream, you'll come back to me one day.

Narr 2: Later that night, when the sun sets and the first stars make their appearance, the boy starts to walk south out of the oasis.

Narr 3: He walks until he finds himself at a single white tent. He sits down in front of the tent and waits. Soon, a man comes riding to him on a horse. He is the Alchemist.

Santiago: I am here.

The Alchemist: The wind told me you would be coming. That you would need help crossing the desert.

Santiago: It's not I that the wind spoke about. It's the other foreigner. The Englishman. He's the one looking for you.

The Alchemist: He has other things to do first.

Santiago: So are you going to instruct me?

The Alchemist: No, you already know all you need to know. I am only going to point you in the direction of your treasure.

Santiago: But there's a tribal war.

The Alchemist: I know what's happening in the desert.

Santiago: I have already found my treasure. I have a camel and I have my money from the crystal shop. In my own country I would be a rich man. I also

have Fatima. She is a treasure greater than anything else I have won.

The Alchemist: But you did not find her at the Pyramids.

Santiago: (*thinking of his dream*) No.

The Alchemist: Rest well tonight. Tomorrow, sell your camel and buy a horse. Return here, and I will journey with you to the Pyramids.

SCENE 5

Narr 1: The next day, the boy and his guide are riding on horseback through the desert. The Alchemist knows the desert well, and there is never any danger of being in the middle of the war.

Narr 2: Weeks go by, and the traveling companions have talked very little.

The Alchemist: You are almost at the end of your journey. I congratulate you for having pursued your Personal Legend.

Santiago: And you have told me nothing along the way. I thought you were going to teach me some of the things you know. A while ago, I rode through the desert with a man who had books on alchemy. But I wasn't able to learn much from them.

The Alchemist: There is only one way to learn. It's through action.

* vocab

OASIS: a small fertile or green area in a desert region that serves as a refuge for travelers

CONSPIRED: worked together toward the same result or goal

Everything you need to know you have learned from your journey. You need to learn only one thing more.

Narr 3: The boy wants to know what that one thing is, but the Alchemist is silently looking ahead at the horizon.

Santiago: Very well then. Why are you called the Alchemist?

The Alchemist: Because that's what I am.

Santiago: And you were able to make gold when others were unable to do so?

The Alchemist: Those others you speak of are looking only for gold. That is why they cannot find it. They are seeking the treasure of their Personal Legend, without wanting actually to *live* their Personal Legend.

Santiago: What is it that I still need to know?

The Alchemist: You are in the desert. So immerse yourself in it. The desert will give you an understanding of the world. In fact, anything on the face of the earth will do that. You don't have to understand the desert, all you have to do is **contemplate** a simple grain of sand, and you will see in it all the **marvels** of creation.

Santiago: How do I immerse myself in the desert?

The Alchemist: Listen to your heart. It knows all things because it came from the Soul of the World, and it will one day return there.

Santiago: But my heart is agitated. It has its dreams, it gets emotional, and it has become passionate over a woman of the

desert. It asks things of me, and it keeps me from sleeping when I'm thinking about her.

The Alchemist: Well, that's good. Your heart is alive. Keep listening to what it has to say. Where your treasure is, there will also be your heart.

Narr 1: That evening, the boy and his guide part ways. The Alchemist once again instructs Santiago to listen to his heart.

Narr 2: As he rides alone now, up one final sand dune, the boy's heart speaks to him.

Santiago's Heart: Be aware of the place where you are brought to tears. That's where I am, and that's where your treasure is.

Narr 3: When the boy reaches the top of the dune, his heart leaps. There, illuminated by the light of the moon and the brightness of the desert, stand the **solemn** and **majestic** Pyramids of Egypt.

Narr 1: The boy falls to his knees and weeps. He thanks God for making him believe in his Personal Legend and for leading him to meet a king, a merchant, an Englishman, and an alchemist. And above all for his having met a woman of the desert who has told him that love would never keep a man from his Personal Legend.

Narr 2: The boy looks down and sees a scarab beetle scuttle just in front of his feet. Knowing that scarab beetles are a symbol of God, Santiago cheers.

Santiago: Another omen!

Narr 3: With tears pouring out of him, Santiago begins to dig with

his hands. He digs and digs all night until at last, when his hands are bruised and his body is exhausted, two rough-looking boys stand behind him, looking down on him in his self-made hole.

Boy 1: What are you doing here? What are you hiding there?

Santiago: I'm not hiding anything. I am digging for treasure! I was told in a recurrent dream to cross the desert and come to the Pyramids, where I would find it!

Narr 1: The boys notice a piece of gold shining in Santiago's pocket.

Boy 2: Look! He's probably got more gold down there with him in that hole!

Narr 2: The boys drag Santiago out of his hole and start beating him. When they find that he does not have any more gold than the one piece, they turn to leave him.

Santiago: I'm going to die here. My recurring dream was a lie.

Narr 3: Santiago is bloodied and confused when the first boy turns back to him.

Boy 1: You're not going to die. You'll live, and you'll learn that a man shouldn't be so stupid. Two years ago, right here on this spot, I had a recurrent dream too. I dreamed I should travel to the fields of Spain and look for a

* **vocab**

CONTEMPLATE: to consider thoroughly and thoughtfully

MARVELS: things that cause wonder, admiration, or astonishment

SOLEMN: awe-inspiring

MAJESTIC: having supreme greatness



ruined church where shepherds and their sheep slept. In my dream, there was a sycamore tree growing there. And in my dream I was told that if I dug to the roots of the sycamore, I would find a hidden treasure. But I'm not so stupid as to cross an entire desert just because of a recurrent dream.

Narr 1: The boys laugh at him and leave. Santiago begins to laugh to himself, as well. His heart seems to be bursting with joy. Because now he knows where his treasure is.

SCENE 6

Narr 2: Santiago reaches the small, abandoned church just as night is falling. It had been a long journey, but he is happy to be back. Except this time, instead

of his flock of sheep, he has a shovel.

Narr 3: As he digs under the sycamore tree, the boy talks to God.

Santiago: You old sorcerer. You knew the whole story the whole time. Couldn't you have saved me the trip?

God: No. If I had told you, you wouldn't have seen the Pyramids. Aren't they beautiful?

Narr 1: The boy smiles and continues digging. Half an hour later, his shovel hits something solid. An hour later, he is unearthing a chest full of rare and priceless Spanish gold coins, precious stones, jewels, and various other riches.

Narr 2: Next, the boy will go to Tarifa and give the Gypsy woman the tenth of the treasure that he had promised her long ago.

Narr 3: The wind begins to blow. It doesn't bring with it the smell of the desert or the threat of invasion. Instead, it brings the scent of perfume the boy knows well and the touch of a kiss that comes from far away. Slowly, it rests on his lips.

Santiago: I'm coming, Fatima. ■

Write About It

Just as Santiago discovers his Personal Legend, so can you. Think about where you might be headed in your life, and write about it. Include the people who can help guide you. Record reflections of important life lessons. Send your Personal Legend to word@weeklyreader.com.

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