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SERIES

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Hypnotic Storytellers*



Hypnosis Master – Robin Manuell

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Welcome

Welcome To The Hypnosis Masters Series

In this series, you will be getting interviews and special seminars from some of the world's best Masters of Hypnosis. Each Master Hypnotist is a specialist in one particular field and will be revealing his or her hypnosis secrets for you.

Meet This Month's Master: Robin Manuell



Robin Manuell has been a storyteller since his teenage years. He started his career by running a small theatre company in Brighton, UK.

During his work with his actors he discovered that he was accidentally using profound hypnotic techniques which sometimes accessed deeply repressed issues. In order to ensure that he was working ethically with these experiences he trained in NLP and hypnotherapy. He quickly rose to prominence in these fields and was even invited by one of the co-founders of NLP, John Grinder, to work under his tutelage.

Robin's work is characterised by the subtlety of the Ericksonian approach to hypnotherapy.

His background in theatre and storytelling meant he naturally took to hypnotic storytelling as an approach to hypnotherapy. He spent many years fine tuning this approach with clients and now focuses on coaching other hypnotists in the art of telling natural, powerful and hypnotic stories.

Robin is now one of the world's leading authorities in hypnotic storytelling. He has developed many tools for showing others how to get to similar levels of storytelling excellence.

Robin's website is: www.HypnoticStorytelling.com

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Introduction

Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. My name is Igor Ledochowski and what you're about to hear is a very special interview, which Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell did for us at the Private Hypnosis Club as part of our Interviews with Hypnosis Masters Series.

As you will hear, Robin Manuell, is a Master of hypnotic storytelling. He has created an amazing system to turn hypnotists into Masters of hypnotic storytelling using hypnotic stories to install the abilities at the unconscious level. Your conscious mind will love his entertaining stories, whilst your unconscious mind soaks up these unique hypnotic abilities.

Listen on at the end of the Interview to discover how to get your hands on over four hours of Seminars revealing this special hypnotic storytelling program.

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Interview – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. I'm here with Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell from HypnoticStorytelling.com. Robin is a particularly exciting hypnotist that I've had the pleasure of working with before. He's probably one of the most creative people I know and one of the people I've learned about storytelling from than any other hypnotist I've ever met.

This guy is a true genius of hypnotic storytelling. I'm really looking forward to this interview because there are some very interesting stories and tales all kinds of other things that are going to come out.

First, let me welcome you, Robin. How are you doing?

Robin: I'm great. Thank you, Igor. Thank you very much for inviting me and for such a generous introduction.

Igor: I'm very excited. As I say I've had the pleasure of working with you before and I'm excited. We're going to have some very good times here.

So given that this is an Interview with Hypnosis Masters, this is the whole purpose of this interview series. I'd like to start by just getting a little bit of your background. I know you have an unusual background in terms of hypnosis, in the sense that you actually started as a storyteller in the arts mall and then moved into hypnosis.

◆ **Could you give us a little bit of background into that side of you so that we can get the feel of how you got into hypnosis later on?**

Robin: Thank you, yes. We were talking about this the other day and it really got me thinking. I suppose the moment where for me I felt like I discovered what the secret was the essence of real storytelling and why it was really the most powerful thing that you could learn to do – picture if you will, you're standing in a park.

It's an English summer evening and there's a slight breeze blowing through the trees. You're standing in a park and you're looking out over this kind of natural little amphitheatre surrounded by a fence and at the bottom of the park, just plunked in the middle there, we have what in England we call the follies.

This building was built in the Regency Period in England by this called the Royal Spar. It used to be a bathhouse and now all that's left are these five huge Roman pillars and a kind of façade. If you looked at it in passing, you might very well think, what a great place that would be to stage a theatre, an open-air

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theatre show. Indeed, that's what's going on because this is the first night of a show that we're doing called *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare.

There's a little bit of tension in the air right now. Everyone has done everything they can to prepare. The lights and the sound are being set up. If you look at the back of the façade, you can see a group of actors warming up and I'm standing there by the gate looking at all of this activity and looking up at the sky. I've got two questions going on in my mind. The first is, is it going to rain? The second is, is anyone going to come and see the show?

Maybe I should just go back a bit because a few months before, I was working in this office and I don't know if any of our listeners have ever had to do that kind of muck job. You know, where you're just putting in the hours. I'm in my early '20s and I'm working part-time in this office. I'm photocopying, doing people's wage slips and making sure the emergency support vehicles are working properly.

This is a telecommunications company and they sell these switches, but these machines are so complicated that they don't work. So, of course, you have to support them. You have to keep maintaining them and when they break down, you have to send people out to fix them.

I'm doing this job, but I've got quite a nice little arrangement because the woman I working with is called Sharon and she's a singer. What she does with her spare time during the day – I say spare time; obviously, this is all company time – but she's on the phone all the time ringing up record companies and producers. I swear she has Elton John's producer on the phone one day and she's sending off little cassettes in Jiffy bags.

I'm there and I'm running this theatre company. I'm working in this place part-time and she's looking the other way when I photocopy the posters and work out the budgets. It was interesting, actually, at that point in time because I'd always known I wanted to start a theatre company. I came down to Brighton to study at Sussex University to do a psychology degree, but all my life I'd been involved in theatre and I'd been fascinated with stories.

I think if I go back, I realize that I think it was probably when I was about four years old, my mom taught me to read and I became a real obsessive reader. I read everything that you could possibly throw at me and I graduated very quickly to reading my mom and dad's books. My mom was working as a librarian at the time, so she was just feeding me the books.

I probably read more than was probably good for me at the time. Just to give you an example of the kind of thing, I remember once when I was eight years old being asked to go and stand in front of the class by my teacher, Mrs. Sewell. It was reading time so everyone was kind of reading their books and

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she was just calling people up one by one to read in front of the class just to test how they were doing.

I got up to read and I got up to the front and was kind of really quiet and embarrassed and I started reading. The thing was I was reading a book called *The Odessa File*, by Frederick Forsyth. I don't know if you've come across that book.

Igor: Great reading for children, right.

Robin: Yeah. I'm reading a page where, basically, the hero of the book, a killer, is waking up in the morning and going down on his girlfriend.

Igor: How old are you at this point?

Robin: Eight years old. I'm reading this book in front of the class and becoming more and more embarrassed and shy, just like hiding away. At the end of it, Mrs. Sewell turned to me and she just said Robin, I don't think you need to read in front of the class anymore.

It was funny, but I learned so much about the world from stories. It seemed to me that stories were just as important as history. I read about Winston Churchill and I knew he was a real person, but to be honest Robin Hood and Adesis were bigger heroes and bigger influence on my life than some people who I knew and who inspired me in real life.

I always had this fascination with stories and I think I kind of hid in this ocean of stories. Growing up it meant that I had lots of these Scooby Doo moments. I call them Scooby Doo moments because it's like when you're watching a film and the two characters go, I know, let's split up and go in opposite directions. You just go, no! Don't do that! Haven't you watched any hero movies? That's always when people start getting killed!

It seemed to me that I'd already learned so much about relationships and just how the world worked from reading stories. The other strand in my life was that my mom was an actor and my dad is a musician. They both have a love of learning, which they taught me very early on. Right from the age of three or four, I was on the stage performing. I think I was in my first musical when I was seven and I started to play the trumpet at seven.

So I grew up just always acting, being in shows, getting involved in directing them. My brothers and I would put on shows for my parents. I guess a lot of people do that. It's something that maybe isn't as common now that TV is so available, but that was an important experience in early life.

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I knew early on that I was going to start a theatre company and that my brother would get involved in that theatre company too. That was his story. That was what he was going to do. He was going to come along and join in and sure enough he did.

I came down to Brighton to do psychology. While I was doing psychology, I read three books that really influenced me. The first was *Improv* by Keith Johnstone. That's one you've got a lot of time for, it's a classic in the history of theatre and psychology, I think personally.

Igor: It's the work of a genius. As far as I'm concerned, I learned more about the unconscious in that book than from most texts on hypnosis and psychology.

Robin: Yeah, you've got to get it if you're listening to this. If you haven't read it, that's certainly one to go for. The other thing I studied in great detail was psychodrama, which was created by Joseph Moreno, who's this guy who originally started working with prostitutes in Vienna. He, basically, used theatre techniques, but he used them to help them tell their story and to deal with some of the situations of violence and abuse that they were going through.

In Greek drama, Aristotle wrote that when you watch a tragedy, the audience goes through a catharsis. That's how the theatre works. We share in this experience of the story and through that we're changed. Joseph Moreno was interested in how the actor changed, how the performer changed and how that catharsis could take place in them as well.

The third book that I read that inspired me was a book called, *Way of the Actor* by Brian Bates. Now Brian Bates is a psychologist. He's probably the foremost expert on European Shamanism and its history. He wrote a book called, *Way of the Actor*. He worked at RADA for a number of years. He proposed that the *Way of the Actor* was the way of the modern Shaman and that a lot of the techniques and the activities actors used in theatre were techniques equivalent to dramas that would have been used by the Shaman.

I'd kind of been messing around with this stuff in workshops and getting some amazing results. The real core in this theatre company was built around creating a safe space where people could learn from each others mistakes and have a good time doing that. We were doing all this kind of body work and meditations and guided visualizations and encounter procedures just as part of our training.

I would start to notice things like I remember one day this guy – I can only describe it like this. He looked like he was standing a foot too far to the right. We were just kind of standing in a circle and doing some exercises. I went over to him and I grabbed hold of his shoulders and I moved him a foot to the right and then back to the left. His whole body relaxed and some tension that he had

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in his face just suddenly disappeared and relaxed and you could see his whole body adopt a kind of a new shape. It was the most amazing thing to see. He became a different person after that.

These things were happening all the time. I remember something that was a bit more kind of obvious in a way. We were playing Romeo and Juliet and the guy playing Romeo was away. He was at a class and couldn't skip for the rehearsal. There was this geeky teenager guy there. A very shy guy who I thought was probably a good actor. I just had an intuition and I said hey, why don't you just read in this Romeo part for us today?

We were doing the scene where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time. I said to this guy – I got them dancing, because I've always found that if you get a man and a woman touching, they're comfortable to begin with and it makes it much easier for them to talk to each other. So I had them dancing while I was talking to them.

I put my hand on this guy's shoulder and I said, okay, listen, Romeo. You're a teenager. Okay? You are just shot through with adrenaline and hormones and you keep falling in love with every girl you look at. You've done it again. Juliet. You've seen her across the room and your whole body is just raging with that desire to get to know her and to touch her and communicate with her. Here's the thing.

She feels exactly the same way. Listen, if you look around at all these guys here, all of these braggarts carrying swords, she's got a choice between one of them and a sensitive guy like you who's got feelings and is not afraid to express them. Who's she going to choose?

We played through this scene a few times and this guy kind of started off a bit awkwardly, but it was amazing how quickly he started to get into it when Juliet started to respond. I said to Juliet, flit it up a bit. Give him a bit to respond back to. Very soon this guy just went off and I swear by the end of the rehearsal period, we had to tie him down at parties because he was smoking everyone. He discovered his own power suddenly through getting to play out that power on stage in a different role.

Does that make sense?

Igor: It makes perfect sense. The charming thing I always find about your work – and this is a great example of it again – is you, like myself, like to use the pattern to teach them. This is a great example of the power of stories told in a fantastic set of stories is the way that people would change. The way it affects people without having to think about it and that's the key thing, isn't it?

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This is something that is very hypnotic and we'll come on to how you do your hypnosis or how you got into hypnosis in a moment, but I really love about storytelling. In particular, the way that you do storytelling, is it gets the change without letting the conscious mind interfere with it. It becomes more magical or more transformative because it reaches much deeper into someone and something more, for want of a better word, genuine gets to come out that way.

Robin: I think that's right. That's fundamental. For me, this is all coming down to is being creative and authentic, you get to tell your own story. I told this story for myself that I was going to start to run a theatre company and it had come true. My brother had come down to join in with that and created this event. The first time we did it, this show, we did an opener show for the Brighton Festival and it pissed down every day.

The weird thing was people came to see it anyway. I don't know whether it's a British thing, but they brought umbrellas. It was like they were determined. No, if these people are willing to perform in the rain, we will watch them! It's the great British spirit! Remember the war!

Igor: Yeah, that's written.

Robin: The papers loved it. They had pictures of us performing in front of a sea of umbrellas. It became a great story in itself. This was interesting because when we added up all the pennies and we thought about what we'd done, we thought, well, what if we did it again and it doesn't rain? How good would that be? We thought well, we'll kind of play along with the paper a little bit. We'll play up to it a bit.

- ✓ The pre-press was all, were you there on that night when it rained last time and everyone got totally soaked?
- ✓ Is it going to rain this time?
- ✓ Will you be there?
- ✓ Will you bring your umbrella?
- ✓ Will you bring a picnic?
- ✓ Will you need your suntan lotion?

When we rehearsed, we used to rehearse this show in the middle of a park. People would be passing all the time and we were kind of just there in that place having a good time. We'd chat to people as they were passing by and I think it made people curious to see what was happening.

As soon as we had this little thing with the umbrella show – now this is powerful because at this point, the audience becomes part of the story. It's no longer just about the particular show that we're putting on. It's about the fact that you went the other night and you couldn't get in because it was so crowded. Or, do you remember that night when a fox walked across the stage and stole something

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from somebody's picnic basket in front of 500 people? If you see that, if that happens when you're in the audience, you're going to tell that story and it's going to become part of the mythology and the history of that little community that you're creating around you.

I remember one year there was a heckler who was really drunk and the audience literally became part of the story by sitting on the guy. They came and arrested him. I swear to God, it's the first time in Brighton that a policeman arriving on the scene received a standing ovation.

Igor: Funny.

Robin: Then when it was over, everyone just turned back to the stage, the musicians, who had all jumped on top of the guy as well, went back to their place and started up the music and the show carried on.

I was sitting in the office working with Sharon and running this theatre company and I remember one day Barbara came into the office. She would always come in and pretend she was coming to get stationery, but I knew she was coming to flirt with me. Come on. She'd come in and she was standing there and she looked out a window and she just looked at the Sun and said, God, I wish I was out there. I don't want to be in here.

I looked at her and something clicked inside me. I just thought, you know what neither do I and I don't have to be. I don't have to do this anymore. I turned around and picked up my coat, my jacket and I walked out of that building and that was the last time I ever worked for anyone. I've been self-employed ever since.

I walked out of that office and walked into the sunshine and into the park and that was why a few months later, I was standing in that balmy summer evening listening to the wind in the trees, wondering if it was going to rain and wondering if anyone was going to turn up.

As I sat there and waited, slowly the first kind of trickling of people began to appear and I could see the actors backstage kind of pretending to hide, but peeking out every now and then just to see how many people were coming. The night was just kind of really slowly beginning to draw in, getting to that lovely twilight. We're by the sea here, so quite often we get lovely orange and purple and pink sunsets. The sun was just setting behind this façade.

People were turning up and before you knew it, I was suddenly standing there in a sea of about 1,000 people. My pockets were stuffed with 10 pound notes and 20 pound notes because the cash till I'd bought was just too small to contain the amount of money from the amount of people coming through the doors, I just thought, this is fantastic.

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Again, I suddenly realized that the essence, the real magic of storytelling was this buzz. It was this community that had grown up around our telling stories. Somehow the story came to life, just at that moment where the audience was there. It's not the words, not the structure, not the props and not costumes, but that buzz that you create inside that you're able to communicate to other people.

I think that's where storytelling is at its most powerful and most compelling. It's why you only have to check the stories of Jesus Christ, Mohammad or the Buddha to understand how powerful a story can be in terms of what it can change.

Igor: One of the reasons I love working with you and the work that you do in particular is because you put a lot of soul back into these processes. A lot of people get carried away thinking I need the next technique, another way that fits within the structure. You've put this little clever thing and it becomes like the ultimate persuasion pattern, but what you do is essentially you have all those things, but you're much more interested in what's behind that.

The vibe that's created and I think you said it in the middle of story and at the end again, which is the interactive nature of it. How you pull people in and make them part of that experience.

Just to point out to the people listening to this little interview right now, how much more do you get a sense that you really know Robin now after, what, just 20 minutes of him just telling a couple of stories? How many people do you meet and 20 minutes later, you feel that you really know this well? This is the power of stories.

Not just telling a story because you're going to win, manipulate or get whatever the outcome of whatever it is, but because it grows something between the two of you. It's the storytelling equivalent of hypnosis as something you become rather than something you do to someone it's a vibe that people respond to. This is one of the reasons I love working with you, Robin, because you really get that and you really create a powerful vibe with people.

Robin: Thank you and I think certainly, when I'm working with people that's what I want to see coming back from them. It's that kind of authentic power when you can tell they're really in the moment, in flow and being the best they can be.

Igor: That's one of the reasons your hypnotic storytelling program or coaching program for hypnotists is actually such a fun program to do. We'll talk more about that later. For now, what I want to get into a little bit is that's your foundation, your starting point. We can tell you're a great storyteller and you got obviously the credentials for it.

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- ◆ How did you get from that into hypnosis? How did you become a hypnotist?

Robin: I guess the truth is, Igor, I was something of an accidental hypnotist. Having kind of gotten to this position when I was quite young – I guess I was what, 25 in 1992. I did the Tempest and we had 40 people. We had two companies of people doing shows all over the place. I guess I had quite a lot of power and quite a lot of responsibility.

A couple things that happened that I didn't have the strength or the maturity to deal with, for example, a woman during the course of an exercise we were doing uncovered memories of abuse. Unfortunately, I was in a relationship with this woman at the time, as well as being the director of the play that she was acting in. I just didn't know how to deal with that.

I realized that I was kind of messing with things that I really needed some guidance with. At the same time, I kind of hit a bit of a wall with the theatre company because I'd been doing this for years and I kind of had a lot of experience, but I had to trust people and I had to motivate people for reasons other than cash.

I'll tell you, I often feel like the reason that Theatre Company worked was because I was quite good at teasing out the story of the people in it. Where they'd been, where they were now, where it was they wanted to go – and making whatever experience in learning that had as part of our enterprise a step in that direction that they wanted to take.

Sometimes it went wrong and I got the can. I remember one day when this friend of mine, an actor 10 years older than me, an experienced woman who was generously offering her time to this show turned up and the stage being set in the worst possible place that you could imagine, in a patch of grass on a traffic island in the middle of an estate. Nobody ever left their houses. There was a cycle track across the front of it and nowhere to plug in the lights. I turned up and everything was supposed to have been done.

My girlfriend was having a psychotic episode. Her parents were down in town looking and try to find her and this actor stood in front of me and she just launched into the most blistering attack on how this was all my fault and my responsibility. I understood that she was upset and I could understand why. I just realized that she was right and that to be powerful I had to understand something that I didn't yet. So I went on a journey to find some teachers.

Igor:

- ✓ Who were the teachers you found?
- ✓ Who were your inspirations?
- ✓ Who were your mentors?

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I know you've seen some pretty decent and good hypnotists and worked with them.

◆ Can you share some of that part of your journey with us?

Robin: Yes, I started by doing the whole workshop circuit and joining a few cults, encounter group type experiences. I figured if you were looking for teachers, you might as well find as many as you could.

Then in 1996, somebody told me about your neurolinguistic programming. So I eventually signed up for a course and went to see Dr. Richard Bandler. This guy stood up and started telling stories and I immediately just fell in love with this idea because having my background in psychology and computer models, the model of the brain that NLP proposed and the way that they used it I found very satisfying. It made sense to me.

At the same time, I'd heard that these guys had learned how to do magic. That was what I was doing in my day-to-day life and I wanted to find out how. So I did all my NLP training and certification with Bandler, McKenna and Breen and I dived into read and to study as much as I could about the field.

I kept on going to workshops and trainings and I kind of discovered that I'd been an accidental hypnotist because in the theatre work, I was using guided visualizations all the time. Now I was just able to incorporate what I'd learned formally through hypnosis training and apply it, just much more skillfully than I was able to before.

Igor: I think this is the interesting part for me. We've talked before, of course and shared stories and you've been sharing some interesting stories here as well. This is something people really should understand. Hypnosis is prevalent in everyday society. People are doing it all the time without really realizing it. You were doing it in a profound way, which is why you started learning it overtly just to kind of catch up with what you were doing already anyway.

So it's kind of easier and this is something that I really like and I really want people to get. It's easier to do hypnosis than not, so you might as well get good at it and forget about can I put this person into a trance. It's more a question of, all right, once you get them in a trance, what the hell do I do with it to make worthwhile.

Robin: Absolutely. I think intention is everything. It was interesting because as I was going through this process of learning hypnosis, I had a friend who was utterly, utterly against it and would challenge it in every single way. I kind of had within

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me this real determination to do right. When people start learning these skills and when they have a desire for power that can be wrong. Let's face it.

I was very concerned that I didn't want to do wrong with my own power. I guess I was afraid that I would. So I kind of studied with various different teachers and Richard Bandler was somebody who inspired me a lot, but I became very doubtful about some of his methods. I don't think we can ignore people's personal history. We can respect and honor the gifts that they do have, but let's not draw the blinds completely behind these things because there's a reason.

I was also a bit concerned because there seemed to be a suggestion that if you weren't careful and you were using these very powerful unconscious installation patterns, things could go wrong. If you don't tie off the ends properly or you give people suggestions that aren't ultimately for their own benefit – because you're imposing content, you're imposing your content on them a lot of the time.

You hear stories about people catching diseases or getting bad habits that the people that they've modeled have, so I thought well, I'll go and study with John Grinder and find out what he has to say. One thing I always liked about NLP – and I know that you talk about it definitely as a kind of subset of hypnosis. I often call it high-tech hypnosis when I'm talking to people because that's nice and simple.

Igor: I would agree and I think more NLP people would become much better at what they do if they actually realized the incredibly strong hypnotic element that their whole discipline demands.

Robin: Yeah. I think it's important to realize that John Grinder and Rich Bandler made this stuff up and look how powerful that story has become.

Igor: Exactly.

Robin: Of course, Milton Erickson started it. Let's not forget that. When you're listening to me now, you probably have noticed that I'm a little more hesitant talking about this and there's a good reason for that. In my kind of search and my desire to find a teacher and to find some kind of moral compass for my own behavior, what I ultimately discovered was that I couldn't find that compass outside of myself.

When I was working with John and he was good enough to supervise me and support me, he was very helpful when we first met and I got to a point where I hit my own ethical boundary. There was a situation where we were working covertly with a woman whose family wanted to help her, but this woman herself didn't know that I was being brought into the family specifically to kind of change her situation.

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I realized that I couldn't in conscience allow somebody to come to like and trust me on the basis of a lie. I suddenly, reached this point where I realized that I wasn't going to find that moral compass outside of myself. I had to start looking inside myself and getting back to the authentic voice that actually I'd had as a young man and that in some way my journey while it had left me richer and wiser, I still needed to reconnect with the passion of that young man who had an important story to tell.

Igor: You know, this is something that I think is important and, again, something I admire about your work. It's something I really want people to get. This Interview with a Master Hypnotist is here for a reason and it's not just to learn techniques, although that's kind of interesting and to expose people to a wider range of hypnotic ideas and so on, which I think is very important.

However, one of the key themes that comes up over and over again – I've seen a lot of Master Hypnotists out there, trained with them, I want to have their skills – and the story is always the same. That is, you learn at the feet of someone else – someone who has great skill and understanding and all the rest of it and they've gone down that path – and at some point, they have to make a break or they'll never be a Master.

They have to decide for themselves, this is where my path is. This is the direction I'm going. This is why and these are the ideas I've been taught, which I don't actually necessarily agree with. I can respect them and you can do your thing, but I'm not. It's that decision where you decide I'm taking control of this process now. I've learned. I've got my training wheels out of the way. I've learned and had my experiences.

Now it's time for me to shine through, rather than for me to try to pretend I'm someone else or copy them and try to fill those boots again. I want to fill my own boots for a change. I personally can't over-emphasize that element enough. I think you, yourself, more so than many people really get that. Don't you?

Robin: Yeah, I would have to agree.

Igor: That's part of where the power just comes from, isn't it? It's the ability to say this is my way. That's part of the, as you say the authenticity of the power of hypnosis. There is power in hypnosis and it's not the language. It's not the clever tricks, it's who you are. If you're not being yourself, if you're not bringing all of who you are, your intention and all that you're trying to do into the equation, then you're selling yourself short and you're certainly selling the people that you're around short as well.

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Let's take that idea a step further. We've got an idea of your theatre background, which is very powerful. You ran into hypnosis initially to try to understand the power that you developed by accident and to be able to control that better. Now you've set foot on your path and decided to go your own way, find your own moral compass and decide where you draw your line in terms of what's right and what isn't.

I'd like to explore a little bit more about your ideas around hypnosis, your philosophy of what it is and how it works. In particular, the age old debate, or at least the debate since the '60s – direct versus indirect hypnosis.

◆ Where do you stand in terms of which one to use, what is better and which path to walk down?

Robin: I've been thinking about this one a lot and I guess in my practice when I'm working or with somebody and we've arranged to work together, then I'm going to use both simultaneously because I think it's good to be doing something direct to distract people while you're doing the covert stuff. I'm sure you've had this situation where you work with somebody and you spend an hour doing change work with them and at the end you do a 20-minute formal hypnotic induction.

You know you've actually already done the work. This is the convincer at the end. It's the money shot.

Igor: Exactly. It's what they came for. That's where's the spinning watch – like oh yeah sorry, silly me, here's the watch. Now you're cured. This guy's so good.

Robin: Exactly. In social situations, it's easier to use kind of the more direct techniques than the indirect techniques. However, I just love the elegance of indirection. I guess that's why I'm so fascinated with storytelling and how that works because I believe it is the most subtle and ingenious way that you can begin to weave in the unconscious learnings that are there for people when they listen with the right ear – and the left.

Do you know what I mean?

Igor: I know exactly what you mean. In summary and please let me know if I'm putting words in your mouth, but this is kind of how I look at it and it sounds like you're in a similar direction.

Direct hypnosis is very powerful, useful and has a tendency to be very linear. In other words, you go after the actual problem, it's done, it's sorted. But, there's all this stuff around it that could also be dealt with at the same time, which isn't touched on because it's kind of like taking a pot shot. Its down, that's down,

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down and one of the beauties of indirect hypnosis is the whole landscape gets changed at the same time.

Sure, you're focusing on one thing. Maybe stop smoking or insomnia or whatever it is, but you're changing the whole landscape rather than the blot on the landscape, so that sometimes the blot becomes a feature and actually becomes more valuable than the thing they're trying to remove in the first place.

Robin: I like that. Yeah, you're changing the whole holographic picture and one little twist makes everything fall into place in a different way. I think using indirection and deliberately focused language enables you with the right degree of pace to direct somebody and while you're directing respond to what you're learning about where they want to go.

Does that make sense?

Igor: Absolutely! This comes back to the power of stories, particularly your method of storytelling, which involves the audience. I love that description of your rehearsing in the park and people coming to watch and then you chat with them and as you chat with them, the play changes live in the moment because you're including the audience now.

So, by the time you actually get to present the actual play in front of the audience, there's no real fear for the actors anymore because they're part of the audience themselves. So how can you mess up? How can you not please the audience if you're part of it yourself? You have the instinct attuned.

Robin: Absolutely. Yeah and learning as we talk about in the short course. Learning to listen is one of the first important skills of being a great storyteller.

Igor: Exactly.

Robin: I was thinking about that whole kind of background to hypnosis really and how I think about it because I didn't come to hypnosis from this more formal traditional route, I suppose. You know I was born in Africa and I have some friends out in Africa who I go to visit. They live in this place where the nearest electricity is about two miles away so there are no tellies.

At night all there is to do is really to just kind of sit around the fire every night called shikamu, the evening fire. You gather the leaves from the chamber, pile them up, light them and you begin to burn them there. You might cook some food in the ashes as you're doing so, but shikamu is a time where people just sit back and the first thing they do is they'll have a little glass of whiskey, local whiskey made from the cassava root.

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They'll sit there and they'll pass around the glass and they'll talk about what needs to be done the next day and who needs to do what work and what to do about this nephew or that niece. Then they'll sit there and they'll just start to tell stories.

There's a story about this boy called Owl. Picture him if you will, Owl is a boy of maybe four. He just plays around with the other kids in the village, wandering around the forests. He's not quite old enough to join the boys who fish on the lake yet and he's not quite young enough to stay with his mother around the hearth. So he runs around the fields and the gardens and he learns how to use a hoe.

That name, Owl, by the way, we kind of associate the owl with wisdom, but in this place, the owl is actually an unlucky thing. Because owls, sure, they're wise, but they're at home in the dark and they see into the shadows. Because they can twist their head all the way around, they can see both forward in time and backwards into the greater way and the greater way is this whole space of existence. It's the whole space of everything that could be, everything that has been and that might have been. It's the space where imagination, space and time meet.

Owl is called Owl because when he was a little boy, when he was a baby, when he was born, they reached inside the mother and they had to twist his head around as they pulled him out. When he was born and when he stopped crying, he sat up and he looked around and he looked each of them in the eye. So the mothers knew that Owl was a spirit who had been born too early into the body. If this happens, sometimes the spirit remembers the spirit world and yearns to be back there, so the child is very sickly and sometimes doesn't live for very long and dies early in childhood.

But Owl had lived through his early childhood and now he was there four or five years old and he lived in the village. One day, the strangers from a far away town came to Owl and they said Owl, come with us to a far away town where we will teach you magic so you may return and be a blessing to your village.

Owl went to his family and he went to his friends and he spoke to them of this. Then the next day he came back to the strangers from the far away town and he said yes, I will go with you to learn magic that I may return and be a blessing to my village. Before Owl left, he took his heart and he sealed it between two halves of a shell that he found in the woods and he gave it to his sister saying sister, will you keep this heart with you because when I know where my heart is, I will know where my home is. His sister took the heart and she put it by the fireplace in the family alter.

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Owl went, he traveled to the far away town where he was taught magic and he learned that we live in the greater way of some total of all that has been, could have been and might have been. Of all the wishes and dreams that humans have, that could be brought into life and he learned how to walk along the Iffalong to see into the space around him in the greater way. He learned that the magic and the secret was just to close your eyes and see and begin to see with your eyes open and begin to see with your eyes closed.

He learned to journey along the Iffalong and back because each of us lives on a certain happen-track, a pathway we choose. It's like the weave of a tapestry or the melody that underpins a song. It's just there's some natural quality inside of us that's bursting to come out.

There's a story that you want to tell. It's coming from somewhere deep inside you and Owl realized that you can write your own story and when you do so, it's a powerful thing. Owl chose to come back to his village and, indeed, his magic was a blessing. People would come to him and he would show them the space around their happen-track, the places, the choices and the opportunities that they had and then send them on their way, along a different happen-track.

Owl stayed in his village and his magic was a blessing to it, but every now and then he would wander out into the forest because, you see, his heart had gone missing at some point. Nobody knows whether maybe his sister was sweeping and knocked it out the door, or maybe a dog found it and carried it away, or maybe the kids used it as a football and while kicking and throwing it, it went soaring out into the forest and nobody saw where it landed.

Well, one day when Fox and Owl were wandering through the forest, Owl spotted Fox and Fox said to Owl, you know Owl, I think I found your heart and I buried it deep in the forest where no harm could come to it.

A few weeks passed and Owl wandered through that place again. From the sound of a baby crying, Owl followed the sound to a tree and there a tree had grown from the seed of his heart and the sound of a baby was heard crying there. Owl went back to his house and began to think about the little seeds he'd been planting.

Now when we close our eyes, when we open our eyes, we have this gift, this wonderfully fertile imagination. I know because we've worked together, we've done some of these exercises together, that I could just turn to you and begin to describe a landscape rolling in front of us with yellow sundried grass and you'd be able to look at that and you'd be able to imagine it in your mind. I know that you'd then be able to take that and you'd be able to begin to describe it on and to take it further.

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Our imaginations can create whole worlds around us and indeed our world, our whole world – if you look around you right now, the chances are that pretty much everything that you can see was an idea before it was a thing. Everything. Even if you're standing in the middle of nowhere, chances are that landscape has been changed and altered by humans mining, by humans farming, by humans working that land.

This is such an important discovery because when you realize how powerful ideas are to change the world and you realize how powerfully you can use stories to convey those powerful ideas, then the world is your oyster.

I've taken you away again. Back to Earth, Igor.

Igor: All I can say Robin, is you're a genius. I love the way you tell stories. I love how much you can pack into a story. Everyone who's listening to this, please go back and listen to that story again. You will hear so much in there. It's unreal. This is one of the reasons I say you are truly the Master of storytelling. In terms of hypnotic storytellers, I have not come across anyone who comes even close to what you can do and this is fantastic.

This is something you focus on as well, of course, in your hypnotic story coaching program, where you take people through their own personal greater way, their own happen-tracks and bring them up from an Iffalong to a place where they can be in a happen-track where they tell stories like you do.

It's a very powerful process. You take everything, all the experiences you had in theatre and, honestly, I don't know how you do it, but over a phone call, you can tease the same story-ness, the same power out of people that you obviously have in terms of your stories. That's just the work of genius. I personally am very proud to have had a chance to work with you and consider you a friend because you do some amazing stuff, Robin.

Robin: Thank you very much.

Igor: Before we come to the end there is one, last question I'd like to explore briefly and then we can wrap it up and maybe we'll tell people about how your hypnotic story coaching program works. I'm sure they're curious.

We've got a good understanding of your hypnotic philosophy, even though I defy anyone to put it down in writing. We're kind of getting more of an intuition of it than anything else, which is exactly what you want us to have. Hence, that story, which I love. There's something important that I think is important to address for any Master Hypnotist, which is, what are the limits? Why does hypnosis fail sometimes and what do we do when it does? How do we make it work when it falls apart?

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Robin: I think that is a very important question and any good hypnotist is constantly going to be challenging themselves in those very cases where, damn, I didn't get a result that time. It's always great when we can notch up another hour-long session that cures somebody's phobia or sends them out into the world feeling more optimistic about life or connecting powerfully with what the story is that they have to tell, but we've all come across that experience where you kind of know that it's not working.

It's this general thing. The ecology's not right. The more I kind of started to appreciate...

Igor: Let me pause there for a moment just in case people aren't familiar with NLP and what that term is.

◆ **Could you say a little bit about what ecology is before you come onto the solutions?**

Robin: Of course. Well, think about it, if somebody comes to your office. This is a good one. I had a guy come to see me with a fear of blushing. He was afraid of blushing. He was embarrassed that he was about to start blushing and then, of course, when he was blushing he was embarrassed about blushing so he became more embarrassed and got redder.

It was just a nice little loop that he had himself caught up in. I did some relaxation exercises and just did some very simple work with him hypnotically and sent him on his way. Sure enough, he came back to me the next week and he said oh yeah, I had a great time. Thank you very much. I didn't feel embarrassed about talking in public at all. I was at the closing night and I shouted out a couple of things and everyone laughed at me.

You see, what I hadn't counted on was that the guy was an idiot and said inappropriate things in public. So when you work hypnotically with people, when people come to you with a symptom or one specific thing that they want changed, often you need to think about the context in which they have this behavior and realize that it might serve a purpose.

It's when I started to look into that broader picture and particularly into what it was that people had in common when they repeatedly failed to make changes for themselves. These people have been to this hypnotist and that hypnotist and it became obvious to me that there was a bigger story that was being served by their failure to cure this.

This isn't new. Byrne talked about for example, the wooden leg game where somebody is basically just presenting all of these things that are wrong with them and you present solution and solution, but they can always think of a way why that's not a solution because this is their game. This is how they get off, on

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you failing to help them. It became obvious to me that the people tell themselves and set these powerful stories quite early on in their lives that then have control over them.

Now I'll give you an example with this guy I worked with who was a drug addict. I asked him when he first knew he was going to be a drug addict. He told me that he'd decided when he was 14 years old and he'd written this verse on his exercise book. It was this little rhyme about how he was going to smoke pot and take heroin all the time.

Now this guy recovered this memory in a hypnotic trance. He was 35 years old and he'd forgotten that he'd told himself that story. Why did he tell himself that story? Who knows, it wasn't a very useful one for him, but he was that powerful that he could make it come true.

One of the things that impressed me about you, Igor, and we've known each other a few years now. I know that you've set yourself this journey that you want to go on, certain things that you wanted to make happen and you've gone out and you've achieved those things that you wanted to achieve and it's been great to see you do that. You're somebody who's really been authentic, I think, in living the life you want.

Igor: Thank you. I appreciate that. Just to reiterate something you said in closing there, this is an attitude that is so incredibly powerful for hypnotists. I actually want to pull it out to make sure people don't miss it. That is that clients aren't weak. They are massively powerful. The bigger their problem is, the more messed up they are, the more power they actually have to maintain that. If they defeated all these people, it's not like, oh my God, there's no help for these people.

It's more like to think, thank God, this person has such an amazing capacity, which just has to be directed. We just have to tap into it and use it as a force for good, rather than as a way of ruining their lives like they've been currently doing. At that point, being a hypnotist is a tremendous pleasure because you're working with some amazing abilities.

I think that's a great attitude for people to have. You clearly have it and I would encourage people to adopt it and tell themselves a story about the power that people have and the power you have as a force for good because you're surrounded by powerful individuals.

Even the most down individual has an immense capacity to shut out every assemblance of a personality to the outside world and that takes an incredible amount of skill and determination to do it constantly so that no one can catch them out. That's nuts.

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Robin: That's right. I'll tell you what, it reminds me of something. I work a lot with artists and performers and I was talking to a couple of artist's friends of mine the other day and they both really surprised me because it was like they were quite contemptuous of the people who liked their stuff. It was like there's a particular someone out there who they want their artwork to appeal to. It's probably an imaginary person who runs in an imaginary gallery in London somewhere. I don't know.

But the actual people who appreciate their stuff – because they as an artist are not actually prepared and confident enough to go, yes, this is good, they can't acknowledge that their audience has taste.

Does that make sense?

Igor: Absolutely. It's crazy but it's true, isn't it?

Robin: I think it's the first thing you have to do as a human being, as a storyteller. When people turn around and pay you compliments and like what you do, it's just to say thank you, that's great.

Igor: This is something I really like about your storytelling coaching program for hypnotists. You have a real good way of actually getting hypnotists to tell themselves a more powerful story about their own, about their own ethics, about their own ability to be a force for good in the world and you do it in a way that makes it fun. You really engage with the energy of what storytelling is.

Those of you who listen to the seminar interview where we get into the storytelling aspect a little bit more detail, you'll really hear Robin shine as a coach there. This is something I think marks your work out and this is one of the reasons I really want people to see your work more because there is a vibrancy to it.

There's vibrancy to your hypnotic stories. You're not just reading it from a book. You're not just using a fairytale and putting on a little singsong voice. Those things have their place and they can be very useful and have had a great impact on people, but you go that extra mile and that is something I really want people to get.

Robin: Absolutely. This is what I'm listening for. This is what I'm looking for when I work somebody. It's that moment and it's something I have a real keen feeling about. That moment where somebody owns what they're doing and is powerfully connected to the emotional power behind it.

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Igor: If you want to hear more about that, you have to come on for the next part of the interview, which happens next week. Robin, we could be spending hours – in fact, I know we've spent hours talking about these sorts of things. It's a shame that this particular interview is limited in time as we come to a close in this first session..

I do encourage everyone to check out Robin's website HypnoticStorytelling.com. Do listen on to the next interview, where we go into the actual art of storytelling and you'll hear some storytelling coaching happening live as we go through that. That's going to be a powerful, fascinating process.

In the meantime, all I've got left to say is, Robin, thank you so much for coming onto the call with us and having this interview. I've really enjoyed it and I'm sure everyone else listening here has enjoyed it immensely. So thank you for that.

Robin: Thank you. It's been great to be here. It's been a great opportunity and it's really helped me think about my work as well and structure it.

Igor: So all I meant to say is thank you. I've been talking to Robin Manuell, Master Hypnotist from HypnoticStorytelling.com. My name is Igor, of course and I'm from StreetHypnosis.com. We'll see you on the next call.

This is Igor Ledochowski from StreetHypnosis.com. If you're interested in finding out more about our hypnosis training programs, just go to StreetHypnosis.com. We have over 30 different programs on all aspects of hypnosis and self-hypnosis.

If you want to listen to Robin's four-hour seminar giving away all the secrets of his hypnotic storytelling system, then go to StreetHypnosis.com/Robin.

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Seminar 1 – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. I'm here with Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell from HypnoticStorytelling.com. Robin is not just a masterful storyteller and one of the best hypnotists I've had the pleasure of working with, he has a unique coaching program that's for hypnotists teaching them how to tell stories that really influence, persuade and move and change people. It's a powerful program.

We're very fortunate today because Robin's going to actually be showing us and teaching us the core essence of what his program is about. So, stay tuned because you're about to go on an exciting hypnotic storytelling ride.

Robin, welcome aboard.

Robin: Thank you. It's good to be back on board.

Igor: It's great to have you. As I say I always love talking to you because first, you never know where you're going to go and second, you know, wherever it is it's going to be a real pleasure. So I think we're in for a real treat today.

Robin: Guys, if you've had the pleasure to meet Igor in person, you'll know one of the things that he is excellent at is being able to stand there and give you just oceans and oceans of appreciation. He'll be right on the mark as well. It's a great talent to have. Thank you for pointing it in my direction so much.

Igor: And thank you for pointing that out. This is now the mutual appreciation society coming to a close.

Let's start with the actual program. I know you have a very powerful storytelling program for hypnotists where you coach them either one-on-one or in groups to show them just how good they are at stories. I thought if you could maybe launch us in with a general background into the idea of power of stories.

- ◆ **Is everyone capable or do you have to born to be a storyteller?**
- ◆ **What's your opinion about how people come to be storytellers themselves?**

Robin: I think the first place that you have to start with this is learning to listen and to really love and get fascinated with stories. It's worth reflecting for a moment on just how powerful stories are, like we mentioned in the last interview when we were talking about Jesus of Nazareth, Buddha or the Prophet Mohammed. You only have to reflect on their stories to realize how powerfully they can change the world.

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It doesn't actually matter whether we know whether those stories are true or not, they still have the powerful effect that they've had. I've always thought it's fascinating that so much anger and strife are caused in the world over the ownership of a few square meters of land in the center of Jerusalem, a city whose name, by the way, means peace.

Now this piece of knowledge is vital to appreciate. To become a storyteller, the first and the most important thing you have to begin is to become a lover of stories. Did I ever tell you about Ole Larson?

Igor: No, not yet.

Robin: I think he was a Dutch guy. No, he's from Denmark originally and he studied with Chuck Kimchuk Par in the states, the Tibetan Buddhist. He studied with Erhardt in some of the trainings and worked there for a while. This guy was like a rock. I swear, when you shoot hands with him, you could just feel this real solidity, this real presence. When he was angry, he'd stand up in front of an audience— I saw him just get angry at this guy once – and it was like you could feel this wave of anger just rushing over the crowd.

As soon as it moved, it was gone and over again. He could do the same with love. He had something about him that just radiated presence. Ole Larson's idea about life – like he would never worry about customer service or getting on with people. If he went to a restaurant, he would be the best customer they have ever had. In the same way, if you want to become a great storyteller, I think the first thing that you have to do is to start to become the best audience ever.

When you begin to really listen, to pay attention to the people in your life, you'll realize, I think, that everyone is extraordinary. Everyone has a story to tell. It's just part of being human. Some of those stories resonate because they are familiar, because they describe the ordinariness of our lives in a special way or because they capture the essence of our own struggle.

There are other stories that delight us because they breathe of mystery and magic. I sometime tell my students the story about two travelers who happen to meet on the same track. Let's say it happened 200 or 300 years ago before industrialization, somewhere in Central Europe. I like it there because there are vast tracks of mountain and forest. It's a wild place even now.

Back then, it was a place of principalities and small kingdoms protected by those natural barriers.

These two travelers meet on the road. They're kind of heading in the same general direction, so they decide to travel together for a while. As they walk,

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they talk and their voices run ahead of them along the road, rising and falling in laughter and in argument.

Now one of these guys is a merchant. He buys goods and he sells them. He knows what people need and he knows the value of things. The other guy is a hunter. He knows the tracks of the deer and the herbs that are good for the body and the soul and they realize that they have much to learn from each other because what they both have in common is that they are storytellers and collectors of stories.

So they set off and that's all they do. They walk along the road together telling each other stories and asking questions like, how high are the stars in the sky? How did the world come into being and when will it end? What's the nature of love and of the soul? What's the true path to happiness for man and womankind?

We all meet people on our own personal journey who we think, oh, a fellow traveler. A few years ago, I was at John Grinder's seminar and there was this guy who was asking questions and making comments. I saw him across the room and I think for a moment I thought he was the only guy awake in the room. He came up to me a bit later in the training and introduced himself. He said, hi, my name's Igor.

When you listened to me in the earlier interview that we did, I was talking about Sharon who I used to work in the office with and how we'd cover for each other while I produced my Shakespeare play and she rang up record producers. There's an important story about Sharon that I neglected to tell you, by the way. It was one of those kind of meetings.

These two travelers because they shared this common just fascination with stories and with other people, they loved to pass the time as they walked in conversation sharing their adventures and eventually they come to a town that's on the shore of a great lake. In the center of the lake, a long, long way away, they can just see it in the distance, but there's an island. On the island there's a castle and the castle seems to rise up out of the island and go up, up into the clouds right to the Sun itself.

They find an Inn in the town and they sit down in the forecourt of this Inn and they look out across the lake and they see the castle and the island there in the distance. They just sit and begin to listen in to the conversations and the exchanges that are happening around them because they both know that the best way to begin to get in touch with the vibrancy and the power of stories is just actually to go into a public place and listen.

Soon enough, you'll begin to hear little gems, little drops of wisdom and you'll see exchanges between people that kind of give you an insight into a broader

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picture, something else that's going on. Have you ever played that game, Igor, when you're out with friends and just a friend and you look at people in the room and you do make believe psychic?

Igor: Yes. That's a great game. I think it's a very powerful game to get to read people. You just say okay, this is this person's life and this is what they're doing. Sometimes you have and go ridiculous, but other times you try to see, given how they're behaving and doing stuff, just what kind of person they would probably be like.

Robin: That's right. It's a wonderful game to play when you know that you don't have to get it right. You're not actually going to find out or check. Sometimes you can. It can be the interesting gambit to a whole other story because you can go over and actually talk to them, but the fun of the game is actually just that your imagination gets crazy and you can come up with all kinds of things.

Have you got example of where you've used that story out and about?

Igor: Sure. The biggest one is normally – I travel a lot, so you're sitting at airports and buses and it gets kind of dull. After a while, you don't want to read books anymore or listen to stuff. You just want to have a connection with people again. I find it's a lot of fun either, because you're just playing the game and you just see somewhere there – especially if you see some bizarre characters.

Like in South America, they have Indian characters and you some Western people and some people who are dressed like their Western, but they've got obviously very strong Indian features and stuff like that.

Part of you just wants to make up a story about them partly just to amuse yourself and the other part is just to get a connection to people again. I remember at one point, I actually started a conversation with people just because you get so carried away by the stories. It's like I want to tell someone just because I like this story.

So you're now telling the person next to you at the bar or wherever it is and say hey, see that guy over there? I bet he's so and so or whatever. You'd be surprised how quickly most people pick up on the game and they just start adding their own bits to it as well. So it just starts snowballing. It goes into its own thing and that's a lot of fun.

Robin: Yeah. I remember I told you a story the other day about the woman who lost her grandma, my friend's grandma. I'm not going to tell you now, but that's the kind of story, you just go around and you just want to tell it to people to see their reaction.

Igor: You just can't help it, can you?

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Robin: So these guys are sitting there in the forecourt of the Inn in the town by the side of the lake, looking out over the lake towards the castle on the island in the distance where they can see it reaching through to the clouds and the Sun itself. They ask the landlord as he comes over and hands them drinks, what is that place? The publican says, well, the castle is the home of the great king.

It's a place of great riches and great learning and it's said that once you've stood in the gardens of the castle and once you've walked around its libraries, then you'll have no reason ever to leave. People come from all over the world, but few are ever allowed in.

Well, the merchant loves this. He thinks, wow! Now, this is surely the place we have been looking for imagine all that knowledge, all of that wisdom collected in one place. Just think of the books there must be there. Just think of the stories. He thinks, well, of anyone in the world, why shouldn't we deserve admittance to that place? We can continue our worthy disputations and discourses with the greatest minds in the world.

The hunter looks out over the lake and says I'll do my part to rest in such a place, if truth be told, even just to know that such a place existed. The publican turns to them again and he says, the only way to the castle anyway is on the other side of the lake. There's a town there and there's a harbor and there's just one ferry to carry people across to the island.

Our two travelers, as they sit there and fill themselves up with good food, as they go to sleep they know that they've already decided what their ultimate destination is. They resolve the next day to continue on to the town on the far side of the lake so they can catch the ferry to the island and gain admittance to the castle.

So they follow the path the next morning down to the lake until they stand by the lake and the merchant says, look to the right. The road is clear. The land is cultivated and there are towns and villages where we may rest and where I might do business along the way. This is a road worn smooth by the feet of travelers. We may benefit from their labor and from their wisdom on our journey.

The hunter looks to the left. Well, the trail this way is not so clear. Sometimes it seems there's no path at all, but look at the forests that lie on the shore. Look to the hills and the caves. Does your heart not yearn to explore those hidden places, to be the first eyes to gaze on these sights? What might we discover on our journey?

While the worlds that so attract you frighten me and the comforts that I crave bore you. I think that we must choose different paths. So the hunter decides to take the left-hand path and the merchant takes the right. But before they part

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they say to each other, let us remember if we continue in the same direction, then it's inevitable our paths will cross again. No matter how long the journey takes, we shall see each other on the other side of the lake. There they make a promise. They shake hands and they go on their way.

Stories are powerful for two fundamental reasons, whether they're the kind of stories that we relate to because they resonate with us personally or because they capture some essence of our own struggle or the ordinariness of our own lives. And, whether they do so because they evoke some kind of magical mystery, the thing is that stories are a fundamental way in which we organize our memories and the internal narrative that we call I; that we call the self.

If you're going to express to me a series of events that happened in the past or anything that's going to happen in the future, then you have to tell me a story. It reminds me of when I was at this trainers training. We were split up into groups for the task of coming up with just five stories that we could kind of weave together.

The guy I was working with turned to me and he said, God, you know what it's like when someone asks you to make something up and then you just get so stuck and you can't think of anything? I turned to him and I said, great. That's fantastic and what's your second story? Of course, he realized he had one right there.

In fact, it's when things don't go right that stories really get interesting. Think about it. Girl meets boy. They like each other and then they get married. Actually, you could do that story really well and very simply. I like to watch a lot of films because some of the best storytellers out there right now are definitely filmmakers. Go to your local video shop, start renting stories and explore the genres that you wouldn't usually. Get some foreign movies or take some movies from the children's section.

Go and start reading children's stories and children's books because the stories that you'll find in those are very simple and very direct and they also kind of explore the realms of magic and what's possible and impossible. Cats and dogs talking and things like that, beings appearing out of nowhere, monsters and ghouls.

That story, girl meets boy, they like each other and then they get married – there is a film actually called My Big Fat Greek Wedding now. I don't know whether it's everybody's kind of movie. It's a very a simple romantic comedy and what I love about that movie is that actually nothing much happens in it. A slightly frumpy woman dolls herself up and goes to night school. Handsome lecturer appreciates her for what she is. They hang out. Her dad gets a bit upset because he's not Greek. They get married.

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Now if you look at most stories and particularly the stories that you'll find in the Blockbuster ranks of the Hollywood hits, this is not what happens, is it? It's much more likely that girl meets boy, girl and boy hate each other or argue over something, girl and boy keep missing each other for 10 years because they're at the wrong times in their lives. Girl and boy fall in love, but then they can't get together. It's frustrated until it all comes together in the end in a great big happy bundle.

You begin to see when you look into stories that there are actually some really simple narratives going on there. Girl meet boy. Sure. There's an infinite variety of versions of that story, but at the same time, there are some pretty simple and inevitable truths within that.

So is there anything that you'd like to pull out of what I've just said, Igor?

Igor: Well, one of the things you're doing very elegantly, I think – and this is very important – is the idea that first, we recognize stories. We know what are good stories and what are bad stories, which means inside of us, we have to have some kind of story-making machine that recognizes what is a good story and what is a bad story. If a narrative violates whatever rules are in our little machine, then we think that's a bad story, which means we have that machine and it's just a question of refining it.

It goes back to what you said at the beginning. If you just listen and start appreciating stories, your machine gets so strong that at some point, it just wants to be able to tell stories or create them because it's filtered through the same basic network.

A key structure that you're pulling out, something that I, in fact, emphasize often is the idea that a story is not just a series of events. It's what happens at the point when a series of events is interrupted and people change, as a result, of it. That's what a story is.

Robin: I knew you'd get that one. Absolutely! I think that's something from Keith Johnstone, isn't it?

Igor: Exactly and I think that's one of the simplest and most powerful truths in terms of storytelling. You don't just tell a sequence of events, this is what happened. It's when those events somehow get sidelined and something else starts happening. That's where the interest perks up and that's when the unconscious mind goes, oh, there's a story that's beginning to happen.

Then all the conflict, frustrations, fears, challenging yourself or whatever those things are that derail the normal story, so to speak, those are the bits that end up changing someone for the better or for the worse and that's how we know that the story first has started. We also know how the story's ended because

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that's when the person has changed and it's kind of a coming around of a circle and the circle's complete.

So we have all the basic frameworks we know. If you tell a little 5-year-old kid a story that isn't a story, they'll tell you, no, you're doing it wrong. This is supposed to happen and they'll correct the story for you. Perhaps we should think more simply and I like your idea of reading children's stories because when you start thinking more simply, well then, you leave room to let your unconscious show you the way again in terms of what actually works.

Robin: Exactly. What this whole first reason that we're talking about here, the first reason that stories are so powerful is because there's a basic structure in our minds that just does this anyway. We can't help it. When we create, when we recall a scene, we can fabricate, we create the memory again from snatches of it, images and feelings and sounds and we put those together.

Now I think the second reason that stories are so powerful is because they have been throughout human history the most fundamental way in which a culture, history, the rules and norms of behavior within a particular culture transmitted from one generation to the other. A number of shifts have occurred in human history that's changed the way culture is transmitted as well.

The invention of writing was a major one. Before literacy, all stories were transmitted orally through storytelling and ritual. Sometimes artifacts or symbolic locations kind of served as memory aides. You might think of some of the crazy ideas they have about the Neolithic use of the landscape to symbolize the journey through death and beyond.

Now because those stories are passed down from generation to generation, the interpretation of these stories and the expression of them changes. It changes as the environment changes. There's also built-in feedback mechanism that links a grandparent to grandchild. It's kind of, I suppose, theorized that in preliterate cultures living so-called traditional ways of life, let's say horticultural or subsistence lifestyles.

This storytelling is an important feedback loop that kind of ensures that over generations, the stories remain true as expressions of deeper cultural truths, while adapting to changing conditions. It's an interesting contradiction and interesting interplay.

If we go back to the hunter in our story, the hunter in our story is originally from Armenia and he's the son of the traditional Armenian storyteller, called Ouspensky. I don't know if you've heard of Gurdjieff. I know, Igor, you have. Gurdjieff was a spiritual teacher from Armenia. He lived in Russia. Let's say when we first encounter him he's living as a guy called Prince Olaf in Russia.

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This is the time of Rasputin and the revolution that comes, I guess Gurdjieff shoots to fame (and flame), when he's discovered by Ouspensky, who is a spiritual teacher and writer who, I think, he works quite a lot in England and he's already got quite a bit of fame. He bumps into Prince Olaf and quickly realizes that this kind of guy is the genuine deal, or at least he's genuine enough to fake it as far as Ouspensky's concerned.

He was an incredible guy and he lived an incredible life. He actually escaped with hundreds of people. He fled around Russia and settled in various places. Hundreds of people kind of came to him and traveled with him. He taught through theatre. He was always doing a theatre play, a couple of theatre plays with these elaborate dances in them, but the plays were never performed. I don't believe ever, not by him anyway because he would find some reason to interrupt it or events would interrupt it.

By the way, Gurdjieff, in my mind is probably one of the most accomplished storytellers ever, but if you actually try to read his books, you'll find them impenetrable. *All and Everything or Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* is a huge tome and it's just long, long complicated words and invented words, one after the other, that kind of sends your head into a bit of gobbledygook. It's the most amazing and dense connection of nested loops you can imagine. It doesn't help that.

Gurdjieff was probably at the time in a lot of pain. He'd survived two assassins – well, he'd been shot twice. He'd been in a car accident that would have killed most people. He was Armenian. He's writing in Armenian and I think Russian and his works were being translated into German and then into English. So, it's not surprising they're confusing.

Everything that you ever want to know about hypnotic storytelling is contained within his books and there are some gems of confusion and interrupt techniques hidden in there for the advanced student.

Now what Gurdjieff wrote in the introduction to his first book, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, was very interesting because he said, I'm trying to write this in a way with a new logic in a way that is going to totally transform the way that you think and feel about the world. I want to destroy every single preconception and idea you have of how we came to be where we are right now and wake you up to what's going on.

He proposed and suggested that simply reading his material and listening to his stories would begin to do that for you. It was a bold claim, but an important and interesting one because he realized that each of us is born into a certain kind of hypnotic reality. We think the world is a certain way. It's not always the way that we thought.

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The more you learn to step into other people's shoes, the more you start to listen to how they see the world and how they feel the world. Then the more perspectives you're going to have and that can be very rich.

Gurdjieff grew up – like the hunter in our story, was an Ashok storyteller and he got brought up in a funny kind of way. He'd be awakened at 4:00 a.m. to take cold showers. He'd have mice and rats and spiders thrown at him while he slept. He'd been buried alive and put through all kinds of tests, all kinds of trials to harden him. In the evening, when he sat and played in front of the fire, his father and his uncle – who was also an Ashok – they would sit and they'd talk together and tell each other stories.

What Gurdjieff didn't realize and what the hunter didn't realize, was that all the time they were talking to each other, actually while he sat distracted in play, they'd been weaving little magical tales, teaching things unconsciously that he'd only realize later. This Armenia Ashok tradition is a fascinating example of an oral culture in action. They would hold these great festivals where storytellers would compete with storytellers.

Imagine it. There's a tent, it's full of people, probably there's been dancing and drinking and eating of food. All these people sitting around with the kids, keeping them comfortable and warm and on the stage they'll be these storytellers, playing instruments and kind of throwing melodies at each other, like a banjo dueling, I guess. Throwing bits of melodies back and forth and improvising. They'd compete to tell stories as well and to gather the biggest crowds around them.

There's such an interesting interplay here between improvisation and that spontaneous play and creativity and structure. Nothing highlights that for me more than something that Gurdjieff writes. He said in the 1930s, he got hold of a translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh. This Epic had been known about and had been discovered in various different scripts and on various different tablets. There was a translation in the 1880s and then I think in the 1930s they found more tablets that enabled them to complete the picture.

Gurdjieff read some of this translation and he recognized one of the verses that had been translated from the tablet as something that his father had taught him and his father learned it from the old tradition. Now we can't be sure because, of course, the Armenian Ashok tradition could have come across this story in a written form. It could have been introduced from somewhere else, but there is the possibility that a single verse or versus of this Epic had been preserved orally for at least 4,000 years. The Epic of Gilgamesh was probably first brought together somewhere between the 21st and the 27th Century, B.C. So that's 4,000 years ago.

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There's an interesting interplay here between conservation – the way in which some elements are preserved – and improvisation around that – how things change and become fluid as they adapt to what's going on.

By the way, what happened to the invention of writing is that suddenly that cultural transmission gets fixed and the generational feedback loop gets cut somewhat. People start to mistake literacy as authority and then the word becomes the final arbiter of anything. It's not by chance that the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are called the people of the book.

At the same time, the basis of peace and security in the West is found largely on the rule of law. What is law if it is not just something written down in a book? There are two spellings of that word, by the way. Think about it.

I think there's been another important change with the invention of the printing press. Suddenly, all the old power elites structured around knowledge transmission – and I'm thinking of the church. I'm thinking of the state – they have been forced to acknowledge the democracies in power that comes with the industrialization of information when you can print hundreds of books, when anyone can print a book.

Now, of course, anyone can share their story with anyone in the world. It's as easy as flicking a light bulb, or at least switching a computer on using a mouse. The way history is written has been fundamentally changed, but the importance of powerful and compelling stories remains the same, if not becoming more important now because, of course, you want to be able to separate quality.

So we got to this point in the story, didn't we, where the hunter has set out on one path and the merchant set out on the other. Years pass. How much time, we don't know, but years rather than months.

Now when we get to the other side of the lake, picture this. Our merchant is arriving in town on the far side of the lake. He rides into town on a great white horse. The side-saddles are full of gold and he has a retinue of followers behind him. He books into a hostel and while his family and servants set up home, he strides into the town walking down to the harbor to look out over the lake to the castle on the island.

Just as he reaches the shore, who should he see walking towards him but his old companion, the hunter? My friend he shouts! The hunter looks up and they embrace. It's been such a long time. I never thought to see you again so soon. Come sit with me. Let us share pots of tea and some rice cakes and we can talk about our adventures!

So they sit down in the courtyard of an Inn, in the forecourt there. They look at the castle and the island much closer now, so much closer. The merchant turns

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to the hunter and he says, well, here we are. Tell me your story. The hunter beings, I traveled for only a few days when the path came to an end and I had to kind of cut through the thickest part of the forest.

I followed animal tracks. Sometimes I cut back to the lake's shore to make my way around the mangrove swamp when the forest proved too thick, but even in the middle of the deepest forest, I came across these huge stones, these carved figures of civilizations flourished and delayed.

For weeks, I didn't see a single living soul. The game was good and the animals and plants that grew there astounded me with their diversity, their beauty. I came to a land that had been cultivated and was inhabited by rich and peaceful people who welcomed me and they gave me a house in which in to live. I stayed with them for a year learning their language and their customs. At the end of the year, they offered me a bride to seal my commitment to the people, but I could not stay.

The truth is I remembered our promise. I remembered only a year, a year and a half before that we had agreed to meet and so I said good-bye to that place and I left to continue my journey.

The road became harder for a while. I'd become used to company, I guess and to the luxury of home and hearth and my muscles had become soft and lazy, but I persisted and soon enough my heart grew strong and the life thrilled through me again. I traveled through and arid desert where nothing grew but rocks. From there into foothills rich with springs and cattle herds, but I was not welcome here. Everywhere I went I was chased off the land and people called me a poacher for my troubles.

I escaped high into the mountains and took a drink of water from a stream there hidden in the mountain, a valley, an ancient ruin, a city long overgrown with weeds. I stayed for days exploring there. It was as if the people had simply vanished, their house and belongings left behind. There was a great temple and behind the alter I found a passage leading to a system of caves and in the caves were rooms full of great treasures, not just gold and precious jewels, but ancient manuscripts of a dead tongue, fabulous works of art preserved somehow.

I explored the caves and spent hours in study, comparing their symbols with languages I'd come across until I began to understand the secrets they contained. In that secret place away from the eyes of man, I began to write down my own story. I wrote of my triumphs, my ecstasies and those things I was most proud of. I wrote of my pain and my shame. I wrote the secrets that were only ever written in the book of the heart.

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I could have taken those treasures into the light, some of the scrolls and manuscripts, but I guess that such a thing would not long remain secret, that if I suddenly brought such treasures into the land of men, then people would feel a desire to find that secret place and that secret treasure and to plunder it for themselves. Somehow I felt it was better left there.

The only treasures I carried out from that place were those treasures that I'd found inside myself. I could have stayed in those dark caverns for a lifetime. There was so much to learn. I remembered our promise again and I decided to continue on my journey.

I collected my notes and my knife and bow and I left the city hidden in the valley in the mountains. I tripped and fell sometime on my journey and my leg was badly hurt. It became infected and I had to keep on walking. I followed the slopes of the mountains as best I could; looking for a place to rest and to tend my injury. I took a bit of a follower. I think a lone male bear followed me from a distance, waiting its chance. I became afraid to stop and afraid to sleep. My infection grew worse and in desperation I struck out for the very top of the mountains daring the bear to follow me there.

I left behind the meadows, the slopes and the cloud forest that fringed the snow line and I pushed higher. The bear followed me into the cold wastes. I found a great slope of broken rocks and climbing to the top of these, I settled myself in a place I could watch the mountain below. Every time the bear came in sight, I would throw rocks at it and dislodged stones so that an avalanche would cascade down. I tried to rest there. I tried to sleep.

I think I could have frightened the bear away at last, but a great storm came into the valley and snow settled thick. I burrowed my way into the snow, creating a shelter there. It was so cold. I don't know how much time passed. I passed into a delirium. I found myself back in the caves and in the city in front of a great door that swung open to reveal a land dark and foreboding, filled with great ghosts that had followed me their arms stretched out as if for arms.

I walked on through the land until I came to a black river. I wanted to cross the river, but a woman naked, except for a crown upon her head appeared there. She said nothing, but pointed with her pale hand. Her long fingers seemed to grow towards me. She directed me back the way I'd come.

I awoke to find myself in the ice cave. The sun glowing brilliantly threw the snow walls. My fever gone, my leg was better. I'd survived and escaped the belly of the bear.

I found myself next in a valley, a little more than a shallow bowl cut into the side of the mountain. This place seemed to have its own climate. It was protected, exposed to all this constant sunlight during the day, fed by rich streams. Life

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flourished all around me and I stayed here for a long time while I healed and returned to full strength.

When there was no hunting to be done, when I'd eaten well and slept better, I would sit above the valley from sunrise to sunset, observing its passage across the sky, following the growth and flourishing of the animals and plants in the valley. I was an empty jar in the valley and the water poured in to fill me up. I was never happier. I could have just stayed there for the rest of my life. But again, something called. I felt I discovered a great secret. I wanted to share it with the world.

I left the valley thinking to travel to some big town or city and from there around again, around the lake. I could see as I came down the mountain even the great castle rising to the sky and I remembered our promise.

As I passed through the foothills of the mountain, I chanced upon a farm and I sought out those that dwelled there for provisions, food. There was a brother and sister that had grown to adulthood who told me their farm had been attacked a looted, their parents killed and their house burned to the ground. They were afraid to stay for the bandits would be back to mount a tribute and well, they had not the strength nor knowledge to work the land as their parents had.

They begged to come with me and taking pity I led them into the forest that borders the lake. Again, my journey seemed to be interrupted, but before I left them, I wanted to teach them everything I knew of how to live, how to survive. I taught them the allies and the foes of the worlds of plants, of the prey and predators of the animal's world and what I knew or what I could teach them of man, the fiercest beast of all. They were quick and keen to learn and they flourished.

Soon I trusted that they could survive on their own, but still I stayed. In truth, I had fallen for the girl, and she for me. We rejoiced when she began to grow with child. If only we'd stayed in the forest. We couldn't live forever without human company. The boy was restless to find one to cleave to. How could I deny him that? Well, we needed company. We needed people. I could not force them to take my path. Oh sure, I think they would have traveled with me willingly even to the end.

I can barely speak of what happened next. We found a small village by the lake and were welcomed with open arms. We brought gifts of food from the forest and things that we'd made. In the night as we slept, a group of men from the village attacked us. I awoke to the sounds of a club falling on the body of my brother, the cries of my wife. God, we fought her and I. We fought for our life, for the life of our child. We ran with nothing from that place. We jumped into the lake to swim away so we would not leave a trail of blood for them to follow.

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We reached the shore a mile or two from the village and I fell into sleep. I wish I had never woken from the sleep. I did and found my wife dead beside me. Oh, I was so filled with grief I wanted to die. I did not eat. I did not sleep. I wandered through the forest a man marked for death, praying that some beast would make a meal of me. Time and again I remembered what had happened. Was I responsible? Would these two have lived if it were not for me? I became like a ghost, but death would not take and grief seemed just to harden me more.

Eventually, I made a meal of fruits and roots that I gathered in the forest and saying a prayer for those I loved and lost and broke my fast and resolved to complete my journey.

The people here are good and have treated me well. They gave me a house in which to live and they said nothing and asked no questions. They fed me and let me sleep and rest. Then they sat just quietly, silently at first. One of two, a young man over here or an old man there, all in passing on her way to the market.

They shared with quality that they could just simply sit with me. They did not ask for anything. Maybe they shared a moment of their day with me, but they would sit and look at me and smile. It was like they were breathing at the same rate that I breathed, waiting to hear the sound going on in my head, the picture I had.

She would just raise her eyebrow like this. Soon enough, I began to talk and to tell people my life and my history and what had happened. As I told my stories, they became eager listening, eager listeners. They gave me space and time and seemed to understand me as I shared with them the experience in my life that had been so powerful.

They were good people, quick in their generosity; slow in their anger. As is their tradition here, after some time I was summoned before the Town Council and asked to give an account of my life in public. They asked me questions then of my life, my wife and my brother. About the time I'd spent in the mountains and of my journey before I met you.

I told them everything, even those things of which I'm least proud. There was a gentleness in their manner, which gave me courage and at the end of the telling, I was led away and their meeting continued long into the night without me. At the end of it, I was called back. I was given this house to stay in. I'm wearing my wisdom and my mistakes. In the balance the people have chosen for me here a job, for which I am most fit and here I have remained ever since. So neither the hunter nor the merchant spoke for a while. The merchant says, I've got so many questions to ask you about that story, but hey, you must be tired from your tale. So it's only fair I should tell you mine.

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The merchant calls for some more tea and plate of rich and filling cakes as they sit in that Inn on the forecourt looking down on the lake at the castle on the island. Now when the merchant set out on his path, what he had was he already had the secret knowledge that everyone was extraordinary. He discovered this very early in life and he discovered not only that he had a knack for seeing the diamond that's inside everyone, but he also had a knack for knowing just where that diamond would be most useful and for putting the one together with the other.

In your experience, Igor – because remember I was telling you about Sharon? Sharon who I worked with in the office, but I'm not able to tell you an important thing about her, can you believe I'd do something like that?

Igor: Shocking!

Robin: I was just getting so lost there. I knew that important fact about Sharon. Well, Sharon and I used to work in this office and like I told you, she would be on the phone to various record producers and sending of envelopes and I guess I've always enjoyed kind of going into places where maybe I don't fit in completely, but I always find that I can learn something extraordinary.

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Seminar 1 – Part 2

Robin: I think this goes back to working at the first job I had when I left. I finished my exams at school, before I went to the University and went to work on a building site for Decki, the plasterer. This wasn't a guy I would have normally, hung out with. He was a racist. He was sexist. He would swear all the time. Every other word that he used was a swear word. He would stand there and comment on the women in the newspapers that he read and he'd be hypocritical. When a woman was present, he would be all, oh, mustn't swear in front of the lady.

I was fascinated by this guy. There was this other guy who worked at the same place called Steven Shakespeare. We called him Shaky and this guy was just such a natural storyteller. What he'd do is he'd go out on Friday night, get drunk, get into a fight and get off with somebody's girlfriend and then he'd come back Monday morning and tell us all about it. It was amazing because he would just act out these events in front of us.

A few years later, I went to see a Steven Berkoff Show. It was very physical theatre and I saw what they were doing on stage and thought, that's exactly like Shaky used to do, just standing in front of us at work on the building site. I suppose, it was these early experiences that got me thinking about anthropology and ethnology, as well which is this idea that you really begin to investigate different cultures and to recognize that people are different wherever they come from.

I was born in Africa and so in a way that kind of gave me a double description. When I was growing during my time England, I really had this kind of other world of Africa to compare it with as I was growing up. I kind of became fascinated by the people who go and live in indigenous groups. You've seen them on the telly, where they go undercover with gangs and con artists and things like this.

I became an undercover ethnologist. This is interesting. This actually proved to be a very useful skill later in life when I was working in corporations as a consultant, because I would sneak in sometimes, go and work there. I'd get a feel for what that informal atmosphere was like that you only get to find out next to the photocopier machine and by the water cooler.

I became fascinated with these people who go live in indigenous tribes and they go undercover with gangs and con artists.

Igor: I think the interesting thing you're talking about there is – and this is again why I love the way you teach. You use stories to teach and then you actually speak about the whole process itself. So you have the left and the right brain, the conscious and unconscious mind going together.

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Something I think is very interesting about what you're talking about there, the ethnologist to go in to infiltrate the secret society or the part of some tribe in the middle of the jungle somewhere. I think that's an important way of looking at the world because you can't just study them from a book. You've got to have the experience first.

Then come back to your normal reality, so to speak and then you can start to integrate and find out, okay, here are the descriptions. Here's how their world view makes sense given how they think, believe, act and so on. You can't do that just by observing them. You can't do that just by reading a book about them or watching a film. You have to dive in and live with them.

This is why I admire the way you work. If you're going to work for a corporation or if you're going to do some coaching work there, you'll be actually someone who's down in the trenches doing the work first and then once you get a sense of what it's like to be there, you know how to do cultural change because you know what the culture is.

They don't tell you what the culture is. You actually get to experience it first-hand, which is much more important. Correct me if I overstep the mark in terms of what you're trying to say here, but one thing that I think is an important position for storytelling is they are the place where those cultures actually come to life. That's how you can tell what a culture is. Its stories that people tell each other, like you said, by the water cooler.

It's where that heritage comes from and it's how you can change it as well. If you change the stories that people tell each other, you change the whole culture, but you don't know what stories to change unless you have people feeding into them to make them come to life again; otherwise, its just stuff someone invented and it's like oh, I don't really care about that too much.

Robin: Yes. That's very important. There's a model that I love. When I say it's a model, it's something that's been invented abstractly. It's not actually a direct reflection of anything that I know necessarily exists out in the real world. It's from a book called, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, by Raoul Vaneigem, who was one of the French Situationist philosophers.

He says that the world comes into being through creativity and through self-expression and that self-expression takes place within a community of love through people who learn to work together by playing together.

Igor: Yes. I think that's very important because that's where the stories come. There's a theme that your work has. Actually, you started right at the beginning with this. You set up some curiosity loop with Sharon's story and my story. Like how we first met, which I think was a funny event, but you really get this idea of you have to play games.

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Get people's imaginations to run away with them because you only get to the point – and this is something I really would love for people to get. This is something that just shines through in how you work with people.

A great storyteller isn't a polished storyteller. A great storyteller is someone who's got a story that is burning inside them to such an extent that they get carried away with it. They can't help but tell it. It's like, as I said, I was sitting at a bar and I was making up these stories about people just because I was bored and one of them just struck me as just so odd and curious, I had to share it with a complete stranger.

Normally, I wouldn't just turn around and just talk to them because I wouldn't be interested, but I had to share it. When you have a story like that, which has so much life in it that you can't do anything but let it go and share it with someone else, those are the kind of stories that change lives and change cultures and change all kinds of different things.

Robin: That's true. I realize sometimes when I've met people and they've told me something in like the first five or 10 minutes about themselves. Later on I realized it's fundamentally important to understanding their whole life and how it fits together.

Igor: I think this is again, goes back to the idea of stories. This is something – if I can backtrack a little bit in terms of what you've been doing in the last few seconds of your storytelling. As you probably are aware, the story hasn't finished yet. The loop will continue – to be continued!

I'm not going to interrupt that process. In fact, I don't even know where the story's going. So I can't. Something I want to mention, which people can really get, is that the story you're telling about the hunter and the merchant is clearly a made-up story. It's got all the overtures of a classic fairytale story, rather than a personal story, but there's something in that, which I think is important for us to draw out.

It goes back to a little bit this idea of being an ethnographer, going in and seeing people from their own cultural point of view, rather than from your cultural point of view, even if you later on were to describe it differently and that's the idea of a truth valley story.

Technically, you've been lying to us all day because you've made up a story that doesn't exist. The hunter never lived. The merchant never lived. The friendship never blossomed. I'm sorry and there is no Santa Clause, so if you thought there was, then ha- ha.

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There's something more important beyond that level of the truth valley and that is the idea that there was an emotional truth. When you were telling the story, you could hear – especially when it got into the, shall we say the tougher areas. When we had overtures of he's going to lose his wife and then, of course, it happens. If you listen to that story again, if you missed it the first time – I doubt you could miss it because it was obvious – you got carried away by that part. Your own emotions got sucked into it.

It was clear that you either, sympathize and empathize with the hunter and probably you had your own personal pain of some other things that happened to you come into it at the same time. Suddenly that story, at least for me, became 10 times more powerful.

Up until that point, the story was interesting and had some very clever devices, in terms of talking about the structure of the story's improvisation, loving stories, exploring stories in one way and different ways. We'll tease some of these things out later on when we've come to the ending of the full story.

For me, something that is important is the story suddenly, took on a deeper aspect, a much more hypnotic content when you switched that on inside yourself. Forgive me if I jump ahead of something that you're probably going to be teaching a little bit later on anyway, but it makes sense at this point for me. It's the idea of how do we get there?

How do you turn a normal story, a very engaging, entertaining story into something that is suddenly much more powerful? Of course, the answer is you actually became more vulnerable. This is the interesting thing about your work. It pulls out two of the key themes that you've been talking about in your stories; the adventure versus warrior, the merchant versus the hunter.

Those are two different storytelling paths there, mutually combined. They're not exclusive to each other, but the power of the warrior path, the hunter's path is pain, is suffering and messing things up. It's the vulnerability where people really find their power. This is an important part of storytelling. You have, I guess, real courage and I think I really love your coaching process because it shows people how to have the courage to go to those, shall we say darker areas of their lives, things that they'd normally never share and reveal them in a way that isn't just going to be accepted by their audience.

So they don't get rejected by them and their worst fears come true, but it actually becomes very healing. Like the story of the hunter in the village. When he shares his pain about his wife and his best friend who died tragically, it doesn't just get him accepted by the village – and we've yet to find what special task they gave to him – but it also clearly became the point that turned him around from being lost in grief and wanting to die. It became the point of his salvation as well.

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That's a real big thing; it's an important theme people miss so I wanted to re-emphasize it.

Robin: Yeah, I think you're right fundamentally. There is nothing more powerful than that revealing of vulnerability. By the way, I should re-assure people that when you experience that vulnerability as a storyteller performing, for example, in the way that I experienced it earlier, it's not something that you get lost in.

At the same time, opening that vulnerability, you're still actually maintaining a very clear head and a very solid grounding in the fact that you are here now telling a story and that this emotion is moving through you. The emotion that comes out is not yours to control in lots of ways. It's a gift that your unconscious is able to give you.

Igor: To take that point a little further, actually to delve into a metaphor that people will be more familiar with from the hypnosis work they've been doing. We were talking, of course, about the hypnotist's trance, a trance the hypnotist goes into in order to do hypnosis better. That's not the same trance that the subject goes into, which is the trance where their eyes are closed they're blubbing, drooling on the floor and having a great time. It's very hard to do hypnosis when you can't actually physically talk, right?

I think the storyteller's emotions are the same. There is absolutely truth and it was clear that you were going through that emotion, but it's a different way of experiencing the emotion than being dominated by it. You're actually releasing it. It's much more like you mentioned in the very first interview, the Greek idea of catharsis, where emotions move through you in such an uninhibited way that it becomes healing. It becomes releasing. Rather than having this bubble of negative emotion trapped inside of us, it releases us.

This is something that Keith Johnstone talked about. I think he's a great storyteller, the improv guy that you talked about before and it's something that rang a powerful bell with me. You talked about how when you make a mistake in improv – in improvisational theatre, you're making stuff up as you go along. I've seen whole plays, like an hour-long play, that people make up right on the spot, which is absolutely ingenious to watch when it works well.

It's horrifying to watch if it doesn't work out because if the actors' minds are in the wrong place, it's horrifying, but when you get a good troupe that works well together and has the rules of improvisation, the rules of creativity drilled into them, those rules actually set them free to create this amazing piece of work.

One of those rules is – and this is something that Keith Johnstone was talking about, which I think is just ingenious about life in general – is that when an actor is on the stage and he makes a mistake, he has two choices. He can either feel embarrassed and the audience will hate him – and the reason the

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audience will hate him is because they're embarrassed with him, so he's just shamed the audience.

The audience has got their heart on their sleeves and they're with the actor, with the emotions going on, on the stage. So when the actor gets embarrassed, the audience gets embarrassed with him and they feel ashamed and whatever the actor might be feeling and they don't like him for it, whereas the actor that makes a mistake and shrugs it off, smiles and goes, whoops – here's an example of this.

The first time I ever saw this, I was probably seven years old. It was a musical recital at school and one of my best friends was playing the clarinet. I still remember it to this day. He walks on stage, everyone's nervous backstage. He walks on stage and starts playing his clarinet. A horrible squeak comes out. It's dead silence.

All the parents are about to cringe in their seats. He puts a big cheeky boy grin on his face and goes, wrong! Let's start again. Everyone cracked up and I just thought, I want to be like you.

Robin: I can see that.

Igor: That was a powerful moment. That was probably better theatre than I've paid good money for.

Robin: I remember a similar thing that happened on stage once during a play. Me and my co-actor, Sarah, were at the front of the stage in the middle a routine and somebody backstage, the magpie who was helping as our assistant, knocked over something. It made a big kerfuffle and Sarah just turned around and said silly magpie and just made light of what was going on.

Igor: I think that's one of the key beauties or advantages of storytelling, particularly the way that you do it, which has a much more spontaneous element to it. Sure, you prepare stories and the story of the hunter and the merchant, in case you guys are wondering, that is a story that has never been told before ever. I asked Robin to create some stories to teach us about storytelling. He said, sure, I'll make some stuff up.

So this is the first time it's ever been heard and it might even be the last. The point though, is it's a great story, one you clearly prepared, but it's also one that evolves it grows with the telling. It grows with the audience. That's the power we have as hypnotist's telling stories we get to bring the audience in. It's the incorporation principle all over again.

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They regularly end up doing hypnotic induction and there's a siren going by saying what do we do? The sirens just remind you how much more urgent it is for you to become better and stronger as a human being or whatever. Stories allow us to do that in a much more powerful way because you can double realities up much more elegantly, I believe.

This is why, I think if you want to sit there and write out a story and memorize it and then recite it, that's one thing. It'll have its thing, but unless you're really trained as an actor to bring the story to life like that, they're much more powerful and, in my opinion, much more powerful in life for you as a hypnotist anyway. It's to make the stories where you know what you want to say. The story's kind of live inside of you, but then you just make it up as you go along.

Why? Because whilst you know the wave points, you get to bring things in, you get to make a mention here, a mention there. Something your character says in the story this time around will reflect the question that someone in the audience just had. That's what stories really grow and that's why they drag people in and people don't want to leave the story.

Like right now, I'm still – this is one of the reasons this is an unusual interview for me. Normally, I just pipe up all the time and just ask questions and make comments and stuff like that, but I can't because my mind is still stuck in the story. I'm going, okay, I don't want to interrupt him just in case he starts the story up again because I want to hear what's going on next.

Robin: I think it's a very important distinction that you're making here between acting and straight drama and storytelling. The key difference is in this relationship to the audience. With storytelling, you're right, you have a basic structure. You kind of know where you're going and maybe you have some nice phrases that you've worked into to, some little poetic pieces and each of those poetic pieces – of course, in NLP or in hypnosis terms, they're anchors, by the way.

This is a little clue for you to be using later and being able to assemble all of those. When you're in a room with people, you start telling that story about a boy and a girl and it's not any boy and girl because as you start, you put your hand on the chair of somebody in the audience and you look at them. You introduce the girl and maybe you look at somebody else in the audience. You're kind of suggesting you're bringing the audience into this.

You allow them the space to interrupt you. Maybe they'll have something that can add to the story. In fact, as you know with Keith Johnstone, there are techniques that you can use. You can just stand up in front of a group of people and go, okay, where are we? Who else is there? Start asking questions. What happens next? Soon enough, you'll begin to build a rich story. People just can't help it.

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In order for you to become a fantastic storyteller, it's really important that you step out of your boundaries, particularly in what you read and what you see. Get the newspapers that you disagree with and get the magazines that you disagree with. Read stories in genres that you wouldn't usually go to because you'll get far more perspectives on the world that way.

I also want to mention one other thing about vulnerability and the power of that. There are two sides to it. There's the being able as a performing to be vulnerable and to kind of commit your body to the story and there's the vulnerability of sharing personal information, personal stories.

There's nothing that gives you more authenticity and builds belief and trust with people quicker than actually being honest about things that you're not so proud of about things that have happened to you where you've learned great lessons that are useful to people. I think, maybe that's the difference sometimes with some of the stories I tell. I make lots of mistakes and I'm quite happy to talk about them.

Although, sometimes I expect people to pay me a little, you know, you've got to have some boundaries. I figure people are prepared to commit to that kind of ongoing process with me and share something with themselves, then I owe it to them to share stuff that I wouldn't share with the general public. There are boundaries.

To come back to vulnerability and truth as well, I've met two women in my life, both of whom had very extreme abuse when they were children. One of them, luckily, was fostered into a family of counselors and she actually got a lot of help with her anger and her pain. She ended up living a good life. She had a husband and kids.

The other woman kind of held onto her anger. She was very angry, but she figured she could do something about it. She went out and told her story and she actually ended up creating a whole network of refuges for women so they could escape from domestic violence.

They both dealt with their anger and their pain, but they did it in different ways. When it gets around to telling your own truth, I think there's a truth that shines out there's always some emotional truth that you can share while the details of the story that you tell may be lies. The story is lying. It's make believe and I consistently lie and change the names, the identities, the occupations, sexes and particular situations of, for example, when I'm telling these stories about clients that I worked with.

There's no way any of that is going to be true because I am very careful to protect people's identity like that. This guy, Shaky, for example. He's a real guy, but you'll never going to meet him and you'll never know who he was, but I can

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tell you a story about how he used to regale us with these adventures. The thing about Decki, the plasterer, the real clue I got as to just how wonderful people are, how extraordinary everyone is. After he'd known me for a while and he'd come to trust me, he'd go, you know when we take our tea break next, if you go past the stores, grab a bag of cement and stick it in the back of my car. Don't say anything to anyone about it.

I was like uh-oh, here we go, some bit of dodgy dealing. I should have known, but I did it anyway. He was embarrassed. At lunch time, we'd go out, take the bag of the cement and plaster we've got in the back and drive out to the big field. It turns out that the local football team needed to put up some new goals and we're spending our lunch putting the concrete around the holes for the goal posts. Then he can come back later with some of the wood he's stolen, probably from another site and put up some goal posts for this football field next to this club for a group of disadvantaged youth.

Well, I suddenly began to realize that all these little side trips he was taking were to do things like give flowers to old ladies or visit people who were sick. I really got to see how somebody who I'd reacted to in a very bad way at first, who I thought this just isn't my kind of person, had something inside them that was extraordinary.

I don't know about you, Igor, but I've never met anyone who didn't have some remarkable aspect to their story. The amazing thing is that usually you don't even realize it's remarkable because it's just you. It's just part of who you are. To you it's ordinary, but to other people it's different. It's interesting. Fascinating.

Igor: I think this is very true and this goes back to your core idea that to be a great storyteller, you need to start by being a great story listener and really appreciating the stories or really appreciating the things that you don't normally otherwise hear and things like that.

The other thing is – and this is something again that your coaching program brings out, I think and I really like about how you do this. It's the idea that – and Keith Johnstone talks about this. This is where I first came across it and then, of course, with our work together. It's the idea that you don't try to be an original. If you try to be an original in your stories, you'll probably mess up and you'll end up having pretty dull stories.

Sometimes, once you get a lot of experience then you can get a little bit more original in whatever it is, but you're missing the real pay dirt if you try to be original because there's no such thing as an original story. Your classic example is how many times have you mentioned boy meets girl? Even hunter meets brother and sister, falls in love, has a baby and baby dies.

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Again, that's not a crazy story. It happens in everyday life all the time, but we're still moved by it, we still want to hear what's going on. We're still hoping that she'd survive.

That story wasn't original. I mean it's probably as cliché as you can get and I hope you don't mind if I say that in such a strong term because you performed it and you set it up and you allowed it to evolve in such a powerful way that it didn't matter that it was familiar. We appreciated it more almost, because of its familiarity.

That's something that's important for people to get is you don't try to be clever with your stories. The cleverness will come by itself. Try to have honesty, going back to the idea of the truth, of the emotion of a story. That's where the power comes from. You can have a normal story and its fine.

Robin: Yeah. Just look around and the ordinary people around you, you will find are extraordinary. Sharon who I used to work in the office with, a few years after I'd stopped working there and I hadn't seen her for a while, she rang me up suddenly out of the blue. She said, come down to the Zap Club tonight. There's a launch, a big party.

I went down and I was amazed to discover it was the celebration party for the fact that Sharon was the singer on a number one record. Her record was number one on the UK charts. She was just this singer I knew and suddenly, she had gone from working in an office to doing exactly what she wanted to do with her life. She'd bought her house for cash, sat around and got very comfortable.

We were talking about the merchant and how really what the merchant had, this great skill was that he realized that everyone was extraordinary. When he set out on the path, not long after he had been traveling, he came upon a group of gypsies. The gypsies at this time and this place were welcomed within the boundaries of the nearest town. They'd found a pleasant meadow somewhere back from the lake to make an encampment.

The merchant was a keen follower of stories and he said, I've decided to find out more about the land in which they came from. So I followed them down to the meadow and I asked their King – because, you know, gypsies have kings too. I asked them permission to stay for a few days. I would sit there with my pen and collect the stories that I heard around them.

I soon discovered that the women of that tribe had a great skill with weaving, especially with making carpets. The merchant said, I was struck with an idea and immediately sprang into action. After much bargaining, I agreed that I should go into the town and purchase the materials that would be needed for

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them to make more of these rugs and carpets and I would begin to look out for some customers.

So I went to town. I made sure the women had everything they needed and that my investment was safe with them. I set myself up a little shop and I began taking orders from the wives of the town. Once I had some samples of the gypsies' handiwork, the carpets began to sell themselves, for everyone in the town competed with each other over who should have the finest house.

Well, the King of the gypsies was well pleased with the business we did with the first set of carpets and he agreed to continue with the trade as long as the land was welcome to them. This put me in a good position. I had enough money to pay someone to run the shop and the materials for many more carpets.

I had a little insight because some gypsies had been making pictures on their rugs. They'd been making decorations and they made pictures of the mountains and the lakes around us and scenes from the village and the castle. After I'd spent a little while in the town and talked to the gossipmongers and rumor millers, I came back with some suggestions of just little devices and ideas for the gypsy women to put into their designs.

So this time when the scene of the town was painted, the house on the hill was on fire, like it was that time. Or when the castle was pictured, there was a lady just looking out into the wood, a little lover hiding there, her secret lover. We began to put the town and the whole area and their little stories into the tapestries and they sold like crazy.

I contracted with another merchant to supply a shop in the next town across the lake. I began to use my new influence to gain an audience with the Lord of the surrounding land. He lived in a big villa overlooking the town. I was regular soon at festivals and feasts that the nobles of the town regularly hold, parties to which I was always invited.

If you go to that place now, you'll still see all the walls of the great halls and every bedroom in the place hangs with one of these rugs, one of these carpets. The gypsies had excelled themselves. In their enthusiasm, they began to work magic into their designs.

Now when I was at the great table of the villa, I began to hear stories of the great King and of the castle in the middle of the lake. It was said by nobles of the town, though not in his presence, that even their Lord had been refused admittance. To gain admittance, the supplicants, you see, had to demonstrate great learning, great accomplishment in the world. Even then, to have the right to enter the castle was apparently at the whim of those who guarded it.

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Some people claimed that to view the gardens and the libraries of the castle, you have to imply in writing to the King and they said no application was possible. No matter how much you wanted to visit the castle, entry was by invitation only and no one knew when or how the invitation would come.

A few even claimed you needed so special qualifications to enter at all. These people claimed that anyone brave enough could enter so long as they could persuade someone to carry them across the lake. There was a ferry man, they said, who had the final yay or nay about who should be admitted.

It was at the tables of the nobles of the town that I also began to hear talk of a secret society. A shadowy group of masters who taught an occult science that would answer many of the questions that we ourselves had asked as we traveled along the road.

Intrigued as I was, I had more pressing considerations. I knew, experienced as I was in the way of business, that sooner or later some other merchant would begin to copy my success in the rugs and the carpets and such like. There would be new markets to sell to, but my margins would be reduced. I knew it was time to be on my way.

So I found among the merchants of the town a trusted buyer for the business and, satisfied that my obligations to the gypsies were fulfilled, I packed up my belongings and continued with my journey.

I made a good sum of money from my latest venture. I left with two servants, three horses, laden with merchandise, samples of the rugs, but also gold and jewelry finely-worked and the beginning of the library of old books.

Well, we traveled along the lake very comfortably, trading and gossiping on the way, picking up little tidbits of knowledge, which the lake dwellers and the people we passed along the route shared with us. It was during this part of my journey that I came upon my second great business scheme.

I began to realize that the most valuable commodity of all, more valuable than gold and jewelry even, was knowledge. The price of fish in the markets along the lakeshore, the merchants traveling along the road and the goods they were carrying, the death or birth of friends and enemies, all these little pieces of gossip that passed from mouth to ear, they had value to the right people.

As we continued along our route, I thought long and hard about how I could use this information to my advantage. By the time we reached the next town, I had a plan in mind. I settled my retinue into a hostel and trusting them to get on with the work of my existing businesses I put my latest scheme into action.

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I contacted a merchant who printed engravings. I contacted a member of one of the societies of nobles that I had joined while in the previous town with the contacts, my money and printers. We recruited a team of runners that we began to send out in both directions around the lake. Their job was to record all the news, all the gossip they heard and to relay it back to us as quickly as they could.

We created a society of subscribers from among the richest of the merchants. We began to publish regular bullet sheets of all the information that we collected hastening the progress of information around the lake. I need not elaborate to you on the details of my scheme, but I will say that we flourished. We recruited printers in other towns and messengers from the lands beyond the lake.

Before long, I moved my operations into a great villa on the outskirts of the town. There wasn't room to store the riches I began to accumulate, but knowing that in business a fall can come at any time, I used the money wisely. I bought land, houses and invested in solid businesses and diversified my sources of income so that I would be protected against any such event.

Well, my business affairs being in order, I began to think of the sweeter that life has to offer. I had a beautiful villa, but it was empty of life and love. My fame was spreading far and wide and it was not long before the invitations to feasts and dances and celebrations began to pour through the doors and I availed myself of the opportunities I could.

I was approached by many fathers offering me their daughters and several times I was tempted, but fate intervened. One day, working the library, continuing my studies into occult matters, I chanced to fall into conversation with a woman who was also studying there. She was a lay sister in the nearby monastery who had dedicated her life to higher studies but now wished to return to the world.

We quickly realized we were kindred souls and before the week was up, we were wed and she returned to live with me at the villa. Ah, now a new world of experience opened up to me. Besides the joys of our physical love for one another, a great respect and affection grew between us. We shared what we'd learned of higher knowledge.

My business prospered and within a year, God blessed us with twins; a boy and a girl child. We adopted two more children from a poor family in the town and under the influence of Maria, my wife; we began to do good works around the region, providing assistance and building hospitals, you know that kind of thing.

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I must tell you now of a certain matter. Soon after I conceived to the business of news, I was approached by the mayor of the town, who invited me to join a select group of nobles who had engaged in the study of a certain book. I progressed swiftly through the curriculum of the society and was initiated into secret chambers. Groups who met in secret and whose identities were hidden even from each other.

I began to learn the true nature of the castle and the great King who dwelt there. I became a little wrapped up in these matters, studying maps and diagrams, neglecting my family and the duties of my business. Had it not been for my wife, perhaps things would have gone badly for me, but she took me to one side and made it very clear where my best interests lay. I kept on with my studies, but I began to spend more time with the children than on our philanthropic work.

Now my businesses were well established by now and save for a common duty of care towards those I had trusted with my affairs, I had no need to work. My fame had spread around the empire. People began to receive visitors asking for audience, requests for me to give lectures and they wanted to share the secrets of success in business and in life.

Look at his wealth, they said. Look at his family and his reputation. Look at his beautiful villas, his farms, his houses in all the towns around the lake. Surely, he is man who can show us the way that we may be as happy and as successful as he is.

Well, the truth was there were certain matters that I wanted to share and my feet itched for the road. I don't so much thirst for the journey to the castle. I'd learned so much, but my thirst for the journey to the castle was undiminished. On the contrary, I was strengthened. Now I believed I held the key that would gain me admittance to the libraries and gardens and perhaps even an audience of the great King himself.

But I had a problem, Igor. I had a problem.

Igor:

◆ **What was that?**

Robin: Well, said the merchant, I didn't want to leave my life. I didn't want to leave my children. But it was here, again, that my wife proved her worth. Sensing my restlessness, she took me aside again and she said, look, do you think you're the only one who wants to see more of the world? I want to forge a reputation too.

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I saw that I'd fallen into the role of a husband and father and in doing so, I'd cast her as a wife and a mother. I'd forgotten the very thing that brought us together in the first place, which was this quest for knowledge. So we left our business in capable hands and we began a great lecture tour from town to village. Sometimes diverting here or there, always heading around the river to this, our final meeting place.

People flock to see our lectures now. Maria proved to a powerful orator as well. She could arouse an audience, invoking in them a great will to succeed. I would lecture too and answer the many questions put to me. I guess this has been my life for almost a year now. I confess we've made as much money again from our tour as I ever did from the newspapers.

I must tell you of one thing that happened on this last part of the journey, though, that did shake my fate a little bit. When we crossed a river and were looking for a place to stay, just to rest and take our lunch, we saw a group of people listening to a man on the bank overlooking the river obviously, another teacher. Well, we settled ourselves down away from the crowd and as soon as I knew everything was being set up, I went to the edge of the group and began listening.

The man looked up and spotted me. Our eyes met. I swear a shiver passed down my spine. There was something honest in his look. Some power I hadn't felt before. The truth is I felt that he saw me for what I was and what I was, was a well-meaning but bumbling and pompous old fool. There you go.

He smiled a welcome. He gestured for me to sit. He didn't interrupt the flow of his story. Now I've studied with many teachers. Many of them believed they were the guardians and prophets of a great truth. This man didn't have any of that. He didn't answer questions; he asked them. He would say perhaps and maybe and I don't know. When he chose to answer a question, he'd just begin to tell a story. It would be a simple story.

First, thinking it was about one then, then you'd be sure it was about something else. Then again, you'd think it was about nothing at all, but somehow you were left with a feeling that your question was answered or that it would be if you just went away and dreamt on it some more.

It wasn't just what he said that affected me so greatly, but the manner in which he spoke. There was a strength and gentleness in him. It was as if he had no fear of anything at all. Listening to him, I felt all the knowledge, all the books that I'd read just kind of dissolving around me.

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There was some simple truth in just the words that came out of his mouth. Seeing an opportunity, I asked the question that had been my study for the whole my journey around the lake. Teacher, I asked, what's the true nature of the great King of the lake? How can I gain admittance to the castle?

The man looked at me. I don't know just how old he was. He said, I'll give you an answer, but I don't think it's the answer you're looking for, but it's the only answer I have. In the lake lives a kind of fish. You know, all the roads, all the rivers in this part of the world lead down to this lake and all the stories end here. A fish that lives in this lake, an ancient denizen that has lived here long before man came.

The fish are born in the young streams at the foot of the mountains. They grow to adulthood. They flow down the stream, down to the river and into the lake. They remain there in the lake for perhaps a year. They feed, they grow strong. Just before the anniversary of their birth, they're filled with a great yearning, an inescapable desire and they set off on a journey back of the river, back to the stream to the very place in which they were born.

No one knows how they get there, how they know that that's their place, but they make it there, they lay their eggs and for many, that's the end of their short existence because the journey back to that place is so tiring. They're exhausted and they die. Just a few of those fish survive the difficult journey and they're carried by the stream back to the river, back to the lake and they live that year again, they feed and they grow strong.

Once they've done that once, it's rare for a fish to make this journey even once, but rarer still for one to make it twice, but once they've made it twice, those fish that do survive grow bigger and stronger with each year's journey and they live no one knows how long.

Now, the philosophers and the scientists will tell you it's the same water that flows from the mountains through the stream into the lake, the same water that evaporates out into the clouds, thaws again on the mountain and travels down the stream into the river and the lake but you've never crossed the same stream twice. It's always different.

I don't know who your King is. I've never met him. I don't know what awaits you in the castle. If I did meet the great King, I suspect that I would discover that, just like you, he had been a boy and, just like you, he will be an old man. He is a man, is he not, just like you?

Well, I didn't know what to say. I had nothing to say. It was as if I had to find a whole new way of looking at the world and to be honest, I'm not sure that I've found it yet, but I did know that I had to complete my journey. I had to know the

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truth. I wanted to gain admittance to the castle. I cannot tell you what it is, but the desire is still inside me. What do you say?

I had to pause and listened. He looked around at the town there, the lake, the castle on the island in the lake. What journeys we've had, he said. We set out in different directions and yet we arrived at the same place and found each other. What next, said the merchant? Let's complete our journey together. Let's complete our journey together.

I have more gold than we could carry, more titles than I could write on my coat. Together we have experience, skill and much wisdom. I long to stand in the garden of the castle, to peruse its libraries and talk with its King; let us not wait any longer. I shall send word back to my house, fetch my wife and together we shall take boat. Let's go.

The hunter laughs and, for the first time probably since we've seen him, there's an ease and just a natural joy in him. He smiles at his friend. Well, my friend, he says, we'll travel to the castle today. You're learning your tales. They'll serve you well with the great King. He loves to learn of the affairs of his kingdom, but you will need no gold today. No gold will buy you a passage there's only one ferry that passes across to the lake island and I am the ferry man.

Igor: Well Robin, what can I say? Robin that's just fantastic. That story is involved, it's detailed and it comes in full circle. I love the way that you finished the story with the actual quest, which is to find the ferry man in the first place and then, of course, one of them has become the very person.

Something came up at the end of that story, which I think we haven't really touched on yet. We've touched on it indirectly. I'd like to really have a little bit more discussion of this, because I think it's an important part. It's an extension, of the idea, that the biggest power of stories come through vulnerability.

We had it with the hunter, with his powerfully moving tale, but we also had it just there with the merchant who became a scholar and how much more charming he becomes when he talks about his successes and everything else and its fine.

It's interesting, but the bit where I personally think most people will feel the strongest or get the strongest connection to the story is the bit where he turns around, meets this other teacher, turns around and is quite honest about himself and says, you know what I was a bumbling fool. Well meaning, but just an idiot anyway.

Again, it goes back to what you said before. The power of something, the bit where people get sucked in suddenly and something deeper happens in the story is when you're willing to be vulnerable. The bit I want to talk about in this

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whole idea is creating that safe space within which it can happen. It happened with the hunter because the people were very kind and let him be first and then when they listened, they listened a certain way.

It happened with the merchant because when he was connecting that that teacher, it held wisdom. There's a sense of acceptance of what was going on there as well. It happens to us as an audience when we hear someone sharing something that is maybe painful or embarrassing and we want to encourage them and we want to be there for them.

So the question then is, how do we create that safe space so that the people who are going to take down, shall we say more of the warrior's path and the adventurous path to share those vulnerable moments to make more powerful moments with people?

- ◆ **How do they create that safe space so that they don't share it in an inappropriate way, in a way that's going to make someone take advantage of them or get them to lose face in some way that is going to be detrimental for them?**

Robin: It's always important to bear in mind, politics. I guess people aren't always nice. However, I've generally found that most people I meet, for example, in the situation of presenting or performing in front of a large group of people where you're all gathered, together. The fact is that those people want to see you succeed.

You saw this earlier. The success, your ability to be vulnerable in the moment in front of a group of people simply depends on that space that is created between you and the audience. It's something that you have to feel out for yourself, but you recognize it. I've had people in my life come up to me and just say I don't know why, but for some reason I think I can tell you this because you're actually giving out a quality of non-judgment, of respect and appreciation for all that they are.

When you do that, you let people be themselves. When you recognize that in yourself, that quality of being a great audience member, you'll realize, that when somebody's telling a story, particularly when it's something for which they feel vulnerable or strongly about; you'll be aware that you react in certain ways to encourage them.

To demonstrate to them that they have this space, that you're going to give them that space. Simply notice those feelings, of course, because that again as we said at the beginning, being a great storyteller is becoming aware of that space where the story meets the audience.

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When you can be a great audience, when you can begin to understand how you draw out stories from other people, particularly those ones in which they feel vulnerable, then you'll understand the quality that you have to do it for yourself.

Now I think it's important to say when you're being a storyteller, you are playing a role there's a function that you're playing and I believe when you're truly performing at your best, you've stepped into a place of flow and creativity where you're kind of not responsible for what comes out to some degree. There's a gift working inside you.

Now your motives, you said those stories, certain stories you connect with and certain bits of the stories that I've told today will have resonated with you more than others. It's like I read books all the time and sometimes they'll go off into florid descriptions of landscape. Well, I don't actually need to read every word of that. I can kind of just look at the paragraph or the page and make a picture in my head of what it is the words are describing and then flip onto the next page. I don't have to read every single word.

So I'll kind of skim through it and there will be parts of stories that you can think aren't directly relevant to you. Hey, guess what? It's a smokescreen. There are bits that are going to be powerful to different people. Different people are going to respond in different ways, but you can hide a real emotional truth because the stories that come around it prepare the ground, they set the scene, they build up the characters and they create engagement. So when you get to the kicker, that's really where the vulnerability just comes out.

You're kind of protected. You're protected by the myth of story. You're protected by the cloak of the storyteller. That means that everyone knows that what you're telling are lies. Everyone knows that it's just make believe, even if it's not there's a very specific different quality to the feeling of vulnerability that you exhibit as a storyteller, as opposed to the vulnerability that you might express to your nearest and dearest.

There is this actual very strong will, this strong intention that is structured around the story. It's that strong will and that structure that enable the flow, the gift of creativity to come out of that and connect with people.

So I'm I guess what I'm coming to here is that being vulnerable is probably going to be a lot easier than you thought it was. Just like the guy who went, duh, I'm silly and laughed and wasn't afraid to laugh on the stage.

Igor: I think some of the important things that came up from that little round-trip you gave us there and, again, I totally agree with, is first of all, it's state of mind. Just like hypnosis. If you have a strong hypnotic intent, people will go into profound trance and do all kinds of weird stuff. If you have a strong hypnotic

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doubt, then that gets transferred and people will react. People tend to reciprocate the strongest frame that's being created at that point in time.

So by practicing with other people, by being able to tease out their stories – I particularly like this as an exercise – tease out their stories, their vulnerabilities in a way where they feel safe, not just telling you, but afterwards having told you, they feel that was the right thing. It becomes an unburdening for them, whilst you can respect them as a human being despite whatever embarrassments and whatever they've gotten themselves into.

Once you can go there with other people and you've done it enough that you have this general attitude that, hey, it's fine. You're a human being. I still like you. I still respect you despite the fact that you messed this up in your life and you know what? It's true. You behaved despicably in that situation, but I respect you for having come out of that as a better person, for wanting to not do that again.

Once you have that attitude inside yourself, it kind is weird that other people start reciprocating it. Because by telling the story, pertaining to the vulnerability from the same place, even though there are the emotions, like I was truly embarrassed and whatever, you're telling people, here's how you get to respond to this, by the way.

Here's how to accept this as adopting or accepting the fact that I'm a human being. In a weird sort of way – this is my experience anyway and obviously tell me if it's similar as your experience – in a weird sort of way when you're about to tell something that is vulnerable, my mind at least automatically begins to reframe the situation or create frames ahead of time.

I know that I can't tell this story yet, because I can see where the people listening are. They're not in the place where I would be when I'd be listening to a story that is something really embarrassing or shameful in a way that would be empowering the person telling it. So I have to tell some stories first. I have to create some frameworks first that take them there.

Once they acquire that space, I go okay, these people are here now. Now I can start opening this doorway up and say look, just have a look inside. This is a very delicate room, so please be careful with it, but they're now calmed down enough that they can deal with that fragility in a way that doesn't disempower them as an audience either.

It's just a question of, as you put it before – and I really liked this little exercise – practice getting other people to share their secrets with you and respecting those secrets and by doing that you build like a mental muscle that lets the rest happen automatically. It's a strange little experience when it happens.

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Robin: Just a frame for those of you who find yourselves – because it does happen sometimes. You say the wrong story in the wrong situation and it's a danger that you may come across, but think of it this way. You're actually an explorer and adventurer because whatever most people have in common, whatever the common mood that prevails in that room, if you're crashing into it, then you're actually even more likely to be the crest of the next wave.

Igor: Yeah and I think the important thing is this goes back, again, to the idea of taking risks. I don't think you would say and I definitely wouldn't say this, that you take needless risk or stupid risk and just blurt stuff out, but you do take certain types of risks. They're controlled risks. They're risks that we understand. That's like in a room, you want to move it forward. The energy always has to move forwards, otherwise it dies.

You take the energy forwards by essentially going right back down to basics, which is you trust your unconscious. It tells you, hey, do this one now. Sometimes it gets it wrong. So what? The point is if you listen to it, it becomes very, very attuned. It very quickly gets attuned to a group and understands how and what to say and ironically – and this has been my experience a few times. Not as often as I'd like, but I'm still growing my own storytelling wings as we go along.

One thing that's happened to me is that I end up saying something or telling a story that at first seems inappropriate and then there's like a moment's pause or whatever it is and people kind of shuffle over it and I'm sitting there going, oh my God, what have you done now?

Somehow that opens a door that everyone else was avoiding. It opens a door up that was important to be opened and, as a result, of it things start coming out where it's suddenly okay. It's weird, in retrospect, the story becomes the perfect thing to have said or the thing you shared becomes the perfect thing to have said. It turns out to be the right thing after all, if you're willing to go through that.

Robin: It's like you go in to work the night after the office party and the first thing you say is, oh, do you think we should mention that you and Barbara slept with each other last night?

Igor: Let's not avoid the elephant they want to see, right?

Robin: Exactly.

Igor: So Robin, you've taken us on a fascinating journey. Your story has been delightful. You've managed to weave in all kinds of important principles and we've talked about them in between the sessions as well. I'm just staggered by how much is in that story.

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The idea that everyone can do it it's a powerful thing. You've taken on a powerful emotional rollercoaster. I think if you weren't before, I think after listening to that story, already we start to learn to listen and love stories better. We have a real sense of awareness of how stories can come in different places because you've told different types of stories throughout this whole thing.

You have the theme of the hunter and the merchant, but you weave in all kinds of other things, personal stories, stories from your own life that were disguised as facts and all kinds of other things in between.

That really goes into your core idea, which is, we want to learn to love, listen to and collect stories. At the same time, how do you collect them? How you find those stories is by understanding people or by willing to find that diamond in the rough inside of everyone else, which is that story waiting to come out.

In the process of uncovering that, we actually learn some tremendously important skills as storytellers ourselves. That whole storytelling tradition becomes part of what we're rediscovering as people and as hypnotists in particular, this is important because what we're saying really is we're going back to working the unconscious. We're going back to that place where the unconscious is protecting us and saying, you can trust me with this one. That's what we're doing as hypnotists anyway. It's just another way of learning it.

Then you've thrown some intriguing pebbles our way, which I'm going to look forward to exploring with you later on in this session that you're sharing with us. For example, things around the idea of creativity and improvisation coming, as a result, of structure, so having rules that limit you being the very rules that set you more free that's a little theme that's beginning to develop here, which I look forward to exploring with you more fully later on.

We've clearly seen how having an emotional range draws you into the story more fully. We can't have doom and gloom all the time, we can't have happiness and joy all the time, but we can go through a rollercoaster of an adventure with them. The story of the adventure of the hunter was very moving and very powerful and in a different way, the story of the merchant was very edifying.

It was very educational. It took us through different types of experiences. So you get to choose the kind of stories that take you through the experience that people need to have. The key is the idea that stories create realities for us. I'm going to be listening to the story over and over again, because it really has that encyclopedia of storytelling. It's got the different attitudes of stories.

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The safer stories that teach, the riskier stories that liberate or the riskier stories that transform people and the common ground between them that is really the space between where the hunter and the merchant had their friendship develop and how they don't have to be mutually exclusive at all.

So I for one would like to thank you for that. I've had a tremendous time following you on this journey and hopefully, I haven't interrupted you too much because I always find it fascinating when you weave in so many different disparate topics into a simple idea.

Robin: Did I even give you a chance to interrupt, Igor?

Igor: Well, I for one had plenty of time and I've really enjoyed this, so thanks for doing this with us, Robin.

Robin: What's fun about doing this has been being able to weave together some of the more left-field stuff that I use with some of the more colorful, directly useful tips and tricks that people need to get started in just going out there and becoming aware of the stories that are around them and beginning to capture those.

When I coach people, sometimes we use some really weird and wacky techniques. I've got to tell you that some people have found themselves in a coaching session with me kind of going oh, why? What?

Igor: By the way, guys, I can vouch for this. I've been there myself and it's a tremendous experience. The stuff that comes out at the other end, it's like I had no idea that was in me.

Robin: I want to stress that this is not about being airy-fairy. There's a beautiful quality to certain children's stories. I don't know if that's the kind of stories you want to create. Hypnotists want to create fantastic, involving, engaging metaphors that are vivid and powerful for their clients. You might just want to tell a story to entertain a friend or to make it easier to meet somebody in a social situation.

I've worked with people. I've worked with senior directors of companies like Shell and Procter & Gamble. I worked with a guy who had a 650 million pound property, an investment portfolio. The work that I did with him was essentially just some simple storytelling. I was teaching him how to present figures and the conclusions of those figures to a whole bunch of people.

Out of that work, he actually decided, he found that he had a calling and that calling was to develop social housing. He ended up launching this whole program of social housing. There are buildings all over the UK now that were built because that guy realized he had something important that he wasn't doing, a story that he wanted to share and he connected with the path to share that.

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That's why I absolutely, love the chance that I have to work with people, because everyone is so intelligent and capable, everyone comes with this unique perspective and sometimes you have the honor, I have the honor to see someone blossom and change like that and do something powerful in the world that I could never have done.

Igor: This is kind of where we're going. So for those of listening to this, this has been the first session of – Robin, you're being very generous I've got say with how much you'll be sharing with us because while those of you may be thinking this is the whole of the session for this month's Interview With a Master, it's just the beginning.

So, the story you've been listening to for the last, I don't know, two hours or so, is just to prepare you to be a great storyteller.

In the next session, Robin's promised to teach us the performance skills, the performance secrets of a great storyteller. He's going to include a little secret, which I won't give away just yet, but he's going to create a context in which you can find the perfect place inside your mind to be an instant performer, to be a great performer of stories.

So, instead of just sitting there listening and going, I wish I could tell a story better, you get to get out there and just start sharing your stories with the same kind of excitement that you've heard Robin use in his stories.

That's something's that waiting for us in the next session and I really look forward to that. Robin, I really look forward to speaking to you on that session as well. I think, for now, this is a good point to pause or come to an end for the proceedings we've got so far, unless there's something you want to add. Something we've missed out on so far.

Robin: No. Just go out there and get collecting stories. Find some gems and start sharing them with people.

Igor: Robin, what can I say? This has been a fascinating journey. I love the way you blend realities from story to facts and figures, through teaching to back to your story again. When we look back on the whole experience we've had so far, it feels like I can't actually point at anything I've actually learned, but when I start thinking about the actual elements, the idea of listening, being playful, letting your imagination run away with you, letting stories carry you away to the point you want to share them.

Having destinations in mind, the different types of stories, the more adventure stories, the kind of tougher stories, the gentler stories, the ones you collect that are much more educating, the ideas of how to get the story interesting when things start going wrong – and going wrong can mean going wrong at so many

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different levels of going wrong. Wrong in the story, wrong in your storytelling, wrong in terms of what's going wrong in someone's life.

There's the idea of finding truth in stories, even when the stories are made up, the traditions of stories that are beyond just telling stories. There are written stories and there are so many different places you can find stories that surround your daily life, which we're ignorant of and as we become more sensitized to it, it just becomes a natural part of what we do.

The emotional range that you have in storytelling is particularly impressive and I look forward to your sharing some of those secrets with us in the next session.

Finally, it's your clear passion about storytelling and how it transforms not just the audience, but actually the storyteller himself. I think this is powerful in the work that you do and I've had a great pleasure of working with you, both as a presenter and learning your tricks, is that you do get change of the person when you learn to become a better storyteller and that's something I strongly encourage everyone to listen to Robin's advice.

Go out there, tell stories and listen to his stories again. They will change you and your telling them to someone else will change you even more.

Robin, thank you very much, for sharing your time with us so far.

Robin: Thank you, Igor. It's been a pleasure again. I look forward to the next one. Hey, guys, go out and listen to stories. Go out and get those DVDs out. Enjoy!

Igor: We look forward to seeing you on the next session. This is StreetHypnosis.com. I'm here with Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell from HypnoticStorytelling.com.

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Seminar 2 – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. My name is Igor Ledochowksi and I'm here with Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell from HypnoticStorytelling.com. Robin is one of the best hypnotic storytellers I've come across. As you've already listened to in Session 1, you'll be familiar with his hypnotic storytelling style and it's pretty impressive.

What we're going to be doing today in Session 2, we're going to be focusing on how to actually do what Robin does. So in the first section, we talked about all the things that you need to have inside you to be a great storyteller. Now we're going to talk about the performance skills. How to actually start doing this stuff and becoming a hypnotic storyteller.

First, Robin, welcome back and thank you for sharing all your wonderful insights with us.

Robin: Thank you for the invitation. It's good to be back.

Igor: I know we've got an exciting day ahead of us. We'll be looking at the actual skills of a mesmerizing storyteller, someone who actually can draw people in and get them absolutely fascinated. I think that's actually the secret, isn't it, the idea that you can go there in a way that you love the story and then they love the fact that you love the story too.

Robin: Your mood just becomes infectious.

Igor: That leads us onto the big question, doesn't it.

- ◆ **How do you actually do that?**
- ◆ **How do you become a hypnotic storyteller whose mood, thoughts, ideas, stories, characters and, of course, suggestions just become such an all-encompassing experience that people want to dive in and stay there?**

Robin: That's what we're here for. In the last session, we talked about becoming a great audience member and really beginning to connect for yourself with what it is that fascinates you and excites you and the kind of stories that you like to listen to and to share.

Later on, in the third session, we're going to be looking at actually how you create your own content whether, that's content that comes purely from your imagination or content that's based on your own personal experiences and the lessons that you've learned.

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In this session, I just wanted to focus really on the performance elements of storytelling and how we go about rehearsing and practicing. You're listening to this tape and you've been listening to us telling stories. Hypnotists are going to tell stories and teaching tales. They're going to want to create metaphors and useful stories that teach those life lessons.

Some of you, though, are just going to want to go out and play a little. I know I've had a lot of fun trying out different stories at parties and social events, just to see how people react to them. That's often very entertaining. You know how it is at parties? People always get stuck in the same rut and if you can introduce something a little different, they appreciate that.

Igor: Let me pause there for a second. I think this is very interesting. As hypnotists, we're kind of familiar, this is the modern hypnosis idea that you tell a client a story and say well, that reminds me of a story. I had a client once that did this, or little Prince Charming has a golden bowl and off you go into your little metaphors. In trance, it can be quite fun and it's relatively easy to introduce.

However, for a lot of people who are not, shall we say "natural storytellers," how would you suggest that they go about this in a social setting? Say they're at a party, a bar or a dinner party and everyone's chatting away. They're talking about the hollandaise and how lovely the steak is and, my God, your shoes are beautiful.

- ◆ **How do you go from that to say hey everyone, look at this crazy story I have?**
- ◆ **What is the transition that you can use just to get into it?**

Robin: I think the key in that situation is to build from what you're comfortable with. So start just talking to one person, telling one person, a friend, someone you're comfortable with. In that context, you can just say hey, can I try a story out on you? Be open about it.

Like the other day, somebody dragged me along to a single's night. Okay, I admit it. I was there amongst this big group of people, all kind of looking around. The organizers had set it up so men and women were equally kind of matched and every man had brought a woman and every woman had brought a man that they were friends with.

Everyone was standing around and not really communicating much at all. I just said, somebody told me something the other day and I just can't believe it. It's a true story. I was around at a friend's house and I remember this scene so perfectly. She was in the kitchen making a cup of tea and she told me this story about something that had happened to a friend of hers, where her friend had gone on a trip to France and it was two families going together.

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Her friend ended up with someone's grandma in the back of the car because the kids had gone off somewhere else and that was just the perfect opportunity to introduce that story.

Igor: Well, you have to tell the story now.

◆ **You know you've started it and people are going to be going, what's the grandma story?**

Robin: Well, I think we should, but I think we're going to leave it for a bit.

Igor: Oh no.

◆ **Do you mean we have an open dialogue?**

Robin: I think that might be it, Igor.

Igor: I wonder what's going to happen to grandma. So you've got the nice little sort of nested reality there. So you've stacked the reality between someone else and, I guess what you're saying is, the same techniques that work in hypnosis work in every other context.

It's just like the, my friend John technique. Well, there's my friend Jane, standing by the sink and she told me a story about someone else. That's kind of a nice way to absolve yourself of responsibility about whether or not the story's any good, right?

Robin: Yes. I was just thinking actually – because there's another element to this in this idea of building. If you're comfortable talking to one person and doing that, then I'll tell you another little story. I used to do what they call hatting and barking.

Igor:

◆ **What's hatting?**

Robin: It's, basically, where you've got a street theatre group and they're going to do a performance. Beforehand, you kind of want to set the scene. You want to get the crowd there. You want to kind of create the space.

I remember once being at this festival and the way that the site was organized it was a little space where the performance was going to take place. There were just a couple of groups of people kind of talking here and there, but there was a constant stream of people just passing the space and really ignoring what was going on.

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I kind of looked at all the people in this area and I kind of thought, well, how can we actually just block the road? How can we block this stream of people and create a buzz around this performance space using what's available, which is people?

So I went up to one of the groups and I just started talking to them. I said, hi and it's a festival so everyone's kind of talking away anyway. I just started telling a few stories about what had been going on and asking people about their experiences. So when they get to telling stories, it's always easier to share.

Then when this little group of two or three people were buzzing a little bit, I kind of leaned over across the area where people were coming by and I opened up another group and just to talk to them and brought them in. Suddenly, some of the people who were in the stream flowing by just kind of got blocked into the group and ended up talking there.

So suddenly we've created this little block in the flow of people who are actually engaged. If you can just imagine how that extended out by just reaching out into different groups and getting them involved with each other. Suddenly, we created a little block that people then joined because like, what's going on? What's going on?

Then when we had a nice mass of people, we kind of went, all right, okay, let's tell a story and we began the whole build-up for the show that we were going to do.

Igor: Perfect and that, by the way, is actually a good tactic for people to just keep in the back of your head. It's one of the classic, shall we say street hypnosis tactics, which is you get groups of people that don't know each other. You become the lynch pin that introduces them and there's always a buzz when people that don't know each other meet each other, even if there's different groups.

This is a great thing for breaking down social conventions and creating a new sort of buzz, which you can then quite happily lead as a hypnotist in different directions. It's a very, very elegant way to do that. That's a great example of Robin using it to create a new energy, which will allow people to get absorbed by the street theatre.

Robin: That context there is very much a performance context, where you're there for the storytelling, but you can see there's obviously a continuum in the build-up for that.

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Igor: So now we've got the idea of different contexts. We've got the idea of the hypnotist, the therapist who we're pretty familiar with. We've got the idea of the social person that wants to do this at parties or social gatherings just to become a little bit more sociable perhaps. We've got the idea of the artist who's telling stories for the sake of telling stories.

Even if the stories they're telling are loaded with positive teaching tales and so on, he's still telling the story more for the art and the pleasure of it than anything else.

- ◆ **What about the practical sides?**
- ◆ **What about the people who want to use it at work or in a sales meeting?**
- ◆ **How can you introduce and use stories there?**

Robin: That's a very useful thing to do. How to do it is very context-dependent because, of course, most companies have a culture in the way they do presentations and the way they communicate with each other. Unfortunately, in a lot of companies, that is PowerPoint. You need to be able to fulfill the expectations that your company culture has and add something extra to it.

It's actually a lot easier than it might seem at the beginning. The thing to remember when you're doing presentations in a corporate context is you've got to pace the culture that you're working in effectively and everything else still counts. Everything about using stories to elicit states, to be metaphors for the buying experience and to create, the words that you're using with your customers, your clients or your suppliers are fundamental to the story of how you work together.

For example, a friend of mine recently was working on a project, a new media website thing and they decided to stop calling their suppliers, suppliers. They now call them partners. As soon as they started calling them partners, they're entire relationship with that group of people changed because they suddenly bought into the process a lot more. That was just one word.

Igor:

- ◆ **Was that a story you just told us there, Robin?**

Robin: Damn. Have I done it again?

Igor: So, are you suggesting then that people, even if there's a culture that doesn't necessarily, facilitate these stories they can just turn around and kind of slide them in?

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Because, that story you just told was not even a minute long, so as they're setting up their slide deck or their computer, they can say oh, we did this the other day and we had a client who – and suddenly you're in the middle of story already.

Robin: Yeah, that's a good piece of indirection.

Igor: Right. So the things that are coming out here are you can use stories officially as a way of pleasing people or providing information, which is what the artist and therapist would do. You might even do it in a social setting just because it's amusing people. But then there's the other side, which is the story you just casually drop in that no one even realizes that you've told a story and that's more to create an atmosphere to build certain things up.

I imagine that when you introduced yourself to your groups during your street theatre performance that you didn't just go up and say hey guys, let me tell you a story and get into this whole performance.

Instead you're going, hey guys, what are you guys up to? Oh, this is wonderful. Hey, you know what? You remind me of my cousin so and so and then off you go into a little story and they're all laughing. Then they tell a story and someone else tells a story and they say hey come of here. This guy here said something else interesting.

Suddenly, you have this buzz starting to build up, which is done much more on an informal basis, much more indirect than trying to force a story on someone by saying can I tell you a story now?

Excellent. So we've got the idea of context so you can get the sense that storytelling is still part of a social context, although once the story kicks off, we're elevating ourselves above the regular social context and it becomes more like a monologue with reactions.

- ◆ **What do you actually do now?**
- ◆ **What are the skills or the things that a storyteller must be able to do to be able to hold the group, tell the story, build it up and so many different things that they have to keep in mind?**
- ◆ **How do they keep track of it all?**

Robin: Before I go into that, just one last thing on the context, on the corporate storytelling side of things because I was being a bit vague there. I'll give you a specific example.

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I was working with this guy who ran a – he was the director and stakeholder in a property development company who had a portfolio of about 650 million quid. He came to me initially because he wanted to present figures and kind of bring those figures to life.

I struggled to find a relevant thread and way into this until I asked him a few things about it. I was like, okay, so when your directors went on your last jolly together, when you hang out, what do you do? He said, sailing. We go sailing. So suddenly, we had the context in which he could tell a story that everyone in the room would relate to and understand.

Igor: Okay. Let's move on then and actually let's look at the actual skills of an actor, storytelling as a performance thing. I know you have a nice interesting and very memorable metaphor to make it easy for people to remember all the things that they have to do.

Robin: Yeah, sure.

Igor:

◆ **Can you kind of launch us into that a little?**

Robin: We talked already about the difference between storytelling and theatre, I think and the idea that storytelling is much more directly engaged with the audience. Your relation to them is involved more in a feedback loop, like with hypnosis and your theatre shows – we talk about in the theatre the fourth wall that separates you its the invisible transparent wall that the stage curtain closes over.

Theatre, of course, breaks out tradition as well, but when you're preparing for a theatre show, there are so many different elements that you want to get in place.

Obviously, you've got the script. You've got the content of the story and what's happening. You've got the actors who are going to perform that. You've got a director who runs the rehearsal period, who stands there and takes the place of the audience through the process of rehearsal and practice and by giving suggestions and helping the actors create choices, brings the whole story to life.

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Seminar 2 – Part 2

Igor: So I don't know if you want to move on from these core skills yet, but there is also the actual performance element. I mean we're talking about nebulous things right now. You know intention, states and going first, reading the audience and incorporating them.

I think they're very important, but in terms of the actual physical things, are there some things people can practice and watch themselves do that they can incorporate in terms of playing with their voice or their bodies in a way to make the stories more powerful, more charming or engaging.

Robin: Absolutely, especially in that situation where you want to go and start telling stories in social situations. You're the performer. You are the theatre. You are it. You're all of it. It's very important to really kind of look at each different element of what makes up a performance.

Over the course of weeks, say nine weeks, really take the time each week to look at a different aspect of your own performance and how your storytelling comes across in the context in which you're practicing.

Igor: Let's imagine that I want to put myself through this sort of nine-week program. I know you coach people and you have a lot of content and details and exercises you put people through and so on, but just to keep it very simple.

- ◆ **Could you tell me the kind of things that I might want to focus on in the first week to get myself into being a more expressive storyteller?**

Robin: The first stage, I believe, is to look at body language and how you actually move, how you feel and how comfortable you are on stage. Your body is going to be expressing and as soon as people see you, know so much about you simply in the way you stand, from the clothes you wear. We get unconscious impressions from people.

The first step, obviously, for you is going to be being sure that you're in that zone where you're comfortable and that what you're experiencing and project out is congruent with the story that you're telling.

Now people talk a lot about what's right or wrong. Should you do this, or should you cross your hands? Should you move about a lot? Should you stand still? To begin with, you need to start playing around with all of those things. As a storyteller, you're standing there as yourself and you come with a whole set of mannerisms.

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Let's face it, the first time I heard myself talk on an audio recording, I was so embarrassed because I could hear the semblance in my voice and the slight campness sometimes or the trace of an accent here. Actually, sometimes I sound like my mom or my dad, the same way with the way that we look. The first time I saw myself on a video as opposed to looking at myself in my mirror, in the mirror. Again, I was shocked by how similar I looked to my dad and how one side of my face was different from the other.

It's very easy. Sometimes people do get caught up in these things, but the thing to realize is that you've gone through all of your life and people have been listening to the sound of your voice and they've seen your face and what you look like when you're standing up in front of people and they haven't run away screaming yet.

Igor: Right and it's kind of important to keep it in perspective because you have to spend your whole life being you.

- ◆ **Why change it now just because you suddenly found a different you than you thought you were at the time?**

Robin: Exactly.

Igor:

- ◆ **How might someone get some feedback in terms of what they're body language is doing and what its impact is?**

Robin: If you can, use a webcam. If you can, use a mirror. Both of those things give you direct feedback into what you look like. At the same time, everything that you do as a storyteller or a hypnotist out there in the world helps. It all counts. What is the difference? If you just meet somebody in the street – like the other day, I bumped into a friend. She was walking one way up the road and I was walking down the other.

If I had just stood there really still and not really moved, then she would have stopped and talked to me and continued to talk to me. Probably the more I remained rooted and just really comfortable there, feeling the weight of my body balanced on my feet rooting to the earth, the longer she would have stayed.

If I had jumped about and kind of like been a bit more bouncy and kind of moved as if I was just about to head off somewhere, then guess what? She would have been making similar moves to keep going up the hill.

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Igor: Okay, so you're saying most of what you do naturally anyway with people, so that when the right time comes, you get to recreate that experience. For example, you're telling a story about someone who's just having to leave and you just basically do what you just did with your friend whilst you were on the street waiting to get a way because you had an important meeting to go to.

So you just recreate the same scene in your mind and that automatically tells your body how to respond.

◆ Is that kind of what you're suggesting?

Robin: That's a powerful way of practicing, learning these skills and using your natural intuition. Now when you stand in front of an audience, whether it's an audience of one or an audience of two or an audience of 30, they're giving you back body language as well. Once you start to reciprocate that, you start to begin the unconscious rapport building that's going to be part of engaging them fully.

That can be as simple as just looking out and making eye contact with somebody and smiling and they smile back. Maybe somebody's got their arms folded, so you fold your arms.

Igor: It sounds like you have a wealth of stuff to show people about body language, but given that the finite nature of this interview, shall we jump into Week 2?

◆ What kinds of things can we look out for in Week 2?

Robin: In week two, you can start to become a lot more conscious about how you're using your body to anchor both spatially, using the stage and the area around you and in terms of marking out characters, objects, props and the elements of the story.

Igor: Let me just pause you there for a second for those people who don't have an NLP background. By anchoring, of course, you mean creating a hypnotic trigger that tells people whilst I'm standing here, you feel this way; or when I have my face in this position, I'm character X, but when my face is in this position, I'm character Y.

So, just by making these physical shifts, by moving a spot, people start feeling a certain way. By shifting your facial features, they know instantly that you're one person who is talking rather than another person. That's the kind of thing you mean, right?

Robin: Exactly. So a simple example might be where you have a dialog between two characters and you turn to the left and to the right repeatedly, depending on who's talking.

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Igor: Right. I'm reminded of a classic version of this, which was mind-blowing for me. It was in a film I love called 'The Lord of the Rings'. There's a scene, in which Gollum switches between Good and Bad Gollum and it's all done by facial expression. He's talking to himself and he's arguing with himself whether or not he should be doing something nasty to the people he's leaving and he's literally switching mid-sentence from one to the other and it's done in facial expressions and mannerisms.

In a heartbeat it switches over and it's fascinating to watch because all those expressions actually came from the actor doing it live in the moment exactly the same way. That's another powerful example of how you can provide information without having to put a big fat label on it saying, now I'm character X; now I'm character Y.

People automatically assume it and again, you can do it in an even bigger context, like in trainings. You can have the trance chair, the one you sit in when people go into trance. You have the chair. You tell people stories and you've got the corner where you answer certain questions from. You have different places marked out where you go to, to do certain things. Then people go wow, now I'll have this rich experience and the unconscious picks up on it.

Robin: Yeah and if you want to get some great examples of spatial anchoring, comedians are fantastic at this. Eddie Lizard, in particular, I love what he does.

Igor:

◆ **Can you give an example of what Eddie Lizard does?**

I personally love Eddie Lizard as well and it's a great example that you love to give that really demonstrates what this is.

Robin: Yeah, because I was working on a show that he performed at the Diamond. I used to do crew work, stage management stuff for the shows at the Diamond. He did this fantastic set in which he kind of built up all of these different routines and each of them kind of had a little mime.

There was one, which was kind of vacuum cleaning, he would just do a couple of little Hoovering motions and he would do it at the peak of laughter. When people were already just rolling around with the jokes that he was telling and just the funny connections he's making.

Then he would go on and he'd seem to go off in some completely abstract way and then he would do another skit. This time it would be a duck, say and he'd have a little movement that was the duck. Again, he'd do the same thing. He'd use all of his routines and all his ability to really know what's going to make the audience laugh next. He'd really get them belly laughing by the time he'd even started the second routine. He just continued to do that.

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Then it was the airplane and each of these little mimes he began to put together. At the end of the show, he did a routine where he just fired off, because there a duck in an airplane with a Hoover. Suddenly, you've got all of these different elements coming together, firing off humor laughter that he's already established earlier.

Igor: So, basically, the whole audience must have gone wild because you have three different types of humor suddenly coming together and you're having those feelings being shot off in your nervous system at the same time, so you'll probably have everyone running off to the toilets before they wet themselves with laughter.

Robin: I'll tell you what, it totally worked for me. I've seen a lot of shows in my time and that's one stands out.

Igor: Right, obviously a powerful experience you had there.

Robin: Let's move into the third week taking that idea of those little gestures, those little movements and use of the stage to describe different locations or whatever, to the actual miming out of stories. Because, as a storyteller, you can stand there and be telling the audience about something that's going on, or you can be kind of stepping into the story and acting out the journey of the character.

This is the great thing about storytelling is you get to jump from one position to the other. You get to kind of get lost in that character and when you do that, you'll find that you really kind of begin to get engaged far more in what's going on. It's just because you're associating into it that it's much easier to get creatively crazy and the audience will love that.

At the same time, you can step out of that role, walk forward and connect with the audience directly using your initial persona and kind of re-engage them. Comment on the story that's going on or draw out again the similarities between their situation and the situation that's happening in the story.

Igor: This whole miming thing sounds like a bit of an extension of the two previous weeks— body language so you get a sense of what movements have what kind of effect. Then, the idea of what you call spatial anchoring – the idea of creating a trigger so people will recognize a position or a location or gesture as meaning something specific.

When you put them together, you have subtext with meaning coming on. What miming lets you do is put those all together into an even richer category to use as like a third level of information.

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Robin: Yeah, absolutely. It's also making that step into first person association, which is really important.

Igor: Which helps you as a storyteller tell the story better because now you are living the story and just giving, shall we say natural reactions rather than trying to tell a story that you can't even picture yourself in your own mind.

Robin: Yes. It reminds me of something you taught me in hypnosis, which is you're the anchor. Your body is the anchor your presence in the room in the anchor.

Igor: Which goes back to the old idea that hypnosis is not something you do; it's something you become and you let people just respond to it. Miming lets you become the story, so people respond to the story more deeply because you are the story. You're living it. We've got these physical skills that we've been focusing on.

◆ What are we going to start doing in Week 4 that is going to take us to the next level?

Robin: One of the things that makes a huge difference whenever stories are being told is tonality. The amount of richness and depth that you can put into your voice and the kind of flexibility and range that you have. It's not just about marking out different characters. You'll find that talking and communicating at different pitches have a different effect on the audience.

If you kind of have a stutter or there's some kind of rhythm, it actually teaches people something about your thinking processes. When you use your tonality to slow down and to describe and elicit comfortable states of mind, that's as important as being able to just go fucking crazy because something's going on now and we have to do something about it!

Practicing tonality is so important, Igor!

Igor: I love the way that you do what you talk about. I wish more people would do that. So rather than just talking like, yeah, you've got to have tonality, tonality is important, you're actually doing it and you're actually demonstrating it over and over again I think that's a really charming way. That's one reason your storytelling coaching programs are so powerful, even the ones that are done on the phone, because you're constantly doing it.

If you want to get someone into something, you've probably been doing it for like 10 minutes before you even ask to do it half the time – and this has been my experience with Robin – half the time you get to the point where he starts doing something and you automatically switch to match him.

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So, he doesn't even bother telling you anymore what you should be doing because you're doing it anyway, which is much more powerful because then your conscious mind doesn't interfere with it anymore, like going, oh what do I do now? He just gives you a little subtle hint and suddenly, bang, it all comes together and you think you've done it, which is ingenious.

It's a real pleasure whenever you do these things, Robin.

Robin: Thank you. I think...

Igor: Go on.

Robin: I'm sorry. I thought maybe you had more.

Igor: No- no- no, the love fest is over now.

Robin: It's vital that you really begin to enjoy just the range and power of your own voice is capable of. Go sing. I know some people love singing. I know some people who did it as a child and maybe it's something they used to enjoy. Other people, it's never something that's been in their life and maybe it's embarrassing because of associations from school or church or whatever, but it's a fabulous way, even if you're just in your bath to really know what's it's like to howl out loud. Well, I've got a beach here, so I can go down the beach and shout at the waves.

Igor: Well, you know, this idea of singing reminds me of the workshop that you and I did together once on storytelling. We had a group of people there. There were like 40 or 50 people and we're all going to do a little story, so it's quiet. We notice that we're talking about these things, about being more flexible, about going out of our range and all the rest of it. They're nodding, but when they go back to their circles, they start telling the stories in the same way again.

So you being yourself, Robin, you have 50 people and someone says, everyone stand up. Suddenly, Robin does a singing lesson. He gets one side of the group to just make random sounds and louder and louder. The other group puts a counter in and then he's put another third group that starts singing some random thing. It slowly starts building up this sort of rhythm. It was actually a nice *a cappella* sort of thing going on between the different groups.

You built up this wonderful competition between them. So you're having some nice little things going on there to get people to get louder and louder, faster and faster, softer and softer, bringing them through the whole range the words were totally irrelevant. Then you send them off for the exercise again.

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At that point, you should have seen the stories these guys were coming up with. The irony is, it wasn't just their voices that got more flexible. You had people standing up on chairs and shouting at people on the floor. You had people shaking part of the audience. You had people kind of very quietly pulling people together like into a little huddle. It was like, my God, what have you done to these people?

The whole exercise took, what, 10 minutes; 15 minutes at the most? So the idea of using your voice, the idea of tonality, from first-hand experience, guys, when he tells you to just take singing lessons, it's not just one of these like, yeah, take some singing lessons. If you find someone who can really inspire you in terms of singing, it releases your voice. When your voice is released, a lot of these other things happen automatically.

Robin: Absolutely. It's creating that sense of connection to the emotional heart of what you're doing, really. Actually, what that story reminds me about, Igor, is just how much fun it gets to be.

I remember a friend of ours standing in one of the workshops just laughing her head off saying, I can't believe I've ever had so much fun. I had to agree with her at that point in time because it can be very powerful stuff.

Igor: And that's really how it should be. The point of being a storyteller isn't just so you have more influence and power and are socially more attractive and all the rest of it. Those, in my opinion, are all the side effects. The fact that your life gets better, that people want to buy more of your stuff, be with you more and all the rest of it those, are inevitable side effects that come with it.

The real idea of storytelling is just so much crazy fun, you're going to want to end up switching the TV off and just tell people stories because it's just way more interesting than watching someone else have fun on the TV stage.

Robin: That's certainly what's going to happen if you come over to my house.

Igor: He's not joking, folks. Robin lives a very interesting life. Without getting too much into the distractions, let's move onto Week 5. So we've got the idea of body language, the anchoring stuff, the miming and we're now freeing our voices up.

◆ What's the next thing to focus on?

Robin: By this stage, your voice and your body are really kind of starting to come to life in performance. You have a lot more flexibility and confidence in what you're doing and in the areas that you need to improve.

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I like to kind of refocus at this point on the audience and how you're now going to use that additional flexibility that you have to pace your audience better. Having flexible tonality obviously helps you to elicit states, to describe different kinds of places in different ways. Being able to talk quickly and to kind of push energy out into people has a different effect.

As you do this, as you begin to really enjoy exaggerating and jumping into the real fun of being flexible in how you perform and how you use your body, you'll notice how people respond to you differently. They will respond back more powerfully. Sometimes that will be WHOA! Too much! Sometimes it will be that they're leaning forward and getting engaged.

Now that you're starting to change behaviors that you've had up to this point, it's time to refocus on that sensory experience and really use what you're doing powerfully with the audience.

Igor: What you're suggestion is, you go out of the box and you break the limits and go far afield. Go mental, Bohemian, crazy, wearing a wig, rhapsody type stuff. Then once you've been out there to kind of push the boundaries further out, you soften it off again and you go back to the idea of being part of the audience and interacting with them at a little more, shall we say appropriate level, which is the idea of keeping in touch with the audience.

Now you can always lead them further because your nervous system, your whole neurology is capable of going further than it was before. Hence, it's going to be easier for you to tell the stories without constraint because you'll be freer to go to these areas that you may have been more hesitant about before.

Robin: Absolutely. I guess it works a little bit like fractionation, you know? You take people a little of the way and then you back off some more. Then the next time, you can take them in that direction and they'll go a little bit further.

Igor: That's actually a very powerful concept within storytelling. Here's the thing. The thing about hypnosis is it fits into so many different contexts. So the principle of fractionation, you can fractionate rapport, you can get close to someone and back off, get closer and back off, get closer still and back off. You can fractionate trance, of course. You can also fractionate any kind of state.

So if you want to get people excited, then it might be too much to say come on people, let's get excited! Yay! Yay! They're all going, what? But you get a little bit of excitement and then you just back off. You add a little bit of something else and then you back off. Then something a little bit more and then you back off.

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I remember seeing this – we were talking about theatre stuff. I saw a fantastic burlesque theatre show in London some years back. It was based on an old German kid's book, back in the days when kids' books were very nasty, where you cut people's fingers off and teaching tales where if you don't eat your soup, you get thrown out a window and die those kinds of things. So it was real macabre and sinister, but it was a funny version of this.

The narrator was this really weird sort of pasty-white face, like a mime type character who actually spoke. He was hysterical. He came out on stage and at first he was just weird. Then he disappeared and something would happen and he'd come back on. His weirdness by now was not so intense, although he was probably still being quite a bit weird, but we kind of had a chance to think about it.

By the end of the play, he was so – I mean I can't even begin to tell you the stuff he was doing. He was just so bizarre, but we were all just wetting ourselves with laughter because he managed to break the weirdness into really funny.

By introducing himself a little bit at a time and little titters and little giggles at what he'd said and then he'd disappear, that really builds it up. So if you want to take people through states that they're not maybe comfortable with or that they're not used to, or it's too far from where they were at normally, a really nice way to do that is what you're saying, which is just fractionate it.

Just give them a little bit and then go off. Give a little bit and then go off. Each time, just like an exercise wheel, it's easier for them to get there. Let's move onto Week 6.

◆ What happens in Week 6, now that we've got all these skills building up?

Robin: Everything else still counts. What I like to do at this point is to begin to really develop our flexibility with language and the full use of what's possible with your voice.

Remember, this is hypnotic storytelling. So it's key to drill certain language patterns and practice things like embedded commands. To do that in a playful way, like you described earlier – you know, you might just exaggerate it – but to drill those patterns so that they are going to become available to you spontaneously while you're storytelling.

Igor: Right. Now I know you have dozens, if not hundreds, of these patterns that you use yourself and that you take people through in your coaching programs.

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- ◆ Can you give us just a couple of examples of the kind of thing you mean so that people who are listening to this can start playing with some of these ideas and maybe develop their own?

Robin: Certainly. For example, with embedded commands, I like to practice two or three methods when I'm storytelling. The one is simply the head tilt. You embed the command just simply by talking over to some imaginary person and they're on your right-hand side.

I tell stories to fairly large groups of people some of the time and so I draw myself in embedding commands to specific people using them as an anchor and then allowing that to kind of ripple out from that person.

Igor:

- ◆ How would you drill that?
- ◆ What would you actually do?

Do you imagine the audience in front of you and say there's Bill in the front row? There's Mary in the middle row, John in the back and then there's someone else around. You just imagine telling your story and then looking at John at one point and at Mary the other and so on.

- ◆ What are the actual steps you go through, the actual drilling process?

Robin: That's exactly what I do in the same way that, while I'm listening to you and you can hear me, I'm imagining where you are and I have very limited information about the environment that you're in, but I've still kind of got a sense of your presence.

However, when I do the more performance-based stories the nested loops, like the performance one we'll be doing later, I imagine a whole audience. I can see them now out in front of me. I perform to them directly and there are specific people in the audience who I target different embedded commands to.

It's just as effective to pick one thing, like it might be. For example, okay I'm going to embed commands by deliberately talking to the person on my left-hand side. Then just go out and start connecting, start doing what you're doing and throw yourself into that and make mistakes.

Igor: Right. Now that's a very key thing. If you're not doing it in the real world, then you'll never do it in the real world. There's always going to be that one, oh man, I've just got to do it stage, where you go from even just rehearsing in your bedroom with your proverbial hairbrush to where you actually have to start

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doing it with real people because it's a very different experience when someone else is hearing you and you know it.

Believe it or not, neurologically speaking, it actually activates a different part of your brain. If you think about something, a little bit of your brain lights up. If you actually say something out loud, much more of your brain lights up. If you say something out loud and someone else hears you and you know they're hearing you, your brain just goes crazy. A lot more of it lights up.

Ironically, the same is true, by the way, if you expect someone is going to listen to what you say even if they're not there. Classically, of course, right now it's happening between you and I, Robin. I can't see you; you can't see me because this is over massive distances. My eyes are not so good that I can look across, what is it, 9,000 miles? But I know you're listening, so my brain is much more engaged, much more active.

You can use that, for example, by say you do an audio recording and make sure a friend listens to it. Or, one of the classic ones, of course, is with a coach. You get them on the phone, you call up someone, maybe a friend that's going to be listeners to stories and you trade stories this way or you actually have a coach that helps you out with this. Your brain goes into the same state it does when it's there in front of a real person. Hence, you have that connection thing.

It's something that a lot of people hesitate over doing and the sooner they get over the hesitation and actually do it in the real world, the sooner the rewards will come their way.

Robin: What's going to help you do that even more effectively is Week 7, which is just looking at representational systems. That's a term from NLP and the hypnosis. You understand the idea of the way that we represent our experience through visual system, kinesthetic system and auditory system.

Igor: So basically, we're talking the language of the senses. See things, hear things, feel things, taste things and so on.

Robin: That's right. It's worth getting out that NLP primer and going through the list of sub-modalities, playing around with your dictionaries and the various idioms in your language. The more richly you begin to describe the worlds that you're creating, evoking those senses in other people and, of course, you'll have preferences.

You'll have your natural choices in these areas. Again, it's a question of building flexibility. Not just that you can use all and each of the sensory channels to communicate with effectively, but that you can slide and glide between them, creating powerful syntheses. Like I was working with somebody the other day and I discovered something. Igor, I think you'll like this one.

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Igor: Okay.

Robin: It was a straightforward kind of NLP pattern. I had them positively hallucinating themselves at the level of fitness and the optimal weight that they wanted to be and giving me very, very strong indicators of trance. As I had him vividly imagine that I saw him going deeper into trance. I asked him to imagine as he watched himself there, seeing himself the way that he wanted to look when he was at his optimal weight and fitness.

That he heard what he sounded like, what his voice sounded like when he was at that level of fitness. Then I said and what your voice will feel like and he just went down, so far down because that overlap from visual to auditory and then straight into feeling was, for him, the perfect way to...

Igor: It's a great hypnotic technique. This is a power we have in storytelling when we talk about sensory language. There's an old adage in hypnosis that everyone will have their favorite language of trance, which is a particular sense will be more active when they're in a hypnotic trance than in another.

When you find that sense, it's a lot easier to get them into trance because you just keep reemphasizing that part of the sensory domain and they go into trance. In stories, of course, we have all the senses open to us. We describe pictures. We mimic sounds or describe sounds. We invoke emotions and feelings, which means, that no matter how large the group is, you can pretty much guarantee you're going to have something in there for everyone, like Shakespeare. We'll call it the Shakespeare hypnosis, if you like.

As long as you're aware of your sensory language, you can't help but whack people out because it's just going to happen at some point.

Robin: And it's so powerful, when you combine that kind of ability to create a rich experience and lead people. David Gordon's book, *Therapeutic Metaphors*, is very useful book to read for anyone who wants to tell stories. Fundamentally, though, it's actually about rap systems, sub-modalities and how to create shifts between those within stories.

Igor: Interesting.

Robin: I often recommend that book, at this point.

Igor:

- ◆ **What do you do at Week 8?**
- ◆ **What is it you start taking people through then?**

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Robin: Just as in week five, when we connect back to pacing, in Week 8, I like to connect back to the initial intention that you begin with, because it's very easy to get lost in the story and to be enjoying it so much. I mean, not that I've ever done this, Igor, but sometimes you get lost and you forget that there's an intention in mind and place where you're going.

Any story has practical limits in terms of how long you're going to be able to keep people there until they need to go to the bar again or the clock runs out and it's time for your next client.

Igor: Right.

Robin: So it's always important to hold and use certain kinds of visualizations and certain techniques that I install in people to help them to just keep the end in mind throughout what they're doing and to hold that intention.

Igor: Because the whole point of being a hypnotic storyteller is that you have a point to telling your hypnotic story. Whether that point is to build rapport and social connections, whether that point is help someone overcome a problem or to be a more active buyer or to do whatever, that point has got to come out and that's what the final end of the story is going to really tie together.

You have to keep that somewhere in your mind whilst performing all these things. Otherwise, the story becomes a regular story rather than a hypnotic one.

Robin: You've got to know when to close the deal.

Igor: That's it.

◆ Speaking of which, what's the final step, step 9 that you want to focus people through?

Robin: Once you are beginning to create these kind of automatic skills that are giving you more flexibilities as a storyteller, once you're really clear about the intention, so much of this stuff is going to become easy for you that you really have a chance to experiment with connecting with real passion with what it is that you're communicating.

As we said at the beginning, it's all about going first. In the same way you learn any skill – when you learn to ski, you start on the beginner's slopes and there are certain drills and skills that you have to learn. Once you've acquired those, then you can venture up onto different slopes and when you're ready to just go off pissed, you can do that do. I suppose for me, connecting with passion is going off the trail and being able to go off the trail and still get to the end.

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Igor:

- ◆ How do you do this?
- ◆ What is it that happens?
- ◆ What do you have to keep in mind to be able to go off the trail and still get to the end at the same time?

Robin: At each stage of the process, you're learning to embody certain things. In the performance enhancement class that we're going to be doing very soon, we're going to look at creating a state of mind. This is something we're going to give you that will provide the unconscious vehicle, the unconscious building block that practically everything you do through your practice builds on.

Igor: You mean you're going to tell people a hypnotic story very shortly in which everything you've been talking about gets naturally associated at the unconscious level?

Robin: I'm afraid I'm going to have to do that.

Igor:

- ◆ What are you doing to us, are you trying to make us into good storytellers?

Robin: I was trying to do something simpler, but I didn't have enough time, so all I could do was give you the best that I had.

Igor: Well, we're going to have to go and accept it.

Robin: I'm really looking forward to the chance to do that with you next, Igor, because it is fundamental that you realize that unconsciously this is all stuff you know already. Putting it together is going to happen naturally as you get more confident with practicing the skills.

Connecting with passion, when we were doing the storytelling earlier in the previous lesson and you commented on a couple of moments where I kind of got lost in it and then I got carried away.

It wasn't a conscious choice and you will find through your practice that your unconscious surprises you. You will do things that you just didn't know that you could do and having done that, you'll understand what I mean.

Igor: Beautiful.

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Robin, I for one am excited because we've covered some serious territory in this section. It's all about really the heart of storytelling, which is the performance skill, how to make the stories great. I think it's to the point where I get to shut up and we get to listen to you tell the story that's going to make us all into amazing storytellers.

Before we do that though, I want to make you a double warning here folks. This is a hypnotic story and this is going to be quite trippy, so just in case any one of you is driving a car or operating any kind of vehicle, this is the time to stop it. If you can't stop that, then stop this recording until you're ready to listen to it in a safe and calm environment where you can probably close your eyes quite comfortably.

That's just a little preamble.

Seminar 2 – Part 3

Igor:

- ◆ How can people start getting comfortable in public places in front of people to tell their stories comfortably and elegantly?

Robin: I think the important thing to begin to realize is that people are afraid of different things. Some people are afraid of spiders, but they're quite happy to go up in an elevator. Other people can't stand next to window and look out 30 feet below, but they're happy handling snakes. People are afraid of different things, and that tells us that the things essentially aren't the problem it's how people are reacting in the situation.

It's funny because if you have my personal experience of growing up, the thought of standing in front of 500 people and being told five minutes before you go on what you're going to talk about, now that's quite exciting. I start feeling like yeah okay, just let me at it. I kind of start thinking of the audience a little bit like a cat thinks about a mouse. People are afraid of different things. Me, I'm actually slightly uncomfortable in different situations.

You know, Igor, I live in Brighton and there's always some event going on in Brighton, some fair or festival. Me and my friend, Suze, we went down to this place called the Peace Center. It's a friend center run by the Quakers and there were a whole lot of stores about different fair trade goods and things like that. There were some notices up to this room, this Greenpeace room and Suze is actually the local Friends of the Earth Coordinator.

We thought we'd go and check out this Greenpeace room. We walked up there, opened the door and walked into it and immediately I realized it was a classroom. It was in the middle of a class. Obviously, it had nothing to do with the fair that was going on and we kind of blundered in during a little break. I could not get out of that room quickly enough. I was like I know this isn't the place. I quickly turned and went and closed the door behind me. I'm outside, and where has Suze gone. She's in there. She's still in there. Five minutes later, she's still in there.

She comes out a bit later okay, let's go. She didn't have any problem just going up to the guy running the class and started to talk to him, even though there were 30 people in the room looking at her. She just knew that she was in the right place. She knew she had a right to be there, but I felt like I was not really meant to be there which is funny, because Suze, if she stood up in front of 30 people to give a presentation would be having nightmares. She told me this because she had a bad experience.

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Lots of people have had bad experiences of speaking in public. I've found two common things actually. When people have to give a presentation just after they've learned some really bad news, like the death of a relative. I've worked with tens of people who've actually been in that situation and it's like just the shock, the stress that they're under in giving that performance, just becomes rooted in this shock reaction.

Then, any time they go to present again or to talk in public they just freeze up and literally, get a shock reaction, so their whole body begins to sweat, shake and they can hardly move.

Suze is a bit like my mom actually, just in that sense of being really confident that you have a right to be where you are. I remember going shopping with her when I was a kid. Oh God, I wished the floor would open up and swallow me because she would stand there and she'd say things, which to me, were really embarrassing and loud and she wouldn't care that everyone could hear her.

I'm sure that also... this is the other thing that makes people scared of talking in public is what they do to you at school. Those early classroom experiences where they humiliate you in front of the whole class frankly. It's like that first day at school when you get there and you don't really know your way around and you kind of run. You're late so you walk into the classroom and you open the door, oh shit. There are all these people looking at you and they're strangers because you've got the wrong room.

So you belt it down the hall and you think, oh no I remember, it's Math. It's Math on Tuesdays. No, no. It's not this class. No, it's Wednesday. It's Geography, you bump straight into the headmaster, who's looking down at you and saying don't run in the hall boy! Oh, nightmares.

Getting up in front of people, performing and singing songs in public, I'm fine with that, but there are certain situations where I lose my cool. I was at a pub karaoke evening a few months ago and I've got this little bit of professional pride because I did perform professionally. The idea of karaoke is not actually something that I'd do for fun. It's like a busman's holiday, but there was a girl there, who I liked and she asked me to accompany her on a song.

She'd chosen this particular song, Under the Bridge. I thought, oh yeah, I know that I'll do that. So I walked up onto the stage and as I got up there the karaoke machine's there in front of me, this old tiny little thing. I realized that the version of the song isn't the one that I know. It's a version by some British girl band. As the karaoke machine starts up, the lyrics and the song music are totally out of time and it keeps jumping.

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So, I'm just standing there attempting to sing along with this, with the woman by my side, breaking into a sweat, wishing the world would just swallow me up right there and then I'm totally making an idiot of myself. I wished I'd never got up there. Help! It can be a real nightmare.

I did actually have a nightmare once where I got up, in my dream I was there and the audience was there. My mom was there, who's like my worst critic. You know, my worst enemy was there. I walk up onto the stage, they're looking at me and I walk up onto the stage, opened my mouth and have absolutely nothing to say. Nothing, I just stand there. I've let everyone down. Those staring eyes are just looking up at me blank faces with no mouths.

That sounds like an exaggeration, but I've met people who that was actually the experience that they had when they stepped onto a stage. They won't see what's out there they're focusing on some internal picture that they created, because there are two ways to be afraid of just speaking in public. There's having some kind of shock or traumatic event, or there's imagining all the ways that it could go wrong.

Suze was a bit like my friend, Tom. I met this guy, Tom, when I was working at the training center in Wales in St. David's. He was a tour leader. He would basically take us coast steering, which is a sport basically where you've got your life jacket on, your helmet on, and you're basically mountaineering, climbing the cliffs, but you're right next to the sea so if you fall off, it's slap bang into the water. Sometimes you have to swim, but that means you can get into all these different caves and go into these different places.

I ended up hanging out with this guy quite a lot. We took a group of teenagers round the cliffs around St. David's. I noticed something kind of unusual. Tom was very shy and didn't really feel comfortable about talking in front of this group of teenagers you could see. Yet, he could stand at the top of a 30 or 40-foot drop, turn his back to it, do a backwards jump somersault and then dive perfectly into the water below. A feat of athleticism which leaves me totally stunned.

I kind of got an idea because he took us up to this cliff, an old quarry and we could just jump off into the water below it was plenty deep enough. I said to Tom look, the thing is your body understands how to deal with stress. There were probably situations – I think everyone has something, whether it's like – I know you enjoy going skiing, Igor. Other people like driving cars fast. Any sport that you do has associated with it a certain level, at which your body performs best.

Tom was a superb athlete. He could just stand on the top of a cliff and perform this fantastic acrobatic maneuver. He could climb up walls that seemed like they were just smooth. I said to him, okay Tom, you're standing here on the cliff

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and if you just close your eyes for a moment and imagine what you're about to do, imagine that movement you're going to make over the cliff. I watched him and as I looked at him, I saw his feet were really firmly rooted into the ground. His knees were a little bit bent and he had good balance. His sacrum seemed kind of loose and his head sat squarely on his spine. His shoulders were relaxed. His head was tilted a little bit backwards as he visualized the movement he was going to make. He was breathing easily, and there was a smile on his face.

I said Tom, if you take those situations in which you feel this confident and you know the limits of your ability so well and imagine how that feels, notice how your feet are rooted on the ground, notice the slight spring in your step and that sense of balance, notice how your breathing is easy and natural. I said what if you just stop and blink for a moment, because behind you there's a group of teenagers here? What if you began very slowly to turn from the cliff with your eyes closed until you're facing them, and only as quickly as you can keep hold of those feelings of confidence, being rooted and balanced and breathing naturally and easily? He just began to turn.

The thing that's important to realize is like any performance, whether it's sport, sails or performing in public like this, there are certain skills you develop, certain attitudes that you can learn. It's possible to learn to control your state of mind quite deliberately. Any actor does this automatically. My flat mate, for example, is a fantastic actress, multi-award winning. I am going to sing her praises.

She goes through a ritual before a performance. For example, recently she was playing the part of Ruth Ellis, who was the last woman to be hanged in UK. Another friend of ours was playing Albert Pierpoynt, the hangman. Every evening before her performance as she's getting ready, she sits in front of the mirror and she has a tape that she makes herself. An mp3 set list that she plays, and it's songs from the period, and the kind of songs that Ruth Ellis would have been listening to, and songs that have a particular meaning, that evoke a particular emotional quality that she wants to bring to the performance.

She has this ritual. She puts on her wig. She goes through putting her makeup on and with each step of this transformation she gets closer to being the character, to being in the state she needs to be in to perform most effectively. You've learned this ritual. Once you've developed this for yourself, it becomes easier and easier.

I'll give you an example. Ian McKellen, who plays Gandalf in 'Lord of the Rings' and is also known as a stage actor. He performs Shakespeare and he was performing King Lear once in London. There's a story about how he's having a conversation off stage in real life with another actor in the play, he's talking about his niece, the state of the nation this, that and the other. He hears his cue

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line and he just stops and without a blink, he turns, walks onto the stage and he is King Lear. It was almost as if there was no moment or thought between the transformation and it was simple. Cue line and he was in there and he was suddenly being in the mindset you need to be in to perform effectively.

Apparently, you can learn how to do this. I didn't know this. If you're lucky enough to have my set of experiences growing up and you'd be as comfortable standing in front of an audience as I am, and you'd probably have to have something like 10,000 hours. Maybe you could do that hypnotically I a trance. It's just a suggestion.

I thought everyone could just walk up to a stranger and start a conversation. I didn't know that you had to be afraid of that. Paul Canner, apparently, he had to learn to do it. At least that's what he told us because he wasn't always a multimillionaire and standing in front of huge audiences every day on TV in the states. He started as a local DJ on the radio station and he used to do shows in pubs and things like that.

He said what I did was I just imagined a pair of shoes. I thought well, a pair of shoes is a bit naff, but how about a circle of pure white light? Or, like in Star Trek where they have the transporters, you step into them and they get blinked down to the other planet and then come back up again. I want one of those and just get a nice column of light, a circle of light.

He said all you need to do is imagine that you're going to step into the state that you need to be in. Before you do that, you can think about well, what are the qualities you'd like to have in that position? Maybe it's about confidence. Maybe it's about holding an intention or maybe it's about being playful or coming across with authority.

He said well, you can just go through each in turn and see what you see, hear what you hear, feel what you feel in those situations in which you perform the best that you can be. Sometimes in hypnosis and NLP, we go through and you can systematically determine okay, I want a bit of this state, this state, this state and you can put them all together. I just like that question actually.

- ✓ How would you be doing this if you were doing it the best that you could?
- ✓ What would that feel like?

There was this guy Oli Larson, I think I got that idea of how are you when you're being the best that you can be, from him. When he used to give workshops and seminars, he'd get up five minutes before he was going to begin, he'd sit on the stage in front of everyone with no props or anything like

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that and he'd look out over the audience. He'd just sit there and look out and the audience would come in and gradually take their places.

I began to wonder, what's he doing exactly while he's sitting there? Because I knew a little bit about modeling, so I started to breathe at the same rate that he was breathing at. His eyes were kind of softly focused, so I copied the same thing with my eyes. Suddenly, I could see the whole room. It was like the whole room sprang into motion. As I looked out over the audience, I could see flashes of movement, you know, like if you watch birds in flight, like a flock of starlings moving, how a pattern seems to ripple here and there.

With my eyes unfocused like that, I could see these patterns and ripples going through the audience. I'd just breathe at the same rate that he was breathing. Oli Larson was this amazing guy. I swear, when you shook hands with him, it was like shaking hands with a mountain. There was something just very solid and grounded about his whole being.

I don't know if you've worked with any Tai Chi Masters, anyone who does any kind of martial arts actually is going to have this strength, just this quality that you can push against them, and the more you push against them, the firmer they seem to become and the more rooted in the ground they seem to be.

He would just sit there on stage. His feet would be firmly rooted on the ground, and his body would be straight and balanced. So I followed his breathing. He was breathing naturally and easily, looking out over the audience. As I watched him, I got this impression as I breathed at the same rate and watched him being so confident and strong there and he was the kind of guy who when he got angry, you felt that anger just rush over you like a wave. It was the same with love. When he looked out and smiled at you, you really felt this sense of connection that he was really looking at you, a member of the audience, not some scary freak-eyed monster.

He would sit there and look out and I watched him and breathed at the same rate that he was breathing, slowly drifting into that really comfortable state of just being at ease right now, I began to notice a golden glow. I could feel like a tingling beginning in my chest where my heart was. It was like, as I breathed in I was breathing in some white light or some golden... I don't know what. I just felt it begin to swirl all around my body, like I was building up this body of light.

I copied this technique that Oli used because he could just sit there in front of an audience and relax by watching them come in. It wasn't just relaxation, he would go into this deeply meditative state, in which he was projecting out all kinds of good intentions in the room and wishing the people in the room well, just with his gaze.

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That's going to work in certain situations, but you don't always want to sit in the front of a room as your audience comes in, sometimes that's not the situation, in which your performance happens. It's could to be flexible, but to always bear in mind that ultimately you have a right to be there and you have a right in that space to control and direct the attention to bring people in.

When I learned to be totally comfortable standing with a group of people, enjoying the experiences in my own body and my reactions to what's going on, I went out and I started trying out some different approaches. I used to teach this business studies group, on fashion and textiles course, for a bunch of kids in their early 20's. I walked into the room and there they all were.

I was in a playful mood. I had a few things, so I set them down and made myself comfortable. I sat in the front and I just looked at out them and smiled, and they all smiled at me, so I smiled back and nodded my head. A number of them had their arms crossed, so I just crossed my arms. I stood there being comfortable and perfectly happy to stand there in silence and just smile.

Very soon a few people at the back started to giggle and that became infectious. It was a fashion and textiles course, so there were loads of pictures on the wall in the back of the room. There were five pictures laid out on the back, which gave me an idea. I turned to the students and said what I want you to do is make me a picture of where you are now. They went away and, of course, they came up with a load of different things.

Some people drew pictures of where they lived and being at college. Other people drew pictures of having loads of debt and needing to make more money and other pictures were about music life and relationships. I said okay, now I want you to make me a picture of where you're going to be at the end of this term when this course finishes.

They went away again and they worked in groups and I showed them around a bit, just so they began to understand this process. Then I said okay, you've got the beginning and the end, there's going to be one in the middle so I'll tell you what, for good measure let's go another one in between those so there's like five in total.

They went away and they drew a set of pictures about what they were going to do for the next term and how they were going to do it. That was good. I liked this idea because with five images, I can hold five images just about, in my mind and project them out onto the back wall. If I'm talking in front of people– I don't know whether you remember, Igor. Igor and I did this fantastic training. It was in a lovely penthouse looking at the bridge in the Thames.

I had a couple of hour's storytelling secrets to do and I hadn't much time to prepare. I went out and started to walk around to think about what I was going

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to do. I just came up with I thought okay, just five things, five points, five pictures to summarize this whole experience. I was out there and consciously went through and chose this is the beginning, that's the end. Then that's halfway between the beginning and end, and that's halfway between there and here and halfway between there and there.

As I was walking around – like what we were talking about before, when you perform and you're preparing for a performance, you've got to associate into it. You've got to be doing the gestures or using the voice and you can do that in your bedroom or you can just imagine doing it. I like to walk around and have a bit more space, find myself a lonely park in which to practice. I came back from that and I thought, hold on a minute it's perfect. I can do my conscious preparation and I've got a whole room of hypnotists here. They can help me unconsciously.

So I turned to Igor and Jodi, who was training with us and I said hey guys, it's time to relax completely now and prepare for performance. Then Igor said...

Igor: Well then, just close your eyes and begin to go into a trance

Robin: That's right

Igor: Because you've seen so many sights

Robin: And as you listen now

Igor: You can drift and find those inner sights

Robin: Slowly, beginning to notice

Igor: The changes, beginning to drift inside

Robin: Happening now

Igor: Those visions

Robin: Quietly return

Igor: Too turn into feelings. Special moments

Robin: Peaceful feelings

Igor: The awareness that you can take those beautiful images

Robin: As your eyes soften and relax

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Igor: And begin to feel more relaxed

Robin: And the muscles around your eyes begin to relax

Igor: Now. The softness of your vision can be mirrored

Robin: You can embrace that softness

Igor: By the softness in your body, muscles relaxing

Robin: That softness feels this breath

Igor: Real comfort

Robin: Spreading down your body

Igor: Inside you know you've had so many experiences

Robin: and whether the right side or the left side relaxes quicker

Igor: And those experiences you can feel

Robin: You can feel

Igor: Your imagination

Robin: That relaxation building

Igor: Growing deeper

Robin: As you drift into comfortable sensations

Igor: And that trance can continue to deepen

Robin: All the way down

Igor: As you feel your mind preparing that journey.

Robin: Your breathing naturally aren't you?

Igor: Finding a comfortable sensation.

Robin: It's a comfortable sensation.

Igor: Breathing it in

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Robin: From the top of your head to the tip of your toes.

Igor: In a natural movement

Robin: And that can be relaxing, can it not?

Igor: Deeper now into trance, developing

Robin: The sound

Igor: This special ability to really learn things.

Robin: As you begin to hear and feel

Igor: Developing new abilities hypnotically

Robin: Knowing that as you deepen in trance

Igor: Going deeper and deeper

Robin: It's just the moment before

Igor: Deeper and deeper

Robin: You drift into a dream

Igor: Deeper and deeper

Robin: That unexplainable feeling

Igor: Deeper and deeper into trance now

Robin: And the changing sensation

Igor: Feeling that dream time beginning

Robin: And in a dream you can begin

Igor: To have any experience you want.

Robin: Imagine that.

Igor: A sense of the inner world meeting you

Robin: And you can begin to move

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Igor: Through a whole landscape inside

Robin: Towards a place

Igor: In which you can find a doorway

Robin: Into the theatre

Igor: Of your unconscious mind now.

Robin: Here, still more in the theatre of the unconscious mind, you open the door to a performance space. You walk in and see yourself standing by the side of the performance space, bathed in a circle of light. As you step onto the stage, a circle of light continues to fill you. You see yourself there standing and you stop and blink as you feel yourself. You see yourself there performing to the best of your ability with confidence breathing easily and naturally, connecting out to the audience.

You see their smiles, their nods. You gather them in and as you see yourself there, it's almost as if a golden light begins to fill you up. And each breath that you take, the body of light glows more until that inner brightness begins to spill out into the room and you notice as you look out over the audience, threads of color intertwine and form a newer light out. You glow out more. With each breath, the light you create begins to fill up the space all around into each and every corner of the room.

You're breathing in the room and breathing it out, filling it up with your light. You feel that coming back to you now as you see yourself there, all the way through to the performance end, enjoying the reactions, the feedback and the experience of beginning now to learn. With glee you step forward into the circle of light. You step into there and once more see now what you'll see, hear what you'll hear and feel what you feel as you enjoy that performance space, letting your light connect out to the audience more each time, with each breath that you take, allowing that connection to become stronger and stronger.

Responding, balancing and playing. Enjoy how good that feels to be so naturally at ease, walk off the stage and from the theatre of the unconscious mind, as you open the door back into the now walking, returning. As you do, only remembering that as you prepare to see yourself succeeding now. With each performance that you experience, you'll learn a little more. You begin to refine and practice.

Igor said...

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Igor: It's time to take these learnings inside and build a real experience of growing as an individual in your own abilities so that, as you begin to emerge back to the world of the outside, bit by bit...

Robin: It's like that...

Igor: ...you reconstruct. That's right.

Robin: That butterfly breaking out from the chrysalis.

Igor: All those learnings

Robin: Or just that moment when you wake up

Igor: Inside...

Robin: And you throw the covers and you stretch.

Igor: Growing deeper, a natural part of you

Robin: Coming out of the old shell

Igor: Express yourself

Robin: That's in the wings of your new self

Igor: Your story is your story

Robin: Because when you can powerfully connect

Igor: And you can connect

Robin: With how enjoyable it can be

Igor: With that story

Robin: You'll discover

Igor: And let it be your truth

Robin: So much more

Igor: Even if that story is just a story now.

Robin: When I began

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Igor: Taking the experience and bringing yourself back

Robin: Was that experience normal?

Igor: Into a normal, everyday, state of consciousness

Robin: With the knowledge

Igor: Of all the things that you've had inside

Robin: will be available to you

Igor: You'll be able to

Robin: In the situations when you need

Igor: Simply relax, blink and breathe, and all the learnings will be there for you now.

As I count from 1-5, just be in touch with other learnings that your body's given you. You've learned to breathe in different ways. So as I count from 1-5, you can learn to breathe at your normal rate. You've learned to blink, all the way open, your eyes into a full emerging of waking state. As I count from 1-5, you can emerge more fully. Your breathing returning, your blinking returning, your arms and legs stretching all by themselves until you're ready to meet the world with the inner hypnotist looking out for you.

1. Coming up slowly;
2. Notice your breathing changing;
3. And all those changes inside ready and waiting for you so that when something on the outside stimulates you, it's there for you;
4. Coming ready now;
5. Open your eyes, blinking, breathing, feeling refreshed, relaxed and alert; simply fantastic

I think it was something like that, wasn't it Robin?

Robin: I can't remember. When I woke up from that trance I was so ready to go because I knew I was ready. I'd prepared consciously and I had just had this wonderful unconscious preparation, this knowledge that I was ready. It was a certain sense of vibrancy and a special magic that meant that not only was I able to deliver the material that I wanted to, but I was free to kind of respond and really interact and incorporate the audience as I did so.

I have to say that, was one of the most fun experiences of performance I've ever had and I've had some great moments standing in front of a thousand people. I'll tell you, that's intense, when people perform on stage, they create

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as much adrenaline as when people are involved in a car crash. It's actually a significant amount of stress, but in that situation, everything just seemed to move fluidly and easily.

I got that preparation idea, that simple way of kind of creating five milestones for your story, the kind of points that you know you need to hit, the scenes – hey guys, it doesn't have to be five. You've got 10 fingers. If you've got seven fingers, use seven. It really depends on how many pictures you're comfortable visualizing. In my mind, they're like little TV sets on the wall, and if I want to get a clearer picture, I just pull them forward. I pull them forward, and then it's like a 3-D model of the scene that I'm communicating.

I got that from working with these fashion students because they were very good at creating visualizations and symbols. They got it straightaway that this picture thing was a trick because I was, basically, saying to them look, this is a business studies course, and so I want to know what's your business going to be over the next term. I didn't just mean what's your business, but what's your business?

It's always good to let people work these things out for themselves. It was so funny, though, because I was standing there in front of these students and doing the smiling thing. I think I kept it up for maybe about 10 minutes of just standing there and letting everyone kind of smile and go through all of that.

A woman came up to me afterwards and she said, yeah, I can do that. I love it when people are forthcoming with their talents like that. I think it's very important. She said, yeah, I can do that. Where did you learn to do it? I said, I learned to do it from Oli Larson. This guy had that real warmth and presence, but he also knew that getting into that stop the world state – that's essentially what he was doing. He was getting into a stop the world state.

That's what Carlos Castaneda talks about and John Grinder talks about it that way. It's that state where the voice inside you just stops. You're listening to the rustles, to the movements, to the way your own voice echoes and bounces around the room, to have orbited by people. An empty room sounds very different from a room full of people, and you can hear amazing things. You can see amazing things when you just really take the time to relax into that state.

You'll notice you can start playing around. This is what I do. If I do a big gesture out to the right-hand side like, basically, point out that way how many people move their eyes up and to the right?

If I touch my nose and scratch it or I say well who knows, let's start from scratch right here. Then start watching who scratches their noses or begins to look like they're a bit itchy. It's all about getting those responses and beginning to build responses. You can just say to somebody, hi. A big mistake a lot of

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presenters make is they say hi and then they don't wait for a response, always wait for a response. Say it to somebody else if you need to. You need a response. Teach them that it's okay to do that.

One of the other things that I learned from modeling Oli Larson was just how subtle the sensations available to you are and how that sensitivity can really exist side-by-side with a confidence and a strength and a determination. Oli Larson used to talk about – because he was trained in the Tibetan warrior tradition, Buddhism – and he used to talk about being on your horse.

We have the image at the center, that creature that's settled in its body. Whatever the qualities that you want to have when you see yourself there now performing successfully in public, you can go through those individually like Paul McKenna suggests. You can take the time to use your hypnotic skills to remember times when you feel confident, see what you see, hear what you hear, feel what you feel at those times, anchor those experiences and begin to build powerful states.

Imagine that circle of light in front of you and step into it. See yourself performing the best that you can be. Step into that picture and feel what it feels like, feel what your muscles feel like, what your face feels like or how your hands move. Really enjoy that experience because it won't be long. If you just practice and develop this art, maybe repeat this experience using this tape even five or 10 times, you'll begin to build a habit for yourself, which will enable you, like Ian McKellen, to turn and be in the state that you need to be in to perform.

He would do that. He would do his King Lear. He would do his crazy stuff and he'd be waving everywhere and then he'd walk off stage and he's start the conversation that he was having just before he left. Yeah, so my niece was just taking up tennis blah- blah- blah. It was just this amazing ability to control his state and to step from one state into another. These are the kind of skills that any athlete, whether it's an actor, whether it's a sports performer, the body really does produce huge amounts of adrenaline. It responds to stress in a very positive way.

What you've got to realize is that the fundamental difference between an athlete and an amateur or a novice in any field of endeavor is the way that they deal with the stress because the novice will get stress and then they will continue to get stressed. The stress will make them more stressed, and then their body functions start to break down. The heart starts to hit about 170, organs stop directing blood to other places and bits of your brain start shutting down.

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The athlete maintains this balance, this breathing, and understands how the moving in your body right now, just that natural firing up, and they're able to manage that so that their performance is really enhanced. It can be a nightmare.

Like I said to Tom, as he began to turn towards the teenagers standing there in a group, and I could see as he turned, his face was still tilted back and his shoulders were relaxed. He was breathing naturally and easily and I said to him, just take this feeling and as you open your eyes and look out at your friends here, realize that's the response that you're going to have from now on.

I knew how easy it is to change this. It really is a simple thing, and I'm sure Igor will confirm that. As soon as you begin to go out and practice, as soon as you just now stretch the limit for yourself, stretch the limits of what you're capable of, but do it gently, do it at a pace that you know is going to work for you, and it doesn't have to be a nightmare.

Like Sues would imagine those faces with no mouths and their big staring eyes and, of course, it would be a nightmare. If you do that, then just stop and blink for a moment and balance whether you want to continue to do that or whether you're going to begin to breathe easily and to perform in a new way now.

You know when you just want the floor to open up and swallow you up? I was standing there on that karaoke stage, and I really wanted to be anywhere else at that moment. The sweat was still on my forehead, the song had shuttered to a close and I could feel my face just slightly red with the shame of it all. The girl I was with kind of like said, oh yes, thank you for doing that. Oh, that was really, sweet thank you.

I walked off the stage and looked around. I went up to a couple of friends expecting them to either take the mic something chronic or commiserate but they hadn't even noticed. Nobody in the room who I knew had noticed. They'd all been too busy doing their own thing or it just hadn't looked that bad. You know what? The woman who I was trying to impress had a good time, and suddenly that was a bit more important than how I might have been feeling.

As I said to Sues just after I worked with her on this – because I thought well, let's do a swap. I'll help you with your fear of speaking in public and you tell me how it is that you felt comfortable in that classroom. She just said well, why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't I be here? I have a right to be here. There are no forbidden signs on the door. It's not top secret or anything, is it?

I laughed because I thought, well, how much of my response was just my hang-up from something that happened such a long time ago that's just not worth remembering. Returning to your question, Igor, as you begin that now, you'll find the answer I believe.

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Igor: Well, what can I say, even if I didn't have the answer beforehand; how could I not have it now?

Robin: I hope somewhere in there was something that's useful.

Igor: That was an amazing set of stories, and if nothing else, it just demonstrates once again your sheer genius when it comes to storytelling, and everyone should realize that again, this storytelling that Robin has just been doing for us – these are all completely new stories. They all happened, they're all based on real life events, but this is the first time they've been performed, the first time you've heard them and you got it first right here.

It just goes to show again that storytelling can be remarkably easy and fun. It requires effort, right? It took you a lot of effort to create those stories, but you enjoyed the effort and enjoy the fruition – in other words, the actual telling of them when you actually came around to doing that.

Robin: Absolutely. Yes, when I know I'm ready, it is when I just have that feeling of excitement. I don't think anything would have got in the way of me doing this today. I was just ready to do it.

Igor: Right and I think your stories brought that out and in particular installed elements of that in us as well. I quite like the way the whole story flows because you have different types of stories, you have the more overtly hypnotic things, the blending of realities and all that sort of stuff. It's a great case study for those who are interested more in storytelling.

Now this brings me onto something that I know you do. You do your hypnotic storytelling coaching for hypnotists. In your work, you emphasize two particular kinds of stories that fit different contexts. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that kind of closing the seminar you're giving for us. You've been talking, of course, about personal stories versus improvised or made-up stories, things you make up on the spot.

◆ **Can you tell us a little bit about what each are, how they relate to each other, how they're different and how they're similar?**

Robin: Certainly. I make the distinction, because there are two important approaches to creating two in the first place.

Igor: Right.

Robin: With the kind of improvised, spontaneous approach, you're consciously surrendering any choice really about what happens next and handing that over to your unconscious. The material that you create will be wildly and amazingly creative you now, how our minds can just fly off into tangents. We've done

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exercises before where I might say oh, Igor I noticed there's a table in the room.

Igor: Oh yes and it has a lovely white doily on top with a bowl of fruit.

Robin: I can see that, and in the bowl of fruit is a rotting banana.

Igor: I'm glad you spotted it because I've been thinking about taking that rotting banana and throwing it on the compost heap just outside the house.

Robin: And I noticed when I went to the compost heap the other day that some small animal had been nibbling a hole at the base of the compost heap, maybe to get at the food.

Igor: Yes, I've been seeing more squirrels running around in the garden. In particular one struck me because it's one of the rare red squirrels, the traditional squirrels that you don't see in England anymore that much.

Robin: That's right. In fact, I've noticed a couple of those recently. To be honest, it looked as if they were like conspiring together.

Igor: It's almost as though they decided to take back their territory. I wonder how they would have started to decide to work together, rather than being individuals.

Robin: And we could go on noticing. We started at a table and now we have the war between the grey squirrels and the red squirrels.

Igor: Right. Now this is something very important to bring out because, again, people think oh, I'm not creative enough, I can't do this and all the rest of it. You have a wealth, one might say an embarrassment of richness, if that weren't a slightly bad term, but you have a real wealth of exercises to stimulate people's minds to be able to do this stuff naturally and easy.

Robin: Yes, absolutely. Whether that's from that kind of psychology of accelerated learning and creativity or whether it's from kind of the theatre-based improvisation work or the art-based work that I do sometimes with people.

Igor: Or, in the pure hypnotic work of getting people to surrender to their unconscious.

Robin: Oh yeah, that too.

Igor: That has some part to play does it not?

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Robin: It certainly does. So, when you're creating stories in this way, it's really just about letting go to the gift and allowing what comes, allowing what you see to just develop and allowing whatever voice is talking to you to just natter on. Some people do it automatically with automatic writing.

One of the exercises I do is I hand out an A5 page, not a big one, just with lines on it and I say, okay, this is the story that finishes at the bottom of the page. Go. You start writing and you start writing. The only constraint is that the story has to finish at the bottom of the page.

People often get far too hung up in this whole what's the beginning going to be? What's going to happen? With this approach, you just have to go. You just go, and it's the right way of generating more and more material. Now, of course, what you will realize – and if you do this for any length of time– that the products of your unconscious mind will tend to be highly metaphorical. They'll often be highly relevant to your personal situation.

Anyone who has any insight and has done improvisation workshops with friends will realize this; when the sense comes down, the unconscious mind comments. This is why in processes like with Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way*, she advises you to begin practicing by whatever technique you're using. Whether you're using image streaming to record yourself as you describe what you're seeing in your imagination or use automatic writing and morning pages and just write to the bottom of the page. Whatever technique that you use, it's worth kind of keeping that gate around it that's safe.

As you become comfortable with that, then you can just go and throw it all out. Most of the stories that I tell, even the big mythical ones, are actually, of course, fundamentally about things that are very important to me and experiences that I've had. This brings me onto the personal stories.

Igor: Before you go there, let me just pause you there for a minute and just emphasize a couple of things that you said there.

1. First, the purpose of improvising stories is partly so that you can be more creative and general a wealth of material, so you'll always have a story that applies to whatever context that you're in. Sometimes you'll do it on the fly. Sometimes you'll do it ahead of time to actually create the story that you'll shape, polish and tell later on; either way it's the same mindset you get in.
2. Secondly, you've got this idea that there's a process. You don't dive into the deep end straightaway and really scare yourself with it because there is a way of learning to do this.

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There's a skill to it, just as much as any sport has a skill to it. You gradually take you by the hand to take you there. Those who are a little bit more nervous or have a little less access directly to their unconscious might take a little longer or do a few more warm-up exercises.

Those who have a more direct contact there can dive straight in and get the materials going through. And that improvise stories themselves have already got that powerful hypnotic element, because they're already metaphorical because they apply to you in your life, but they also apply to other people in their lives.

So, this idea of isomorphic stories, rather than trying to intellectually try to figure out how one thing equates another thing and so on, it's almost a question of you can't not do it if you're trusting the unconscious. This makes your life so much easier than these technical manuals that say okay, now find the pattern going on in this family or this problem, take a horse and put it in place of the father and put a pony instead of the mother and put all these other things in between.

It gets like a stilted way of telling a story. This just becomes a very natural way of achieving the same outcome, and possibly more powerfully so because you have no mediation. There are no blockages in the way.

Robin: Yes, that's a very good point. Thanks for reinforcing that.

Igor:

- ◆ **Contrasting that to telling personal stories, could you tell us a little bit more about the personal stories and how that compares to what we've just been talking about?**

Robin: As we talked about, I think in one of our earlier courses, there's something very powerful about being able to be authentic, to speak your truth and to talk the lessons that you've learned in your life. That approach, obviously, depends on the kind of experiences that you're talking about. If you've had a wonderful, happy life, full of only happy experiences, then that's great. You have a lot of stories to tell that can cheer people up.

I have a friend, actually my flat mate, Beth – I mentioned her earlier. She's got like four brothers and family that all live up together in the midlands. The stories she tells about their lives are just so funny. I don't know what it is about the way she tells them, but she's got a real knack for turning things.

Like, she tells stories from her childhood about the adventures that her mom went on in order to get the money to buy a loaf of bread so they could have baked bones on toast for tea. She turns these simple, mundane things into amazing adventures.

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Igor: So this is an important point again. People think they have nothing interesting that happens, but now you're telling me that the art of storytelling is the point not the actual story. In the sense, that you can tell a story about going shopping for a loaf of bread, and turn it into an hysterical adventure when "in reality" it's just someone going down the road, buying a loaf of bread, coming back and maybe one or two odd things happen along the way.

Most people would dismiss it, whereas, if they have that repertoire inside themselves that could be a tremendously entertaining, funny, happy or incisive story.

Robin: Absolutely. I don't know about you, Igor, but sometimes I think – because we get so fluid at doing this ourselves – it's easy to forget that we ever didn't. Just tell stories almost compulsively as ways of connecting with people and sharing ideas.

The important thing about personal stories is they give you that wealth of stuff that you can have this strong emotional connection with. The skill of then taking those – the way I think of it is this. You go through life and like some kind of seashells, a little bit of sand gets in there and creates an irritation or a sore, and slowly over time, your unconscious mind and what you do as an artist or a storyteller is that just gets layered and layered until it becomes a pearl. It becomes something beautiful.

We turn the pain and the suffering and the lessons that we learned into something precious that we can share and give to other people.

Igor: That goes right back to what we said in, I think it was the initial interview, when you talked about two ladies. Both of them, I think they were raped or had sexual abuse of some sort, and one of them ends up running a woman's shelter and telling her story as a healing thing. Rather than saying, look at all the bad things that happened to me, saying looking at all the bad things that happened to me and how I got through it and how there are now places for people like us to go to and be safe and so on.

So the story that you're telling will have been personal. It's partly to get the outcome that you're looking for whether that's healing someone else, overcoming a difficulty or a problem, or persuading them in some way. However, it also can be a tremendous source of personal satisfaction, where you end up taking your own personal wounds and turning them into something wonderful, like a pearl like you were saying.

Robin: Yes. I wish we had time now to go into some of the details of how we go about doing that. I tell a lot of stories that are about me personally and they're absolutely, true but they are also lies fundamentally. For me, the truly interesting thing is how you get at that element of truth in a story, and how do

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you protect yourself? How do you tell a story that might offend somebody or might frighten them or scare them?

A friend of mine went to see a play recently, and the play was a very funny comedy about a very neurotic mother and the daughter who had to look after who. This was my friend's personal situation growing up, so the play affected her very deeply. The process of finding and identifying what the essential elements of the story here are; what's the truth to it and how do I then tell that story in a way that respects and honors other people's privacy and my own need to protect myself?

Igor: Absolutely. That's actually an important point, especially when we talk about the power of storytelling. It's not just telling a little ditty. You can tell funny stories and amusing stories, and they have their place. They have a very important place actually, but it goes back to what we mentioned before, which is the idea that a lot of power in the stories comes from when things don't go right, the embarrassment, the shall we call it the dark side of human beings.

By dipping into your own dark side, you recover part of your own power, but you're also letting someone else connect with that themselves and go this is a real person with three dimensions, someone I can really connect to and with and respect them for that.

There is a real artistry– and something that I've learned a lot about from you, Robin– in terms of opening and showing yourself to the world. At the same time, not doing it in an inappropriate way where you end up either, imposing things on the world it doesn't really need or even in a situation or context, revealing things that will end up harming you if you don't do it in the right way.

There are ways and ways of doing things, and it's difficult to share or talk about it abstractly. The easiest way to do it is just to practice. This is, again, where your coaching program is fantastic I think, because people do get that practice. They get a sense of, okay, here's how to do it. Here's one little bit of a risk I'll take, and actually that worked out quite fine. Or here's a risk, there's something wrong about it and maybe I'll polish this bit here and then that. Suddenly, there's a frame of reference around it, which no matter what happens, it's still good to tell that story.

They learn over time how to do this. It's a lot of tremendous fun as well, and it's always a pleasure working with you. I have such a good time. Anyone that gets a chance to work with Robin, you just have this really happy, fun – to me, it reminds me of being a kid again and sitting around a fireplace, like a campfire, toasting marshmallows and people telling ghost stories, personal stories or jokes, whatever.

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You get sucked into the atmosphere, so you can't help but share your own. Even if you normally don't say anything, you'll just go oh, I've got one, here's one.

Robin: It sounds like one of our trainings, Igor.

Igor: It does, doesn't it? This is why I really enjoy every time I get a chance to talk to you and do this. People, do check out Robin. He's a tremendous storyteller. You've seen it for yourself now. You need to experience it for yourself then that goes to another level yet again.

Before we finish up, is there anything you want to add or say that hasn't been said yet. I know there's a lot you can say, but we're at the end now, Robin.

Robin: No, I would just like to say thank you so much for the opportunity to share some of this information and some of the stories. Obviously, I had a chance to work up a whole new batch.

Igor: What a fine batch they were too. Thank you, Robin, so much for being so generous with your time. You've gone way beyond the normal ambit for these interviews, but you've given us a real solid taste of your talent, what you can do. Hopefully, you can read between the lines and see that Robin actually gets to show people how to do what he does just as well. I admire that about what you do.

If you want to check out Robin's work, go to HypnoticStorytelling.com. This was Master Hypnotist Robin Manuell, and my name is Igor Ledochowksi from StreetHypnosis.com. I would like to thank everyone for listening and paying attention to this fascinating interview, and I look forward to seeing you guys again on the next part of this Hypnosis Masters Series.

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End of Seminar

On that final note, everyone, as much as I hate to say this, this is the end of this particular session. We will be back again with another master next month.

Until then, I've been talking to a true hypnotic genius, Hypnosis Master Robin Manuell from HypnoticStorytelling.com. My name is Igor Ledochowski from StreetHypnosis.com and I look forward to speaking with everyone again in the next session.

Meet Your Host

Each month's Interview with a Master will be hosted by Igor Ledochowski, a master hypnotist of international acclaim. He is regarded as one of the world's foremost experts and trainers in conversational or covert hypnosis.

Igor created the Private Hypnosis Club, the world's first community for master hypnotists.

He was the first ever hypnotist to release a full audio course on Conversational Hypnosis, the latest version of which is 'The Power Of Conversational Hypnosis' and is the No. 1 best-selling hypnosis course in the world.

Igor is also the creator of over 30 other advanced hypnosis programs. All his programs are available from:

www.StreetHypnosis.com