MADE FOR AMAZING

AN INSTRUMENTAL JOURNEY *of* AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION

MARK NATION

ADVANCE PRAISE

"We all desire a journey of self-awareness that reveals a deeper purpose that truly matters. Mark chronicles this journey for us, offering timeless principles that help each of us to lead in very uncertain times."

—Nick Craig, President, Authentic Leadership Institute; best-selling author of *The Discover Your True North Fieldbook*

"We are made for a purpose, yet too many of us live dull lives, muted by the daily demands of our culture and society. Nation challenges us to find the music within us, and to have the courage to give it voice. Imagine a world in harmony, a world where our song uplifts the spirit of those we meet. Nation shows us how in Made for Amazing."

—Randy Street, President, ghSMART, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Who: The A Method for Hiring* and *Power Score: Your Formula for Leadership Success*

"Music has the power to inspire us all, and in Made for Amazing, Mark Nation will help you find your voice and sing from the rooftops. Highly recommend reading!"

—David Carr and Third Day, 4-time Grammy and 24-time GMA Dove award-winning recording artist;
9 million albums sold with 31 #1 singles

"Mark Nation's extended parable underscores the importance of finding one's authentic self—and the effort that's often required to find it. Unlike many parables that cause the reader to discover key points, Nation offers a gentler form of guidance through the questions he poses outside the narrative. A very helpful addition to the body of self-discovery literature."

—Warren Radtke, Founding Principal,
Right Management Consultants, Episcopal Minister

"The story of a young man and his grandfather is very powerful, as my grandfather was so 'instrumental' in my own life. Music is a brilliant metaphor for encouraging us to 'find our song' and build a purposeful life. Through Josh's grandpa, Mark Nation suggest that we are the instruments; what a great way to inspire others to identify and develop the music they were meant to play."

—Kevin Head, Lead Pastor, First Baptist Roswell, Co-Founder, New Perspectives for Life

"Finding your authentic purpose is critical to maintaining vibrant careers and healthy lives. Through Josh Lynk's 'musical' journey, Nation offers at least 20 rock solid building blocks on how to make an authentic life—indeed, an amazing life—truly possible."

—Jack Studer, Chairman, Erlanger Health System (Rated 9th best U.S. public hospital)

"Made for Amazing is a rich mixture of self-leadership, philosophy, and spirituality, all wrapped inside an entertaining business parable. The messages contained in this book couldn't be more timely for both Eastern and Western audiences. I am anxious to share Mark's messages with my clients, colleagues, and friends."

—Charles Ferguson, President, Asia-Pacific,
ADP (Singapore)

"Made for Amazing is a great resource for entrepreneurs, start-ups, and anyone who really desires to build a strong and enduring brand. A vital framework for personal and corporate platform growth."

—Charlie Brock, CEO, Launch Tennessee;
former Vice President, Brach & Brock Candy

"Mark Nation is fascinated with the idea that each of us is 'made for amazing,' that is, by being placed in this world, we are obligated to find, develop, and contribute the best we have of ourselves. He has woven this concept into an absorbing tale that will have readers delving onto their own possibilities, as they follow the struggles of a gifted musician to discover the music his beloved grandpa always knew was in him."

—Jim Ballard, best-selling author of *Whale Done!*, *What's the Rush*, and *Everyone's a Coach*

"Every once in a while, an author and book come along and shake up the landscape of the human spirit. For me, Mark Nation is that author, and Made for Amazing is that book."

—Jose Antonio La Rosa, CEO, Supera! Global (Peru)

"Mark never fails to deliver value and motivate me to do great things—all while having so much fun engaging in the process. Highly recommended."

—Julia White, Corporate VP, Microsoft

I looked to Mark often for personal leadership and career advice. His support has been life-changing for me."

—Zhai Fang, Private Equity Principal, Fosun International (China)

"Mark is awesome. Whether we meet for 2 hours or talk for just 20 minutes, the same things always hold true: It's meaningful, it's a blast, and it's a highlight in my day. Put on your 'workout' clothes, get moving, and take Mark's leadership and life principles for a spin. You will see results, inside and out. Get ready!"

—John Foley, Founder and CEO, Peloton, Former CEO, Barnes & Noble Digital, Former CEO, Evite

"I have worked for start-ups, Fortune 500 firms, and top-tier strategy and recruiting firms. I can honestly say Mark has some of the most insightful and powerful assessments and tools I have ever used. In addition, he has an uncanny ability for synthesizing leadership stories, and calling out those unique patterns that bring strength and deeper purpose to life. I find myself using his ideas and concepts constantly with my teams."

—Shauna Finnie, People Operations Executive, Google

"Mark's values, judgment, and decision-making frameworks are extremely useful. I was amazed by the depth of insights he shared with me."

—Ryan Hodgson, Partner, American Industrial Partners

"Mark's insights, emotional intelligence, and solutions that apply across silos and divisions are exceptional. He adds value with every interaction. Consistent 5-Star leader & coach."

—Elbert Bailey, Asia-Pacific Director, Google (Singapore)

"An incredibly interesting leadership framework, assessment framework, and conversation. Give Mark's leadership lessons and inspiring messages serious consideration—you won't regret it."

—Derek Schrader, Partner, TruPoint

""Mark has been my go-to business coach, whenever I need expert support to solve major work or personnel challenges, define my own career acceleration path, or just get inspired and motivated to keep going. Trust me, when you read this book and talk to Mark, his sincere words of advice and encouragement will echo in your heart and mind, long afterward."

—Caroline Shi, Manager, U.S. Embassy (China)

"I have spent my entire career leading global high-tech business divisions. Whether at Intel, HP, or Honeywell—in Silicon Valley, Sao Paolo, or Seoul—I find authentic leadership and integrity-based decision making in persistent high demand. Few people I know model these traits more strongly than Mark Nation. High tech requires high growth, and Mark will help you drive the strongest growth of all: growing yourself."

—Caroline Pan, VP Strategy and Marketing, Global High Growth Regions, Honeywell (China)

"Mark's personal coaching and advice provided me with mental maps which guided some of my most critical leadership decisions. These decisions led to unbelievable professional and personal growth, beyond what I ever would have imagined. If you let them, Mark's insights, questions, and candid advice can change your life."

—Rob Bernshteyn, CEO, Coupa Software

"Mark has a flair for guiding and mentoring teams. He is particularly adept at helping shape high growth personal and professional strategies, then offering development paths to execute for results. A commensurate professional."

—Bronwyn Hastings, Global SVP, SAP

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that you hold this book in your hands means you are very special to me. I have debated at length as to what I might say to you, were we to meet through the pages of a book. After all, it's incredibly difficult to distill decades of life into a few pages, and then call it any sort of instructive manual or representative sample. Nevertheless, I tried to imagine getting one chance to meet with you, just one opportunity to speak to your mind, heart and soul. *Made for Amazing* is what came to me, and I sincerely hope it will resonate with you on some level.

Those who know me will tell you I love to ask questions. They help me to learn so much about myself as well as businesses and teams, my surroundings, my work and family, other people, and life. Therefore, I've added some introductory material to help you understand a little more about the book—and about me—before you embark on your journey.

Not surprisingly, it's easiest if I think about this material in response to the questions you may ask of me.

WHY A STORY ABOUT A MUSICIAN?

Made for Amazing traces the journey of Joshua Lynk, a talented young musician who struggles to discover his voice and the music he was meant to play to the world. Josh's journey inspires readers to find their own "song;" that is, their authentic leadership and life purpose. The story also encourages us to overcome personal limitations, to combat mental resistance, and to believe we can benefit others in a way that truly "brings amazing to life." It's not a book about music, however; it's a book about *finding your song at work and in life*.

I wrote *Made for Amazing* as a parable, so I could employ subtle, more nuanced methods to offer readers guidance and encouragement. This approach allowed me to craft a story that can entertain many different types of readers, utilizing timeless principles and emotions which music so universally brings to life. Through this "lyrical" journey, the narrative poses thought-provoking questions and offers a variety of teachable moments that unfold naturally over time.

Music is one of life's rare "larger than life" themes; it is as old as history itself, residing in virtually every living element. Like the wind or love, you cannot see music, but you know it when you feel it. Music can soothe the soul, reach broadly with its messages, spark creative dialogue, build character, and enhance self-esteem. We all recognize the visceral emotion a song evokes, as it touches our hearts and

moves our spirits. *Made for Amazing* employs music as a metaphor to help reunite us—with our world, our communities, our companies, our families . . . and with ourselves.

WHY THIS BOOK? (OR WHY DID YOU WRITE THIS BOOK?)

I am convinced that life and work are meant to be experienced as "superlatives," and everyone possesses unique gifts that make the extraordinary possible. Unfortunately, so many people in today's world are confused, hurt, broken, or simply have no song in their hearts. Perhaps they have not listened closely enough for the "music in their lives."

I have witnessed this tragic condition in many diverse places around the world, from the mud-structured streets outside Phnom Penh to the glistening avenues of Beverly Hills. In more cases than I ever imagined, people and businesses must be built, or re-built, from the ground up, from the inside out. Indeed, a heart-and-soul centered effort may be what is required to make an amazing life and enduring legacy truly possible.

Made for Amazing was created to help people identify and sharpen their unique talents, both in the workplace and across the broader community. In doing so, they release infinite energies to connect with teammates, customers, family, friends, and others in a very powerful and enduring way. The book is an earnest attempt to help people believe in themselves and their unique abilities, and encourage them to spend their lives honing their incredible talents in a way that contributes positively to the world.

WHERE ARE ALL THE 'ANSWERS'?

We know instinctively that key learnings can appear through the questions we ask as often as the answers we receive. In *Made for Amazing*, I simply aimed to "start the conversation," and to guide people to meaningful questions and worthwhile discussion topics. In the book, as in life, there are *few clear, easy* answers. Consequently, Josh's story is not meant to promise quick fixes nor dispense magic, one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, we each must find our own unique pathway, self-managing the effort to discover and create meaning as it emerges within and around us. Thankfully, helpers always seem to appear to aid and assist us along the way. As I often tell people, the *Joy is in the Journey*.

In thinking about topics to inform and guide deeper learning, I re-read the story—and captured more than three hundred questions! I chose to place a select few questions at the end of the book, so as not to disrupt the story's flow. This approach provides readers the choice to review and reflect on questions after reading each chapter, or keep turning the page, and allow the questions to emerge at another time. Never underestimate the power of a question to amplify very basic concepts!

HOW SHOULD I READ THE STORY?

I encourage you to approach Josh's story with an open mind, knowing there is almost always a "story within the story." In the opening scenes, you will get a glimpse into Josh's life and his current state of affairs. Then, we will trace Josh's

journey from his childhood days to the present time where we first met him. Later in the book, we return to Josh in his present state and then walk alongside him through the rest of his epic journey.

As the storyline unfolds, try to see the story in your mind's eye; take the opportunity to escape your own movie and enter Josh's for just a few moments. Sense the sights and sounds. Feel the tension. Notice word choices, and the "spaces between the notes." Review the chapter questions for more insight, and re-read sections of the book when needed to inform deeper self-reflection. Ruminate on the key storyline concepts, then personalize and adapt Josh's story to your own.

Made for Amazing can simply be a source for reading entertainment, but it's really meant to be an *action guide*. It's about Josh's story, but also *your story*. So, please take notes to capture your thoughts and ideas, or consider purchasing the supplementary workbook and materials to gain further insights into your own journey, and your own authentic leadership purpose. Like anything in life, the more of yourself you invest into this book, the more you will come out of it. This I can assure you.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

I intended *Made for Amazing* to be a short and simple story, with a tightly-packed mix of both grandiose and granular moments which together inform an enduring quest for inquiry and learning—a sort of "miniature traveler's companion." In this way, I suppose the book represents a

humble gift, a spirited adventure, a heartfelt exhortation, and a simple prayer—that those who read the book will in some way be touched. It is my greatest desire that in quietness and stillness, readers will find their own strength, hear the incredible song from within that's calling out to be played—and choose to become "musicians for life."

I welcome your thoughts, questions, and insights, and would love to hear from you. Please post your feedback about the book, and share how your own transformation is unfolding. Let's find some way to talk. Meanwhile, please consider at least five other special people who will be placed on your heart through the reading of this book, and choose to *invest yourself* into them. Write them a letter, email them, call them, or perhaps even offer them a copy of this book as a gift. Find a way to help them believe they are amazing. Write their names down, and then tell me who you selected, and why. Trust me, this activity will become a critical part of your own leadership transformation process. *Never underestimate the power of a few simple, heartfelt words, well-placed.*

I hope one day we will have the chance to meet, or to meet again. I would love the opportunity to thank you for your time and investment, both in me and in yourself. Believe me when I say *you are worth it*. I look forward to the day we can shake hands or share a friendly hug, when I can admire you in person, and see the amazing one in you.

~

Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Chapter 1

GRAMPA

"HEAD FOR AP JACK!"

Joshua Lynk sat bolt upright in bed, heart beating wildly, eyes staring into the darkness. Was it a dream, or had he been *there*? There again, in a boat on a lake in the worst freak storm of the summer! It seemed he could still feel the spray stinging his face. Near the shore in his dream, trees were falling, boats crashing into docks, lightning drenching the place in light, and the lake seeming to lift to meet the downpour. A panic-stricken boy of nine in those revisited dream moments, all he had wished for was the warmth and safety of his grandfather's cabin. But the old man's shout from the kayak churning the waves beside him gave him his direction, and he obediently dug for the mountain.

As Joshua's breath calmed, his mind strove to hang onto the fading images that had swept him away to a moment

twenty-five years before: his kayak tossed about like a chip in the waves; the mountain bulking dimly through the downpour. Mostly, he wanted to keep the feeling of that presence in the other boat, the one with the reassuring voice, the one who always knew what to do. He tried to recreate the face he'd seen faintly for the first time in years, but he couldn't bring it into focus. The dream was fading, but it was with him still to the extent that his breath caught in a sudden sob.

Joshua Lynk had once been "somebody," but these days he considered himself another washed-up musician, down on his luck and forgotten. Having been a top performer for ten years, and a star for over three, he was now living day-to-day in a state of numbness, bewildered by the way things had turned out. These days, his existence as a mere guitar teacher on the outskirts of Seattle seemed humdrum, marginal. For the millionth time, he asked himself, How has such a magnificent run ended in such a wreck?

He rose dully, blighted by sleep and depression, still troubled by the lake dream. He went to the tiny kitchen and poured a cup of coffee. He took a sip and grimaced. Like my life, he thought. Cold and stale. On impulse, he sat down at the table and pulled his laptop to him. "Ap Jack Mountain," he Googled.

There it was, that once-well-loved peak near Tenby, Washington, with the lake at its foot. Josh read the caption: "Nicknamed Ap Jack by some of the older Welsh summer residents, the mountain's real name is Mount Tevilo." This he had not known growing up, for between him and his grandfather the Pacific Northwestern mountain was, ever

and always, Ap Jack. Summer after summer, the old man had told him stories about the mountain which, shaped like a minor Matterhorn, rose across the lake and charmed the boy with its romance. Grampa had taught him to watch the mountain and notice how it was different each time they looked, with the sun on the rocks at the top, the deep green forest on its rolling flanks, and cloud shadows playing across it.

Joshua closed the laptop, took a scrap of paper, and scribbled idly on it the only remainder he had of the dream: *Head for Ap Jack! He smiled sarcastically, thinking, God knows there's little enough to color my days now. Same boring routine. Kids who don't want to learn, who'll never learn to play or be any good. The few bucks I make are hardly a reason to perpetuate this stupid existence, but what else would I, could I, be doing at this point in my good-for-nothing life?*

Grampa. The once-beloved elder had hardly crossed Joshua's mind in the years since the old man's passing. *Out of sight, out of mind*, he thought, and thinking it he felt ashamed at the long stretch since he had revisited thoughts of his grandfather.

Now that the memories rushed back to him, it was the crwth, of course, that stood out. Carved and shaped lovingly by his Welsh grampa, the precious stringed instrument from his homeland, together with the tunes the old man could bring from it, fascinated Josh as a youngster. Bowing it skillfully into the shape of what looked to Josh like his own toy

bow and arrow, Brynmor Lynk would coax a seemingly endless variety of melodies from its gleaming fingerboard. The old man's playing had been Josh's introduction to music.

Sometimes, Bryn would be joined on the crwth by his old friend, Gerwyn Jones, a gifted flutist who lived across the lake. A traditional lullaby called "Suo Gan" was Josh's favorite. Whenever he listened to Gerwyn's plaintive flute trilling the notes of that song, Josh seemed to rise out of himself, his eyes brimming over helplessly. Other times, his toes would tap as Gerwyn and Grampa beat out "Caniad Y Gwyn Bibydd" (The Song of the White Piper), a brisk dance tune hundreds of years old. Young Josh didn't understand how the music could do these things to him, but his grampa did. Often, Josh would see those gray eyes beneath the shock of white hair looking searchingly at him, as if to discern something he saw in Josh's response to the music.

Josh's mother, May, could play anything by ear on the piano. People would often gather in their home to sing old Welsh hymns in their minor keys, and the soaring strains would lift the boy's heart. When he was small, his grampa used to lift Josh up onto the piano and have the people sing "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho." Most of the folks were not Welsh-speaking, but a few were. So, Josh learned most of the minor songs in English. His favorites were the gospel-sounding tunes like "Go Down Moses" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain." His favorite hymn of all was "In the Garden"; he was drawn to the story it told and the devotion it expressed. At the end of a particularly spiritual song, the folks would sometimes smile, nod, and repeat soulfully, *Canu gyda ysbryd*, meaning "Sung with the spirit."

Josh could go to his mother with any new song he'd heard at school or out at play, sit her down at the piano, and hum the song. May could then play it, chords and all, in that same key, never having heard it before. Josh Lynk grew up in an atmosphere of music being made.

. . .

As he sat at the table now, another memory long-treasured, but long-forgotten, came to him from a Christmas long ago . . .

"One at a time, children," his mother chided. "We wait while each person takes a turn to open a gift." Josh and his older sister, Alwyn, had been arguing over whose turn it was.

"Oh, Ma, there aren't that many gifts, anyway!" Josh said impatiently. His grampa's squint directed his gaze to his mother's hurt look and Josh regretted his thoughtless remark. This little family had to be, as May Lynk would say, careful with its pennies. Her earnings as a salesperson at a downtown dry-goods store, supplemented by Bryn's meager pension from his years as a mail carrier barely met expenses. In his later years, Bryn had taken on additional work as a luthier—a builder and restorer of wooden instruments—to bridge the income gap.

May finished opening a gift from her father-in-law, a hand-carved loon Bryn had made. There was a pause, then, taking an oblong box from behind the tiny tree, the old man said, "For you, Josh."

"Wow!" Josh exulted, attacking the box. He lifted out a shining blond ukulele and, mouth open, looked wonderingly at his grampa. "You carved it, didn't you, Grampa?"

"It's because of what's within ya, lad," Bryn said, his gray eyes twinkling.

"What's within ya" was a phrase Josh had heard before from the old man. It puzzled him. This morning he decided to ask, "What do you mean, 'within me,' Grampa?"

The old man said, "Hush now. I think it's my own turn!"

. . .

Josh had known his father, William, only until he was seven, when the man had left suddenly, for good. Before his departure, he'd seemed to have little or no time for the family, spending most of his time at his job as a bartender. Josh's memories of his father focused on his sharpness and impatience. Having seen his grampa bowing his head silently before meals, Josh had once ventured to ask, "Daddy, is there a God?"

"No!" came the definitive answer.

Tears rose. "But I want to meet Him!"

"If you ever met God, you would go crazy," William said and walked away. Perhaps it was from his father that Josh had inherited his temper and sharp tongue. He shook his head now. This review of past vanities the frightening dream had occasioned was not to his liking. He stood up, turned out the kitchen light, and crept back to his lonely bed.

The doorbell rang, jolting Joshua awake. Groggily realizing it was late morning, he quickly dressed and went to the door to greet Sam, his twelve-year-old guitar student. He was never glad to see this boy, one of the "sent" ones with little interest of his own, whose parents wanted him to learn an instrument. Sam heaved a sigh as he came in the door, tossing

his baseball glove disgustedly onto a chair. "This sucks!" he groused. "We were ahead, and I had to leave." *The joys of a music teacher*, thought Joshua as he led the way to the practice room. Then came a second thought: *I should talk. I used to be that way myself with the maestro*. Again, the choking sense of futility clouded his brain. *What am I doing here, anyway?*

. . .

Later that afternoon, Joshua was sitting idly in his car, waiting in a fast-food order lane, when the thought came of how it had all started with the ukulele. "That's it. You're getting it," Bryn Lynk told his grandson, as Josh tried to fit his fingers into the three basic chording positions his grampa had shown him on the ukulele. "This is hard," Josh complained. "My fingers are sore, and I don't even know why I'm working on this dumb ukulele, instead of on a real guitar."

We don't make the music
because we're not in tune.

The old man reached over and took the instrument from him. He began to pick out an older Welsh tune called "Amapola," which Josh had heard played on the radio. Bryn's tremolo fingerpicking technique and buttery fretboard movements sustained the notes of the song and made the ukulele come alive. The tiny instrument seemed instantly to have been transformed into a small orchestra.

When the performance ended, Josh was bursting with

excitement at what the old man had done. "Wow!" he said. "How did you learn to play like that, Grampa? I thought you only played the crwth."

"Listen here, boy—something very lyrical and elegant is looking for you," Bryn said, now pointing a finger at Josh. "You thought the ukulele can't make the music!" He shook his head. "It's not the ukulele that can't make it; it's you; it's me. We don't make the music because we're not in tune." He saw the boy's confusion. "You—how do I tell you?"

Something very lyrical and elegant is looking for you.

"Tell me what?"

"How it's we who are the instruments."

Josh laughed. "If we're instruments, who is playing us?" he asked.

The old man pointed to the sky.

"You mean God?"

"Who else? We are the instruments, and God is the Master Player. And, when we are in tune He plays through us."

"Grampa, you're funny. You say I'm an instrument, and you tell me I have to get in tune. How do I do that? How do I get in tune?"

But the old man looked away with a shake of his head. No more discussion on that subject. "You thought the ukulele didn't make the music," he said, handing the instrument back to Josh. "This makes the music when you make the music!"

Josh looked with new care and respect at the device his grampa's hands had shaped, from which he had just coaxed such sounds. "I could never learn to play like you, Grampa."

The old man gazed at the boy until he met his eyes again. "Not yet," was all he said.

Joshua Lynk was glad when the lesson was finished, and Sam had returned to his ball game. He took up a pile of song sheets from the table and went to his car. Driving to another student's home for his second scheduled lesson of the day, he mused, *This won't be bad. Dotty's a brighter kid, both in intelligence and attitude*.

On the way home after the lesson with Dotty, it was unseasonably hot; Joshua put the windows down. The music sheets on the seat beside him rustled in the wind. As he moved them, the breeze picked up a scrap of paper that had been under the sheets and blew it in front of his face. He caught the tiny scrap just before it went out the window. He looked at the phrase penciled on it. *Head for Ap Jack!* it said.

"I could do it," he said aloud. "I could start out now and be there by dark." Without warning, such a tide of grief rose in his chest that he had to pull the car to the side of the road. He got out, walked into a field, doubled over and grabbed his stomach, great sobs shaking him uncontrollably. Back came trooping memories of all the summers he had spent up at the lake with his wife, Joy, when the girls were small. Family games and concerts, campfires, kayaking

and sailing. Three years of separation now. Beth preparing for high school; Sarah Grace now in primary school. It was all gone, gone down the toilet.

I'm lost, he thought. A tortured wail rose out of him: "*Grampa!*"

~

Nothing ever comes to one, that is worth having, except as a result of hard work.

—Booker T. Washington

Chapter 2

MONDAYS WITH THE MAESTRO

"TRY IT AGAIN."

The patient, direct tone of his teacher's baritone voice always arrested Josh's attention, compelling him to respond obediently. What was it Grampa had said? "The man is not frightening. He just means business." Peter Colesworthy was a former concert pianist of renown, and his prowess as a classical guitarist was equally notable. Several of his students had risen to fame.

Today, as usual, young Josh just wanted his guitar lesson to be over. Mr. C was too demanding, too painstaking! As far as Josh was concerned, he'd done the figure right that time—the *third* time! He looked at the thin features, the

unblinking eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses, the long aristocratic nose above a dark, carefully trimmed moustache. But his teacher's wardrobe was the most arresting. No one else Josh had ever met wore a white linen suit, which always seemed crisp and freshly laundered. The way his teacher looked demanded respect.

As he moved to play the line again, he heard, "Wait." He paused while Mr. Colesworthy corrected the position of his fingering arm, rounding his wrist until it hurt. "Hold it there, hum."

Josh sighed loudly, knowing it would not faze his teacher, who said, "It's foundational. No muscles in the fingers, hum." Now he felt a small nudge on his left shoulder blade. "Keep the x-y axis with shoulders and spine, Josh."

Why classical *guitar*? Josh's mind complained. *I want to play jazz. I want to play rock!*

"Every true kind of guitar craftsmanship must be built on these basics," hummed Mr. C. "They form the architecture of good performance."

How does he know what I'm thinking? Josh wondered.

Peter Colesworthy watched the boy writhing on the stool in front of him. His commitment to his calling did not allow him to react to the surface behavior of his students—the agony over details; the impatience to "just play" that dulled their ability to bring what they had from within, and which led so many into mediocrity. Peter's gift kept him up at night, for he heard the music that was in people and he could not turn it off. His calling was to release it in a chosen few.

As a master, Peter Colesworthy was on the lookout for a

student who had some inkling of the music that was truly his or hers, the gift he or she had to give. *They do not know they have it*, he thought. *They just feel something. Usually it expresses as a wish to perform. They've seen the limelight and they want it. Fame-seeking can be the blighting of their gift. I must find a way to strengthen the knowing I see in this one. I expect impatience with beginners, but this boy's lack of concentration could likely work against the extraordinary promise I see. I must hold him to a high standard without reining in his will to be good, to be the best*. Peter knew he must challenge his budding prodigy to follow his dream. It was there, but it was at risk. These were the days that counted. He must be careful, lest the boy throw the lessons over, and the god of ordinariness claim another.

One clue that surfaced early was a natural *rubato*, an expressive and rhythmic freedom the master recognized in a slight speeding up and slowing down of the tempo of a piece at the boy's own discretion. Peter marveled to see this intuitive timing in one so young. *It has been a long time*, he told himself, *since I've had one that promises to move audiences*.

"And *breathe*, Josh! Breathing is the house we sit on."

"But I'm not singing!"

"Whether you sing or not—and you will sing, hum!—you must find a seat in the breath and feel your center there."

"It's too much to think about! Besides, I don't have a seat inside me."

"You do, but it's an empty chair, waiting for someone, hum, you don't know you are. Don't think. *Feel!* Your brain is merely an outpost. Your music comes from the center of you."

"Where's that?"

Don't think. *Feel!* Your brain is merely an outpost. Your music comes from the center of you.

"Exactly. Now, once again, hum."

• • •

Josh was putting his guitar in the case by the front door when the master approached and said, "Do you know your mother wants to sign you up for the next ten lessons?"

Long pause. "Yes."

"I want to know what you think, Josh. Sometimes I think you're fighting me."

"It's not you."

"All right. But you need to know that you're far enough I can see that you are ready."

"Ready for what? I've barely started."

"But you are ahead of the usual story. You are at what I call the cusp. Lots of students quit where you are right now. The choice to go on is a critical one. It means either that you'll continue to give proper care to your technique, or you won't."

"I know, but it's hard."

"It will get harder." The teacher paused. "What do you want, Josh?"

"I want to play steel!"

"Hum. Think about it, Josh. For you, I see . . ." He turned and walked away.

"Dude! I thought you'd never get outta there! I hate it when that guy keeps you late!" Danny Goldsmith was doing his usual complaining about waiting for Josh to finish his lesson.

. . .

"It wasn't too bad today. I learned a lot. And hey, call him Mr. C."

"Mm. How about we call him the Maestro? That's a term of respect, and he looks like he should be conducting an orchestra." Seeing Josh smile, his best friend continued: "Let's go down to Sander's Music and listen to CDs. Jake's on today and he'll let us use the headphones; I can't wait to hear the new Aerosmith!"

"*Aerosmith!* Listen, Danny, your drumming suffers when you listen to all that bashing. You're a steady backbeat drummer. Nobody touches you when you're in the pocket."

"Yeah, you're right. I just like their songs. What are you gonna hear?"

"Me? The usual. Clapton, Steely Dan, Greg Allman, Santana."

"Santana! Dude, you're gonna wear that album out! It's at least ten years old now!"

"Sure. That's why it's good. Nobody plays like Carlos Santana. I think it's timeless. I can play every one of his solos now."

A few days before Josh's birthday, he overheard his grandfather on the telephone, saying, almost in a whisper, "Yes. The check for the next lessons is in the mail." The old man hurriedly hung up and gave Josh their usual parting hug. Throughout the day, Josh thought about it. He resolved to speak to his grandpa about his conflict with the style and rigor of the guitar lessons. After school, he went to his grandfather's shop. The old man was busy lightly sanding the body of a new mahogany guitar. "Grampa," he said, "I'm confused."

"Mm," the old man murmured dismissively.

"I'm learning classical guitar on a used guitar you are renting for me. But I want to play popular music with a band. How will I ever be able to switch over?"

Grampa went on sanding. Finally, he said, "Seems to me, if you work hard every day practicing what you learn in your lessons, your dream will follow."

"But how?" Josh asked. "How will it follow?"

The old man paused in his work. "By the power of intention, Josh. Intention works like a law. It is behind everything you see in the world. God demonstrates it by creating a world that goes on working before our eyes, turning the seasons, growing trees and plants, giving us air and water and food. Likewise, intention is in every so-called man-made object. For instance, look at this guitar I'm making. How do you think it is getting made?"

Josh looked at the gleaming mahogany neck, folded into the ash wood body of a beautiful guitar. "Um, by your intention?"

"Exactly. So, if you connect your intention to play in a band with your hard work practicing what you're learning from Mr. C, the law will work."

Josh shook his head. "I don't get it, Grampa," he said. "How can one thing lead to the oth—"

"Okay," the old man said, turning away. "Too much talk. I am busy. Scoot now."

. . .

That was a birthday Josh would remember all his life. The beautiful guitar his grandfather had been fashioning so carefully that day in his shop was his! He was choked with awe when his grampa laid the gleaming instrument in his hands.

"Steel!" Josh kept saying. "Steel!"

"Sure. Steel!" Grampa said.

"This'll take a pickup fine," Josh exulted. "And it will sound great through an amplifier with some reverb. Maybe I can even learn slide! I'm going to name it my Old Warrior in honor of you. Oh, Grampa!" Looking into those gray eyes under the bushy eyebrows, Josh saw the love shining in them.

"Its voice will open up nicely over time," Grampa offered. "If you take good care of it, then it'll develop a deeper, richer, and sweeter tone with each passing year." Well pleased with his captive young enthusiast, Grampa continued sharing his thoughts: "Remember what I said about intention?" Josh nodded. "And also what I've told you about us being instruments? It was *your* intention, boy, that worked through my hands to build something that would further your dream. I saw you working hard on your classical practice. That work

translated into the work I did to make this guitar. I was allowed to be an instrument for the great music you will one day please so many people with. You see, Josh, when intention is strong and pure, beautiful things are created. That's the way it works."

Intention is behind everything . . . when it is strong and pure, beautiful things are created.

For the next few hours, even though there was noise and gaiety around him, Josh was struck silent by the depth of the laws Grampa had opened up to him.

• • •

It was as members of their small middle-school band that Josh and Danny had shared their common interest in music. The friends approached two other school band members to ask them about the idea of forming their own music group. The boys were Colin Guernsey, the band's pianist, and Greg Haycox, who played bass guitar. The four began to meet on weekends in Greg's garage to practice playing some of the easy popular hits of the day. The place contained an old piano and the team would help carry Danny's drum kit there. Like many small groups of budding hopefuls, the boys strove to achieve a sound that pleased their ears. All were talented, but it was Josh's skills that his bandmates recognized, and he became the natural leader.

On a hot Sunday afternoon, the group had been practicing

for several hours, going over an arrangement Josh had made of "All You Need Is Love." Josh had been critical of Colin's backing of his solo. As the group continued to practice, he became testier. Finally, when Josh called another stop and announced, "Let's go from the top again," Greg protested.

"No way!" he yelled. "It's plenty good enough. I say we go on to another song."

"We're staying with this one until it's right!" Josh returned loudly.

"You're too picky!"

Danny intervened. "Okay, okay, guys. Calm down. This isn't serious. Yes, Josh is picky. It's because he wants it right. But Josh, Greg's also right. We've been on this too long. Let's move on."

Danny had a way of getting through to Josh, and another piece had been chosen. But the scene sowed the seeds for future episodes of irrational perfectionism and impatient outbursts.

As the next lesson with the Maestro ended, Mr. C said, "Your mother told me you are free this Saturday afternoon. I have two tickets to the Seattle Symphony and I would like you to go with me."

Josh was taken by surprise. He quickly searched his mind for some excuse not to attend, but in the end complied. As the week drew to a close, his mind fussed repeatedly. *How will I get through this? What do I have to do with a bunch of over-cultured geeks? It isn't my scene at all.*

Josh knew his mother had conspired with the Maestro in this, and he'd stormed and shouted at her, but she calmly said, "It's what your teacher wants." At the appointed time, dressed in his hand-me-down suit and tie, Josh climbed into the Maestro's car and was taken into the city for the dreaded concert. They parked, and Josh felt his feet dragging as they made their way into formidable Benaroya Hall, home of one of the top symphonic organizations in the country. As they entered the luxurious auditorium, Josh stared around the vast hall and up at the faraway ceiling. They found their seats and he gazed in awe at the orchestra spread before him, preparing to play. Its shining brass and gleaming stringed instruments seemed too much for his eyes to take in. But what most absorbed him were the sounds coming from the group as they tuned. Their instruments, focusing on the G with which the first selection would begin, captivated him. The steady drone, matched by so many kinds of instruments, reverberated through his consciousness.

Applause rose as a distinguished-looking man walked from the wings and took his place facing the orchestra. On a signal from him, all the players' instruments rose in place. There was a momentary rapt silence and then began the first movement of Brahms' First Symphony. Josh had never thought he would hear such music. He was swept away by the processional opening section featuring syncopated rhythms with timpani drums pulsating behind woodwinds and pizzicato strings playing with thematic phrases, finally followed by melodic introductions sung by oboe, flute, and cellos.

When a pause came, Josh, enraptured, started to clap,

then found himself held back by the audience's expectant silence. The second movement began abruptly, and soon the main theme was being sung stridently by the violins. The brilliant melody brought tears to Josh's eyes; he found himself helplessly in the arms of a musical experience that was beyond what he knew. The repeating theme found a ready answer in the song already pulsing through his soul.

On the drive back after the concert, Josh was excited. "I can't believe how they worked together. I know they must all be the best players and that the—what do you call the guy who wrote it—"

"The composer, Brahms," Peter Colesworthy answered.

"Yeah, Brahms. I knew he must have been a genius. But it was how they put it all together. That band leader . . . ."

"Conductor."

"Right, the conductor. He was, well, just the finest. What a lot of work, what a lot of discipline it must take for that many people to be able to perform together like that. Thank you, Mr. C, for taking me. I will never forget this."

"I hope not, Josh. It was my pleasure." As Peter Colesworthy drove home after dropping off his young charge, he congratulated himself on having contributed to Josh's musical knowledge. He had imagined the boy would be deeply stirred by the experience, and he had been right.

What Josh's teacher did not know was that the concert had fed into another side of the boy that was deep-seated. The near-perfect musical performance he had witnessed made him say to himself, I could never be anywhere near as good as any of the people in that orchestra. I don't know why I even try. I'll never be any good.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

The questions below may help you to reflect on and discuss each chapter. Some questions relate directly to the storyline itself, while others are more self-reflective in nature. These questions are not meant to represent an exhaustive list; rather, the intent is to bring a few key topics to light in a way that will ignite your thinking, and accelerate your own journey toward greater authentic leadership purpose.

A couple of points are worth noting here. First, you should not feel obligated to answer every question, as these are simply representative samples to spark your imagination and guide your critical thinking. Second, you may find questions you are not yet prepared to answer nor address fully at a given time. This is very natural, as many questions deal with much weightier topics than you might have noticed in the storyline. Please do not let any open questions keep you from

reading the story in its entirety! Understanding Josh's complete journey is critically important, just as it is important to understand your own work and life in its entirety.

After reading the book and addressing the related questions, my hope is that you will arrive with a much greater sense of what makes you *amazing* as well as a clearer sense of what makes those key people around you amazing. In addition, my intent is to help you discover, sharpen, and amplify your authentic leadership purpose. If you would like additional details or a more extensive guide to support your efforts, then please feel free to explore the companion workbook and materials which supplement the book.

I wish you all the very best on your journey!

CHAPTER 1

1. What music brings out the deepest emotions in you?
2. Who was (or is) your "Grampa"? What (or where) is your "Ap Jack Mountain"?
3. How do think Josh feels when we first meet him? What tones do you see and hear resonating from his spirit?
4. What "gifts" did you inherit in your youth?
5. What important things in your life have you lost?
6. What dreams haunt you? Are they dreams of something that occurred, or something you wanted to happen (but remains unfulfilled)?

7. Are you in tune? How does the "music" of your own life sound?

CHAPTER 2

1. When do you feel a song flowing freely through your life and work?
2. What natural talents, skills, and abilities are you developing actively and practicing intentionally? What is your motivation for each key talent and skill you're working to develop?
3. Why did Mr. C tell Josh there was a seat inside him, but it was an empty chair?
4. Who is your "Danny," someone representing a strong and stable friend and supporter in your life? Are there a few?
5. How beautiful and powerful is the music you orchestrate with your teammates, both inside and outside of work?
6. Who is your "maestro"—an expert who teaches and mentors you in your growth?
7. What do you tell yourself when no one else is listening?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Nation is a globally-recognized management expert, leadership consultant, executive coach, author, and speaker. He is personally driven to discover what makes individuals, teams, and organizations *amazing*—those elements that power the heart and soul of individuals and businesses worldwide.

Mark is Founder and President of Nation Leadership, the Made for Amazing Project, and Harvard Help Circle. He has developed and managed companies in five industries: enterprise technology, financial services, music and entertainment, construction, and professional services. He has led start-ups and served in key regional or global executive roles at SAP, JDA Software, Siebel Systems (Oracle), and UNUM. Mark has developed people, products, and partnerships on six continents, gaining experience in virtually

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Mark graduated *summa cum laude* from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and holds an MBA from Harvard Business School. He is a former professional musician and Ironman triathlete, still enjoying skiing, running, and biking when possible. His work and travels have taken him to more than 40 US states and 35 countries, where he has managed, performed, or spoken to over 300,000 people. When not traveling, Mark is based in Tennessee with his wife and two children.