

6 The Fifth Step SIDE - JAMES

James It's basic fourth and fifth step stuff.

The fourth step you make what's called "a moral inventory". A list of everything bad you've done in your life, big or small. Resentments and fears. Harms done to others. If you've stolen money from your mother, say, or tried to feel up some

girl when she's passed out at a party. Whatever. You get it down on paper.

And step five, you share it with someone, your sponsor.

The point is to divest yourself of shame. Anything that'll make you pick up a drink in the future. It's about getting clean.

Luka It's like a confession? If you're a Catholic?

James Yeah it's a similar uh . . .

Are you a Catholic?

Luka No.

James Ok.

Luka I'm an atheist.

James Were you born Catholic?

Luka My parents weren't religious.

James Ok.

Luka I think my grandpa was a Free Presbyterian.

James I'm a recovering Catholic.

Luka Right.

James Heard a guy in a meeting say one time "that Church – they did a number on me." You know?

Luka Yeah.

James I don't think it's all bad. It helps some people. My wife goes to church. It seems to help her.

Luka So are you an atheist?

James I would say I'm spiritual not religious.

Luka What does that mean?

James I dabble in Buddhism. The Tao.

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Luka So then you're not an atheist?

James Well, there's no God in Buddhism. You have to find your own path.

Luka But they talk about God in AA.

James It's a God of your own understanding.

Luka That's Step Three.

James The Third Step, exactly.

Luka It's still God.

James Like that chair could be your god.

Luka I don't get that.

James A paper cup. Whatever.

Luka How could a paper cup be God?

James The point is you don't have to believe in the Christian God. It's God as you understand him.

Luka I don't really get it. I just don't believe in God. I never have and I never will. Even if he is a paper cup. What's the point in believing in a paper cup? I don't get it.

James Well . . . just keep an open mind.

Luka If I don't believe in God, will I get drunk?

James Well, some people believe you need a spiritual awakening to have any hope of staying sober. If you read the Big Book, there was a famous psychologist called Carl Jung. He believed that.

Luka Do you think I need a spiritual awakening?

James I think it helps. But I've never had one.

Luka Never?

James I suppose becoming a father was a kind of awakening for me.

Luka How many kids do you have?

James Just the one. A son. He's at uni now in Bristol.

Luka What's he like?

James Oh he's terrific. We're very close. We can talk about anything.

Luka That's great.

James He's like my best friend.

Luka And what about your wife?

James What about my wife?

Luka What's it like to have a wife?

James It has its ups and downs. Like anything.

Luka I'd like to have a wife some day.

James You will.

Luka And a coupla kids.

James I'm sure you will.

Luka You think?

James If that's what you want. My sponsor used to say "the programme offers you a life beyond your wildest dreams". I thought he meant riches, material success. I've had some of that. But really what AA has given me is the ability to be an attentive father, a loving husband. That was beyond my wildest dreams.

Luka I was hoping I could get a woman sponsor.

James Ok.

Luka I think I need a mother figure in my life.

James I think that's probably a mistake.