



BEFORE THE *Journey*

A Preview of
Atlas for Lost Souls





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Welcome Note ✿

HELLO, DEAR TRAVELER.

Atlas for Lost Souls isn't a travel book in the traditional sense. It's a bucket list of transformational moments through the lens of *illuminated travel*—a way of moving through the world guided not by itinerary, but by your inner compass.

I wrote this for my twenty-something self, adrift not because anything was wrong, but because nothing felt truly right.

Back then, I didn't want a vacation—I wanted answers. And when I left my old routines to find them, I found *myself* instead.

If you want travel to be your method of transformation, this is a glimpse into that journey—a preview of the stories, frameworks, and invitations within *Atlas for Lost Souls*.

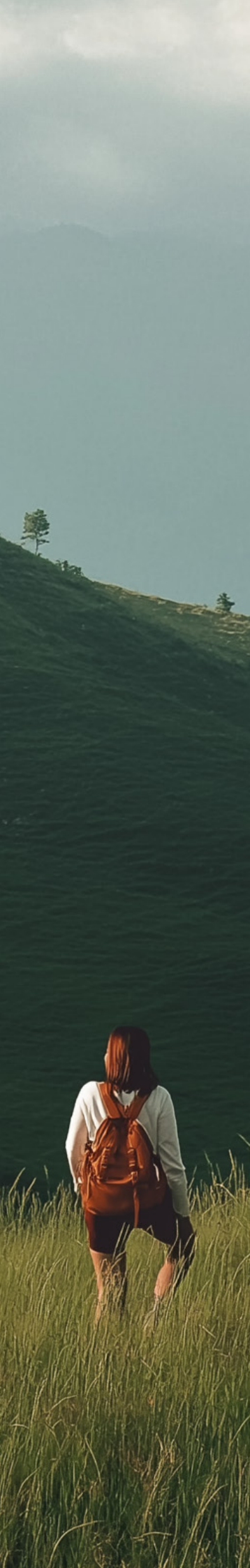
May it stir something in you.
May it meet you where you are.
And may it gently point you toward the destinations you're already longing to go.

Because sometimes, all it takes is a nudge to notice the quiet flickers signaling that life could be different.

And from there, your real journey begins.

—Jen Twang

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The Language

Before we go further, here's a glossary of handy terms and key concepts you'll encounter in *Atlas for Lost Souls*.

DASHA



In Vedic astrology (*Jyotish*), a *dasha* is a “cosmic season,” a planetary chapter shaping what seeds are most likely to bloom. Each story in the book is mapped to these cycles, offering another lens to understand timing and transformation.

DELIGHT BLACKOUT



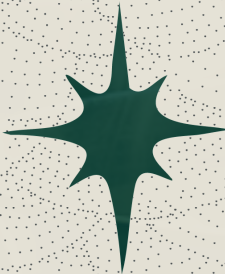
A moment of awe so profound it suspends thought. Whether you're stunned silent or babbling in wonder, you've been momentarily overtaken by beauty too big for words.

FIELD NOTES



Snapshots of transformation, captured like coordinates in time and space. More than travel stories, they're inner waypoints—reflections from the road reminding you that what matters isn't how things look, but how they feel.

ILLUMINED TRAVEL



A mode and mindset of travel where you deliberately step beyond your comfort zone, trading the familiar for the wild, unpredictable unknown. Guided not by itinerary but by inner orientation, it's travel that transforms—where the real destination is a wiser, more joyful version of yourself.

LOST CONVOS



Unexpected, soul-deep conversations with fellow seekers, where you skip small talk and speak straight from the core. They remind you you're not alone, and that your journey, with all its longings, reckonings, and revelations, is mirrored in someone else's.

TYDKYN Pronounced (TID-KIN)



Short for “Things You Didn't Know You Needed,” these are the unexpected joys and revelations that find you when you're fully engaged with life. They often leave lasting imprints: a new taste, a new rhythm, a new way of seeing.

Lay of the Land

THE FOUR PHASES OF ILLUMINED TRAVEL

01
EXPLORATION



02
WONDER



03
CONNECTION



04
SELF-DISCOVERY



As with any epic journey, illumined travel unfolds in phases, each offering its own trials, invitations, and unexpected gifts. They won't always arrive in order, but if you stay with the path, you'll move through all of them.

In *Atlas for Lost Souls*, you'll find ten transformative moments for each phase—plus a few waypoints from when the journey breaks open and your illusions fall away. The reckonings. The thresholds. The lessons you can only learn the hard way.

The real work is in your willingness to meet what rises, and let it remake you. Because there's no growth without friction.

And that's the whole point of getting lost on purpose.

As your journey progresses, you won't just learn how the world works. You'll begin to shift—not through grand revelations, but through quiet, catalytic moments.

I think of illumined travel as a chisel—and ourselves as sculptors—patiently carving away the identities we've outgrown to reveal the truer self that's been waiting underneath all along.

As Pema Chödrön wrote:

"Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over to annihilation can that which is indestructible in us be found."

In the book, I retell some of my own bucket-list experiences as "Field Notes."

The one that follows is for anyone who's ever stood at the edge of the unknown, longing for a glimpse of what lies beyond.

May it remind you:
Heartbreak can be a doorway.
And fear? A compass.



Field Notes:

AN EXCERPT

#38. Go where you're forced to confront your fears ...

... and learn how much fun you can have after you transcend them.

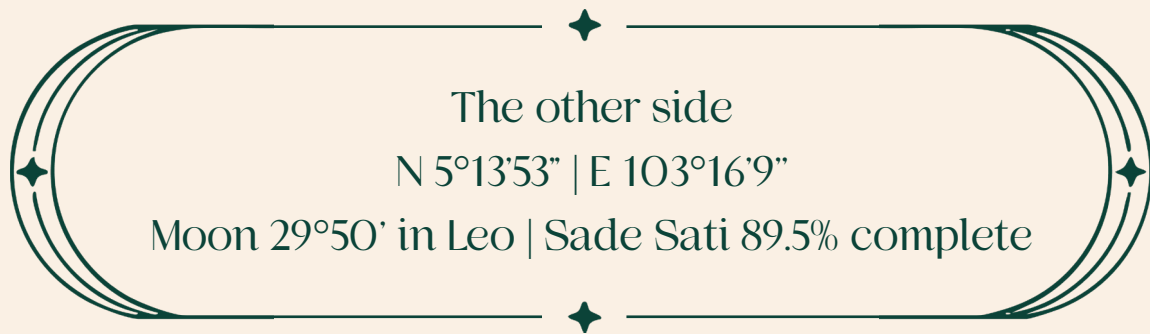
Outside of your comfort zone, fear is a steady companion. But by facing fear, you have a chance to transcend the version of yourself who was afraid. And who doesn't like the sound of that?

Illumined travel affords us more chances to confront our fears—as many as it takes to realize we don't mind it so much, because leaning into it always takes us somewhere greater. Like *nishikigoi*, or Japanese koi, we grow into the size of the world we are comfortable playing in.

If you think about it, real courage isn't the absence of fear, but choosing to take action in spite of it. If used as a catalyst for growth, old wounds can be healed, and self-doubt becomes the fuel to get you where you've always wanted to go.

In crisis, fear simply points the way forward, and at the end of this “way,” you'll be more capable of meeting any future, playing any part you're asked to play with aplomb.





The aftermath of every crisis in my life had taken me, like a current, into an ocean of greater possibility—this time, literally. In fact, I'd developed a particular fondness for breakups, since over the years, I'd learned there was no better time to level up than when heartbreak made all my usual anxieties seem manageable in comparison. The sooner I could attribute newfound power to the pain that motivated me to obtain it, the faster I moved on.

Which is why I'd deemed it exceptionally fitting to channel the torrent of breakup energy from a surfer-dude relationship into conquering a lifelong fear of drowning. For months, I'd made my way to the pool each morning, trying to get comfortable in an environment that terrified me.

It was a radical routine for someone who, as a kid, hated the spray of water on my face so much that I refused to step foot into a shower until well into my teens. By college, I'd sworn off all water sports after someone flipped my kayak while I was relaxing in the middle of a lake. I'd been fished out, flailing—and, to add insult to injury, choking on a bagel I'd been eating.

But now that I was in Southeast Asia, surrounded by tropical islands and marine life galore, learning to play in open water would mean gifting myself with what was tantamount to a veritable galaxy of new experiences to discover.

The only way to pull it off was to keep practicing and face the fear head-on. I took a deep breath and stilled, letting my head sink below the water's surface, intent on making this the best breakup yet.



I stepped off the boat onto the soft, white sand for which Kapas (a.k.a. cotton) Island was named, letting the epic golden-hour views carry me straight into the arms of a delight blackout. I vaguely heard myself muttering a litany of obscenity-laden praises—an impressive number of variations of “Oh my god this is so fucking amazing” and “Holy fucking shit, where are we?”—between the photo stops I took every twenty steps or so.

Just like that, tropical island vacations rocketed to the top of my ever-growing list of TYDKYNs.

The sun was minutes from setting when we finally arrived at our camp, so I set my bag down, grabbed the first snorkel mask I'd ever bought, and ran straight for the beach, eager to try out my newly acquired skills. I ran to where the water level hit my chest and plunged my face beneath the surface. As beginner's luck would have it, right in front of me was a bloom of bright corals and an octopus, tentacles curling back as it darted away from me.

Surfacing with a shout of wonder, my gaze was immediately captivated by a glorious, advancing pastel sunset that created a glistening path of quicksilver ripples on the ocean's surface. I ducked up and down repeatedly, unable to choose between the two breathtaking views, trying desperately to take in as much of Nature's beauty as I could, even as it slipped through like fine sand in loosely cupped hands.

As months passed, more TYDKYNs followed: blissful, post-dive naps on the sundeck of a liveaboard, the sea breeze keeping the sun's harsh heat at bay; exhilarating encounters with sea creatures in shapes and colors resembling illustrations more than living things; a serene boat ride to a deserted island, where low tide and a new moon revealed I was sandwiched between the dazzling smoky starlight of the Milky Way and a twinkling seabed of bioluminescent plankton clinging to the flora below me.

After I caught my first wave, I'd triumphantly slapped the water with my surfboard, sending a quick but fervent thanks to the heartbreak that started it all, reveling in the truth that on the other side of any fear that plagues us is more expansion, more freedom, and a lot more fun.

From time to time, as beach trips became a frequent part of my life's rhythm, I'd recall another memory from that trip to Kapas—the second evening, when our group gathered for a requisite beach bonfire and performance by the firemaster, who dipped his poi into the flames and began dancing to beat-driven EDM tracks with the noise of lapping waves in the background.

I looked around at the friends I'd met within the last year, smiling faces aglow in the firelight. While unplanned and unpredicted, it was crystal clear to me at that moment that everything, pain included, must be set up for us to learn more about ourselves. Why else would I feel like I'd gained a million more things than I'd lost?

Overcome with emotion, I leaned forward, pounding the sand rhythmically and chanting from my heart, "Life is so good, so good, so good."



About the Maker



Jen
Twang

Founder of Cozy Little Universe. Her own journey—through rupture, reinvention, and round-the-world exploration—became the seed of *Atlas for Lost Souls* and the soul of CLU.

She has worked internationally as a business journalist, startup content strategist, and marketing executive, and she's integrating it all to help people navigate uncertainty and map their own meaning.

& the Mission

Cozy Little Universe is a platform blending story-led frameworks, intentional travel, and reflective tools to help people navigate life's turning points.

Think of it like a visitor center at the threshold of the Unknown—a place to pause, reorient, and begin again.

Travel Deeper

IF THIS SPOKE TO YOU, THERE'S MORE AHEAD —
TOOLS, TECH, AND STORIES DESIGNED TO MEET
YOU AT THE NEXT THRESHOLD.



EXPLORE THE BOOK'S FULL BUCKET LIST AT

cozylittleuniverse.com/atlas