SAMPLE

The Drowned Queen

The Personality That Rose From Betrayal Transformed

Aiman Sterling

Free sample: Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

Buy the full book:

Payhip

Carousell

Lulu

Contents

Chapter 1: The Signature — the Drowned Queen at a Glance

Chapter 2: The Core — Betrayal as Raw Material

Chapter 3: The Instrument — The Calm of the Once-Drowned

Chapter 4: The Craft — The Sovereignty That Runs the Room

Chapter 5: The Cost: The Ledger of the Unissued Trust

Chapter 6: The Dark Side: The Sea as Moat

Chapter 7: The Drowned Queen at Work — Career, Teams, and the Boss Relationship

Chapter 8: The Drowned Queen in Love and Friendship

Chapter 9: The Matchups — Companions, Rivals, and the Other Types

Chapter 10: From Moat to Harbor — the Queen Learning to Issue the Shore

Afterword

Chapter 1: The Signature — the Drowned Queen at a Glance

The Telltale Manner

Before anyone speaks, the room has been weighed — and the sea chest must open with the even-keeled fact that makes this type so magnetic and so unreachable: the Drowned Queen is calm — not the ordinary composure of a well-managed self; the deep, tank-still calm of a person who has already survived the worst thing the room could do — and the bill of lading's sharp note: the calm arrives first — before the pleasantries, before the reading of the room, the assessment has already happened: the exits, the players, the hands that could close — the signature, the sea chest has learned to read it in the first ten minutes of any room: watch what the undertow does with an offer — the kindness, the deal, the compliment, the open hand: the Queen receives it perfectly — gracious, unhurried, already verified — and the offer's true cost, computed, before the offer has finished being made. The manner carries the throne, and the sea chest must render it precisely because it is so frequently mistaken for confidence: the Queen's poise is not self-belief in the ordinary sense; it is ballast — the wound, refloated to stability: the self that cannot be destabilized because it already touched the bottom — and the bill of lading's testimony, gathered from the courts of every plunge, is word for word the same: she has been calm through things that ended careers, marriages, and companies — I do not know where the calm came from, and she will never tell me — said with awe, and the sea chest's sharp note: both halves are true, and the second half has a cost the first has never priced. Sharper under observation: watch what happens when someone gets close — the year of friendship, the intimacy earned, the moment a hand reaches across the moat — and the bill of lading's finest finding: the Queen goes gracious — the drawing-in is always beautiful: the schedule, thinning; the answers, complete and untraceably brief; the closeness, re-graded — and everyone experiences it as the Queen's busy season — and the sea chest's x-ray: the gracious withdrawal is the depth's own ship's code: the closeness was approaching the water line, and the ship's code's whole design is older than the friendship.

And underneath the calm runs the tell the undertow's loved ones report and the undertow never sees: the mercy, withheld as policy — the Queen's quiet, permanent arithmetic of who is forgiven and when: the underperformer, judged competent and past; the friend who failed the test, written off with perfect grace — and the bill of lading's correction: the undertow does not experience the withholding as coldness; the undertow experiences it as jurisdiction — mercy being the one currency the water taught was counterfeited — and the people near the Drowned Queen live the way people live near a deep harbor: beautifully, productively, and with one eye on the depth — the whole court sensing, correctly, that the throne's mercy is not unavailable;

it is denominated — priced in a currency the court has never been shown.

The Backstory Signature

the sea chest holds two versions of the origin, and they are both true, and they meet in the same water.

In the first version, the self was betrayed by the intimate — the classic drowning: the raft who signed away the firm; the best friend who took the secret public; the parent who used the confession as a weapon; the mentor who claimed the work — the bill of lading has collected the scene in every variant, and the anatomy is uniform: the weapon was given, not taken — the self's own openness, used against the self — and the betrayal's planning, discovered later in every plunge, long predates the moment: the trust was being banked for years for exactly this harvest — and the discovery, made under the water: the hand was closed before it was ever offered.

In the second version, the self was drowned by the institution — the record's colder variant: the company that framed the fall; the family that rewrote the history; the partnership that left the self holding the ruin — and the type, betrayed by a system rather than a person, experiences the same water at the same depth: the world's own hand, closing — and the file's entry: the institutional drowning produces the deeper moat, because the betrayer's face is everywhere — any hand, any company, any promise, can be the same hand — and the record's dry line: the person betrayed drowns once; the institutionally betrayed drowns in general, and the moat is sized accordingly.

And the origin moment, where the versions converge, is always the same water — the same scene in every plunge: the moment of drowning — the revelation, the fall, the exposure — the self held under by the trusted hand, the lungs full of everything the self once believed — and, in the same water, the moment the bill of lading marks as the birth: the self, underwater, ceasing to fight the way the drowning are supposed to fight, and making the ruling instead, made in the water's own calm, never written down, never once revisited: the softness dies here; the self that surfaces will not be touchable; never again — and the bill of lading must enter the ruling's first half with the care this plunge deserves: the ruling was correct — the bill of lading has verified it in every plunge since: the self that surfaced was never drowned that way again; the sovereignty worked, permanently — and the ruling's second half, the clause that becomes the shadow: the whole shore is the enemy's country — the prohibition, signed by a drowning self, against the land itself — and the whole biography is that prohibition at work: the throne, built on the betrayal's exact coordinates; the moat, filled; the court, held at the distance once kept only for betrayers — and the bill of lading's correction follows the signature like a wake: the self has spent thirty years being unassailable — and the whole sea chest will show: the self has also spent thirty years underwater.

The Childhood Album

The album opens the way it always opens, and this plunge's is the harbor's most sunny — and the sea chest must enter the sounding first, because it is the plunge's own heartbreak: the early photographs record the most open child in this record — the trust, total; the doors, unnumbered; the secrets, given away daily to anyone with a face — and the album's own testimony is that the water found a self that was easy to love and easy to rob — the bill of lading's most delicate entry: the child who became the Drowned Queen was the album's warmest child — and the cold was never a trait; the cold was a cast.

The album's most telling photo is the one no one wants: the hand — the first wreck's own picture, and the sea chest has learned to check every album for it: the child, in every plunge, photographed mid-trust — reaching up, giving away, led by the hand that will close — and the bill of lading's sharp entry beside it: the album contains no photograph of the betrayal itself — the water, unrecorded — because the album, in every plunge, stops: the sunny years, then the drowned year, and then the album restarts, years later, as if the previous child had been a first draft — and the sea chest's most quietly devastating finding, uniform across every plunge: the post-drowning photographs record a person who is unrecognizable to the people who loved the draft — the warmth, replaced by a poise that photographs beautifully and holds nothing — and the album's whole testimony is the plunge's own arithmetic: the water took a child who trusted, and returned a queen who verified.

And the album ends on the closer the series knows is coming: the young self already the queen — the adolescence organized around the new sovereignty: the confidences, exchanged for information; the friendships, functional and clean; the family, loved from a position — the bill of lading's count of the album's final year: one self, sovereign; zero hands held without audit — and the moment the coronation became the identity: the young Queen, offered a real friendship by a real friend, running the verification instead — and the friend, failing no test, passing nothing either, because the audit has no end condition — and the sea chest's first wreck arithmetic, moored beside the last photo: the self built the only safety that cannot be robbed, and the safety's whole cost is the album's own last page: the friend, waving from the shore, cleared and unmet.

The Type at a Glance

Energy: sovereign — the undertow runs on jurisdiction: assessed, controlled, owned — and the sea chest's even-keeled spec: the Queen's energy peaks at the verified — the known quantity, the mapped ally, the pre-read room — the new hand, the bill of lading notes, is where the energy goes to audit.

Ambition: the unassailable position — the undertow does not want love or conquest; the undertow wants the one thing the water took permanently unavailable to take: the self, safe — and the bill of lading's dry note: the ambition is pursued by fortification, in the only currency that cannot be counterfeited: distance — the world's most expensive way to build a life, and the only one that has never once been robbed since.

Vanity structure: the calm — the pride is in the unshakability: the attack, received; the provocation, absorbed; the self, unmoved — and the sea chest's x-ray: the vanity's secret clause is the proof — the calm needs the occasional storm to be witnessed, because the serenity was purchased with the whole draft of a self, and the undertow needs the world to see what the purchase bought — and the bill of lading's quiet note: the calm photographs beautifully and holds the one thing the water never returned: the person who needed to be calm, still standing at the shore.

Loyalty: to the verified few — the Queen stays with the cleared circle through decades, disasters, and the world's opinions — and the bill of lading's driest note: the loyalty's blind side is its admission price: the verified few are loyal to a queen, not to a person, because the person has never once been shown to the court — including, the sea chest notes, to the self, who receives the court's loyalty and cannot feel its warmth, the warmth being denominated in the currency the water retired.

Weakness: the moat — the trust, never issued: the new closeness, investigated past its own natural death; the loyal, watched for the betrayer's face — the one gesture the constitution forbids: taking the hand without the audit.

Unspoken need: to be reached — the one order the undertow has never given or received: come in; I have checked the water for years; it is you — the need the throne guards like a border, because the last time the self said come in, the guest used the door — and the counterevidence — that the reached queen is the living one, and the living queen is the only one who can rule the shore — has never once been allowed to exist.

The Type in Five Situations

At a party. The room's tide — the Drowned Queen at a party is the guest everyone orbits and nobody absorbs: the conversation, flawless; the stories, given in exact, pre-measured portions; the exit, timed to the minute — and the sea chest's sharp detail: the party's best conversationalist will leave knowing everyone and having been known by no one — and the bill of lading's found line: she was the most charming person at the party, and I could not tell you one true thing about her — because the charm, the bill of lading notes, is the throne's own ship's code: the warmth that signals approach without permitting it — the lighthouse's exact weather: lit, rotating, never docking.

In a new job. Instant institution — the Queen's first quarter is the bill of lading's most respected: the systems, mastered; the politics, mapped by the second week; the alliances, formed at verified depth only — and the bill of lading's warning arrives on schedule: the institution will defer to the undertow in a way the org chart cannot record — and the sea chest's most reliable workplace finding: the Drowned Queen, by year two, holds the department's real authority in the undertow's calm — the crisis, absorbed; the power struggle, ended without being joined — and the first colleague who tries to know the undertow, the bill of lading notes with care, discovers the institution's whole constitution: the door, gorgeous, locked from the water side.

Under sudden pressure. the undertow's native country, and the bill of lading enters it with genuine awe: the Drowned Queen in a crisis is the harbor's most unshakable presence — where others panic, the undertow descends: the voice, leveling as the room rises; the plan, forming while the plan is failing — and the sea chest's most delicate finding: the crisis is the water's own weather, the weather the undertow was born again in — the self that has already touched the bottom cannot be dropped further — and the bill of lading's line: the world calls it grace under fire; the sea chest calls it the one address the self knows the depth of — and the whole table steadies on the Queen's calm, and the Queen, afterward, is the only one who does not need the debrief: I have been under worse water than this, the bill of lading has collected the sentence, verbatim, in every plunge.

In a boring meeting. Present, courteous, at depth — and the bill of lading's x-ray: the audit — the Queen's mind, under the agenda's dead air, is quietly reading the room's hands: who is aligning with whom; whose promise has a history; which alliance, when it closes, will close on someone — and the sea chest's tender note: the minutes record the undertow's courtesy; the audit, under the courtesy, is mapping the moat's next threat — and the bill of lading has never once watched a Drowned Queen sit through a meeting without filing a verdict on everyone in it by the hour's end.

On holiday. the bill of lading's most geographic finding for this plunge: the Drowned Queen on holiday is a sovereign inspecting the provinces — the itinerary, controlled; the interactions, prepaid; the whole rest taken at verified distance — the resort, excellent; the companions, optional — and the tell is in the return: the undertow, in every plunge, comes home exactly as calm as it left — the bill of lading's line on the pattern: the holiday does not move the throne; the throne travels with the undertow — the luggage light, the crown never once checked — and the self, the whole sea chest has found, has never once been away — the one address the constitution cannot book: the shore.

Not to Be Confused With

The Vengeful Widow (Volume 60) is the nearest neighbor, and the confusion is the sea chest's most common, because both types were made by violation — but the Widow's answer is war: the grief, aimed outward at the violator, forever — the enemy, hunted; the loss, memorialized in campaign after campaign; the Widow lives in the attack on what took the person; the Drowned Queen's answer is sovereignty: the betrayal, refloated inward to jurisdiction — the throne built on the betrayal's coordinates; the violator, judged and archived, not hunted — the Queen lives in the rule of what the taking left behind — the test: ask each of them about the one who did it. The Widow answers hot: the campaign continues, and the type will show you the battle plan with pride. The Queen answers cold: the verdict was rendered years ago, and the sea chest, the bill of lading notes, is closed — I do not think about him; I think about the moat — and the border, dry and final: the Widow fights so the violation is avenged; the Queen builds so the violation is impossible — and the sea chest's closing note: the two types are the wound's two weapons — retaliation and fortification — and only one of them, the bill of lading notes, ever ends the war: the Widow's sea chest is still

fighting; the Queen's sea chest is still underwater — the Widow's war at least touches the shore, and the bill of lading's quiet warning to the Queen alone: the sovereignty that ends the war inside the self has not yet been built — because the throne, this whole plunge will show, is not the end of the water; it is the water's address.

The Relentless Avenger (Volume 9) is the sibling confusion, the sea chest's most instructive, because both constitutions were founded by a wrong and swore never again — but the Avenger's oath aims outward: the prevention, public — the fight so that it never happens again, to anyone: the cause, the systems, the world's next victim defended in advance; the Drowned Queen's oath aims inward: the armor, private — the self that will never be touchable again: the prevention ends at the moat — the test: watch each of them meet a young version of the self. The Avenger enlists: the cause gains a soldier, and the type will build the young one's defenses with real love. The Queen verifies: the young one is assessed — useful, cleared, not admitted — the bill of lading's most delicate finding: the Queen will give the young version of the self every tool and zero company — and the border, the voyage's sharpest: the Avenger protects the world from the wrong; the Queen protects the self from the world — and the sea chest's closing note: the two types are never-again's two directions — the shore defended, and the self sealed — and the mature pair, the sea chest has learned, is the moat and the watchtower on one coast: the Avenger teaching the Queen that the past can be spent on others — the violation, made into the young one's armor, the one gift the water ever returns — and the Queen teaching the Avenger that the self survived — the throne, not just the fight — the two never-agains, retired in the same season, the bill of lading's favorite parallel: safe, and together — the only formation the water never planned for.

The Indestructible Titan (Volume 51) is the misreading the world makes often, because both types radiate invulnerability — but the Titan's armor is denial: the wound, never admitted — the undertow has no scars on record, by policy; the Titan's strength is the claim that nothing hurt; the Drowned Queen's armor is documentation: the wound, admitted fully, once, in the water — the scar, the whole identity: the Queen's strength is the claim that everything hurt, once, and was survived — the test: ask each of them about the worst thing that happened. The Titan answers light: the reframe, the lesson, the silver lining, all delivered at speed, because the file beneath the polish is sealed. The Queen answers still: the worst thing happened; I will tell you it happened, and nothing else — and the sea chest's dry line: the Titan cannot admit the water; the Queen was born in it — and both of them are standing on the beach, dry — and the border, the voyage's last and the plunge's quietest: both types are hiding from the same thing — the wet self: the person who was hurt and needed to say so — the Titan above the water, the Queen under it — and the bill of lading's quiet warning to the Queen alone: the Titan, at least, is lying to itself about the depth, and can therefore surface by accident; the Queen knows the depth exactly, and has furnished the bottom — which is the whole difference and the whole sea chest: the denial ends when the truth is survivable, and the truth, this sea chest will show, is not that the self was betrayed — the truth is that the warm self was not the mistake — the door was never the problem; the unverified hand was — and the shore, the whole

record has found, is where the difference is lived.

The Third Person

The signature the whole circle reports and no one has named, placed at the chapter's front because it governs every sentence this subject speaks: the third person — the Drowned Queen, discussing the years before the wreck, says she — she was so warm; she believed everyone; she would have gone under for any of them — and the circle, hearing the grammar, always assumes grief, and the bill of lading's cross-check corrects the assumption: the third person is not mourning; it is jurisdiction — the drowned self is spoken of the way a court speaks of a predecessor: respectfully, finally, and as a different legal entity — and the finding beneath the grammar, which the whole volume turns on: the Queen did not lose herself in the betrayal so much as incorporate the loss — the warm self, declared, wound down, and kept on the books as an asset she holds title to: the empathy, salvaged; the trust, converted into judgment; the softness, still there, issued only on purpose — and the third person's one cost, logged plainly: the Queen, so sovereign, cannot say I was warm in the first person any more than she can say I am afraid — the grammar that saved her being the same grammar that keeps the person behind the throne, in the raft's words from the opening, still wet, still trusting — and waving only at the ones who knew her before the water.

Chapter 2: The Core — Betrayal as Raw Material

Every engine in this harbor runs on a first wreck, and the Drowned Queen's is the only one that was a harvest. Consider the plunge the bill of lading opens with: the colleague — she was the warmest person in the building — and after the partnership broke, she came back the calmest, the coldest, and the most powerful, all in the same week — and the water that built the queen: the trusted hand, closed, and the self's own openness, used as the blueprint for its ruin.

the riptide this builds is betrayal as raw material, and its mechanics deserve the sea chest's closest attention because they are the most constructive in this harbor: the payoff loop, exact and stated plainly: the sovereignty buys unsurprise — the one thing the water took: the self's standing in the world, the unquestioned of every day since — and the trade restores it permanently: in sovereignty, the hand's closing was foreseen, the depth pre-read, the attack already amortized — the bill of lading has verified the purchase in every plunge: the Drowned Queen has never once been taken by surprise by a hand since the water — and the flaw is built into the same purchase, because a self that cannot be surprised by hands, the bill of lading's central finding, cannot be reached by them either: the trade pays in the currency of the shore — every year the moat holds is a year the kingdom goes unloved — and the bill of lading's first wreck correction, moored with both inks at once: the coronation was not bitterness; the coronation was engineering — the self built the only safety that cannot be robbed, because the first safety was — and the corruption is not the sovereignty; the corruption is the denomination: the trust, hoarded as treasure, is never spent —

and the withholding, the sea chest's most delicate finding, is the tell: the mercy arrives exactly when the threat is confirmed absent, the two in one policy — never again, and never near — the kingdom's own economy: the wound pays the calm — and the adult, thirty years deep, is still paying it, in the one currency the water minted: distance — which the whole plunge turns out to be running short of.

And what was the riptide for? the sea chest answers with the tenderness every plunge deserves: the self was solving for annihilation — the real scarcity of the water was not the loss of the betrayer, or even the ruin; the ruin was repairable, and the bill of lading has watched the sea chests: the companies, rebuilt; the reputations, restored — the scarcity was the self's own continuity: the warm self, the one who gave the secrets and left the doors open, was the self the betrayal discredited — under the water, the discovery that felt like dying: the person I have been is the person who was robbed — the openness was the flaw — and the sovereignty, the one self that could not be robbed the same way twice, became the answer to the annihilation: I cannot bring back the warm self; I can build the self no one can take — and the bill of lading's most delicate finding, uniform across every plunge: the coronation's real purchase was never the kingdom at all; it was existence: the throne meant the betrayal had not ended the self — the self was still someone, and the someone was inviolable — and the bill of lading's central line on the plunge: betrayal as raw material is not vengeance; it is salvage — the drowning self's one construction project against annihilation — and the adult's whole work, arriving ten chapters early so the undertow can practice standing in it, is the discovery that the salvage is real and the blueprint is wrong: the self that ruled from the depth survived — and the self that survives alone, the whole sea chest turns on this, has not yet lived: the water's whole lesson, read to the end, was never the softness was the flaw; it was the unverified hand was — and the warm self, this sea chest will show, was not the mistake the water claimed — the warm self was the shore — and the rising tide's whole discovery: the sovereignty, kept, and the trust, re-issued in measured, survivable portions — the throne, at last, shared with the land — because the kingdom ruled from the depth is safe, the bill of lading has verified it in every mature plunge, and the kingdom ruled from the shore is inhabited — and the two, at last, in the same self, are the plunge's whole finding: the queen, and the woman, both alive, on dry land.

The mechanism's adulthood is where the sea chest's plunges live, and three of them set the pattern. The institution's plunge is the classic: the betrayal's sequel — the company, rebuilt bigger; the reputation, restored past its original height; the board, chaired by the self the raft tried to drown — and the bill of lading's interview, conducted years later, produced the undertow's own summary, worth entering whole because it is the riptide in a sentence: he took the firm, so I built an empire — and I did not build it to spite him; I built it because empires cannot be moored through the front door by a man with my keys — said with the calm the sea chest has learned to read, and the sea chest's sharp note: both halves are true, and the second half has a price the first never pays: my keys — the empire, built to be unrobbable, is also, the sea chest notes, unvisitable — the bill of lading's sharpest entry, from the colleague of nine years: she built the safest company in the industry, and I do not think she has

ever once enjoyed it — the calm is the business model, and the moat is the founder's address. The partnership's plunge is the tender one: the re-graded marriage — the spouse, cleared years ago, still waiting at the water line: the confession, asked for once and never asked again; the intimacy, beautiful at the verified depth and forbidden below it — and the spouse's line, held with the love the whole plunge deserves: she trusts me at the distance of a formal alliance — and some nights I want to shake her and say: I am not him — and I never say it, because I have seen what the water did, and I would rather be loved at a distance than watched from the shore — the sea chest's entry beside it: the never say it is the audit's whole cost: the spouse, cleared, holding the position the betrayer held, with no way to be naturalized — and the bill of lading's correction, moored with both their griefs intact: the loyalty is real; the loyalty is unreceived — the self, sovereign, has never once been known since the water, and the court, the whole sea chest notes, is the shore's own population, held at sea. And the friend's plunge is the one the bill of lading enters most gently, because it is the shadow's whole arrival: the projected face — the old friend, twenty years cleared, failing one test the water's laboratory never designed: the friend, distant for a season, busy with a life, re-graded overnight — the verdict, rendered in the betrayer's exact terms — and the friend's discovery, the bill of lading has collected it from every plunge: I failed a test I was never told was being given, for a crime I did not commit, against a man I never met — and the sea chest's finding, moored with both the sovereignty and the cost intact: the Queen was right that hands close — and the bill of lading's arithmetic: the friend's hand never closed at all — the projected face, the bill of lading's coldest line, the only betrayer still inside the kingdom — what the first wreck explains is only this: why the undertow, hearing all three sentences — the empire unenjoyed, the spouse unaudited, the friend unmet — sea chests them under the price of safety and cannot process the pattern underneath: because the pattern's remedy is the issuing, and the issuing, in this constitution, is the water's final round — the hand, opening again — and the bill of lading's last line on the first wreck, filed beside the birth: the self made the trade underwater, drowning, with no time to read the terms — the softness dies here — and the whole growth path, the sea chest can now say plainly, is the discovery that the trade, read on land, has a rider: the softness was never the weapon; the unverified openness was — and the warm self, retrieved from the water's own verdict, is the one asset the throne has never once counted: the shore — and the issuing, when it finally comes, is not the drowning's return; it is the birth's completion: the queen, walking out of the water, at last, with the crown still on — and the whole kingdom, for the first time, populated.

The Salvage Log

The core chapter keeps one final exhibit, named for the register that gives this engine its cold competence: the salvage log — the Drowned Queen's running inventory of what the wreck actually yielded — and the bill of lading, given access to four subjects' own logs (kept, in one case, as an actual spreadsheet titled, in the subject's hand, wreck manifest), enters the inventory plainly: from the betrayal, salvaged: the information (the betrayer's methods, learned in full — the Queen, afterward, reads every operator in the room with the exact manual that ruined her); from the betrayal,

salvaged: the standards (the trust, once issued to all, now issued to the vetted few — the cost chapter prices what this cost, and the core logs what it bought: a life never betrayed twice — the record holds only one repeat betrayal in this whole dossier, and the betrayer in that case had to marry in) — and from the betrayal, salvaged, the log's heaviest line: the sovereignty itself — the power in the boardroom, the level voice, the tilt of the head, all of it recovered property, lifted from the sea floor of the exact week the partnership broke — and the salvage log's closing arithmetic, the core's whole sentence: the Drowned Queen did not rebuild after the wreck; the Queen stripped the wreck — everything the betrayal took, itemized, and everything the betrayal was, converted — the sea that was meant as a grave, run, ever since, as a mine.

Chapter 3: The Instrument — The Calm of the Once-Drowned

Get the toolbox open. This shelf has a standing rule: every portrait delivers the mechanics of its subject's signature implement, visibly, on the bench. The calm has three working parts: the depth, the verdict, and the policy — and the people it works upon are, in the beginning, everyone who has ever watched a crisis meet a person and lose.

The depth is the primary instrument, and the sea chest enters its even-keeled spec first: it is inviolable — the Drowned Queen's calm is not composure, which can crack; it is ballast — the self that has already touched the bottom cannot be dropped further, and the bill of lading's awe on the bill of lading: every attack the world has thrown since the water has been, by the depth's own measure, shallow — and the same instrument, aimed at the self's own shore, is the sea chest's most delicate finding: furnished — the depth, so complete against the world, is also the residence: the self lives at the bottom, in the calm, among the wreckage — the undertow's own confession, verbatim across every plunge: people think my calm is strength; it is the fact that I live where the worst thing happened — I never surfaced; I decorated — the instrument's address is the whole plunge: pointed at attacks, impregnable; pointed at the shore, abandoned. The verdict is the second working part: the rendering — the betrayer, judged once, archived permanently; the friends and rivals since, judged by the same tribunal, in the same terms, with the same finality — and the sea chest's note on the verdict is the riptide's whole signature: the court has no appeals — the Queen's judgments close the sea chest permanently, because the appeals process is what the water exploited — the open hand, the second chance, the hearing — and the bill of lading's most delicate finding: the tribunal's docket, in every plunge, is the betrayer's face, projected onto everyone since: the friend who failed once, archived as the betrayer; the new loyalty, cleared at the same standard the original hand failed — and the docket's cost is the docket's own harbor roll: the court is emptying — the verdicts, rendered over decades, leave fewer subjects than the kingdom started with.

And the policy is the delivery — the mercy, withheld as the throne's standing law: not cruelty — the Queen's mercy is not absent; it is denominated — available only in the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.