

# POWERS OF CREATING 7



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# SEVEN POWERS OF CREATING

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## Introduction

### POWER

Power. Would you like to have power? Do we have any? You wake up some moment in a room after your mother has given birth, and your life begins. You find yourself essentially helpless in the care of others and emerge into a world, a life, a place, and maybe a family. It all seems to happen to you, and you start to wonder if you have any power over any of it.

And what of the world you emerge into? What constrictions do it and the people in it place on you? Do you feel like a prisoner, bonded into situations that limit you and your life and being? And deep down inside of you, do you feel that the world and your life should be so very much better? Do you feel that the person you are could be so much more? And when you ask this, do you feel that it

can be? Or do you feel otherwise? Do you feel you have any power over anything, much less a world where seven billion people (in countless situations) are feeling pretty much the same way?

And what about people around you? Do they limit you, telling you the way things have been and the way things are, and what can happen and what can't? And they tell you that's the way you must be—the way you must feel? Your world and your life have been handed to you as an experience you can view as one of limitations, restrictions, and duties.

And if you were given the power to change your world, your life, and yourself, what form would that power come in? Would it be the power of money? Would it be the power of fame? Would it be the power of friends and people you know?

What is true power?

At its core, in all its definitions, power creates. In every definition of power, from the spiritual to the material, power of all kinds gives the occupant in which it resides the opportunity to create. For if we each had unlimited power, we could create a life and world exactly as we want it.

Here you will access seven powers of creating—of making something that did not exist before become real and of transforming that which already exists into something new, exciting, and better. These powers exist for everybody, not a chosen few. By ignoring them, you will live a life based on reacting to experiences that come your way, essentially victimized by your circumstances and the circumstances of others. You can access these powers or ignore them. By accessing them, you can make your life one of creating, in small to huge ways. You will be in charge of your ultimate reality.

How do I know these powers are real? Many people in life tell you something. Many people in life will tell you what they think is the truth. Many people write books about their ideas or give sermons or lectures of different kinds. I have always liked to listen to many different peoples' ideas of truth. To make something a real truth for me, I have to believe it to be so in my heart and then to put it into practice in my life to see if it works—to see if the physical world aligns with the inner belief. For a belief that does not hold up to real life is just an illusion and a fake. I like truths that are real. So all the following powers are ideas that I not only believe to be true, but also that I've also tried and practiced and that have worked in my life as well as in the lives of many other peoples from many walks of life. And I've observed many other people who have also applied these powers and have demonstrated their effects—how these

powers have created a new reality for the people who apply them. There are seven powers that allow us to bring into reality something that did not exist before so we can transform our lives and our world for the better.

I invite you to join me in exploring these powers, and I invite you to please take these seven powers and test them yourself to see if they are real for you. See if you can create something special, or make your life the way you want it, or even create a better world for all of us.

PICTURE  
THE CORE OF CREATION



*Some men see things as they are and  
ask why.*

*Others dream things that never were  
and ask why not.*

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

## THE POWER OF PICTURING

Would you enjoy the power to create your world the way you want it rather than the way it's been handed to you? Would making something new and specially yours feel great? Would you enjoy creating whatever you can imagine—from art to work, from your health to your personal life? Would you like the power to bring an idea or a dream to life? Where do you begin?

You begin with the dream itself. Welcome to the power of picturing, a power that exists within you and connects your deepest identity with personal visions and wonderful ways to make them real in your world. In order to create anything, first discover the pictures that excite you and call you to bring them into your reality. Our world is intentional and energetic, and to engage the same power that created the world you're in and all that's in it, you start with a picture in your mind or a vision. Without this, it is likely you will create nothing particular but the events based on a series of various thoughts and urges, living the life of a random victim, bouncing between experiences. We all have the ability to envision and to create meaningful pictures and long-term projects, yet few people seem to use this natural talent. Most simply react to the bombardment of images and experiences that hammer them daily. Instead of reacting

to what comes to you from the outside, have you discovered the thrill of living from inside yourself? For within you, you can connect to all the possibilities of life as you know it and life that has yet to be lived, and from that place you can bring select possibilities into reality.

Where does the picture come from? It comes from a place inside you: from the core of your heart. A picture of true power does not usually come from a friend, family, school, fan organization, or from anybody else. It comes with power when it comes from a personal place inside you that is true to your self. The part of your self that it comes from might also be called your spirit, and the longing to create something with your time or your life can be called your calling. Ironically, if you get the picture from that deep, inner place of knowing and wisdom, it will also usually connect to others and be of service and positive impact. Of course power of all kinds

can be used for negative and harmful creations as well, but these usually come from pictures disconnected from the heart: from places of fear or deep wounding.

Also, if your pictures are not really coming from inside yourself—from a clear and true place—you probably won't choose to devote enough time and energy to bring them into life and into your world. You'll find that looking to others to create for you, or letting others impose their pictures on you, won't bring you much personal power and will undoubtedly not work well for you. Pictures that come from others have no root inside you, unless the picture is truly shared by you, thus they will not grow in the soil of your life. Yet the pictures that come from inside you thrive in the soil of your life and grow as the light inside you brightens. The pictures and the light go hand in hand. As the light feeds

your creative ideas, your sense of self brightens, creating more light to feed your pictures.

This process helps you to think big. Thinking small or limiting yourself closes you down and crushes your abilities, your capacities, and your opportunities. Yet if you think big, if you expand yourself like the sky, the sun, or beyond, you will find waves of inspirations rolling over you and lifting you to greater heights and true well-being.

Still, do you wonder if you have any pictures inside? Do you wonder how to discover your true pictures? What if you don't believe you have a vision to create something? What if your heart doesn't tell you what to picture now? Here you will discover some ways to find your picture. These ways have worked for many highly creative people from artists to scientists to athletes, and, if you try them, some or all of them should

work for you. Since any form of creation starts with the right picture, we'll explore many different and proven processes to help you find your picture(s). In addition to these ways, you might find other ways that work for you, yet the processes in this book should get you rolling on the path of envisioning your work and your life. Would you like to give them a try?

## DISCOVERING A PICTURE WHILE DOING SOMETHING YOU LOVE

Want a simple and fun path to a picture that means something to you? When you do something you love doing, you get lost in the process of doing it, and whatever that is, you take yourself to the place of the heart. In that place you stop worrying; you stop striving. You just live and enjoy. And when you do that, you open

yourself up to your deep nature: to your heart. You connect to what you are, authentically. When you're in that authentic state, it allows an ease and an ability to listen, to feel and to open yourself up to you and to the way you want your life to be. This leads to ideas and aspirations you might want to create. Here's the trick to this path: do something you love, not just something to do—not a distraction or time-killer. And keep it positive. For if it's something you enjoy, but it's harmful to you or others, the picture might not be one worth creating. Drugs, for example, might be something that people think they love, but most of the time drugs actually do just the opposite of taking you to your heart—they take you away from it and take away your higher awareness and connection. Doing things you truly love for positive effect takes you to your heart in a way that opens you to discovery and awareness, an awareness of who you are

and what you have inside. Since there are so many, many exciting and positive experiences in the world, why not try to find things you love to do that benefit you and make you feel amazing? Do this, and watch how you'll get a hunch or an inspiring idea or feeling before, after, or during doing the things you love.

## GIVING YOURSELF THE TIME AND PERMISSION

Creation requires that you give yourself time and permission. You need to give your creative ideas a chance to emerge and then give them the time and opportunity they need to flower and blossom. You give yourself a chance to find visions you want to create by trusting and listening to yourself in different ways.

You can start by giving yourself permission to follow what makes you happy—what excites you. If you

trust what is inside you, you have the power to discover something, or many things, that makes you not just want to live but also to live a great and positive life that's good for others and yourself.

Yes, we all have pictures of what we want to create. The place to discover them is in your heart, and the pathway to creation is through your heart. Our minds act like our computers, helping us bring pictures into physical reality. But our minds aren't much help in discovering what we want to create, nor in creating projects that matter deeply to people or our world. The heart, a general metaphor for the inner life, connects us beyond the mind to each other, to our deepest feelings, and to the awareness that makes all things.

And the heart thrives in an environment of calm, spacious time and simplicity. When we are stressed, busy, and dealing with life's daily emergencies all the

time, it can be challenging to listen to our heart or come up with new creative visions. Or, if an idea comes up, we might easily dismiss it as something that other people could do, or a project that can't possibly fit into our busy daily life or the requirements others or we have put on ourselves.

Learning to take time to be alone with yourself and to listen to your heart and feelings gives your inner self a chance to present you with the pictures of the life you want to live and create.

## CALMING THE MIND TO CONNECT

Once you start giving yourself time alone, you might find it difficult at first to stay still, or you might find your mind rushing toward different thoughts or activities or distractions. Especially in a world where we

have a bombardment of stimulation and communications and interactions, it feels unnatural to be with oneself only—and many don't find solitude much fun.

Throughout time, creative people have found that a key to making time alone fun and even electrifying comes surprisingly with calming the mind, so that they can access the place and way of the heart and greater awareness. Many ways exist to do this. We'll talk about a few approaches that have worked for many creative people, because some of these ways could work for you, or you might find another way more suited to you.

## THE CALMNESS OF THE BREATH

Our ability to breathe slowly and deeply is one of the best ways to calm our minds and to also gain access to greater creativity, power, and peace. You'll notice that

when you feel agitated or stressed, your breathing is often rapid and shallow, or your chest tightens, and it feels hard to even get a breath. We use the words “I couldn’t even catch my breath” to describe an intense feeling.

Slow, centered breathing is a natural body process, yet when we label it “meditation,” people can sometimes feel intimidated, thinking it’s a skill they don’t know how to do or concerned that it is against their chosen religion or belief system. Others imagine that meditating is focused thinking about things, like “I’ll meditate on that” or have heard of various forms of meditation that are supposed to be purposeful thinking. Although these types of meditative practice have their own value, thinking about things too much without calming breath can lead to anxiety and mental chatter, the exact opposite of surrendering to the heart and your

inner wisdom of creativity. Simple, slow, intentional breathing helps us to relax the mind and stop thinking, simply experiencing ourselves peacefully in the moment. With practice you learn to simply breathe more slowly and fully most of the time, living from a deep place inside, where you feel your connection to your core. Part of the magic of focused breathing comes from the breath's symbolic integration of our physical bodies and realities with our spirits and unbounded potentials. So by focusing on the breath and slowing down the mind, the body (physical energy) and spirit (creative) unify and empower each other. From this relaxed place, we are able to connect more easily to our creative pictures.

In the beginning it helps to practice breathing mindfully. Find a comfortable place to sit so that your back can be straight (some people may find lying down or sitting in a chair to be their most comfortable

positions). Then you simply breathe regular, deep, slow and easy breaths (preferably through your nose) as you allow your mind to focus on the breath. It's as if you're watching the inhale and exhale. This gives your mind somewhere to focus, and ironically, it will focus on that which will slow it down. The mind might still try to distract you, and even as you're breathing and focusing on the breath, some thoughts are likely to happen automatically. When you find yourself thinking, simply notice that you're thinking, and then take your attention back to the breath again. Your intention is to not struggle with the thoughts, but simply take your attention back to the breath over and over. In the beginning most people can do this comfortably only for about two to five minutes, but with practice you can increase your time, until you begin to enjoy the process and find the peacefulness and calming sense in your mind truly

beneficial. You might find it very helpful to say (inside your head, not out loud) a two-syllable phrase, one syllable on the inhale and one on the exhale. Good ones include ah-men, so-hum, and ah-hum. These syllables or mantras help the flow of breath and the elimination of inner-mind chatter.

Over time you begin to realize that your mind creates all kinds of random thoughts that really are not you and aren't really coming from your true self. As you relax in this way, you will find your ability to connect to your pictures and your true inner vision is increased throughout the day, not just in moments when you are focusing. You'll find your pictures are more clear and accurate, even easier to get to. With a calm mind, pictures of what you'd really love to create emerge inside of you, especially if you hold that subtle intent as you focus on the breath. Why does this happen?

Wouldn't it make more sense for an active mind to bring you creative pictures? It happens because the connection with breath and the slowing of the mind brings you in more direct experience with your inner self, the place of awesome potential and the place where all authentic creativity emerges.

## NATURE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Many people find that they are too fidgety to sit and breathe easily in the beginning and respond better to physical activity to calm their mind. This will be true if you're a "moving centered person"—if you normally respond to stress or discomfort by needing to get up and pace or walk around.

You can still make your exercise a meditative process by using your breath to calm your mind. You can

breathe in harmony with your pace as you walk or run, focusing on the breath instead of allowing your thoughts or worries to dominate your mind.

Yoga, tai chi, chi kung and other martial art practices are also excellent physical ways to calm your mind and are great ways to learn focused breathing while doing something physical. In yoga, for example, you'll want to practice the same slow, in-and-out breathing through your nose that you'd do when sitting. By doing this you'll integrate the body and self (spirit) naturally, easily, and happily.

Another natural way to calm your mind and connect with something greater is being in nature itself. A walk in a park, a hike in the woods or mountains, a beach, an ocean—any direct access to nature will most likely take you immediately to a connection to your inner self and allow your mind to slow down. Why does

this happen? Perhaps nature represents a raw and direct connection with creativity itself. Most people stand in awe of nature and feel the power of creation spontaneously.

One aspect of nature that seems to magnify its calming effect is water. You might be a person who responds to being around water as a calming influence. This could be swimming, an activity that automatically harmonizes the breath with the pace of the arm strokes. Or you might enjoy a fountain or find a stream, river, lake, or beach that you can get to, to experience the water's calming effects. Even a bath or shower, taken with the intention to breathe slowly and release mental chatter, will be particularly calming for some people.

When you connect with nature, you might very well find your mind relaxing and images or gut notions about what you want to create emerging inside yourself.

Listen to them, see them, and feel them. If they are pictures of deep meaning, you'll experience a sense of happiness or excitement accompanying them.

## FINDING YOUR PICTURE THROUGH ASKING

Many find themselves shy or resistant to asking in life—asking of an authority, a loved one, or a source that can help. Yet asking opens you to the possibilities of receiving, and it actually engages the process of receiving. By asking, you say to the intended source of your request, “I not only intend this, but I also know (not just want for you to deliver this).” Asking requires both a sense of humility (we wouldn't be asking anything of someone else if we felt self-contained) and a profound confidence (we wouldn't be asking if we were afraid of the response or doubted the source could deliver).

Asking can be a tremendous way to discover your picture or to engage any aspect of the creating your picture. Asking is not weakness; it is power. By acknowledging that you want help, and others or higher sources can help, you engage creative powers that exist for your taking. There are ways to ask that work best, and there are different sources to direct your question.

When asking, define clearly what you want. If you want to ask for the inspiration and the discovery of what is best for you to create, make that clear. If you know basically what you want to create, but need further definition, make that clear. Remember that when asking, you get what you ask for—so make sure you are clear about what you ask for and that your request aligns with your intent. Don't make a vague request, or one that is negative or in any way different from your intent. Often we have a tendency to minimize our desires and ask for

less than we really want. Here again, it's best to begin from the full, whole picture to create what we want.

When asking, ask from a position of deep conviction and knowing that you will receive your answer. You will get what you ask or better. Sometimes better isn't understood right away, and we have to reframe our understanding to realize that what we received is all part of our path, and a negative answer can mean we might not be asking the right question. Having clear intent and deep belief (sometimes called faith) defines and energizes the asking.

And who do you ask? You can ask of yourself, which is asking the inner you or higher self, the wisdom and answers that come from your gut feel or heart. You can ask of another person such as a friend, colleague, family member, or, in appropriate situations, even a stranger. Or you can ask of higher power if you are

inclined to believe in one. The first form of asking brings one into communion with one's self, expressed as the intuition, aligned and connected with the place beyond the mind. It connects you with self, especially if you are in a place of quiet or peace when you do so. Close your eyes and ask your inner self, either out loud or silently, anything, and listen, feel, and hear the answers from within. The second form of asking reaches out to others, acknowledging them with respect and engagement. It connects you with others. In the final form of asking, you surrender to something bigger than you and others (if you believe in some form of invisible forces). It connects you with divine or higher powers and is also called prayer or puja. This connection to higher power can be however you wish to understand it, from a sense of God or the universe to nature or the creation force of physics.

When making a request, you can say the question, write it, or even think it. Let's look at strong and weak ways to ask of yourself, others, and higher powers:

Weak to self: "Hmmm.... I don't know what I want, but I ask myself to please figure out something that would excite me to create."

Strong to self: "I know that deep inside I know what's best for me, and I know there are things that are important for me to create. What should I create now that will matter and is of the highest good for all concerned?" Or ask your inner self any specific question and notice how you will get impressions, gut feelings, inner answers, and even visions when you do.

Weak to others: "I don't know what I want to do with my life. Could you help me figure it out?"

Strong to others: "I admire you for who you are and what you know and do. Would you mentor me or

share with me ideas on ways I can find my path, do my best, and create something important?”

Weak to higher powers: “I am not sure about much. Would you please, please—I beg of you, please!—help me to find my way and something to do and create?”

Strong to higher powers: “I am deeply connected to you, and I ask/pray [that which you intend] and so it is, (amen).” In this form of direct connection and confidence/faith, you know that which you intend, or something better for yourself, is and will emerge in your path and on time.

Further to prayer: prayer can be used in conjunction with meditation. They do not need to be viewed as bi-polar opposites but as complementary paths and processes. You can ask for that which you want to create, then meditate and allow the answers to emerge.

By praying first, you create a clear intention that infuses the meditation. The same holds true with walks in nature, relaxation in water, or any of these processes. You can merge them. You can pray and swim or meditate and walk. It's all about finding your ways into the self, the inner life. And again, it's different strokes for different folks. If prayer or mediation ain't your bag, do something that is. There are many paths to the meadow of inspiration. Here's a few more:

## FINDING A PICTURE THROUGH EXPLORING LIFE

The act of discovery implies a process of exploring. This is as true for your inner life and personal creativity as it was for those pioneers who discovered anything from the seven continents to electricity.

Exploring means opening yourself up to possibilities, trying different things, experimenting, and perhaps failing along the way. Exploring carries an attitude of expansion, of being a seeker, of learning and of becoming more than you imagine you are.

One way to explore is to ask other people you meet about what they do and how they came to their own creativity or success. Inquisitive people learn more, opening themselves up for opportunities and possibilities. You are not asking another to do it for you, but asking for ways, processes, and knowledge to help yourself on your true journey. As you converse with others, learn to listen for true wisdom without worrying too much about following the opinions of people who seem to be caught up in their own story without any real sense of “seeing” you. You can learn not to be intimidated by others you feel are in authority; you can

learn to hold your own and not be swayed from your inner vision.

It's really helpful to explore anything that interests you, assuming it's basically healthy and safe. You can use the Internet to research your interests or read books and magazines. You can simply watch the world around you, talking to people you find interesting and gaining new perspectives. You can try new things in life, even when you might initially think you won't like it, or won't be good at it. As we progress in the discovery of our heart and our gut intuition, we learn to tell the difference between our fears and blocking thoughts and true intuition about what we will like or not like.

As you explore life, pay attention to the things you experience that you feel could be done a lot better, compared to the appreciation you feel for the ways

others have accomplished other projects you love and admire. Learn from both, and use these two aspects to help yourself find your musical style, a film idea you'd like to pursue, or a business you could begin that would solve a problem or provide a service.

A lot of great businesses emerge from the innovations of people who were just trying to create something they wished for themselves, and it turned out others needed or wanted the same service or product. A lot of great art comes from people who need to express something inside themselves in ways unique to them yet common to others.

## FINDING A PICTURE THROUGH FUN WRITING

The act of writing can be fun and can give you a regular outlet to dream, explore, and focus your visions.

To make writing a fun part of your life, start by finding your preferred places, times, and tools to write.

Experiment writing on and with different things, because a natural writing process will allow your intuitive voice to emerge. You could try a journal or notepad that appeals to you, or use an electronic tablet, phone, or computer, if you prefer. Discover places and times of days that you enjoy writing and when your writing flows. For some it's first thing in the morning, when it's quiet and the day is fresh. For others it's late at night. For some it's midday in a café. Make the place, time, and aspects of writing enjoyable and, lo and behold, you've set the tone for fun and creative writing.

One way to write that can lead to ideas and visions you want to create is journaling. Every day, or most days, you can write thoughts and ideas that come to you in your preferred journal. These can be free-flowing

creative ideas, notes to self, drawings, or rants. The process of journaling becomes an organic one and carries unique aspects for people. Some people write about people and characters who might end up in books. Some write statements of gratitude about their lives. Others use the journal as a place to purge themselves of hurts and troubles. Some use the journal as a way to hone in on visions and affirmations that connect mind with spirit. It can be a place to craft your feelings and beliefs about life. You can do diary writing, where you record key events and experiences from the previous day. You can use journaling to dream about new experiences for your future. Some use their journals as places they put only descriptions of what they want to occur and to create in their lives. You can make it a free-form, free-flowing experience or a more focused one—whatever feels good; whatever’s fun and exciting. And

as you write in ways that are fun and exciting, you'll find yourself drawn to your journal as a magic place, a place that gives you amazing experiences and connects you to your deeper self and a place where you discover pictures of what you'd like in your life or in our world.

If you are keeping a journal, don't try to analyze your journal writing too much either. You probably want to keep your journal to yourself, so that you don't seek people's opinions on what's in it or try to craft and refine it for presentation. The place of a journal will best remain a place of freedom, exploration, and creating vision. It might become a favorite place where your intuitive self emerges in the journal as you discover more and more about who you really are.

**AFFIRMATIONS CAN HELP YOUR PICTURE  
BECOME REALITY**

You can also use your journal for affirmations, a powerful mental process for creating different outcomes in your life. When you write down affirmations, you are writing creative thoughts for your life, in the present tense, as if they were already happening. This is because the mind responds to our negative thoughts by assisting us in blocking our ideas, and it also responds to our thoughts about the future to keep the manifesting potential locked away in the future. So when we say in our mind (or in our journal), “I’m going to be a musician” or “I hope to be successful” or “When I’m older, I’ll create a film,” we keep the project and the outcome out in front of us, in the future—we create a state of permanent longing. It’s valuable to write your affirmations to express the goal happening in the moment, such as “I now am making a movie that blows

people's minds" or "I am a successful, well-known musician."

Learning to change the way you talk about yourself to be more positive and affirming will also help you create your pictures. Affirmations are more powerful when they are coupled with emotional feeling, so as you say the positive affirmations in your mind, also allow yourself to imagine how you will feel when you have accomplished the goal. You might imagine you'll feel happy, secure, proud of yourself, powerful, or loved, for example. Feeling the goal adds a magnetic quality to your affirmation. Your picture easily becomes your reality!

WHAT IF

Many have viewed daydreaming as a passive escape from reality. It's likely that you'll discover the opposite to be true for you if you open yourself to the idea of "what if." Consider seeing things not as they are or appear to be; instead, see things better and bigger, the way you'd prefer them. Use your imagination. Reality is not necessarily real. Imagine the life and world you want, and lo and behold! But take things as they are and as others present them to you, and they might just remain that way for you. Think and feel what if: What if this? What if that? The souls and people of imagination make our reality, yet it starts with the pondering of, What if?... And know that when you ask what if, you will encounter many who say the if cannot be. It's fine to ignore those who have shut themselves off to greater possibilities due to their own hurts and limited lives—feel compassion for them, smile, and keep thinking

about new ways, new prospects, and greater successes and opportunities for you and for all. Just because things have been a certain way does not mean they need to remain that way. So say, “Why not?”

And when you imagine something that feels right, begin to love it. Love, don't fear. Fear destroys vision. Fear causes anxiety and limits us. Nothing disturbs us like fear. Dismiss fear and its illusions. Embrace love, inner power, and peace, and they eliminate fear. When looking for your vision, if you feel fear, stop, see it for the hurt liar it is, and take back the upper hand from fear. Have compassion for yourself and others, if they are feeling fear, and understand that fear arises from a place of hurt. Then tell fear to flee, that it has no home inside you. Dream, love, reach, and live fully, and you will find fear shrinking away from you.

## TRUST YOUR FEELINGS

No matter what path you take to finding the pictures within you, a real test for the clarity and truth of your picture is to tap into your feelings to find out what's right and real for you. Feelings act as your personal guide by providing direct and personal feedback. If something feels good or great to you, it's generally a good idea to follow that idea forward, exploring it, dreaming about it, and allowing the picture of it to expand in your mind. You can spend some time with your feeling sense as you see the picture in your mind. If something feels bad or dull or negative to you, it's certainly not right for you as it is, or perhaps there are blockages or issues to be dealt with and adjustments to be made before you can go forward. Often we put a premium on leading with our minds, yet the world of

creativity comes more from leading with our inner feelings and impressions. The mind comes into play later as a helper in bringing the visions into reality.

## WHAT PICTURING DOES FOR YOU

Picturing connects you with the core of creating. When you have the power to create, you have the power to shape your life and help shape the world around you. Finding and discovering visions and pictures within yourself helps you know your true power and true importance.

These processes of finding your ideal picture are not an excuse to avoid doing the work necessary to live and engage with life fully or to be a great student or member of society. We all have to take out the trash—and more. But as you take the time to go inside and

discover your inner creativity and the pictures you hold for your life, you will come closer and closer to what's really going to excite you. From these beginnings, you can discover a creative life that will bring you happiness and true success.

Everyone wants to feel important, cared for, and loved. That feeling has to start with you and for you. Sometimes you have to love yourself and care for yourself before you can do so for others and before others will do so for you; at least, holding that intention and practicing self-care will move you in the right direction. Listening to what you have inside and caring enough about yourself to picture what you want to create can really feel amazing. It will light you up and expand your confidence and start you on the path of very fulfilling and exciting ventures in life, ventures that are

authentic and aligned with who you are rather than what others think you are or want you to be.

When looking for your picture, you are listening to the world inside yourself and listening to others who inspire you. When you listen, you open yourself rather than close yourself. Opening up to your inner voice, and the external voices that align with your inner voice, allows for ideas, emotions, notions, and visions to roll into you and into your mind from deep and pure sources. It's this opening of and listening closely to your true self that brings inspired pictures.

By looking within, to yourself, you also connect to others and to invisible forces more powerful than your body and mind. Inside of you lies the answers to all you seek, but you have to go inside, listen, trust, and feel to begin that process. This leads to the journey of living the

life you're meant to live, the one that will bring you fulfillment and touch the lives of others as well.

CLEAR WATERS  
A SEVEN POWERS STORY

PART I

Martin Leonard sat under the gloom of a Los Angeles summer's day. The smog was especially thick, blown east by the wind off the ocean, piled up against the flanks of the San Gabriels so high you couldn't even see the mountains. Heat smothered the sprawling teen like a soiled blanket and refused to let go. But it was all right. He was already on his third book this week, going through it with a hunger he couldn't seem to satisfy. The pages were worn and slightly tattered, evidence that the book had been through countless exchanges during its time in the library. But despite the book's somewhat ragged condition, it still had considerable heft. And he liked that. The thickness gave it substance, and he

couldn't afford a Kindle or iPad. Library books were free. Happily lost in the story, he turned a page while wiping a drop of sweat off his forehead.

The guy in the book was alone, fending for himself in nature's hostile beauty. Well, no, not exactly; he did have a wolf cub, lost and separated from his pack, with him. Vulnerable, but determined, just like the guy. Funny thing, thought Martin. I can relate. To both. Lost father. No friends. Doing stuff you don't at all understand. Not 'cause you want to; 'cause you have to.

Yet you know you can trust animals. That's the way it was with Harley, Martin's dog. Someone once had said the dog was golden retriever-collie, but the boy knew he was just plain mutt. But that mutt was such an amazing friend—really the only one Martin had. He could count on Harley. Martin glanced at his green bell-bottoms, a patch fraying over the right pocket. Though

most of his clothes were thrift-store specials, these pants had actually belonged to his father. Over a year ago the boy had tried to go the usual route with big white tee way loose over jeans that hung precariously on the slight curve of his butt. He thought he'd be more visible as part of the crowd. But he never seemed to fit in and went back to his style after the trial run had passed, never really sure if his clothes were a weird kind of statement or if he'd gotten permanently stuck in the seventies in a former life: like his father, an embarrassment to his family, who first ran away from law school and then from the girl he got pregnant.

Since Martin never saw his father, the photos meant a great deal to him, as they were his only connection with the man who helped bring him into the world and then split. The photos were taken when Martin's parents were in middle high school, the late

seventies. Nothing made him laugh as quickly as those pictures. And Martin had copied their seventies look even though it made him look like an idiot to most of the people who might otherwise have been his friends. He didn't care, though. He liked the look better than the Nike-branded fashion of his school, and he found the clothes cheap at thrift shops around town.

Martin had always had such a blast going through his parents' photo albums and high-school yearbooks. They looked happy then; at least, in the photos they were always smiling, and Martin couldn't help but laugh every time he peered down at the images under the protective plastic sheets. Long, wild hair, ridiculous white tube socks up to the knee, ultra-short shorts like the basketball players used to wear, and tight and shiny, hideously colored polyester shirts, with collars that didn't quit. And then there were the nauseating plaid

pants and super-wide, hip-hugging bell-bottoms. Man. But somehow the seventies and Martin got along just fine. Nobody approved of his ironic style sense, but he didn't care. He wasn't making any kind of statement, and he didn't want any part of his classmates' nihilistic posing. He was an outsider no matter what he wore, so instead of pining for those \$150 Nike's, he just stayed comfortable in his hand-me-downs and thrift-store duds. He was fine with that.

The pond in the backyard caught his attention, distracting him from his book again, for probably something like the tenth time. It was dark and murky, and you couldn't even see the bottom, even though it was hardly three feet deep. Somewhere down there were his two pet koi, Frank and Goldie, swimming through the filth. A koi pond in Pasadena, Santa Monica, or Beverly Hills was no big deal, but here in Los Angeles,

it was like, “Huh?” Like having a new Porsche in the driveway, instead of a beat-up old Chevy dead on the lawn. But his mom had insisted, and with some deferred maintenance on the house, and a bit of the fitful child-support money set aside, she made this oasis in the cracked and curled clay a reality.

After the pond went in, it immediately softened the hard edges of the ramshackle house and the surrounding neighborhood. It was almost as if Martin and his mom were able to join the koi in their meditative motion below the water, far from the LA smog and despair. They would escape the heat of the house, settle into the unraveling rattan chairs, stare at the fish, and fall into playful banter, recalling better times. Or at least those days had seemed better, seen through the prism of the past. Martin and his mom would talk long into the night on occasion, the gaps in conversation filled with

the gentle splashing of the koi. Only the sirens of the black-and-whites and the neighbors arguing and doors slamming could break the spell. “Lord, look how late it is. I’ve got to go to bed or I’ll never get up in time for work,” his mom would say. “Night, Momma,” Martin replied as she kissed him gently on the top of his head, like she always did, and walked back into the house.

He loved those times. But they weren’t as frequent anymore, and, to his surprise, the boy found he didn’t mind. After all, he had his books to keep him company, along with the koi. Martin loved reading in this tiny oasis, surrounded by the soothing sounds of the pump and the burbling of the water. It wasn’t always so. Martin and reading had once been distant strangers. In elementary school, he just couldn’t seem to get it, and those who did taunted him, making him feel stupid. Even now, the thought of those struggles made him burn with

anger. For a long time reading was slow and tedious, a chore that made his head hurt. But then chance, or maybe it was fate, led him through a door to another world he never dreamed existed.

It was still fresh in his mind, that first book he'd picked up on his own, one that wasn't part of school. He'd seen it lying around the house, neglected, an old (the price, \$1.35, gave it away) worn-out paperback copy of *The Catcher in the Rye* with part of the cover torn off. It might have been his momma's, or even one of the few items his dad left behind in a college footlocker.

He was bored, and the TV was broke, and, somewhere in the back of his mind, he thought this book was one he'd have to read and report on in English class next term. Might as well get a head start. *The Catcher in the Rye: A Novel*, the faded cover proclaimed. He wasn't even sure what a novel was. But he took the book to his

cramped little room, stretched out on the bed, and cracked it open.

At first Holden Caulfield might as well have been some alien from another planet: rich family, smart, in a snooty school with a bunch of other rich, snooty kids. Hard to believe he had anything to complain about. Enough with the whining! But, as Martin got further in, the book—and this Caulfield dude—pulled him into a place that was totally new yet strangely familiar. All the outer stuff surrounding Caulfield couldn't protect him from his inner thoughts and feelings. Just like Martin, he felt apart from a world that made no sense, apart from people who didn't have a clue, apart from a family he couldn't relate to—apart and alone. And the way this Salinger guy put down the words, they spoke directly and, it seemed, only to him. Martin was hooked. When he finished *Catcher in the Rye*, he wanted another novel

and another after that. Soon he was reading three or four books at a time.

The front door slammed, and he jerked up in his seat as the feral neighborhood cats scurried under the planter box. Martin heard the fridge door opening: the magnet in the gasket, reluctantly giving way with a slight sucking sound, then closing with a soft thunk. Hurry up, please. Ice clinked into a tall glass, and he had a brief glimpse of his mom in her drab blue smocks her shoulders stooped more than they should have been at her age, opening the screen door and stepping into the garden. Before she could even sit down, he pounced. “Have you seen our pond?” He was almost shaking.

His mom, Terri, eased into her favorite rattan chair, took a slow sip of her iced tea, and stared coolly back at him over the lip of the glass. She set the drink down on the clay, bent over, untied her black, thick-

soled work shoes, and kicked them off. Her feet still hurt, but not as bad.

Martin saw how tired she was, but he persisted, feeling like a brat, but unable to help himself. “Have you seen the pond, Momma? It’s filthy. What happened to the guy who’s supposed to clean it?”

“Martin, yes, whoa, son. The pond is very dirty. But the refrigerator needed fixing, and I needed to buy us food, and the pond cleaning got left out. I’m sorry, but that’s all the money I had. Maybe you could learn how to clean it.” It was like Martin didn’t even hear her. His face was a screwed up pout and he let out a Holden Caulfield whine.

“But I can’t even see the koi. They’re gonna get sick swimming around in that muck.” Terri sighed, put the cold glass to her forehead, and walked back inside. The oasis between them had gone dry. The gold and

black and red and white fish, once so brilliant, even under the muted LA sun, were now obscured, almost invisible. The traffic noise, harsh and piercing, crashed into the yard.

The faint glow of the only two unbroken street lamps threw long, vague shadows across the broken concrete while dusk and then the night consumed the neighborhood. Martin sat at the edge of the koi pond, chin cupped in his hands, ruefully contemplating the turbid mess below. He flashed on when he and his mother had first dug out the unforgiving clay and put in the pond, all the details well-attended to and the type and size of fish researched and selected with care. The water was so clear then—almost blinding, when the sun hit it at the right angle: a brocaded tapestry of gold and black and red and white, flowing peacefully just below the surface. The lily pads, vibrantly green, rocking

slightly back and forth in the tiny, koi-stirred waves.

Now the lily pads were slimy, and the fish might as well have been plain old brown carp. It wasn't right. The pond should be clean. The fish deserved that much.

He sat looking at their one piece of nature and one peace of mind. He sat and sat, contemplating the water, and remembering how nice it looked clean and how much he loved seeing the colors of the fish swimming calmly around the lily pads. His imagination and feelings started to carry him off as he thought about the pond cleaner and what they did when they drained and cleaned the water. He wondered about this little pond, this small amount of water and the difference between its being clean or dirty. He suddenly found himself thinking about more than just his pond and his fish. He started to think about all the bodies of water in the world he had read about or seen: lakes, streams,

rivers, glaciers, and oceans. He thought about how we are all like fish and need clean water for so many things: drinking, bathing, swimming, and living. He wondered about all the people and animals he had read about who lacked clean water. His worries about his dirty pond started to make him anxious. He found that while he normally felt peaceful by the pond, now he was upset, worrying, fidgeting, and irritated.

Then he had a thought—a feeling, really—that would change his life. He wondered why somebody hadn't created a way to easily and cheaply clean any kind of water, to rapidly purify filth. He had a strange, stupid feeling that he could find a way.

Martin was still staring at the pond when Goldie rose high out of the water and splashed down, covering the boy with a brackish patina of green-brown scum. He was so startled that he fell over backward and hit his

head on the unforgiving clay. He felt a sharp pain, and there was a ringing in his ears. Looking up at the night sky, he was surprised to see stars, which was odd; there were hardly ever stars in LA. He propped himself up on his elbows and looked down over his feet at the pond. Goldie gave a final sharp flip of his tail, then disappeared under the water.

“What was that!” thought Martin, But then, after a minute, he started to laugh. “Goldie! I get it! Sorry. Definitely my bad.” He went into the house, where his mom had the radio on, a jazz ballad spilling softly over the floor: maybe “Body and Soul.” She was dozing, but bolted upright in the chair as the screen door slammed. It took a while to recognize the lagoon creature in front of her as her son, but when she did, she couldn’t stop laughing. “Oh my, look what happened to you. Did you decide to go for a swim with Frank and Goldie?” She

wheezed and held her sides and rocked back and forth, tears coming out of her eyes. She hadn't seen anything so funny in a long time. Martin did a double take at the hallway mirror, looked at his convulsed mother in the living room, and then he was laughing too.

“Momma, I think the koi pond needs clea—” But before he could finish the sentence, they both exploded in spasms of laughter again. “And I’m going to do it.” More howling. “I’m serious.” Uncontrollable, now. “Momma, quit it, my side hurts.”

“Then you’d better wash that face. Otherwise, I may never, ever stop. Go on, now.”

First thing the next day, Martin found a book at the library about koi and how to keep them healthy and their ponds fresh and clean. It turned out that it wasn't all that hard: Drain the pond about a quarter of the way down, then use some fine-mesh netting to get out

whatever debris was clogging the filter and turning the water brackish. He didn't even need to take Frank and Goldie out. Then fill it back up with dechlorinated water. Finally, pump in some oxygen—not so bad at all.

Cleaning out the koi's watery home made Martin feel really good, like he was actually doing something. It seemed like a small thing, but for the fish it was huge. And seeing how much difference it made got him thinking about the vital nature of this precious liquid. He hadn't ever given it a whole lot of thought; you turned on the tap, and out came the water. Working around this little pond and understanding the importance between its being clean or dirty opened him up to some bigger thoughts: The connection between all living things and this simple substance. How we all need it. Can't exist without it. And along with all the bodies of water that came to mind—those lakes, streams, rivers, glaciers, and

oceans—were the people and animals all over the world who had no clean water to drink or bathe or wash their food or clothes in, not even a drop. It didn't seem right. There had to be something that could be done about that. The thought held him hard and refused to let him go.

After repeating the cleaning process a few days in a row, Martin was stunned to find the water could be that much clearer, and, after a week, the koi were gliding back and forth in their newly restored oasis. Martin wasn't sure if fish could be happy, but he imagined so, and it sure seemed like Frank and Goldie were. And if he could make them happy, it didn't seem like such a hard thing to make things better for people, even if they were just small things, at first. And help them be happier too. There had to be a way.

POSITION  
MAKING IT SPECIAL



The whole world loves a maverick and the  
whole world wants the maverick to achieve  
something nobler than simple rebellion

—KEVIN PATTERSON

## THE POWER OF POSITIONING

Position combines what you share with  
everybody with how you or what you create stands apart.  
It's what you share and what makes you unique in the  
world or your space. In terms of creating, position is  
how what you create as defined by the people who  
experience it or use it, how they see what you create, and

how they see it being special. People many times feel they are not special or feel they'd rather be part of the crowd. Creating asks you to understand why you and what you create are incomparable while sharing commonalities and universal aspects.

## WE ARE BOTH CONNECTED AND UNIQUE

As important as it is to understand that in fundamental ways we are all connected and share a universal unity, it is also important to understand why you and what you create are uniquely important beings and expressions.

What do we share with the more than seven billion people on this planet? We all feel the same feelings; we all have the same fundamental needs and desires. All of us, no matter where or to whom we're born, no matter what circumstances we've been dealt,

know a range of emotions: from anger to joy, from fear to peace, from sadness to happiness. We all have the desire to be loved and to love, even if this desire has been shut down from trauma, hurt, or neglect. We all know that we like to eat when hungry and drink when thirsty. We all want opportunity and community and work we enjoy. We share many, many things. In so many ways, we are one.

On the other hand, there is nobody within the seven continents of seven billion people who carries your rare and fantastic combination of characteristics, experiences, and gifts. A great tragedy is that many people simply don't realize this or appreciate their uniqueness. Many feel lost in the crowd or disempowered. Others desire to be part of the crowd as a means of feeling comfort or gaining the esteem they lack internally. A great empowerment comes to those who

begin to tap into a sense of what make them special.

Understanding that you are essential and uncommon gives a sense of inner confidence and power. The same holds true of your picture of what you want to create.

What makes that picture original and distinguished, and what carries a universal connection? This sense of identity becomes a very important power in creating, because, if you do not have a picture with a clear and positioned identity, your true and unique identity will have a harder time emerging and connecting with people in ways that truly matter to them and to you.

To understand the position of what you picture, you must first understand and appreciate your position as a person, because we benefit by understanding what's inside us before we create something to exist outside us. As you take some time to reflect upon yourself, you might connect with the traits about you that everyone

shares, such as a desire for love or happiness or a wish to be seen clearly and compassionately for who you truly are. By focusing on your identity, you will get to know what it is about you that stands out as being your unique expression or voice.

What is it about you that's completely different?

What is it about your combination of elements that's rare and unusual?

It's okay to applaud and embrace this. If you strive to fit in too much, you might lose your true self. Ironically, as you strive to be yourself, you will find that your unique position, within the whole, is what allows you to truly fit in and to give something special to others and to the world.

It can also be very helpful to understand what it is about your creation picture might be universal and what might be considered incomparable, one of a kind,

and peerless. Most people want to fit in, so understanding the importance of what makes you or your project different and special can be daunting. Copying or trying to do what's already been done well by others or wanting to be just like the group does not bring greatness, innovation, or something truly creative and lasting. It can bring temporary success and awards, but it will not have lasting impact or speak to who you are and what you have to give. Copying or emulating essentially clones another person's creation. That being said, as anyone sets out on a creative path, it's common to practice the masters' techniques and ways prior to forging your own path, a path that might integrate some of what's been done before. Learning from others, especially great mentors, carries a tremendous power to define your abilities and your true self. It's perfectly fine and healthy to learn from what's already been done, of

course, but as you ponder your unique strengths and listen to your inner self, you'll find and add original ways and content. You'll discover how to bring what's fully you and what's original into your creations. The result? You will ultimately find people who passionately love experiencing or using what you create. If you just copy, you will do nothing more than find yourself in the position of always following and never advancing. As discussed, there may be a stage during the learning process when copying others helps develop your own style. But eventually, breaking loose and embracing your authentic self forges a picture that comes from inside, not from somebody else. That unique picture and its position that will connect to more people, serve others better, and ultimately bring back to you rewards of many kinds than if you imitate someone else.

## FINDING YOUR POSITION

How do people find their position and why they are different so they can understand what is unique about what they will create?

One way is to applaud the original. By learning to appreciate and applaud originality around you in the people you encounter, the movies and books you experience, and in the ways of leaders, you open yourself to your own sense of being and create something with identity. Look for that which is different and find something in it to laud without automatically jumping to condemn it for being different. An aspect of being youthful is embracing the new and different, not clinging to the tried and common. If you approach something that's new and totally unlike the way you've experienced something before, avoid the tendency to

turn it off, and instead turn yourself on to appreciating what is appealing and special in it. It may or may not be for you, yet your attitude of appreciation of that which is different enforces a way of looking at things that will affect who you are and what you do. By appreciating what's unique in people and creations, you begin to tap into the energies of originality—the essence of creating the new. You draw from your life and become a force of authentic expression. Gaining an inner sense of originality deeply aids you in becoming a person who understands and thus communicates outwardly why and how they are wondrous, as well as creating truly special things in this world.

PICTURING WITH POSITION

Let's look at an example of how a person can picture something that has a strong and unique position: relationships and love. In our current Western society, many grow up seeing that broken relationships have become the norm. Love does not seem to last; in fact, it seems to be a temporary illusion people fall into until they really get to know each other, and then they part, only to go through the same ritual with someone new. This process may take weeks, months, or years, and many of us have become skeptical and jaded about the prospects of attaining deep, loving connections. Coming into this world, you might have been surrounded by people who do not believe that love lasts. They do not see many examples around them of lasting and growing love, so they have the belief that we live in a world where breakups and divorces have become commonplace. They might also view marriage as

something people do that has few long-term benefits other than providing children with a sense that their parents are bonded legally (although they might not bond in love). People without the ability to go within themselves to find their true pictures of relationships and their positions therein will simply accept the ideas of their parents, friends, and peers, as well as the data around them. They will then proceed in the realm of love with very low expectations for long-term fulfillment and envision nothing more than a lifetime of shallow relationships, breakups, and temporary fulfillments. They will probably decide that infidelity is no big deal either, since there's no such thing as a truly fulfilling marriage where the sex and love can last and develop over time once the hormones have subsided.

However, people of position and vision might look inside themselves to understand what they truly

want and instinctively believe it possible in their world. They might see inside themselves a desire and commitment to creating a love that does last and that does grow through time with a special person who feels the same way. And they might envision how this might occur in a new and unique way in a world that has worn out the tired, common practices of traditional marriage roles and regulations. From this position and vision comes the possibility of creating exactly what is wanted yet might not yet be visible around them. It's all truly possible. And it starts right there, inside. No person can have a long-lasting, developing love who doesn't personally see and believe it as a possibility for him- or herself, even if countless others choose a different path, the road commonly traveled. Making a unique reality is not only possible but also totally viable and proven time and time again in history by visionaries and people of

commitment. These brave people discovered who they were and what they wished to create and have, regardless of its difference from the accepted, the norm, or the common. In fact, these people celebrated their differences, and so they were able to create different lives, personal experiences, and gifts to the world. They are not the common, but the uncommon—the visionaries of maverick position.

## HOLD YOUR POSITION

It's likely that you will find yourself bumping into people, or even working or living with them, who offer ways to limit your life and your self. These people might present their premises to life and the way it is—for them. Smile, move on, and know inside that you have no limitations; possibilities are endless. Because

something exists for another, or because something has occurred certain way to another, does not mean it must be that way for you. Know that inside your true self you hold every opportunity, no matter how challenged you are and no matter what has happened to you so far. No one has power over the true you—what you truly are is unlimited and is yours and yours alone; so there's no need to limit yourself and your visions, and no need to allow those in authority to limit you either. Hold true to your unlimited being and watch as the miraculous visions flow into you and trickle into your mind on their way to becoming real in this world.

## QUESTIONS TO HELP FIND YOUR POSITION

Relax and breathe for a while to let go of your stress or mental chatter, get yourself into nature, or do

any of the processes discussed to calm and connect to your inner self. Allow your vision to come into your mind as a picture that's already real. Imagine the completed film, album, art show, business, relationship, or whatever it is you are creating. Notice the connection between your picture and the creative force of the world. See the similarities between your completed project and the needs and desires of all humans or the projects or goals attained by others. Allow this sense of connection to be the foundation from which you feel the solidity of shared values and needs.

Now ask yourself two questions: What's special about me? And what's special about my picture? Notice the unique characteristics you have and the unique characteristics you discover about your picture. These special qualities may be your personal traits or the innovative aspects of your creativity, project, or

business. Imagine yourself feeling strong in these traits. Now see and feel the aspects of what you will create that will be unique. See how these aspects of your creation are great and fun and exciting. By noticing what's original about what you want to create, you will probably feel happy. It's a good feeling to create something original and something that's you and that connects to others all at the same time.

## WHAT POSITIONING DOES FOR YOU

What positioning does for you is open up the opportunity to connect to people, audiences, users, and friends. While maintaining a common, unifying thread among the aspects of life we all share, you create relationships with people who deeply value you and what you create because you are different and special.

Positioning takes you out of your fears of not being liked or of not belonging due to your differences and transforms those habitual thought patterns into a power within you: the power of being original and being you.

Positioning gives you and those you serve a sense of why you all should value your gifts due to the elements of difference and uniqueness rather than conformity. As you reach higher and broader in life, you will find that what you do and create becomes different than the mass trends, and it is only from there that you can serve humankind in the most profound ways, lifting, expanding, and improving our world. We serve best not by abandoning our identity in order to be liked but by fulfilling our identity, which in turn will ultimately make us authentically liked.

# CLEAR WATERS

## A SEVEN POWERS STORY

### PART II

Like all journeys, Martin's began by waking up and simply starting. Possessed by not much more than the wisp of idea that kept tickling his mind, he set out to discover how he, a kid in LA, could make dirty water clean for people he didn't even know in places he may not have even heard of. He dove into the Internet headfirst and, armed with search words such as contaminated water, water purification technology, and drinking water supply, he entered a world both strange and awesome, one he'd barely known existed.

At first he was shocked. More than a billion people in the world had no access to a clean water supply. And over two million people died each year from bad water

and the diseases carried in it. What hit him perhaps the hardest was that there were so many simple ways to make the water safer in these countries. Basic techniques like chlorinating the water, filtering it, and storing it in clean and safe containers could save thousands of lives. Why wasn't this happening? How could that be? Especially with all of today's technology? He decided to dive deeper. Nothing was more important to life than clean water, and nothing seemed taken more for granted. This obsession with water puzzled him. Not that long ago he had hardly given it any thought at all. But now he found himself constantly thinking about it. It was like a raging river in his head, with undeniable power and a fearsome roar. It was a good thing he didn't have much of a social life. Not that he really had any true friends, but if he had, they probably would have rolled their eyes and walked away, thinking, "Okay, Martin, enough with

the water. Okay, dude? Wow...” Before, Martin had isolated himself with his reading when most were all into video games. Now it was this strange fixation with water. Not exactly a hot topic on the streets or in school and definitely not at parties. But then, Martin didn’t go to any parties. Still, when Martin asked himself if he were crazy to be so into water, he concluded that although everybody might not be interested in it, everybody needed it, more than anything. There couldn’t be life without it.

It had started with Goldie and Frank, his two pet koi, and how badly they needed that clean water. Now he wanted to reach out way beyond their little pond and find a way to purify water easily and cheaply for people living desperate lives in distant lands. Before he never much thought of himself as anything other than just plain

Martin. But now he had a direction and a purpose; he began to think of himself as the “water guy.”

Wa Ming was a transfer student from Beijing who didn't seem at all out of place in Martin's high school. There were Asians of all kinds—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese—most of them at least second-generation Americans who were just as American as the rest of the students. The difference with Wa was that her English was far superior to most of the kids'—more formal, with the slightest hint of a Mandarin accent that was just enough to highlight her exoticness.

When Martin thought much later about his first real encounter with Wa, it had happened so unexpectedly but so wonderfully that it made him blush. He was sitting in the back of class, his eyes glued to the computer monitor, deep into a website on, what else, water, when

Wa, who always sat next to him but had never said even a word, said three: “What you reading?”

Martin, whose experiences with girls, especially pretty ones, were, it was safe to say, nonexistent, almost looked behind him to see who this black-haired beauty was talking to.

“Uh...” His eyes flitted between the monitor and the girl with the glossy black hair and sparkling eyes. “It’s a site on...um, well, nothing. Nothing important. Actually... it’s on water.” His eyes locked back to the screen. Wa moved behind him, looking over his shoulder.

“Really... What’s the site?”

“Xylem Technologies.”

Wa folded her arms in front of her and leaned in for a closer look. “Xylem. Sounds pretty geeky.”

“Well, yeah. I guess it is,” Martin replied.

“You a nerd?” she asked matter-of-factly.

The question took Martin by surprise. “Never much thought about it.”

“Nerds never do. You should. What’s with all the reading? And the old clothes?” She nodded toward Martin’s outfit. “They have anything to do with Xylem Technologies?” Martin wondered if all the girls in China were this blunt.

“Um, if reading makes me a nerd, then, yeah, I guess I’m a nerd. But my clothes? They’re cool.”

Wa smiled thinly and shook her head. “Sorry, they’re not cool.”

“Really?” Martin was feeling a bit defensive but also a little bolder. He leaned back in the chair. “I think they’re cool. The seventies were cool.” The girl paused, then let out a sigh. “Okay. I guess if you think they’re cool, they’re cool. To you.”

“Isn’t that what matters?”

“Maybe it matters. Maybe it doesn’t. I think having friends matters more.” Why was she talking to him?

“The right friends,” Martin countered, nervous, but very much wanting the conversation to continue.

“Hmm.... For a nerd, you’re not so bad. You’re not shy like a nerd. You’re kinda confident.” Her smile took him aback.

“Confident? Me? No, not at all.” He thought he was stammering. “I’m not really confident about much of anything. Except my clothes, which are cool, by the way. And I do like to read.”

“Fair enough. I like to read too, but sorry, I still don’t like your clothes. Do you like mine?” She stepped back and posed, so he could get a better look.

Martin looked closely at Wa, just short of staring. Her casually distressed jeans and the red and black brocade jacket over a sky blue, scooped-neck top complemented

the sheen of her hair and the ebony pools of her eyes.

She was, Martin concluded, very cute. Why was she talking to him? No matter; he just didn't want her to stop.

“Okay. Your clothes are better than mine. Or least you wear them better. Actually, they look great on you.” Wa looked down for a second. Was she blushing? Whoever said he was no good with girls? Well, actually, no one had ever said it, but he'd always thought that was true. He liked this new feeling that she actually might be flirting with him.

“I don't look better,” she said quietly. “But I do think clothes help a person fit in with other people and belong. I like belonging.”

“Well, maybe that's true, but I think clothes help a person say to other people who they are. What makes

them different, not the same; you know, somehow special.”

The class was starting, but Martin wasn't at all ready for the teacher's lecture. He wanted to talk to Wa some more. It was almost as if Wa had read his thoughts. She leaned and whispered, “I'd like to find out more about your water stuff some time. But no problem if you don't.” She turned and started toward her desk.

Not that he was ever the talkative sort, but now Martin was momentarily speechless. When he realized what had just happened—a cute girl was asking him out—he forgot all about the lecture and blurted out,

“Absolutely!” The teacher looked in Martin's direction, her eyes reproachful over the rims of her glasses.

“You don't exactly play hard to get, do you?” said Wa.

“Haven't had any practice.”

“Okay, coffee or yogurt?”

“Huh?”

“You are a nerd. Do you want to meet for coffee or yogurt?”

“Yogurt.”

“I’ll check my calendar and get back to you,” she said, grinning now.

Martin smiled back. “I don’t have a calendar.”

Where did that come from?

The teacher looked up from her notes. “Martin, Wa. Save it for after class. Please.” There were stares and giggles from the other students, then the lecture resumed. Martin didn’t hear a word of it.

That Thursday, after school, Wa and Martin were set to meet at a local Korean yogurt place. Martin arrived right at four, nervous as the proverbial cat. He’d built up a good sweat on the walk over and now worried about that. Eddies of doubt swirled in his head: Where was

she? Would she even show? What did she expect? What would they talk about? Yogurt? Who did he think he was, anyway? Should he order for her? Should he pay for hers?

This was not good.

He tried to calm down while he stood outside the door waiting for her, but with each passing minute he got even more anxious. It felt like hours as people came into the shop, ordered, ate, and left. No Wa. He looked at the clock. The battery must have died; it had to have been more than five minutes. He could feel the sweat evaporating on his skin. Oh, no, had it soaked through the shirt? He looked at his bell-bottom pants and was suddenly self-conscious. He should have just worn jeans and a T-shirt. He was beginning to doubt everything, and the cool confidence he'd had in the classroom melted in the heat. What exactly was this? A casual encounter? Or

was it a—date? The pressure was mounting while the clock's hands moved farther and farther past four. When it hit 4:15 p.m., he knew this was a mistake; she'd either forgotten or, worse, blown him off. What an idiot!

He'd wait five more minutes, then get out of here and head home. At 4:19 p.m. he despaired, knowing full well he'd been duped by the cute girl who couldn't have cared less. He turned on his heel and shuffled down the sidewalk, head drooping, totally defeated. He was more mad at himself than at Wa. Who do you think you are?

You are just a hopeless nerd.

He heard someone running behind him and turned to see Wa, her backpack flopping against her side and her stylish heels clapping noisily on the sidewalk. "Martin! Hey, wait." Wa ran up to him, breathing hard. She let the pack slip to the ground and swept her hair out of her eyes.

“Where you goin’? You don’t give a girl much of a break for being late.” She flashed a hopeful smile.

Martin frowned. “I figured you bailed.”

“Hey, have a little faith. It’s not that much after four.

You’re going to have to learn all about being fashionably late. It’s a girl’s prerogative.” She laughed, cautiously.

Martin shrugged. Wa persisted. “Martin, I’m really sorry. My ride fell through, and the bus took forever.”

“Walking’s faster than the bus,” he said, as if it made perfect sense. Wa dismissed his foolishness with a scoff.

“Okay. You’re right. But in these shoes—which, by the way, I wore just for you—I’m lucky if I can walk two blocks.” Martin saw through the sludge of his mope that, beside the open-toed, stack-heeled shoes, Wa was wearing a pale yellow skirt and matching cap-sleeved top. Her shoulder-length hair gleamed like obsidian in the afternoon sun. Her legs were shapely and strong.

“Don’t stare too hard.” But she wasn’t serious. She liked that he was staring. He felt like he had the stupidest look on his face when he met her eyes.

“And I would have called or texted, but I don’t know your cell number.”

A flush of embarrassment shot through Martin as he looked away. “I don’t have a number ’cause I don’t have a phone. We can only afford one, and that’s my mom’s. She lets me use it sometimes, but she’s got it at work now.”

“What about your dad?”

“No. He’s not around anymore. Haven’t seen him in a long time. It’s just me and my mom.”

“Sorry, I didn’t know.” She smiled and held out her hand. “C’mon. Let’s get some yogurt. I’ll buy, since I made you wait.”

“You don’t need to buy. I have money.”

“Uh-uh—my treat, this time. I was late and made you think I was standing you up, which I would never do, by the way. You can buy next time, okay?” She slung her pack on her left shoulder and slipped her hand into Martin’s, and they walked back to the store.

The place was bustling with youth, an expansive sampling of all of Los Angeles’s cultures and walks of life: Hispanics, Asians, Whites, Blacks, Indians, jocks, surfers and skateboarders, stoners, moms with little kids, businessmen, bike riders, and even a few nerds. Martin and Wa browsed the rows of oversized cardboard cylinders filled with yogurt of every color of the rainbow and then some. And the flavors! Of course there were vanilla and chocolate, but they paled compared with all the other exotic varieties, like dragon passion, green apple, guava pineapple tart, Irish minte crème, mango mixer, and salted caramel pecan.

Martin glanced over at Wa as she inched from tub to tub, deciding. She was petite, unlike the other girls indulging in large bowls filled with three multicolored scoops complete with a thick covering of sprinkled toppings.

Wa ordered the same size. Martin couldn't believe it.

“How you going to eat one of those? They're huge!”

She put her hands on her hips and arched an eyebrow at him. “You calling me fat?”

“Um, no. Not at all. I just don't see how a girl so small can eat something so...so big.”

“Just watch me, big man. Just watch me.”

Martin had little choice but to watch as Wa went on to overload the second-largest bowl with a super swirl of pomegranate and another of chocolate. Then she layered on nuts, brownie chunks, and M&Ms. Martin, on the other hand, ordered the smallest bowl with a simple

blast of vanilla yogurt and no toppings. He looked at his, then over at Wa's. His bowl looked puny and dull, the color of chalk.

“You must be a vanilla kind of guy,” Wa said just before she put a huge spoonful into her mouth. She rolled her eyes as the flavors exploded on her tongue, swallowed, and said, “This is so good!”

“Yeah, I guess I am—plain, that is.”

Wa took another massive spoonful. “Maybe I'm too exotic for you. Maybe you'd rather have a vanilla girl.” She laughed. His initial embarrassment melted away as he looked at the sickly white yogurt pooling in his little cup. Her teasing was endearing. He gave up trying to figure out why. The fact was she really did like him.

They both were caught up in each other's laughter, and, when they settled back down, something

had changed. There was a new ease in their conversation. Martin didn't avert his eyes when Wa looked at him, and he felt a lightness, like he was floating in the warm water of a tropical island. They settled into a small table near the door, stashed their backpacks on the floor against the wall, and breezed into conversation.

“So,” Wa began. “Tell me more about this water thing of yours.”

“Hmm... Where to begin? Well, let's see. The only place where I can totally relax and be myself is by our pond, our koi pond in the backyard, which isn't much of a yard. A while back, the pond started getting super dirty, because we couldn't afford the cleaning service. When I complained to my mom, she listened for a while, then basically told me to shut up and clean it myself. I thought it would be hard to do, but I wanted to

make the water better for my two fish, Goldie and Frank. Watching them glide back and forth in the water always gave me such a peaceful feeling, and I felt bad that I'd let them down. Once the water was clear again, and I could see them swimming like before, it got me thinking about how important water is for every living thing, especially people. I guess my cleaning up the pond was like dropping a pebble into the pool of my mind. From that first splash, the ripples spread out farther and farther, until I got this idea that I might be able to actually do something to bring clean water to people who'd never had it. Sounds weird, I know, but that's how it started. Now I can't stop thinking about it." Wa scooped some more of the yogurt mountain into her mouth and folded her arms on the table, listening. As Martin talked, his passion became more evident. He waved his hands to punctuate his ideas and thoughts

while conveying them to Wa. What had started out as the thin cirrus of an idea was now gaining strength and structure, forming into a storm cloud of enormous intensity. He now knew that, one way or another, he wouldn't quit until he found a way to help clean up water for people who didn't have any. After talking for five minutes straight, he took a deep breath and looked at Wa's hardly dented mound of pomegranate yogurt.

“Can I try a bite of that?”

“Go ahead, Mr. Vanilla. As long as you're not carrying anything.” She stared hard at him then broke into a huge smile.

This time he knew she was teasing him. He smiled back and took a big spoonful of Wa's yogurt. As it melted on his tongue, delicious flavors he had never tasted before dazzled his taste buds and made his eyes widen with pleasure.

“See,” said Wa, “there’s lots more than vanilla in life. You just have to want to try things. You just might find you like them, a lot.”

“I’m sorry I talked so long. Did I bore you?”

“No, Vanilla Man. Don’t worry, I’ll catch up soon and take the lead before you know it. I hear what you’re saying. I really do. Plus, I think there could be some decent money in your ideas.”

“Money?”

“Yeah, why not? You could even buy yourself a phone if you made a few bucks. Just think, I could actually call you if I were going to be late.”

“I wasn’t really thinking about money.”

“Oh, I get it. You’re an ar-teest!” She laughed lightly.

“Purely into it for the creation.”

“Why not? Plus, I just want to make things better, not get rich.”

“All well and good and highly admirable, but look, you’re going to need money to be able to do more than talk about this idea, right?”

“I guess.”

“No, Martin. No ‘I guess.’ It takes money, at least some, to build anything. And if you find a way to do something special, people will pay you for it. And that’s okay; this is America, isn’t it? Your Thomas Edison wanted to help people, too, but to make his ideas real, he had to have money. And it’s no crime to get paid for it. Everybody’s got to eat.”

“Isn’t it enough just to think about doing something for people?”

“Yes and no. Why not get paid along the way, so you can work on your dreams rather than spend your life working for other people’s dreams?”

“You don’t think it’s a good thing, working for other people’s dreams?”

“Of course it is. It’s definitely a good thing, if you like their dreams. Then their dreams become your dreams. But you’re getting me off track. You need to first get some money to begin making your idea something real.”

“Okay, Ms. Exotic Yogurt. How do we start?”

“We start by creating a plan. You need to have a plan before you can get the money, ’cause nobody wants to give money to just a dream—not going to happen. It’s bad business. And let’s face it, if you really want to do this, you are going to be in business.”

Martin was about to object, but caught himself and asked, “What kind of plan? What goes into it? How do we put one together?”

“You came to the right place, Mr. Vanilla. My family has made hundreds of plans, big and small, for all kinds of businesses. If you want, I’m sure I can get them to help us make a plan for your clean water.”

“Okay, but you know I can’t pay for it. Remember? Seventies clothes? No cell phone?”

“No worries, Water Guy. You can pay me with friendship. What do you think?”

“Yeah. Yeah, totally.”

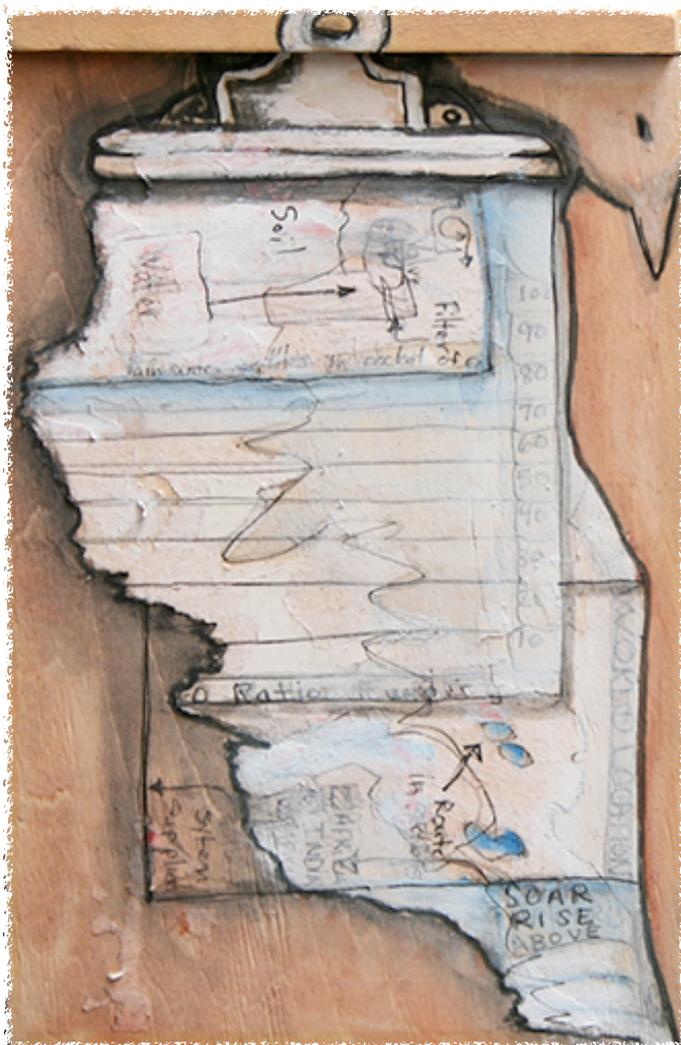
“All right, then. Your first payments will be we meet here every Thursday at four. We’ll work on the plan together, and I’ll get my family to help me review it and tweak it over the weekends. Is that a deal?”

“It’s a deal.” He’d almost forgotten how pretty she was. He was beaming.

Wa returned his smile with a huge one of her own and extended her hand. They shook. Her grip was firm, but

her hand was also soft and warm. Martin didn't want to  
let it go.

PLAN  
ORGANIZING ACTION TOWARD REALITY



*You can always amend a big plan,  
but you can never expand a little  
one. I don't believe in little plans. I  
believe in plans big enough to meet  
a situation which we can't possibly  
foresee now.*

—HARRY S. TRUMAN

## THE POWER OF PLANNING

Planning organizes the action necessary to bring a picture into reality and optimizes creation. Can you create something without a plan? Of course you can, but a plan will help crystallize your thinking, create efficiency, and empower you to unleash what's necessary

to make an idea real. It's virtually impossible to build a complex building without a blueprint, and all but the simplest of projects require some planning and organizing. The right balance of a grounded plan and organic, intuitive energy becomes a fun and motivating process that unleashes the action necessary for your vision to become real.

How do you plan? Do you have to be an organizer to plan? What's in a plan? If you are a creative or spontaneous person, do you really need to plan? Isn't planning boring? Planning can be fun and motivating. Yes, it might not be as fun as the actual creative action, but it will make the creativity more fun when you optimize its realization. Daydreaming without action leaves you without the joy and power of something that's become real.

There are many ways to plan, and you can develop a process that's right for you. Here's one way to do that has worked for many, many people. If you absorb this way, and maybe even try it, it can help you develop your way of planning that works for you. The structures might vary with different types of plans and levels of complexity, yet common themes arise from many effective planners: summary, objectives, strategies, milestones, team, costs, resources, actions, and time line.

Summary of Vision: This is a quick overview touching upon the picture of what you will create and highlights from the other aspects of the plan. Let's take an example of Jason's picture of wanting to climb a major mountain. His summary goal or picture is the following:

- Climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa
-

Objectives (goals): Objectives are the various goals of realizing the vision. They come to you by posing the question “What ...?” as in, “What do I want to do?”; “What needs to happen first?”; “What support or education do I need?”; “What order to events occur in?”; and many more questions you can ask yourself as you brainstorm the plan. Definite objectives require that you think about the different major aspects needed for the vision to come into reality. And often, as you continue your research, your objective list will grow, change, and modify. Jason might initially come up with the following objectives needed to climb Kilimanjaro:

- Set my plan (the planning can be an objective) to optimize my climb
- Raise or save whatever money is necessary for the journey
- Research, locate, and secure the team (friends)

- Do the physical training necessary for the climb
- Get all the gear and clothing needed to climb effectively
- Pack and travel to the site
- Finish the climb by February 28 of next year

Strategies: The strategies are the ways to achieve the objectives and the vision. They might be discerned through asking the question “How?” There are many ways to approach and do most anything. Strategic planning looks at options and decides between various ways that objectives can be accomplished. You might evaluate to see what is most effective, economical, simplest, or most fun, for example. The strategies can be adjusted as you continue with your project. If a strategy doesn’t work so well, another can be tried. For example, there are many approaches to climbing Mount

Kilimanjaro. One way would be to go fast and light with one or two professional guides—this way might require intense physical training and preparation to ensure that you can move fast and spend only a few days and nights on the mountain. By moving in a small group, you would not have to wait for the slower members of the team. Another way might be to engage a large group of friends and many guides to embark on the journey with you. This might bring greater morale and support for a difficult climb as well as potential group help. It would probably be a slower approach and require somewhat less training. It might also be more cost-effective, since the fees for the professional guides could be shared among more people. If you feel you are a fit and fast climber, you might feel delayed by the group's energy. An outrageous way might be to not spend much time on the mountain or training at all and spend a lot of money

to have a helicopter drop you higher up and a team of professionals taking most of the burden. These are all potential ways to do the climb, and there are probably more. Let's imagine that Jason has chosen the middle strategy, because he decided he wanted the climb to build a life experience shared among friends that required only a moderate amount of expenditure and training.

**Milestones:** These are events or accomplishments that make significant progress toward creating something. They can be thought of as times to celebrate both the process and the progress. Mapping out a few of these makes the planning process more fun and brings a sense of fulfillment along the path of the journey. Jason could choose these milestones based on his strategy:

- The day I am in good enough shape to keep my heart rate at 135 for forty-five minutes at level nine on the elliptical and then engage in an intense cross-training weight circuit, hitting my all-time highs in strength and reps.
- When I have found all the people who are going with me on the climb, and everyone has sent in their deposit (Celebrate with a launch dinner.)
- First milestone during the climb: When we hit the second base camp.
- The penultimate milestone: Standing on the top of the mountain with my friends.
- And perhaps—coming back down safely!

Team: After the vision, the team comprises the most important part of a plan. The vision and the people creating together to allow it to come into reality form the

core for the success of any plan. Taking time to think about the people you want and need to make your dream come true is an important part of the process. Think about the various skills or attributes that your fellow team members should carry. You then write into your plan the descriptions of who these people are, what they are like, and what they do well—even if you haven't met them yet. Jason might decide to pick the friends to share his journey based on their fitness and expertise or based on how much he enjoys time with them or both. He might pick his professional guides based on their experience and capacity or upon their rate of pay.

**Costs:** Most things have some cost associated with creating them. Research the costs, and create a budget for what you need. In a budget, you can think of everything based on its cash cost, or you might consider

elements (in kind) or services (pro bono) that others might donate to alleviate the cash costs.

**Resources:** This is where you plan on how you will come up with the money, resources, or donations needed to create or pay the costs of your vision. This might not seem like a creative process, but it can be very creative. Sometimes you have to be as creative in how to fund a project as how to realize or actualize it. If your plan requires more funding than what you can earn and spend, then you will need to research and understand ways to acquire either investments, loans, or donations.

**Actions:** This is usually the biggest part of the plan. You map out the categories of actions you will put into play to create. You don't have to map every detailed action, but you most likely should at least summarize the main

areas of needed action. From this you can create tactical task lists or spreadsheets or use more complex project-management tools.

Schedule: Create a time line (or calendar) that not only includes the milestones but also the essential road map to show where you're going and when.

## PLANNING IS AN ONGOING PROCESS

Even with a great plan that is thoroughly researched, detailed, and supported by mentors and a team, there will be ongoing changes as you create your vision as well as adjustments based on strategies that work or don't. You might have underestimated the resources needed; you might be more successful more quickly than you had estimated (ask any new restaurant that is

running out of food while there's a line of customers out the door); or the economy or other factors outside of your control may change. Your plan must be fluid, based on changing feedback and data as well as your feelings about your plan once you're in the middle of actually manifesting your vision. You might have thought you'd do much of it yourself then realize that you're not able to and would enjoy more support.

## WHAT PLANNING DOES FOR YOU

Although planning seems to most creative people like it could be the least interesting part of creating, after you do it a few times and learn to do it well, it actually becomes a fun and inspirational process. It always mobilizes teams toward a unified vision. Most importantly, planning helps a person ground the reality

behind the idea. A good plan will save effort and resources from being wasted and will keep one's team and oneself motivated as all feel there's a clear agenda to be accomplished.

Although much can be created organically and spontaneously in life, planning does help, and it especially helps complex visions see light and reality. It's simply a helpful power when creating anything that has a significant level of complexity or requires other people's collaboration. Planning and not just talking about a goal is a big part of making it real. Planning can be an intuitive and enjoyable part of the creative process. It fuses grounding and action with vision and dreams.

CLEAR WATERS  
A SEVEN POWERS STORY

PART III

The next six weeks, Martin was happier than he could ever remember. Although he was intensely bored by the planning phase of his clean water journey, he loved meeting Wa each week and working with her on the project. He couldn't wait for Thursdays to roll around and bask in the warmth of her smile and marvel at her highly intelligent, organized mind. Having never received anything from anybody before, except from his mother (which was sort of her job, being a mom), accepting Wa's help and that of her family humbled him. But being involved with people who cared about his project—and him—gave him a sense of purpose, strength, and confidence he'd never experienced.

When he and Wa would get together, it was all Martin could do to keep his mind on the project, as he much preferred to watch Wa and drink in her beauty and energy. But Wa was all business during the time they worked on how Martin could realize his clean-water dream. They researched like mad over the Internet, and Wa would organize the various sites into easily recognizable categories they could draw on later when putting together a concrete plan. Slowly, it started to come together and assumed a basic structure. Wa's parents and brother built on the structure and pointed out the form and elements that required focus. Otherwise, no one in a position to award them funds would even give his idea a second thought.

First they put together a summary, research, and definition of the problem. Next came an explanation of others' past attempted solutions and the degree of

success and failure each had experienced. Then there were market analyses of the positive economic impact clean water would have on the local and wider communities as well as the negative effects if the situation remained the same or worsened. It was really tedious, like wading through one muddy stream after another. But Wa's parents put together plans for a living and had instilled in Wa the same painstaking, methodical approach to projects. Martin could see it in her homework—everything was just so: highly organized and cleanly, precisely presented. Come to think of it, Wa dressed the same way. Instead of following the latest trends, she had a timeless style and good taste and wore her outfits with pride and ease. Martin looked at his bell-bottoms with the frayed cuffs, and he winced.

“Martin? Hello? Earth to Martin.” Wa, her head cocked slightly, was staring at him while deftly twirling her

pencil over her thumb and over her knuckles. “C’mon, Martin. We need to concentrate on this stuff, or we’ll never get anything going. Okay?” Even when she was impatient with him, she was cute.

“Yeah, sorry. Where were we?”

Wa knitted her brows in a mock display of reproach, then laughed. “All right, Vanilla Man. We have to figure out the funding—that is, how much it’s going to take to make this happen—and then the ROI (that’s our return on investment) that’s going to make this worthwhile to the money people. And then we need to put together a time line that we’ll have to follow to keep everything on track. Also what we’re going to do if the schedule does hit some bumps, which they always do.”

Wa might as well have been speaking in Mandarin, but she carefully explained to Martin the meaning and

importance of each part of the plan. Wa may have been a girl, but she had the patience of someone much older. Her mentoring Martin helped him transform his ideas and thoughts into more solid forms. All was on track and going very well. But near the completion of their first draft, a strange, lost feeling ambushed Martin and took him hostage. They were at the yogurt place. Martin was even more quiet than usual. No matter what Wa did to bring him out of whatever funk he was in, Martin was bound up in his own misery.

Wa was scraping the last of her mango tart yogurt from her cup when Martin caught her eye then quickly looked down at the floor. “Martin,” said Wa, “what is it? What’s wrong?” He stabbed at his yogurt with his spoon, eyes cast down at the table. After what seemed like hours, Martin burst out, “Wa, why are we doing this?”

Wa sat silently for a moment, a stunned look on her face, like she'd been suddenly slapped. "What? What are you talking about? Wh...why?"

"Yes, exactly. Why are we spending all this time on a plan for some vague something; something that's not really real. I just wanted to have people have clean water. I didn't want to build a business around it."

Wa sat for a few seconds, looking for some reason to stay, but found none. She swiped the printouts off the table and quickly stuffed them into her backpack. "I'm sorry. Apparently I've been wasting your time, Vanilla Man." There was no irony in her voice this time.

"That's not what I meant."

"Well, then what did you mean?" Wa kept shoving the papers, some of which scattered on the floor, in her pack. She looked at Martin, but it was obvious he wasn't going to help pick them up.

“I’m just getting overwhelmed by everything. I really, really appreciate what you’re doing—and what your family’s doing—for me, but it just seems to be...I don’t know, too much.”

“What’s too much? What’s so overwhelming?”

“Why does everything have to be so, so formal? Do we really have to plan it all out, plan it to death? Can we be more creative, more spontaneous? Explore and try ideas? Not have everything so rigid and controlled—what do you think?”

Wa sat back down, spooned up a big glob of yogurt, and pointed it at Martin as if it were a gun. The hurt and anger burned in her, but she wasn’t about to let Martin see it.

“Look,” she said. “I know you want to do it your way, and you don’t have experience in these kinds of thing, but if you wing it, nothing’s going to come of your

dream, much less your idea. I know it seems we're doing things like a business, and you don't like or trust businesses. But, like it or not, we don't have much choice. That is, unless you're not really committed to doing this and doing it right. If you are, just say so, and I'll chalk it up to experience with a goofy dreamer, and we'll go our separate ways. Don't you see? The planning may seem dull and plodding, but it will give you more to work on and bring about more ideas on what to do. The plan will be the means to scrub the mud out of your ideas and make it clear, just like the water in those far-off places. The planning is a step in the journey to get to the next step, which will lead to another one, higher up, and then another. Eventually you'll be where you want to be, with real things you can apply to the problem. Without it, you just have an idea, dangling helplessly in a void. Is that what you want?"

“So you don’t think people have created things without plans?”

Wa felt like braining him, but held back and said, almost sweetly, “Of course they have. But the plan lays the groundwork for real action with real results. The world is full of talkers but not that many people who act. Just think if there’d been no plans—really intricate, detailed plans—for putting a man on the moon. We’d still be looking up at the sky, wondering.”

Martin’s stared into his cup of yogurt, which had melted into a miserable pink pool. He felt like a scolded little boy and wanted to run and hide. But the stakes were too high. He badly wanted to help make the world better, even if it wasn’t on the scaled he dreamed. Plus, not incidentally, he didn’t want to lose what he had with Wa. He looked up and met her eyes. Her arms were

crossed, and she arched her eyebrows as if to say,

“Well?”

“Do we have to follow this plan every detail, every day?”

Wa scoffed and then shoved him in the shoulder.

“Of course not, you poor, misguided boy. It’s not a hard-and-fast order; we use it as a guideline, a road map. No one says you can’t take a different route if it looks more interesting or leads to a better destination. You can make changes to it along the way. But it does get you going, and it does point you where you want to go, with milestones along the way that also help you get people who believe in the project to help make it happen.”

“Why do I need a plan to get people to help me?”

“Because it shows them that there is some substance behind your ideas. That you’re not just some ridiculous fool chatting them up or trying to con them.

That you've made the effort and shown the respect to figure out what exactly you want to do and how you're going to get there—at the very least, how to start. How to take those first steps.”

“So you don't think this is just a waste of time?”

Wa couldn't take it any more and gently smacked the side of Martin's head. “Have you not been listening? Do you think I'd be spending every Thursday, and weekends, on your water project if I thought it was a waste of time? Sometimes you are so dense, I want to scream. Martin, you don't always need to be so scared. Of me, or of how hard you're going to have to work on this. It's tremendous, what you want to do. But it's going to take more than plain, white same-old, same-old.”

Martin was flush with embarrassment, but it was only fleeting. He strangely felt a new strength rising up

in him. Wa was nervously stabbing at her yogurt again, waiting for Martin to break the silence.

“I have an idea,” he finally said, smiling.

Wa was spent. She sighed. “What now? If you don’t want to do this, I’m not going to force you.”

“No, no, no. You opened my eyes. I’m totally committed to this now. In fact, I’m going to go way out on a limb. I’m going to have some pomegranate yogurt.”

He slouched down in the chair and folded his arms across his chest, a huge grin covering his face.

Wa began to laugh. The soft brilliance had returned to her eyes. “Great idea, Mr. Vanilla. Go ahead. Expand your horizons. There’s only up from here.”

PASSION  
THE FUEL FOR CREATIVITY



*There is no passion to be found  
playing small—in settling for a life  
that is less than the one you are  
capable of living.*

— NELSON MANDELA

## THE POWER OF PASSION

Passion is the fuel that drives the vision into reality.

All creative and innovative people have deep passion and sincere excitement for what they create and do. Look at anybody in any field from sports to art to education to science, and the successful ones, the creative ones, are those who love what they do. They might act cool, calm, and collected on the outside (the peace we'll talk about

later), yet inside their passions motivate, feed, and fuel them onward.

You'll notice that the words love and passion many times go hand in hand. To be passionate about something, you must love it, and to love it, it must connect organically and deeply to who you are at a core level. Returning to the importance of picturing something you care about reminds us that we cannot have passion to create something we do not love. If we work to create something we do not love, we can go through the motions for a while, and even do something successful for a time, but eventually, and usually quickly, the engine stops running, because there's no steam to drive the pistons.

And people who bring passion, bring it all the time, day in and day out. Even on days when the passion wanes for a while, it comes back, and they dig inside themselves to reignite it, and they can, because there's a true love: a

love that comes from a natural, connected place. People who are bored a lot or disengaged have not connected inside to find what they love, but once they do, they might surprise you at how much they give. To think of extreme examples, no slave ever worked or created out of desire or passion, and no artist or scientist ever created without great passion and desire. So pick that which you truly love, and give of yourself to those that you love, and watch how easy you find an expanding passion.

That's the other component of passion: giving.

Passionate people give and act. They act spontaneously and give freely and from their hearts. And through the giving, they receive and passion expands and grows. The giving feeds the passion. So giving must accompany passion so it grows.

And what if you're passionate about something and giving to it, and it doesn't give back to you? That's okay—

because you are following your heart, and by doing so you'll build the capacity to have passion and eventually have it for what does reward you and give back to you too.

And what if you're passionate about something for a while, and then the passion goes away? It's completely natural for the body and emotions to go through periods of exhaustion or overuse. Many times waning passion means simply that you need a short break to recharge, and you naturally find the passion expanding again. Sometimes you need to just challenge yourself to find out if your passion is true and real for you. And if the passion ultimately completely vanishes, then what you are creating is probably not really the aspect you are meant to create—it might have just been a stepping-stone to the higher vision, the one that is really right for you and your life and creativity.

Passion, like most attributes in life, grows stronger with use and with some rest. Like the physical body that

responds to exercise followed by good eating and plenty of sleep, so passion grows by engaging it regularly, yet giving it the break time it needs to recharge and expand. But overall, if you are doing what's right for you, you will find more and more passion for what you create over time, not less.

Passion breeds expansion. Reach high, and keep reaching. The glorious hawks and falcons and eagles spread their wings and reach upward and outward. The supreme athlete reaches to jump higher, run faster, and perform more brilliantly. Artists push themselves to create more beautifully and more poignantly. Always, always, continue to reach, because when you stop reaching, you find yourself in a place of stasis, and stasis brings contraction and mediocrity and eventually inertia and degradation. When you reach you grow, expand, and live. Life and creation require expansion. Expansion brings new aspects

to your true self and to your position, and when you expand your pictures they might gain more impact and specialness.

To have passion for something, you must truly love it and care for it. You must care for it all the time, not just now and then, for the passion to fully bloom and grow.

Passion thrives when it's cultivated and summoned.

Essentially passion is an energy stimulated via an attitude.

When thinking about attitudes, it helps to look at people who demonstrate these attitudes. You can find people of great passion in every walk of life from mothers to prime ministers. Let's take a look at four people of recent history who demonstrate the power of passion applied to four different pictures: Winston Churchill, Julia Child, Michael Jordan, and Bono.

History shows that not only did Winston Churchill save Great Britain from what seemed a likely demise at the hands of Hitler, Churchill rallied the world to save itself.

Without the leadership of this singular man, it's highly possible that all the world would current reside under the dictates of a universal dictatorship, one that had instituted systematic genocide and would probably have continued that and worse. Churchill was the voice of courage and freedom and humanity at the time all seemed lost. He found a way to continue his passionate quest to lead throughout a life that had as many setbacks, defeats, and humiliations as it had successes. He grew up with a father who cared little for him and thought he was a loser; he was blamed often for problems he did not cause; he lost his money, position, and stature, but he never lost his way. At the lowest time in his life, when life seemed to have abandoned him, and he sat drinking away his afternoons in pubs, he received the opportunity of the century. When things got completely bad, the people of England called forward the man of utmost passion—the bold, often wrong, yet always

energetic Churchill—as their last dash hope to somehow thwart the Nazi terror that had overwhelmed most of Europe and was heading toward their island.

And how did Churchill keep England not only alive but also ultimately the hero in staving off and overwhelming Hitler and his Axis allies? Through consummate and ongoing passion! Churchill, at sixty-five, brought a deep love and caring for his country and the world and a passionate belief in his vision to victory. Through a dynamic work ethic that exhausted his generals and all those around him, through superlative oratory and written communications and complete commitment to do whatever it took, he summoned the power of passion and fueled himself, his country (which was sadly undermanned and under-armed, and summoned his allies (most notable the United States) into a five-year campaign that preserved humankind. He preserved human dignity and offered a

future for all of us to have lives of freedom and opportunity. He cared. He cared deeply. He brought it every day and in every way. He brimmed of passion and exuded it even when the darkest clouds surrounded him. His passion drove him and drove the world to the eventual victory in which the V symbol he popularized became a reality, not just an idea.

Julia Childs: another British legend, completely different in occupation than Churchill and perhaps seemingly not of same magnitude of historical impact—but who knows? Julia loved cooking and food with her body, mind, and soul. She devoted her life to pursuing great cooking and educating others to make and enjoy great food. When Childs spoke on TV or through her writing, it was not a delivery of facts and figures; it was all-out passion, enthusiasm, and ebullience for every aspect of cooking. Childs could even take something as mundane as turning

on an appliance such as a blender into a spectacle of wonder and enlightenment. She walked, talked, and breathed food—and, through her love of it, inspired her generation and then the leaders of the next generations toward great cooking.

Before Childs, great cooking was relegated to the storied French chefs, an esoteric group who the rest of us had little in common with except to admire their creations, if we were so lucky to encounter them. Then Childs came, a housewife with a passion for life and French cooking. Against all odds, she became a culinary master and had a deep desire to share her wisdom with the world. She wrote of food with the energy a literary master would write of love. As a television pioneer, she brought her extraordinary personality, being, and passion to audiences around the globe, transforming an ordinary meal into a feast and experience of the senses and, most importantly, the heart.

Michael Jordan changed the face of sports by bringing a consummate passion to a game where the talent pool is so close in capacity that only an intangible could allow one to rise consistently ahead of the pack to the lead position. Was Jordan cool as ice under pressure?

Absolutely. But did the fire of his soul burn bright and strong for the game he loved? Completely. The NBA brings the finest basketball athletes to compete as teams, and the talent among the teams and individual players comprising them is extremely similar. If you measure the individual players' pure athletic capacities (height, vertical jump, strength, cardio fitness, speed, and quickness), they are not far apart from one another. Then how can one individual perform year in and out at a much higher level of excellence and consistently lead his teams to championships? How can a player take a year off to pursue

another dream (baseball) and then return at the height of his abilities to win again and again?

The answer is passion: a drive to greatness and love of the game, the competition, the moment of pressure, and love of excellence. It seems also that people of great passion also have great confidence. Have you ever seen a very confident person who lacked passion or a very passionate person who lacked confidence? Rarely. Why? Why does the man who took basketball to another level of performance also have the strength of character to shave his head and make bald really beautiful and not just the cliché it had been? Because the energy of love—of self, of what you care about, and of others—creates the passion. Jordan did not talk much, but he exhibited the love that makes for great passion and confidence and fuels a dream into reality, no matter how big or extraordinary.

Bono translates passion into words and music and creates a literal vibration (energy) in the process. Music utilizes vibrations to communicate emotion, directly. Some of the best contemporary musicians make a mark being cool and chill, yet it's the driving pulsing passion of music that makes their fans love them.

Growing up in Ireland, Bono absorbed the Irish sense of emotion and deep caring. Never a rich people, the Irish cared deeply for and nurtured the written word as a means of lifting the human spirit and communicating the emotions of the heart. With each word that Bono sings with the music of his band U2, you feel and hear a man who's soul is on fire with love. Whatever he sings about, he deeply cares about. Does he have the most pure and sophisticated voice of his generation? Of course not. But he does radiate the passion of life most dynamically, day in and out, as well, if not more passionately, than anyone.

Through this fuel of passion, U2's music finds its life and growth and connects with audiences.

These are four people who have made a strong mark in recent history, and you can find countless others who express the power of passion. Study their lives. Listen to them. Watch their ways. Note how the passion within them drives their visions into reality. Passion fuels creativity. Without it, your ideas and your pictures will sit on shelves or as files on hard discs or vanish in the air as mere words spoken in a café. With passion, your vision gains food, fuel, and life. Without it, your vision dies.

## WHAT PASSION DOES FOR YOU

Passion benefits you by waking you up and engaging all of you with life and what you love to create. Passion feeds your soul and feeds the bliss inside of you.

Passion makes you a person that people want to be around, because you have energy for what you love. And passion does not need to be loud and boisterous; it can be found fully in a quiet person. Yet, be they quiet or great communicators, people of passion attract other people and fulfill others' desires in life. And the opposite is true: people lacking passion put everybody to sleep, including themselves.

What is passion? Simply put, it's an inner energy directed toward something. Passion is a fuel, the force that drives and energizes. People of passion are people of the heart. They care deeply, and in that caring they find the energy. So the attitude of caring connects one to the inner energy that will fuel and drive whatever the energy is directed toward; in other words, to that which is cared about. And caring is a renewable and expanding energy source. The more you care, the more the energy grows. And

the more passion you have, the more your heart and mind expand and the more fulfilled and alive you become.

If you live a life of passion—if you infuse your dreams with passion—you will gain spectacular inner and outer rewards. Inside, you will gain the electrifying feeling of being alive and caring about something. You will gain confidence as the passion brings you to a state of inner strength. Outwardly, you will see your ideas begin to take shape as you put the action into your plan by reaching out, communicating, doing, living, and creating—by being alive. You'll see aspects of your dreams and your dreams themselves becoming real in the world, and this will reward and benefit you. You will see other people connecting to your visions and your work, because, like everyone, they find love and caring and passion attractive. Nobody really wants to be dull—to be dead. Passion inspires others and

yourself and fuels that wonderful picture you're brewing up  
into a reality, not just a dream.

## CLEAR WATERS

### PART IV

A month passed, and Martin had lost most of his shyness around Wa. Together they had made good progress on the plan, and, with Wa's parents' help on the weekends, it was really starting to take shape. Martin surprised himself and now believed that his ideas had some substance—that they could actually work, given the proper amount of funding and determination. But at the moment, a much bigger, more intimidating project stood before him. He hoped all his new planning experience would pay off and produce a healthy ROI. All he needed now was an extra dose of courage. He wanted to ask Wa out on a real date.

Up until now, in their after-school Thursday project sessions, things were very businesslike, with just a slight touch of good-natured teasing to break up the seriousness

and tedium. Although Martin thought he was content with the way things were, something deep inside him hungered for more. All logic told him to take it slow, like another important journey, one step at a time. It made good sense. But his gut feel was that it was now or never. And never was a long, long time.

It was after their last Thursday meeting at the yogurt place. Wa was closing up her laptop and sorting papers to put in her pack. Martin was nervously playing with a balled-up a straw wrapper, trying to find the right words so that she wouldn't turn him down.

“Hey, Wa. Have you ever been to the Casa del Mar in Santa Monica? It's an old, like 1926, I think, restored hotel, right on the ocean, really cool, with these amazing views. 'Course I've never actually stayed there, but it's one of those things from the past I love being around. Simple, but elegant, very classy. Makes you feel like you're back in time, when LA wasn't so frantic and crazy. Well, at least not as crazy.”

Wa stopped what she was doing and looked up at Martin, puzzled. “Um, no, I haven’t, but I’ve heard lots about it. It’s just one of those places we haven’t had a chance to get to yet.”

Martin looked away, rolling the balled-up wrapper between his thumb and forefinger. Sweat trickled down his neck. He felt like he couldn’t breathe. Finally, gazing down at the spilled drop of yogurt on the table, he mumbled something.

“Sorry,” Wa said, leaning in. “Didn’t hear you.”

Martin glanced at her then looked away again. “Wanna meet there, and I can show you all the cool views? There’s even a yogurt place nearby where you can look out over the ocean. I’d buy this time.”

Wa’s rolling laughter spilled over Martin like a cool wave on hot sand. She stood with her hands on her hips and stared at the puddle in front of her that was Martin Leonard. “Vanilla Man, are you asking me out, like on a date?”

“Well, it doesn’t have to be. I mean this hotel is just really cool and if you haven’t seen it and you want to see it and if you have time sometime, I could show you.”

“Whoa, Martin. Relax.” She sighed and shook her head. “Finally. I’ve been waiting weeks for you to ask. You

know, you are extremely dense sometimes. Yeah, I'd love to. It sounds like a lot of fun. When should we go?"

Martin was stunned, like he'd won the lottery and been arrested at the same time. Wa caught his eye and arched her brows, as if to say, "Well?"

"Um," said Martin. He had been certain she would say no. Now what? He cleared his throat and crushed the straw wrapper flat.

"Saturday?" Jeez, you idiot, Martin chided himself. You're the one who asked her. At least try to sound more confident! "Yeah, Saturday. How 'bout Saturday?"

"Okay," said Wa. "Saturday it is. This time we should probably go together. Otherwise, if I'm late, you'll take off and leave me stranded." Her brief laugh was only mildly reassuring that she was kidding.

The ensuing silence swallowed Martin, and there was roaring in his ears. "We can take the bus from my house, if you want to do that."

"Or better yet, how about if my ahma, that is my grandmother, drives us there? She's headed to Santa Monica to do some shopping then and she could drop us off at Casa del Mar and pick us up when she's done. She loves to shop, so that should give us plenty of time to take in the

hotel and get some lunch and wander around. Do they have sandwiches at the yogurt place?”

“I think so,” Martin replied.

“Well, if not, then we’ll just get some yogurt. Okay?”

“Yeah. Sounds great. About ten thirty?”

“Perfect,” said Wa, slinging her pack over her shoulder and walking out the door. Martin snatched up his things and caught up with her. Her hair seemed especially glossy today, for some reason. Martin was almost certain he wouldn’t get much sleep Friday night.

Martin was ready at eight, in a fresh pair of bell-bottoms and a shiny polyester shirt that was open at the throat. He was fidgeting so much that his mom finally shooed him out of the kitchen and into the backyard. He stood over the koi pond and caught his reflection in the calm surface of the water. Goldie and Frank were languidly cruising back and forth under the lily pads and the little cascade that ran off the rocks and pearly into the pool. Martin took a deep breath and smiled at his reflection,

which seemed almost to wink as it smiled back. Much calmer now, he went back into the house, grabbed the plans for the clear water project, sat down at the little rusty patio table and started to make some notes. He was so deep into his thoughts that he didn't even notice Wa standing behind him. She had on an aqua, short-sleeve, combed cotton top that made her hair look even more brilliant, cream-colored capris pants, and cross-strapped sandals.

“Hey, Martin. Working on a Saturday? Good man. But put it down for now, okay? Time to relax just a little. C'mon. My ahma is out front with the car.”

“Yeah, just let me get my pack.”

The sleek new E500 Mercedes sat on the buckled and cracked asphalt of the Leonards' driveway, sleek and shiny, like a panther ready to pounce on the beat-up 1999 Toyota Corolla that got Martin's mom back and forth to work. He approached the car cautiously, as if he were about

to crash a party. What was he doing, trying to be friends with this really smart, pretty girl whose family was rich? He looked over at Wa sheepishly. He felt very small. The purring of the engine roared in his ears. Wa frowned, crossed her arms, and cocked her head toward the passenger rear door. She knew what he was feeling, but wasn't going to let him give in to it.

“It's just a car, Martin, no matter what you think. Just get in. My ahma has some serious shopping to do.” She shook her head and laughed as she opened the door. Martin numbly got in. The interior smelled of very expensive leather.

Wa got in the back seat with him and tapped Martin on the shoulder. “Hey, there must be some very cool seventies black Caddie Eldorados still running around here. I think I've even seen a few. This Mercedes may be new,

but those Eldorados, they have the character. Don't let this German machine intimidate the nerd in you, Vanilla Man.” She gave his shoulder a teasing little pinch.

When Wa got in the back seat next to him, instead of up front with her grandmother, Martin was wide-eyed in surprise. For the first time since he'd become friends with Wa, he felt his heart opening. It finally dawned on him that she truly cared and respected his being different. He was confident now that somebody other than his mother might actually care whether he lived or died. Because he was so stunned, he didn't know how to—or even if he should say—thank her for her kind and thoughtful act. They had come such a long way since their first encounter. Blunt and totally together Wa had a soft side. And it seemed the softness was especially for him.

“Oh, yeah. A seventies Eldorado coupe, with the wide whitewalls, midnight vinyl top, and shaved rear fins, beats this fancy Benz any day, any time.”

Ahma turned back to Wa and said something in Mandarin, the pitch of her voice rising in an inquiring tone. Wa replied, also in Mandarin, then in English said to Martin, “My ahma reminded me that I’ve forgotten my manners. Martin, this is my ahma.” Ahma nodded in Martin’s direction and smiled a perfect smile that betrayed the perfect symmetry of dentures. “Ni hao, Martin”; his name came out Mah-teen.

“That means hi,” said Wa. “Ahma doesn’t speak any English, and since you speak no Mandarin, you two will definitely get along.”

“Hello, A-ma?”

“No, not a-ma. Draw out the first syllable. Ahhhhh-ma.”

Martin tried again. “Hello, Ah-ma.” Ahma smiled wide and laughed. Wa clapped her hands and playfully punched Martin in the shoulder. “Oh, yeah, you guys are going to get along perfectly.”

The ride to Casa del Mar was sweet, but very slow, even by Los Angeles standards. As soon as they got on the Santa Monica freeway, the sluggish traffic stopped altogether and became one big parking lot. “I knew I should have trusted my instincts and taken Olympic and Pico. But it’s Saturday. The 10 shouldn’t be this bad. Ah, I guess I’ll never learn,” Wa said ruefully, then shot a sweet smile at Martin. So they crept along for an hour, in modern inertia, before mercifully exiting at Lincoln and creeping down Pico to Casa del Mar.

As they got out of the gleaming Mercedes, Wa told Ahma to drive down Main to Ocean, where she could park and comb through the eclectic tangle of shops. She would

call Wa when she finished. She winked slyly at Martin, then waved her hand out the window as she pulled away from the curb. Ahma was happy, because her granddaughter Wa, the joy of her life, seemed so happy. Not as intense and serious as she had always been. She looked to be having fun, and Ahma was all for that.

When they entered the Casa Del Mar from the beach side, it was as if they'd walked through a time warp. Moving through the opulent, painstakingly restored Italian Neo-Renaissance structure, they felt like they'd been transported back into the golden age of Hollywood, when sleek Pierce Arrow and Packard limousines prowled the palm-tree-lined boulevards under clear, warm skies, and films were silent and magical, and stars were everywhere.

They walked around the lobby, gazing up at the vaulted gold ceiling, running fingers along the gleaming mahogany tables, and sitting in the massive winged-chairs

with curved legs. The building had a proud and stately feel and emitted an energy that both Martin and Wa soaked up eagerly.

They made their way up to the second floor on the twin curved staircases that opened up on a sun-drenched lounge, with floor-to ceiling-windows offering stunning panoramic views of Santa Monica Bay, the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, and the huge Ferris wheel and retro amusement park on the famous Pacific Pier. They stood at the windows, drinking in the view, not saying a word. Then Wa poked Martin playfully in the ribs and said, “Nice view, Vanilla Man. You do know something good when you see it. You’re not such a nerd after all.” He looked at her, puzzled, She laughed, then said very quietly, “It’s beautiful, Martin. Thanks for bringing me. You’re right. It is really special.”

Leaving the hotel, they made their way toward Venice. The sun was perfectly warm and the air soft, the light bright yet subdued, not at all like LA, where everything seemed harsh and oppressive and stifling. Along the way there was the usual Venice-area parade of Rollerbladers, cyclists, joggers and walkers, body-builders, weirdoes, flakes, and posers: the LA circus that never stopped. Entertaining, but also over the top, like the main purpose wasn't to be out and about, but only to be seen. The strangeness of it all seemed to trigger something in Wa, a need to get back to reality. She pulled Martin off to the side and said, "This is really great, Martin, but we need to talk about the project. What do you want to go over today? Want to talk about the team section of the plan?"

Martin was distracted by Wa and the crazy, kinetic scene. He wasn't really up for talking about clear water. Not now, anyway. He shrugged as an answer.

Wa found his eyes and held them. She was suddenly all business. “Hey, Vanilla Man. You want to make something in this world, you better wake up and have some excitement for it.”

Martin was taken aback. “You...you don’t think I’m excited about it?”

“I don’t know. Are you? Sometimes you’re about as inspiring as a ninety-year-old politician with bad dentures.”

“Really?”

“Really. We’re out here at the edge of this massive body of water. I would think that would provide some inspiration and trigger some enthusiasm for what you’re trying to accomplish. What we’re trying to do together. I don’t know. Maybe I’m expecting too much.”

“I’m not asleep,” Martin protested. “I was just enjoying the time. You know, being with you and away from LA.”

“That’s great, Martin. That’s wonderful. I’m enjoying it, too. But if we’re going to actually make this water idea of yours into something that’s going to matter, we have to bring it all the time: twenty-four/seven.”

“Bring what?”

“The fire! The passion!”

Martin didn’t like where this was going. He shrugged again. “Whatever. I’ve got plenty of passion, Wa.”

“Do you? You watch basketball?”

“Yeah, I watch basketball.”

“You like basketball?”

“Yeah, I like it well enough. I follow it.”

“You ever see Nash or LeBron or Kobe play?”

How did she know who they were? “I’ve seen them, plenty.”

“Good. So listen. They’re not just talented. In fact, Nash wasn’t even all that. What makes those guys really great is their love and passion for the game, their commitment to it and to winning. They’re driven, Martin. And they drive their teams to be the absolute best they all can be. They live and sleep and breathe basketball. Do you live and sleep and breathe clean water?”

“I sleep it, anyway.” Wa was not amused.

“Martin, up till now it’s been a really great day, but now you’re getting under my skin. I think, for the first time, you’ve actually managed to Piss. Me. Off.” Wa turned away from him and continued walking toward Venice Beach. Martin was stunned by her sudden outburst, but soon ran after her.

“Wa, wait. I’m just getting into this water stuff. Sure I have passion for it. But I can’t say I live and breathe it.”

“Then why am I wasting my time helping you?”

Martin was flush with the heat of embarrassment. “I thought we were friends, Wa. I thought we were doing this together, as friends.”

“Yeah, Martin, we’re friends, no doubt. And I’m happy to do things with you any time. But if you want me to help you with this water notion of yours, you better decide if you have it in you to bring the passion to make it happen and make it great. If you’re doing this just so people will think you’re cool, me included, you can count me out. People who think they’re cool—I couldn’t care less about them. It’s the people who have passion for something, living, breathing, flaming passion; those are the people I want to spend my time and energy with.”

Martin had that disturbing roaring in his ears again. He was right at the edge of the cliff, and he knew it. “Then

what do I have to do to prove to you that I do have passion, real passion, for this?"

She stared at him, the gears of her brain grinding hard. "It's not just one thing, Martin. It's more of an attitude, a way you carry yourself, how deeply you want to make a difference and to change things. It's not really about just you."

She could tell Martin was taking her reproach hard and softened her tone, suggesting they not spoil the rest of the day and enjoy their walk. She took his arm and nudged him forward toward Venice Beach, her smile soothing Martin's wounds. He picked up his pace and matched her stride, as well as her smile, though it was smaller and not as bright.

They spent the rest of the afternoon strolling around Venice, where they ate sandwiches and people-watched at a café that looked out over the beach dotted with crazy,

colorful characters ,and the surf breaking on the sand in the distance, an abundant feast of sights and sounds that got them laughing and took their minds off the project.

Around five, Wa got a call from her ahma, and, after their brief conversation, told Martin that her grandmother was ready to head home and would meet them back at the Casa del Mar entrance on Pico in twenty minutes. Coastal clouds were gathering and pushing inland, dropping the temperature ten degrees. Wa had no jacket, and her outfit was no match for the cooler air. She stuck close to Martin as they walked back to the hotel. Much to his amazement, Martin put his arm around Wa to help keep her warm, and, even more amazing Wa snuggled into him. It didn't seem like it was just to keep warm.

Shopping bags filled half the back seat of the Benz, forcing Martin and Wa to sit next to each other. Ahma grinned at them both as they got into the car, but winked

slyly at Martin when she knew Wa wasn't looking. "Good day, Wa? Mah-teen?" She laughed and pulled the black sedan into the thick LA traffic.

Wa was warmer now but stayed close to Martin for the ride back to his house. She was quiet until a few blocks from his street. Then she pulled back and looked at him with an intensity that made him nervous.

"It's been a really great day, Martin. Beautiful, actually. But I want you to think hard on what I said. You're the one who needs to decide how badly you want to make a difference. Once you do decide, let me know, and I'm with you all the way. But now's the time to stop talking and dreaming and start acting. And, if it's not what you want to do—if you're not absolutely one hundred percent committed—I want you to know it's okay. I'll still be your friend. But we won't waste any more time thinking and talking about clear water. Ever again. Do we have a deal?"

She put out her hand. The Mercedes pulled into the Leonards' driveway.

Martin reached out with his thumb up, seventies style. "Okay," he said. "Deal."

Wa laughed, clasped his hand in hers, and pulled him into her, kissing him quickly, right on the lips. "Good night, Vanilla Man." Martin stumbled out of the car, Wa getting out behind him to move up front with her ahma, and he slowly walked toward the dim light that was glowing out of the kitchen window. The surrounding air sure was soft for Los Angeles. He turned walked back to Wa and said, "Then what do I have to do to prove to you that I have real passion for this?"

She thought a moment. "I don't think it's one thing. I think it's an attitude. Why don't you just take a break for the rest of the day and not think about water. Then you go away and decide how much you want to do something

special. If you do, let me know, and I'm in. If you don't, no problem. I'll still be your friend, but I don't want to spend more time on this."

He thought about her proposal. "Okay—deal." He extended his hand to her, thumb up, seventies street shake style. She laughed and gave him the handshake.

PARTNERS  
CHOOSE THEM WISELY



*Geography has made us neighbors.  
History has made us friends.  
Economics has made us partners,  
and necessity has made us allies.  
Those whom God has so joined  
together, let no man put asunder.*

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

*I learned from the best, stayed  
away from the worst.*

—PITBULL, LYRICS FROM “MR.

WORLDWIDE”

## THE POWER OF PARTNERS

To create alone would cut you off from the power of partnership. To create with others brings exponential opportunity and expands the potential of your dream.

Although the myth of the solitary creator exists, nobody can live or create alone. Even a writer, who on face value might seem to be creating alone, requires a pen, paper, or computer, all of which required many people to create. The writer requires live experience to write about, which demands interactions with others. And the writer needs editors, publishers, or sites to connect their writing to others. And most of all the writer needs an audience? So even the most seemingly isolated creation requires partners, and most acts of creation require many partnerships.

Partnerships can be the keys in bringing a picture into reality. Choose your partners wisely, for a great partner will lift you up, whereas a bad partner will pull you down. Listen to your gut when you are deciding whether to partner with somebody. Do they make you feel good or great most of the time? Do they bring complementary talents or abilities to help your vision? Are you on the same path? Will you support each other? Do you trust this person? These are keys to any partnership from love to business. If you can answer yes to these questions, go ahead and engage this person as a partner—and make sure you can keep answering yes to preceding questions through time. On the other hand, if a person makes you feel bad consistently or causes you anxiety, or if you are going down different paths, or if you are not supporting each other, or if you do not trust them—well, that's not a partner to choose.

Great partnerships make each person better than they are as individuals. It's been said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts: together, great partners create more than if you added together what each would create by working alone. From family to business to art, the dynamics of partnerships have similarities. Great partners bring their support for each in all circumstances from the highs to the lows of life and creating. They help each other. They share common bonds and interests yet offer unique capacities and talents. They bring wisdom to each other. And they always care about each other and the vision they are creating and the path they are heading down together. Great partners usually have much in common, yet each brings unique aspects, elevating the team through common vision and enhanced overall skills and attributes. Many times one partner has a particular strength to add to the team, and the other partner relies on this person to drive

that area and vice versa. Great partners always have each other's backs and forgive each other consistently, building a power in knowing that there's somebody (or several people) who you can always count on who remain there to help, even when you're not at your best.

Great partners deeply admire and respect each other. They love sharing all the elements they have in common and applaud those talents, abilities, or aspects each other that are strengths. And partnerships also make everything a lot more fun. Partners enjoy each other's company and time spent in all situations. And great partnerships continue over time, growing and changing as the picture becomes real and expands to even greater scope, reach, and impact.

Perhaps the most important quality of great partners is their consistent sense of mutual appreciation. They do not take each other for granted; instead, they exhibit consistent gratitude for each other and for the each other's

contributions. Gratitude and appreciation fuel partnerships in the way that passion fuels making a dream real.

And the opposite of the above holds for poor partnerships. These are relationships based on greed or selfishness or manipulation or worse. These are relationships in which people are heading down different paths with different values, and usually in these kinds of partnerships, one or both people feel taken, unappreciated, or misused. So choose your partnerships wisely. And stay with those that time proves to be great. Otherwise, you bring each other down. Hold out for the right partners. Better to wait for the right one(s) than jump in with the wrong. And, if you find yourself with the wrong partner sometime, then it's probably best to disengage that partnership if you've tried to make it work. Bad partnerships just defeat one or both parties. But if you've experienced what seems like a bad partnership, learn from

it instead of complaining or blaming the other. After all, you did choose to be in it, and it's a reflection on you and the person you were when you engaged the partnership. So see the good you experienced and learned and move on to better partnerships when necessary. Sometimes partnership starts off being the right one then diminishes over time.

When this happens, both could be very wise try to resurrect the partnership strengths or get back together on one path.

If that doesn't work, it might be best to find the right new partners for the next stage while demonstrating integrity and appreciation, not betrayal, for your former partner. The great partnerships do last and evolve over time, shifting and changing as life does yet remaining on that shared path and vision and with the spirit of mutual care and support.

Most of the time, partners are on the same level of experience and mastery. Sometimes one partner has experienced more, and the other partner can benefit from

that experience. Mentors are important partners for people who are less experienced and newly emerging from their private creative spaces into the world. Mentors can help accelerate our careers as well as our creative and personal growth. Mentorships often end when the partner who was less experienced gains mastery and confidence, yet some mentorships can last a lifetime.

Regardless of whether a partnership lasts a year or a lifetime, remember to praise the other's differences in partnership—applaud your partner's unique position. Each day the world understands more and more that we are all interconnected. This being said, we are all not alike—not at all. People are as different as they are alike. Ideally, you attract and bring into your life the partners who share your interests and dreams and have values in common with you but who also bring something unique to your vision. Great partners and partnerships tend to have much in common,

especially a desire to head down the same path, yet each partners' being unique means each partner's unique attributes and skills complement the others' as together they journey down that path. Are we one? Yes, at a core level we are most likely one—or at least from a common or similar source. Yet we are united while expressing unique capacities and levels of growth. That's the thrilling thing about life. It's not that unification means a grey, expressionless mass of sameness—not at all. True unity means connection yet diverse expression and being. That's the glory of life. And in this you find the power of partnership: the unity of more than one toward a shared vision while celebrating differences.

Good partners help you and you help them, and the picture comes into reality quicker and better. Great partners do this at masterful levels and bring all the special gifts outlined above. Take the journeys of bringing your pictures

into reality with the right partners and experience added joy and power in your work. It's a key to life, love, and creating.

But what if you are alone and have had a hard time connecting to or finding the right partners? How do you find them? And once they're found, how do you engage them? This might be one of life's great mysteries. Why do some people connect through apparently synchronized events on one hand and random ones on another? To answer this, you have to dig deep inside yourself and your personal beliefs about life, the unfolding of your life, and the influences on it. Is a lonely person or a person without the right partners troubled by fate or karma or just lacking the social skills or creative processes necessary to bring the partners into their lives? Or, worse, how about people who are not lonely but are involved with the wrong partners, ones who are pulling them down or limiting them? Again,

your personal beliefs will lead you mostly in this space, yet there are a few universal aspects you might explore and keep in mind. First, just like creating anything, you need to picture and fully define the attributes of the partners you want. If you have not pictured clearly, you will not likely draw in any partners, or you might draw in ones you don't want. Having that clear and defined picture that excites you remains key in creating anything, including the partners to help you with your creations. Next, open your heart and your life to receiving the right partners while holding the mental and emotional boundaries to choose only those who fit your picture. If you close your heart through anger or depression or bitterness or hurt, it's unlikely you'll find partners. Also, if you have not set your boundaries to align with the picture you want, then you might invite in the wrong partner and thereby push away the opportunity for the right. Finally, use the tools you have available. You

have at your disposal the age-old social tools of communication as well as contemporary tools and technologies, making it easier than ever before to connect with people. With care, good sense, and boundaries protecting you from fakes or bad apples, you can leverage your opportunities through available tools. Ultimately, you can apply all the Seven Powers in this book to the process of getting the right partners: picture, position, plan, passion, partners (the right partner can help you find others), persistence, and peace.

## WHAT PARTNERSHIPS DO FOR YOU

Can't we do it alone? Wouldn't that be easier?

Actually, no. Partnerships not only make creation more fun and dynamic, they also give a tremendous power to bringing vision into reality. As mentioned, picking the

right partners is not easy at all and requires much wisdom to do well. Also, some partners are for a limited time, not the long haul. When you are with the right partners the music really sings; all harmonizes, and the end result has supreme impact while bringing great happiness to the process. No one actually lives or creates anything of deep and lasting value alone. Creating connects, and to create something of great impact you need to connect to others in the process.

By connecting to partners, you gain the beauty and enjoyment of collaboration. Creating with others brings deep joy and help and belonging. You create community while you create and through your creations. It's special and wonderful and gives you support and strength.

Partners give you people to share the journey with who have a very special, insider knowledge and experience with the process and challenges you have gone through

and face. Partners are a power that transforms creating  
from a lonely process to one of camaraderie and  
happiness.

## CLEAR WATERS

### PART V

Martin knew that he couldn't let Wa's sudden kiss influence his decision on the water project. If he told her he was totally committed and wasn't, she would see through that as though she had X-ray eyes. And the withering look he knew she would shoot at him afterward was enough to force him into some heavy-duty contemplation about how passionate he really was. Was this notion about getting clear water to those who didn't have it just a passing interest? Or was he ready to go into the battle with both barrels blazing, ready to face the rough road that probably lay ahead?

Over the weekend he spent a long time at the koi pond, weighing one side against the other. What was he willing to do? How far was he willing to go to make this

good idea into a great community—maybe a worldwide one—and alter reality? Goldie and Frank were there to give him some much-needed tranquility, but the decision had to be all his.

He met Wa after school at the yogurt shop. She was already there, doing some homework, typing furiously on her laptop when he arrived. His shadow stretched across the table and over Wa. She looked up and smiled. “Hey, Vanilla Man. What’s up?”

Martin sat down, opened up his pack, pulled out a fistful of papers, and looked directly at the girl. “Let’s get to work, Wa.”

“All right!” she cried, closing up her laptop with a flourish.

Wa might have been a bit skeptical at first, but Martin took the lead in the meeting, reviewing each of the project-plan sections to make sure they really did move the

vision forward in a concrete way, fully addressing needs and incorporating strengths. Piece by piece, they read the plan aloud to each other, seeing if it first made sense and then if it had all the necessary actions to go to successively higher levels. As they made their way through the entire working document, they realized that, in fact, they really had something; it wasn't just a pipe dream. The initial hard work and assist from Wa's parents had crystallized many of their ideas and plotted a viable course of action. Everything was going smoothly, until they got to the final piece, the team section, which they hadn't fleshed out yet. All that was there were a few lines about each prospective position and its related roles in the project. The descriptions of these positions and Marvin and Wa's brief bios were fine, but the overall purpose and direction of the team felt weak, without a solid structure.

Martin spoke first, waving the pages like he was trying to swat a fly. “This plan rocks, but the team sucks.”

Wa grabbed his wrist and held it. “Um... Are you saying I suck?” She laughed, knowing that’s not what he meant. She just wanted test him a little.

Martin didn’t hesitate for a second. “Sometimes you do suck, Wa, no offense. But even though that’s true, I was actually talking about the plan.”

Wa wasn’t fully prepared for this new-found sarcasm, but she found it refreshing. “Whoa, Vanilla Man. That’s harsh. I think you may be getting just a little too passionate about this. You want to cut me from the team?”

Martin chuckled. “Nah. You know I’m kidding. You’re great. Couldn’t do this without you.”

“Ah... Too true, too true. Nice to hear you admit it, though.”

Martin's smile suddenly disappeared, and he began shaking the papers in his fist. "Yeah, too true. But seriously, Wa, after you and me, we got nothin'. We need—"

"Some partners," said Wa.

"Right on, Wa. Great minds do think alike. But, minor detail, how do we go about getting them?"

She slid about half her pomegranate scoop into her mouth and held the spoon there for what seemed like a very long time. She really didn't want to share with Martin that she'd come up empty, after several brain-racking attempts, on how to effectively supplement their two-member team with a solid core of real, experienced players. She knew it and she also knew that Martin realized that the two of them weren't going to be nearly enough. Wa, thinking hard, moved the spoon in her mouth from side to side. The melting pomegranate yogurt didn't reveal any answers—they were stuck.

Wa suddenly stood up and started stuffing her laptop in her pack. “C’mon, Vanilla Man. I think we need a change of scene for a fresh perspective on this problem.”

“Like where?” said Martin.

“Let’s go to your place and ask your koi what they would do. After all, they’re how this whole water thing got started.”

They made the short walk over to Martin’s house, aimlessly chatting and teasing each other. Frank and Goldie (“How did he come up with those names for Japanese fish? Oh, yeah, it’s Martin,” thought Wa) were calmly swimming back and forth in the small pond, a studied contrast to the noise and chaos of the neighborhood. Wa and Martin sat on the rusted lawn chairs, watching the koi moving gracefully under the clear water and saying little. Wa was entranced by the subtle power of the fish, their steady motion and

their scarlet, black, and gold that shimmered like jewels under the afternoon sun.

“Want to feed them?” Martin asked her.

Wa looked up. “Sure.”

Martin led Wa to a large, rectangular plastic bin. He pried the lid off and pulled out a canister of fish food.

Twisting off the top, he handed Wa the little scoop.

“Take a scoopful and throw it to the back of the pond,” he said.

She filled up the scoop and turned toward the pond.

All in one awkward motion, Wa lowered the scoop for leverage then twisted her body as she flung the food. The pellets sprayed like buckshot, way over the pool and onto the yard. Martin tried to hold back, but burst out laughing at Wa’s misfire.

“Nice shot, Wa. Finally, something you’re not good at.”

“My deep, dark secret. I suck at sports.” She looked down at her toes and pawed the ground in mock embarrassment. Martin took the scoop from her hand. “We’re trying to feed the koi, Wa, not fertilize our already dead grass. Here, let me show you.”

Martin took the scoop, filled it with food, then gave it back to Wa. He stood behind her and held her wrist. “Gently, Wa. You’re feeding the koi here, not in Pasadena.” Wa tried again. This time she barely tossed the food, spilling it onto the ground in front of her. “Crap!” she howled, stomping her foot.

“Third time’s the charm,” said Martin. He filled another scoop, gave it to Wa, pulled her arm down slowly, then pitched it up so that the feed fanned out and splashed on the back of the pond like a tiny cloudburst.

“Bravo! Right on target. And you said you sucked at sports; I’m recruiting you for the co-ed softball team once

we finalize the project plan. By the way, the birds around here are going to love you.”

Wa watched the koi darting around the lily pads and algae, gobbling down the food in a flurry of activity. It was a beautiful dance, choreographed and natural, the two fish moving perfectly together. She slowly turned to Martin and gave him a sly smile. “I know how we can handle this team thing.”

“Okay, Wa, how do we handle it? I don’t think we’ll attract too many people with koi food, though.”

“Very funny, Vanilla Man. Listen. We got stuck on just you and me as ‘the team’ and thinking that’s all we have. We need to toss the food of our thinking into the right place in the pond and let it radiate out to imagine the types of people we need to join us as partners in our venture. You know, build our team with true collaborators.”

“Okay, I get it, but why would one, let alone ten or so collaborators, want to partner with us? We’re way young, don’t know a whole lot, and have no experience and no money. And we don’t just need experts; we need movers and shakers who have connections to money. Otherwise all we have is a nice shiny Caddy with no engine.”

Wa went deep into thought for a minute. “By stating our weaknesses, you’ve pointed out just the kinds of partners we need—people who can bring those elements to the project: experience, knowledge, wisdom, resources—and also other people who might not have any of those things but who share our passion and can share the load of this big project .”

“So how do we write about and put in the plan people we don’t have? That’s the problem here.” Martin frowned.

“It’s not the problem,” said Wa. “It’s the insight into what we need to add. We write about the exact types of partners we’ll look for and go after. Let’s write the team section of the plan as a discussion on those key types of people we need—then do some homework on how to locate them: strategies on how to build our team and with whom.”

“So what happens when we find these people; what do we have to offer them?”

“Well, for starters, a share in our dream. This project is a great idea. Many people don’t have even good ideas. So that’s something right there. Then we can figure out ways that by being involved, eventually there’ll be other rewards, like offshoot opportunities and ownership and—”

“And money, right? You think we can get people other than you and me to do this for free until we get some money.”

“I don’t know, but all kinds of people volunteer to do lots of things they enjoy. There are some people who do things because they’re the right things to do, not because there’s a lot of money in it for them. If we also make this fun and exciting, then maybe, yes, maybe we can get some people to do it for free. Or maybe we find a couple of retired people who don’t need money but want to help out a couple of up-and-comers.”

“So how do we define who these partners are, exactly, Wa?”

“Well, look at those fish. There are things about their look that distinguishes them, and distinct ways they behave, their inner character, and how they complement their environment that defines them too. Let’s write the partner descriptions talking about skills and external talents and then about the values and inner aspects we’re looking for as well.”

“Like?”

“Kay —hmmmm. We definitely need a—finance guru! A highly successful, retired investor or financial expert who knows how to structure and fund a business but who also has a big heart and interest in the world we’ll be passing on to future generations.”

“Like a Wall Street monk?”

Wa laughed. “I never thought about it like that, but yeah, kind of.”

“I’m sure that will be real easy to find.” Martin slathered the word with two-syllabled sarcasm.

Wa rolled her eyes and put her hands on her hips. “Hey, Martin. Don’t be so neg-a-tive. I may not be real good at throwing, but I’m tremendous at talking people into things. Did with you, don’t forget, Vanilla Man.”

Martin laughed good-naturedly. “Good point, Wa. I’m counting on you to pull this off. Let’s do it.”



PERSISTENCE  
COMMITMENT UNTIL IT'S REAL



*Between you and every goal that you wish to achieve, there is a series of obstacles and the bigger the goal, the bigger the obstacles. Your decision to be, have and do something out of the ordinary entails facing difficulties and challenges that are out of the ordinary as well. Sometimes your greatest asset is simply your ability to stay with it longer than anyone else.*

— BRIAN TRACY

*Don't be discouraged. It's often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock.*

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*For now you know one of the  
greatest principles of success; if you  
persist long enough you will win.*

— OG MANDINO

*Just don't give up trying to do what  
you really want to do. Where there's  
love and inspiration, I don't think  
you can go wrong.*

— ELLA FITZGERALD

Persistence quotes points out the one big factor that sets the successful people apart from the rest—the quality of perseverance and never giving up.

## THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

There have been as many quotes by successful people on the topic of persistence as on anything else. It's a

topic close to the hearts of most people who have made a mark. Yet in a world where everything is becoming more instantaneous, most people seem to want everything fast and easy. A deep power exists, however, in the ability and commitment to persist until your picture has become real, no matter what the time frame or the challenges.

Many of the greatest creations through time, and most of the positive changes enacted in our world, have come from people willing to persist—and persist and persist, regardless of the results they receive, regardless of setbacks, and regardless of the opinions of others. It's easy and fun when something comes fast. And if it does, take it, and give extra thanks. But sometimes, for those to whom success has come fast, it doesn't last. And many times, the bigger, more impactful and lasting the creation, the more time it requires to come into reality. Without question, the more you've had to persist to create something, the more

rewarding it is when it does become real. And those who have had very little handed to them up front tend to be more appreciative when the good things come their way and more attuned to pass along good things to others.

Does this mean that struggle is important? There is no glory in struggle. Look at the masters in anything (sports, music, dance, science, anything) and when they have hit master level, it all looks so easy, and at that time the master feels glorious. The star basketball player floats a ball from thirty feet away into a small hoop ten feet high during intense competitive pressure, and it softly rips the net.

Guitarists' hands flow on the neck and strings, and the sounds effortlessly explode into our ears. Yet these talents and all others take persistent practice and action to get to the point of flow and ease. The athlete who demonstrates ease and cool under fire is usually the one who's spent the

most time in the gym or the field grinding out repetitions—  
experimenting, driving, and improving.

There's a saying among the innovators of many of  
our greatest technologies and technology companies: Try,  
fail, learn. Try, fail, learn. Try fail, learn. And then—  
succeed. A quitter will not continue past the fail part. We all  
get downhearted—we all feel like throwing in the towel  
many times—but the quitter throws in the towel, while the  
creator uses the failure as motivation toward the ultimate  
reality.

How long does a person have to persist? The  
answer: as long as it takes. It's that attitude that makes a  
true champion in any field or in any aspect, even one's  
personal or family life. If you truly believe in it—that is, if  
it's the right picture from your heart—you stick to it until  
it's real. People have had the good fortune to create pictures  
that have taken hours, days, or weeks to bring into reality.

Others have worked years and even decades to bring into the reality what was imagined and intended. All creations can be appreciated; still, those that took that extra time—those that required the extra courage and stamina, and that called for more gut-checks and meeting of more challenges—those creations definitely summon the greatest appreciation when realized. It's certainly inwardly rewarding to know you have continued when others would have said "I'm done," folded, and gone home. And then, finally, finally on one fine day, it's there, it happened, and it's real. Wow! And a major wow, at that. It's not the speed at which something comes into being that makes it special, it's the process and the quality of the ultimate experience and reality.

This being said, it is not wise to close yourself off to the possibility that something you had intended to create might ultimately not be for you or that there might be

something that's more right for you. Sometimes the process of creating something reveals to us a different path that's more suited for our inner purpose and authentic happiness. It's a fine line, when you are facing obstacles, between knowing whether these are signals to go in another direction or merely the challenges that will hone your identity and an ultimate creation that's super special. During these crossroads, look inside and listen. Do you still really want this? Is it really you? If yes, continue, regardless of obstacles, until your creation is realized. If your creation turns out not to feel like it came from your true, inner vision or picture, create something more authentic. Remaining stuck or falling in vortex of negativity, just to say you don't quit, could be more crazy than noble. Yet there's no reason to back out because the going gets tough—to do that is to miss an incredible opportunity for growth and supreme success. That's the

way of the coward: a quitter and person of low integrity.

Instead stay true to your path and your picture, as long as the picture is true.

The power of persistence can be easily summed up: stick with it until it's real or until you realize that it's not really right or authentic.

## WHAT PERSISTENCE DOES FOR YOU

Some things go fast, while other projects build character while they come into reality. But that commitment and persistence, regardless of outcomes, forges inside you a special strength: a backbone of steel and ultimately a mastery that makes all go much easier and faster down the line. Persistence makes you a person of strength and deep character. It defines you as a person who steps outside the trappings and anxieties of time,

knowing that what you have pictured to create is real and you just have to keep at, enjoying every moment of the process and knowing that the process is what's real now. Persistent people gain confidence as they understand that visions become real if they hold to them, even if some take more time to come into reality than others do. Persistent people develop deep faith in themselves, their partners, and their visions, knowing that what's inside them is true and meant to be. They develop the strength to overcome all odds and challenges, and when they finally enjoy the day when their visions are realized, they enjoy their creations more because of what they've given to accomplish their projects. Many times, creations that were a struggle to realize inspire people who see them even more because of what the creators endured and overcome.



## CLEAR WATERS

### PART VI

The next few months, Wa and Martin's lives were transformed, ablaze with an energy neither one of them had ever thought possible. They not only finished writing the plan, they also actually began to put it in motion. They were on an extended high, finally being in action mode, where what they had talked about, envisioned, and put on paper was taking solid form. They worked on all the project elements organically, doing what felt right to them when it felt right, rather than methodically going through a set sequence, one aspect at a time. They set out to recruit and engage partners (with a little assist from Wa's father and his business connections) and did endless hours of research, studying ways people had already attempted to create workable, low-cost purification technologies and how their

successes and failures opened up new approaches and possibilities. They started talking passionately to everybody they encountered about what they were doing, then listened and measured others' interest and potential for support.

One day after class, Wa, extremely excited, rushed up to Martin, her shoes clapping hard on the walkway just like the first time they had met outside the yogurt shop. She was nearly out of breath.

“What is it?” Martin asked.

“Martin, you're not going to believe this, but”—she paused to add some drama, extremely excited “I, Wa Ming, have our first investor. Well, actually more of a donor than investor. But it's a real, live one, Martin.” She was beaming, tugging on his sleeve.

“Really?”

“I talked to your science teacher, Mr. Andrews, and he said to e-mail this VP at that green tech company we've

been talking about and looking at. I'm so excited I can't even remember the company name. Well, anyway, Mr. Bollinger, Mr. George Bollinger, he, is, in!"

"In?" Martin asked. "In with what, Wa?"

She punched his shoulder playfully. "He's going to loan us, give us, a small room he has in one of his buildings to use as our office and our lab."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously. He said we don't have to pay him, and he doesn't want anything in return except for us to invite him to the launch party, whenever we have it."

"That's amazing! Where is this office?"

"Just three bus stops away. We can get there in twenty minutes. Want to check it out?"

They ran to the bus that was just pulling away, banged on the door and, as luck was had it, the driver actually opened the door and let them on.

Martin paid their fares, and Wa found seats near the middle of the bus. She sat at the window that was smudged with grime. Martin set his pack on the floor while he put away his wallet, then sat next to Wa. The bus churned through the clot of traffic, making strange but beautifully rhythmic music with its grinding gears and hissing air brakes. Wa squeezed Martin's knee, harder than she thought, and he winced.

“Sorry, I'm just so excited!”

The third-story room wasn't much, but right away they both saw the potential of the office as a place where the dream could grow into something tangible. They spent a week of after-school afternoons cleaning and setting up the computers and copiers and phones that Mr. Bollinger had been so nice to let them use. “They're just dust collectors now; I'm glad you can use them,” he had said one day as he stood in their office doorway, admiring Wa

and Martin's enthusiasm. "You kids are amazing; I wish my staff had half as much energy. Let me know if you need anything else." He closed the door behind him, shaking his head and smiling. "Youth..."

It took a while to get things off the ground, but soon the office was humming with activity. Wa ran the office and business side of the operation while Martin worked on crude, productive "lab work"—these were the first steps of their real journey. Everything up till now had been trek preparation. Now they had actually started to move toward the mountain. It loomed large ahead of them, but they struck out, undaunted. They decided to name the company Watin, a combination of Wa and Martin that also sounded like water. It fit just right, very cool. Watin Inc. was now in business.

Their first year working together flew by, especially with school taking so much of their time. But Watin had

become not only a mission, it had also developed into a passionate labor of love. The initial stages of their enterprise were full of bumps, but with Wa's smarts and Martin's eagerness to find a practical, economical solution, they rode them out, arguing minimally and often laughing about it later over yogurt and coffee in the funky little shop that was just down the block.

Wa's parents put in time, too, helping with the tricky legal and business aspects of the project they knew teenagers wouldn't think much about. Sometimes Ahma would come with them. She would look around the office and comment in Mandarin about something or other to no one in particular. Then she would smile at Wa and wink at Martin. They always loved it when she came.

Networking over the Internet, they found a huge variety of new collaborators and champions, people who shared their vision and who were anxious to join this new

battle. Creating and developing something that was all their own filled Wa and Martin with pride. But they also, never having done anything like this before, had a ball, mostly because they were doing things they didn't know supposedly couldn't be done. Wa's parents advised but never flat-out said something was impossible, and the two youth fed off that.

Although Martin and Wa truly believed the goal was attainable, they discovered that the journey up the mountain was longer and more difficult than they ever could have imagined. More than a few attempts—most far more sophisticated and with much more funding—had failed in the past. As much as Wa and Martin wanted to capture lightning in a bottle, they learned that it would take far more than what they were doing to find a truly viable technology. It wasn't actually the Holy Grail, but it was no slam-dunk either.

Although they didn't come at all close to finding the solution they had hoped and planned for, they were learning something new each day about water and about business, creating, and teamwork. Plus, they were reveling in what they did manage to accomplish and having a great deal of fun. They found volunteers to work with them, but also learned that seeking out allies who totally understood where you were going and could actually help you get there was not easy.

They learned some hard lessons and had some growing pains, too. It wasn't easy, letting people go who didn't share the extent of their passion or who didn't quite get what Martin and Wa were trying to do. They didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings, but they sometimes had to, so that the project didn't lose focus or get thrown off track.

They buckled down, building a strong team, and found that working hard more often than not brought them

“luck,” like meeting with the father of one of their teen volunteers who advised them on how to go about broadening their base funding in the future. With that extra money, Martin could better concentrate on building and experimenting with prototypes rather than just get frustrated that the ideas couldn’t be practically applied. But Martin had matured enough so that he didn’t mope around if things didn’t happen right away. With Wa’s urging, he just worked harder. His will, his mind, and his heart were all expanding, thanks also to Wa. He loved where he was and what they were doing, and he wanted to keep going, no matter what.

Things were moving along—maybe not always as smoothly as they wanted, but they were going forward. Plus, Wa and Martin had grown closer. They were the best friends, and more. It was all business at Watin, but on the weekends they would sometimes put the work aside to go

to a movie or a free concert or dinner at a local taqueria. Martin loved holding Wa's hand, and when they kissed it was electric, even though Wa wouldn't kiss him back for as long as he wanted. But it was okay. Well, maybe not. At least there was kissing.

The next year, in early June, they graduated high school and, within the glow of euphoria that release brought, there was a sudden tension between them that wouldn't subside. They were taking a break from the office, sipping coffee and spooning yogurt at the local café. Their laughter was more forced, and Martin could tell there was something not quite right. He reached out and grabbed Wa's hand, stroking her fingers with his thumb. He leaned in to kiss her, but she turned aside and looked down at her lap.

“Sorry, Martin,” she said, her voice trembling slightly and her eyes welling up with tears.

“What is it, Wa? You’ve been a bit weirder than usual lately.” She laughed, but it was quickly drowned out by her sobs.

“Martin, I don’t think I can work on the project anymore.” She sniffled and wiped away a tear with the back of her hand.

“Why not, Wa? Things are just starting to come together. You can’t quit now.”

“I don’t want to, I really don’t. But—” She was having trouble but finally blurted out, “I’ve been accepted at Princeton, and I have to be there in a week to start working as a research assistant. I don’t really want to go, but I have to; it’s an opportunity I can’t pass up.” She looked up, dabbing at her eyes, which were red from crying. Martin sat back in his chair, like he’d just been punched in the stomach.

“But I thought you were staying here, at UCLA?”

“I was, but then I got the letter from Princeton, saying I was accepted, with a full scholarship. They have probably the best business school in the country.” She looked back down at the balled-up tissue in her hand. It was soaked and pathetic-looking.

“That’s tremendous, Wa,” said Martin, a lump forming in his throat and pressure building in his eyes. “Of course you have to go.”

They sat for a while in a deafening silence, Wa playing with her worn-out tissue, Martin staring down at his empty coffee cup, the brown-tinged white foam from the cappuccino pooled forlornly at the bottom.

“So, is this the end of Watin? I can’t keep going without you, Wa.” He was drowning in a flood of questions and roiled in emotion.

Wa looked at him earnestly. This wasn't easy for her either. "Is this the end of our friendship and of Watin Inc.? Three thousand miles is a pretty long commute."

"I don't know, Wa. What do you think?"

"Our friendship's forever, Martin; you know that, don't you? I don't want that to end, even though it'll be hard. We can phone, e-mail, text, Skype, right?"

"Yeah, I guess. But none of that can replace actually being together in the same place," Martin said. He hadn't cried in a very long time, and he didn't want to start now.

Wa nodded. Martin thought how odd it was that even when crying, Wa was beautiful.

"You're right. It won't be the same, Martin, but have a little faith in me, okay? I'm going to work really hard, you know I will, to keep our friendship going. And I'll be here for holidays, vacations, and summers. Other people have done it. I don't see why we can't."

It took all of Martin's will to make his voice sound even and calm.

“Hey, Wa, can I ask you a point-blank question?”

Wa smiled weakly. She was trying to be her cool, flippant self, but failing miserably. “Of course, Vanilla Man. Like I've never asked you one? Let it fly.”

He rested his elbows on the little table and looked hard into Wa's bloodshot eyes.

“Do you think we should dissolve the company? Let Watin Inc. just dry up? Sorry, lousy pun.” The pressure behind his eyes was stronger now.

“Um... I don't know, Martin. Do you still have that driving passion for Watin?”

Martin didn't hesitate for an instant. “Totally. Totally. Do you?”

“Yeah. But right now things are complicated. Getting into Princeton is a really big deal, not just to me,

but to my family, too. I don't want to let them down. And like I said, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I definitely love Watin and have the passion for it; you've seen how hard I work. But I'm not sure what I'm going to be like or what I'll be doing in four years. Or where I'll be." Her voice trailed off.

Martin regarded her. "Sad, but fair enough. So what do you think we should do? After all, you're half of the company."

Wa's voice was soft, but firm. "I think you should keep at it with Watin. Some day I know you'll make it great. And some day in the future, if it fits for me to come back and join you, if you want me back, I can be part of it. But if I don't come back, I think you should have the company and still do it. Turn that engineering degree into something earth-shaping and life-changing. This is your

true passion, and I know you can pull it off eventually, even without me.”

It wasn't at all what Martin wanted to hear, and a black wave of depression crashed over him. All of a sudden he was losing his partner, friend, and girlfriend, all at the same time. Wa had yanked him, sometimes kicking and screaming, out of his isolation and had given him purpose and joy. But at the same time, he knew he was now no longer a loser with no confidence. Regardless of what Wa did, no matter that his heart was being stepped on, he would carry on. He would get the knowledge and the skills to do what Wa said: make a difference in the world for people who had no power.

Wa left for school the next week, and Martin began his studies at USC in late August; he was sad but determined to continue with Watin, and with Wa, by whatever means he could. At first, with his mind either on

Wa or the lab at Watin, he found it hard to focus on his studies. At night, when he as supposed to be doing his calculus and equations, he found himself working on Watin ideas instead. At one point, he was so immersed in the project, he thought seriously about quitting school and turning all his attention to Watin.

He wrote Wa long e-mails about it, and she never told him what to do, which surprised him. She just kept encouraging him to do what he thought was right for him. After thinking long and hard on it, he decided to give school one more semester and to branch out and take a variety of liberal arts classes to round out the tedious rigors of his engineering requisites.

He almost blindly stumbled into a history class on the great twentieth century that so captivated him that it made the other classes interesting by sheer proximity. He dove deep into learning about these famous and infamous

great leaders who used their powers for good or for evil. And the class wasn't just memorizing empty dates and places. Professor Heizinger brought the history to life, and Martin found he could take some of that knowledge on what it takes to become a leader and apply it to his life and his quest at Watin. It had never occurred to him before, but he began to believe that he, Martin Leonard of LA, could actually become a leader himself. All that was stopping him was the notion that he couldn't ever be one of those people, and deep inside he knew that notion was foolish. His gut told him that if he wanted to make a difference, he was the only person who could stop him.

He learned about political leaders such as Roosevelt, Kennedy, Churchill, Eisenhower, and Thatcher, and also about Stalin, Hitler, and Idi Amin. Even more interesting were the innovators who had become leaders in the latter part of the century, such as Steve Jobs, Steve

Wozniak, Gordon Moore of Intel, David Packard, William Hewlett, and even Warren Buffet. They had started out with just ideas and tiny places to work, and look at how they had managed to change the world. Why not Martin Leonard? Because of this class alone, Martin knew he'd made the right choice to stay in school.

Between his engineering demands, his extra classes that he loved, and his work at Watin, Martin didn't find much time for socializing and started to feel that he was missing out on a big part of his college experience. Even when he did socialize, all the people he met were never as interesting to him as Wa was. But Wa was in New Jersey, and he was in LA. She had her life; he had his. He couldn't count on her any longer to provide the food for his soul and his heart. He would never forget Wa, but the distance between them had grown large since she'd headed east, and he wasn't at all sure they could span that void. Although

Wa was gone, he refused to pine after her. Someday he knew he would meet somebody, not only as interesting as her, but also somebody who was really interested in him romantically too. Besides, he was way too busy for moping around.

Years later, two months before graduation from USC, Martin came to a major crossroads in his life. He had spent five years working on Watin, while also, for four of those years, getting his degree with a double major in engineering and history. Looking back on his time in school, Martin was surprised at just how much he actually enjoyed it. Proof of his enjoyment was easy to see; he did well in all his classes and was starting to get a number of job offers from prestigious companies, including Google and Lenovo, with salaries way beyond the stratosphere of his experience growing up in LA near the poverty line.

Watin, though, had been and still was his true passion, and the few hours he squirreled away each week to work on his experiments and ideas always gave him a warm feeling that sustained him when he returned to his studies and classes. Unfortunately, throughout all his studying and experimentation, he still hadn't come across anything viable that would have enough of an impact on clean-water technology to create a product or service that people would use and buy. Although he felt happy in his work, he also felt extremely frustrated. He had read the fascinating stories of young entrepreneurs who were hits right off the bat, creating companies and technologies. On the other duller side of the coin, he had also read of inventors where it took years and years—almost a lifetime, in some cases, to make their mark. He wasn't sure he wanted to spend his entire life doing Watin, without some tangible reward, which in turn had him wondering if he was

being the fool's fool for passing up these lucrative jobs that could help not only himself but also his mother. What's more, working for a prestigious company might also increase his odds of meeting a woman whom he could fall in love, marry, and have a family with. That was way down the line, of course, but it was something he definitely knew he wanted.

He held the information about the job offers close to his vest, deciding not to talk about them with his mother, for fear of disappointing her if he ended up choosing to stay with Watin full-time instead of grabbing a high-paying position elsewhere. There was only one person with whom he felt he could share this dilemma. Only one person could he count on: Wa.

They exchanged long e-mails on the subject, and, when she expressed mixed feelings, he was quite surprised. Whereas at one time she had talked so forcefully about

maintaining his passion, Wa now wondered if she might be encouraging him to take the wrong path that led away from these enticing opportunities. Her ambivalence left Martin confused and a bit angry. He couldn't count on her anymore. She had changed.

Martin decided to take his problem to the one place he had always relied on, the place where all this new life had begun five years ago. He would go visit old friends and get reacquainted. He would sit in peaceful contemplation and figure things out.

He left his small apartment and made his way to his old neighborhood. His mother was surprised to see him but delighted he was there. She hugged him a long time before pulling back, her hands on his shoulders. "What's wrong, Martin?" she asked, her eyes locked onto his. "I know you're all grown-up now, but I'm still your mother. Something's bothering you. Why don't you tell me? I may

not be able to help or make it go away, but I think you'll feel better if you do. Looks like you're carrying a big sack of worry around with you."

"It shows that much? Ah, I don't know. C'mon, Mom. Let's go out back and say hi to Frank and Goldie." They sat down at the pond on the new lawn chairs Martin had bought for his mom the previous summer, neither of them speaking for a while. It had been quite a while since he had spent time in his favorite spot. He'd forgotten how much power lay in that calm little body of water. His mom had done an excellent job of keeping the pond in pristine condition, her small way of thanking him for doing so well in school. Under the ripples, Martin could see the gold and black and scarlet of the two koi, moving silently, back and forth, back and forth. The runaway train of thoughts that had been rumbling around in his head slowed to a stop, and

he found himself lost in the quiet rhythm of the fish and the tiny cascade that bubbled over the rocks and into the pool.

The movement of the koi and the clarity of the water gave him a renewed sense of purpose for his work at Watin. He might have to work at it for a long time—a very long time—but there was no denying it. He couldn't give up his dream; it was too important. If he could pull it off some day, water-purifying technology would help thousands, maybe millions, of people. The project had become much bigger than himself and Wa and their small enterprise. He felt driven to press on, even though succeeding might be beyond his resources and reach. But when he weighed abandoning Watin for a high-paying job in the corporate world, one he might not even like, he knew there was no contest. Watin was his reason for being; it was what he really wanted.

The heat of the day was fading as the shadows of LA grew longer and the light softer. The traffic noise was oddly calmer, too. Martin leaned over the pond and wiggled his fingers in the water. Within an instant, there were two simultaneous splashes as the koi broke the surface, flipping their tails in the cool, clean water. Martin's mother went out to the kitchen and brought back a couple of Coronas, thin lime wedges arching out of the tops of the bottles.

“Looks like you could use one of these,” she said, sighing heavily as sat down. She was glad to be off her feet. “You brought a nice night with you, Martin. Cooling down, not too noisy. Better now?”

“Yeah, Mom. Much better. Thanks.” They sipped their beers and watched the koi gliding through the water. The sun went down into the Pacific, and Martin and his mom chatted for a couple of more hours in the warmth of

each other's company, under the glow of the light that spilled out of the kitchen window and onto the pond.

After Martin got back home, he wrote Wa, explaining that he was about to take the biggest gamble imaginable to a young man in his position; he was passing on prestige, money, and an easier life to do what he wanted to do, to continue Watin—regardless. Her reply, which came within minutes of Martin hitting Send, made him smile.

“Hey, Vanilla Man. You can't see me now, but I am clapping for you. I was hoping you would take the 'proper' path and not give up your dream. I'd like to say I've set off on a similar journey, but I'd be lying if I did. I don't want to say I've gone over to the dark side, but I guess the possibilities of a good job, with good money and security, have gotten the best of me, at least for now. I'm taking a job with JP Morgan Chase, as a financial analyst. I've got

to learn a lot, but I'm excited about it and think I can do some good, even if in a less direct way than you can. Someday I hope I'll be in a position to make low-cost money available to people who really need it, to start a business or, like you, turn passion into practical applications.

“I know you probably think I've tossed my ideals down the sewer, but I think they're mainly intact, and starting here will give me a good shot at seeing how much I like it and if it's a good fit and if I'm actually making a difference, somehow. Part of me had to do this for my parents, too. They've helped me and believed in me for so long, I didn't think I could let them down. I hope you understand.

“I'm wishing you the best with Watin. I know you can make it work. Just don't get down on yourself when things aren't going your way. You have the power to make

it happen. Incidentally, I hope you've developed a taste for pomegranate yogurt and that you're still not wearing those awful bell-bottoms (ha-ha). ☒

Martin smiled then closed the lid of his laptop. He missed Wa badly, but it was definitely time to move on.

Two months later, Martin graduated with honors, and the very next morning began working for himself full-time while also keeping a part-time barista job to meet expenses and for the health insurance the company provided.

He'd never taken his mom to the Watin office he and Wa had set up, but one day he decided he needed her to see what he was doing and why. He was a little nervous taking her there, knowing that she might be hugely disappointed at the small scale of everything and all that he had passed up to stay here and pursue the dream. He needn't have worried. After the tour, there were tears in her

eyes, and she took him in her arms and held him a very long time, sobbing. “Martin, I couldn’t be prouder of what you’ve done, or of you. This is so wonderful. You are such a good young man. I love you so much.”

PEACE  
THE INNER WELL BEING THAT PROMOTES  
CREATION



*Peace is merely a distant goal that  
we seek, but a means by which we  
arrive at that goal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

*Be the change you want to see in the  
world.*

—MAHATMA GANDHI

## THE POWER OF PEACE

To create is to bring into your life and/or the world something that did not exist before or to change a current aspect for the better. So at the core of creating comes the sense of picturing tomorrow, then making tomorrow real, today. Yet the sense of making things different can bring a

sense of dissatisfaction with today, a sense of anxiety in wanting something different or, sometimes, a sense of lacking now what you want to have real. The greatest challenge to the creative person? Finding and experiencing peace here and now while that which you create comes into being.

And where can you find peace? Peace comes from a sense of knowing that what you envision will come into your reality. Peace comes from a confidence that right now, even if it might not seem to be so, all is as it should be and manifests toward your good and your new reality. Peace comes from a sense of being fully present and appreciative of what you have now and who you are now. Peace comes from enjoying the process of creating what you want and appreciating each step of that journey. Peace comes from a place of appreciation for yourself and for your giving your best and knowing that you have. Peace comes from

knowing that failure comes to all who take risks on the path to greatness or innovating. Peace comes to those who eventually understand that we're in a world of time and change and movement yet just being and just being aware bring a connection to what you truly are: a timeless you that paradoxically, creates as a human in time. Peace comes from looking beyond yourself to connect with all. Peace comes with knowing that all the things you might be searching for in life, from love to happiness, are available inside, right now, and when you tap into them, the outside world will start to reflect on what you've revealed. Peace comes from this understanding that it's ultimately an inside-to-outside process to happiness, not the other way around—in fact, as it's been said, you can be the change you want to see in the world and also be that which you want in your life from love to respect to happiness. Peace comes with various spiritual practices that bring a person

back to an awareness that what they truly are is not their body, yet their body and mind are beautiful experiences.

Peace comes with knowing that, even when it doesn't seem like it, all unfolds perfectly for you, right now and into the future for all that you are meant to experience and be.

Peace comes when you understand that you have the power to create but know that still you must surrender in that creation to the higher forces that support and bring you that power. You must let go, allow, and appreciate and accept rather than force and cajole.

Peace comes from a place of forgiveness of others for any hurts they have done you and of yourself for any hurts you have caused yourself or others. You cannot have peace inside yourself if you hate another, hold resentments or hostilities, or feel victimized by others. Although you can have peace in any situation, you must be free from all emotional chains to have peace.

What can take away your peace? Criticism. Forgo criticizing yourself and others to hold peace. Forgive yourself and others when you've strayed; have compassion for your path and those of others. See yourself and others as doing the best that can be, regardless, and forgo the distractions, the anxiety, and the distaste of criticism. Others may try and condemn or find fault, due to their insecurities or their misguided attempts at perfection, yet know that you are the perfect you, right now, and know that you are on your path and doing what you were created to do and process. Have faith in that, and, in an attitude of kindness and openness and compassion, allow yourself and others to be—to be just the way you should be, right here and now. By doing this, you will give yourself the freedom, focus, and confidence to bring in the pictures you want to create.

What if somebody does something to disturb or eliminate your peace? Understanding why people hurt people can be a very fruitless endeavor. Leave that to greater powers. Yet we all fall prey directly and indirectly to actions that can hurt and create anger or depression, pulling us from our peace. Forgiving removes any real power these actions have over you. Yet only fools or cowards allows themselves to be subject to further hurts unnecessarily. So, whenever possible, create boundaries: strong boundaries that disallow the other's continued action. These boundaries can come from a place of compassion rather than vengeance, and, if fostered in that compassionate energy, have greater power while eliminating the negative energies within. Remember that forgiveness does not call for acceptance of continued action. That would be madness or cowardice, not forgiveness. So do not allow another to take your peace.

Know that your peace is yours, untouchable by others, and only you own it and control it. You can hold it through any circumstances, although this can be very hard to do at times. And a huge help to holding peace is being centered on creating something you love. Doing that gives you a tremendous sense of well-being, a well-being that helps attract you to peaceful and loving situations and gives you a place of beauty and strength even during the tough situations that can arise for an individual or community.

Peace is not something out there. It is in us now.

When activated, it can have a tremendous effect on our creations. So, again, in the words M. L. King, a man whose life and words have motivated billions yet who faced circumstances that seemed the opposite of peace every day:

“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

## WHAT PEACE DOES FOR YOU

Peace brings a state of utmost confidence, happiness, and faith into every moment a person lives. By knowing that you are exactly who you are supposed to be; that you are creating exactly what you are here to create; and that all unfolds optimally for you, even things that momentarily seem to be setbacks or discouragements, you gain a deep sense of well being. Peace allows you to maintain a sense of strength and happiness regardless of the behavior of others or of external situations; thus, it makes you a person with the ultimate defense shield. Peace connects you to what you truly are, deep inside, and that knowing brightens your being with a power beyond any human-made power of guns or money or influence. Peace summons a surrender to forces great and deep within you. Peace allows all to

connect in harmony and mutual support, satisfaction,  
and true happiness. Peace is a consummate power, yet  
one that usually takes the most cultivation over time for  
most, cultivation far worth the impact and rewards.

## CLEAR WATERS

### PART VII

As the weeks and months passed, Martin felt like he was being tossed about in a furious eddy of contrary emotions. The work at Watin couldn't have been better, and he often floated home on a cloud of elation. But, at the same time, there was this troubling anxiety about the lack of significant success. Sure, he'd won some small battles and secured enough funding to keep the office going, but there hadn't been any meaningful breakthroughs or leaps to the next level. He had spent quite a bit of time contemplating the definition and measure of success for him.

He went back and forth on what was important and how he could achieve his goals, but every time, no matter how he sliced and diced it, no matter how many

times he heard about the process being more important than the results, Martin knew that ultimately he had to have some real, tangible outcomes to feel fulfilled, if only just for his self-esteem. Of course, just the trying and persevering were admirable, but that only went so far. Eventually, he would need an actual product that would make an impact on the world of clean water. He hated this sense of frustration and anxiety that dogged his passion for his work. What's more, the usual business pressures, such as raising money, paying the team, engineering roadblocks, marketing, and selling, were becoming more burdensome, rattling his confidence. As a full-time leader and entrepreneur, he spent only a small part of his daily effort actually doing the creating and experimenting necessary to achieve ultimate success. And it really began to bother him. At times he heard mocking laughter coming from

somewhere, accompanied by a disembodied voice echoing in his head: “Loser. Who do you think you are? You’re not going to find a solution, because it doesn’t exist. Loser.”

To still the voice, calm things down, and gain back his confidence, Martin plunged into books on psychology, meditation, spiritual consciousness, and other topics that promised to help you find inner peace. As he pored over the books, he found himself drawn less to the ones about super achievement and more to the books about discovering and following pathways to inner happiness—what he ultimately referred to as the “abundance of what matters.” The books opened some doors, yet he felt he needed a person wiser than himself in these areas to guide him.

He was leery of counselors, therapists, and their ilk because there was always a chance of connecting

with the wrong one. He'd read plenty of horror stories of self-proclaimed gurus and healers that just took your money and led people astray or left them damaged. After much research, Martin decided to contact a self-improvement speaker who had interested him. He wrote a short, impassioned letter of appreciation in which he also made a humble request. He e-mailed it and also sent a hard copy to the organization's headquarters.

A week passed with no response, then two. And then, three weeks later, after he had almost completely forgotten about sending the inquiry, he received a genuinely warm and encouraging e-mail, with two referral names in the LA area. He quickly studied the websites of the two persons and found himself drawn to one but actually repelled by the other. He easily chose and called to set up an appointment.

At the consultation he discussed his limited financial capacity, his work and dreams, and his challenges with frustration, anxiety, and even anger that all were starting to boil over. At the end of the consultation, Martin liked the counselor even more. They seemed to have hit it off, and because of Martin's limited finances, the counselor also set up an inexpensive plan for Martin's sessions. The only conditions the counselor, Walter, made for the return of his generosity were that Martin (1) totally commit to finding and maintaining a calm center of peace, regardless of the pressures of external forces; (2) give Walter an invitation to attend Watin's first product launch.

"That's it?" asked Martin, expecting he would have to sign up for much, much more.

“That’s it,” said Walter, peeking over his reading glasses at his new client. “When do you want to start?”

Over the next year, Martin worked as hard on his inner life as he had at Watin and at school. It was a tough go at first, calming his overactive mind with prayer and meditation, but as he began to see results, his excitement grew, and he worked even harder. Gradually, he started to weave bits and pieces of himself into an inner tapestry of peace that balanced out the heavy passion that drove his Watin work. Each day that passed, he felt a little better, less pressured about results and more motivated to create and simply trust in the knowledge of some higher order, a sense that somehow everything would unfold perfectly—in his work, his creativity, and his personal life, even if there were times where it didn’t feel that way. As he continued to hone this inner effort, he had a growing sense of restored confidence. He truly

believed that eventually he would obtain what he was after, but instead of obsessively worrying about it, he could just let go and enjoy every moment as it was happening. Looking back, he realized he had seen it, but not recognized it in Goldie and Frank, the two wonderful, colorful fish, serene in their rightful place. And now he too had a koi pond, beautiful and calm, that was all his own.

## Conclusion

There is only one absolute in creating. You must create from a vision: a picture of something you love. The picture originates in love. When love and creativity connect, the true magic happens. If you do not love that which you intend to create and love the people for whom that which you create will serve, you will either fail or, even worse, create something that harms others. And even if those who create harmful elements seem to reap some rewards, one reward is not inner happiness. People do apply creative powers to negatives; still, none of these creators have been happy or authentically fulfilled people. Life and love just don't work that way.

To create is to love. So find out inside yourself what you would love to create in your life that would also benefit others and the world, and you're off and running.

Get into your heart, not your brain, to center your creative picture. You'll use your brain plenty in planning and acting and bringing your picture into reality, but the true and authentic vision comes from the heart. Get silent, get into nature, or get yourself into a place and state that allows you to feel naturally and happily and listen to your inner self. Feel your feelings. Ask yourself what you want to create, and open yourself to that which arises.

Then understand what's unique (position) and universal about your picture. Use your brain to organize your actions into the plan needed to bring the picture into reality. Fuel your picture and actions with passion. Seek and then engage with partners who share your vision and make you feel good and can help. Have the inner strength of persistence. And hold on to your peace at all times, making the road to the mountain as well as the mountaintop itself both experiences of empowered bliss.

All of the Seven Powers of Creating emerge from the source of love. True creating originates from love. Find that place, and find the power to create anything from art to science or from an education to a fulfilling personal life. Find creating through love, and also know that you can find love through creating. They go arm-in-arm and make living magical, purposeful, and spectacular.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“Strength comes from the people involved and how great their passion and skills are. The leaders of Cinequest have both of those. That’s why it’s been with us for some time and will still be here long into the future,” says Steve Wozniak (cofounder, Apple Inc.).

At twenty-two, after graduating summa cum laude to earn a degree in literature with a minor in film, Halfdan Hussey wrote his first screenplay when he wasn’t earning a living by driving a cab in New York City. Halfdan then directed and coproduced a feature film, *He’s Still There*, that opened to rave reviews at the Venice Film Festival, Italy. The film was a hit with the festivals critics.

“Ultimately, *He’s Still There* is a great movie full of feeling and aspirations. Halfdan Hussey demonstrates not only an idea but also a remarkable ability to translate an idea to film....Above all he is a bravo regista [great director]”, says Francesco Carrara of the Venice Film Festival (Il Piccolo).

Soon after, Hussey directed *Still Waters Burn*. “I really like *Still Waters Burn*. Its young director shows brilliant promise and talent,” says Robert Wise (four-time Academy Award winner; legendary director of *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *West Side Story*, and *The Sound of Music*).

Halfdan then cofounded, with Kathleen J. Powell, Cinequest (Cinequest Mavericks Studio and Cinequest Film Festival) in the Silicon Valley

fusing creativity with innovation to empower. *The Ultimate Guide to Film Festivals* named Cinequest, having stayed ahead in digital filmmaking, exhibition, and distribution for years, in the top ten among the world's two thousand festivals and deemed Cinequest the place where you "find the future of film". A pioneer in digital filmmaking, distribution and marketing, Cinequest has also provided a bastion of discovery for artists, technologists and audiences.

Halfdan was named one of the top twenty-five people who dramatically changed the Silicon Valley over the past twenty-five years by *Metro* newspaper in 2010.

Recently Halfdan returned to writing and movie-making. His debut book, *To the Dogs*, tells

the dramatic story of a man who leaves a world of integrity to fall into one of crime, leaving his sons with an inheritance of corrupt power. The sons must decide whether to continue the ways of their father or return to the world of dogs, the land of unconditional love and inner power.

Halfdan continues to balance his creative work and business with a lifelong passion to empower others to create and live the lives of their dreams. He works with Cinequest's Picture the Possibilities (PTP) to empower creativity and innovation that improves lives and communities worldwide. PTP gives youth and leaders the powers to create the world they envision. He and his partner, Kathleen J. Powell, have developed an empowerment program and accompanying book

called *The 7 Powers* about the powers to create anything.

PTP serves youth in Silicon Valley, Los Angeles, New York City, Mexico City, Beijing, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Phnom Penh and more. PTP has partnered with Cinequest Mavericks Studio to create a powerful and inspirational documentary, *Life Is Love*, of women who have emerged from the slavery of trafficking to become free and transformed by love.

*Seven Powers of Creating* shows the process of creating anything from art to innovation, business to personal. It takes you from your picture of what you want to create to the reality of it being alive and thriving. *Seven Powers of Creating* emerged from Cinequest's Picture The Possibilities, a transformative movement that empowers youth and leaders to create a better world for all of us.

*Seven Powers of Creating:*

- PICTURE—the inner vision of what you want to create.
- POSITION—what makes what you create special and unique.
- PLAN—organizing the action needed to bring the picture into reality.
- PASSION—the fuel that drives the engine of creating.
- PARTNERS—who you choose to create with can lift you upward.
- PERSISTENCE—the commitment to stay with something until it's real.
- PEACE—finding inner confidence, calm, and well-being right now.