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THE
GREATEST SECRET
OF ALL



INTRODUCTION

*How I first discovered
the secret of manifestation,
and then the greatest secret of all*

Somewhere along the many paths I've taken, it became obvious to me that every one of us is completely unique. Every one of us is an original, even a creative genius, in some way or ways. We all have a long and winding and absolutely original path, and each of us makes our discoveries in our own way.

It can be helpful at times to hear another person's story; what has worked for me just might work for you as well. Feel free to skim through this Introduction, if you wish. Find the words that grab your interest, and skip the rest.

The core of this book is in Part One, Part Two, and the Summary. There, slow down and take in the words, especially in the Summary, which is just a few pages. You'll notice that I return to the key points again and again, stating

them in different ways. The repetition is important, in my opinion; it can take a long time for us to absorb this kind of life-altering information, and each time we hear it or read it, it sinks in a little deeper.

*Throughout the book,
the essential points are in bold, centered.*

*If you wish to quickly grasp
the essence of this book,
just read the key points.*

I'll start with a bit of my story. Throughout my twenties and early thirties, I had the opposite of the Midas touch. Everything I touched fell apart. Worse yet, I was on an intense emotional roller coaster much of the time, with a variety of anxieties and periods of immobilizing depression.

I dropped out of college to join a theater company that fell apart within a year. I joined another company, and that fell apart too after just a few months. I wandered to a Zen center and got kicked out for breaking the rules. I

tried a back-to-the-land experiment that only lasted a few cold, wet months. I spent over three years at a Tibetan Buddhist center, working very hard, making no money at all, and not making much progress in my understanding of anything that helped improve my unsatisfactory life.

I wandered around the spiritual smorgasbord of Berkeley, California, for a few years, living on almost nothing. I was fired as a busboy and dishwasher for being too slow. I was fired as a typesetter for not showing up on time. I had a rock band that lasted a few years before it broke up.

THE DISCOVERY

And then I turned *thirty*. I woke up in a state of shock, finally realizing I wasn't a kid anymore. I had no job and no savings or any other assets except an old torn-up electric piano. I was scrounging (a word we used often) to come up with \$65 every month for rent for my little studio apartment in a funky part of Oakland, California.

That day changed my life, because I began to apply some ideas in some new ways, ideas that before had just been occasional floating thoughts, ephemeral and remote possibilities in my mind. I sat down and wrote on paper what became — for me, in my words — the first secret of manifestation:

*The first step to discovering
the secret of manifestation
is to write your ideal scene on paper,
your dream life five years in the future.
Begin with the end in mind,
and keep it in mind.*

The day I turned thirty, I sat down and took a sheet of paper and wrote *Ideal Scene* at the top. I imagined everything had gone as well as I could possibly imagine, and somehow, over the next five years, I was able to create the ideal life for me. What would it look like? What would I do and have, and who would I be?

I was surprised, even shocked in a strange way, at what came spilling out on paper. I

imagined I had a publishing company, successfully publishing books and music, including my own books and music. Before I sat down and wrote out my ideal scene, I had absolutely no interest in business. I had never taken a business course. I had never written a book or recorded my music. The words that spilled out when I wrote my ideal scene surprised me as much as they were to surprise just about everyone else I knew.

I imagined I wrote successful books and recorded beautiful music as well. I imagined I had a lovely white home on a hill in northern California, one of my favorite places on earth. I imagined I had a wonderfully loving relationship. I dared to imagine my *ideal*, so I imagined I had plenty of time for it all: creativity, a successful business, friends and family, and plenty of free time alone for myself as well.

And I added something else that changed my life dramatically: When I dared to think of my *ideal*, the kind of life I would have if I could have anything at all, I realized what I really wanted was a life of ease. I didn't want to work

too hard. The few forty-hour-a-week jobs I had tried hadn't worked out, and working that many hours felt inhumane to me. Ideally, I wanted plenty of time for ease and relaxation, plenty of time for my creative life, spiritual life, and personal life with friends and family.

That was my ideal: success with ease, and success without compromising the other things that were important to me in life. I wanted to do what I loved, and not have to do anything I didn't really enjoy.

I didn't know it at the time, but I was beginning to learn secrets that were far greater than the secret of manifestation.

*The simple step of
writing down my ideal scene
led me to discover the unfailing
natural laws of manifestation.*

I stared at that sheet of paper awhile and realized that within it was a list of goals. I took a second sheet of paper and listed all the goals I

could think of. There were twelve of them, at first. (Now I'm down to six.)

It was thirty years ago, but I remember it clearly: As I was writing my goals, I was assaulted with doubts and fears. I wrote, "Start and build a successful company," and my thoughts were churning — *You? Who are you trying to kid? You have no money, and you need money to make money! You know nothing of business! You don't even like business! And it'll wreck your creativity! It'll destroy your soul! Money is the root of all evil! The rich man has as much chance of entering the Kingdom as a camel does of going through the eye of a needle!* On and on it went — an endless stream of doubts, fears, and darkly negative thoughts.

But then I remembered something I had read in a book by Catherine Ponder, a Unity Church minister. She wrote about the power of *affirmations* — simple statements or declarations that your dream or goal is now coming into being. They work best when they're in the present tense, worded in a way that your

subconscious mind can accept and begin to absorb and play with.

The most vivid phrase I remember from Catherine Ponder's writing has become part of my daily life. She said that affirmations are even more effective if they start or end with this phrase: *In an easy and relaxed manner, in a healthy and positive way...*

So I took another sheet of paper and rewrote each goal as an affirmation, beginning with that phrase. I worded my goal of starting and building a successful business like this: *In an easy and relaxed manner, in a healthy and positive way, I am now building a successful business.*

*The second step to discovering
the secret of manifestation
is to write your goals as affirmations,
beginning with
In an easy and relaxed manner,
in a healthy and positive way...*

Years later, looking back, I realized how powerful those words were — so powerful, in

fact, that by repeating them daily, I overcame many of my doubts and fears. What, after all, are our doubts and fears whispering to us? *It isn't easy; it's very difficult! It certainly isn't relaxed; it's stressful! It's not healthy for you, not even positive. You'll fail! You don't know what you're doing! You're a fool!*

That powerful little phrase — *in an easy and relaxed manner, in a healthy and positive way* — repeated thousands of times, overcame a lot of those doubts and fears. It took me about five years, but I finally got it through my thick skull that it was possible to create a great deal of success in the world in an easy and relaxed manner, in a healthy and positive way.

Don't underestimate the power of those words — or the power of any words you repeat to yourself. Our thoughts determine our actions. And our actions lead, inevitably, to success or failure, fulfillment or frustration.

I typed up my list of goals as affirmations and carried it around with me in my back pocket. I often began the day by reading that list. I read

it at my desk as I started to work. I read it in the bathroom sometimes.

Some deep part of me knew that if I kept reading and rereading that list, my subconscious mind would absorb it sooner or later, and I would eventually be able to turn those distant, ephemeral dreams into solid intentions — and once that happened, those intentions would soon become reality.

Reading my list of affirmations led me to the next obvious step:

*The next step to discovering the secret of
manifestation
is to write a one-page plan
for every major goal.*

It's simple, isn't it? For me, the process has to be simple, and the words I write have to be words a child about ten years old can easily understand. That makes it much easier for my subconscious mind to absorb those words.

I took a separate sheet of paper for every major goal on my list and wrote a one-page

plan to achieve that goal. This little process took several months for some of the plans, because I didn't even know where to start.

The only plan I could think of at first for starting a business involved just a few action steps: Read a used business textbook, and talk to anyone I could who knew more about business than I did. These little steps led me to see and then take the next step of actually writing a simple, one-page plan.

That led to the final step:

*The final step to discovering
the secret of manifestation
is to take action.*

*When you have a plan,
an intention will form.*

*When you take action,
nothing can stop you.*

This step became obvious as soon as I'd taken the other steps. I kept reviewing my plans — and rewriting them, because most of them changed all the time — and then I'd pull out

my little weekly calendar and write down an action step to take on a specific day. Without being consciously aware of it at first, I was sending a powerful message to my subconscious mind: Not only am I planning, in writing, to achieve this goal, but I am taking the next steps necessary to get there.

At age thirty I was a poverty case; about six years later I was a millionaire. The secret to success that had eluded me for so many years became simple and obvious to me:

*Great success is the result
of a great many small steps,
all moving toward a clearly defined goal.
That is the secret of manifestation.*

Maybe some of you are thinking it can't be that simple. Or you've heard it all before, and there's nothing new in it. It's true — there is nothing new in it, and you've probably heard it all before. And it *is* simple — these simple steps set your course. Then it's just a matter of ongoing course correction, of getting back on

course every time you wander off course into doubts and fears, frustration and anxiety.

How do you get back on course? By focusing, once again, on your goals and affirmations, and remembering your plans and moving ahead on those plans in whatever way you can.

I once heard that an airplane is off course over ninety percent of the time. But the pilot just keeps correcting the course, over and over, and the plane finally reaches its destination. When I heard that, I thought, *That's the story of my life. I set my course, and then kept going off course, over and over. So I had to reset my course, over and over.*

That sums up the whole process for me.

THE VALUE OF EVERY MOMENT OF THE PAST

Once I set my course, I noticed a fascinating process begin to unfold. Before I went through those few simple steps on my thirtieth birthday, I had the image that all my past experience had come to nothing, that it had slipped away

like sand through my fingers. But once I set my course, once I wrote a simple plan, I began to realize that every experience I'd ever had was valuable, and I had learned a great deal in my various activities and wanderings through my teens and twenties.

I had learned a great many valuable secrets, but I hadn't yet applied them in my life. The little steps I took the day I turned thirty changed all that. As soon as I affirmed my goals, made a short plan to reach those goals, and took the first few obvious steps in front of me, those simple actions somehow made me far more aware of so many things I had learned in the past. Instead of feeling as if everything I had learned had slipped through my fingers like sand, leaving me with nothing, I realized I had absorbed a great deal of information and knowledge that could help me reach my goals.

In my early twenties I worked about six months for one of the world's worst bosses — a miserable man who had learned the secret of manifestation but had no clue to the far greater secrets of a life well lived. I realized if I

did exactly the opposite of what he did, I could become a good employer and leader. He taught me what not to do, and that's been invaluable to me all my life.

Another time in my early twenties I wandered into a bookshop in Madison, Wisconsin, that specialized in Western magic. I talked for maybe an hour with the owner and left with several books. That was my introduction to the Western mystical traditions, drawn primarily from the Kaballah, an esoteric branch of Judaism, and from Egyptian traditions.

The most memorable book I got at that time is one I still read to this day, *The Art of True Healing* by Israel Regardie. It is Western magic in a nutshell, and it gave me some exercises I still do fairly regularly, not only for healing myself and others, but for the creation of wealth and fulfillment as well. (The main reason I continue to do these exercises is that I do them flat on my back, in bed — the favorite kind of exercise for someone as lazy as I am.)

I began yoga classes when I was with my first theater company. It was tremendously

healing for body, mind, and spirit, and I feel I'm still reaping the benefits of that yoga, though I'm too lazy to do much of it on a regular basis.

I began meditating at that time as well, and saw a vast new inner space open up, a world of the mind, created in an instant by the mind, and somehow connected to an inner source of creativity, abundance, and fulfillment. I discovered a quiet center within, from which we can create a far better life experience for ourselves and help others as well. I wasn't sure how to use these new tools that were given to me, but I began to see all kinds of new possibilities.

I went back to the Bible in my late twenties and reread the words of Christ. I collected the sayings of Christ — every word he said in the New Testament — in a little booklet and carried it around with me for a while. In very simple words, words a child can understand, Christ gave us both the secret of manifestation and the greatest secret of all.

*Ask and you shall receive;
seek and you will find.*

That is the secret of manifestation.