

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
PREFACE	xiii
THE GAS STATION AT RAINBOW'S END	3
BOOK ONE: THE WINDS OF CHANGE	31
1 Gusts of Magic	33
2 The Web of Illusion	49
3 Cutting Free	71
BOOK TWO: THE WARRIOR'S TRAINING	91
4 The Sword Is Sharpened	93
5 The Mountain Path	135
6 Pleasure beyond the Mind	157
BOOK THREE: UNREASONABLE HAPPINESS	173
7 The Final Search	175
8 The Gate Opens	191
EPILOGUE: LAUGHTER IN THE WIND	205
PEACEFUL WARRIOR —	209
FROM BOOK TO SCREEN	
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	217

PREFACE

An extraordinary series of events took place in my life, beginning in December 1966, during my junior year at the University of California at Berkeley. It all began at 3:20 A.M., when I first stumbled upon Socrates in an all-night gas station. (He didn't volunteer his real name, but after spending time with him that first night, I named him on impulse after the ancient Greek sage; he liked the name, so it stuck.) That chance encounter and the adventures that followed were to transform my life.

The years prior to 1966 had smiled upon me. Raised by loving parents in a secure environment, I was later to win the World Trampoline Championship in London, travel through Europe, and receive many honors. Life brought rewards, but no lasting peace or satisfaction.

Now I realize that I had, in a sense, been sleeping all those years and just dreaming I was awake — until I met Socrates, who came to be my mentor and friend. Before that time, I'd always believed that a life of quality, enjoyment, and wisdom were my human birthright and would be automatically bestowed upon me as time passed. I never suspected that I would have to learn *how* to live — that there were specific disciplines and ways of seeing the world I had to master before I could awaken to a simple, happy, uncomplicated life.

Socrates showed me the error of my ways by contrasting them with *his* way, the Way of the Peaceful Warrior. He constantly poked fun at my own serious, concerned, problematic life, until I came to see through his eyes of wisdom, compassion, and humor. And he never let up until I discovered what it means to live as a warrior.

Often I sat with him far into the early morning hours — listening to him, arguing with him, and, in spite of myself, laughing with him. This story is based on my adventure, but it *is* a novel. The man I called Socrates did, in fact, exist. Yet he had a way of blending into the world, so it's been difficult at times to tell where he left off and other teachers and life experiences began. I have taken liberties with the dialogue and with some time sequences and have sprinkled anecdotes and metaphors into the story to highlight the lessons Socrates would want me to convey.

Life is not a private affair. A story and its lessons are only made useful if shared. So I've chosen to honor my teacher by sharing his piercing wisdom and humor with you.

WAY OF THE
PEACEFUL WARRIOR

Warriors, warriors we call ourselves.
We fight for splendid virtue, for high endeavor, for
sublime wisdom, therefore we call ourselves warriors.

— Aunguttara Nikaya

THE GAS STATION AT RAINBOW'S END

Life begins, I thought, as I waved good-bye to Mom and Dad and pulled away from the curb in my reliable old Valiant, its faded white body stuffed with the belongings I'd packed for my first year at college. I felt strong, independent, ready for anything.

Singing to myself above the radio's music, I sped north across the freeways of Los Angeles, then up and over the Grapevine, connecting with Route 99, which carried me through the green agricultural flatlands stretching to the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Just before dusk, my winding descent through the Oakland hills brought me a shimmering view of San Francisco Bay. My excitement grew as I neared the Berkeley campus.

After finding my dormitory, I unpacked and gazed out the window at the Golden Gate Bridge and the lights of San Francisco sparkling in the darkness.

Five minutes later I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, looking in shop windows, breathing the fresh northern California air, savoring the smells drifting out of tiny cafés. Overwhelmed by it all, I walked the beautifully landscaped paths of the campus until after midnight.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, I walked

down to Harmon Gymnasium, where I'd be training six days a week, four muscle-straining, somersaulting, sweaty hours each day, pursuing my dreams of becoming a champion.

Two days passed, and I was already drowning in a sea of people, papers, and class schedules. Soon the months blended together, passing and changing softly, like the mild California seasons. In my classes I survived; in the gym, I thrived. A friend once told me I was born to be an acrobat. I certainly looked the part: clean cut, short brown hair, a lean, wiry body. I'd always had a penchant for daredevil stunts; even as a child I enjoyed playing on the edge of fear. The gymnastics room had become my sanctuary, where I found excitement, challenge, and a measure of satisfaction.

By the end of my first two years I had flown to Germany, France, and England, representing the United States Gymnastics Federation. I won the World Trampoline Championship; my gymnastics trophies were piling up in the corner of my room; my picture appeared in the *Daily Californian* with such regularity that people began to recognize me and my reputation grew. Women smiled at me. Susie, a savory, unfailingly sweet friend with short blond hair and a toothpaste smile, paid me amorous visits more and more often. Even my studies were going well. I felt on top of the world.

However, in the early autumn of 1966, my junior year, something dark and intangible began to take shape. By then I'd moved out of the dorm and was living alone in a small studio behind my landlord's house. During this time I felt a growing melancholy, even in the midst of all my achievements. Shortly thereafter, the nightmares started. Nearly every night I jerked awake, sweating. Almost always, the dream was the same:

*I walk along a dark city street; tall buildings
without doors or windows loom at me through a dark
swirling mist.*

A towering shape cloaked in black strides toward

me. I feel rather than see a chilling specter, a gleaming white skull with black eye sockets that stare at me in deathly silence. A finger of white bone points at me; the white knucklebones curl into a beckoning claw. I freeze.

A white-haired man appears from behind the hooded terror; his face is calm and unlined. His footsteps make no sound. I sense somehow, that he is my only hope of escape; he has the power to save me, but he doesn't see me and I can't call to him.

Mocking my fear, the black-hooded Death whirls around to face the white-haired man, who laughs in his face. Stunned, I watch. Death furiously makes a grab for him. The next moment the specter is hurtling toward me, as the old man seizes him by his cloak and tosses him into the air.

Suddenly the Grim Reaper vanishes. The man with the shining white hair looks at me and holds out his hands in a gesture of welcome. I walk toward him, then directly into him, dissolving into his body. When I look down at myself, I see that I'm wearing a black robe. I raise my hands and see bleached white, gnarled bones, come together in prayer.

I'd awake with a gasp.

One night, early in December, I lay in bed listening to the howling wind driving through a small crack in the window of my apartment. Sleepless, I got up and threw on my faded Levi's, a T-shirt, sneakers, and down jacket, and walked out into the night. It was 3:05 A.M.

I walked aimlessly, inhaling deeply the moist, chilly air, looking up into the starlit sky, listening for a rare sound in the silent streets. The cold made me hungry, so I headed for an all-night gas station to buy some cookies and a soft drink. Hands in my pockets, I hurried across campus, past sleeping houses,

before I came to the lights of the service station. It was a bright fluorescent oasis in a darkened wilderness of closed food joints, shops, and movie theaters.

I rounded the corner of the garage adjoining the station and nearly fell over a man sitting in the shadows, leaning his chair back against the red tile station wall. Startled, I retreated. He was wearing a red wool cap, gray corduroy pants, white socks, and Japanese sandals. He seemed comfortable enough in a light windbreaker though the wall thermometer by his head registered 38 degrees.

Without looking up, he said in a strong, almost musical voice, "Sorry if I frightened you."

"Oh, uh, that's OK. Do you have any soda pop?"

"Only have fruit juice here. And don't call me 'Pop!'" He turned toward me and with a half smile removed his cap, revealing shining white hair. Then he laughed.

That laugh! I stared blankly at him for one more moment. He was the old man in my dream! The white hair, the clear, unlined face, a tall slim man of fifty or sixty. He laughed again. In my confusion I somehow found my way to the door marked "Office" and pushed it open. Along with the office door, I had felt another door opening to another dimension. I collapsed onto an old couch and shivered, wondering what might come screaming through that door into my orderly world. My dread was mixed with a strange fascination that I couldn't fathom. I sat, breathing shallowly, trying to regain my previous hold on the ordinary world.

I looked around the office. It was so different from the sterility and disarray of the usual gas station. The couch I was sitting on was covered by a faded but colorful Mexican blanket. To my left, near the entryway, stood a case of neatly organized traveler's aids: maps, fuses, sunglasses, and so on. Behind a small, dark brown walnut desk was an earth-colored, corduroy-upholstered chair. A springwater dispenser guarded a door marked "Private." Near me was a second door that led to the garage.

What struck me most of all was the homelike atmosphere of the room. A bright yellow shag rug ran its length, stopping just short of the welcome mat at the entry. The walls had recently been painted white, and a few landscape paintings lent them color. The soft incandescent glow of the lights calmed me. It was a relaxing contrast to the fluorescent glare outside. Overall, the room felt warm, orderly, and secure.

How could I have known that it was to be a place of unpredictable adventure, magic, terror, and romance? I only thought then, A fireplace would fit in nicely here.

Soon my breathing had relaxed, and my mind, if not content, had at least stopped whirling. This white-haired man's resemblance to the man in my dream was surely a coincidence. With a sigh, I stood, zipped up my jacket, and sallied forth in the chill air.

He was still sitting there. As I walked past and stole a last quick look at his face, a glimmer in his eyes caught mine. His eyes were like none I'd seen before. At first they seemed to have tears in them, ready to spill over; then the tears turned to a twinkle, like a reflection of the starlight. I was drawn deeper into his gaze until the stars themselves became only a reflection of his eyes. I was lost for a time, seeing nothing but those eyes, the unyielding and curious eyes of an infant.

I don't know how long I stood there; it could have been seconds or minutes — maybe longer. With a start, I became aware of where I was. Mumbling a good night, feeling off balance, I hurried toward the corner.

When I reached the curb, I stopped. My neck tingled; I felt that he was watching me. I glanced back. No more than fifteen seconds had passed. But there he was, *standing on the roof*, his arms crossed, looking up at the starry sky. I gaped at the empty chair still leaning back against the wall, then up again. It was impossible! If he had been changing a wheel on a carriage made from a giant pumpkin drawn by huge mice, the effect couldn't have been any more startling.

In the stillness of the night, I stared up at his lean shape, an imposing presence even at a distance. I heard the stars chime like bells singing in the wind. Suddenly he snapped his head around and stared directly into my eyes. He was about sixty feet away, but I could almost feel his breath on my face. I shivered, but not from the cold. That doorway, where reality dissolved into dreams, cracked open again.

I looked up at him. “Yes?” he said. “Can I help you?” Prophetic words!

“Excuse me, but . . .”

“You are excused,” he smiled. I felt my face flush; this was starting to irritate me. He was playing a game with me, but I didn’t know the rules.

“All right, how did you get up on the roof?”

“Get up on the roof?” he queried, looking innocent and puzzled.

“Yes. How did you get from that chair,” I pointed, “up to that roof, in less than twenty seconds? You were leaning back against the wall, right there. I turned, walked over to the corner, and you . . .”

“I know exactly what *I* was doing,” his voice boomed. “There is no need to describe it to me. The question is, do you know what *you* were doing?”

“Of course I know what I was doing!” I was getting angry now; I wasn’t some child to be lectured to! But I desperately wanted to find out the old man’s gimmick, so I held my temper and requested politely, “Please, sir, tell me how you got up on the roof.”

He just stared down at me in silence until the back of my neck began to get prickly. Finally he replied, “Used a ladder. It’s around back.” Then, ignoring me, he looked upward again.

I walked quickly around back. Sure enough, there was an old ladder leaning crookedly against the back wall. But the ladder’s top was at least five feet short of the roof’s edge; even if he could have used it — which was highly doubtful — that

wouldn't explain how he got up there in a few seconds.

Something landed on my shoulder in the darkness. I gasped, and whirled around to see his hand. Somehow he'd gotten *off* the roof and crept up on me. Then I guessed the only possible answer. He had a twin. They obviously got their kicks scaring the wits out of innocent visitors. I accused him immediately.

"All right, mister, where's your twin? I'm nobody's fool."

He frowned slightly, then started to roar with laughter. Hah! That clinched it. I was right; I'd found him out. But his answer made me less sure of myself.

"If I had a twin, do you think I'd be the one wasting my time standing here talking with 'nobody's fool?'" He laughed again and strode back toward the garage, leaving me standing openmouthed. I couldn't believe the nerve of this guy.

I hurried to catch up with him. He walked into the garage and started to tinker with a carburetor under the hood of an old green Ford pickup. "So you think I'm a fool?" I said, sounding more belligerent than I'd intended.

"We're all fools together," he replied. "It's just that a few people know it; others don't. You seem to be one of the latter types. Hand me that small wrench, will you?"

I handed him his damn wrench and started to leave. Before I left, though, I had to know. "Would you please tell me how you got up to the roof so fast? I'm really puzzled."

He handed me back the wrench, saying, "The world's a puzzle; no need to make sense out of it." He pointed to the shelf behind me. "I'll need the hammer and the screwdriver now, over there."

Frustrated, I watched him for another minute, trying to figure out how to get him to tell me what I wanted to know, but he seemed oblivious to my presence.

I gave up and started toward the door, when I heard him say, "Stick around and make yourself useful." Deftly removing the carburetor like a surgeon in the middle of a heart

transplant, he set it down carefully and turned to face me. “Here,” he said, handing me the carburetor. “Take this apart and put the pieces in that can to soak. It will take your mind off your questions.”

My frustration dissolved into laughter. This old man could be irritating, but he was interesting, too. I decided to be sociable.

“My name’s Dan,” I said, reaching out to shake his hand, smiling insincerely. “What’s yours?”

He placed a screwdriver in my outstretched hand. “My name doesn’t matter; neither does yours. What *is* important is what lies beyond names and beyond questions. Now, you will need this screwdriver to take apart that carburetor,” he pointed.

“Nothing lies beyond questions,” I retorted. “Like how did you fly up on that rooftop?”

“I didn’t fly — I jumped,” was his poker-faced reply. “It’s not magic, so don’t get your hopes up. In your case, however, I may have to perform some very difficult magic. It looks as if I’m going to have to transform a jackass into a human being.”

“Who the hell do you think you are?”

“I am a warrior!” he snapped. “Beyond that, who I am depends on who you *want* me to be.”

“Can’t you just answer a straight question?” I attacked the carburetor with a vengeance.

“Ask me one and I’ll try,” he said, smiling innocently. The screwdriver slipped and I skinned my finger. “Damn!” I yelled, going to the sink to wash the cut. He handed me a Band-Aid.

“All right then. Here is a straight question.” I determined to keep my voice patient. “How can you be useful to me?”

“I have already been useful to you,” he replied, pointing to the bandage on my finger.

That did it. “Look, I can’t waste my time here any longer. I need to get some sleep.” I put the carburetor down and got ready to leave.

“How do you know you haven’t been asleep your whole

life? How do you know you're not asleep right now?" he said, watching me intently.

"Whatever you say." I was too tired to argue. "One thing, though. Before I go, how did you pull off that stunt — you know, on the — ?"

"Tomorrow, Dan, tomorrow," he interrupted. Then he smiled warmly, and all my fears and frustration dissolved. He reached out and clasped my bandaged hand. Soon my hand, my arm, then my whole body started to tingle. He added, "It's been pleasant seeing you again."

"What do you mean 'again'?" I began, then caught myself; "I know, tomorrow, tomorrow." We both laughed. I walked to the door, stopped, turned, stared at him, then said, "Good-bye — *Socrates*."

He looked bewildered, then shrugged good-naturedly. I think he liked the name. I left without another word.

I slept through my eight o'clock class the next morning. By the time my afternoon gymnastics workout started, I was awake and ready to go.

After running up and down the bleacher stairs, Rick, Sid, and I, along with our teammates, lay on the floor, sweating and panting, stretching our legs, shoulders, and backs. Usually I was silent during this ritual, but today I felt like telling them about last night. All I could say was, "I met this unusual guy at a gas station last night."

My friends were more involved with the stretching pain in their legs than in my little story.

We warmed up easily, doing a few handstand push-ups, some sit-ups, and leg raises, and then began our tumbling series. As I flew through the air again and again — as I swung around the high bar, did scissors on the pommel horse, and struggled through a new muscle-straining ring routine — I wondered about the mysterious feats of the man I'd named *Socrates*. My ruffled feelings urged me to avoid him, but I had to make sense out of this enigmatic character.

After dinner, I quickly read through my history and psychology assignments, wrote a rough draft of an English paper, and raced out of the apartment. It was 11:00 P.M. Doubts began to plague me as I neared the station. Did he really want to see me again? What could I say to impress upon him the fact that I was a highly intelligent person?

He was there, standing in the doorway. He bowed, and with a wave of his arm welcomed me into his office. “Please, remove your shoes — a custom of mine.”

I sat down on the couch and put my shoes nearby, in case I wanted to make a hasty exit. I still didn’t trust this mysterious stranger.

It was starting to rain outside. The color and warmth of the office was a comfortable contrast to the dark night and ominous clouds outside. I started to feel at ease. Leaning back, I said, “You know, Socrates, I feel as though I’ve met you before.”

“You have,” he answered, again opening the doorway in my mind where dreams and reality become one. I paused.

“Uh, Socrates, I’ve been having this dream — you’re in it.” I watched him carefully, but his face revealed nothing.

“I’ve been in many people’s dreams; so have you. Tell me about your dream,” he smiled.

I told him, in as much detail as I could remember. The room seemed to darken as the terrible scenes became vivid in my mind, and my familiar world began to recede.

After I finished, he said, “Yes, a very good dream.” Before I could ask him what he meant by that, the station bell clanged, and clanged again. He put on a poncho and went outside into the wet night. I stared out the window, watching him.

It was a busy time of evening: the Friday-night rush. Things got pretty hectic, with one customer driving in after another. I felt silly just sitting there so I went out to help him, but he didn’t seem to notice me.

An endless line of cars greeted me: two-tones, reds, greens, blacks, hardtops, pickups, and foreign sports cars. The moods

of the customers varied as much as their cars. Only one or two people seemed to know Socrates, but many people looked twice at him, as if noticing something odd but indefinable.

Some of the people were in a party mood, laughing loudly and blaring their radios while we waited on them. Socrates laughed right along with them. One or two customers were sullen, putting forth a special effort to be unpleasant, but Socrates treated one and all with the same courtesy — as if each person were his personal guest.

After midnight, the cars and customers grew scarce. The cool air seemed unnaturally still after having been filled with raucous noise and activity. As we entered the office, Socrates thanked me for my assistance. I shrugged it off but was pleased that he'd noticed. It had been a long time since I'd helped anyone with anything.

Once inside the warm office, I remembered our unfinished business. I started talking as soon as I flopped onto the couch. "Socrates, I have a couple of questions."

He held his hands in a gesture of prayer, looking upward to the office ceiling as if asking for divine guidance — or divine patience. "What," he said with a sigh, "are your questions?"

"Well, I still want to know about the roof, and why you said, 'I'm pleased to see you *again*,' and I want to know what I can do for you and how you can be useful to me. *And*, I want to know how old you are."

"Let's take the easiest one, for now. I'm ninety-six years old, by your time." He was not ninety-six. Fifty-six, maybe; sixty-six at the outside; seventy-six, possible but amazing. But *ninety-six*? He was lying — but why would he lie? And I had to find out about the other thing he had let slip, too.

"Socrates, what do you mean 'by your time'? Are you on eastern standard time or are you," I joked feebly, "from outer space?"

"Isn't everyone?" he replied. By then, I had already considered that as a distinct possibility.

“I still want to know what we can do for each other.”

“Just this: I wouldn’t mind having one last student, and you obviously need a teacher.”

“I have enough teachers,” I said too quickly.

He paused and drew a deep breath. “Whether you have a proper teacher or not depends upon what you want to learn.” He rose lightly from his chair and walked to the door. “Come with me. I want to show you something.”

We walked to the corner, from where we could see down the avenue to the lights of the business district and beyond them to the lights of San Francisco.

“The world out there,” he said, waving his arm across the horizon, “is a school, Dan. Life is the only real teacher. It offers many experiences, and if experience alone brought wisdom and fulfillment, then elderly people would all be happy, enlightened masters. But the lessons of experience are hidden. I can help you learn from experience to see the world clearly, and clarity is something you desperately need right now. You know this is true, but your mind rebels; you haven’t yet turned knowledge into wisdom.”

“I don’t know about that — I mean, I wouldn’t go that far.”

“No, Dan, you don’t know about it yet, but you will go that far and beyond.”

We headed back for the office just as a shiny red Toyota pulled in. Socrates continued talking as he opened the gas tank. “Like most people, you’ve been taught to gather information from outside yourself, from books, magazines, experts.” He stuck the gas nozzle into the tank. “Like this car, you open up and let the facts pour in. Sometimes the information is premium and sometimes it’s low octane. You buy your knowledge at the current market rates, much like you buy gasoline.”

“Hey, thanks for reminding me. My tuition check for next quarter is due in two days.”

Socrates just nodded and continued to fill the customer’s tank. When the tank was full, Socrates kept pumping gas, until

fuel started overflowing the tank and pouring down onto the ground. A flood of gasoline ran across the pavement.

"Socrates! The tank is full — watch what you're doing!"

Ignoring me, he let the flood continue — saying, "Dan, like this gas tank, you are overflowing with preconceptions, full of useless knowledge. You hold many facts and opinions, yet know little of yourself. Before you can learn, you'll have to first empty your tank." He grinned at me, winked, and turning the pump off with a click, added, "Clean up the mess, will you?"

I got the feeling he was referring to more than the spilled gas. I hurriedly watered down the pavement. Soc took the driver's money and gave him back some change and a smile. We walked back to the office and settled in.

"What are you going to do, fill me full of *your* facts?" I bristled.

"It's not a matter of facts; it's a matter of body wisdom."

"What's 'body wisdom'?"

"Everything you'll ever need to know is within you; the secrets of the universe are imprinted on the cells of your body. But you haven't learned how to read the wisdom of the body. So you can only read books and listen to experts and hope they are right."

I couldn't believe it — this gas station attendant was accusing my professors of ignorance and implying that my college education was pointless. "I understand this 'body wisdom' concept, but I don't buy it."

He shook his head slowly. "You understand many things but have realized practically nothing."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Understanding is the one-dimensional comprehension of the intellect. It leads to knowledge. Realization is three-dimensional — a simultaneous comprehension of head, heart, and instinct. It comes only from direct experience."

"I'm still not with you."

"Do you remember when you first learned to drive? Prior to that time, you'd been a passenger; you only understood

what it was. But you *realized* what it was like when you did it for the first time.”

“That’s right!” I said. “I remember feeling, So that’s what it’s like!”

“Exactly! That phrase describes the experience of realization perfectly. One day, you’ll say the same thing about life.”

I sat quietly for a moment, then piped up. “You still haven’t explained how body wisdom works.”

“Come with me,” Socrates beckoned, leading me toward the door marked “Private.” Once inside, we were in total darkness. I started to tense, but then the fear gave way to keen anticipation. I was about to learn my first real secret: body wisdom.

The lights flashed on. We were in a bathroom and Socrates was peeing loudly into the toilet bowl. “Ahh,” he said, “now *this* is body wisdom!” His laughter echoed off the tile walls as I stomped out, sat on the couch, and glared at the rug.

When he emerged, I said, “Socrates, I still want to know...”

“If you are going to call me ‘Socrates,’” he interrupted, “you might at least do the name honor by allowing me to ask the questions on occasion, and you can answer them. How does that sound?”

“Fine!” I responded. “You just asked your question, and I answered it. Now it’s my turn. About that flying stunt you pulled the other night...”

“You are a persistent young man, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am. I didn’t get where I am today without persistence. And that’s another question I’ve answered. Now, can we deal with some of mine?”

Ignoring me, he asked, “Where are you today, right now?”

Eagerly, I started talking about myself. However, I noticed that I was being sidetracked from getting answers to my questions. Still, I told him about my distant and recent past and about my inexplicable depressions. He listened patiently and intently, as if he had all the time in the world, until I finished several hours later.