

The
**Leader Who
Had No Title**

*A MODERN FABLE ON REAL SUCCESS
IN BUSINESS AND IN LIFE*

Robin Sharma

**#1 International Bestselling
Author of *The Greatness Guide***

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CHAPTER 1

Leadership and Success Are Your Birthright

Nobody succeeds beyond his or her wildest expectations unless he or she begins with some wild expectations.

—RALPH CHARELL

The sight of an achievement is the greatest gift a human being could offer others.

—AYN RAND

EACH OF US IS BORN INTO GENIUS. Sadly, most of us die amid mediocrity. I hope it doesn't upset you that I reveal this closely held belief so early in our brief time together. But I need to be honest. I also should share that I'm just an ordinary guy who happened to get lucky enough to learn a series of extraordinary secrets that helped me become super-successful in business and deeply fulfilled in life. The good news is that I'm here to offer you everything that I discovered on a pretty stunning adventure. So you too can work at wow. And live full-out. Starting today.

The powerful lessons I'll reveal will be given gently, carefully, and with sincere encouragement. Our ride together will be full of fun, inspiration, and entertainment. The principles and tools you'll discover will *automatically* cause your career to fly, your

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happiness to soar, and your absolute best to fully express itself. But above all else, I promise you, I will be honest. I owe you that respect.

My name is Blake Davis, and though I was born in Milwaukee, I've lived here in New York City for nearly all of my life. And I still love this place. The restaurants. The pace. The people. And those hot dogs on the street—incredible. Yes, I do adore food—one of life's best pleasures, if you ask me, along with good conversation, my favorite sports, and great books. Anyway, there's really no place on Earth like the Big Apple. I have zero plans to leave. Ever.

Please allow me to quickly mention a little of my background before I tell you about the bizarre yet precious events that shifted me from where I once was to the place I'd always wanted to be. My mom was the kindest person I've ever met. My father was the most determined person I've ever known. Salt-of-the-earth-type people. Not perfect. But find me someone who is. The main thing is that they always did the best that they could do. And in my mind, the best you can do is all you can do. Once you've done that, go home and have a good night's sleep. Worrying about things beyond your control is a pretty good formula for illness. And most of the things we so concern ourselves with about never actually happen. Kurt Vonnegut said it beautifully when he observed: "The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind, the kind that blindside you at 4:00 p.m. some idle Tuesday."

My parents shaped me in so many ways. They didn't have a lot of things, yet in many ways they had everything: they had the courage of their convictions, they had superb values, and they had self-respect. I still miss them deeply and not a day goes by that I forget to appreciate them. In my quieter moments, I sometimes reflect on the fact that we generally take the people we love the most for granted. Until we lose them. Then we take long, si-

lent walks and pray for a second chance to treat them the way they deserved to have been treated. Please don't let that sort of regret infect your life. It happens too often, to too many among us. If you are blessed enough to still have your parents, honor them. And do it today.

Growing up, I was a good kid. "A heart on two legs" is how my grandfather used to describe me. I just didn't have it in my constitution to hurt anyone or disrupt anything. I did fairly well in school, was pretty popular with the girls, and played some solid football on my high school's varsity team. Everything changed when my parents were killed. The ground beneath my feet fell out from under me. I lost all confidence. I had no focus. My life became stuck.

In my early twenties, I drifted from one job to the next, sort of coasting on autopilot for a while. I numbed out and didn't care about much about anything. I medicated myself with too much TV, too much food, and too much worry—all designed to avoid having to feel the pain that one feels at the recognition of one's lost potential.

In that period of my life, work was merely a means to pay the bills rather than a platform to express my best. A job was nothing more than a rough way to get through the hours of my days rather than the gorgeous opportunity to grow into the all I was meant to be. Employment was just a vehicle to pass my time instead of a precious chance to shine a light on other people and a way to use my days to build a better organization—and in so doing—a better world.

I finally decided to enlist in the army. It seemed like a good move to help me feel a sense of belonging and to find some order amid the messiness. I was shipped off to the war in Iraq. And though being in the military did bring structure to my life, it also brought with it experiences that continue to haunt me to this day. I witnessed friends I'd gone through basic training with killed in

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bloody battles. I saw soldiers who were not more than kids brutally maimed and tragically hurt. And I watched any of the mild enthusiasm that may have existed in my former self wither away as I sank deeply into the muddy, desperate awareness of what my life had become. Even though I'd escaped physical trauma at war, I still became a wounded warrior. And I carried the ghosts of battle with me wherever I went.

One day, it was suddenly time to come home. It happened so fast it was dizzying. I was put on a transport plane, flown home, and within a day or two after some routine medical checks, handed my papers. I was thanked for the service I'd rendered to my nation and wished good luck. On a sunny autumn afternoon, I walked out onto a city street and came to a frightening conclusion: I was completely on my own again.

My biggest struggle was trying to find my way back into a society that had forgotten me. Most nights, I couldn't sleep—my mind punished with violent memories of the nightmarish scenes I'd experienced at war. In the mornings, I'd lay in bed for hours trying to get enough energy to get up and start my day. My body hurt. I'd feel scared for no reason and could hardly relate to anyone other than my fellow soldiers. The things I used to love doing seemed so trivial and boring to me. My life lacked any sense of purpose or meaning. Sometimes I wished I'd die.

Perhaps one of the best gifts my parents gave me was a love of learning, especially through books. Within the covers of a single book are ideas that, if acted upon, have the power to rescript every part of your life. Few things are as smart as investing in becoming a better thinker and developing a stronger mind. Relentless learning is one of the main traits of an open and powerful person. And obsessive and ongoing self-education is one of the best survival tactics to get through turbulent times. The best people always seem to have the biggest libraries.

So I began to work at a bookshop down in SoHo. But due to

my negative attitude and utterly complacent behavior, I wasn't doing well at the store. I was frequently reprimanded by my manager, and I fully expected to be fired. I was generally unfocused, nothing of a team player, and less than average at my work. My love of books was all that saved me. While those who ran the store despised me for my poor work ethic, the store's customers seemed to like me. And so I was kept on. But only by a thread.

Now here's where the story gets really good. One day, a miracle of sorts showed up in my life. When I least expected something good to happen, good came hunting me down. And that changed the game completely. A most curious stranger visited me at the bookstore. And the lessons he taught me in our all too brief time together shattered the limitations I'd been clinging to—exposing me to a whole new way of working and a completely new way of being.

Now, at the age of twenty-nine—amid more success and joy that I could have ever dreamed of—I've come to understand that hard times do make better people. That in the middle of difficulty lives opportunity. And that each of us is built to win—in both work and life. It's now time for me to share what happened to me with you.