

The background of the entire page is a beautiful landscape photograph. It shows a calm lake reflecting the golden light of a setting or rising sun. In the distance, there are rugged mountains with some snow patches. On the right side, a small, modern tiny house with large windows and a wooden deck is nestled among trees. The foreground is filled with wildflowers and greenery. The sky is a mix of soft orange, yellow, and blue with scattered clouds.

The
SIZE OF
— • —
Your
Dreams

— 🌿 —
Dream Big. Live Small.
Love Every Minute.

—
ROSS HARVEY

DEDICATION

For Christy Anne.

Because after a lifetime of dreaming about changing the world,
I discovered that Heaven on Earth could also be found lying
beside the woman I love.

And for every person who has ever had a dream that seemed
too big, too improbable, too late, or too foolish to pursue.

Keep dreaming.

But don't become so consumed with tomorrow that you miss
today.

The dream matters.

So does the kiss.

So does the cup of tea.

So does the stranger you greet on the sidewalk.

So does this moment.

Especially this moment.

FOREWORD

I have always been a dreamer.

Not a modest dreamer, either.

As a boy, I didn't dream about playing hockey.

I dreamed about becoming a professional hockey player.

I didn't merely want to become good at golf.

I wanted to become a great golfer.

When racquetball entered my life, I didn't want to participate.

I wanted to become the best.

When I became involved in clubs, restaurants and businesses, I didn't dream about creating ordinary ones.

I wanted to create the best.

Eventually, even that wasn't big enough.

I began dreaming about changing the world.

Some people might call that ambition.

Others might call it madness.

I call it vision.

And after more than sixty-five years of living, winning, losing, building, failing, loving, hurting, beginning again and dreaming dreams that sometimes seemed impossible, I have come to believe something very strongly:

We need enormous dreams.

We need dreams so big that they pull us out of bed in the morning.

We need dreams that frighten us a little.

We need dreams that require us to become bigger people in order to pursue them.

We need dreams that may take years—or perhaps an entire lifetime—to realize.

But there is another truth I have learned.

It may be even more important.

Never allow the size of tomorrow's dream to steal the beauty of today.

That lesson took me much longer to understand.

I spent much of my life looking toward the horizon.

There was always another mountain.

Another business.

Another championship.

Another idea.

Another opportunity.

Another possibility.

Another dream.

And I am grateful for that.

My dreams have carried me through an extraordinary life.

But today, some of the moments I treasure most would barely qualify as events.

A kiss from my wife.

A bagel with butter, raspberry jam and cream cheese.

A pot of tea.

A walk through my neighbourhood.

Holding a door for someone.

Learning a stranger's name.

A wave from someone driving past.

Watching an old episode of *Columbo* while cuddling with Christy.

Sitting quietly together while she paints.

Making dinner.

Running her a bath.

Listening to music.

Laughing.

Talking.

Being still.

None of these things will appear on a résumé.

They won't make the front page of a newspaper.

Nobody will build a statue to commemorate them.

And yet, increasingly, I think they may be what life is actually about.

This book is about the marriage of those two ideas.

Dream enormously.

And:

Live intimately.

Reach for the stars while noticing the person standing beside you.

Build castles in your imagination while appreciating the room you're sitting in.

Try to change the world while being kind to the person you meet at the grocery store.

Plan for tomorrow while refusing to sacrifice today.

I haven't always achieved that balance.

Far from it.

This book isn't being written by a man who figured everything out.

It is being written by a man who has spent sixty-five years figuring things out—and who is still learning.

My life has taken me from childhood dreams of professional sports to racquetball championships, golf, veterinary medicine, restaurants, fitness clubs, public companies, business ventures, books, music, community projects and ideas that eventually grew into something I call **A NuVo World**.

Today, two particular dreams occupy an enormous part of my imagination.

Come Away With Me, a feature film.

And:

A NuVo World – Journey to Eden – Co-Creat Heaven on Earth, an interactive world in which people don't merely imagine a better civilization—they help build one.

Beyond them stands an even larger vision: communities around the world designed to help people thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially and financially.

Ten thousand destinations.

NuVoWay LifeStyle Centres.

G3 Golf.

Hotels.

Entertainment.

Music.

Learning.

Health.

Community.

Places where people don't merely exist beside one another but actually belong to one another.

It is the biggest dream of my life.

And yet—

if you asked me to describe Heaven on Earth today, I might tell you about something much smaller.

I might tell you about lying on our bed with Christy watching *Columbo*.

Because perhaps the secret isn't choosing between the enormous dream and the tiny moment.

Perhaps the secret is understanding that **we need both**.

This is the story of how I came to believe that.

INTRODUCTION

The Horizon and the Flower at Your Feet

There are two ways to miss your life.

The first is to have no destination.

The second is to become so obsessed with the destination that you fail to notice the journey.

I have spent most of my life staring at the horizon.

I see possibilities.

I always have.

Show me an empty field and I don't necessarily see an empty field.

I see what could be built there.

Show me an ordinary club and I imagine the greatest club in the world.

Show me a struggling neighbourhood and I imagine a community in which everybody knows one another, helps one another and has what they need to thrive.

Show me the world as it is and my instinct is almost immediately to ask:

What could it become?

I don't think I learned that.

I think I arrived that way.

As a child, my imagination was always ahead of my circumstances.

The dream changed repeatedly.

Hockey.

Golf.

Racquetball.

Veterinary medicine.

Business.

Restaurants.

Clubs.

NuVo.

G3 Golf.

Music.

Community.

Books.

A movie.

A video game.

A new way of organizing society itself.

But the impulse underneath them remained the same.

What if?

Those may be the two most powerful words in the English language.

What if I could?

What if we tried?

What if nobody has done it because nobody has imagined it quite this way?

What if failure isn't the end?

What if this setback is simply redirecting me?

What if the best part hasn't happened yet?

What if the impossible is merely something nobody has figured out how to do?

What if?

A dream begins there.

But dreams can become dangerous if we aren't careful.

Not because dreaming is dangerous.

Because postponing life is.

Someday I will be happy.

Someday I'll have enough money.

Someday I'll have enough time.

Someday I'll travel.

Someday I'll tell her I love her.

Someday I'll write the book.

Someday I'll start the company.

Someday I'll spend time with my children.

Someday I'll slow down.

Someday.

Then one morning you wake up and discover that someday has quietly consumed twenty years.

I don't want that.

Not anymore.

I want the horizon.

But I also want the flower at my feet.

I want the ten-thousand-centre dream.

And I want the kiss with raspberry jam still on Christy's lips.

I want to build something that might outlive me.

And I want to notice the person walking toward me this morning.

I want to think about humanity.

And I want to learn my neighbour's name.

I want both.

Maybe that is the central argument of this book:

You don't have to choose between an extraordinary future and a beautiful present.

In fact, I increasingly believe one without the other is incomplete.

Vision gives life direction.

Presence gives life meaning.

Vision tells us where we're going.

Presence reminds us why we're going there.

This book is my attempt to tell that story.

And like most good stories, it begins with a boy who wanted to become something.

CHAPTER ONE

I Was Going to Be Somebody

I don't remember ever wanting an ordinary life.

I don't mean that arrogantly.

As a child, I wasn't walking around thinking I was better than everyone else.

I simply imagined things.

Big things.

When something captured my imagination, I didn't want to stand at the edge and watch.

I wanted in.

And once I was in, I wanted to see how far I could go.

Hockey was one of my earliest dreams.

Like countless Canadian boys, I could imagine the arenas, the competition, the excitement and the possibility of playing professionally.

There is something wonderful about childhood dreams because children haven't yet learned all the reasons something supposedly can't happen.

A child doesn't begin with statistics.

He begins with imagination.

He doesn't ask:

"What percentage of boys who play hockey eventually become professionals?"

He says:

"I'm going to be a hockey player."

There is enormous power in that innocence.

Somewhere along the road to adulthood, many of us lose it.

We become practical.

Reasonable.

Realistic.

Those can be useful qualities.

But they can also become prisons.

The world has a remarkable ability to reduce dreams to probabilities.

You tell someone your dream and almost immediately the questions begin.

How?

With what money?

Who do you know?

What experience do you have?

Has anybody else done it?

What happens if you fail?

All reasonable questions.

But dreams aren't born from reasonable questions.

Dreams begin before the answers exist.

That boy dreaming about professional hockey didn't know where life would take him.

He couldn't have known about racquetball.

He couldn't have imagined the businesses.

He couldn't have foreseen the restaurants or clubs or books.

He certainly couldn't have imagined A NuVo World.

He was simply learning one of the most important habits of my life:

See yourself somewhere before you know how you're going to get there.

That has stayed with me.

The destination has changed.

The principle hasn't.

There is a great difference between fantasy and vision.

Fantasy says:

"Wouldn't it be nice?"

Vision says:

"I can see it."

And when I can see something clearly enough, I begin moving toward it.

Sometimes quickly.

Sometimes clumsily.

Sometimes successfully.

Sometimes in completely the wrong direction.

But I move.

That matters.

Because dreams without movement eventually become wishes.

I have had plenty of dreams that didn't unfold the way I imagined.

Professional hockey was one.

That might sound like failure.

I don't see it that way.

A dream can accomplish its purpose without coming true exactly as you imagined it.

Hockey taught me to dream.

Then another dream arrived.

CHAPTER TWO

The Dream Changes

One of life's strangest lessons is that we can be completely sincere about what we want—and still be wrong about where we're ultimately going.

There were times when I was absolutely certain about my destination.

Then life changed the road.

Golf became important.

Then racquetball.

At different times, each seemed capable of becoming the defining pursuit of my life.

This is where people sometimes misunderstand vision.

They think having vision means stubbornly refusing to change direction.

I think the opposite can be true.

A strong vision tells you what matters.

Wisdom allows you to change the route.

Imagine driving across Canada.

If a bridge is washed out, you don't abandon Vancouver.

You take another road.

Life is like that.

Sometimes the road disappears.

Sometimes another road appears that you never knew existed.

Sometimes what looks like a detour becomes the entire adventure.

Racquetball was like that for me.

I loved competition.

I loved mastery.

I loved seeing what happened when you pushed yourself beyond yesterday's standard.

Sports provide brutally honest feedback.

The ball doesn't care what you intended to do.

The scoreboard doesn't care about excuses.

You perform or you don't.

You improve or you don't.

You win or you lose.

And then you come back tomorrow.

That mentality became part of me.

I didn't simply want to play.

I wanted excellence.

Eventually, I became a world champion racquetball athlete.

To a younger version of me, that would have sounded like the culmination of the story.

It wasn't.

It was another beginning.

Success is funny that way.

We imagine arriving at a goal will produce some permanent state of completion.

Then we arrive.

The celebration happens.

The trophy goes on the shelf.

And tomorrow morning still comes.

You still have to get out of bed.

You still have to decide what kind of person you're going to be.

You still have to determine what matters next.

The mountain you spent years climbing becomes the ground beneath your feet.

And suddenly you can see another mountain.

I have lived much of my life that way.

Climb.

Look.

See farther.

Climb again.

There is beauty in that.

There is also a danger.

If every mountaintop merely becomes the base camp for another climb, when do you enjoy the view?

That question would take me decades to answer.

CHAPTER THREE

Becoming the Best

I like the word **best**.

I always have.

To some people, it sounds competitive.

To me, it means something different.

It means asking:

How good could this be?

Not:

How good does it need to be?

Not:

What will people accept?

Not:

What's good enough?

How good could it be?

That question followed me from sports into almost everything else.

I became deeply involved in racquet sports and golf.

I wanted to become the best professional I could be.

Later, when I became involved in businesses, the same instinct appeared.

Why create an average restaurant?

Why create an average club?

Why create an average anything?

If you're going to pour your hours—your irreplaceable hours—into something, why not try to make it extraordinary?

That doesn't mean everything must become the largest.

Best and biggest are not synonyms.

A tiny neighbourhood café can be the best café in the world to the people who gather there every morning.

A teacher can be the best teacher in the world to one struggling student.

A father can be the best father in the world without anyone outside his family knowing his name.

Excellence is not fame.

Excellence is care.

That distinction has become increasingly important to me.

When I was younger, achievement was easier to measure.

Scores.

Rankings.

Wins.

Revenue.

Growth.

Buildings.

Business milestones.

These things are visible.

Life's most important achievements often aren't.

How do you measure a marriage?

How do you measure trust?

How do you measure kindness?

How do you measure the moment when a stranger who has walked past you every morning for six months finally smiles and waves first?

There is no scoreboard for that.

Maybe there should be.

Because I now think some of the greatest victories of my life have happened without anyone applauding.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Veterinarian I Never Became

At one point, another road appeared.

Veterinary medicine.

I became a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Even writing that sentence reminds me how unpredictable life can be.

Here was a serious professional path.

A respected profession.

A meaningful one.

Animals have always mattered to me, and there was every reason to imagine this might become my life's work.

But I didn't ultimately practice veterinary medicine.

For some people, that might make the years of education seem wasted.

I don't believe they were.

This is another lesson I wish we taught young people more often:

Not everything you learn has to become your career in order to become part of your life.

Education changes the person being educated.

Training changes the mind.

Discipline changes character.

Experiences accumulate.

They become ingredients.

You may not know what you're cooking yet.

I certainly didn't.

We place enormous pressure on young people to decide what they're going to "be."

What are you going to be when you grow up?

It's one of our favourite questions.

Perhaps it's the wrong one.

Maybe we should ask:

What are you curious about becoming next?

Because I have been many things.

Athlete.

Professional.

Veterinarian by education.

Entrepreneur.

Restaurant owner.

Club developer.

Writer.

Dreamer.

Community builder.

Husband.

And I hope I'm not finished becoming.

Why should a human life fit neatly onto one business card?

We are allowed to evolve.

We are allowed to change our minds.

We are allowed to discover that something we desperately wanted at twenty isn't what we want at forty.

And we are allowed to begin again at sixty-five.

That last one matters to me.

I don't see sixty-five as the beginning of the end.

I see it as another beginning.

Perhaps the biggest one yet.

CHAPTER FIVE

Spike 'n Chesters

Eventually my instinct for creating experiences found another outlet.

Restaurants.

Bars.

Hospitality.

Spike 'n Chesters became part of my story.

Later there was Champion RestoBar.

These weren't merely businesses to me.

I have never been very interested in businesses as numbers on spreadsheets.

The numbers matter, obviously.

Without sustainable economics, a business eventually disappears.

But what fascinated me was the experience.

What happens when people walk through the door?

How do they feel?

What do they see?

Who greets them?

What makes them want to return?

How do you turn a room into a place people remember?

Hospitality taught me something that would become fundamental to my later vision for community.

People want to belong.

They want places where someone knows their name.

They want familiar faces.

They want ritual.

They want connection.

Think about your favourite restaurant.

Often, the food is only part of the reason you return.

Maybe somebody recognizes you.

Maybe you have a favourite table.

Maybe the bartender knows your drink.

Maybe the owner walks over.

Maybe you have celebrated birthdays there.

Maybe you met your spouse there.

Maybe it simply feels like yours.

We underestimate the importance of places like this.

They are not merely commercial establishments.

At their best, they become social infrastructure.

They are where life happens.

That understanding stayed with me.

Years later, when I began imagining communities designed around human flourishing, I wasn't merely thinking about buildings.

I was thinking about belonging.

There is an enormous difference.

You can build a spectacular building and never create community.

And you can create community on two park benches outside a grocery store.

I know.

I've done it.

CHAPTER SIX

Building the Best Club

My ambitions eventually moved into another arena: fitness and racquet sports.

Again, the question wasn't simply whether something could work.

The question was:

How good could we make it?

I wanted to create the best fitness and racquet sport club possible.

This combined many parts of my life.

Athletics.

Competition.

Coaching.

Business.

Hospitality.

Community.

People didn't simply come to exercise.

They came to see people.

They came to challenge themselves.

They came to belong.

That distinction would become enormously important later.

Most people think of fitness centres as collections of equipment.

Treadmills.

Weights.

Courts.

Pools.

Locker rooms.

But those are only tools.

The real product can be transformation.

A person walks through the door one way and, over time, becomes someone slightly different.

Stronger.

Healthier.

More confident.

Less lonely.

More connected.

That is powerful.

I began thinking beyond facilities.

What if you could create environments specifically designed to help people become the best versions of themselves?

Not just physically.

Mentally.

Emotionally.

Socially.

Spiritually.

Financially.

What if the purpose of a community itself were to help its people thrive?

I didn't have the entire concept yet.

But the seeds were being planted.

That's another thing about dreams.

The biggest dreams often arrive in pieces.

A childhood experience gives you one piece.

A failure gives you another.

A business gives you another.

A relationship gives you another.

A stranger says something on Tuesday morning that gives you another.

For years you carry around what appears to be a collection of unrelated puzzle pieces.

Then one day you begin placing them together.

And suddenly—

you see the picture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NuVo

The word was **NuVo**.

To me, it came to represent something simple:

The best.

Not the most expensive.

Not the most exclusive.

Not the fanciest.

The best.

The highest standard we can imagine.

That concept became increasingly important in my business life and eventually expanded far beyond business.

Why shouldn't we want the best communities?

The best health?

The best education?

The best relationships?

The best opportunities for children?

The best care for seniors?

The best public spaces?

The best chance for every person to develop his or her potential?

Why should excellence be reserved for products?

Why shouldn't we pursue excellence in civilization?

That question became enormous.

Eventually it became:

A NuVo World.

A better world.

Not through one grand gesture.

Not through waiting for governments to solve everything.

Not through complaining endlessly about everything that's wrong.

But through people.

One day at a time.

One neighbourhood at a time.

One relationship at a time.

One person at a time.

This is where my life began moving from dreams primarily about what **I** could build toward dreams about what **we** could build.

That single-letter change—from I to we—is enormous.

A personal dream can be achieved by one extraordinary individual.

A societal dream cannot.

You need people.

Thousands of them.

Eventually millions.

Maybe billions.

And suddenly the boy who once dreamed about becoming a professional hockey player was dreaming about something almost absurdly larger:

What would Heaven on Earth actually look like if human beings decided to build it together?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ten Thousand

Today, when I close my eyes and imagine the future, I can see places all over the world.

More than ten thousand of them.

G3 Destination Centres.

NuVoWay LifeStyle Centres designed around the whole human being.

Championship golf.

Hotels.

Entertainment.

Performance halls.

Restaurants.

Stores.

Health.

Fitness.

Learning.

Community.

Nature.

Beauty.

Places designed not simply to extract money from people but to enrich their lives.

Places where families can gather.

Where children can discover what they're good at.

Where seniors remain connected.

Where people who are lonely find belonging.

Where health means more than treating illness.

Where physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and financial well-being are understood as parts of one life.

I can see them.

Will there really be ten thousand?

I don't know.

That's the truth.

Nobody knows.

But I have never believed we should size our dreams according to what we can already prove is possible.

If we know exactly how to accomplish something before we begin, it probably isn't much of a dream.

The dream creates the destination.

Then comes the work.

Then the partners.

Then the financing.

Then the setbacks.

Then the revisions.

Then more work.

And sometimes something happens that nobody anticipated.

A door opens.

A person appears.

Technology changes.

An opportunity emerges.

The impossible becomes merely difficult.

Then the difficult becomes achievable.

Then, one day, someone walks through the doors of something that once existed only in another person's imagination.

That is creation.

Almost everything surrounding you began that way.

Someone saw it before everyone else could.

CHAPTER NINE

Two Park Benches

And now I want to tell you about two park benches.

Because without them, you might misunderstand everything I've written so far.

My "office" these days is often two park benches outside a Metro grocery store on Somerled Avenue in NDG, Montreal.

There is no receptionist.

No boardroom.

No corporate logo behind me.

No executive assistant.

No mahogany desk.

Just benches.

I arrive early.

Often around 5:30 in the morning.

People are beginning their days.

Workers.

Delivery drivers.

Neighbours.

People walking dogs.

People heading toward buses.

Metro employees arriving for work.

Some are tired.

Some are rushed.

Some are cheerful.

Some barely look up.

And I say hello.

Good morning.

Have a great day.

At first, many people simply passed.

Then something began happening.

Faces became familiar.

Familiar faces acquired names.

Names acquired stories.

Stories became relationships.

People began waving.

Some people driving past began waving from their cars.

Across streets, people acknowledged me.

The man on the bench had become part of the landscape.

And slowly I began understanding something profound.

For years I had imagined changing the world through enormous projects.

Now I was watching a tiny world change through something almost ridiculously simple:

showing up.

Again.

And again.

And again.

No multimillion-dollar budget.

No strategic plan.

No technology.

Presence.

Consistency.

Friendliness.

Interest.

A willingness to notice people.

Could something this small really matter?

I believe it can.

Because every human being carries an invisible question:

Do I matter here?

A greeting answers it.

I see you.

A remembered name answers it more strongly.

I remember you.

A conversation says:

Your story matters.

And repeated presence eventually says:

You belong here.

Perhaps community isn't something we build.

Perhaps community is something that accumulates.

CHAPTER TEN

Raspberry Jam

Now we arrive at what may be one of the most important chapters in this book.

Raspberry jam.

That probably wasn't what you were expecting after ten thousand destination centres and changing civilization.

Good.

That's exactly the point.

My wife, Christy Anne, often has what I jokingly think of as her Heaven on Earth bagel.

Bagel.

Butter.

Raspberry jam.

Cream cheese.

Sometimes I ask if I can have a taste.

Then instead of taking the bagel, I kiss her.

"Mmmm. Butter."

Another kiss.

"Mmmm. Raspberry jam."

Another.

"Mmmm. Cream cheese."

Ridiculous?

Absolutely.

Important?

More than I can adequately explain.

For much of my life, I believed the great moments would be obvious.

Championships.

Businesses.

Accomplishments.

Big announcements.

Grand openings.

Success.

And yes, those moments can be wonderful.

But life doesn't happen primarily in grand openings.

Life happens on ordinary mornings.

Life happens in kitchens.

Bedrooms.

Cars.

Sidewalks.

Grocery stores.

Park benches.

It happens while you're waiting for the kettle to boil.

It happens when the person you love looks up from an iPad.

It happens when you make Chicken à la King for dinner.

It happens when you run your wife a bath.

It happens while you're lying beside each other watching an episode of a television program made decades ago.

If we aren't careful, we dismiss these moments because nothing "important" happened.

I am beginning to think we have the definition backward.

Maybe these are the important moments.

The giant dream gives my life direction.

Christy's raspberry-jam kiss gives it meaning.

I refuse to choose between them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Columbo and Heaven on Earth

Recently, Christy and I lay on our bed together late one morning and watched an episode of *Columbo*.

We cuddled.

That was it.

No breakthrough.

No investor called.

No contract was signed.

No world problem was solved.

We watched *Columbo*.

And it was the highlight of my day.

Later, I watched golf while Christy painted.

I prepared Chicken à la King.

We ate around four.

Later still, she played on her iPad while I ran her a Dr. Teal's bath.

She would probably soak for hours.

I planned to do some work and listen to Joel Osteen or perhaps an NPR Tiny Desk concert.

Read that paragraph again.

Nothing happened.

And everything happened.

We were alive.

Together.

Safe.

Comfortable.

Fed.

Interested in things.

Able to laugh.

Able to touch.

Able to create.

Able to rest.

Able to dream.

What exactly are we waiting for?

We spend so much of life arranging conditions under which we promise ourselves we will eventually become happy.

When the mortgage is paid.

When the children graduate.

When the company succeeds.

When we lose twenty pounds.

When we retire.

When the project launches.

When we finally have enough.

Then we'll enjoy ourselves.

But what if this is it?

Not "it" in the depressing sense.

It in the magnificent sense.

This moment is life.

There isn't another life waiting behind this one.

Tomorrow, if we are fortunate enough to receive it, will arrive disguised as another today.

So dream about tomorrow.

Build tomorrow.

Work for tomorrow.

Sacrifice intelligently for tomorrow.

But don't sacrifice every today to get there.

Because eventually there are no todays left.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Dream and the Day

I am working on two projects now that I believe may become among the most important creative works of my life.

The first is **Come Away With Me**.

Its central question is provocative:

What if He already came?

The second is:

A NuVo World – Journey to Eden – Co-Create Heaven on Earth.

It is conceived as much more than entertainment.

It asks people to imagine—and participate in creating—a better world.

These are enormous ideas.

They occupy my mind.

I think about how they might be made.

Who might help.

What technology could accomplish.

How they might reach people around the world.

I can easily become consumed by them.

That is one of my great strengths.

It can also become one of my weaknesses.

Passion needs boundaries.

Otherwise the dream you're trying to create for tomorrow can consume the life you're living today.

So I am learning a new discipline.

Not the discipline of working harder.

I've known that one for decades.

The discipline of **stopping**.

Closing the computer.

Going for the walk.

Making the tea.

Sitting beside Christy.

Watching the show.

Talking to the neighbour.

Cooking dinner.

Doing nothing useful whatsoever.

That last one is particularly difficult for ambitious people.

We have been taught to worship productivity.

What did you accomplish today?

How much did you get done?

How many emails?

How many calls?

How many pages?

How much money?

How much progress?

Useful questions.

But incomplete ones.

Here are some others.

Who did you love today?

Who did you notice?

Who did you encourage?

What made you laugh?

When did you feel peaceful?

What did you see on your walk?

Did you look at the sky?

Did you kiss someone you love?

Did you sit still long enough to realize that, for at least this moment, you already had enough?

Those questions belong on life's scoreboard too.

Maybe near the top.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Bigger Than You Know How to Do

People sometimes reduce their dreams to match their resources.

I think that is backward.

Your resources describe where you are.

Your vision describes where you're going.

If the two are identical, you don't need vision.

You need a checklist.

The dreams that have mattered most in my life have usually exceeded my immediate ability to accomplish them.

I didn't have every answer.

I didn't know every person required.

I didn't possess every resource.

Sometimes I barely knew what the first step should be.

But I could see something.

That mattered.

There is a peculiar arrogance in believing we must understand the entire journey before taking the first step.

We can't.

Life is too complicated.

The future contains people we haven't met.

Ideas we haven't encountered.

Technologies that don't exist yet.

Circumstances nobody can predict.

Our responsibility isn't to control the entire journey.

Our responsibility is to take the next faithful step.

Then another.

Then another.

I have come to think of vision almost like a North Star.

You don't reach the North Star.

It orients you.

When you're lost, you look up.

When circumstances become confusing, you ask:

What direction am I trying to go?

That's what a great dream does.

It gives direction to decisions that otherwise seem unrelated.

And strangely, once the direction becomes clear, the small things become more important—not less.

Because the enormous future is built almost entirely from tiny todays.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Smallest Unit of a Dream

What is a dream made of?

Days.

That's all.

A magnificent dream sounds enormous when described from the finish line.

A championship.

A company.

A marriage.

A book.

A movement.

A transformed community.

But nobody lives at the finish line.

We live Tuesday.

Then Wednesday.

Then Thursday.

The athlete's championship is made of practices nobody watches.

The author's book is made of paragraphs.

The marriage is made of conversations, forgiveness, dinners, touches and ordinary evenings.

The company is made of phone calls, decisions, mistakes and meetings.

The community is made of hellos.

The future is assembled from almost embarrassingly small pieces.

This realization changes the meaning of ambition.

You can dream as big as you want.

In fact, I encourage you to dream bigger than seems reasonable.

But after you dream, come back to today.

Ask:

What is the smallest thing I can do today that points toward that future?

Make the call.

Write the paragraph.

Walk the mile.

Introduce yourself.

Apologize.

Save the dollar.

Practice the shot.

Send the proposal.

Read the chapter.

Hold the door.

Say hello.

Kiss your wife.

Make the tea.

Then tomorrow, do another small thing.

People think great lives are constructed from great moments.

Mostly, they aren't.

They are constructed from ordinary moments repeated with unusual intention.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

What If Your Life Is Already Happening?

I want to leave these opening pages with a question.

Not:

What do you want to accomplish?

We'll get to that.

Not:

How much money do you want?

Not:

Where do you want to live?

Not:

What company do you want to build?

Not:

What mountain do you want to climb?

This question comes first:

What if your life is already happening?

Not next year.

Not after retirement.

Not after the promotion.

Not when the children grow up.

Not when the dream comes true.

Now.

This morning.

This afternoon.

Tonight.

The danger of a great vision is that the future becomes so vivid that the present begins looking like a waiting room.

I know that danger.

I can see enormous things in my imagination.

A NuVo World.

Thousands of destinations.

A movie reaching millions of people.

A game connecting people around the idea of co-creating a better civilization.

Communities built around helping every person thrive.

These possibilities excite me enormously.

But this morning there will still be someone walking past my bench.

Christy will still be upstairs.

There will still be tea to make.

Someone will need a door held open.

Someone may need a ride.

A stranger may become a familiar face.

A familiar face may finally acquire a name.

There may be a kiss.

There may be raspberry jam.

And none of that is interrupting the dream.

That is the dream.

Perhaps Heaven on Earth doesn't arrive one day after we've finally constructed everything perfectly.

Perhaps it arrives in flashes.

A kindness.

A friendship.

A meal.

A laugh.

A hand held.

A person noticed.

A quiet room.

A beautiful piece of music.

A dog wagging its tail when you walk through the door.

The person you love asleep beside you.

Maybe our task is to notice these pieces of Heaven—and then build a world that creates more opportunities for everyone to experience them.

That is the dream I want to spend the rest of my life pursuing.

It is enormous.

It is almost impossibly large.

And it begins very, very small.

So I will keep looking toward the horizon.

I will keep dreaming things I don't yet know how to accomplish.

I will keep imagining what doesn't exist.

I will keep asking, **What if?**

But I will also look down occasionally.

At the flower beside the path.

At the person beside me.

At the life already happening.

Because after sixty-five years, I am beginning to understand something I wish I had understood much earlier:

Dream as though you have forever.

Live as though today is the miracle.

The future needs your vision.

But this moment needs you.

And you don't have to choose between them.

You can build the castle.

And smell the flowers.

You can change the world.

And watch *Columbo*.

You can dream of ten thousand destinations.

And sit on two park benches.

You can reach for Heaven.

And discover that, every once in a while,

you are already there.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Business of Becoming

Business never felt separate from the rest of my life.

It was another arena.

Another place to compete.

Another place to imagine.

Another place to create.

Sports had taught me to perform under pressure.

Business taught me to make decisions without knowing the outcome.

That is a different kind of competition.

On a racquetball court, the rules are clear.

The dimensions are fixed.

The score is visible.

Your opponent is standing in front of you.

Business is not like that.

Sometimes you don't even know what game you're playing until you're halfway through it.

The market changes.

Partners change.

Technology changes.

Customers change.

Your own ambitions change.

Something that looked brilliant in January can look foolish by September.

And still, you decide.

That fascinated me.

I discovered that entrepreneurship is really an exercise in controlled uncertainty.

You imagine something that does not yet exist.

Then you begin putting resources behind it.

Money.

Time.

Energy.

Reputation.

Relationships.

You make bets.

You test assumptions.

You adjust.

Sometimes you are right.

Sometimes you are very wrong.

But if you are truly building something new, certainty is never available at the beginning.

That is why entrepreneurs and dreamers are cousins.

Both must see something before it is visible.

Both must tolerate misunderstanding.

Both must continue before there is proof.

And both must learn one very painful lesson:

Believing in your vision does not guarantee that your execution is correct.

That distinction matters.

I have always been willing to believe.

Learning when to revise has been harder.

There is courage in persistence.

There is also courage in saying:

"This isn't working."

That can be difficult for a visionary personality because the vision becomes personal.

An idea begins to feel like part of you.

Then criticism of the idea sounds like criticism of you.

That is dangerous.

A dream should stretch your identity.

It should never completely become your identity.

Because sometimes a dream must change.

Sometimes the timing is wrong.

Sometimes the business model is wrong.

Sometimes the partner is wrong.

Sometimes you are wrong.

And sometimes, strangely, a failed idea becomes the raw material for a better one.

I have lived that more than once.

Maybe failure isn't the opposite of vision.

Maybe failure is one of vision's teachers.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Cost of Wanting More

There is a price attached to ambition.

Nobody tells you that when you're young.

We celebrate the entrepreneur.

The athlete.

The builder.

The leader.

The person who refuses to settle.

We rarely talk about what gets pushed aside.

Time.

Rest.

Relationships.

Stillness.

Perspective.

Sometimes health.

Sometimes joy.

Sometimes people.

The danger of always wanting more is not greed in the traditional sense.

It is displacement.

Something important gets moved because something urgent is shouting louder.

One more call.

One more meeting.

One more proposal.

One more deal.

One more hour.

One more idea.

One more problem to solve before going home.

And then somehow the years go by.

I don't regret being ambitious.

I want to be clear about that.

Ambition gave my life tremendous energy.

It opened doors.

It created stories.

It introduced me to people.

It allowed me to test myself.

It taught me resilience.

I would not erase it.

But I would refine it.

If I could speak to the younger version of myself, I would not say:

"Dream smaller."

I would say:

"Protect what cannot be rebuilt."

Businesses can be rebuilt.

Money can sometimes be replaced.

Careers can change.

Projects can be restarted.

But a missed season of someone's life never returns.

A conversation you should have had may never come again.

A friendship neglected long enough may harden into distance.

A parent ages while you're busy.

A child grows while you're working.

A marriage can become logistical before anyone notices.

Time is the one currency nobody earns back.

That realization changes success.

It has to.

If your dream requires you to become absent from everyone you love, the dream may need redesigning.

If winning destroys your peace, the definition of winning may be wrong.

If success means postponing life indefinitely, then success has become a very sophisticated form of failure.

I understand that better now.

The goal is not less vision.

The goal is a better architecture for vision.

One that includes the people you love.

One that includes rest.

One that includes laughter.

One that includes unproductive afternoons.

One that includes enough room for life to surprise you.

Because some of the best things that ever happened to me
were not on my calendar.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Reinvention Is Not Failure

One of the great myths of adulthood is that changing direction means you failed at the old direction.

I don't believe that anymore.

Sometimes changing direction is evidence that you were paying attention.

I have reinvented myself many times.

Athlete.

Professional.

Businessman.

Club developer.

Restaurateur.

Writer.

Visionary.

Community builder.

Each version of me inherited something from the one before.

Nothing disappeared completely.

The athlete still exists when I work.

The competitor still appears when someone tells me something cannot be done.

The coach appears when I talk with people.

The businessman appears when I think about systems.

The writer appears when I try to make sense of my life.

The dreamer appears everywhere.

Reinvention does not mean becoming a completely different person.

Often, it means rearranging the same ingredients around a new purpose.

That matters if you're sixty-five.

It matters if you're twenty-five.

It matters if you're eighty.

We have created a strange cultural script for life.

Learn.

Work.

Advance.

Accumulate.

Retire.

Then, apparently, disappear politely.

I reject that.

Why should your most meaningful work necessarily happen when you're thirty-five or forty-five?

By sixty-five, you may understand yourself better.

You may know what you value.

You may care less about impressing people.

You may have decades of mistakes available for reference.

You may finally be ready.

Some people retire from a job and discover their life.

Others never officially retire because the thing they are doing does not feel like something they are trying to escape.

I have always preferred that idea.

Do what you love deeply enough that Monday morning is not an enemy.

That doesn't mean every day feels easy.

Purpose can be exhausting.

Love can be demanding.

Dreams can be frustrating.

But there is a difference between being tired from something meaningful and being depleted by something you resent.

I want meaningful tired.

I want the kind of tired that comes after creating, helping, loving, building or learning.

Then I want to go home.

Make tea.

Lie down beside Christy.

And remember that the work is not my life.

It is part of my life.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The People Who Say No

Every dreamer eventually meets the people who say no.

Sometimes they say it kindly.

Sometimes they say it with concern.

Sometimes they say it sarcastically.

Sometimes they don't say anything at all.

They simply stop answering.

No.

Too expensive.

Too ambitious.

Too unrealistic.

Too complicated.

Wrong timing.

Wrong person.

Wrong market.

Wrong idea.

Dream smaller.

Be practical.

There are times when these people are correct.

That is important.

A dreamer who assumes every critic is a fool becomes impossible to teach.

Some criticism is wisdom wearing uncomfortable clothing.

Some rejection protects you.

Some closed doors save you years.

The challenge is learning to distinguish between three very different things:

A bad idea.

A good idea badly executed.

And a good idea ahead of its time.

They can look identical in the beginning.

This is why humility matters so much in ambitious work.

Vision needs conviction.

Execution needs feedback.

Those qualities can live together.

You can believe strongly in the destination while remaining flexible about the route.

You can defend the purpose while revising the plan.

You can listen without surrendering your imagination.

I have not always done that perfectly.

Sometimes I have pushed too hard.

Sometimes enthusiasm became intensity.

Sometimes intensity became something other people experienced very differently than I intended.

Intentions matter.

Impact matters too.

That may be one of maturity's least pleasant lessons.

You can mean well and still get it wrong.

You can care deeply and still overwhelm people.

You can believe you're inviting someone into a dream while they feel pressured by it.

When that happens, the answer is not necessarily to abandon the dream.

The answer may be to become better at carrying it.

A big vision held badly can repel people.

A big vision held with patience can invite them.

I am still learning that.

Maybe I always will be.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Long Way Back

Relationships are more fragile than projects.

Projects usually tell you when something is broken.

Relationships often don't.

People become quieter.

Responses get shorter.

Invitations stop.

Distance grows.

And because there is no alarm bell, we sometimes don't understand the damage until the silence is enormous.

I have experienced this.

There were periods in my life when the way I communicated, especially through email, damaged relationships with people I cared about.

At the time, I often felt urgency.

I had things I wanted people to understand.

I had convictions.

Ideas.

Frustrations.

Dreams.

I wanted engagement.

But communication that feels urgent to the sender can feel relentless to the receiver.

That distinction changed me.

You cannot force understanding.

You cannot demand closeness.

You cannot argue someone into trust.

Trust returns slowly.

Through consistency.

Through changed behaviour.

Through patience.

Through giving someone room to decide for themselves what they think of you now.

This is difficult for action-oriented people.

We want to fix things.

Send the message.

Make the call.

Explain.

Clarify.

Apologize.

Then perhaps explain the apology.

But some things cannot be accelerated.

If you have hurt trust, the most convincing apology may eventually be your life.

Not one grand gesture.

A hundred small ones.

Calmer communication.

Respect.

Restraint.

Kindness without an agenda.

Showing up differently.

Then eventually someone notices.

Maybe they say:

"You seem like yourself again."

Few sentences can mean more.

Because reconciliation is not merely getting someone back.

It is becoming a person with whom reconnection is safe.

That takes time.

There is vision here too.

Not all dreams are businesses.

Sometimes the dream is simply:

I would like us to be okay again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Love Arrives Late

For much of my life, romantic partnership was not the centre of my story.

Then Christy arrived.

Some of life's greatest gifts have very poor respect for our preferred timelines.

They come late.

Or what we call late.

We act as though life has fixed deadlines.

Love by thirty.

Career by forty.

Security by fifty.

Then coast.

But life does not care about our schedule.

Sometimes the relationship that changes everything appears after decades of living without it.

And when it does, you realize how many things you did not understand before.

Love changed my relationship with time.

Before, time was often something to use.

Now it is something to share.

That is different.

An hour with someone you love is not valuable because of what gets accomplished.

Its value is the hour.

This may sound obvious.

It wasn't always obvious to me.

I spent years measuring life through progress.

Now I increasingly measure parts of it through presence.

Was I there?

Did I listen?

Did I notice?

Did we laugh?

Did I make her feel loved?

Did I put the phone down?

Did I choose the person over the project when the person needed me?

These are not small questions.

They are probably among the largest.

Love is also wonderfully disruptive to ego.

Your grand theory about the future becomes less impressive when someone needs you to take out the garbage.

That is healthy.

The person building a vision for humanity still has dishes.

The man imagining ten thousand destination centres still needs to remember the groceries.

The writer still has laundry.

The visionary still needs to be kind when tired.

Home is where grandiosity meets reality.

And if you are fortunate, reality is more beautiful.

I would rather be loved in a small apartment than admired from
a distant stage.

Recognition cannot cuddle you.

Applause cannot know you.

A reputation cannot kiss you goodnight.

Love can.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Enough

One of the hardest words for an ambitious person is enough.

Enough money.

Enough recognition.

Enough work.

Enough planning.

Enough.

There is always another level.

That is what ambition tells us.

And technically, ambition is correct.

There is always another level.

You can earn more.

Build more.

Reach more people.

Improve more.

Write another book.

Open another location.

Add another goal.

Expand the vision.

But there is a spiritual and emotional danger in living without any concept of enough.

Because if nothing is ever enough, you are never allowed to arrive anywhere.

Every achievement immediately becomes insufficient.

Every blessing becomes merely a platform.

Every moment becomes raw material for the next moment.

That can make a person remarkably productive.

It can also make a person impossible to satisfy.

Enough does not mean giving up.

Enough means being able to experience completion inside an unfinished life.

I can want more tomorrow and still be grateful today.

I can dream of extraordinary future possibilities and still say:

For this moment, I have enough.

Enough food.

Enough shelter.

Enough love.

Enough beauty.

Enough purpose.

Enough breath.

Enough.

That word creates peace.

And peace does something surprising.

It makes ambition healthier.

When you don't need the next achievement to prove your worth, you can pursue it more freely.

You can experiment.

You can fail.

You can change direction.

You can enjoy the work.

You stop making the dream responsible for saving you.

The dream becomes something you serve rather than something you worship.

That is a major difference.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

From Success to Significance

When you're young, success often means proving yourself.

Can I do it?

Can I win?

Can I build it?

Can I earn it?

Can I become someone?

These are natural questions.

Then, if you're fortunate, another question emerges.

What is all of this for?

That question changes everything.

Experience.

Contacts.

Knowledge.

Money.

Ideas.

Influence.

Energy.

What are they for?

Accumulation alone eventually feels empty.

At some point, I became less interested in the question:

"What can I accomplish?"

And increasingly interested in:

"What can I contribute?"

That is the movement from success toward significance.

Significance is not necessarily bigger.

Sometimes it is smaller.

You can build a billion-dollar company and contribute very little to someone's inner life.

You can also spend twenty minutes listening to a lonely person and alter the course of their week.

Scale matters.

Depth matters too.

I want both.

That has become a recurring theme in my life.

Big and small.

Global and local.

Ten thousand centres and one neighbour.

Technology and touch.

Vision and presence.

The world and the person standing in front of me.

I don't believe these are contradictions.

I think they are partners.

A global vision that has no tenderness for individuals becomes abstract.

Personal kindness that never asks how systems could improve can remain limited.

We need people who can hold both.

The architecture and the person.

The system and the story.

The future and breakfast.

Perhaps that is the kind of life I am trying to build now.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The First Centre Is a Person

For years, when I imagined a NuVoWay LifeStyle Centre, I imagined a place.

A facility.

Fitness.

Health.

Learning.

Food.

Community.

Support.

Activities.

Coaching.

A place designed around helping people thrive.

I still believe deeply in physical centres.

But lately I have begun to see something else.

Before the building comes the person.

A centre can begin in a human being.

Someone who notices.

Someone who connects people.

Someone who knows names.

Someone who asks:

"How are you really doing?"

Someone who can point a neighbour toward help.

Someone who celebrates progress.

Someone who watches out for the person who seems to have disappeared.

Someone who introduces two people who should know one another.

Someone who makes belonging easier.

That person becomes a kind of living community centre.

This is how I began thinking about the role I now call a NuVoWay LifeStyle Coach.

Not merely a fitness coach.

Not a therapist.

Not a financial advisor.

Not a pastor.

Not a doctor.

But a connector.

An encourager.

A consistent human presence.

Someone who helps another person move from surviving toward thriving.

The professional expertise still comes from professionals.

The coach helps make sure the person does not have to navigate life completely alone.

Imagine one such person for every hundred people.

Not controlling them.

Not judging them.

Knowing them.

Helping.

Connecting.

Encouraging.

Now imagine hundreds of these people in one neighbourhood.

Then thousands of neighbourhoods.

The system suddenly becomes less theoretical.

You begin with names.

Always names.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Names

There is a moment when a stranger stops being a stranger.

Often, it is when you learn the name.

Before that, someone is:

The man with the dog.

The woman from the third floor.

The guy who works at Metro.

The person at the bus stop.

Then:

Darren.

Susan.

Maria.

Aaron.

David.

A name changes perception.

A category becomes a person.

This is one of the simplest forms of human dignity.

Learn someone's name.

Remember it.

Use it.

I am fascinated by how much this matters.

We live in cities surrounded by thousands of people and can remain profoundly anonymous.

We share elevators with the same people for years.

Walk the same streets.

Shop in the same stores.

Wait at the same bus stops.

We recognize faces without knowing stories.

Urban life can create physical proximity and emotional distance at the same time.

It doesn't have to.

The first intervention costs nothing.

"Hi. I'm Ross."

That sentence can begin a community.

Not every person wants to talk.

That must be respected.

Friendliness is an invitation, not an obligation.

But many people are waiting for someone else to begin.

Someone has to risk the first hello.

Someone has to be willing to look slightly foolish.

Someone has to wave first.

Why not me?

Why not you?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Architecture of Belonging

If I were designing a community from scratch, I would begin with one goal:

Make it easier for people to know one another.

That sounds almost too simple.

But think about how many problems worsen in isolation.

Loneliness.

Depression.

Fear.

Mistrust.

Misunderstanding.

Neighbourhood conflict.

Even practical hardship becomes heavier when nobody knows you are struggling.

Belonging does not solve everything.

It changes the conditions in which everything gets faced.

Imagine an elderly person who lives alone.

If nobody knows her, a missed day is invisible.

If twenty neighbours know her, absence becomes information.

"Has anyone seen Margaret?"

That one question can matter enormously.

Imagine a young family struggling financially.

In an anonymous environment, they struggle privately.

In a connected environment, perhaps someone knows about a food program, a school resource, a job opening, donated furniture or childcare support.

Connection creates circulation.

Information circulates.

Help circulates.

Opportunity circulates.

Care circulates.

This is why I increasingly see community as infrastructure.

Roads move cars.

Pipes move water.

Networks move information.

Relationships move care.

And care may be the most important thing we distribute.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Money Is Not the Only Currency

We have become very good at measuring money.

Almost everything has a price.

Very little has a value we agree how to measure.

What is the economic value of a neighbour preventing another neighbour from becoming isolated?

What is the value of a teenager finding a mentor?

What is the value of an elderly woman feeling safe walking to the store because people know her?

What is the value of a volunteer helping someone fill out a form?

What is the value of a conversation that prevents despair?

Our economic systems are excellent at measuring transactions.

They are weaker at measuring human flourishing.

This has shaped my thinking about A NuVo World.

Money matters in the world we currently inhabit.

Projects need financing.

People need income.

Buildings need capital.

Food costs money.

Technology costs money.

There is no value in pretending otherwise.

But money is not the ultimate objective.

Human well-being is.

If the financial system becomes the master rather than the tool,
something has gone wrong.

We should judge systems by the lives they produce.

Are people healthier?

Less lonely?

More secure?

More purposeful?

Better connected?

Are children thriving?

Are seniors respected?

Do people have meaningful opportunities?

Does a person have a fair chance to build a good life?

These are the metrics I care about.

Profit can be one measure of viability.

It should never become the full measure of worth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Building Eden

The word Eden carries enormous symbolic weight.

Paradise.

Beginnings.

Harmony.

A world before everything became complicated.

I am not interested in returning to an imaginary past.

I am interested in asking what humanity can create next.

That is what **Journey to Eden** means to me.

Not escape.

Creation.

Imagine a game in which winning does not primarily mean destroying an opponent.

Imagine instead that the challenge is building the most flourishing civilization possible.

Housing.

Food.

Health.

Transportation.

Education.

Environment.

Relationships.

Culture.

Purpose.

Community.

How do your choices interact?

What happens when efficiency destroys belonging?

What happens when unlimited consumption destroys the environment?

What happens when technology improves convenience but increases loneliness?

What happens when housing becomes financially successful but socially inaccessible?

These are fascinating game mechanics because they are fascinating human problems.

And unlike a book or a film, a game lets someone make the decisions.

Try.

Fail.

Revise.

Build again.

What if millions of people learned to think like community designers simply by playing?

That idea excites me.

Because cultural transformation needs imagination before implementation.

People have to be able to see a different world.

Then perhaps they will help build it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Come Away With Me

The film is different.

Movies enter through emotion.

An argument can change your mind.

A story can change your heart.

Come Away With Me asks a dangerous question.

What if the thing humanity said it was waiting for had already happened—and we failed to recognize it?

At its heart, the story is not merely about identity.

It is about recognition.

How do we decide whom to believe?

How do we treat someone whose claim challenges our assumptions?

What happens when certainty collides with mystery?

What if humanity's greatest expectations blind us to whatever arrives in an unexpected form?

These questions reach beyond one story.

We do this constantly.

We imagine what success should look like.

What love should look like.

What wisdom should look like.

What leadership should look like.

Then reality arrives wearing the wrong clothes.

And we walk past it.

A film can explore that tension in a way an explanation cannot.

It can make the audience feel uncertainty.

Compassion.

Discomfort.

Wonder.

Skepticism.

Hope.

I don't want people leaving the film being told what to think.

I want them leaving with a question they cannot easily dismiss.

Great art does that.

It follows you home.

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Impossible Deadline

Dreamers love deadlines.

Especially impossible ones.

There is something energizing about declaring a date before every detail is solved.

It creates momentum.

It forces decisions.

It prevents endless deliberation.

But there is a danger here too.

A deadline can serve the dream.

Or the dream can become a servant of the deadline.

Those are very different things.

I have set ambitious dates many times in my life.

Sometimes they create miracles.

People focus.

Problems get solved.

Unnecessary steps disappear.

Other times, reality simply refuses to cooperate.

Then maturity asks:

What matters more?

The date?

Or the quality and integrity of what is being created?

There is no universal answer.

Sometimes shipping imperfectly is better than waiting forever.

Sometimes rushing destroys the thing you were trying to build.

Wisdom is knowing which moment you're in.

I still love audacious deadlines.

I probably always will.

They make my blood move.

But I am learning to hold them differently.

A deadline is a target.

Not a god.

If something meaningful takes longer, I want enough humility to let it take longer.

If a simpler version can begin sooner, I want enough pragmatism to begin.

Vision should create urgency.

It should not create panic.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Who Is the Dream For?

This may be the most important test of any enormous vision.

Who is it for?

If the honest answer is:

Me—

be careful.

There is nothing wrong with personal dreams.

I wanted championships for myself.

There is nothing immoral about wanting achievement.

But when a dream grows large enough to affect communities, organizations, thousands or millions of people, motive matters enormously.

Who benefits?

Who decides?

Who pays?

Who has a voice?

Who might be harmed?

Who gets overlooked?

A beautiful vision can become dangerous when the visionary loves the idea more than the people living inside it.

That sentence is worth repeating.

Never love your vision more than the people it is supposed to serve.

If the people don't want something, listen.

If they want it differently, listen.

If your system works beautifully on paper but badly in their lives, the paper is wrong.

This is an important evolution in my own thinking.

A NuVo World cannot be something one person imposes.

It must be something people co-create.

That changes the role of the visionary.

You are not the ruler.

You are the initiator.

The inviter.

The storyteller.

Maybe the architect of the first sketch.

Then other people arrive with pencils.

And erasers.

Especially erasers.

That is co-creation.

You begin the picture.

You do not insist on finishing it alone.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Humility of a Prototype

I love enormous visions.

But enormous visions should often begin embarrassingly small.

A pilot.

A prototype.

A block.

A single program.

One hundred people.

One centre.

One neighbourhood.

Something small enough to fail without catastrophe.

Something real enough to teach you.

This is where my thinking about NDG becomes important.

Why try to solve the whole world first?

Start where you live.

What would happen if one neighbourhood became dramatically more connected?

Could we reduce loneliness?

Improve access to food?

Help seniors?

Support families?

Create easier transportation?

Make recreation available?

Connect people with health resources?

Create neighbourhood coaches?

Encourage local businesses?

Make people feel more known?

These questions are actionable.

You can test them.

You can measure them.

You can learn.

Then the big vision gains evidence.

That is how dreams become systems.

Not through certainty.

Through prototypes.

The prototype is humility in physical form.

It says:

"We believe this may work.

Let's find out."

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A Better Definition of Greatness

For most of history, we have admired greatness in visible forms.

Kings.

Generals.

Athletes.

Celebrities.

Billionaires.

Presidents.

Founders.

People whose names become known.

There is another form of greatness that is much quieter.

The person who cares consistently.

The neighbour who notices.

The parent who shows up.

The teacher who stays late.

The nurse who remembers.

The volunteer nobody interviews.

The friend who answers.

The spouse who remains tender.

The person who forgives.

The person who changes.

The person who makes someone else feel less alone.

Maybe greatness should be measured partly by how people feel after being around us.

Do they feel larger?

Safer?

Seen?

Encouraged?

Or diminished?

That test is uncomfortable.

It is also useful.

I still want to build large things.

I do not apologize for that.

But I want to become increasingly careful about how I build them and how I move through the world while building them.

I want the people around the dream to matter more than the image of the dreamer.

That is a better kind of greatness.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

When Nobody Applauds

There are seasons when nobody applauds.

No headlines.

No recognition.

No big win.

You keep showing up anyway.

This may be where character actually develops.

Success gives you feedback.

Ordinary life often doesn't.

You hold the door.

Nobody notices.

You greet someone.

They barely respond.

You write.

Nobody reads it.

You send an idea.

Nobody answers.

You improve your behaviour.

The people you hurt remain cautious.

You keep going.

This is where ego gets separated from purpose.

Am I doing the thing because it is good?

Or because I want to be seen doing the good thing?

That question can sting.

Most of us have mixed motives.

I certainly do.

We want to help.

And we like being appreciated.

We want to create.

And we like recognition.

We want to serve.

And sometimes we still want our name on the building.

Human beings are complicated.

The answer isn't pretending ego disappears.

The answer is learning not to let ego drive.

Do the work.

Let the applause be optional.

That is freedom.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

A Life in Draft Form

I have written many books.

There is something comforting about writing.

You can revise.

Delete.

Move paragraphs.

Change titles.

Clarify.

Start a chapter over.

Life feels permanent while we are living it, but in another sense, life is also constantly being revised.

You cannot delete yesterday.

But you can change what yesterday means.

A failure can become education.

A broken relationship can become humility.

A loss can become gratitude.

A wrong turn can become the road that introduced you to something essential.

We revise the meaning through what we do next.

That is hopeful.

Your past is fixed.

Your story is not.

The final chapter has not been written while you are still here.

I like thinking of my life as a manuscript in progress.

Some chapters make me proud.

Some I would write differently.

Some are funny.

Some painful.

Some confusing.

Some extraordinary.

But all of them brought me to this page.

And this page is blank until I live it.

So is yours.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

The North Star

Every life needs something larger than mood.

Mood changes.

Circumstances change.

People disappoint you.

Plans collapse.

Energy rises and falls.

A North Star remains.

For me, True North has become a useful way of thinking about direction.

Not a detailed map.

Direction.

Am I moving toward love or away from it?

Toward contribution or ego?

Toward connection or isolation?

Toward health or neglect?

Toward truth or self-deception?

Toward the person I want to become or away from him?

These are navigation questions.

You don't need perfect conditions to answer them.

You may not know what will happen five years from now.

You can still know whether today's choice points north.

This is one of the gifts of vision.

A good vision simplifies decisions.

Not all of them.

But many.

You know what kind of life you are trying to build.

Then you ask:

Does this belong in it?

Does this relationship support it?

Does this habit strengthen it?

Does this project serve it?

Does this communication reflect it?

Does this use of my time move me toward it?

The North Star does not tell you every turn.

It keeps you from forgetting the destination.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

The Ordinary Sacred

I used to think sacred moments would feel sacred.

They would announce themselves.

Music might swell.

Light would pour through stained glass.

Something unmistakable would happen.

Now I think most sacred moments arrive wearing ordinary clothes.

A hand on your shoulder.

Someone saying your name.

The smell of dinner.

A dog asleep near your feet.

A quiet drive.

A shared joke.

Someone waiting for you to come home.

The first sip of tea.

A walk before the city wakes.

These things are easy to miss precisely because they happen often.

Familiarity hides miracles.

We become accustomed to people.

Accustomed to health.

Accustomed to food.

Accustomed to warmth.

Accustomed to mobility.

Accustomed to waking up.

Then something changes and suddenly the ordinary becomes precious.

Maybe gratitude is the practice of discovering value before loss teaches it to you.

I want more of that.

Not someday.

Now.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Don't Wait for Permission

Nobody appoints you to your own life.

There is no committee that eventually sends a letter saying:

"You are now authorized to begin."

If you want to write, write.

If you want to build something, begin.

If you want to know your neighbours, introduce yourself.

If you want to improve your health, start walking.

If you want to repair a relationship, change your side of it.

If you have an idea, sketch it.

If you want to create a better neighbourhood, pick one thing.

Do not confuse permission with preparation.

Preparation matters.

Competence matters.

Expertise matters.

But endless preparation can become fear wearing respectable clothing.

At some point, the person you are waiting to become is created by doing the thing you are waiting to be ready for.

You learn by beginning.

This does not mean recklessness.

It means movement.

One step.

Then evidence.

Then adjustment.

Then another step.

You don't need permission to care.

You don't need permission to imagine.

You don't need permission to start small.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

What I Would Tell the Boy

If I could sit beside the boy who dreamed of professional hockey, I wonder what I would say.

I would not tell him what happens.

That would ruin it.

I would not warn him away from the disappointments.

They taught too much.

I would not make his dreams smaller.

I might make them even bigger.

But I would tell him this:

You are going to become many people.

Don't be frightened when one dream ends.

Another will come.

You will win things.

Don't mistake winning for worth.

You will lose things.

Don't mistake losing for identity.

Some people will misunderstand you.

Listen anyway.

Some criticism will be wrong.

Some will save you.

Learn the difference.

You will love ideas.

Love people more.

You will work hard.

Learn to stop.

You will spend years imagining the future.

Remember to look at the person beside you.

You will think greatness is far away.

Sometimes it will be sitting at breakfast.

You will try to change the world.

Good.

But start with your own behaviour.

And when you finally find someone you love deeply, don't treat ordinary time together as ordinary.

It isn't.

Then I think I would smile.

Because the boy probably wouldn't understand most of it.

I didn't either.

That is why we have to live.

CHAPTER FORTY

The Second Half May Be Bigger

People speak about the second half of life as though the game is nearly over.

I don't experience it that way.

I feel a peculiar combination of urgency and possibility.

Urgency because time is obviously not unlimited.

Possibility because I finally know more clearly what I care about.

Maybe youth has more years.

Age has more compression.

You become less willing to waste time on things that do not matter.

At least, that is the hope.

I don't want my remaining years to be a quieter imitation of my earlier years.

I want them to become more focused.

More loving.

More useful.

More courageous.

And somehow less frantic.

That combination interests me.

More impact.

Less noise.

More vision.

Less ego.

More work that matters.

Less work merely to stay busy.

More people.

Fewer performances.

More truth.

More tenderness.

If I can do that, the second half will not be an epilogue.

It may be the main story.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

The World Does Not Need Another Saviour

The world does not need one heroic person to fix everything.

That fantasy is dangerous.

The world needs participants.

Millions of them.

People improving the square meter around them.

Then ten meters.

Then a block.

Then a community.

Some people will build companies.

Some will teach.

Some will care for children.

Some will design systems.

Some will make music.

Some will grow food.

Some will coach.

Some will volunteer.

Some will invent.

Some will simply become the person in their building who knows everyone.

All of it matters.

I no longer think the central question is:

Who will save the world?

The better question is:

What part of the world is mine to care for?

Then care for it.

That is manageable.

And if enough people do that, something enormous happens without anyone needing to become enormous themselves.

Maybe that is how Heaven on Earth is actually built.

Distributed love.

Distributed responsibility.

Distributed imagination.

Everyone carrying a piece.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

The Dream Is Not Finished

I am still dreaming.

That may be the simplest way to describe me.

The dreams are large.

Sometimes absurdly large.

A NuVo World.

G3 destinations around the globe.

NuVoWay LifeStyle Centres.

A film.

A game.

Communities built around human flourishing.

Projects I cannot yet see the full path toward.

I don't know exactly how much of it will become real.

That uncertainty no longer bothers me as much as it once did.

My responsibility is not to control the final outcome.

My responsibility is to continue becoming capable of serving the vision well.

To write.

To connect.

To learn.

To invite.

To listen.

To revise.

To love.

To show up.

To notice.

To take the next step.

And then perhaps, at the end of the day, to close the computer.

Walk into the other room.

Find Christy.

Kiss her.

Make tea.

Maybe watch another episode of *Columbo*.

Because the dream will still be there tomorrow.

And this evening will not.

That may be the most important thing I know now.

The future deserves our imagination.

The present deserves our presence.

Give both everything you have.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

What If It Doesn't Happen?

There is a question every serious dreamer eventually has to face.

What if it doesn't happen?

What if the company never becomes what you imagined?

What if the book doesn't reach millions?

What if the film is never made?

What if the building remains a drawing?

What if the people you hoped would join you never come?

What if the world does not change in the way you pictured?

Was the dream wasted?

I don't think so.

I used to measure dreams primarily by realization.

You imagine something.

You pursue it.

You achieve it.

Success.

Or you don't.

Failure.

Life has taught me that the equation is much more complicated.

A dream changes the dreamer.

That alone matters.

To pursue something difficult, you must learn.

You must reach.

You must meet people.

You must develop abilities you didn't possess.

You must confront weaknesses you might otherwise have ignored.

You must become comfortable with uncertainty.

You must get back up.

You must discover what matters enough to keep pursuing when applause disappears.

Sometimes the person created by the pursuit is more important than the thing being pursued.

That doesn't mean outcomes don't matter.

Of course they matter.

I want my dreams to become real.

I don't spend hours imagining A NuVo World because I merely enjoy the exercise.

I want to see it.

I want to walk through it.

I want other people to experience it.

I want **Come Away With Me** to become a film.

I want **A NuVo World – Journey to Eden – Co-Create Heaven on Earth** to become an extraordinary interactive experience.

I want communities designed around helping people thrive.

I want the dream embodied.

But I am learning not to make my peace dependent upon the outcome.

That is a different kind of faith.

Work as though it depends upon you.

Release the illusion that everything depends upon you.

There is freedom in that.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Ask for Great Things

I believe there is value in asking for great things.

Not because we are entitled to receive everything we ask for.

We aren't.

But because the size of our asking reveals the size of our imagination.

Too often we censor the dream before life has the opportunity to answer.

We say:

That's ridiculous.

That's too much.

Who am I to ask for that?

Who am I to imagine that?

Who am I to build that?

Maybe the better question is:

Who am I not to?

If the dream is rooted in love—

if it seeks to create beauty—

if it helps people—

if it expands possibility—

if it gives rather than merely takes—

why make it smaller merely to avoid appearing foolish?

Ask.

Imagine.

Write it down.

Say it aloud.

Then hold it with open hands.

That last part matters.

There is a difference between asking boldly and demanding that life conform to your script.

I have written many scripts for my future.

Life has rewritten most of them.

Sometimes painfully.

Sometimes magnificently.

There have been things I thought I absolutely needed that never arrived.

There have been things I never knew to ask for that became treasures.

Christy is one of them.

How could I have perfectly planned for a person I had not met?

I couldn't.

Life contains gifts outside our imagination.

That is why vision must coexist with openness.

Dream boldly.

Ask boldly.

Work boldly.

And leave enough room for the possibility that something better may arrive wearing a form you never anticipated.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Let Go and Let God

There is a phrase that has become increasingly important to me:

Let go and let God.

It sounds passive.

I don't experience it that way.

Letting go is not doing nothing.

It is doing what you can without pretending you control everything.

That is difficult for builders.

We like control.

Plans.

Timelines.

Objectives.

Budgets.

Milestones.

Responsibilities.

I still believe in all of them.

But there comes a point where effort reaches its boundary.

You send the letter.

You make the proposal.

You prepare the presentation.

You do the work.

Then another person decides.

The market decides.

Circumstances intervene.

Timing intervenes.

Life intervenes.

At that point, worry adds nothing.

This has been an important lesson for me, especially with the dreams that matter most.

I can develop the treatment.

I can refine the blueprint.

I can write the book.

I can contact people.

I can explain the vision.

I can keep improving the work.

I can show up.

What I cannot do is force another human being to say yes.

I cannot force timing.

I cannot command the future.

There is tremendous peace in recognizing the boundary.

Do your part completely.

Then release what isn't yours.

Tomorrow, if another step becomes available, take it.

Until then, live.

This is where the enormous dream and the small life meet again.

While waiting for the giant door to open, don't spend your entire life standing in the hallway staring at it.

There are other rooms.

Go live in them.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

The People God Puts in the Car

I sometimes imagine my life as a vehicle.

For much of my younger life, I thought I was driving.

I picked the destination.

I held the steering wheel.

I pushed the accelerator.

I decided who belonged in the passenger seat.

Life has gradually complicated that picture.

Now I sometimes think God is driving.

I am still responsible for what I do inside the vehicle.

I can look out the window.

I can talk with the people beside me.

I can learn.

I can help.

I can pay attention.

But I don't always choose the road.

And I certainly don't choose everyone who appears along it.

People enter your life.

Some remain for decades.

Some stay for a year.

Some for an afternoon.

Some for ten minutes.

Some alter everything.

We tend to rank relationships according to duration.

Maybe that is a mistake.

A stranger can say one sentence that changes your thinking.

A person you meet once can introduce you to someone who becomes central to your life.

A friendship can last forty years.

A marriage can transform your understanding of yourself.

A person walking past a grocery store can become part of your morning.

If I am always looking toward the destination, I miss the passengers.

That may be one of the reasons presence matters so much.

Perhaps the person in front of you is not interrupting your journey.

Perhaps they are part of it.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Vision Needs Other People

One of the great temptations of the visionary is believing that because the vision arrived in your mind, you must also know how to execute every part of it.

That is nonsense.

The larger the vision, the less likely one person possesses all the skills required.

A filmmaker understands things I don't.

A game developer understands things I don't.

An architect does.

An engineer does.

A community organizer does.

A physician does.

A teacher does.

A financial expert does.

A parent raising three children in NDG understands things about family life that I don't.

A person struggling to pay rent understands something about economic pressure that I may not.

A teenager understands their world differently than I do.

A senior living alone sees the neighbourhood differently.

If the vision is truly about people, all those voices matter.

The visionary's job is not to know everything.

It may be to see connections between things other people see separately.

Then bring the right people together.

That is leadership at its healthiest.

Not:

Follow me because I have all the answers.

But:

I see a possibility. What do you see?

That question converts followers into collaborators.

And collaborators build better things.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Courage to Be Wrong

I have been wrong.

Many times.

There.

I said it.

Those may be among the most useful words any ambitious person can learn.

Not:

"I was misunderstood."

Not:

"They didn't see my vision."

Not:

"The world wasn't ready."

Sometimes those things may be true.

But sometimes:

I was wrong.

The idea was wrong.

The approach was wrong.

The timing was wrong.

The way I communicated was wrong.

The assumption was wrong.

Admitting that does not make a person smaller.

It makes growth possible.

There is an enormous difference between confidence and infallibility.

Confidence says:

"I believe strongly enough to act."

Infallibility says:

"I cannot be mistaken."

The first creates.

The second eventually destroys.

I want enough confidence to pursue enormous ideas and enough humility to discover when part of the idea needs changing.

That balance is difficult.

Perhaps impossible to perfect.

But it is worth pursuing.

One of the most dangerous things success can do is convince you that because you were right once, you are right now.

Every new decision deserves examination.

Every new idea deserves testing.

Every person deserves the right to disagree with you.

And sometimes the person who loves you most will be the one who says:

"Ross, I don't think that's a good idea."

Listen.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

The Person Beside the Visionary

There is another person in this story.

Christy.

It would be easy to write a book about enormous dreams and position the visionary at the centre of everything.

That would miss something essential.

Dreamers need people who live with the dreamer.

That is not always easy.

A mind filled with possibilities doesn't necessarily turn itself off at five o'clock.

An idea arrives at dinner.

A thought appears in bed.

A project becomes urgent.

A message suddenly seems as though it absolutely must be sent.

The person beside the dreamer experiences the dream differently.

They experience the human being carrying it.

That means my responsibility is not merely to make the dream successful.

It is to make sure the dream does not become a third person in the marriage demanding all the attention.

There are times when the greatest thing I can do for A NuVo World is stop talking about A NuVo World.

There are times when the film can wait.

The game can wait.

The email can wait.

The document can wait.

Christy is here.

That sounds obvious when written.

It is harder when an idea is burning.

Love requires interruption.

It asks you to become interruptible.

That may be one of the great disciplines of partnership.

To say:

You matter more than whatever is on this screen.

And then prove it.

CHAPTER FIFTY

Heaven on Earth Is Not a Place

When I first began using the phrase **Heaven on Earth**, it naturally evoked a place.

A better world.

Beautiful communities.

Abundance.

Peace.

Health.

Opportunity.

Connection.

People living well.

I still imagine those things.

But my definition has expanded.

Heaven on Earth is not merely a destination.

It is a quality of experience.

It can happen in a mansion.

It can happen in an apartment.

It can happen on a beach.

It can happen in a hospital room.

It can happen at a dinner table.

It can happen on two park benches outside Metro.

It can happen in a kiss.

It can happen when someone who has been lonely realizes another person remembers their name.

It can happen when a friendship heals.

It can happen when someone receives food with dignity.

It can happen when a child discovers what they love.

It can happen when a person feels useful again.

It can happen when someone says:

"I've got you."

Maybe building Heaven on Earth means increasing the frequency of those moments.

That is a much more practical mission.

We don't have to wait for perfection.

We can create one piece today.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

The Mansion and the Apartment

I enjoy imagining beautiful things.

Beautiful homes.

Wonderful hotels.

Extraordinary destinations.

Places around the world.

Comfort.

Freedom.

Travel.

I see nothing inherently virtuous about deprivation.

Beauty can enrich life.

Comfort can create space.

Money can create extraordinary opportunities.

The question is whether we possess these things or they possess us.

I can dream about magnificent residences and still understand that the quality of a home is determined primarily by what happens inside it.

A mansion filled with resentment is not Heaven.

A modest apartment filled with laughter can be.

The square footage doesn't determine love.

The postal code doesn't determine peace.

The view doesn't determine gratitude.

I want beautiful things.

I also want the freedom to enjoy them without needing them to prove anything.

That is a more mature relationship with abundance.

The goal is not to reject wealth.

The goal is to understand wealth.

If you have resources, what can they make possible?

Time?

Beauty?

Generosity?

Experience?

Employment?

Creation?

Hospitality?

Help?

Then wealth becomes a tool.

The danger begins when the tool becomes the score.

Because there is always someone with more.

If comparison determines enough, enough never arrives.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

The Helicopter Dream

I can dream in extraordinary detail.

Not merely:

I'd like to travel.

I can imagine the aircraft.

The colour.

Where it lands.

The view.

The experience.

There is joy in that.

Imagination is fun.

We sometimes make dreaming unnecessarily serious.

A dream can serve humanity.

It can also simply make you smile.

You are allowed to want things.

You are allowed to imagine adventures.

You are allowed to picture yourself stepping into a beautiful helicopter, flying somewhere spectacular with the person you love.

Not every dream requires a moral defense.

But material dreams become healthiest when they sit inside something larger.

I don't want the aircraft to be the life.

I want it to transport us into the life.

To places.

People.

Experiences.

Possibilities.

A vehicle is valuable because of where it takes you.

That is true metaphorically too.

Money is a vehicle.

Business is a vehicle.

Technology is a vehicle.

Influence is a vehicle.

Even vision is a vehicle.

The question remains:

Where are we going?

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

More Than Ten Thousand Rooms

Imagine having access to beautiful places all over the world.

Wonderful rooms.

Wonderful views.

Wonderful destinations.

An extraordinary privilege.

But there is a question more important than how many rooms you can sleep in.

Who is beside you?

I spent much of my life without the relationship I have now.

That changes the dream.

A beautiful hotel room alone is architecture.

A beautiful hotel room with someone you love can become a memory.

The same room.

Different universe.

This is another way Christy has changed my imagination.

My dreams are no longer entirely about what I want to build.

They are also about what I want us to experience.

That tiny pronoun matters.

Us.

The dream becomes shared.

Travel becomes shared.

Home becomes shared.

Meals become shared.

Silence becomes shared.

Life becomes shared.

Perhaps love's greatest gift is not that it adds another person to your life.

It changes the meaning of everything already there.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

The Ministry of Small Things

I am increasingly convinced that the world is held together by small things.

Not speeches.

Not summits.

Not grand strategies.

Those can matter.

But beneath them is another layer.

Someone makes breakfast.

Someone drives a friend to an appointment.

Someone walks the dog.

Someone checks on a neighbour.

Someone volunteers at a food bank.

Someone makes a child laugh.

Someone calls their mother.

Someone holds an elevator.

Someone picks up something another person dropped.

Someone says:

"Good morning."

Civilization rests on millions of tiny acts of cooperation that receive no recognition.

Imagine if they stopped.

The world would become unbearable almost immediately.

Maybe we have celebrated spectacular achievement so loudly that we have forgotten ordinary goodness.

I want to celebrate both.

Build the skyscraper.

And hold the door.

Write the symphony.

And call your friend.

Create the company.

And learn the cleaner's name.

Dream of changing humanity.

And treat the cashier like a human being.

The small thing does not compete with the large thing.

It proves what the large thing is for.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Everybody Is Carrying Something

When you greet a stranger, you know almost nothing about the life approaching you.

They may have just received wonderful news.

They may be terrified.

Their marriage may be ending.

Their child may be sick.

They may have received a promotion.

They may be grieving someone.

They may be lonely.

They may be falling in love.

They may be late for work.

They may simply be thinking about groceries.

You don't know.

That uncertainty should make us gentler.

Everybody is carrying something.

This does not mean we need to interrogate every person we meet.

Sometimes kindness is simply allowing someone to pass without adding weight.

A smile.

A little patience.

Holding the door.

Giving someone the benefit of the doubt.

We often interpret other people's behaviour as being about us.

The driver is rude to me.

The cashier ignored me.

My friend didn't answer me.

Maybe.

Or maybe they are carrying something heavy.

Compassion leaves room for possibilities we cannot see.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

What Would Love Do?

Complicated situations often produce complicated thinking.

We analyze.

Strategize.

Defend.

Predict.

Sometimes a simpler question helps.

What would love do?

Not:

What would weakness do?

Love is not weakness.

Not:

What would make everyone happy?

Love sometimes disappoints.

Not:

What avoids conflict?

Love sometimes requires difficult conversations.

What would love do?

Would love send this message?

Would love send it now?

Would love say less?

Would love listen?

Would love apologize?

Would love establish a boundary?

Would love give the person another chance?

Would love stop chasing someone who clearly needs space?

Would love speak?

Would love remain silent?

This question does not automatically produce easy answers.

But it changes the orientation.

You stop asking:

How do I win?

And begin asking:

How do I act in a way consistent with who I want to be?

That is usually a better question.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

The Discipline of Not Sending

I have written many messages in my life.

Some were important.

Some created opportunities.

Some strengthened relationships.

Some should never have been sent.

Modern technology has removed the natural cooling period from communication.

You can feel something at 2:07 a.m., write it at 2:09 and deliver it at 2:10.

That is astonishing power.

And sometimes a terrible idea.

I have learned that one of the great modern disciplines is not writing.

It is **not sending**.

Write it if you must.

Then wait.

Read it tomorrow.

Ask:

Does this need to be said?

Does it need to be said by me?

Does it need to be said now?

Does it need all these words?

What am I hoping happens when the other person reads it?

Am I communicating?

Or am I unloading?

There is wisdom in the unsent message.

Silence is not always avoidance.

Sometimes silence is maturity.

Sometimes the strongest response is changed behaviour.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

The Return of Friendship

One of life's great pleasures is rediscovering someone.

A friendship that had become strained begins to soften.

You sit together.

Talk.

Laugh.

For a while, the history disappears.

It feels like old times.

Except it isn't old times.

It is something better.

Old affection with new understanding.

I have experienced moments like this.

They remind me that relationships do not always follow straight lines.

People drift.

Collide.

Separate.

Return.

Sometimes the second friendship is wiser than the first.

You appreciate what you once took for granted.

You become more careful.

More grateful.

Less certain that people will always be there.

Reconciliation is one of life's quiet miracles.

It cannot always happen.

Some relationships end.

Some boundaries are necessary.

Some people choose different roads.

But when reconciliation is possible, it is worth treating gently.

Don't demand that everything immediately become what it once was.

Let trust grow at its own speed.

Water it.

Don't pull on the plant to make it grow faster.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

Planting Trees You May Never Sit Under

Some dreams are too large for one lifetime.

That does not make them foolish.

Human civilization exists because people planted trees whose shade they knew they might never enjoy.

Scientists worked on problems whose solutions arrived generations later.

Parents sacrificed for children.

Builders laid foundations.

Teachers influenced students who influenced others.

Ideas traveled farther than their originators.

Maybe A NuVo World will unfold exactly as I imagine.

Maybe it won't.

Maybe pieces of it will.

Maybe someone younger will take one idea and make it far better.

Good.

The dream does not need to remain mine in order to matter.

That is another form of letting go.

If you genuinely want the outcome, you cannot insist upon owning every part of it.

Plant the seed.

Explain it clearly.

Nurture it.

Protect it when necessary.

Then allow it to become something you could not have built alone.

Legacy is not controlling the future.

Legacy is contributing something useful to it.

CHAPTER SIXTY

The World After Me

There will be a world after me.

That sentence becomes less theoretical as you age.

For a child, life feels almost infinite.

At sixty-five, infinity looks different.

I don't find this depressing.

I find it clarifying.

What do I want to leave?

Not merely assets.

Not merely books.

Not merely companies.

Not merely buildings.

Ideas.

Relationships.

Examples.

Maybe some systems.

Maybe stories.

Maybe a film.

Maybe a game.

Maybe centres.

Maybe people who became more hopeful because something I created helped them imagine differently.

And perhaps a few people who simply remember:

Ross always said hello.

I would be happy with that too.

We often think legacy must be monumental.

But most human legacy is personal.

Someone repeats something you taught them.

Someone treats their child differently because of what they learned from you.

Someone becomes generous because you were generous to them.

Someone begins saying hello because you once said hello first.

You never know how far a small act travels.

Legacy is partly what remains after your name disappears.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

I Don't Want to Retire

I have never been attracted to the traditional idea of retirement.

Stop doing meaningful things at a predetermined age?

Why?

If work is destroying you, retire from that work.

If your job has become empty, change it if you can.

If you have spent decades waiting to travel, travel.

Rest.

Play.

Do absolutely nothing for a while.

But purpose?

Why retire from purpose?

I hope I am creating until very near the end.

Writing.

Thinking.

Helping.

Dreaming.

Talking.

Building.

Learning.

Loving.

Not because I am afraid to stop.

Because I enjoy being alive.

I don't want a permanent vacation from life.

I want a life I don't need to escape.

That is different.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

The Richest Day

Imagine two days.

On the first, you make an enormous amount of money.

You spend the entire day stressed.

You barely speak to anyone you love.

You eat badly.

You don't go outside.

You fall asleep exhausted and irritated.

On the second, you make almost nothing.

You wake rested.

You share breakfast with someone you love.

You go for a beautiful walk.

You have a meaningful conversation.

You help somebody.

You laugh.

You eat a good dinner.

You watch the sunset.

You sleep peacefully.

Which was the richer day?

The answer is obvious.

And yet our accounting systems would record only the first one as productive.

Maybe we need better accounting.

A life ledger.

Love.

Health.

Purpose.

Friendship.

Beauty.

Contribution.

Peace.

Adventure.

Growth.

Laughter.

Time.

Money belongs on the list.

It simply shouldn't occupy every line.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Ten Thousand Dreams and One Morning

I can wake before dawn with ten thousand thoughts.

Ideas.

Plans.

Messages.

Possibilities.

Projects.

I can begin working immediately and disappear into them.

Then morning arrives outside while I am staring at a screen.

I don't want to miss too many mornings that way.

So I go outside.

I sit.

People appear.

Good morning.

Have a great day.

Someone waves.

Someone stops.

Someone tells me something about their life.

Then I walk home.

Christy is there.

Tea.

A kiss.

Perhaps a walk.

The enormous vision remains.

Nothing has been lost.

In fact, something has been added.

Reality.

The dream needs reality.

Otherwise it becomes abstraction.

If I want to create communities for human beings, I need to keep meeting human beings.

If I want to build Heaven on Earth, I should probably pay attention whenever a tiny piece of Heaven appears.

That is field research of the best possible kind.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

What Success Looks Like Now

Ask me today what success looks like and my answer is different than it once would have been.

Yes, I want the projects.

I want the film made.

I want the game developed.

I want A NuVo World to grow.

I want extraordinary centres.

I want ideas to spread.

I want financial abundance.

I want beautiful experiences.

I want to create at a very large scale.

I am not pretending otherwise.

But I also want something I might once have placed farther down the list.

I want peace.

I want a beautiful marriage.

I want trusted friendships.

I want health.

I want mornings I enjoy.

I want work I love.

I want to be useful.

I want to be able to sit still without feeling that I am falling behind.

I want to notice my life.

That last one may be the most important.

I want to notice my life while I am living it.

What good is having an extraordinary life if you are mentally absent for most of it?

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Sixty-Five

I am sixty-five.

I like saying that.

Not because sixty-five is particularly magical.

Because I am here.

There were sixty-five years required to reach this morning.

Every mistake.

Every victory.

Every friendship.

Every argument.

Every business.

Every dream.

Every disappointment.

Every meal.

Every mile.

Every kiss.

Every person.

Every ordinary Tuesday.

All of it arrived here.

I don't know how many pages remain.

Nobody does.

That is not a reason to become afraid.

It is a reason to become awake.

I want to use the time.

But not merely productively.

Fully.

There is a difference.

A full day might include three hours of excellent work.

A long walk.

A ridiculous conversation.

A nap.

A meal.

Music.

Helping somebody.

Watching television beside the woman I love.

That can be a very full day.

Maybe fullness, not busyness, is the better ambition.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Your Dream Is Allowed to Be Yours

Not everyone will understand your dream.

They don't need to.

Not everyone will want it.

They don't need to.

Not everyone will believe in it.

They don't need to.

But be careful.

There is a difference between not needing approval and refusing feedback.

Your dream is yours.

The consequences of your actions may affect other people.

That means both courage and responsibility matter.

Dream boldly enough to withstand skepticism.

Listen carefully enough to detect truth inside criticism.

Then choose.

You are the one who has to live your life.

There are few things sadder than abandoning something meaningful merely because people laughed.

There are also few things more destructive than refusing to reconsider a harmful course merely because you have labelled persistence a virtue.

Wisdom lives somewhere between.

Be stubborn about purpose.

Be flexible about method.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

Do It Now

There are dreams that require ten million dollars.

There are dreams that require permission.

There are dreams that require partners.

There are dreams that require years.

But many of the things that make life better can begin before lunch.

Call someone.

Walk outside.

Write one page.

Clean the room.

Say thank you.

Apply.

Introduce yourself.

Forgive if you can.

Apologize if you should.

Make the appointment.

Turn off the television.

Turn on the music.

Invite someone for coffee.

Tell the person you love that you love them.

Start.

We overestimate what must happen before life can improve.

Sometimes the first move is embarrassingly available.

Do it now.

Not everything.

One thing.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

The Last Championship

I once understood championships through competition.

Someone wins.

Someone loses.

There is a score.

A trophy.

A ranking.

Life's final championship is different.

There may be no opponent.

Maybe the ultimate competition is between the person we could become and the habits that keep us from becoming them.

Can I become kinder?

Can I become wiser?

Can I listen better?

Can I love more freely?

Can I remain ambitious without becoming consumed?

Can I admit when I am wrong?

Can I forgive?

Can I receive forgiveness?

Can I enjoy enough while still pursuing more?

Can I leave people better than I found them?

Can I build without losing myself?

Can I dream without missing today?

That is a championship worth training for.

And unlike sport, there is no age division.

You can improve until your final day.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

The View From Here

From where I stand now, my life does not look like a straight line.

It looks like a constellation.

Hockey.

Golf.

Racquetball.

Veterinary medicine.

Restaurants.

Fitness.

Business.

NuVo.

G3.

Writing.

Music.

Community.

Christy.

A NuVo World.

Come Away With Me.

Journey to Eden.

Two benches.

Raspberry jam.

Viewed separately, some of those points seem unrelated.

Connect them and a picture emerges.

Competition taught excellence.

Business taught creation.

Failures taught humility.

Relationships taught patience.

Community taught presence.

Love taught enough.

Dreams taught possibility.

And ordinary life taught me what all the dreaming was for.

Maybe your life looks scattered too.

Don't assume the picture is missing simply because you cannot see it yet.

Keep collecting the stars.

The constellation may become visible later.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

Build the Castle. Smell the Flowers.

If I had to reduce this entire book to six words, perhaps these would be them:

Build the castle. Smell the flowers.

Build the castle.

Imagine something magnificent.

Stretch yourself.

Create.

Work.

Risk.

Attempt things that may fail.

Make the call.

Write the book.

Build the company.

Start the movement.

Pursue excellence.

Ask for great things.

Refuse to shrink your life merely because somebody else is uncomfortable with its scale.

Build the castle.

But smell the flowers.

Look around.

Notice the weather.

Know your neighbours.

Eat slowly sometimes.

Call your friends.

Love your spouse.

Play with the dog.

Listen to music.

Take the walk.

Watch *Columbo*.

Make tea.

Laugh at stupid things.

Rest without guilt.

Let someone else talk.

Hold the door.

Say good morning.

Look at the person you love when they are not looking at you
and understand that this ordinary moment will not exist forever.

Smell the flowers.

Because the castle may take twenty years.

And life is happening today.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

If Everything Comes True

Sometimes I imagine everything coming true.

Not cautiously.

Completely.

A NuVo World flourishing around the globe.

Thousands upon thousands of destinations.

NuVoWay LifeStyle Centres helping people thrive.

G3 Golf.

Hotels.

Entertainment.

Performance halls.

Beautiful communities.

The film reaching people around the world.

Journey to Eden becoming a global experience of imagination and co-creation.

Financial abundance beyond anything I need personally.

Beautiful places to live.

Travel.

Freedom.

Opportunity.

The ability to fund ideas that matter.

Everything.

Then I ask myself:

What would I do tomorrow morning?

And the answer makes me smile.

I would probably wake early.

I would make tea.

I would kiss Christy.

I would go outside.

I would say good morning to somebody.

Maybe sit on a bench.

Maybe take a walk.

Perhaps talk to a stranger.

Then I would come home.

And work on something.

That tells me something important.

The best dream is not one that rescues you from your life.

It is one that enlarges a life you already love.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

If None of It Comes True

Now imagine the opposite.

Suppose the giant version never happens.

No ten thousand destinations.

No global phenomenon.

No enormous financial outcome.

Suppose the vision remains only partly realized.

Would my life have been meaningless?

Of course not.

I loved.

I competed.

I built.

I wrote.

I failed.

I learned.

I met extraordinary people.

I reconciled with people.

I discovered community.

I found Christy.

I sat on benches.

I walked through my neighbourhood.

I tried.

That last one matters enormously.

I tried.

There is dignity in a sincere attempt.

The world is shaped not only by people who succeeded.

It is shaped by people who tried things that taught the next person what to do.

So I will continue pursuing the enormous outcome.

But I refuse to allow its uncertainty to hold today's happiness hostage.

That is freedom.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

What I Want You to Remember

If you remember nothing else from these pages, remember this.

You are allowed to dream ridiculously big.

You are also allowed to enjoy a ridiculously small life.

In fact, I recommend both.

Have a vision larger than yourself.

And a breakfast you love.

Work toward something that may take decades.

And take the afternoon off sometimes.

Build wealth if that is part of your dream.

And learn the pricelessness of enough.

Travel the world.

And know your own street.

Meet important people.

And treat supposedly unimportant people as important.

Build something extraordinary.

And build a beautiful home life.

Become excellent.

And become kind.

Ask God for great things.

And say thank you for tiny things.

Look toward tomorrow.

And live today.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

The Life Between the Milestones

A biography usually records milestones.

Born.

Graduated.

Married.

Founded.

Won.

Published.

Built.

Achieved.

Died.

But those words represent perhaps one percent of a life.

What happened between them?

Breakfast.

Traffic.

Waiting rooms.

Walks.

Phone calls.

Rainy afternoons.

Laundry.

Arguments.

Apologies.

Grocery shopping.

Pets.

Television.

Music.

Illness.

Recovery.

Birthdays.

Boredom.

Kisses.

Sleep.

That is where we actually live.

Milestones are punctuation.

Ordinary days are the sentences.

Don't become so obsessed with punctuation that you forget to write a beautiful sentence.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

One More Morning

Tomorrow morning, if I am fortunate, I will wake again.

There will be ideas waiting.

There always are.

Some enormous.

Some ridiculous.

Some potentially useful.

I will probably want to start working immediately.

Maybe I will.

But eventually I will go outside.

The neighbourhood will be waking.

Cars will move along Somerled.

Someone will be heading to work.

Someone will walk a dog.

Someone I recognize may pass.

Perhaps someone I don't know.

I will say:

"Good morning."

Maybe they will answer.

Maybe they won't.

It doesn't matter.

I will have added one tiny piece of friendliness to the morning.

Then I will return home.

Christy will be there.

Perhaps there will be a bagel.

Perhaps raspberry jam.

Perhaps a kiss.

And somewhere on my computer will be documents describing
a future almost unimaginably larger than that room.

I love that contrast.

I think it may be the story of my life.

A man imagining the world—

and learning, finally,

to notice the morning.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

The Greatest Dream

For most of my life, if you asked me about my greatest dream, I would have described something I wanted to achieve.

Today my answer is different.

My greatest dream is not merely to build something enormous.

It is to become someone capable of enjoying whatever I build.

To love well.

To contribute.

To remain curious.

To remain useful.

To keep imagining.

To become more patient.

To become more humble.

To become more present.

To continue repairing what can be repaired.

To accept what cannot.

To make the people around me feel valued.

To wake up interested in the day.

To go to sleep grateful for it.

And yes—

to keep dreaming outrageous dreams.

Because I don't want maturity to become a polite word for surrender.

I want wisdom without cynicism.

Ambition without obsession.

Faith without the need to control.

Confidence without arrogance.

Wealth without worshipping wealth.

Vision without blindness.

Love without possession.

Purpose without hurry.

That may be the greatest dream of all.

Not merely to build a better world.

But to become a better human being while trying.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

Heaven Is Already Leaking Through

Perhaps Heaven on Earth will never arrive as one dramatic event.

Maybe it leaks through.

A little here.

A little there.

Through music.

Through friendship.

Through food.

Through beauty.

Through generosity.

Through forgiveness.

Through love.

Through a stranger holding the door.

Through someone feeding a hungry person.

Through a neighbour checking on another neighbour.

Through a child laughing.

Through an old friendship returning.

Through two people lying together watching *Columbo*.

Maybe Heaven has been appearing all along and we were simply too busy waiting for the grand opening to notice.

I still want the grand opening.

I still want the centres.

The destinations.

The movie.

The game.

The communities.

The big dream.

But I no longer need to wait for them to experience what they are supposed to create.

Connection.

Belonging.

Love.

Purpose.

Beauty.

Joy.

They are available in pieces right now.

Perhaps the great project of civilization is simply to make those pieces available to more people.

More often.

More fairly.

More abundantly.

That is a vision worth pursuing.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

One Day and One Person at a Time

The phrase has stayed with me for years.

One day and one person at a time.

It sounds almost absurd beside a global vision.

Ten thousand destinations?

One person at a time?

Yes.

Because there is no other way.

Even a message reaching a billion people reaches one consciousness at a time.

One person sees it.

One person feels something.

One person decides.

One person changes something.

Scale is accumulated individuality.

Never forget the one.

The million can seduce you.

The one keeps you human.

If a project reaches ten million people but causes you to stop seeing the person directly in front of you, something has been lost.

I want both.

Reach millions.

See one.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

The Invitation

So here is my invitation to you.

Dream again.

Perhaps you stopped years ago.

Perhaps responsibility crowded it out.

Perhaps someone laughed.

Perhaps you failed once and decided failure was evidence.

Perhaps you think you're too old.

Perhaps you're waiting until you have more money.

More time.

More confidence.

More permission.

Begin anyway.

What would you attempt if embarrassment were impossible?

What would you build if you knew you could begin small?

Who would you become if your past were information rather than a sentence?

What would a beautiful ordinary Tuesday look like?

That last question matters as much as the others.

Don't design only your future achievement.

Design your day.

Because your future will eventually arrive in twenty-four-hour pieces.

CHAPTER EIGHTY

Dream Big. Live Small.

Dream big.

Bigger than your resources.

Bigger than your résumé.

Bigger than your current circumstances.

Dream something that makes you sit back occasionally and think:

How on earth could that ever happen?

Then begin.

One page.

One conversation.

One prototype.

One walk.

One introduction.

One decision.

One day.

And while you are building it—

live small.

Not small in spirit.

Small in attention.

Notice details.

Notice faces.

Notice hands.

Notice laughter.

Notice weather.

Notice food.

Notice music.

Notice the person beside you.

Notice the moment.

The universe is enormous.

Life is intimate.

Hold both.

That is what I am trying to do.

I want to imagine ten thousand destinations and appreciate one cup of tea.

I want to reach the world and know my neighbour.

I want to create something that lasts beyond my lifetime and enjoy this afternoon.

I want to build Heaven on Earth and recognize the pieces of Heaven already here.

I want to dream like a child who has never heard the word impossible.

And live like a sixty-five-year-old man who finally understands that time is precious.

Maybe that is wisdom.

Maybe it is simply gratitude.

Whatever it is, I wish I had learned it sooner.

But I know it now.

And now is enough.

EPILOGUE

The Bench

It is early.

The city is waking.

I am sitting on a bench outside a grocery store in NDG.

Nothing about the scene suggests greatness.

Cars pass.

A delivery truck arrives.

Someone is walking toward the bus.

A man I recognize crosses the street.

He looks over.

He waves.

I wave back.

For a moment, I think about the strange road that brought me here.

The boy who dreamed about professional hockey.

The golfer.

The racquetball player.

The veterinarian who never practiced.

The racquet sport professional.

The restaurant owner.

The club builder.

The entrepreneur.

NuVo.

G3.

The writer.

The dreamer.

The man imagining ten thousand destinations.

The man imagining a feature film.

The man imagining a game in which humanity practices
building Heaven on Earth.

And now —

the man on the bench.

Maybe these aren't different people.

Maybe they are chapters of one education.

The boy learned to dream.

The athlete learned to compete.

The entrepreneur learned to build.

Failure taught humility.

Time taught perspective.

Community taught presence.

Christy taught love.

And this bench taught me something I might never have
learned in a boardroom.

You don't need to wait until you change the world to begin making it better.

Someone else approaches.

I have seen him before.

We don't know each other's names yet.

Not yet.

I smile.

"Good morning."

He smiles back.

"Morning, Ross."

I pause.

He knows my name.

I laugh.

Maybe tomorrow I'll learn his.

The sun is beginning to rise over NDG.

Somewhere beyond this neighbourhood is an enormous world filled with problems and possibilities.

I still want to help change it.

I still believe in enormous dreams.

I still believe we should attempt things that sound impossible.

I still believe humanity can become better than it is.

I still believe we can build extraordinary communities.

I still believe there are great things ahead.

Maybe greater than anything behind me.

But right now there is a man walking away who knew my name.

There is a woman upstairs whom I love.

There will be tea.

There may be raspberry jam.

There is another day waiting.

And suddenly I understand.

This isn't the time before the dream comes true.

This is the dream too.

I stand.

I begin walking home.

And for once, I am in no hurry.

THE END

And the Beginning

Dream big.

Live small.

Love deeply.

Notice everything.

Build something.

Help someone.

Forgive when you can.

Begin again when you must.

Say hello first.

Ask for great things.

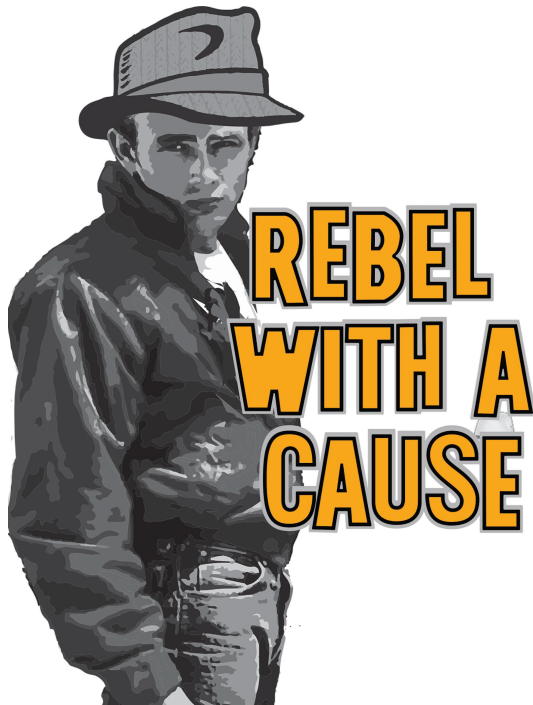
Be grateful for little things.

Look toward the horizon.

Look at the person beside you.

And never become so busy building the life of your dreams that
you fail to realize—

you are already living it.



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