

“Tim Grover was by my side for fifteen years, and knows more than anyone about building winners. This book is essential for those who want to be the best at whatever they do...and are willing to pay the price to get there.” —MICHAEL JORDAN

THE UNFORGIVING RACE TO GREATNESS

W1NNING



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BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF RELENTLESS

WITH SHARI LESSER WENK

WINNING

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TIM S. GROVER

WITH SHARI LESSER WENK

SCRIBNER

New York

London

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THE CHASE

One week before my friend and client Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash, we spoke on the phone for the last time.

We hadn't talked in a while, and neither of us apologized for not being in touch more often. We'd send an occasional text just to check in. He was busy. I was busy. All good.

We'd have plenty of time to catch up soon.

Since the end of his basketball career in 2016, Kobe actually seemed busier than he'd been as a player. He may not have been in the gym at 4 a.m. putting up shots as he did for the many years we worked together, but he was still working on new endeavors and obsessions during those dark lonely hours that haunt every true competitor. He'd already won an Oscar, launched a series of bestselling children's books, created several television productions, and was traveling to coach his daughter Gianna's basketball team when the chopper crashed and they were both tragically killed, along with seven others. He hadn't slowed down at all; he was still driven to achieve more and more.

"Rest at the end," he would say, "not in the middle."

During the 2009 NBA Finals, a reporter asked him

why he didn't look happy after his Lakers took a two-game lead over the Orlando Magic. Kobe gave him that iconic Mamba glare, and said:

“Job not finished.”

Three words that summed up everything about him.

On that last phone call, we talked for a while, and made plans to get together at the upcoming All-Star game in Chicago. That meeting would never happen.

Our conversation ended like this:

“You good?” I asked.

“Yeah, I'm good. Always chasing that win. Never done.”

I hear those words over and over.

Always chasing that win.

Never done.

Kobe's life was a series of wins, fueled by his insatiable hunger to succeed. The more you told him it couldn't be done, the more he wanted to do it. He had to know why, when, how much, how long . . . every detail mattered to him. He couldn't just take a bike ride, he had to ride in the desert, at the hottest time of day, just to prove to himself that he could. He never just watched film, he broke it down frame by frame analyzing every movement, every variation. He played with a concussion in an All-Star game (unbeknownst to anyone else) to see how it would feel. He didn't just call his friend and idol Michael Jordan to ask what's up, he called him in the middle of the night, asking questions and looking for ways to become .0001 per-

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cent better. Everything he did, in basketball and in life, was about his desire to win. As an athlete, a father, a creator, a dreamer of what could be next, he looked Winning in the eye over and over, and demanded more. More success, more victories, more accolades, more time with his family.

More time to run his race to greatness.

For all the times Winning said yes to Kobe, on January 26, 2020, it finally said: No.

I know that sounds harsh. I just can't look at it any other way.

Winning doesn't apologize, and it doesn't explain. It throws a party in your honor, refuses to give you the place and time, and sticks you with the check. It pours your champagne, and knocks over the glass.

You reach out to shake its hand, and it has no idea who you are.

Winning puts you on the biggest stage. And shuts off all the lights.

In my thirty-plus years of working with the greatest competitors of our time, from Michael Jordan and Kobe and Dwyane Wade and Charles Barkley and countless others, to CEOs and elite achievers in all walks of life, I've seen Winning in all its glorious generosity, and all its excruciating cruelty. One day it wears a halo. The next day it has fangs.

You don't get to decide which it will be.

You can only chase it, and if you're willing to pay the price, you might catch it. Briefly.



The ability to win is in all of us. For some, it's the first championship. The first million. The new business. The new house. For others, it's finishing a workout, or finishing school. Sending a kid to college. Buying that first car. Going a whole day without smoking. Ending a bad relationship. Asking for a raise. Seeing the last open parking space, and grabbing it before the other guy gets there. Making a U-turn and getting away with it.

Getting up every day and putting your two feet on the floor.

Winning is everywhere. Every minute, you have the potential to recognize an opportunity, push yourself harder, let go of the insecurity and fear, stop listening to what others tell you, and decide to own that moment. And not just that one single moment, but the next one, and the next. And before long, you've owned the hour, and the day, and the month. Again. Again.

That's how you win.

It doesn't happen all at once. For my athletes, it starts with the first workout in the off-season, builds until the last second of the championship game . . . and continues into the first workout of the next off-season. For my business clients (who play a harder schedule than any athlete) it begins with an unpredictable array of opponents with no off-season, no playbook, and no clock to stop the action, and with unofficial scorekeepers and referees who are constantly changing the rules. For everyone, there are endless setbacks, challenges, roadblocks, letdowns, and issues that force most people out of the race.

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But if you can stay with it, if you can survive the battlefield in your mind, if you can tolerate fear and doubt and loneliness . . . Winning would like a word with you.

Winning is the ultimate gamble on yourself. The difference between dreaming about what could be, and actually living it.

Winning drives you forward. Every time you advance, you can hear the steel bars clank shut behind you; they are real, and they are earned. Now you can't go back, only ahead. You can't unlearn what you've learned. You can't unfeel what you've felt.

Winning never lies, but it always hides the truth. It tells you everything you want is so close, and then laughs as it slams the door in your face. It tells you all your goals and dreams are impossible, and then taunts you to keep going. One more step. One more step. One more step, to an uncertain destination that might not even be there.

Winning is craziness. It doesn't sleep, and doesn't understand why you do.

It refuses to share time or space with others in your life, like a jealous lover who demands all of you and gets it. It's a driving obsession that looks irrational to others and perfect to you.

Winning is unforgiving. If you screw up, if you lay down, if you show weakness, you're done.

It shows you the best of you, and the worst.

Winning keeps its hands in its pockets, so it doesn't accidentally point to someone unworthy.

It holds you up to the sun. And watches you burn.

If you manage to reach the top, Winning will be there to greet you with open arms. Just before it pushes you off the ledge to make room for someone else.

It's your ultimate reality check, a scorching reminder of who you really are and who you're pretending to be, and forcing you to reconcile the difference. Winning is the lover who takes you to paradise all night long, and disappears before morning. It's the dream you can't remember when you wake up.

Winning is unapologetic. You can be replaced. You *will* be replaced.

I know it's common in books like this for the "experts" to give you "steps." *Five Easy Steps! Ten Secret Steps! Twenty Steps I Just Made Up for This Book!*

Seriously?

You can't buy a map to the top. If you could, everyone would be up there.

They're not.

The steps to Winning are infinite, and constantly shifting. One minute you see a step in front of you, the next moment it's quicksand.

Most people don't see that step disappear until it's too late. They get sucked into the quicksand, and give up.

Winning doesn't care if you can walk up the steps—*anyone* can do that. It wants to know what happens when you miss that step, when you can't see or feel what's in front of you. When you have to trust yourself and believe what you feel, not what you see.

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Sometimes you take those steps one at a time, sometimes two at a time. Some days you'll feel so good you'll want to sprint, other days you're crawling on your hands and knees, gasping for breath and wishing you'd never started this race. You'll slip and tumble and lose everything you just gained.

And when you finally make some progress . . . more steps to climb. There's a pebble in your shoe, a blister on every toe. Your lungs want to explode. Every day. Every damn day.

Ten steps?

Wouldn't that be nice.

"Ten steps" are a convenient way to simplify and sell success, but hardly effective.

In 2013, I wrote a book called *Relentless: From Good to Great to Unstoppable*, about mental dominance and the character traits of elite achievers, how they think and act and strategize. I call those individuals Cleaners, and if you read the book, you know there are numerous traits that define a Cleaner. But there is one thing all Cleaners have in common: the ability to achieve the end result over and over. They don't just have a great game or a big month; they have iconic careers that set the standard for everyone else. They take their teams from playoffs to Finals to Championships, they take their businesses from the basement to seven figures to eight figures to three commas. They don't need to be told how. They figure it out and execute. Repeatedly.

I was honored and blessed by the magnitude of support for *Relentless*—from athletes and CEOs, parents and

entrepreneurs, entertainers and doctors and presidents and, well, every possible kind of competitor, each running his or her race to greatness. The most common message?

“I thought I was the only one. Thank you for telling me I’m not crazy.”

You’re not crazy. There are a lot of us out there.

But I was also intrigued by this occasional criticism: “This book doesn’t tell you what to do!”

That is correct.

Why the hell do you want to be told what to do?

I don’t tell my clients “Be relentless!” or “You got this!” They feel it, they know. The greats fall and stumble and gasp for air just like you do. But they keep going. They already know that at some point, the ground beneath them will shift and give way. They’re ready for that; they trust there’s another step, even when they can’t see it. They don’t think about the pain and sacrifice; they just see the end result—Winning. They stay on that road, and they keep chasing greatness.

Thinking back over the years, all my clients chased something. A record. A paycheck. A legacy. A ghost.

MJ chased immortality, and caught it. He will live forever.

Kobe will also live forever. He chased immortality too. But before he could catch it, immortality caught him.

What are you chasing?

What’s chasing you?

Because if you’re comfortable with sacrifice and pressure and criticism and pain, if you can learn to focus on

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the result instead of always focusing on the difficulty . . . you can chase Winning, fight for it, and defend your right to catch it.

But I'm not going to tell you what to do. I'm going to show you an intensely honest and raw picture of what it truly takes to navigate the roadblocks and obstacles and challenges that get in the way, slow you down, and threaten your dreams. I'm giving you the action plan to achieve both success and mastery of the relentless mindset. You can't have one without the other. This is how the greats control and survive the journey, and how you can too. And by the end of this book, you won't have to be told. You'll know.

In April 2020, ESPN and Netflix aired *The Last Dance*, the long-awaited documentary on Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls' run for their sixth and final championship together. As MJ's trainer for fifteen years, I considered it a privilege to be included among those who were interviewed and participated in the series.

For many, it was a vividly nostalgic trip down memory lane, with videos and photos and interviews with the greats, stories never told, unfinished business to debate and scores to settle.

For others, it was a bittersweet drama about relentless excellence at all costs. Unapologetic. Unrelenting. Unforgiving. Unforgettable.

For those who lived it, *The Last Dance* was about one thing: Winning. Those years became the platform for my career with the greatest athletes of our time, and the foundation of the work I do today with high achiev-

ers in sports, business, and all walks of life . . . those who never stop chasing greatness, however elusive it might be. For more than thirty years, I've witnessed Winning at the highest level, and experienced losing at a level you can't comprehend. I've seen winners lose, and losers win. I've tasted both extremes. My chase continues.

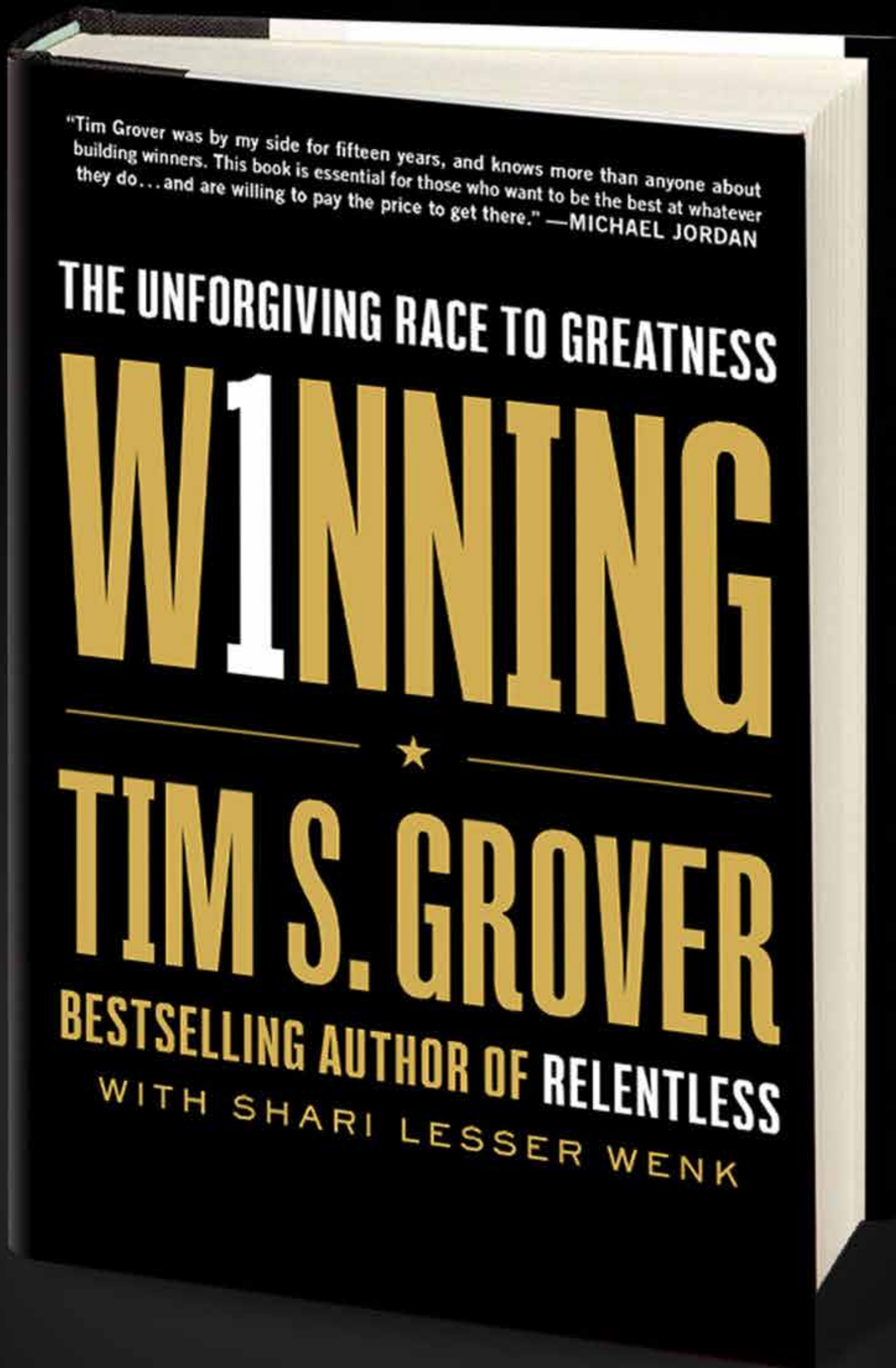
So does yours.

Let me take you into the world of elite cutthroat competition, and show you how to navigate a road that can't be found on any GPS. There is no map, no light, no pavement.

It's the road to paradise, and it starts in hell.

You have been chosen. Not by others, but by yourself.

Welcome to Winning.



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