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# TODAY WE ARE RICH

**HARNESSING  
THE POWER  
OF TOTAL  
CONFIDENCE**

**Tim  
Sanders**

*New York Times Best-Selling  
Author of Love Is the Killer App*

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# TODAY WE

**HARNESSING THE POWER OF TOTAL CONFIDENCE**



*Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

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**ARE RICH**

**Tim  
Sanders**

*To Jacqueline—my muse, my rock, and  
a source of abundance in my life.*



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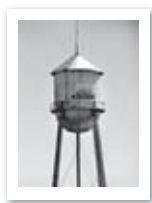
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## PROLOGUE

# BILLYE'S LESSON I NEVER FORGOT



It was a typical sunny summer morning, and my grandmother and I were eating a breakfast of hot cereal, fresh biscuits, and Karo syrup. Through a freshly Spic-and-Span'd window, I spotted a stranger trudging through our wheat field toward the house. He was walking slowly, deliberately, with his head down. With each lumbering step, he appeared larger and larger.

Soon my grandmother noticed him too. She grabbed my hand, and together we made our way toward the field. We stopped in the peach orchard, just on the other side of the electric fence that surrounded the wheat field.

“Can I help you, sir?” my grandmother called out.

The man looked at us with a shy smile and replied, “I pray so, ma’am, I pray so.” He took a long breath and continued: “My name is Clarence, and I need a day’s work and a hot meal. I’m at my wit’s end, ma’am, and I have no other options. But I am a good worker.”

My grandmother sized him up—he was middle-aged and African American with salt-and-pepper hair and wore an ashy black suit with a yellowing white dress shirt underneath. He looked harmless, albeit shabby. She motioned for him to step over the fence and sit down with us on folding chairs around a card table in the orchard.

“I’m Billye,” she said. “This here is my grandson, Tim. What’s your story?”

“I’ve been walking for days, coming from my hometown, Dripping Springs, Oklahoma. I lost everything I owned in a swindle. I have nothing left but my winning smile, what’s in this here pillowcase, and a few relatives who are willing to help me start over in Arizona.”

He wiped his brow and said, “I just need some work, ma’am. I need someone to believe in me, if only for today.”

Billye looked to the sky, as if seeking advice,

looked back at him, and then said, “I’ll pay you ten dollars to work from right now till sundown. First, I need you to prune the tops of these peach trees. I can’t reach them. Next, clean out the barn. And finally, if there’s time left, you’ll need to climb a ladder and touch up the trim on top of it.”

Clarence hung his jacket on the limb of a peach tree and got right to work. So did I, walking around behind him as his pseudoforeman, commenting on his progress, and peppering him with all kinds of questions. He answered most of them with grunts. He finished the pruning in less than an hour and then started to clean out the barn. It was a dusty and herculean task.

Billye came out periodically to check up on us. Later she explained that she was making sure he wasn’t leaning on his broom—a Southern phrase for “goofing off on the job.”

At high noon she served lunch in the orchard on paper plates. It was a bounty: sliced hot dogs with ranch-style beans, mustard potato salad, Texas toast, and sweet tea. Clarence dug into his meal like he’d dug into his work that morning. His massive hands made his plastic fork look like a toothpick.

The more Clarence ate, the more conversational he became. He started to answer my questions more

thoughtfully. He also started to dish me advice. He lowered his eyes and said, "I want to tell you something about your grandmother. She's special. She has faith!" He stopped to take a swig of his sweet iced tea.

"Miss Billye," he continued, "is an angel that God put on this earth to have faith in a stranger who needed someone to trust him. People like her make the world go round, boy. You understand?"

I nodded. I knew my grandmother was special. She had taken me into her home at a time when my own mother couldn't or wouldn't keep me. Billye loved me as if I were her own son, agreeing to raise me from the time I was four, even though she was getting on in years. She declared from the time I could walk that God had big plans for me. That's the kind of person she was—a big giver and believer in people.

"In the last few days I've had guns waved at me and dogs sicced on me," Clarence said. "I thought no one would give me a chance. But your grandmother did." He wiped his lips and summed up my lunch lesson: "See how happy she is? You will be too if you follow her example. You learn from your grandma's faith in people. Inherit some of her sweetness."

After lunch, Clarence really stepped up his efforts, as if energized by his meal. He cleaned out the entire barn, hauled off garbage, and painted all its trim.

Billye joined us at the end of the day to evaluate Clarence's work and pay him. She took a good look around, smiled, and said, "Clarence, you and I agreed on ten dollars for a good day's work. But today you gave a *great* day's work. You are a go-getter, and I appreciate that."

She pulled a worn twenty-dollar bill, a small fortune to us at the time, out of her clutch purse. She handed it to him and said, "For twice a good day's work, you deserve twice a good day's pay."

Wide-eyed, Clarence thanked her profusely. "You're an answer to prayer, ma'am."

"Speaking of prayer," she quickly replied, "would you pray with us before you leave?" Clarence eagerly obliged.

The three of us got down on our knees in the barnyard, just by the horse tie. Clarence went first. His prayer was brief but heartfelt. He thanked God for bringing him to this farm. He thanked God for Billye. He asked God to look over our farm and keep us safe and healthy.

Billye's prayer went on a bit longer, as I knew it would. Her prayers were always epic and usually made my knees go numb. She was, to quote Pastor Heck, "a prayer warrior." She started out by thanking God for Clarence's character and what it taught me about

the value of hard work. And then, sobbing in joy, she thanked God for the opportunity to be a helpful part of his journey to Arizona, where he would make what she called “his great comeback.” She asked God to put other Christian families in his path over the coming days.

With a final amen, she and I stood and dusted ourselves off. Clarence, however, stayed down on his knees, observing a lingering moment of silent prayer. As he knelt, we both noticed the holes in the soles of his shoes. They were the size of silver dollars, big enough to reveal his dirt-brown socks.

When Clarence stood up, Billye said, “After you put away the tools, come by the house on your way out. I have something you might want.”

I helped Clarence clean up the tools, and when we got to the back door of the house, Billye was already there, beaming and holding up a brand-new pair of black wing-tip, go-to-Sunday-church shoes. I knew they had belonged to her deceased father, Tommie King, who had bought them a few months before he passed away. Billye had kept them in her bedroom closet “for a sunny day.” (She never planned for rainy ones.)

“I hope these fit,” she said, handing the shoes to Clarence. He quickly sat down on the porch swing to

try them on. Slipping them on effortlessly and tying them, he smiled up at us and said, “They fit like they were made for me.”

His eyes were glassy with tears. He shook Billye’s hand and patted me on the head, then picked up his pillowcase of possessions and strutted off confidently toward the west, on his way to Arizona. I was in tears too, but I wiped them away so Clarence and Billye wouldn’t see me bawling. I felt sorry for Clarence and, at the same time, elated at what we’d been able to do for him that day.

As we watched Clarence walk off into the sunset, Grandmother put her arm around me, squeezing me tightly to her side.

“Timothy,” she said in a near whisper, her voice rising with each word, “today is a special day for us. Don’t ever forget this feeling. Today we are rich!”

With the cadence of a minister, she repeated herself for emphasis:

“Today. We. Are. Rich.”



A few nights later Billye and I were having dinner at Burger Chef, a monthly treat. We split a chicken-fried-steak sandwich and a large bag of crinkle-cut fries and sipped Dr. Pepper over crushed ice.



There's just something about food that brings out philosophizing.

When we finished, as Billye gathered up the wrappers and napkins, I asked her, "When you said, 'We are rich,' the other day, what did you mean? You mean rich like Woody"—the owner of Turner's Department Store on Main Street—"or like Lane's dad?" (the attorney who drove the best car at church).

"Nope," she replied. "I meant that we have all we need, enough to share with Clarence. And because we were able to share, we're worth something. By being able and willing to give, we are rich."

The puzzled look on my face must have told her I didn't get it. She continued, "There's bank-account rich, and there's rich in spirit. The second kind is achieved when you make a difference. It's the forever kind of rich that no one can take away from you but you."

She held up her Dr. Pepper cup and tipped it so I could see inside. She had drunk about half of it.

"You see this?" she asked. "'Rich' means the cup's got enough in it to quench my thirst. More than enough. As far as I'm concerned, it's full, running over. If *you're* still thirsty, you can have some of mine. Get it?"

"But what if you get thirsty later?" I countered.

She took a little sip and then continued, unfazed by my question.

“I’m *confident*,” she stated, emphasizing the word’s first syllable. “I believe in myself, all the people in my life, and even when everything else fails, God. Through all these beliefs, I know there is always more where this came from.”

She had a twinkle in her eye, as if she knew she was teaching me something important. And she was. I understood that the key to being rich was the belief that there would always be more: the twenty-dollar bill, the soda pop, friends, family—anything.

I’ll never forget the last thing she said as she pressed the buzzer for the carhop to pick up the tray: “Rich is a full cup and a light heart.”

As we waited, her words hung in the air. I didn’t quite know at that time the power of those words, but I could sense it: Billye wasn’t just quoting truisms to me. She lived these truths because she had learned them the hard way. For Billye, life was a lesson in the ephemeral nature of being bank-account rich. She had come from a family of dirt farmers in Oklahoma who had saved just enough money to buy some land on the outskirts of Clovis on the eastern plains of New Mexico. Billye’s father, Tommie King, worked hard, and everything he touched in Clovis turned to gold. He raised bumper crops, which allowed him to purchase even more land and a gas station/hotel.

Unlike the rest of Billye's high school classmates, she had her own car at seventeen. When she drove down Main Street, the boys on the football team would run beside the car and jump on the running boards to get a ride. Far away from the turmoil on Wall Street, her father was one of the few who had money to spend on machinery, fertilizer, and manpower.

Then, during the 1940s, Tommie suffered a setback. For more than a decade, he'd been sending most of his money back to Oklahoma, where a pair of cousins had a bank. As it turned out, they were swindlers. Virtually overnight the Kings became land rich and cash poor.

By the 1960s, my grandmother Billye Coffman, now married to a retired air force officer, had earned it all back through hard work. She had a prosperous farm and a hair salon that did a brisk business.

A few years later, she lost it all again. Lloyd, her husband, poisoned her reputation at the air base, where most of her clients lived. He ran up credit all over town, then told banker friends that Billye was crazy. When he left town, all she had was the stuff in the house. She was land rich and cash poor again.

But through these highs and lows, Billye learned a valuable life lesson: You can't control your material wealth, but by cultivating a strong sense of

confidence, you *can* control your attitude about whether there's enough to go around.

Billye's charity toward Clarence was a part of her mental exercise program to cultivate her sense of confidence and faith. Even though that twenty-dollar bill was gone, we were still having our monthly burgers and getting by just fine.

As Billye turned the ignition switch on her Buick Electra, she summed up the idea: "Being rich is a decision that stems from a sense of *confidence*. It's right up here," she said, tapping her forefinger on the side of her head. "Listen to me: Confidence is rocket fuel." She revved the car's engine for emphasis. "It'll fill you up and make you believe there will be enough of what you need. The other day with Clarence was your first lesson in abundant living."

At that exact moment I realized that Clarence was right about one thing: I'd be a smart kid to study my grandmother and be like her. He was wrong about her being an angel, though. She was my confidence teacher. A tingle crawled up the back of my neck as it occurred to me that *Clarence* had been the angel, put in our field that day to teach me a lesson about life. I didn't realize at the time that it was a lesson I would stray from but never forget.





PART 1

# The Case for Confidence





# 1

## **SIDEWAYS YEARS**

I first met Eric Goldhart in 1997.<sup>1</sup> With his toned physique and strong, confident demeanor, he was known as a “rock star” at his company. As the top producer and de facto sales leader at his dot-com start-up in Dallas, Eric possessed a charismatic let-me-lead-you personality that could convince even the most conservative staffing professionals to spend money with his Internet company. Eternally optimistic, Eric had a ready answer for any prospect’s objection. In fact, he loved skeptical clients or tough audiences because he saw them not as obstacles but as opportunities.

Eric and I met when I was asked to give a presentation at his company’s annual sales-awards dinner. We



hit it off immediately because we had a lot in common: We'd both been raised by our grandmothers. We liked to read the same types of books. We'd both been successful in our fields and had similar dreams of running our own companies someday.

In the months that followed, we spun it up over long lunches, exchanging tips and dreaming about when we would eventually make it big in the business world. And the next year I wasn't surprised to hear that Eric had been recruited by a Seattle-based leasing company as the western regional vice president of sales. As far as I knew, Eric was well on his way to running Microsoft someday.

I didn't hear from Eric again until early 2002, when an e-mail from him arrived, asking me for a few minutes on the phone. I could tell by the tone of his e-mail that something was very wrong. This was not the "rock star" I once knew. This was someone who had lost his way and needed help. I called him that weekend, and we talked for over an hour as he laid out his problem in detail.

Since 2001, the dot-com industry had been under fire from Wall Street, and Eric's region, which stretched from Silicon Valley to Seattle, had been the hardest hit. Each week start-ups of all types were running out of cash and shuttering their businesses,

breaking leases, and selling cubicles and computers for pennies on the dollar.

The mood in the industry was darker than the weather, and just as depressing. As survivor companies implemented massive layoffs, Eric found himself pummeled from every side by messages of fear and insecurity. When he worked out at the gym, talking heads on cable television spelled out all the ways the coming recession would likely unfold. Newspapers ran headlines hysterically predicting the end of the Internet era. Even Eric's coworkers were growing increasingly concerned and wondering when the hammer would drop on them, too.

Even though Eric was a long-standing optimist, he couldn't resist the fear chatter. Against his better judgment, he read, listened to, and viewed these scare-lines like drivers who can't look away from a car-crash scene. Before long, his positive outlook evaporated. He began to question his ability and commitment and to wonder whether he had enough talent and drive to survive the impending economic storm. He even started to feel guilty for taking downtime or enjoying himself, attributing the root of the dot-com industry's failures to an overabundance of fun.

Suffering from a shortage of confidence, Eric became doubtful about his own company's chances

of survival, even though senior management was holding to a more positive, wait-and-see attitude. Deciding to take on this fight himself, Eric hunkered down and told himself that it was up to him to come up with instant sales solutions.

He stopped going to the gym because he felt guilty when he wasn't working. Leaving work at six in the evening felt morally wrong—inasmuch as the ship was presumably sinking—so he stayed late at the office, missing dinner with his wife and two toddlers.

Even when he was at home, his mind stayed in overdrive mode. He snapped at his wife and kids, locked himself away in the den with his computer, and sat glued to the cable news channels for hours at a time. He stopped having morning devotions—they seemed insipid in the face of reality—and attending church with his family. The only thing that mattered was finding some way out of the mess in which he found himself.

Trapped in an emotional spin cycle and sleeping fitfully at best, Eric started chewing his fingernails and developed puffy circles under his eyes. At work, his productivity plummeted faster than the stock market. He wasted hours rereading the same set of bad numbers from a variety of sources. He pored over an endless supply of downward projections

and combed the Internet for more bad news on the horizon.

For every minute Eric worked, he worried for ten. And his outlook was contagious. He badgered his salespeople to work harder because times were apocalyptic. In meetings, he filled his coworkers with personal doubts and fears, which led to a swift decline in personal productivity on their part. Customer sales calls often ended up with a gloom-and-doom session that left all parties worse off than when they started.

At the end of the year, Eric's boss gave him a lukewarm annual review and a warning: "Get your groove back, or I'll have to replace you." Eric had never been demoted or fired in his young career, and now he was on the brink of both.

At this point, Eric was running on empty. He was in a full-blown personal recession. He was shrinking as a person, drinking far too much, and chasing away everyone in his life. He knew things had to change, and on New Year's Eve he made a resolution: *I'm going to get help, and I'm going to make a comeback.*

That's when he wrote to me.

As I listened to Eric talk on the phone that afternoon, I had to admit that his story sounded eerily familiar. He described 2001 as a year he failed to move forward in any part of his life; in other words,

he had experienced his first “sideways” year. At that point, I knew I could help him. He’d only had one of those years. I’d had fifteen of them in a row. My sideways years had stretched from my early twenties to my midthirties, and I was proof positive that you can fill your tank back up and come roaring back.

I knew that the way for me to help Eric was to share my story with him, one that I’d always been reluctant to tell.



It was late summer 1981, and I was out for a spin west of town in my candy-apple-red Pontiac Astre, rocking out to an eight-track tape of the band Yes on my new car stereo. The song “Close to the Edge” was playing, and I was singing along at the top of my lungs when I noticed flashing headlights in my rearview mirror. When I pulled over, I recognized my uncle Jim’s black Monte Carlo rolling up behind me. We got out of our cars, and when he approached me, he put his hand on my shoulder and said with a heavy sigh, “I don’t know how else to say this. Your father’s been murdered, Tim. I’m so sorry.”

I stood there on the side of the road in shock, mumbling the words back to him, “My father’s been murdered. . . .”

As I followed Jim back to the house, a slide show of times with Dad played in my mind. I could smell his aftershave—he always wore Brut—and feel his whiskers pressing against my cheek as he hugged me. Fighting tears, I tried to distract myself by changing tapes in the car, only to hear Diana Ross and the Supremes sing “Someday We’ll Be Together.” I had to keep my eyes glued to Jim’s taillights for the rest of the way home to avoid driving off the road.

Even though I had spent only a week or so with my dad each summer when I was growing up, he had made a big impression on me. He had been forced to give me up twice: first to his wife (my mom) and then later to his own mother (Billye) when my mom decided she couldn’t raise me. My dad had a jack-of-all-trades career and a big-city lifestyle, and he knew I would be better off with Billye. Even though we were apart, he called me often, mostly to tell me how much he loved me.

The week before his death, my father, Tom Sanders, had accepted a writing position with a television production company in Los Angeles, the same city where I was attending college. It was the first time we would be living in the same city, and I had been looking forward to getting to know him better. He

was funny, smart, and sophisticated and had always been one of my biggest fans.

Now, it was all gone. Our reunion seemed to have been canceled by fate.

When I got home, Billye was there, surrounded by friends and family. She knew I would be a wreck, so when she saw me come through the front door, she stood up and extended her arms toward me. She was ready to comfort me, as she always did during my difficult moments. Billye had always been my rock. Her solid faith and serene confidence had inspired me to achieve so much during high school and my first two years in college.

For years Billye had taught me confidence lessons as I sat perched on the edge of the bathtub. While she shaped her beehive hairdo, she shared tips I could employ the next day. Her lessons had paid off in my life. I went from being labeled a “discipline problem” and being placed in the local special-education program in second grade to returning to public school and making the honor roll in sixth grade, in spite of being called “Short Bus Sanders” by the other kids. By my senior year of high school, I was on a roll: class president and state champion in debate. Just a few months before my dad’s death, I had received a debate scholarship to finish college at a prestigious school on

the West Coast, after winning several junior college national championships. Yes, Billye's hard-won life lessons on confidence had turned my life around.

Yet on that day, something inside me snapped. As Billye tried to get me to join her prayer circle of family and friends, I snarled, "Why would God do this to him? Why would he do this to me?" She was crestfallen and hurt. She didn't have the energy to pursue me. All she could do was bow her head and begin to pray.

Billye's words about a loving God didn't make sense to me anymore. In an instant my faith had been shattered. Suddenly, I no longer trusted anyone. Since all of Billye's principles were based, in some part, on her faith, her teachings no longer had the ring of truth to me.

When I left Clovis to move to California later that month, rejecting everything Billye had taught over the years about how to live life, I didn't take a single book from the family library with me, even though Billye offered them all. I didn't even bring my Bible.

As I went through the motions of my junior year in college at Loyola Marymount University, everything was different. I no longer cared about earning good grades or making something of myself. I skipped classes, took shortcuts in my research, and coasted



along, just getting by with what little confidence I had leftover from the previous years.

My sideways years had begun.

When I moved to Tucson to attend graduate school, my attitude shifted from a simple lack of faith and trust to one of full-blown negativity. I decided that my championship years as a debater had been little more than dumb luck, and I figured I'd better take whatever I could get in terms of a job. When I landed a consulting position at Hughes Aircraft, I again assumed it was a fluke. Since I couldn't imagine ever being successful in business, I didn't take the position seriously.

Instead, pursuing my passion for music, I joined a local band and settled into a month-to-month lifestyle that eventually left me in a broken-down school bus in an RV park just east of Dallas, Texas.

A few years later, I met Jacqueline, who became the love of my life. I was a mess at the time, but she saw something beneath my black rocker clothes and penchant for pessimism. Her son, Anthony, was four years old at the time, and I fell in love with him, too. Still, I didn't have the confidence or ambition to strive for more than living paycheck to paycheck.

I found a sales job in the cable television business that leveraged my gift of gab. And even though I

made good money, I always found a way to sabotage my path toward management. I was earning a solid income, but I still wasn't happy. I had no goals other than to be discovered one day by a record mogul and stop working for "the man."

By the spring of 1996, I was near the breaking point. I quit my job, cashed in my 401(k), and devoted my energy to getting a record deal—even though I knew deep down that it was a next-to-impossible feat. I took odd jobs to help with the rent, and we ate on the tips that Jacqueline made as a hairstylist. Each day I became more disappointed in myself, and one afternoon while driving home, I had a sudden impulse to jerk the car's steering wheel to the right and drive full speed into the concrete freeway barrier. The compulsion was so strong that I had to pull the car over and stop until I regained my composure. It wasn't the first time such a dark thought had crossed my mind that year. When I told Jacqueline about it that night, I cried uncontrollably, shaking in her arms as she tried to console me.

I was far away from the wide-eyed kid Billye had taught to love life and achieve great things. I knew I needed to find a way out of my sideways years, even if it meant going backward—back to a time and place where life made sense.



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## About the Author

**Tim Sanders** is a sought-after international speaker, a consultant to Fortune 1000 companies, and the author of the *New York Times* best seller *Love Is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*. He is also the author of *The Likeability Factor* and *Saving the World at Work*, which was rated one of the Top 30 Business Books of 2008 by Soundview Executive, the leading reviewer of business books. Tim is a former executive at Yahoo!, where he served as chief solutions officer and also leadership coach. Today he is the CEO of Deeper Media, an online advice-content company. Tim has appeared on numerous television programs, including *The Today Show*, and has been featured in such publications as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Family Circle*, *Reader's Digest*, *Fast Company*, and *Businessweek*. Originally from New Mexico, Tim and his wife, Jacqueline, live in Los Angeles, California.