



THE FLYER

*A Story That Teaches
You To Soar*

ROBERT STOVER

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THE FLYER

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TIMBER COVE PRESS

ORANGE, CA

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Timber Cove Press
7912 E. Sprucewood Ave
Orange, CA 92869
www.TimberCovePress.com

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The Flyer/ Robert Stover. -- 1st ed.
ISBN 978-0-9830278-3-6

To Mikayla and Shane:
It matters not what others think.
Fly!

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CLIMBER

ONCE upon time in a Land of Possibility far away, there was a young man who was a world-class ladder climber.

If someone put a ladder against a wall, told him that he would win success and approval if he climbed it — he would climb it.

One day he climbed a ladder that many others had failed to climb. Some said it was impossible, but; he did it.

His friends praised him. His co-workers admired him. At a party he could just mention this accomplishment and receive instant respect. Others asked

him to join their organizations and climb their ladders.

His business card proudly displayed CLC: Chief Ladder Climber. He put 1CLIMBR on his vanity license plate.

But one day his foot slipped on a rung. Yes, it was a small slip. But a slip is a slip. And my how it stung.

He was embarrassed. Ashamed. His overseers were infuriated.

His boss kicked the ladder out from under him. "I can promise you one thing. You'll never climb ladders around here again!"

Down, down the Climber fell...his arms flailing, his hands grasping air.

He hit the ground and his spirit shattered.

In an instant he was transformed from champion Climber into a shattered "Slipper." No one with an important ladder would ever hire him if they knew he had slipped.

Never again would he climb ladders to palaces floating in the sky.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SLIPPER

THE SLIPPER HID from his friends in shame. And the more he withdrew, the more isolated he became.

His dreams of climbing golden ladders hung from great palaces in the clouds were reduced to thoughts of mere survival.

To get by, he began work at a factory weaving cloth for the sails of flying ships.

In time, he won promotions. His bosses said he had a good instinct for shaping sails that could fly higher. Occasionally he looked up and watched flying ships with his sails soar by.

I can be happy, he thought, *creating sails that help others fly.*

One night, in the darkest hour, he stirred awake and heard A Voice whisper, “Don’t forsake your gift.”

He looked around, but no one was there, except his sleeping wife.

CHAPTER THREE

DESTINY

HE REVEALED this secret to an Advisor. The Advisor scratched his beard, nodded his head and with squinted eyes stared out at the future.

After a long moment's reflection, the Advisor said, "The Voice is right: you do have a gift. You are a great climber. But you were climbing everyone else's ladders that were hung from goals that they had chosen.

"Why don't you start choosing your own goals and climb your own ladders? Why should others hold your destiny in their hands?"

So the Climber set out to climb his own ladders towards his own goals.

Sadly, it wasn't all so easy.

Sometimes weeks and months would go by as he determined just which ladders to climb.

Some were too tall, some were too small and others too crowded. Not one seemed to be just right.

Others looked meaningless. Some were too wobbly. And on every ladder, when he took that first step, his old fears of falling froze his spirit.

When the Climber did start to climb, he developed the worst habit of all.

He never finished climbing any of the ladders he started.

CHAPTER FOUR

LISTENING LESSONS

HE RETURNED to the Advisor with all his failure in hand. “I just don’t know, I don’t understand.”

The Advisor looked long towards the past. Then raised his eyes as he understood at last.

“You have climbed so many ladders for so many others for so many reasons that you can no longer hear your own heart’s call.

“Yes, that is where we must start. You must begin immediately to listen to your heart. Don’t filter what you hear, pay attention to what is most dear.”

The Climber reflected and realized the Advisor was right. *So long I've studied what pleases others that I don't know what brings me joy.*

So, he began to listen, especially at night and his excitement would surge as the morning turned bright.

But just as quick, as if someone had snuffed out a candlewick, the flame was quenched by the realities of life...

This can't pay my bills! It won't cover rent, he thought.

I'm the only one who would want to watch this ladder climbed.

*If only I had begun to climb this ladder when I was younger
– it's too late now.*

Sure it's fun, but climbing this ladder serves no greater purpose to the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

STANDING ON TOP

FRUSTRATED, the Climber took his little, unfinished climbs and their excuses to his Advisor.

“Look, they are so small and matter not at all.”

The Advisor scratched his head and cocked it to the side. “What’s wrong with doing something you love because you love it? Yes, I want you to climb one ladder all the way to the top – just because of love.

“But be warned...

“If you turn back before you reach the top, I will turn my back on you. Go!”

The Climber’s heart pounded.

He walked home in a drizzle that afternoon. Looking up, the Climber spotted an abandoned water tower he conquered as a boy. Older boys dared him to make the climb. At the top he could see over the Land of Possibility to the Sea Beyond and all the way to the Island of Desire where water and sky met.

Surely I can make this climb again?

He put his hand on the first rung. It was cold, damp. But up he stepped.

This is silly, he thought.

But then he stepped up one more.

My friends are going to mock me for making a boy's climb.

He inched up a bit more. Drizzle turned to rain. The wind blew harder.

Why am I climbing a ladder that no one else will respect?

He moved one rung more.

The wind gusted. Rain stung his eyes. His hands clenched the steel. A gale buffeted him and his foot slipped. And there he clung, dangling between the earth and the sky. His frozen heart kept him from taking one more step.

Far down below a passerby yelled, “Look at the poor fool. Doesn’t he know? Who would ever approve of a climb like that?”

The Climber’s cheeks burned hot. He realized it was true. Others would never approve -- no matter how much this climb meant to him.

And then he had another thought, *The others are the ones that kicked the ladder out from under me. The others are the ones who wouldn’t hire me. The others are the ones who ruined my reputation.*

With that he climbed one more rung, then another and soon he was standing atop his tower, a goal of his own choosing.

The wind blew the clouds away. The sky was cleansed by rain. He could see over the Land of Possibility to the Sea Beyond and the Island of Desire. His heart warmed as the sun set and lit the sea on fire.

After his victory climbing a ladder he loved, more followed. The climbing came easier. The wins came faster.

Late one night his soul soared higher and he saw a star that shown oh so brighter. And there in the dark he heard A Voice whisper, “Forsake not your gift.”

All the next morning and throughout the day, though he tried and tried, he couldn't forget. Every night the star would return and deep inside it caused his spirit to yearn.

He began looking for a way to reach his star. *No ship can sail high enough – no ladder is long enough. The star is too far.*

He studied and he invented, he thought and he sought. Yet, there was no method he could devise to climb that high.

Frustrated he sought his advisor.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ONLY WAY TO REACH A STAR

“**N**O MATTER how much I work and how much I try, I just can’t find a way to climb there from here. No, there isn’t a ladder, there isn’t a palace high enough to serve as a base, there isn’t even a flying ship that can sail that high!”

The Advisor stared at him long. Then squinted to look at the past. And turned his head and peered into the future. He rubbed his beard and looked at the ground.

Slowly his head began to shake and a tight smile appeared on his face.

“I see the problem now. I was wrong about you. You are not a Climber.”

The Advisor paused and stared at the Climber again.

No! thought the Climber.

Deep inside he felt that first slip of his foot back on that fateful day. The Advisor had found him out. The Advisor knew he was a Slipper at heart. The Climber’s spirit sunk beneath the shame.

“Yes that is the problem, you are not a Climber at all,” said the Advisor. “You, my friend, were born a Flyer.”

“A what?” asked the Climber confused.

“You are a Flyer. I should have seen it sooner. The signs were all there.” He pursed his lips and jabbed his finger in the air.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FLYING LESSONS

“IT IS TRUE there is no ladder tall enough nor palace high enough to reach the star that is beckoning you.”

“But I can’t fly. Actually, people can’t fly,” said the Climber.

“You see, this star is unique to you. No one else but you can reach it. And you, my friend, can’t reach it with a ladder. You must fly!”

“Again, I can’t fly.”

“Come with me. We have some people to see...”

The Advisor took the Climber to a dance performance.

“Watch them fly,” he said.

The Climber watched the dancers soar with grace. There was no hesitation, just a leap and they floated through space.

“Follow me now to the gymnasium.

“Watch the gymnast fly,” said the Advisor.

The Climber watched them bound and twist and fly. They released the bar and hung weightless in the sky.

The Advisor said, “Notice how it’s impossible to do half a flip? To fly like a gymnast you have to commit.”

The Advisor said, “Come with me to the cliff by the shore.”

The Climber watched the seagulls and hawks and hang gliders soar upon the updrafts created by the wind against the cliff.

The Advisor said, “Notice how these Flyers have tapped into forces more powerful than their own. They relax and the wind takes them home.”

“I’m beginning to believe I can fly,” said the Climber.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FLYER

AND SO the Climber went home, and made sure he was all alone. Surely it would be safe to leap in the air when there was nobody there.

His first leap, he didn't go far. Then he remembered he needed to keep his eyes on the star.

The Climber thought to himself, *Flying feels a lot like falling till you get the hang of it.*

Week-by-week he soared a little higher. Learning not to hesitate, giving it his all. And finding greater forces helped him not to fall.

The day came when he was ready. He knew what he must do. But he let that day pass. Then another. There were no boys to dare him this time.

Finally, he dared himself.

He returned to the abandoned water tower. Scaled the ladder to the top. Then stepped back as far as he could from the rail. He cinched his jacket, adjusted his goggles and glanced down. If he couldn't fly from this height, he would plummet to his death.

He inhaled and sprinted toward the rail.

No hesitation, just a leap.

As he launched into the air the toe of his boot caught the rail. Instead of flying up, it pivoted him straight down. The ground rushed at him.

He spun his head and sighted his star; flared out his arms and got his feet below him. The plummet slowed, then leveled, he began to rise. He caught an updraft and soared to the sky.

Far down below, he heard a boy exclaim, "Wow mom, look at that man. He's a Flyer!"

For an instant the Flyer took his eye off the star. He smiled inside and felt such glee.

Yes! Yes! Look at me!

In that instant his updraft failed. Down, down he spiraled and spun. Through a great tree's mighty limbs he crashed until into the ground he smashed.

Slowly he twitched a finger, then an arm. He wiggled his toes and touched his broken nose.

Suddenly, in a panic, he felt for his spirit. With relief he realized that it had not shattered. *Something is different this time.*

He let himself lay back on the ground when just then his Advisor walked by. The Advisor looked down at him and smiled.

“Why climb when you can fly is what I always say!”

They both laughed. It hurt The Flyer's ribs as he lay there in the dirt.

He looked up and caught sight of his star oh so bright.

He said, “I just realized I would never have learned to fly if I hadn’t been kicked off that ladder.”

Just then came A Whisper on the wind, “Forsake not your gift. If you endure the pain, it will not be in vain, go tell others and their lives will never be the same.

FLY!

A FREE GIFT FOR YOU

Thank you for reading *The Flyer*.

I'm grateful that you took the time to read this, so I want to offer you a special gift...

The Flyer's Toolbox

It's a toolbox of resources that will help you soar higher in your life, work and world.

Here's the link to get The Flyer's Tool Box free.

<http://www.robertstover.com/flyers-gift/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book didn't take flight by my efforts alone. So, I want to take a moment and thank those who helped give it wings.

First, my wife Laura. Thanks for her patience and insight after the 100th "Hey, what do you think of this...can you read this real quick?"

And Jennifer Mason (<http://jynnemason.com>) for her critique and insights on the first draft. This work flies higher for them.

And to my father, Frank Stover, who let me know when an earlier version flew off course.

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