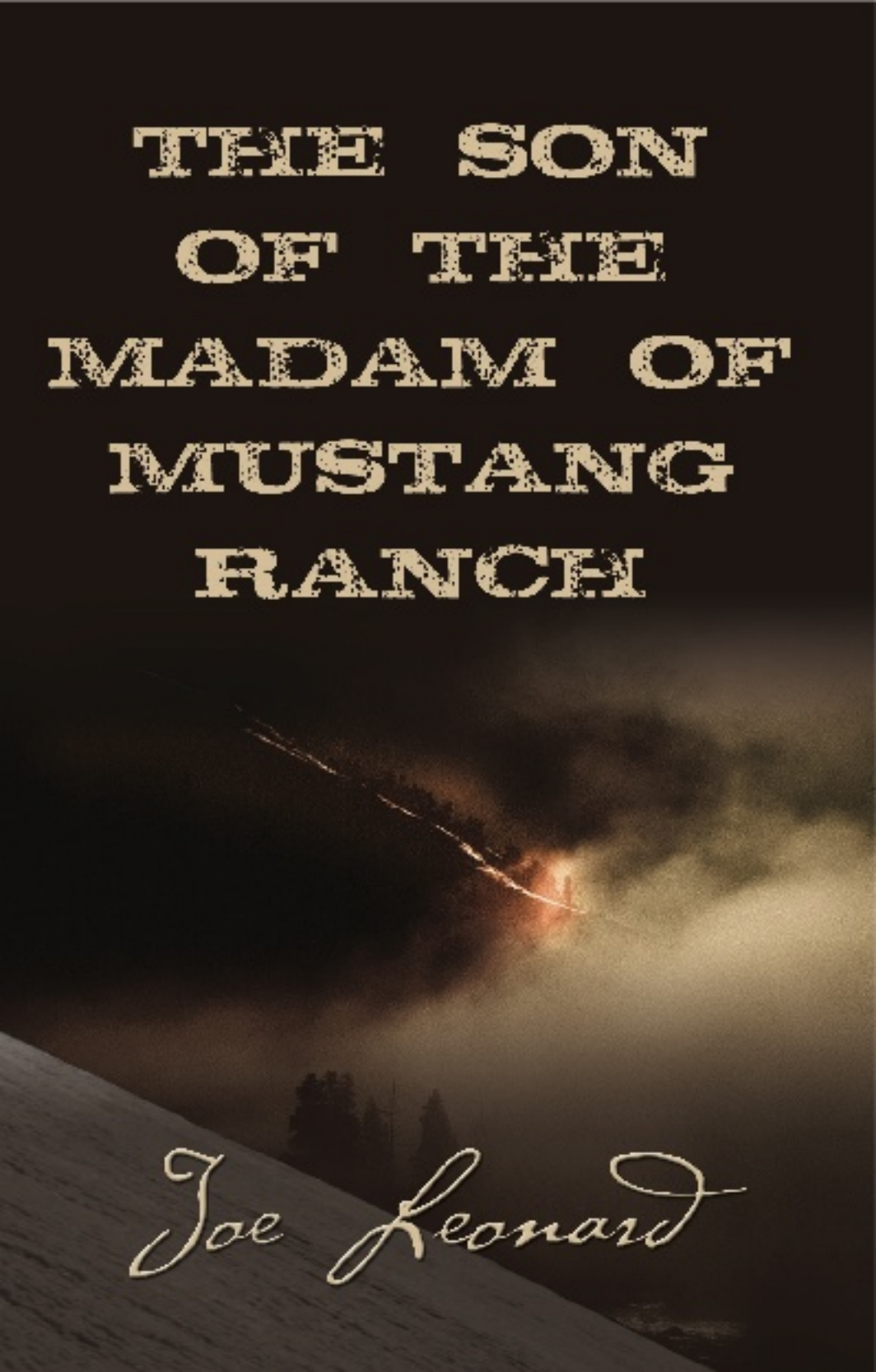


THE SON
OF THE
MADAM OF
MUSTANG
RANCH



Joe Leonard



Compelling, adventurous and inspirational, The Son of the Madam of Mustang Ranch, is a memoir. Guns, violence and lust; wars between two houses of prostitution, gambling rife and aplenty, and debauchery. It was a crazed and corrupt world, and author Joe Leonard was born right into it. Beyond all, this is the story of how he gained the courage to leave the dark realm he had inherited, turning to the wilds in pursuit of his better angels...

The Son of the Madam of Mustang Ranch

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**THE SON
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MADAM OF MUSTANG RANCH**

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TRANSITIONS

*Chasing the
Elusive Summits.*

Life can be extreme. Leaving the world of constant adrenalin for a life of quiet contemplation makes for an enormous change, and it is hard. There is so much one must be willing to give up. Yet at some point even the most energetic person gets older, and there is no choice but to face this change, and try as best as one can to embrace it. The question basically becomes *what* to replace the hunger for adventure *with*. Distraction and ever-diminishing pleasures are one possible road. The other is to take all that one has acquired over the years, all the experiences and setbacks and achievements, all the heaven and all the hell, and to extract from this undifferentiated mass of raw *life*, the lessons it has to teach.

Everything that passed before in my own life had led me to this moment, driving me inward. The time had come for me to make sense of it all – everything that I had seen, had lived, had been. The awareness of something greater than myself had been sleeping silently in the background and was forcing itself to wakefulness. I was facing the highest mountain I would attempt to climb, and truth be known, it was the most difficult obstacle I had ever faced – that of my own ego. It had been born through a need to survive, a desperate will to continue and preserve itself. Desertion, self-preservation, vanity and death had been its sires, and it had clung to its very existence with pitiful and frantic fear.

I once read a story about a team of courageous young men who set themselves to climb Hkakabo Razi, thought to be Southeast Asia's tallest mountain. Mark Jenkins, one of those

young men, said something that was quite stunning, and I instantly recognized myself in his words:

“All serious mountaineers have big egos. You cannot take on risks and constant suffering of big mountains without one. We may talk like Buddhists, but don't be fooled, we're hard-driving narcissists.”

Up to this point my life had been one physical exertion after another, but I was aging and my body could no longer endure the extreme measure that I exacted from it. It was time for acceptance. It seemed that destiny was playing its hand yet again, and my inward search for true meaning found fertile ground.

“Our greatness lies not so much
in being able to remake the world,
as in being able to remake our selves.”

Gandhi

But how does one transition from self-love to an inclusive love that concerns all of life? In the search for the answer to this question, my life continued to unfold, as it always had, and always will.

The change *was* great, but I discovered new passions and rekindled old ones. I became involved in environmental issues, pursued photography, and chose to spend my time in service, helping others and sharing my expertise when asked for. What I found was renewed joy, purpose, and awareness.

I read books, and then more books, on spiritual growth and awareness - and I still do. *The Course in Miracles* has claimed my mornings and sets my course for the day. I have studied it with the same fervor and persistence in which I have climbed my mountains. I still falter, but always come back to my belief in *Oneness*, and I try to live by that standard. There is no

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moment in my past I would change, nothing I would take back. These moments are, after all, my reason for *being*. I can only hope that I have lived, and that I am living, in such a way as to be worthy of this gift of life.



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