BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Total Recall: My Unbelievably True Life Story

by Arnold Schwarzenegger

Poor Austrian kid to bodybuilding king, movie star, and governor - it started with a vision, then he out-worked everyone.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Build the vision first, and make it so specific it feels inevitable.**

A magazine story on Reg Park - Mr. Universe turned movie Hercules - handed teenage Arnold his whole blueprint: win Mr. Universe, get to America, star in films. He refined it 'until it was very specific... it was this or nothing.'

02 **Write your goals down - exact numbers, not vague wishes.**

Arnold put his goals on index cards: train five hours a day, gain seven pounds of muscle, save $5,000, buy an apartment building. 'Writing out my goals became second nature - and so did the conviction that there are no shortcuts.'

03 **Reps, reps, reps. There are no shortcuts.**

His closing rule, earned over five-hour training days stacked with acting classes, construction work, and college. 'No matter what you do in life, it's either reps or mileage.'

04 **Forget plan B - no safety net, no half-commitment.**

From the 'Arnold's Rules' chapter: a backup plan is permission to fail. Test yourself instead: 'Think about the worst that can happen if you fail. How bad would it be?'

05 **When someone tells you no, hear yes.**

Advice he got early in Hollywood and made a rule: 'We can't do this movie' got a hug and 'Thank you for believing in me.' Gatekeepers said a huge body and thick accent could never carry a film - he heard a green light.

06 **Never follow the crowd. Go where it's empty.**

His own examples: immigrants saved for a house, he bought an apartment building; actors chased bit parts, he held out to be a leading man; politicians climbed from local office, he went straight for the governorship.

07 **Turn your liabilities into assets.**

The unpronounceable name, the accent, the oversized body - agents wanted all three changed. They became the brand: there was exactly one Arnold, and everyone knew it.

08 **Be brutal about your flaws - attack your weakest point first.**

'It's human nature to work on the things that we are good at... To be successful, you must be brutal with yourself and focus on the flaws.' After losing to Frank Zane in 1969, he audited his own preparation instead of blaming the judging.

09 **Everything in life is selling - the work is only half done until people know.**

'You can have the greatest movie in the world, but if people don't know about it, you have nothing.' Offered a six-city book tour, he demanded thirty cities in thirty days.

10 **Be a businessman first - and know your money yourself.**

He was a millionaire from bricklaying, mail-order, and real estate before movies paid: 'The most important thing was not how much you make, but how much you invest, how much you keep.' For Twins he took no salary and a percentage instead - and made a fortune.

11 **Stay hungry.**

A whole chapter carries the title. 'Be hungry for success, hungry to make your mark... Don't rest on your laurels.' Seven Mr. Olympia titles, a movie career, a governorship - each finish line became the next start.

12 **You're not a self-made man - give something back.**

The rules chapter ends on hunger for helping others. He lists the parents, coaches, training partners, and mentors who carried him - then spends his later chapters on after-school programs and public service.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Arnold Schwarzenegger grew up in Thal, Austria, in a house with no running water, under a police-chief father whose discipline - earn your breakfast with sit-ups, copy every misspelled word fifty times - he says he 'turned into drive.' At fifteen he found weightlifting, then a magazine story about Reg Park, the Mr. Universe who had become a movie Hercules, gave him a complete life plan: be the greatest bodybuilder in the world, get invited to America, and parlay it into movie stardom. 'I refined this vision until it was very specific,' he writes. 'There was no alternative; it was this or nothing.'

He executed it step by step. He went AWOL from his Austrian army tank unit to win a junior title in Stuttgart and took the punishment. At twenty he became the youngest Mr. Universe ever, moved to California in 1968, and won seven Mr. Olympia titles - six straight, then a shock comeback in 1980

on seven weeks of training. On the side he built a bricklaying business with Franco Columbu, a mail-order company, and a real-estate portfolio, and earned a college degree: he was a millionaire from business before Hollywood paid him anything serious.

Movies took longer. Told his name, accent, and body made stardom impossible, he refused bit parts and held out to be a leading man. Pumping Iron made him famous, Conan the Barbarian (1982) made him a star, and The Terminator (1984) made him the biggest action star in the world - after which he proved his range with Twins and Kindergarten Cop, and his business sense by taking a percentage of Twins instead of a salary.

In 2003 he did it again from a standing start: announced for governor in the California recall and won, then won a second term - governing through budget crises and leaving, by his own telling, with as many defeats as victories. The book is candid about the lowest point coming last: the final chapters cover his governorship, then 'The Secret' - the affair and the son he fathered with the family's housekeeper, which Maria Shriver confronted him about after he left office and which ended the marriage. He owns it as his failure, not bad luck.

The memoir closes with a chapter called 'Arnold's Rules,' where he writes the playbook down plainly: turn liabilities into assets, hear yes when they say no, never follow the crowd, everything is selling, forget plan B, reps reps reps, stay hungry. His repeated lesson across 600 pages: it was not talent - it was a picture in his head, written down, backed by more reps than anyone else would do, and, he insists, a crowd of people who helped him get there.

DO THIS WEEK

Do Arnold's index-card exercise this week. Take one card (or one phone note) and write 4-5 goals with exact numbers and dates - not 'get in shape' but the pounds, the dollars, the hours, the deadline. Carry it where you'll see it daily. Then pick the smallest one and do its first rep today: he worked five hours a day, but the rule underneath is reps, reps, reps - and reps start with one.

Total Recall: My Unbelievably True Life Story by Arnold Schwarzenegger (written with Peter Petre), first published 2012. For anyone who thinks their starting point decides their finish line.