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A Conversation with My Mother Leads to the Dreaming Room

All the influences were lined up waiting for me.
I was born and there they were to form me,
which is why I tell you more of them than of myself.

—Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March*

My mother is ninety-six, lives an active life, looks to be no more than sixty, and has a wonderful sense of humor about it all. “One day I won’t be here,” she says with a twinkle in her eye, “but don’t give me up for dead yet!”

My mother loves to talk, and she loves it even more when I talk. She loves it when I visit her and share my life with her. She eats up all my stories when I tell them, which I usually don’t because I can’t bear to hear them since I’m living them. She has read every one of my seven books, which amazes me since she has no interest in business.

She puts it this way: “Your books are you, Michael, and I get to experience you when I read what you’ve written. I love your books,”

she says, her eyes going deep when she says it, “because I love *you*. You’re a remarkable man, Michael. I know I’m your mother, and that’s what mothers are supposed to say and feel, but, please know that I mean it, even if I weren’t your mother, you are a remarkable man.” It’s always difficult for me to hear that when my mother says that because I don’t feel like a remarkable man. I just feel like me, which is not remarkable. But don’t we all feel that way?

So, in 2005, my mother asked me, “So, what’s going on in your life, Michael?”

“I’m feeling lost, mom,” I said. “I’m sixty-nine years old and I’m feeling like I used to feel when I was a kid. I don’t know who I am anymore, or where I’m going. I feel disconnected from my company and disconnected from myself. I want to do something new but I don’t know what. I feel at a loss, disconnected from the past and the future, and not doing very well in the present either. I don’t even know how to say it.”

My mother smiled, “Michael, if there’s one thing I know about you, you’re never at a loss for words! Tell me what you would tell me if you *did* know how to say it.” She sat there with that lovely enigmatic smile of hers.

“It’s just that, for the past twenty-nine years, I have been so immersed in creating my life, my books, my company, the world I live in, the speaking—all of it. It’s been my passion. And while it’s been difficult at times, it’s also been extraordinary beyond belief. I have been someone, have done something that few people have ever done, have come to this place in my life knowing that I’ve had a positive impact on millions of people in the world, and yet . . .”

I paused, feeling that I was missing the point somehow, but continued to push through it.

“Oh, God, that’s not really it, Mom, it’s something much less obvious. It’s that, yes, all that is true, but at the heart of it something

is missing in all of it. I have been so consumed with the path I was on I stopped looking at where it was taking me. It's like the path became the purpose. But the path I was on . . . still am on . . . is simply that, one path among many. And it could have been a million different paths, had I paid attention somewhere along the way; it could have been anything. I could have done anything, other than what I have done. And I'm feeling the loss of the many paths not chosen because of the one I did take. I have committed myself to becoming 'Mr. E-Myth' and I don't know how to disengage from him now that he's become such a reality to so many people, and to me. I guess what I'm saying is that I need to find a new path, and, at sixty-nine, I feel foolish and lost because I don't know how, or even why, I want to do it."

My mother said, "Michael, pardon me if I don't take what you've said seriously. You've never been at a loss for ideas. You're one of the most imaginative people I know. So, we both know it's not that you can't figure out what to do. It's that somehow you're not really dealing with the problem. Somehow you're avoiding what's really eating at you. What is it? What's making you feel so off?"

I suddenly knew what it was. It came to me so quickly, so immediately, so sharply, and clearly, that I was amazed I hadn't seen it until that minute.

"I'm afraid, Mom. I'm afraid to start something brand new. I'm afraid that I won't have what it took me to start E-Myth all those years ago. That I could actually create something new that is as powerful as E-Myth has been. I'm afraid I'm too old, too used up, too stuck in my E-Myth rut. And, at the same time, I'm afraid to let go of E-Myth for fear that all the work I've done, all the life I've put in it, will simply lose force and die a slow and ugly death. I'm afraid that the people I've left it to won't cherish it as I do. Won't respect it as I respect it. Won't honor it the way it deserves to be honored. And, if that hap-

pens, then none of what I've done will really matter. It will end up being just a book. One book among millions of books, but what it has done for tens of thousands of people will stop. And I would hate that."

My mother had not stopped smiling during my rant, but her smile softened to a sadness, which was reflected in her pale eyes as she looked at me.

"Michael, I feel your pain. I do. I can only imagine how difficult it would be to have to start all over again. But, of course, you don't have to. You could do anything you wish to do now. The only reason you feel so conflicted is because you're coming awake to energy in you, the same energy that has been bubbling and bursting and playing inside of you ever since you were a little boy. Just let it, Michael. Stop thinking. Just let it bubble and burst and play inside you, and see what happens. It's telling you something. It's telling you that that little boy I love so much is just aching to come out. He's the one who is making such a ruckus in you. He's the one who created the E-Myth when everyone told you that you were crazy. He's the one who still wants to play, no matter what time it is, no matter what anybody has to say. Michael, you've always been like that. Let go, and let it do what it does. I have a feeling everything will change. It feels like it's time for something new to come into your life, Michael," my beautiful mother said. "Isn't that exciting?"

It was exactly at that moment when "In the Dreaming Room" was born in earnest: when an entirely new phase of my life began; when my inner entrepreneur was awakened, and a flood of new impressions catapulted me out of my lethargy and drew me to places I had never been before; when the inventor in me woke up and thought, "I'm awake!"

This was really good! It had been so many years since I had felt like this. As the entrepreneur within me began to see and feel and

think. As the entrepreneur within me began to say, “What if?” and “Why not?” and “Why doesn’t anyone know about that?”

All of that happened in the few weeks following my conversation with my mother, and it was more intensive work than I had done in the previous thirty years. But, in the thirty years prior to this epiphany—this moment of seeing clearly, this awakening of the entrepreneur within me—I had done everything I needed to do to prepare me to write this book. I was now ready to take millions of people—those who want to wake up the entrepreneur within them and discover an independent life—closer to their dreams than I had ever believed I could.

That is what this book is about. It’s that process, the awakening, that I want to describe to you.

Before I do that, let me set the rules of the game straight. The rules for playing the Game of the New Entrepreneur. The rules for inventing a new life out of nothing other than the most delightful, most remarkable and miraculous thing of all . . . your imagination.

Let’s look at the Five Realities of the Entrepreneur.