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The Secret Is to Begin
Getting Started
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Getting Started

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When you resolve to take your destiny into your own hands, it's hard to know where to start. Ceding responsibility to others is easy: you vote for a political party, you donate to a nonprofit group, you pay taxes to a government, you enlist in an army, you enroll in a school, you work for a corporation, you convert to a religion. Practically our whole society is arranged that way. It can be daunting to come up with your own agenda, to start over with yourself as the agent of history.

But you're not starting from scratch. You have talents, longings, and dreams that you have given up on pursuing because there seems to be no space for them in this world. The first step is to re-discover them. We aren't just talking a negative struggle against external constraints, but the positive project of realizing our potential on our own terms. Anything you wish you could do—anything you think someone should do—begin it now.

Ready or not, you are already engaged in the struggles of our time. We were all born into them. It's not a question of whether to fight, but how. Do we seek individual solutions or make common cause? Do we address one problem after another, or strike

at their roots? Do we keep investing resources in the institutions that are failing us, or stake our lives on something else?

The ruling order may appear unshakable, but change is the only constant in this world. Windows of opportunity are going to open when things will be possible that seem impossible now. The best way to prepare for such moments is to already be in the habit of acting on your own terms, outside the logic of the prevailing regime. When you know your own strength, you may be able to open those windows yourself.

Get in position. Find people who bring out the best in you. Learn to take care of each other and act powerfully together. Share things. Discuss struggles elsewhere around the world; draw your own strategic conclusions to test when the opportunity arises. Build networks, resources, and skills that will be useful in those moments of possibility. Dedicate yourself to a long-term project that challenges some aspect of the power structure. Wherever you can, open up the fault lines between those who prefer the world the way it is and those who want something different. Don't seek to concentrate power, but to diffuse it—a part of your potential is locked in everyone else, and you won't be able to access it without them. The outcome of a revolution is not determined by revolutionaries, but by which side the people on the fence ultimately join.

Take heart. The hardest part of taking your destiny in your hands is the fear of the unknown. There are no guarantees, and the stakes are the things you prize most in all the world. This is why it's a relief to consign yourself to others' projects and values, giving up on your own in advance so you don't risk failing yourself. Yet that means accepting the worst-case scenario as a foregone conclusion. If that's the alternative, you might as well hazard the leap into the unknown. On the other side, you will find us—the companions you deserve.