

# The Secrets of Wilder

Yogani



The Secrets of Wilder  
—  
A Story of  
Inner Silence, Ecstasy and Enlightenment

Yogani

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Cover photo: Sunrise at Fort George Inlet, Florida, circa 1972

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“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:  
for they shall be filled.”

*Mathew 5:6*



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## Chapter 1 – The Question

*Why not me?*

John Wilder brushed the sun-bleached hair away from his eyes. The firm autumn wind blew it back again, but he didn't notice. Neither did he notice the steady roar of the surf coming over his shoulder. He sat high on the dune, his elbows resting on his bare raised knees and his head propped on his hands. He was transfixed by the miracle unfolding before him.

It came slithering out.

John fell on his side in the warm sand, intently watching the quivering creature perched uncertainly on the dead empty shell that clutched the strand of wind-wavering sea oats. It slowly, painstakingly, opened and dried itself in the morning sun. After a while it went up. He rolled on his back, smiling into the blue northeast Florida sky and its living texture of magic sparkling specks. And there, there it went, the butterfly, fluttering away on great golden wings. His eyes were wide with joy as it flew up, going gradually out of sight...

He didn't find a caterpillar changing into a delicate creature of the air very often. But when he did, he'd stop to witness the excruciating beauty of nature unfolding, feeling the fantastic mystery. He wanted to become a butterfly too. So strong was his longing to be transmuted that he made a vow that in this life he would find a way to become much more than a mere human being bound to the earth by this body and these thoughts.

He lay face-up in the sand pondering his eighteen years of humanity.

*How will I get beyond this?*

He gazed into the great breathing blue. A deep silence overtook him, enveloped him. His eyes closed slowly. He disappeared from the world. He didn't know where he was. Then he heard the woman's voice.

*Come to me.*

His eyes snapped open. He shot to his feet and looked around.

No one in sight.

"Who are you?" he called out nervously, looking around the great white mounds guarding the shore.

No one was there.

He'd been hearing the voice for a few weeks. It came when his longing settled deep inside where he was quiet. The voice seemed to come from inside him. Familiar, but he couldn't place it. Now it was gone again.

He sank back onto the sand and into the spiritual hunger that never left him.

After a while he got up, gazing at the massive shuttered Coquina Dame Hotel decaying behind the shelter of the dunes. He turned toward the sea and swooshed playfully down the great sand slope, his feet pointed inward



like a slowing skier. He navigated between the clumps of tall blowing grass, looking past the huge surf and endless white caps to the rippling horizon.

A hurricane was whirling two hundred miles offshore, making its way from the Caribbean to the Carolina Outer Banks, yet another raging beauty passing by the concave coastline of the Jacksonville area. It was clear and sunny here, but the wind gushed in over the horizon, bringing the huge and chaotic sea with it. Its sweet salty mist beckoned him. It heaved rhythmically, tossing its waves on the wide beach, taunting him.

John gazed at the sea. "Is it you calling me?"

Nothing but the roar replied.

He threw off his T-shirt and ran into the warm seductive water, diving under a large wave as it curled over him hungrily. Then another, and another. He swam through the first line of waves heading for the outer break where they were three times the size. He dove under the walls of foam that came roaring down on him. A dozen dives later he reached the outer break. Tired, he treaded water as he bobbed over swells as big as two story houses, on the edge of breaking into boiling oblivion. The shore seemed miles away.

His adrenaline pumped with anticipation each time a wave lifted him high into the air.

*I'll catch one. I know I can.*

With a sideways snap of his head he whipped the hair and seawater from his eyes. The salty taste filled him. Then he smiled inwardly like a skydiver about to jump out of a plane with an untested parachute. The impending encounter produced a resonance in him. It was something deeply quiet, yet intensely pleasurable. He lived to become that. Sometimes he felt it in cross-country, when he was dashing for the finish line, on the verge of passing out, fighting to win again. He'd lose track of everything, even his body, yet, be more alive inside than at any other time – it was a dying that filled him with life. He was here challenging the sea to send him there.

When the next towering swell approached, he swam like mad to catch it. Catch it he did, a second too late. The tip of the wave licked the sky, on the edge of climax, and he was still on top instead of long gone down the slope heading for a survivable ride out front. It would have been better if he had been a few more seconds late. Then he'd only have to contend with the turbulent backwash behind the wave. No, he'd caught this one just wrong. He knew it as soon as he hadn't made the slope, finding himself on top with no place to go but into the abyss with tons of churning water falling in behind him.

He'd never been in this situation on a wave this big. He knew to curl up in a ball with his head between his knees and arms wrapped around his shins. He hoped he wouldn't hit the bottom too hard. When a wave crests it gets shallow in front, even this far out, and that is where he would land. He took his last breath and balled up as he and the water plummeted together. It was like going over Niagara Falls, minus the barrel.

*Thunk ... whoosh...* He hit bottom on his back. Half his air got away. He tumbled wildly. He kept his head tucked and hugged his shins in a death grip. He hung on to his remaining air. He'd need it until the wave left him behind, and maybe for the next one that could hit him when he came up.

It seemed like the thrashing currents went on for hours. His lungs were burning for air. Somehow he drew strength from the urgent sensation. It was a phenomenon he discovered in running, how a shortage of air could bring a mysterious energy from deep within him. But no pondering it now, except to be thankful that it was saving him from drowning. When he came up in the trail of light foam behind the departed wave, he was staring at another monster coming over him like a hungry predator. He gulped air and went down, back into the ball, splattering on the bottom as the whole Atlantic Ocean crashed down on him. His ball came apart. The air was smashed out of him.

He was dazed, disoriented, on the verge of blacking out. Would this be it? Should he breathe in the great sea and become one with all of life? He saw a light and instinctively swam toward it. He broke the surface into the air, gasping an in-breath. If another wave had hit him then, he'd have been gone for sure. He took a few desperate breaths and then looked around. He was in a lull – nothing but a thin trail of foam between him and the safety of shore. He could make it if he went now.

He turned back out. He could see the mountainous swells coming at him from far out. It was an easy decision – he went straight out toward them. He fought his way under a string of giant waves to get back to the outer break. He was aching, raw, exhausted. But finally he got there and was being lifted high over the tops of the huge walls of water again, ready to try again. This was all that mattered.

He summoned all his breath. "I'm going to ride one of you if it kills me!" he cried, waving his fist at the endless procession of mammoths rolling in toward him from the hurricane over the horizon.

One arrived soon enough. His arms and legs felt like rubber as he flailed to catch it. This time he managed to get in front of it, but not too far. He hit it just right and came down the giant slope head first, arms trailing on his sides, screaming all the way.

"Yeeehaaaaa!"

The wave exploded, burying him in white behind the leading edge of the roaring water. He maintained his board-like posture. He knew he had it. He could feel himself skidding down the hill under the foam. Then his head and shoulders popped out, established in front of the white conflagration and flying toward the beach. When he and the wave approached the inside break, the wave slowed and he started swimming again, catching it as it broke for the second time, much smaller by now. He rode it all the way to the beach, stopping short on the firm sand like a fighter jet landing on an aircraft carrier.

He rolled on his back, exhausted, as the remnants of the great wave receded past his beaten body, sucked back into the sea. He spread his arms and legs out wide in the wet sand and started to laugh, shaking all over.

“Wheweeeee!”

Still laughing, John got up and staggered toward his shirt.

Six middle-aged walkers were gathered there. They’d been watching the crazy kid getting pounded by the wild surf a hundred yards out. Their apparent leader, a man in Bermuda shorts with a large sunburned belly and Panama hat, came up to him.

“Are you all right, son? We were about to go for help.”

John grinned. “Oh yeah, I’m okay.” He turned toward the sea, squinting with a slight cock of his head, and then slowly back to the man. “Some surf, huh?”

“Looks dangerous out there. Did you know what you were doing?”

John shook his head hard, blubbering his lips and slinging water on the man’s reddish feet. “Just barely.” He wiped his face with his shirt. Then he started jumping up and down on one foot with his head tipped to get the water out of his ear. Drops of salty sea fell to the sand from his shaggy hair.

“The ride ... was it worth the risk?” the man asked.

“For me? Yeah. There’s something in it besides the ride.”

“Like what?” The man took off his hat, scratched his bald head, and quickly covered it again.

John looked up at the blazing sun and then into the man’s sunglassed eyes. “It’s hard to explain, sir. It’s a kind of inner opening. A going beyond.”

“Going beyond? Beyond what?”

“Don’t you think there could be more than what we are seeing here?” As the words came out, John made a slow wide gesture with an outstretched arm, encompassing the land and the sea.

The man followed John’s hand. “Well, no ... I don’t think so, son.”

John’s arm hung in the air for a second, like an unfinished sentence, and then dropped to his side. It splatted against his soggy cutoffs. His

facial expression also hung in the air a few more seconds... “Anyway, that’s why I was out there.”

He pulled on his shirt, gave the man, the woman behind him and the two other touristy-looking couples a wet salty salute, and took off trotting north along the waterline in his pigeon-toed way. As he sped up, his hands opened loosely, and his fingers began flicking downward conspicuously with each accelerating step. He sure didn’t look like a high school state champion cross-country runner. But that’s what he was, two years in a row.

The walkers watched him go, that short wiry teenager who gave himself to the raging sea, came out laughing, spouted a few mystic bits and trotted off like that. After a minute, he was but a dot on the shore as he sped away.

The house was three miles up the beach, near the north end of Coquina Island. The sun was high in the sky. Morning had yielded to mid day. The wild surf and steady northeast wind clothed the shoreline in a thin luminous mist. John ran through the white sun-drenched moisture, his slender legs slicing through the mounds of foam that were scattered on the beach. The exhilaration of the surf and the exertion of running made him feel bigger inside.

*Never mind the pain. Maybe if I run hard enough I can burst from this body that confines me. I’ll try.*

He ran faster on the hard wet sand ... and faster.

*After all, if a caterpillar can do it...*

By the time he got home he was breathing hard and shining with sweat. As he came up the long wooden walkway over the dunes, he heard a shout.

“Hey, squirt, where you been?”

“Kurt? You back from Florida State already?” John called. “You just left last week,”

Kurt Wilder stood among the palms at the top of the faded wooden steps leading up the big dune to the veranda in front of the house. He had one hand on each rail, blocking John's path.

“Not again,” John said as he trudged up the stairs.

“Just like old times,” Kurt said. “It’ll cost you a buck to get through.”

“I don’t have a buck. Do I look like I have a buck?” John held out his arms, revealing all he had on him was one pair of wet cutoffs and one sweaty gray T-shirt with a fading *Duval High Cross-Country* on the front. “Even if I had a buck, what makes you think I’d give it to a moron like you?”

“Hey, screw you.” Kurt stood his ground. He was four years older and six feet tall, nearly half a foot taller than his younger brother.

John went up the stairs toward Kurt. *Seems every time I come up these steps, he’s waiting for me.*

When he got to the top, he stopped.

Kurt had a big grin on his acne-scarred face. “Hi, dreamer.”

John tried to press through and Kurt gave him a knee, sending him half way back down the stairs. John came right back up.

Kurt released one hand just as he arrived. “Whatcha been doing out there?”

John knew Kurt didn’t care for the beach or the sea, usually referring to them collectively as, *out there*. Kurt’s taste was more for games of conquest, which included chess, Risk, and student politics.

“Not much. Thanks for the free pass,” John said as he went by, limping slightly on the knee he banged on the way down the stairs.

There was no way he could tell Kurt about the butterfly. He wasn’t sure himself why he had such strong and giddy feelings about it. So how was he going to explain it to his pain-in-the-ass big brother? Kurt would just as soon squash the bug, so what would be the point? But to John, it meant everything – the changing ... the changing. It filled him with wonder.

As John headed to the house, and the solitude of his room, he wondered why he got so worked up about something as simple as a butterfly. Why did such things attract him so strongly? His life seemed to be about breaking through to something. But what? He was more concerned about himself than the butterfly, or Kurt. His strongest interests were limited to what even he considered dubious. He loved pondering his nebulous inner possibilities, and indulged himself freely in that. He knew his parents were concerned. So was he. It was his senior year and he had no plans. *What’s wrong with me? And that voice, that woman calling inside me. Who is she?*

By the time he crossed the lawn between the house and the pool, Kurt had caught up. “Wanna go swimming?”

“No thanks.” Kurt’s idea of swimming was wallowing in the pool like a manatee, vomiting business and politics.

“Gotta go. See ya later.” John was in the side door of the sprawling weather beaten cedar shingled house and heading up the creaking back stairs three at a time. He traversed the long musty hall on the third floor, went into his room and shut the door. The skeleton-key lock clicked.

It was here that he had his most exciting adventures.

## Also by the Author

Yogani is an American spiritual scientist who, for over forty years, has been integrating ancient techniques from around the world for cultivating human spiritual transformation. The approach is non-sectarian, and open to all. His books include:

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