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What I Talk About
When I Talk
About Running

A Memoir

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Foreword

Suffering Is Optional

There's a wise saying that goes like this: A real gentleman never discusses women he's broken up with or how much tax he's paid. Actually, this is a total lie. I just made it up. Sorry! But if there really were such a saying, I think that one more condition for being a gentleman would be keeping quiet about what you do to stay healthy. A gentleman shouldn't go on and on about what he does to stay fit. At least that's how I see it.

As everybody knows, I'm no gentleman, so maybe I shouldn't be worrying about this to begin with, but still, I'm a little hesitant about writing this book. This might come off sounding like a dodge, but this is a book about running, not a treatise on how to be healthy. I'm not try-

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ing here to give advice like, “Okay everybody—let’s run every day to stay healthy!” Instead, this is a book in which I’ve gathered my thoughts about what running has meant to me as a person. Just a book in which I ponder various things and think out loud.

Somerset Maugham once wrote that in each shave lies a philosophy. I couldn’t agree more. No matter how mundane some action might appear, keep at it long enough and it becomes a contemplative, even meditative act. As a writer, then, and as a runner, I don’t find that writing and publishing a book of my own personal thoughts about running makes me stray too far off my usual path. Perhaps I’m just too painstaking a type of person, but I can’t grasp much of anything without putting down my thoughts in writing, so I had to actually get my hands working and write these words. Otherwise, I’d never know what running means to me.

Once, I was lying around a hotel room in Paris reading the *International Herald Tribune* when I came across a special article on the marathon. There were interviews with several famous marathon runners, and they were asked what special mantra goes through their head to keep themselves pumped during a race. An interesting question, I thought. I was impressed by all the different things these runners think about as they run 26.2 miles. It just goes to show how grueling an event a marathon really is. If you don’t keep repeating a mantra of some sort to yourself, you’ll never survive.