



Redemption: A Street Fighter's Path to Peace

Michael Clarke

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While “grit” is considered one of the biggest indicators of someone’s potential for success, the question is how to teach people what it is and how to cultivate it. One way would be to hand them a copy of *Redemption: A Street Fighter’s Path to Peace* by Michael Clarke. In this memoir describing how karate turned his life around, Clarke displays passion and grit in spades.

Clarke, author of *The Art of Hojo Undo* and hundreds of articles for martial arts magazines, revisits his early years as a troubled youth in Manchester, England and the first decade of the karate training that lifted him out of a violent existence. With humility and vulnerability, Clarke lays bare the angry past that landed him in prison two days before his eighteenth birthday. Upon his release eight months later he vowed to change his ways and never return, but that was easier said than done—until the day he walked into a karate studio and found his passion.

This is a revised edition of Clarke’s original memoir, *Roaring Silence*, written in 1985. He has seamlessly melded the original work, sometimes flavored with the naiveté of the young thirty-year-old he was back then, with the wisdom that has come with age and hindsight. For example, the memoir ends with a life-changing journey to Okinawa to seek out Morio Higaonna, a karate master featured in a BBC documentary series on martial arts. Clarke believed he could find Higaonna sensei’s dojo simply by wandering around and looking for the building he had seen on TV, and then he would ask the master to teach him. All the things that could go wrong with this plan just didn’t enter his mind. “Ignorance can be a beautiful thing sometimes,” he writes.

Clarke’s writing is characterized by passion and his memoir is full of emotion, from his heart-quickenning description of the tension leading up to a difficult conversation with a former teacher to his strong views on how karate has changed, and not necessarily for the better. His passion often turns eloquent when he writes of budo, or authentic karate training: “Budo is found in adversity, in the discomfort of the unfamiliar, and is absorbed into your character by the choices you make when all around you is not as you would like it to be. Your mind is where progress is made or lost, and character is developed or allowed to shrink in the face of hardship.”

Though this book is grounded in karate, the overarching theme of overcoming the past and persevering through adversity is universal. Clarke’s honest assessment of his failures and humble attitude toward his successes are refreshing, and this memoir will appeal to many outside the world of karate as well as in it.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (January 21, 2016)

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