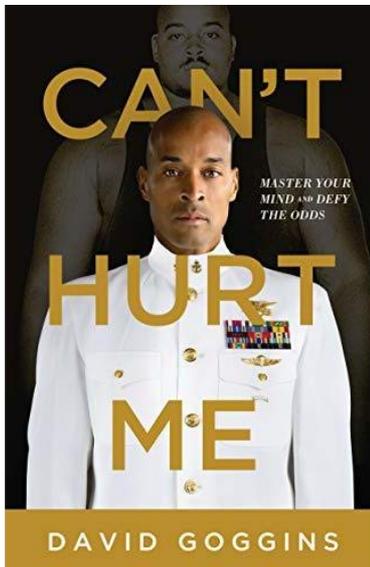


Best Books I Read in 2019

December 16, 2019

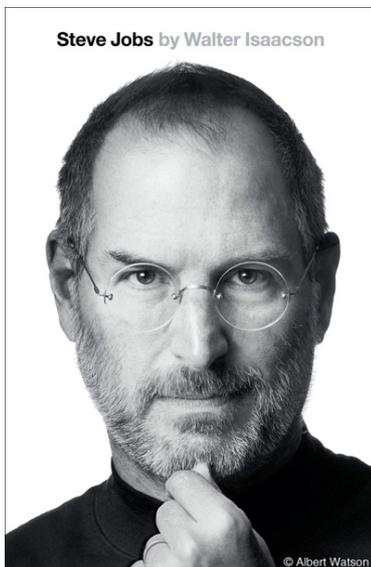
By: Direk Khanijou



Can't Hurt Me by David Goggins. This self-help memoir is phenomenal and is by far the best book I read this year. If you haven't heard of Goggins, go to YouTube and listen to his interviews with Joe Rogan.

Goggins had a rough childhood. He was abused by his father, was a victim of racism and was neglected by the educational system. Yet against all odds, he went on to achieve unbelievable success in the military.

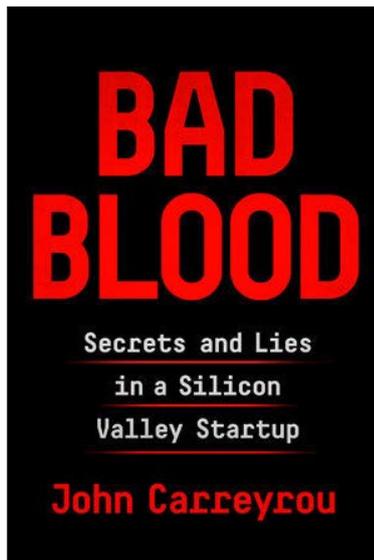
I have never read a more meaningful account of one man's ability to change his life through sheer force of will. This book is raw, authentic and inspiring. I plan to re-read it in 2020.



Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson. Apple is one of the most iconic brands in the world. This book is the definitive account of the man who started it – Steve Jobs.

A biography has to be really good to make you read all 600 pages. I found Jobs to be complex, inspiring and brilliant. He was ambitious and uncompromising in his drive for product perfection. I believe this is still deeply embedded in Apple's corporate DNA.

Even if you are not a fan of Apple, you will learn about the early years of personal computing, Jobs rivalry with Bill Gates, and how he built Pixar.

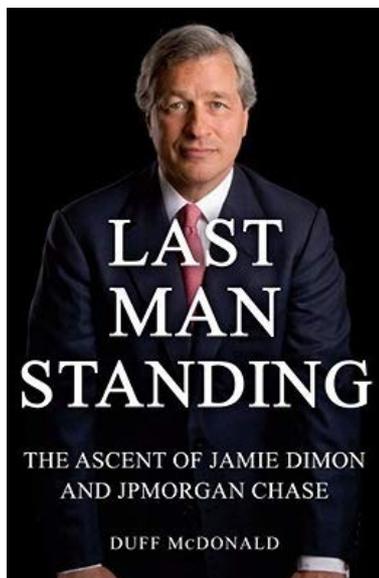


Bad Blood by John Carreyrou. Holyshit. What a story. This book is about Elizabeth Holmes and her now defunct blood-testing startup Theranos. Holmes dropped out of Stanford, founded Theranos at 19 and was widely billed as the “next” Steve Jobs. She even mimicked Jobs by wearing a black Jobsian turtleneck.

Theranos promised to quickly give you a complete picture of your health using only a pinprick of blood from a finger-tip. By 2013, Theranos was valued at \$10 billion and had partnered with Walgreens to roll out their proprietary blood testing devices around the country. The problem? Their technology didn’t work.

At Theranos, Holmes was romantically involved with Sunny Balwani (Theranos COO) and together they fooled VC investors, customers, regulators, the media and their board. Their product demonstrations were outright deceptions and many lives were put at risk.

One of the many things I learnt from this book is that success will be copied, sometimes in a very disgraceful way. Because people like Holmes can be very convincing, we must be wise enough watch out for Batesian Mimicry.



Last Man Standing by Duff McDonald. Since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008/9, every major U.S. bank has had a new CEO – except JP Morgan Chase. The company is the largest American bank by market capitalization and its CEO, Jamie Dimon, is perhaps the most powerful banker in the world.

I especially enjoyed reading about Dimon’s partnership with Sandy Weil. Together they took over the Baltimore-based subprime lender Commercial Credit, whipped it into shape, made acquisitions and built a financial services powerhouse. The duo orchestrated some of the greatest deals in banking.

The book also gave me insights into Dimon’s management style and how he groomed several financial services titans such as Charlie Scharf who is now the CEO of Wells Fargo. Scharf has worked with Dimon at Commercial Credit, Salomon Smith Barney, Citigroup, Bank One and JP Morgan. It is fair to say that he is well trained in the Jamie Dimon school of banking.