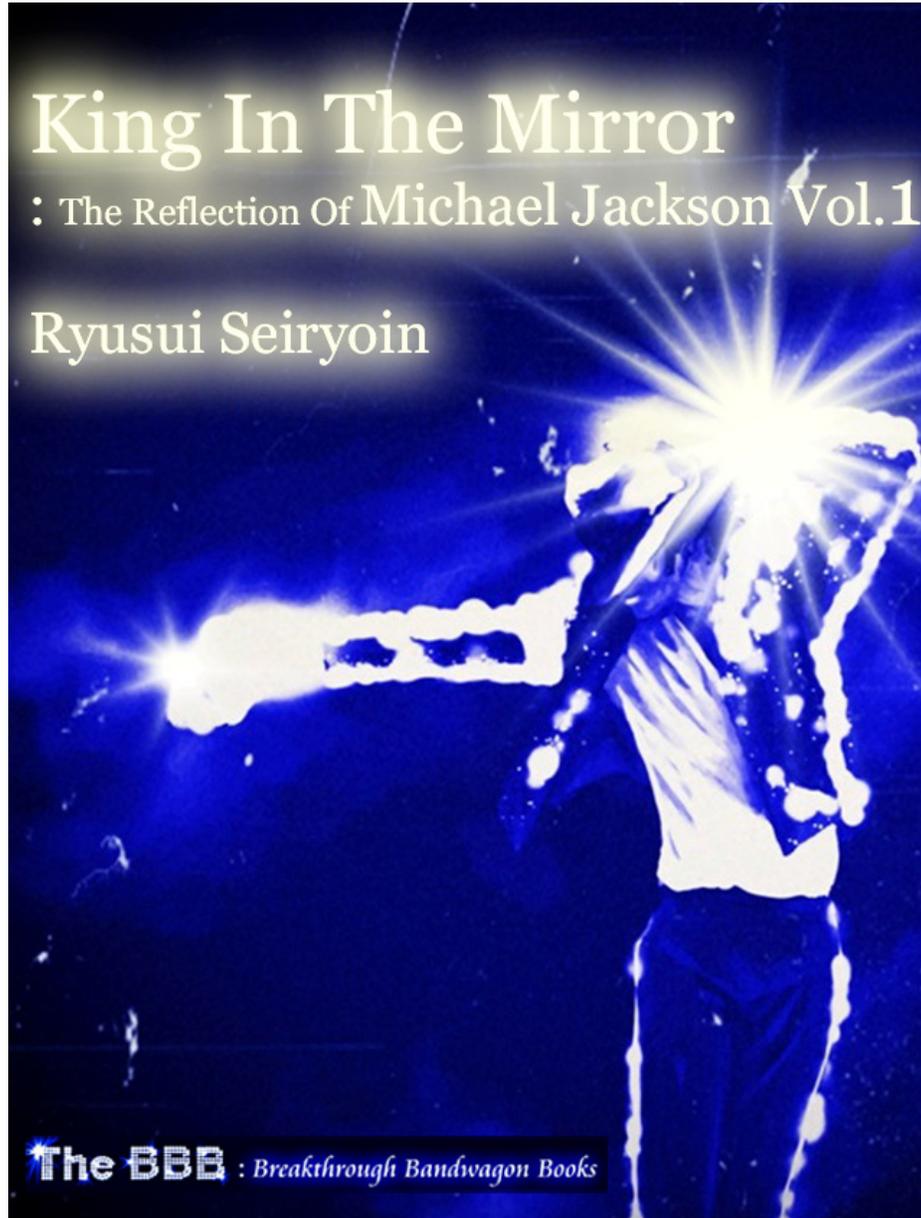


King In the Mirror: The Reflection of Michael Jackson Vol.1



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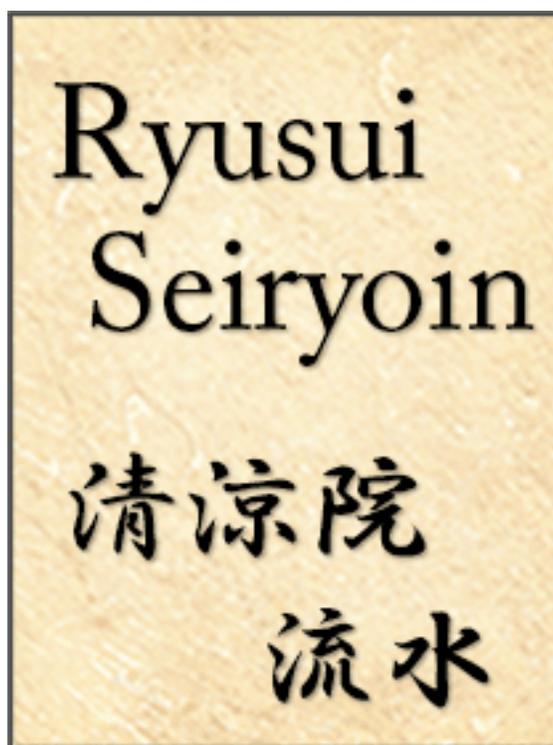
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Prefatory Note

Do you wanna be starting something?

Like a thriller?

Foreword

At times, I ask the man in the mirror a question:

“Do you remember when the course of your (my) life was decided?”

* * *

When I was a child, I just followed the path my parents had set for me, like many people do.

While some people might only follow that early path, I suppose the majority must follow intently the other path that they later choose for themselves.

At least in my case, this was true.

Then, I wonder, when did I choose this path for my life?

* * *

There was definitely a big sign. Yeah ... I remember it well.

A sign that can change the path of your life often turns out to be an encounter with a particular person.

Of course, an encounter with a book can also change your life.

* * *

A moving reading experience is similar to an encounter with that special person.

Introduction: The Mystery of a Gift

To the south of Lake Michigan lies Gary, Indiana. Smoke rising from the chimneys of steel mills clouds the vision of this city, which has the highest African American population in the United States. A man was born here into a large, impoverished family and was given a name with the initials “MJ.”

When this man was born, he already had brothers and sisters. More siblings were born after him. His parents and their nine children lived in a small house. They never imagined that the initials “MJ” would become a kind of icon that would stand for “Michael Jackson,” that they would later become the most famous musical family in the world.

The mother, Katherine, had a very beautiful voice and was good at playing the piano and clarinet. If she hadn’t suffered from polio and become disabled, she, too, might have aspired to a career as a singer.

While working as a crane operator at a local steel mill, the father, Joseph, also played and sang with an amateur R&B band called the Falcons that his brother also played in. They always rehearsed at Joseph’s house, so their family could watch them every time. Joseph singing and playing the guitar looked much cooler to his children than any other superstar.

When Joseph was away, his children would secretly bring out their father’s precious guitar from the closet and practice with it. Their mother soon noticed, but kept their secret. She seemed to regard their actions as far more sensible than their becoming juvenile delinquents in street gangs. Thanks to music, none of her children became gangsters.

One day, the second oldest son, Tito, broke a guitar string while practicing. Joseph found out that his children had been playing his precious guitar. Naturally, this angered the short-tempered master of the house.

Crying, Tito adamantly made an excuse.

“I ... I just ... I practiced!”

“If you insist that you have been practicing, then show me your performance,” Joseph ordered.

The young guitarist put on a show that was better than his father had expected.

Later, Joseph not only taught his children how to play instrumentals and sing but was also able to give them a guitar and a bass by saving money and making ends meet. Gradually, he became fascinated with the idea that his children could form a band.

At first, he mainly taught his three older sons—Jackie, Tito, and Jermaine. The two younger sons joined in later, and they began to play at various places as the Jackson Family or the Jackson Brothers or the Jacksons, and finally, as the Jackson 5.

The training was unbelievably strict. When one of the boys made a mistake while playing or singing, Joseph would punish him mercilessly with a belt or a whip. Sometimes, he even slammed them against the wall with brute force. Since he had been a boxer, he was tremendously strong. Today, such treatment would be considered child abuse.

Because they were afraid of Joseph, the children practiced like crazy. At the same time, it was fun for them to observe the progress they were making. They participated in local music contests and often won prizes.

The Jackson 5 enjoyed a huge success that was beyond their expectations.

* * *

Now, we focus on the days when they started playing music and participating in activities as the Jackson 5.

This sometimes makes us wonder whether there is an inborn difference of gift.

All the Jackson children had inherited the same genes, and yet, each of them had surprisingly different abilities. All of the girls—Rebbie, LaToya, and Janet—later released records under their own name, but only two of all siblings achieved true success.

Was this because of a difference in the innate gifts they had inherited?

Or was this just a coincidence?

* * *

What did the man, whom we mentioned at the beginning, think about this?

He might have felt a sense of inferiority about his gifts compared to those of his brothers and sisters.

He might have felt distressed about what had led to these differences among them, and why only he couldn't do well musically, although all of the sons had been born to the same parents and had been taught and had practiced in the same way.

He might have thought that there was surely a difference in a person's innate gifts. He might have thought how unfair the world was and might have even cursed the Lord who created it.

But we assume, if this was the case, that his thoughts must have changed gradually.

He might have thought that a difference wasn't really there and that the difference between his younger brother and him wasn't only a matter of a gift.

* * *

The initials of this man were "MJ."

Not only his brother, Michael, but also the man himself was "MJ."

However, most people in the world associate "MJ" with his younger brother, Michael Jackson, and not with him, Marlon Jackson.

* * *

We know that the difference in musical talent between Marlon and Michael was clear from the beginning. The singing and dancing abilities of Michael were surely outstanding.

At first, the lead vocal of their group was Jermaine, the third brother. But Michael, the youngest brother in the group, took over the role later.

"The audience will be pleased if Michael sings, because he is the youngest boy in the group," their father explained. The children were convinced, although Jermaine did not seem happy.

But this was not just a strategy. Michael's voice was indeed special from the start. We could presume that Joseph knew this very well. Thus, Michael became the main vocalist from that time on.

Compared to Michael, Marlon was not good at singing and dancing and did not have the talent for playing musical instruments.

"You and Michael are only a year apart in age. Why are you so incapable?"

Joseph bellowed and beat Marlon countless times. In his autobiography, *Moonwalk*, Michael recounted that Marlon got yelled at much more than his other brothers.

But Marlon never blamed Michael for their father's anger. Michael and he had been the closest within their family before Janet grew up to be like Michael.

If Marlon ever blamed anything, it would have been his lack of talent.

But we wonder, did he really not have the talent?

Why could he not be as successful as Michael or Janet?

* * *

Michael and Janet had a talent and created their success. But that is not all they did.

Michael Jackson, aka the "King of Pop" and one of the most legendary artists of all time, was gone all too soon on June 25, 2009. Since then, we have often reflected on our memories of his life and those of the other members of the Jackson family. As a result, we feel that Michael had a much greater struggle than not only his brothers and sisters but also other people in the world.

Even when his brothers and sisters were playing, Michael never stopped practicing his singing and dancing. He always aspired to perfection and was never satisfied with himself.

Can we say this was only a matter of talent?

Surely, it was somewhat a matter of talent.

Even so, we suppose, the true talent of Michael was not his ability to sing and dance but to keep trying everything.

This may be a universal law that applies to Michael as well as other geniuses in different fields. If we consider successful people, we can conclude that this is indeed the case.

People believe geniuses to keep trying harder than other people, without any exceptions.

If there is ever a gift, it must be the ability to be able to keep trying.

We have surely learned this truth from the life of Michael Jackson.

However, the things that Michael thought about are an eternal mystery now.

Michael ... We will always miss you.

Where are you now?

Chapter 1: The Mystery of Success

When the King was a small child, his mother told him,

“Michael, you are named after an angel. You are actually our angel.”

Katherine always doted on Michael. She loved not only him but also her other children, and of course, her husband, too. Katherine was an amazingly adoring person, and Michael might have learned the importance of love from her.

At this very age, Joseph, too, had some impressive words for Michael.

“Michael, even if you are endowed with many talents, you will never fulfill your potential unless you plan and prepare well. Never forget this.”

Joseph was the children’s music teacher, their manager, and an excellent strategist.

The children had, for example, some microphones, which were pretty much a luxury in those days. Compared to their rivals, who were amateur bands not accustomed to using microphones, the Jacksons had an advantage in that respect alone.

If you weren’t accustomed to the way the tone of your voice changed when you used a microphone, you would be bewildered and out of sync during actual music contests. The Jackson 5 actually saw such groups. Some of them couldn’t even sing when they faced the microphone.

Needless to say, practice does make a difference. At the same time, there is undoubtedly an experiential difference. The Jacksons learned these things as children.

As a lot of people in Gary loved music, many local music contests were held there. The Jackson 5 entered contests right and left, and won trophies one after another.

While their rivals looked just amateurs, Joseph tried hard to making his children appear professional, and instructed them in detail on what to wear, how to stand, and how to act. They practiced over and over again until they could do everything perfectly, just as Joseph had imagined it.

* * *

When Michael was eight, they won the biggest contest in the city, and the Jackson 5 finally became the champions of Gary. But Joseph was far from satisfied, and soon, his children became his next target.

The stage for their new challenge was a metropolis, Chicago, which was the second-largest city in the United States after New York. Chicago is in Illinois, next to Indiana, and just around the corner from Gary.

In those days, Joseph reduced his hours at the factory, and as the manager of the Jackson 5, got jobs for his children at nightclubs in Gary and Chicago. They played five-set shows six or seven nights a week and accumulated playing experience. The fact that they played among strippers was kept a secret from Katherine, of course.

Around the same time, Joseph got acquainted with a man named Mr. Keith, who had a recording studio in Gary. With him, the Jackson 5 recorded their first album, *Big Boy*, and released it under Mr. Keith’s personal label, Steel Town. This record was often played by the local radio station. But, of course it couldn’t rank in on those days.

As the Jackson 5 released their own record and participated in amateur contests held at theaters in Chicago, their musical activities drew more attention. Consequently, they received referrals from key people and were able to enter the finals of an amateur contest at the legendary Apollo Theater in New York, which they won.

Thanks to this memorial victory, they were offered a TV program in New York. If this had come to pass, it would have been their first TV appearance. However, it got canceled.

A bigger offer awaited them.

This was the call from Motown.

* * *

The name of Motown Records came from “Motor Town,” the nickname of Detroit, in Michigan. The record label, which specialized in African American artists, was enormously popular in the ‘60s and ‘70s, and many superstars, such as Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, and Stevie Wonder, belonged to this label.

Michael trembled with excitement and anticipation in the car as the Jackson family drove to Detroit. He must have felt that they were approaching huge success. But nobody assured them that they could surely achieve it. They were actually nervous, because if they missed this chance, they would be going back to the beginning—in the last minutes on their way to success—as in Monopoly, the board game they loved in those days.

They played some songs at Hitsville USA, the Motown studio. But they didn’t receive a good response from the Motown staff. Michael found himself asking them, “Hey, how do you like our performance?”

They didn’t hear from Motown that day.

At a later date, they were informed that they had passed the audition, and got an opportunity to meet the famous Berry Gordy for the first time, who had founded Motown and been a composer of many hit songs.

His confident words at that time impressed the boys greatly:

“Well, gentlemen, you know, we are going to make history. From now on, we are going to start an amazingly huge thing that the world has never experienced before. I can predict it. You will be in music textbooks in the future. Your first record will reach number one. The second record, too. Not only those, but the third record will reach number one, too. You will reign over the hit charts. Just like the Supremes, Diana Ross and her group.”

* * *

Gordy had them spellbound with his words. The moment Michael heard these words, his view of the world changed completely. Soon, the prediction of the charismatic manager of Motown came true.

The Jackson 5 made their debut from Motown in October 1969. Their first four singles ranked number one in the United States. This was a historic first for new singers. Their name was now inscribed in music history. This record is still unbroken, and it is an immortal accomplishment.

* * *

The Jackson 5’s unexpected run after their debut led to the unmistakable first massive success in their lives. Although they had experienced several small successes before, four consecutive number-one records were a crucially greater success. They accomplished what no singer in history had ever achieved.

If someone would ask Michael, “Why were you able to achieve such success and I wasn’t?” he might have asked a question back,

“Have you practiced more and gained more experience in your field than anyone else?”

“Have you set an achievable goal for success and prepared for it?”

Of course, we know there are various reasons for someone's success. Meeting people who help you, a compatibility with modern times, and factors influenced by luck, are also important.

But Michael could confidently say one thing from his experience of being in show business for decades:

“Every person who becomes number one surely practices many times more than others, accumulates experience, and prepares to achieve success every time.”

This rule has no exceptions.

When people practice many times more than others, accumulate experience, and prepare to get a chance, only then do they achieve success.

However, what decides whether or not you succeed is not merely your luck.

The amount of experience you have accumulated when you get lucky is equally important.

Chapter 2: The Mystery of Strategies

After the date for their debut had been determined, the Jackson 5 and their father/manager, Joseph, moved to Los Angeles at the request of Motown Records. Compared to their home in the cold Indiana, they felt as if California was Heaven, because there was plenty of heavenly warm sunshine there.

At first, Berry Gordy and Diana Ross let them live in each of their houses in Beverly Hills. Seeing the trust and expectations that they both had from them, the Jacksons were excited. Their life there was really enjoyable.

Diana especially cared for Michael, the youngest member of the band. Michael often went out with Diana. It was like a dream for him to monopolize the attention of his favorite Diana, one of the top stars of the era.

“Michael, you should learn to recognize the true value of a painting in order to become a real artist.”

She taught him how to draw pictures and took him to museums. She was the person who taught him about Michelangelo, whose work he loved all his life.

Michelangelo’s name is a combination of “Michael” and “angel.” Michael learned the true meaning of art from the works of this great artist who was his namesake.

When Michelangelo drew the mural in the Sistine Chapel, it was said that he broke a part of it and drew it again if he did not like any part of the drawing. Michael learned one truth from him—the great arts live forever, so a real artist has to be a thorough perfectionist.

Diana Ross was Michael’s first crush, and for him, an eternal lover. While Michael lived with her, she was a senior associate of Motown and one of the most successful singers in the United States. She was like his mother and his sister, and a somewhat ideal lover ... a miracle for him.

In fact, even though Michael was only a child, he knew that Diana was Gordy’s lover. However, Gordy and Diana’s special relationship didn’t last very long.

When Michael was in his teens, he proposed to her, because he believed that she was the only person in the world to whom he could be married.

His proposal was quite serious, but Diana shook her head with a perplexed expression.

“I truly love you ... but I have known you ever since you were only a child, and we are too close for me to imagine us becoming husband and wife. I’m so sorry, Michael ...”

When she married another man some years later, Michael was asked to be the bride’s best man. He accepted at once, but later declined. Even though he wanted to congratulate Diana, he simply couldn’t be happy for her.

Later, when he released a number called “Dirty Diana,” people assumed that the relationship between them had deteriorated. But Michael swore that the song was not about Diana Ross.

* * *

Motown Records had already succeeded in introducing the blind boy genius Stevie Wonder to the public before the Jackson 5. So they were very willing to promote the Jackson 5, too. The boys had thought that their father Joseph was a sharp strategist, but Motown now managed them as a solid brand. All of the brothers had their hairstyles changed to Afros as a kind of icon, and their characteristics set up to the gallery.

They were given strict instructions about how they should answer questions in interviews, according to previously prepared scripts, in order to play ideal children's roles. For example, Michael's allowance was said to be \$5 a week, which he used to learn about art.

Although Michael was actually 11 years old when the brothers made their debut, Motown announced that he was only eight to make a stronger impact on the public. Of course, this was an age when he still had to go to school. But many fans crashed their school, and the brothers couldn't attend classes. So they were home-schooled by teachers hired by Motown.

Since Gordy tried to make their debut single "I Want You Back" into a perfect song, they were forced to do a surprising number of retakes. He was a great composer, and his persistence was right on the mark. The Jackson 5 learned a lot from him because they didn't have much experience back then. In fact, Michael later admitted that Gordy's perfectionism had a great impact on him.

Their debut single, "I Want You Back," released in October 1969, became number one in the United States, and sold two million copies in six weeks. Their second single, "ABC," took over the U.S. number-one spot from the Beatles' "Let It Be" and sold two million copies in a mere three weeks. Subsequently, their third single, "The Love You Save," once again replaced the Beatles' last single, "The Long And Winding Road," at the U.S. number-one spot. Their fourth single, "I'll Be There," held the U.S. number-one spot for five consecutive weeks. This number was the greatest hit in the Jackson 5's career and the third-biggest hit in Motown history. Incidentally, the biggest hit of Motown Records was Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through The Grapevine," and its second-biggest hit was "Endless Love" by Diana Ross and Lionel Richie.

In the year following their debut, the Jackson 5 became a social phenomenon throughout the United States. All of their four singles made it to the top 20 in the United States in 1970 in their second year as a professional group. Their whirlpool was getting bigger and bigger. They went on a tour, visiting nearly 100 cities all over the United States and a world tour that took them to several countries. They had a lot of different experiences.

On Gordy's suggestion, Michael started his solo activities in 1971 in the third year of the Jackson 5 as a group. He was selected as an alternate singer for singing the theme song of the movie *Ben* in 1971, which made it to number one in the United States at the very start of his solo career and got him his first Golden Globe Award.

* * *

While the group achieved unbelievable success, Michael began worrying about changes in his appearance around the time that the Jackson 5 was in its fourth year as a group. He was growing taller and taller as an adolescent and had a lot of pimples on his face. Many people were disappointed when they met him. They seemed to still have a strong first impression of "Little Michael."

"... Eh? Has that cute boy grown so big?"

"Too bad ... a very ordinary boy like any other."

Some people even said the word "ugly" to Michael's face, and this hurt him immensely.

He was at the age when his voice was breaking, and he was unable to sing in the same key as he had when the group had debuted. As the brothers grew up, all of their achievements seemed to crumble gradually. This was terribly frightening for them.

Michael often wished that he would never age, like Peter Pan.

The Jackson 5's first four singles had made it to number one in the United States, which was even better than Gordy had expected, but they never reached number one again. In addition, "Ben" was the only number-one single by Michael as a solo singer and that too as a member of the Jackson 5.

The older Michael became, the more the boom of enthusiasm for the Jackson 5 receded.

Although they were only teenagers, the boys were shunted off into a corner in people's memories, and their songs became oldies.

"After all, the Jackson 5 is nothing more than just child stars. If Michael's voice changes, it's over," Quite a few adults had said such bitter things since the group had made its first appearance.

The Jackson 5 wanted to prove these people wrong. But their declining popularity seemed to prove them right.

Motown also worried about Michael's changing voice and tried to sell as many records as possible before then. Therefore, they made the Jackson 5 record every day.

* * *

Meanwhile, the third-oldest brother, Jermaine, who was enormously popular with teenage girls back then, married Berry Gordy's daughter, Hazel, in 1973.

Gordy had treated the Jackson 5 as his own sons. At last, Jermaine truly became his real son, and the Jacksons became his real family.

"Well done!" Joseph said, and gave Jermaine a hug, and the family heartily congratulated him.

People said, "The Jackson family has it made now because of what Jermaine did!"

Following Jermaine and Hazel's marriage, Gordy focused on the next single, "Get It Together," as well as their debut single. Unfortunately, it wasn't successful, but the single that followed, "Dancing Machine," became the Jackson 5's biggest hit in the later stage of their career. It grabbed the second place on the U.S. charts, which was the first time that had happened in three years.

The street-style robot dance that Michael performed when the group sang "Dancing Machine" on TV became extremely popular among the young generation in the United States and contributed to the song's popularity.

However, that was the last jackpot for the Jackson 5, and their popularity gradually decreased after that.

* * *

As we look back on the history of the Jackson 5, it becomes evident that nobody can control success. In their case, although Motown's strategy fortunately worked well, their success wasn't entirely expected. In fact, a lot of similar groups didn't enjoy any success at all. It could be said that the Jackson 5's accomplishments depended on luck and, of course, the continuous efforts of everyone involved.

Moreover, even though some might achieve massive success, none can keep it forever.

There isn't a single child star in history that has been able to hold onto his or her popularity without a break. As child stars grow up, their appearances and voices change, and they can't maintain the image that people would like to see.

Even if they didn't grow up after their debuts, like Peter Pan, they wouldn't have held onto their popularity forever. If they repeated the same performance all the time, people would get tired of it. Furthermore, a person ages little by little and finally transforms into an older person.

Achieving success resembles mountain climbing. You can climb to the top of a mountain, but can't stay there forever. You have to come down sometime.

If you want to achieve your next success, you have to prepare for the next climb.



Chapter 3: The Mystery of a Comeback

The reason that the popularity of the Jackson 5 was decreasing was not only because the boys were growing up and were no longer child stars but also because of the growing distance between their age and music.

Berry Gordy and the composing team at Motown Records always treated them as kids and rejected their opinion that they should try something new and challenging. Gordy, especially, completely spurned their hopes of being involved in songwriting.

At that time, Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder, top stars of Motown, had succeeded in breaking new ground by strengthening their artistic value. The Jackson 5 was convinced that they needed to proceed in the same way as the senior artists at Motown. However, Gordy never allowed them to produce works by themselves.

“You guys are not veterans like Marvin or Stevie, and your caliber is far from sufficient. You must credit my help for your success.”

The Jackson 5 had entrusted all management to Gordy in their early days, because they didn’t know anything about the music industry. But they were not going to be kids forever. More important was that Motown itself was losing momentum along with the Jackson 5.

Michael decided to set up a one-on-one meeting with Gordy and passionately told him that their hopes of songwriting were really serious. But Gordy consistently turned them down.

In the middle of this stagnation, with no breakthrough in sight, Joseph groped desperately for the possibility of changing record companies. Finally, they were able to sign a new contract with Epic Records, which was affiliated with CBS, one of the three biggest television networks. Motown had owned the rights to the name “The Jackson 5” since the group’s debut contract, so the boys took the name “The Jacksons” again, which they had used when they had been amateurs. Then, they resumed their music activities as The Jacksons.

However, Jermaine couldn’t leave Motown Records because Gordy was his father-in-law. So, it was quite sad for the other brothers when Jermaine stepped away from their group.

They forwarded the transfer contract without informing Jermaine. When Jermaine discovered at the last minute what had been done, he was furious.

“Why did you all have these talks without informing me? We are family, aren’t we?”

It was the first time that the tightly knit family had shown any cracks.

They had expected Jermaine to choose them and not the Gordy family. As a consequence, Jermaine dropped out of their group and continued his solo career at Motown Records for several years after that.

From an early age, Jermaine and Michael had been the vocalists of the group. So, his older brother’s dropping out must have caused Michael grief and pain, as if he had lost his other half. However, if the boys hadn’t made this decision and had stayed at Motown, their history might have ended right then. To continue maintaining the hopes of their family, they couldn’t help but choose the option of moving away from Motown.

* * *

In place of Jermaine, Randy, the former supporting member and youngest brother, officially joined them. The Jacksons once again became a party of five, just as the Jackson 5 had been.

Epic Records, to which they transferred, also didn’t allow them to produce their first two albums. They only let them compose some songs experimentally.

After they transferred to the new label and changed the group's name, the Jacksons' first two albums didn't sell well, so they found themselves in a more difficult position than before.

They prepared themselves in the event that the next album became the end of their career and persisted in negotiating with Epic Records. Finally, they were able to self-produce their album for the first time.

Their third album, *Destiny*, in 1978, and the single "Shake Your Body" both were huge successes. In fact, they became the biggest hits in the Jacksons' entire history.

This achievement, which was due to their own efforts, must have been far more meaningful than the success someone else had given to them.

* * *

Since the popularity of the Jackson 5 had been steadily decreasing until their comeback as the Jacksons, they had been struggling for years. At times, they were discouraged and hopeless.

But their persistently reaching for the goal they believed in paved the way for them.

In everyone's life, there comes a certain period in which you are not rewarded no matter how hard you try. Your success is influenced by the chemistry between you and the age in which you live and some luck. Even so, if you believe that you will get a chance some day and prepare for it on a regular basis, you will be able to soar again to a new height with the help of good luck when you actually get it.

We can learn such truths about life from the period that stretched from Jacksons' struggles to the success of their *Destiny* album.

* * *

There really is an ebb and flow to both life and luck. Once a downturn starts, an unrewarded period continues no matter how hard you try. But if your luck improves again, then many things may turn around.

While they changed from the Jackson 5 of Motown Records to the Jacksons of Epic Records, Motown asked Michael to attend a movie audition individually and not as a member of the Jacksons.

Since the court trial with Motown had continued after they had changed record companies, Michael was somewhat hesitant. He consulted Diana Ross, with whom he had continued to be friends. She told him, "That's a different story. Asking you to audition is Berry's request, in fact."

Michael auditioned for the movie *The Wiz*, which was a remake of the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz* with an entirely African American cast, and he was selected for the role of the scarecrow.

Michael was so happy to get a chance to act with his icon, Diana. In fact, it was during this time that he met Quincy Jones, the music producer of the movie, which was a remarkable event that would change his life dramatically. More accurately, this was a kind of reunion, because Michael had met Jones once when he was a kid.

* * *

It was a truly memorable moment.

In one scene of the movie, Michael received an instruction from the director to pull out a bit of paper from his straw hat and read from it. It was a quote from Socrates.

He knew the spelling of Socrates, but he couldn't pronounce the name correctly because he hadn't read it aloud in front of people before. There was an awkward silence when he made a mistake, but one gentleman kindly corrected it.

Michael saw him, and the man looked back at him with a gentle smile.

That guy was Quincy Jones.

After that, Jones and Michael became close friends, like a father and son.

Jones was a masterful producer, whom everyone in the music industry knew, and he had an extensive network. Michael had intended to seek an outside producer for his next solo album, because he wanted to add a fresh taste that differed from that of the Jacksons.

Michael consulted Jones about this.

“Hey, Quincy, could you introduce me to a talented musical producer?”

Jones mentioned a few names, but he shook his head as if he couldn’t accept these ideas. Finally, Jones made an amazing suggestion. He said, “How about me?”

Michael later swore he hadn’t intended to ask Jones at all. For some reason, he hadn’t thought about that possibility. However, thanks to Jones’s attractive suggestion, Michael began anticipating a great collaboration, because the chemistry between the two of them was very strong.

Joseph, the Jackson brothers, and the people from Epic said, “He is outdated now!” and resisted Michael’s opinion. But he acted according to his hope and intuition, because it was HIS solo album.

Thus, this was the beginning of the relationship between Jones and Michael, which continued for ten years.

* * *

Michael had another important encounter back then.

Perhaps someone had given her Michael’s phone number, but one day, out of the blue, Heather McCartney called him. She told Michael that she was a big fan of him and the Jacksons, and invited him to a party on a ship. There, Michael first saw her father, Paul McCartney, one of the most successful musicians in history.

Michael only saw McCartney at that time, but he was very excited because he was a huge fan of the Beatles and McCartney. Michael felt as if McCartney was filled with a mysterious energy, even in a crowd. Michael couldn’t talk with him at the party, but several months later, he had his next opportunity to introduce himself to McCartney at another party.

They shook hands, and McCartney surprised him by saying, “In fact, Michael, I have written a new song, keeping you in mind.” Saying this, he actually hummed the tune. The song, “Girlfriend,” was later included in McCartney’s album *London Time*.

At a later date, an amazing thing happened when Michael recorded his solo album with Jones.

“Michael! I’ve found a song that perfectly fits your image!”

Jones was talking about “Girlfriend.” Michael told him that McCartney had written the song keeping him in mind. Jones was really surprised.

They got permission from McCartney, and “Girlfriend” was included in Michael’s solo album, too.

At first, the title of the album was *Girlfriend*, but then, they finally chose the title *Off The Wall*.

In any case, they did want to do off-the-wall things.

Off The Wall was Michael’s first solo album after transferring to Epic Records. The first song of this album, “Don’t Stop Till You Get Enough,” was the first number that he had written entirely by himself. Michael

rose to number one in the United States with this song for the first time in seven years, since “Ben” in 1972. It was a truly great achievement for him, and he was ecstatic.

After the downturn of the Jackson 5, they made a comeback as the Jacksons. At the same time, Michael also made a comeback as a solo artist for Epic Records.

Rather than a comeback, it was a new soaring, which overtook his past success.

* * *

The subsequent single, “Rock With You,” also rose to number one in the United States. The *Off The Wall* album sold six million copies in the United States alone at that time and became the first album in history to include four top-10 singles in just one album. This success was far more miraculous than the phenomenon of the Jackson 5 or the comeback of the Jacksons.

With Jones’s help, Michael enjoyed much more success as a solo artist than he had with his brothers.

Michael won his first Grammy Award, which is the highest honor in the music industry, for this album. However, although *Off The Wall* achieved great success that year, it was nominated only for the R&B men’s vocal category. Michael was quite shocked by these results. Given his success, he expected the album to be nominated for several awards.

So, he declined the invitation to the awards ceremony and cried in frustration while watching it on the television at home. Michael felt ignored by other people in the industry because he was African American.

“Next time, I have to create an album that nobody can ignore!”

He raised his fighting spirit.

His next target would be a challenge for him to overcome all limits.

Chapter 4: The Mystery of the Glory

People say we have only one heyday in our lives. But we wonder whether this is true. If you believe that you can achieve more success and make every effort to meet the next challenge, new heydays would come in your life again and again.

For example, it is not necessarily the case with successful athletes, who are believed to have only one heyday. They often get second and third heydays as managers, coaches, commentators, or entrepreneurs.

Of course, if someone had experienced a huge success in the past and couldn't get over it, they would be told, "You had a heyday back then, right?"

For Michael, the period from the Grammy in 1980, when he was humiliated and swore to himself that he would be a great success, to the Grammy in 1984, represents the soaring days that many people called Michael Jackson's heydays.

Michael made up his mind to do things the best he could with the greatest power possible. He ran at a high speed and overcame many barriers facing him, and finally reached a frontier no one had ever reached before.

* * *

For his new solo album, called "Starlight" at first, Michael wanted to create completely new music that nobody had ever heard before and that could leap easily over the walls of the genre. To that end, he vowed to himself that he would spare no effort.

"I'm going to make my next album the highest-selling album in world history."

When Michael said this, Quincy Jones and his other staff laughed. They thought that Michael was kidding.

But they soon found out that he was quite serious, and Jones supported Michael as much as possible. Jones asked many composers to participate and offered almost 700 candidate songs for the new album.

Jones's network extended to every corner of the music industry. First-rate musicians, who were such big names that Michael was surprised just by hearing them, offered new songs to him. In addition, Michael himself wrote more than 100 candidate songs.

In this way, they came up with more than 800 songs and selected nine of them for the album. The selection process was so stringent that it would have hardly been possible to choose a song that wasn't great.

Meanwhile, the record company was putting more pressure on Jones and Michael to release the "Starlight" album before too much time had passed following the success of the last album, *Off The Wall*.

They thought that the six million in sales of *Off The Wall* was a happy coincidence, and if "Starlight" sold even two million, it would be the best that could happen.

Back then, Jones and Michael were making another album with movie director Steven Spielberg, which was the position of a storybook of the movie *E.T.*. So, the "Starlight" album was on a tight schedule.

The record company said that the release date would not be changed. So, Jones and Michael spent many sleepless nights completing it. But the first edition was so terrible that Michael felt miserable, and his eyes were filled with tears. No matter how great the original song was, if you mixed it in haste, it would be like a movie that had been edited very poorly.

Michael was so disappointed that he became furious and let out his feelings, which was unusual for him.

“We should never release it! That’s that! Call CBS and tell them! They will never get this album. We will NEVER release it!”

Still, Epic Records was trying to enforce the release. But the people around Michael and Jones were opposed it, and so, the release date was postponed for a short time.

Because Jones and Michael had spent a series of sleepless nights, they first got some restful sleep, and then carefully re-edited the album song by song.

The result was the finished album that is now known by its renamed title, *Thriller*. The people from the record company accepted the completed version and appeared to be fully satisfied with it.

* * *

If there ever is a mysterious, magical moment for charming people, it would have to have been the exact moment when the melody of “Billie Jean” came to Michael. He didn’t feel that he had thought of it. Rather, he felt that it had fallen from the sky.

Michael wanted to name the song “Billie Jean,” but Jones objected and insisted that they name it “Not My Lover.” Jones thought that if they chose “Billie Jean,” then the title might upset the famous tennis player Billie Jean King. But Michael couldn’t think of any better name than “Billie Jean.”

So, Jones finally consented.

Their recording engineer, Bruce Swedien, who always did only one take, groped and did no less than 91 takes of “Billie Jean.” Possibly, this song stimulated his professional pride.

Thanks to his efforts, the well-controlled song, which was described as containing 12 hit-song factors, was finally completed. It became Michael’s musical masterpiece.

* * *

Because Michael had been a film lover since childhood, he wanted to make the music video of “Billie Jean” more cinematic than the conventional ones in which only singers were shot singing. The record company invested \$250,000, and Michael was able to make the video as a “short film.” Although music videos are usually shot with a video camera, Michael stuck to the style of film-making and had it shot in 35 mm.

MTV, the cable TV network that specializes in music, had started in 1981 and only broadcasted music videos of white people back then. At first, “Billie Jean” was not aired on MTV because Michael was African American. But CBS pressured MTV, saying, “If you don’t broadcast such a great video, we will never offer you videos of any of our other artists.” The result was that when “Billie Jean” was aired on MTV, it was the first instance of a video by an African American artist being shown. This was later regarded as a historical turning point in the discriminatory society of the United States.

Around the same time, Michael and his brothers were invited onto a TV program commemorating the 25th anniversary of Motown Records. At first, they declined the invitation, because Motown and they had been fighting lawsuits over contracts ever since the Jacksons had transferred to Epic. But Berry Gordy himself visited the studio where Michael was recording and bowed his head, so Michael stated one condition.

“If you have me sing ‘Billie Jean,’ we will appear.”

Gordy choked up and said, “Michael, that’s not possible.”

The old charismatic entrepreneur appeared to lose his dignity.

As the show was a celebration of Motown, he had wanted only Motown songs to be performed on the show. But he finally gave in, and “Billie Jean” was to be the only song performed that had not been released by Motown.

* * *

On the shooting day of “Motown 25,” Michael sang hit songs from the past with the original Jackson 5, including Jermaine, for the first time in eight years. Then, Randy joined the group in the middle of the performance. After that, his brothers left the stage, and Michael performed “Billie Jean.”

This was the first time that he sang “Billie Jean” wearing a black hat, which later became synonymous with the song. This was also the first night that Michael did the moonwalk.

He had not invented the steps. In fact, the dance was a move called the backslide, which was popular among African Americans on the streets back then. Three boys on a street had taught Michael the move, and he performed it on “Motown 25.” The response was terrific, and before he knew it, it was named the moonwalk, which later became one of his signature moves.

Michael received much greater recognition than he had anticipated with the broadcast of “Motown 25.” His performance was nominated for an Emmy Award. Also, it came to be recognized as his best performance from then on.

“Motown 25,” which had been watched by almost 50 million viewers, had an impact on the hit chart. “Billie Jean,” having been in the number-one spot when the show was broadcasted, stayed at number one for seven consecutive weeks, which was Michael’s best record and one that equaled his song “Black Or White” in the later year.

“Billie Jean” was a significant milestone. It was later chosen as the greatest song of the 1980s based on a voting by several music-related media sources.

* * *

When recording the subsequent single, “Beat It,” Michael performed with Eddie Van Halen, a first-rate white guitarist. Their collaboration was quite meaningful, because it proved that African Americans could play not only R&B but also Rock 'n' Roll as well as white people could. Originally, Rock 'n' Roll was started by African Americans such as Chuck Berry, but white people later jumped a claim.

Because the costs were too high, the record company was unwilling to invest in music videos for “Beat It” and “Thriller,” the singles that followed the album. Even so, Michael still had a strong desire to realize the project as he had imagined it, so he himself shouldered the one million dollar cost to complete the two music videos.

He featured real street gangs from Los Angeles in the *Beat It* video. The video established an unprecedented style, in which a singer sang and danced with many dancers behind him, as in *West Side Story*, and this approach soon became mainstream in the music videos broadcasted on MTV.

In the *Thriller* video, Michael transformed into a werewolf and a zombie with makeup, and sang and danced with many zombies that had returned from their graves. This video exploded in popularity all over the world. The *Thriller* video was later named as “The greatest music video of the 20th century” and was to be permanently preserved by the U.S. Congress. This was the first honor in the history of music videos.

* * *

Thanks to periodic news releases, the album *Thriller*, which was released at the end of 1982, ranked in the top 10 of the U.S. hit chart for all 52 weeks of 1983. During that period, it held the first place for 37

consecutive weeks. Additionally, it was the first time in musical history that an album was in the first place in both the first and last week of a single year.

As a result, Michael was nominated for 10 Grammy Awards in 1984 and won eight of them, including one for the *E.T. Storybook* album. He had finally grabbed the crown of victory in the music industry. He was in seventh heaven. It was obvious to everyone that he had been able to avenge his defeat in the 1980 Grammy Awards.

Thriller ultimately sold 100 million copies and appeared in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. But these numbers were merely of the total sales in 25 years. When it was first certified as a world record by the *Guinness Book* in February 1984, the total sales were 25 million copies.

* * *

Michael caught some momentum, like the big bang of *Thriller*, and the *Victory* album of the Jacksons was released, which for the first time consisted of all his brothers, including Jermaine. They performed 55 concerts in the “Victory” tour and drew audiences of 2 million people. Profits from the tour were more than 75 million dollars, which represented the pinnacle of success in the music industry back then.

Meanwhile, as both his solo career and the group’s career were becoming more successful than he had anticipated, Michael felt even more aware of the gap between his ideal music and that of his brothers. So, at a concert at the end of 1984, he announced that he was dropping out of the Jacksons. After that, he would concentrate on only his solo activities.

In 1985, Michael participated in the charity project USA for Africa, which aimed to generate support for victims of the famine in Africa. Jones produced the video, for which he assembled 45 top stars that represented the U.S. music scene at that time. The fact that he wrote the song “We Are The World” with Lionel Richie was indeed an honor for Michael.

It was said that the sales of “We Are The World” would be unpredictable. But the first 800,000 copies sold out within three days. Richie and Michael won four Grammy Awards in 1986. Compared with the fever of the *Thriller* album, the sensation had cooled down a little, but his popularity showed no sign of decline at all. Michael naively believed that his glory would continue forever.

Chapter 5: The Mystery of Envy

If at one time you believed with all your heart that dreams really do come true and you were actually making progress toward a goal, then that might have been one of the happiest periods in your life. Success gives us a temporary feeling of euphoria. But at the same time, when a dream comes true, that can give us a sinking feeling, as if you got lost by losing the goal.

Until you become a champion, you are always able to make another desperate bid for success. However, once you have reached the top, you would be required to achieve victory every time. Defensive battles, in which everything could vanish if you lost, would continue forever.

The worldwide success of *Thriller*, which no one had ever witnessed before, gave Michael a sense of accomplishment, but he never thought of this moment as the peak of his lifetime, because he was just 26 years old at the time. He must have believed that he was still developing and should be able to create a lot more wonderful works for decades, for the rest of his life.

* * *

Fortunately, for Michael, thanks to the massive success of *Thriller*, the record company no longer pushed him to record his next album. For the first time in his life, he had arrived at a position in which he could take as much time as he liked to work on one album. Therefore, he decided that the next goal was to make the perfect album, the best that a person could make.

“I will show you all—the results will be even better than the *Thriller* album.”

When Michael said this, no one laughed at him this time. Rather, everyone looked forward to the album.

Jones admitted that Michael’s composition ability was improving dramatically. He told Michael, “You should write all the songs for the next album,” and turned over the work to him. Michael selected 33 songs for his new album from many candidates he had been preparing for years. He adopted nine of them and added two more songs written by other composers, which Jones thought were needed for the total balance of the album.

The two songs were “Just Good Friends,” which Michael sang with Stevie Wonder, and “Man In The Mirror,” which was to be the standard last song of his concerts after that. “Man In the Mirror” was also the best-selling single from the *BAD* album.

Michael thought that the elaborate album *BAD* was commercially successful. It was the first time that five consecutive singles from one album had made it to number one in the United States. It rose to the first place on the charts in 25 countries and sold more than *Thriller* had in the U.K.

But the album was nominated for only 4 Grammy Awards and won only one, for Best Recording. Once again, Michael felt that he had not been fairly evaluated.

He had believed that *BAD* could surpass even *Thriller*. He was sure he had enhanced the quality of the second album, but he didn’t receive any praise for doing so.

It was truly regrettable that even though he was confident and the sales were actually good, the album was labeled a failure. We can learn one thing from this. However talented you are, if you keep creating your art based on the same perspective, your work might become stale and outdated.

Michael felt that his collaboration with Jones had reached its limit. The success of *Thriller* was so awesomely tremendous that even the old and trusted Jones hesitated to advise Michael, who had achieved the honor of “the man with the best-selling records in the history of the world.”

If nobody gives you honest advice, you cannot create great art. This was the case even with Berry Gordy, who had, at first, reigned as a top producer, and then found that Motown Records had lost its momentum. Michael began to get frustrated, just like the Jackson 5 had been.

* * *

Success is similar to climbing, because as you get closer to the top of the mountain or to success, many people will cheer you on. The attitude of someone who is about to achieve an important goal can touch people's hearts.

However, once you have reached the top of a mountain or attained success, your circumstances might take a dark turn. Those who had seemed to cheer you on from their hearts on your way up might act cold or become uninterested in you.

It is as if they want to say, "How long do you intend to stay there? The next person is awaiting his turn. Don't you understand?" Public support can suddenly turn in the opposite direction.

* * *

When the Jackson 5 were popular, they had the wind at their backs and carried all until they released the single "I'll Be There," which marked the group's peak. But once they reached that peak, the wind began to die down, and the opposing wind gradually became stronger. They found themselves in the midst of hard times, so that however hard they worked, they couldn't get the results they wished for.

Through his work, from *Thriller* to the single "We Are The World," Michael had established his solo career. But from that point on, the opposing wind began to get stronger again.

"Thank you for the great job, Michael. Your turn is now over. You have to give your place to the next star."

Michael felt that the voices trying to get him to come down from the top were getting louder and increasing.

* * *

In fact, from the time Michael released *BAD*, the personal attacks against him increased dramatically.

For example, people said, "He must have done plastic surgery on his face many times," or "He must have injected female hormones." The most unpleasant slander was, "He has had his skin bleached because he wants to look like white people." These remarks were vulgar gossip based on speculation. Before Michael knew it, the media was often ridiculing him. In the aftermath of all this, he was shocked to find that his album was also ridiculed.

Indeed, compared to his childhood, his appearance had changed drastically. One reason for this was that Michael had become a vegetarian and slimmed down in order to build a body suitable for a dancer. But everybody's appearance changes more or less as they grow older, doesn't it? Is there any adult who has the same face that he or she had as a child? In his case, because his face as a child was so familiar to people worldwide, the change in his appearance seemed even more apparent.

In fact, Michael had had plastic surgery done thrice in the past. The first time, he had a treatment for his nose, which had been fractured during a concert. The operation made it a little hard for him to breathe, so he had it worked on in a second surgery. The third time, he had a cleft made in his chin, solely to make himself look better. He swore that these were the only instances of plastic surgery he had had done.

While many Hollywood celebrities have such surgeries, why was he the only one to attract attention and be ridiculed and rejected? If he had been white, he wouldn't have received such criticism. Society is not fair in this respect.

Michael thought his voice was a gift from God and his mother, and he appreciated it. He would never have had a hormone injection to change his voice, which was his best gift.

He was most hurt by the stupid slander that he had had his skin bleached because he longed for white skin. To begin with, he had never heard that such a medical procedure existed. His skin was actually getting white. Truthfully, this was caused by vitiligo, a disease in which the pigment of the skin is destroyed by the sun's rays.

The first symptoms appeared during his making of the album *Off The Wall*. He began to wear a white glove to hide the skin on one hand that was becoming partly white. When he was invited to the White House and shook hands with President Reagan, he was criticized by the media because he didn't remove the white glove. But, he couldn't take it off.

His skin was dappled with several white spots due to the disease. At first, he tried to color the white places on his skin to camouflage them. However, the white parts were getting larger, so he had to hide the problem by using makeup to appear all white. Later, almost all of his skin turned white due to vitiligo.

The media created a fuss about not only his skin but also his high-pitched voice. They said, "Michael is gay, without a doubt!" Michael had some gay friends and was not prejudiced against them. But it was unpleasant for him to be ridiculed with such false gossip. He didn't have an opportunity to explain himself at that time.

He was truly proud that he was African American. So it was quite a tragedy that he was mistakenly believed to bleach his skin and was looked down upon as a traitor even by other African Americans. Even sensible people were influenced by the media, and they stigmatized him.

Michael, who had been loved and blessed by so many people, was now being targeted with spite and abuse.

* * *

Before long, he had gathered around him people who were trying to trick him out of his money. In fact, he was often betrayed for money by some of the people whom he trusted. He began to mistrust people and couldn't look other people straight in the eye. Thus, he took to wearing sunglasses.

Gradually, he came to trust only children and animals, because they were pure and honest, and never deceived him. He had his ranch, Neverland, built, which had an amusement park and a zoo on the premises and got some rest there. The media made fun of him as usual, but thanks to this estate to which he could escape, he finally recovered.

Michael had Neverland built in 1988 not only because he desperately needed a place to escape to but also because he could invite many children there every week, who had serious diseases or were deprived. Also, he allowed welfare organizations that supported children to use Neverland for free. However, the media didn't report such things at all and emphasized only that he was an odd person. He couldn't help but feel hurt by their terrible malice.

He made the decision to build Neverland keeping Disneyland in mind. Michael held Walt Disney in high esteem and learned a lot from books that featured his achievements and those of Disneyland. Disney is the best example, and several of Michael's performances were inspired by the theme park.

For example, Michael took the idea for a silhouette of himself from Disney. Disney characters had been so created that people could recognize a character by seeing its silhouette. This was a requirement for a good character. Michael learned about this concept and used the same method in some of his symbolic performances of songs such as "Billie Jean," "The Way You Make Me Feel," "Smooth Criminal," and so forth.

He was well known as a big fan of Disney, and got along well with representatives of the company. The theme park even established a Michael Jackson Suite in one of their hotels in Disneyland. Although many of Michael's personal belongings were there, the suite wasn't only for him. Anyone could stay there. Moreover, Disney gave him full authority to create a new theme park attraction, which was like a dream come true for Michael.

At first, he hoped to create an attraction featuring a short film with Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, his close friends. But Spielberg was busy at the time, and so, Michael asked Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola for help. Consequently, they created a 17-minute 3D short film, "Captain EO." Lucas came up with the name EO, which means "dawn" in Greek.

Michael believed that no person who loves children, animals, or Disney from the bottom of his or her heart could be bad.

People love Disney because they seek a dreamland as an oasis in their lives.

No one blames them for doing so. Nevertheless, the media denigrated him about Neverland. He couldn't determine whether they envied his success or had a deep-rooted prejudice against him as an African American.

* * *

Based on his experience with *BAD*, from which he learned various things and had an awakening, Michael decided to change his course drastically. He hired Teddy Riley as a producer, who was younger than Michael and had been at the center stage since the end of the 1980s, creating a new style of sound called New Jack Swing. The collaboration with Riley turned out to be the right answer. The new album, *Dangerous*, was released in November 1991 and went on to sell more copies and win greater critical acclaim than *BAD*.

Michael knew what he had to do to regain popularity after his experience of the Jackson 5's decline and the Jacksons' comeback. So he did it.

He was sure that the fickle public would embrace him once again.

* * *

The year 1993 had a special significance in both good and bad ways for Michael's life. First, he attended the inauguration ceremony of President Bill Clinton in January, at which he gave a speech about his dear friend Ryan White, who had been infected with HIV from contaminated blood products and had fought against prejudice and discrimination. He dedicated a song to Ryan, "Gone Too Soon." President Clinton promised Michael at that time that he would pass the Ryan White Care Act, which later contributed to helping many HIV patients. Also, it was a great honor for him to sing "We Are The World" with Diana Ross and other singers at the ceremony.

Then, Michael performed during the halftime of the Super Bowl, the largest sports event in the United States, on January 31 of that same year. About 130 million people viewed this live even on TV, and for the first time in the long history of the Super Bowl, the ratings for a halftime show surpassed that of the game itself. This performance by Michael boosted the sales of *Dangerous*, which had been released more than a year earlier.

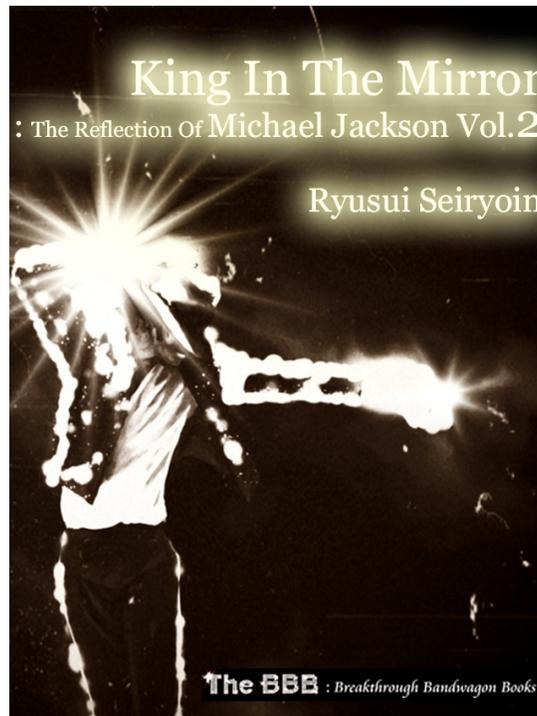
Later, Michael was interviewed on an enormously popular TV program, "The Oprah Winfrey Show," on February 10. About 100 million people watched this show, on which Michael was able to reveal for the first time that he had vitiligo. In the aftermath of this talk show, *Dangerous* soared again on the hits chart and moved back into the top 10.

Michael didn't win either of the two Grammy Awards on February 24 for which he had been nominated. However, he was given the prestigious Grammy Legend Award for his outstanding contribution to the music industry, which his sister Janet presented to him. He was extremely moved by the award because it was only given to truly great musicians such as Frank Sinatra and Elton John.

He was about to reach the second peak in his life, and he felt he could improve still more. But an unbelievable stumbling block was waiting for him down the road.

This book is followed by Vol.2.

Ryusui Seiryoin Works List at The BBB



King In the Mirror: The Reflection of Michael Jackson Vol.2

<http://thebbb.net/ebooks/king-in-the-mirror-vol2.html>