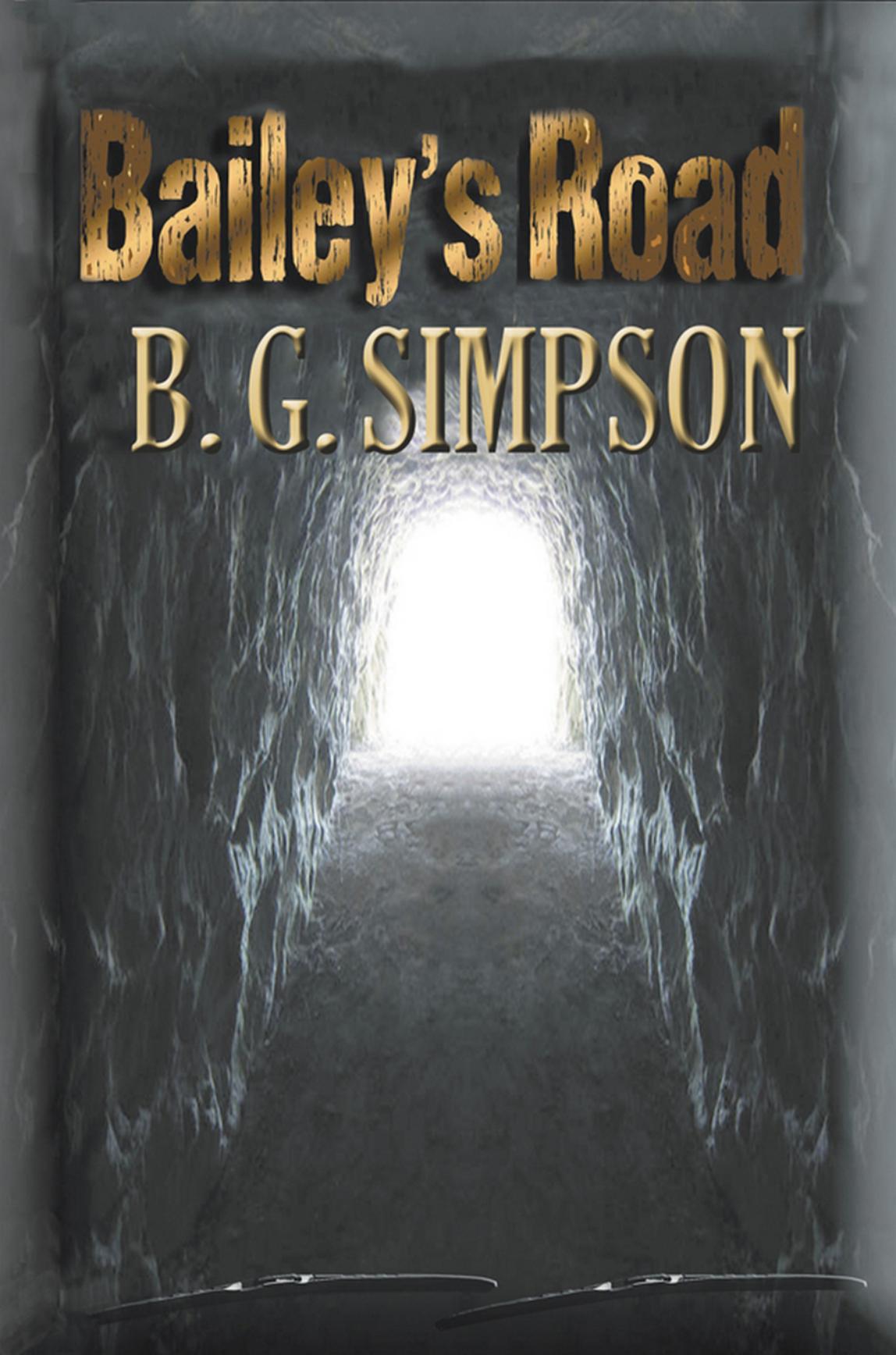


Bailey's Road

B. G. SIMPSON



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DEDICATION

To my father
Vernon Eugene Simpson,
Thanks for being there for me . . .

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Chapter One

THE EVENING RUN

The distance down a dim-lit, dark dusty road was too far for the eye to see, not for the fainthearted to aloft on foot. The sweat ran down his tanned leathered skin in the heat of the evening twilight. Step-by-step, breath-by-breath, the trail in the warm muggy air was calling to him, like it was a part of him, knowing his every move and thought. The pain was real in his body, making the evening run invigorating. The noise of his feet hitting the pavement set a rhythm to his step, his heart pounding, his head clear of stress, and the day's worries done—left behind him on this dusty road, pushed by the pain, driven in the dark by the evening noise of crickets and dogs barking in the background. Ahead was this fence separating him from crossing the border of Mexico. Small shack houses dotted the side of the hill. Noises of nightlife could be heard faintly in the distance. His turn to the beach and seven miles back was the order of the night. Down the turn facing west a mile and half from the ocean, as he hit the turn, a pocket of air became cold, cooling his sweat beaten brow.

The fence was intriguing, worn from time, and battered by use and weather. The ocean breeze was now pushing against his body making him work to stay in rhythm. The smell of the salted sea could be felt on his lips and burning skin, yet the need to push on kept him propelled forward in anticipation of the next step. The road ended soon, and nothing was left but sand and wind and the gusts of air, hitting his face in an awkward and unbalanced procession. To the left over the fence could be seen

off in the distance the bullring of Tijuana, Mexico. The unknown runner glanced slightly to notice the bullring, just to make sure it was in its usual place, and he was on the right track. With the waves could be heard echoing off in the distance, the runner became fleet of feet, knowing there was cool water to quench the heat from his weary wandering. The muscles in his legs felt the sting of the cooled water as it splashed over his body—like hot coals dipped in frigid waters.

No thoughts of the tough day gone by, just pumped full of vigor and life from what he was feeling physically at the moment . . . life was at its best when experienced at the high of exuberance. The physical drain covered all his adversities. Today was the best day of his life for that moment, for that experience. Internalizing everything—the ocean sounds, the coldness of the water, the darkness of the night, and the dim lighting of the moon on the ocean's waves. He knew that crossing the water inlet was always a surprise, not knowing if the current would be strong enough to pull him out toward the ocean's door. The challenge of swimming in its doorway would sometimes take the breath from his lungs, tighten all his muscles, and take him to the brink of exhaustion. This was living, no boredom, no anxiety, and just pure adrenaline moving and pressing him forward. The water was cold and seemed to pull him at an angle through the current. Not quite sure which direction he was going, he looked forward to view the sand from the other side. The distance still seemed out of reach and he was already exhausted.

Something brushed up against his leg while pushing forward into the mucky waters. Somewhat startled, he plunged onward to try to avoid anything else that might be swimming in the cold frigid seawaters. His heart was beating so rapidly. *Come on, you can do it*, he whispered for encouragement. With all his muscles at the brink of despair, he felt the other side of the water inlet under his feet. Gaining his confidence back, he began comprehending to pace himself, to conserve that last little bit of energy to pull his weary body up on the sand. Lying there in

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the soft sand of darkness, he started to regain his composure, thinking about the race that lay ahead of him that coming week. *Why did I ever get into such an exhausting sport?* He thought, but then he remembered it wasn't by chance. Somehow he knew it was destiny that drove him to be the best at this overlooked gift.

He was a young athlete—a man of reason and depth. He stood to his feet gazing into the darkness, with long slender build, thin muscular frame, blond hair, and brown eyes piercing through the darkness like he could see beyond the limits of human eyes. His name was Bailey, not a name of honor or royalty. Bailey was a young man who was full of heart and integrity. He never put limits on his abilities and was always game for a challenge. He was tender, and innocent of life's usual drama, never involved in mischievous actions, always a peacemaker, with a soft-spoken voice. Bailey was a young man of honor and courage beyond human limits. He stood at the beginning of his young enduring life trying to find his direction, his purpose in life. He developed an insatiable love for running, not knowing this passion would teach him about life, and a drive that would fuel his emotions for years to come.

November 18th 1975 was Bailey's birthday, and he was turning seventeen. That weekend, he was to race against one of the toughest schools in the valley. The butterflies in his stomach began to churn as he thought of the day's task. Bailey continued his run down the beach on the hard sand using the moon as light for his path. Regaining his strength, he propelled forward. In the distance, he saw beach houses coming up on the right and Imperial Beach Pier farther off to his left. A beach fire, in a fire ring, was blazing light in his direction, giving him a marker to run toward. Holding his running shoes, he picked up his speed as he drew closer to people around the fire ring. As he passed the ring, six people, an older gentleman said, "Hi," and Bailey acknowledges by a raise of his left hand. Too out of breath to speak, he ran past the fire ring up off the beach toward an ending

