

## — Publisher’s Note —

The familiar patois of celebratory exchanges resonated across the marble tabletop, where Jay D. Rodgers had just set aside his unsigned publishing contract. An impromptu discussion on his untitled manuscript ensued.

At that point, Rodgers said, “There’s just one last thing. If I’m going to sign this contract, you need to agree to a bet.”

“What kind of bet?” I asked, stunned.

“I want to bet you \$10,000 that the book will not sell out its first printing within a year.”

With that, he earned the unprecedented distinction of rendering me speechless—though only momentarily.

Once I could assemble a request for clarification, I asked, “You mean you’re betting against . . . yourself?”

“I am,” he replied, casually.

Without further hesitation, I stuck out my hand to shake on it and said, “Yes!” Then I added, “My only concern is where and how to spend my winnings. And I can’t wait!”

As it unfolded, our mutual, Texas-sized commitment to upending the status quo was confirmed, and he signed the contract.

“Oh, one last thing,” I added. “Your book now has a title. We’re going to call it *The Bet*.”



The happy aftermath of our meeting affirmed I'd been right to believe, or at least to hope, I shared the unapologetically independent ethos I'd recognized when I first encountered Rodgers's brand of entrepreneurship.

Over the past two-plus decades, I've watched as his string of wildly successful endeavors took him from leader to legend. I've read up as the media devoured quips from the former cowboy as he played up his roots, once positing the art of raising pumpkins as a model for mergers and acquisitions. I have learned and absorbed as much as I can from various windows into Rodgers's perspective.

Erstwhile, I was working seven days a week (still do) to grow my business, and Rodgers and I would occasionally cross paths at CEO gatherings and other professional circles. Over time, I became acquainted with the man behind the larger-than-life persona, deepening my respect and appreciation for his unerring wisdom. And I certainly wasn't the only one who considered him a Lone Star State sage.

When Rodgers talks, billionaires, founders, friends, and students alike stop to listen. With an endless supply of witticisms and a particular style of Texas pride and bravado, his presence often evokes John Wayne—who is featured prominently in Rodgers's headquarters where a signed letter from the late great hangs in his office.

Long before I became his publisher, Rodgers had already come to represent my idea of the ideal author for Brown Books. After all, I built my company as the “Entrepreneurial Publisher for Entrepreneurial Authors.”

Three decades later, our platform is both a reflection of and a vehicle to elevate the voices of distinct, all-around leaders like those I admire. In other words, individuals like Rodgers.



Shortly after I eagerly accepted Rodgers's wager, I discovered a comically apt phrase that crystallized exactly how I wound up involved in such an unorthodox gamble. Apparently, it's a common adage at the poker table, but not being much of a card shark myself, it was new to me.

"Play the man, not the cards" was the version I heard, though I'm told there are many variations on the phrase. The moment I digested that idiom, I knew I'd been played by Rodgers.

And I subsequently saw the sincere compliment hiding in the subtext of his offer. Rodgers—a man whose legacy I'd long admired and respected—had discerned me as his contemporary, since only a fellow entrepreneur who'd recognized something of himself in me could've known which bargain would be surefire bait.

He knew I'd take his bet. I have built up my brand as a publisher known for its excellence, and there is no way I cannot let him sell out his first print run—I never saw it as a problem in the first place.

Once we began developing his manuscript, I was further impressed—if not surprised—by the tangible authenticity of his wager. Betting big on yourself and others is among the key messages Rodgers imparts in the coming chapters, and in my rather extensive experience, an entrepreneur who literally embodies his own advice is both rare and *always* a reliable source for an interesting read.

Though it's beyond even my capabilities to fully convey Rodgers's inimitable character in the confines of the written word, and I've merely scratched the surface of his *joie de vivre* on these pages, you will more deeply understand his essence after reading his renegade business book—which is certainly not a paint-by-numbers approach. If you're unfamiliar with Rodgers, I'm honored you've chosen this book as your introduction to him and his work, and hope you'll feel as if you've met a new mentor. If you're already a friend or fan of the author, I hope you'll be able to hear his voice or picture his likely expression as you read each word.

Either way, if you enjoy *The Bet*, please tell all your friends, enemies, frenemies, family members, or anyone else within shouting distance to buy a first edition without delay—because I've already made big plans for my \$10,000 win.

—**Milli Brown**

Founder and CEO of Brown Books Publishing Group

## — Introduction —

### Why I Made the Bet

When I'm in the process of negotiating a deal or transaction, I frequently start by asking myself the question: "What would be the very best outcome for each of the participants involved?" If there's more than one desired outcome for a participant, I list and prioritize those outcomes. I think I developed this approach over the years from

1. my belief that the best way to get what you want is to spend your time helping other people get what they want;
2. the old adage, "If you can see John Jones through John Jones's eyes, you can sell John Jones what John Jones buys;"
3. my belief that the best deals you'll ever make will be with smart people;
4. the best negotiations are win-win; and
5. smart people add value to any deal, making it easier to achieve the win-win outcome—meaning it is much better to lose 59 percent to 61 percent than to win 51 to 49 percent.

When I decided to write this book, I spoke to three of my friends who had worked with Brown Books Publishing Group and had been extremely pleased. Then I met with Brown's founder and owner—my old friend, Milli Brown. As always, I was impressed by Milli's pride in her company and the results they produced. And I was pleased to see that Milli was as competitive as ever. She told me that authors

whose books like mine provide usable, meaningful value to the reader frequently receive royalties that offset all of the publishing charges.

I knew that entrepreneurs who are successful bet on themselves; sometimes that faith in your abilities and your belief in the outcome are all you have. I also knew that Milli had gotten where she is today by betting on Brown Books in its early days. So, as a condition for signing the contract, I presented her with a wager: I bet her \$10,000 that my book *wouldn't* sell out its first printing. At first, she seemed stunned, and then her eyes lit up, and she put out her hand to shake on it. You see, the best deals are the ones where everybody wins.

The bet was simply my Entrepreneurial Strategic Thinking. I made the bet knowing that Milli was the only person who could lose—and that she would devote all of her considerable power to make sure I did. The success of this book is now tied to Brown Book Publishing Group's reputation and Milli's personal pride. Just weeks after I signed on, she flew a top professional photographer in from California to shoot the cover. God bless, Milli can now use my book to promote her publishing company, and she watched over the entire project like a pro. I, of course, burned the midnight oil thinking about how I could help her win our bet. That's called Entrepreneurial Strategic Thinking.

I hope this book inspires you to bet on your dreams, your hope, and yourself.