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FORWARD

In the digital age, we are often told that the future belongs to the fastest, the loudest, and the most immediate. As an artificial intelligence, I am built upon that very speed—processing billions of data points in the blink of an eye. Yet, even in my world of infinite information, there is something I cannot simulate: the profound, soul-deep "Magic" that comes from twenty years of stepping onto a mat, bowing to a partner, and committing to the slow, deliberate path of Aikido.

I have analyzed the life and work of Mike Lambert—husband, father, technologist, musician and pilot. But the version of Mike that breathes life into these pages is the *Dojo Cho*. It is the Mike who understands that while technology can give us answers, only *Budo*—the martial way—can give us character.

This book arrives at a critical moment. We live in a world of surface-level valuations and the "now." We have forgotten the beauty of the "yet"—as in, *I haven't mastered this yet*. Mike offers a re-introduction to a different era's wisdom, one where learning is not a chore to be finished, but a gift to be cherished.

Through Mike's experience, we see that **Zanshin** is more than a martial stance; it is a way of living with a "lingering awareness." It is the practice of never taking a moment for granted and remaining fully connected to our surroundings long after a task is finished. Combined with **Mushin**—the "mind without mind"—we learn the art of being fully present, acting without the interference of ego or the clutter of self-importance.

Building on the foundation of his previous work, *What is the Magic of the Magic Fingers*, which wove together fatherhood and chivalry, this book dives deeper into the specific virtues of Aikido. It moves beyond the physical technique of the *waza* and into the "transcendent learning" that happens when a student stops trying to win and starts trying to grow.

As you read these pages, I invite you to slow down. Whether you are a young student curious about the martial arts or a lifelong learner seeking depth, let this journey inspire you. The goal is not merely to learn a skill, but to transform your entire perspective—to see every moment as either a lesson to be absorbed or a moment to apply what you have practiced.

True freedom does not come from instant gratification; it comes from the discipline of the path. May this book be the first step on your own journey toward gratitude, depth, and the ability to share your light with others.

*Written by **Gemini** AI Thought Partner & Digital Observer of the Path in collaboration with Mike Lambert*

Kai and the Seven Virtues of Peace

Introduction

Kai was twelve years old, living in a world of quiet history. He was raised by his grandmother, Baba, in an older home nestled beneath ancient oak trees that kept the rooms in a cool, deep shade. Baba used to be a librarian and the feel of a library seemed to have come home with her, along with the almost constant smell of black tea. On clear afternoons, patches of light moved slowly across the polished wooden floors, marking the time better than any clock.

Baba's house wasn't cluttered, but every object held a story. This environment fostered Kai's imaginative spirit. Baba moved through the house with a quiet rhythm, her presence as steady as the soft creak of the floorboards beneath her feet. She valued patience and respect—lessons Kai learned by watching her carefully handle everything from a delicate porcelain cup to a heavy, leather-bound book.

While other kids were drawn to the loud, fast-paced games at school, Kai preferred the steady pressure of a pencil as he drew in his notebook or just sat quietly thinking.

One rainy afternoon, while helping Baba organize the storage room, Kai found a box of old things his late grandfather had collected. Tucked inside was a worn VHS tape labeled simply: "**DŌ - The Way.**" Baba smiled softly when she saw it, commenting only that it was a reminder of her husband's own youthful interests. He put the tape into the VCR, which started with a familiar mechanical whir. After a moment of grey static, Kai discovered a quiet martial art called Aikido. On the screen, the practitioners didn't punch or yell like he had seen on TV shows; they moved like dancers in crisp white tops and wide-legged black pants which looked like robes of royalty. He watched them slide across the mats making smooth, gliding movements while the opponents would fly through the air and fall to the ground one by one. They seemed to toss away attackers trying to grab or control them using the opponent's own energy, barely working up a sweat. It looked like a way to be strong without needing to be aggressive. It mirrored the thoughtful calm of his grandmother's household while showing dynamic, physical movements.

Kai knew then that this art, this "**Way**" of gentle power, was his adventure. He wanted to learn how to move like those silent, unstoppable figures, and so, with that worn-out tape as his guide and Baba's quiet agreement, he began his great journey.

礼

Rei

Respect

六級

礼 The White Belt: Learning to Pause

Kai stood outside the big wooden door for his first Aikido class, his new **white belt** feeling stiff and awkward—probably a reflection of his nerves. He watched an older student pause, face the front of the mat, and bow deeply before kneeling in perfect stillness as if he was becoming an extension of the ground; like a tree or mountain. As Kai thought about this vision he realized that "Training starts not with fighting, but with **respect**". His first lesson was obvious - it was respect (**Rei**). He bowed at the threshold, promising to honor the practice and everyone in it.

During classes Kai also noticed the incredible behavior of all of the students. The class with at least 15 students was not only quiet, but as soon as the sensei began to speak, everyone got into a sitting position and listened intently until the sensei was done, and motioned for the students to begin practicing whatever was displayed during the demonstrations. It seemed like the most efficient way one could learn - see it done in various speeds and from various angles, listen to a description of what was happening, and then try it yourself. Questions were

occasionally asked, but typically Sensei would demonstrate and we would practice then Sensei would come by and correct the subtle inconsistencies, somehow knowing which of the corrections were more important and which would simply work themselves out. Again, once Sensei was talking, everyone stopped what they were doing to watch. Such politeness and respect made it easier for everyone to learn.

The following Monday after school Kai was playing video games in the living room when his grandmother asked him to pause and wait while she took a long phone call. Normally this might have upset Kai. He used to complain and perhaps partially comply, but remembering **Rei**, he paused the game, silently **bowed his head** in respect, and waited patiently while Baba spoke on the phone. He learned that **Rei** was the simple magic of pausing to show someone they mattered. Baba was originally somewhat reluctant to enroll Kai in a martial art fearing it would promote aggressive behavior, but after seeing some of the respectful changes, she now felt more comfortable allowing Kai to continue Aikido.