FOREWORD

Eve Ensler

Jody Williams is many things—a simple girl from Vermont, a sister of a disabled brother, a loving wife, an intense character full of fury and mischief, a great strategist, an excellent organizer, a brave and relentless advocate, and a Nobel Peace Prize winner. But to me Jody Williams is, first and foremost, an activist.

What is an activist? The dictionary says, “an especially active, vigorous advocate of a cause, especially a political cause.” My sense—and I think it is most clear in this stirring memoir—is that an activist is someone who cannot help but fight for something. That person is not usually motivated by a need for power or money or fame, but in fact is driven slightly mad by some injustice, some cruelty, some unfairness, so much so that he or she is compelled by some internal moral engine to act to make it better.

I have often wondered at what moment one becomes an activist. Are we born with the activist gene, and then some event or incident catalyzes it into being? Is it a deaf brother, abused and cruelly treated? Is it witnessing unkindness to those we love

or being raped or beaten and undone ourselves and surviving through the love of others and then feeling compelled to give back the same?

Many of us are accidental activists. We didn't necessarily or consciously choose to devote our lives to ending war or violence against women or racism or poverty or sexual oppression, or to fighting for the environment, but our survival became so clearly wrapped in the struggle, we had no choice.

The big question, of course, is why do some shut down and move away in the face of power and oppression and others move into action? I think if we could resolve this riddle, we would unlock millions of sleeping activists who could possibly help save this world and transform suffering. Some of the secrets are found in this book.

What is most compelling about Jody's writing about her remarkable life and deeds is how unremarkable she makes it sound. It is simple, straightforward, unembellished. It all seems logical, one thing growing out of another. There were landmines destroying the lives of thousands of people worldwide. There was a goal to ban them. There was the insane belief that this was possible. (By the way, I think another characteristic of activists is this dogged faith that change is possible even in the face of what on the surface seems like an utter impossibility.)

Jody had a goal she wanted to accomplish—banning landmines—and she employed her powers, her smarts, her wisdom and engaged all those around her to bring about that end. I think one of the wonderful things about her winning the Nobel Peace Prize is that it honored all the activists in her project who made it happen, and for that matter, it honored activism everywhere.

I have pretty much lost faith in governments or world leaders or patriarchal institutions to reverse the sad and terrifying

trajectory of human beings. My hope, my life, lies with activists. I think of the Occupy Wall Street movement, environmental activists in the rain forests, domestic workers' unions, Pussy Riot, LGBT workers, V-Day activists, antiviolence and antiwar activists, antiracist, fair trade, hunger, animal rights activists. The list is fortunately endless, and these activists are born every minute and are rising everywhere to reenvision and give birth to the new world. They are obsessed, unstoppable, passionate, creative in finding ways over and around obstacles. They are community builders, often humorous, sometimes and necessarily belligerent, insomniacs, usually dancers, celebrators of life.

This book charts Jody's activist journey with a whole lot of other amazing people to successfully ban landmines. It will inspire you to believe that what you do matters a lot and to follow your path and trust your outrage and sorrow. If we are to find a way out of the current madness, it will take a whole lot more of us filled with the spirit, mischief, fury, and determination of Jody Williams.