

ELON MUSK

WALTER
ISAACSON

**SIMON &
SCHUSTER**

London • New York • Sydney • Toronto • New Delhi

Contents

Prologue: Muse of Fire	1
1. Adventurers	9
2. A Mind of His Own: <i>Pretoria, the 1970s</i>	15
3. Life with Father: <i>Pretoria, the 1980s</i>	22
4. The Seeker: <i>Pretoria, the 1980s</i>	29
5. Escape Velocity: <i>Leaving South Africa, 1989</i>	35
6. Canada: <i>1989</i>	40
7. Queen's: <i>Kingston, Ontario, 1990-1991</i>	44
8. Penn: <i>Philadelphia, 1992-1994</i>	49
9. Go West: <i>Silicon Valley, 1994—1995</i>	54
10. <i>Palo Alto, 1995-1999</i>	60
11. Justine: <i>Palo Alto, the 1990s</i>	68
12. X.com: <i>Palo Alto, 1999-2000</i>	73
13. The Coup: <i>PayPal, September 2000</i>	82
14. Mars: <i>SpaceX, 2001</i>	90
15. Rocket Man: <i>SpaceX, 2002</i>	97

16. Fathers and Sons: <i>Los Angeles, 2002</i>	102
17. Revving Up: <i>SpaceX, 2002</i>	106
18. Musk's Rules for Rocket-Building: <i>SpaceX, 2002-2003</i>	111
19. Mr. Musk Goes to Washington: <i>SpaceX, 2002-2003</i>	118
20. Founders: <i>Tesla, 2003-2004</i>	124
21. The Roadster: <i>Tesla, 2004—2006</i>	131
22. Kwaj: <i>SpaceX, 2005—2006</i>	144
23. Two Strikes: <i>Kwaj, 2006-2007</i>	149
24. The SWAT Team: <i>Tesla, 2006-2008</i>	155
25. Taking the Wheel: <i>Tesla, 2007-2008</i>	162
26. Divorce: <i>2008</i>	168
27. Talulah: <i>200#</i>	172
28. Strike Three: <i>Kwaj, August 3, 2008</i>	175
29. On the Brink: <i>Tesla and SpaceX, 2008</i>	178
30. The Fourth Launch: <i>Kwaj, August—September 2008</i>	182
31. Saving Tesla: <i>December 2008</i>	190
32. The Model S: <i>Tesla, 2009</i>	195
33. Private Space: <i>SpaceX, 2009-2010</i>	203
34. Falcon 9 Liftoff: <i>Cape Canaveral, 2010</i>	209
35. Marrying Talulah: <i>September 2010</i>	213
36. Manufacturing: <i>Tesla, 2010-2013</i>	217
37. Musk, and Bezos: <i>SpaceX, 2013-2014</i>	223

38. The Falcon Hears the Falconer: <i>SpaceX, 2014-2015</i>	229
39. The Talulah Roller Coaster: <i>2012-2015</i>	235
40. Artificial Intelligence: <i>OpenAI, 2012—2015</i>	239
41. The Launch of Autopilot: <i>Tesla, 2014—2016</i>	245
42. Solar: <i>Tesla Energy, 2004-2016</i>	251
43. The Boring Company: <i>2016</i>	257
44. Rocky Relationships: <i>2016-2017</i>	260
45. Descent into the Dark: <i>2017</i>	267
46. Fremont Factory Hell: <i>Tesla, 2018</i>	276
47. Open-Loop Warning: <i>2018</i>	287
48. Fallout: <i>2018</i>	295
49. Grimes: <i>2018</i>	305
50. Shanghai: <i>Tesla, 2015—2019</i>	312
51. Cybertruck: <i>Tesla, 2018-2019</i>	315
52. Starlink: <i>SpaceX, 2015-2018</i>	321
53. Starship: <i>SpaceX, 2018-2019</i>	325
54. Autonomy Day: <i>Tesla, April 2019</i>	332
55. Giga Texas: <i>Tesla, 2020—2021</i>	335
56. Family Life: <i>2020</i>	340
57. Full Throttle: <i>SpaceX, 2020</i>	347
58. Bezos vs. Musk, Round 2: <i>SpaceX, 2021</i>	353
59. Starship Surge: <i>SpaceX, July 2021</i>	358

60. Solar Surge: <i>Summer 2021</i>	369
61. Nights Out: <i>Summer 2021</i>	376
62. Inspiration4: <i>SpaceX, September 2021</i>	382
63. Raptor Shake-up: <i>SpaceX, 2021</i>	387
64. Optimus Is Born: <i>Tesla, August 2021</i>	393
65. Neuralink: <i>2017-2020</i>	398
66. Vision Only: <i>Tesla, January 2021</i>	404
67. Money: <i>2021-2022</i>	408
68. Father of the Year: <i>2021</i>	412
69. Politics: <i>2020-2022</i>	417
70. Ukraine: <i>2022</i>	428
71. Bill Gates: <i>2022</i>	435
72. Active Investor: <i>Twitter, January-April 2022</i>	440
73. “I made an offer”: <i>Twitter, April 2022</i>	450
74. Hot and Cold: <i>Twitter, April-June 2022</i>	459
75. Father’s Day: <i>June 2022</i>	466
76. Starbase Shake-up: <i>SpaceX, 2022</i>	474
77. Optimus Prime: <i>Tesla, 2021—2022</i>	482
78. Uncertainty: <i>Twitter, July-September 2022</i>	488
79. Optimus Unveiled: <i>Tesla, September 2022</i>	495
80. Robotaxi: <i>Tesla, 2022</i>	501
81. “Let that sink in”: <i>Twitter, October 26-27, 2022</i>	506

Contents

xi

82. The Takeover: <i>Twitter, Thursday, October 27,2022</i>	511
83. The Three Musketeers: <i>Twitter, October 26-30, 2022</i>	515
84. Content Moderation: <i>Twitter, October27-30,2022</i>	523
85. Halloween: <i>Twitter, October 2022</i>	532
86. Blue Checks: <i>Twitter, November 2-10,2022</i>	536
87. Allin: <i>Twitter, November 10-18,2022</i>	546
88. Hardcore: <i>Twitter, November 18-30, 2022</i>	553
89. Miracles: <i>Neuralink, November 2022</i>	561
90. The Twitter Files: <i>Twitter, December 2022</i>	565
91. Rabbit Holes: <i>Twitter, December2022</i>	574
92. Christmas Capers: <i>December 2022</i>	581
93. AI for Cars: <i>Tesla, 2022-2023</i>	592
94. AI for Humans: <i>X.AI, 2023</i>	599
95. The Starship Launch: <i>SpaceX, April2023</i>	607
Acknowledgments	617
Sources	619.
Notes	623
Index	637
Photo Credits	667