

The Young One and The Old One

The Leader

WHOM DO WE FOLLOW?

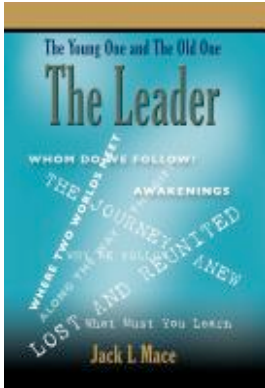
AWAKENINGS

WHY WE FOLLOW

What Must You Learn

Jack L Mace

WHERE TWO WORLDS MEET
ALONG THE WAY
LOST AND REUNITED
THE JOURNEY
THE GIFT
REUNITED
ANEW



The Leader narrative tells a story of two old friends on a Journey of Leadership focusing on 31 Leadership Axioms. Leading is taught as a journey in discovery alongside the Followers, not ahead in example or behind to push. The Young One has failed in his Leadership task. The Old One, his trusted mentor and invited Journey guest, teaches past his failure toward successful completion of The Journey.

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ISBN 978-1-62141-265-6

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Published by Booklocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

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2012

First Edition

Introduction

Two Old Friends

Two Old Friends roam the stretches of my mind; and beyond. No names of which I am aware; I know them only as *The Young One* and *The Old One*.

Sometimes I know who These Old Friends are; sometimes they are new to me. Always they know who I am. Sometimes I know what they know. Always they know what I know; and more. Sometimes I am they. Always, somehow, they are me. Sometimes I put to words what they know. Sometimes they give words to what I know.

Often "absent," These Old Friends roam my *Unconscious Beyond* – for days, weeks, years – then they return from *That Land Beyond*, rapping at the portals of my awareness. When I open wide my consciousness to These Old Friends, they bring me to write the story they have to teach.

I. Along the Way

Walking rapidly, The Young One demanded, "Do they still follow?"

"Pardon me?" The Old One brought his attention back from the surrounding environs.

The Young One and The Old One had walked many miles. The Young One was so intent on this *Journey to Somewhere* that he had said little either before the journey or in its progress. All The Old One had heard of it was when The Young One knocked on his door and said, "Come travel with me."

The Old One cared much for The Young One, and saw much potential and future for him. Thus it was that he left straightway with no question. These two – unlikely pair that they were – had spent many hours and many days together. Many a long journey had they traveled in each other's company. Oft had they engaged each other in leisure – The Young One ever working at it, The Old One ever relaxing at it.

"Do they still follow?" repeated The Young One.

"Who? Do who still follow?"

"*The Company of Wayfarers* following: Do they still follow?" The Young One's tone was both demanding and impatient.

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Turning, The Old One peered back. In the distance he saw The Company of Hurried Travelers, following on the same road.

“Yes, they still follow.”

He had noticed That Entourage in the distance when he opened his door to The Young One’s knock, and a few times along the way. He had determined to question them if ever they came alongside. Ever interested in others, particularly intrigued was The Old One in their journeys. Even more was he ever curious regarding the confluence of paths which unrelated companies might travel.

Through the practiced experience of his years, The Old One knew such confluence was seldom accidental. There are truly few *coincidents*. He had long ago learned that almost inextricably the unrelated is indeed related.

“Wherein,” he mused aloud, “lies the true confluence of the path of Yon Entourage and ours?”

The Young One, so busily absorbed in his journey, barely responded. Perhaps he managed a grunt as The Old One turned again to gaze back.

“I believe they close the gap. Perhaps we shall journey together.”

Again, with little discernible response from The Young One, The Old One resumed his study of the environment along the way.

The way they traveled that day was a varied one. The Path was smooth and rough; and level and pitched. It was straight and it curved thither and yon. It would ascend the heights, to

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descend into nigh-unfathomable depths beyond. The way was arid, and it passed by gentle streams.

Always, The Young One strove forth to the next obstacle. Always The Old One reveled in the present challenge, then strode calmly forth to the new.

Again and again, The Old One turned as if to span the distance to The Company behind. When the way was easy, their stamina waxed bold, and they would close the gap. At this The Young One seemed impatient. As the way waxed hard, The Distant Company would wane in perseverance, and The Young One would be the more impatient. Seldom did he turn to look back. When he did it was in disdain.

The Old One mused at his Young Friend's responses, thinking, "Does His attitude regard the confluence of paths this day, or is there more; much more?"

Indeed, what would be at The Journey's End? For what purpose had The Young One summoned him forth from his abode. The Old One knew not The Young One's ways upon This Journey. He knew only he was with His Friend, and old as he was, he still enjoyed an adventure. He had taught The Young One many lessons of patience. Surely, *he* could now wait a while to learn This Journey's purpose.

At length, This Unlikely Pair paused for respite. Now given opportunity, The Old One prevailed upon The Young One to tell of his response to The Travelers following.

"They impinge upon my success!" The Young One spat his response.

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"*They* impinge upon *your* success? But how? They are there behind, and *we* here in the lead."

"Precisely! *They* are to be *with* me!"

"*They* ... are to be ... *with* you?" The Old One was obviously puzzled. "How ... ? Why ... ?"

The Young One's reply was most emphatic.

"It is mine to lead. It is theirs to follow. That is why I go before them."

"But My Young Friend," The Old One responded in surprise, "do you not know – have I not taught you? Leadership fares not *before* the follower. It travels *alongside*."

The Young One erupted, "They *should* be alongside! Precisely in *that* centers my vexation with them!"

"*Your* vexation with *them* ...?"

The Old One's question was more an echo.

"Yes! If they were of worth as followers, then they should be alongside *this* moment. They should not lag so."

"Your notion of leadership seems quite self-indulgent. Please acquaint me with your thoughts on Leadership – *and* Followership."

"I know only what I am told to do, but I can tell you this. Those guided forth must keep the pace; else they pose no following at all. How shall any Leader affect the way and the will of those who lag so?" The Young One snorted. "Search high. Search low. Search thither and yon. To find one with

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requisite vigor for The Following, is a task well nigh impossible.”

“You speak with high disdain for those with whom you share your fate. Have you no accountability to those following? Have you no greater tie to *That Company of Wayfarers*, as you call them?”

The Young One bristled that The Old One should suggest he might be more attentive to *That Company of Wayfarers*. His manner of speech was arrogant and angry.

“If I am able to attain to success then so are they able. I fare before them in demonstration of what to do – and how. Is it to my account if they falter in the learning?”

“ ... *That Company of Wayfarers!* Aye! In that lies the matter! Scant more are they than a *Company of Wayfarers!* They require leading by the hand. Would not a nursemaid do them well? Let them not look thus to me! Perhaps among the dainty they may yet find such a one. As for me, I shall continue in my duties whether or not they continue in theirs.”

With that The Young One arose to continue forth, but The Old One moved not. He had resolved to remain for The Followers to close the distance. He would continue in their company. Perhaps he could influence His Young Friend so to remain as well.

“Shall it be thus, then?” asked The Young One.

“Only if you continue to fare ahead of those you lead – otherwise, for the remainder of This Journey, I too shall lag behind.”

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With The Old One firm in his resolve, away The Young
One paced, leaving His Friend to silently await The Followers.

II. The Gifts

Scarcely had the quarter of an hour passed when The Followers came to the place where The Old One kept his wait.

“Did he leave you as well?” asked one of The Followers who was called The Speaker.

“It was not that he left me, but that I chose to stay for you. Let us be on our way. It appears Our Trek shall cover many leagues before Journey’s End.”

Forward they fared and as they went, the way became the rougher. So rough was it at times that those of weaker will must be gently urged forth by those stronger, else they should languish on the wayside. At other times, so steep was the descent that they formed a chain to permit the weaker and more unsteady to continue forth.

Observing carefully as was his wont, The Old One made note of those needing aid, and of those aiding. At times it seemed as though the weaker aided the stronger, just so much as the weaker needed the stronger. At each challenge, one with the needed gift would step forth to stand in the gap. At times, The Followers would turn to The Old One for aid. Each in turn when needed, bestowed his or her special gift upon The Journey.

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Outwardly, This Joined Lot appeared as unlikely a team as were The Young One and The Old One. Yet, of such are great ensembles made. In such company none is left in want. None is denied the fortune of ministering to the whole.

Knowing well the answer to his query, The Old One asked, "And which of you is the leader here?"

"Our leader goes before us," replied The Speaker. "Would that he remained alongside where we could aid him. Alas, though, he understands not the worth of the weaker ones."

The Old One echoed The Speaker's words as though he understood not.

"... the worth of the weaker ones?"

"Aye. Each here has an exceptional endowment. In full time, the need of that gift shall be revealed. I am one given to words. With my gift, I am able to negotiate aid from without when the requisite gift is not within The Team. Outwardly, yon gaunt and bony one scarcely appears to possess a gift any could need. Yet, the strong among us depend much on such a one as he when strength alone cannot prevail. Yon gaunt and bony one is able to see in his mind that which oft is invisible to multitudes. From such vision are many solutions made."

As they traveled, The Speaker illuminated the gifts of The Followers, detailing the worth of each.

"Even our leader – The Young One, I believe you call him – has a special gift. If only he would travel alongside, such an endowment of strength he could add."

Again, feigning a lack of understanding, The Old One asked, "An endowment of strength?"

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“Aye, an endowment indeed; each of us is endowed with a strength of our own. When we share it with others, it is multiplied, and each realizes a dividend from it. Yes, an endowment, indeed.”

“Tell me more.”

Little encouragement was needed.

“Our Leader has the gift of fire from within. When so needed, such fire can challenge the weakest to heights and depths otherwise not attempted. In such fire of passion the wildest are tamed, and the loneliest comforted. Alas, his fire burns wild – unbridled.”

“From these words of yours, one might suppose him unworthy. Even with your admiration for his fire from within, why do you yearn for him to be alongside? Would he not then be more the vexation?”

“One could so assume such from what I have said, but I think beyond the conflict. Not that I always am able so to think, but in my present musings, I can see that were Our Leader alongside, we could give Him the gift of our reliance, our loyalty, our experience, and our aid. Even yet, we might teach him how to lead us to greater advantage.”

“Then would not The Follower become The Leader?” asked The Old One.

“My Dear Friend, are we not all both leader and follower in due time?”

III. Lost and Reunited

The Young One, well ahead of His Followers, was now absent the company of The Old One as well. Without his trusted mentor the terrors of the way grew around him. Forthwith he knew fear as he had long forgotten he could know.

His frightened thoughts bore him many years into the past to the time when he first met The Old One. Just meeting one whose desire it was to lend aid had been well-nigh as fearsome as was his present loneliness in all his anger. He remembered how he had been alone and weary, and with no food. The Old One had brought food and drink, but he had been afraid to take it; to trust this stranger.

He recalled the long weeks and months of his loneliness before meeting The Old One. In those times, he scarce could gather the strength to rise with each dawn. He survived only through wit and tenacity. Trusting no one, he was no follower, and only those willing to suffer abuse and disdain would, for a time, travel with him.

Immersed in the loneliness and bitter memories, he became the more afraid. The more he remembered, the more frightened he became. He could not discriminate between his demons of many years past, the demons of the present way

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nor his demons from within. Somehow all seemed the same. The more he thought on it, the more his spirits lagged. The more his spirits lagged, the more he thought on it. Without the warm solace of The Old One, he could not calm himself. Those fires of passion from within welled up and would destroy him once again.

Amid the struggle with his demons, The Young One began to feel lost. Looking about, he knew not his way. More inhospitable a place had he never known. Inward rage drowning the thundering silence without, The Young One dashed hither and yon to find his path. In fear and isolation, his fire within blazed the hotter.

At length, he cried out in his fearsome darkness.

“Not only can I not lead those in my charge, now I cannot lead even myself. Shall not my overseers chasten me? Shall not I lose my charge and all future occasion for such office?”

In his disquieted hopelessness The Young One became incapacitated with fear and hate. The more alone he felt, the more he feared. The more he feared, the more he hated. Hate recycled on fear, and fear recycled on hate.

Amid his hatred and fear and disorientation, The Young One began to hear voices vying for his heed. There seemed a voice from without underscoring his frightening solitude, charging others with blame for his present state. There seemed another voice, from within, striving to credit his own response to the outside voice for his current state. Try as he might, the latter voice he could not sequester from the cacophony from without.

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Or was such cacophony from without at all? Added to the din he heard, he found himself cursing his peers, his followers, his leaders – even himself. He cursed himself for yielding to others' imagined works against him. Regarding their designs, how could he have been so ignorant? How could he have permitted them such control? Yet more, besides cursing himself he cursed others for their presence in his life.

Near hopelessly lost, The Young One paused to compose himself. Taxing though it was, he began to clear the cacophony from his mind. At length, he could hear beneficent messages from his past.

It was as though he heard The Old One speaking calmly. "Always, keep an eye at once to your goal and to your past. For without knowing where you have been, you cannot then know where you are, nor where you go."

The Old One had also said, "Never are you truly lost until you cannot find the return path whence you have come."

Thus did The Young One at length determine the course he must take. He must return to His Unlikely Entourage if ever he should be able to find The Way and regain his Office Of Leadership – if ever he should be able to find himself again.

Looking about, he sought familiar sights leading to somewhere. Such sights, he supposed, must be along the path he had traveled to where he now found himself. Otherwise they should seem unfamiliar. No matter how familiar that which he viewed, The Young One knew he must carefully focus both within and without to find his way. He assumed as well that in his bewildered state many things both known and unknown would bear the visage of the familiar.

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Carefully, in time, he found his way to that which more and more, he knew well. Hope for his Journey to Somewhere flowed afresh. At length, in the distance he caught brief views of His Company of Wayfarers and The Old One. With each brief glimpse, calm slowly settled over him anew. Not fully understanding why, The Young One now found joy in that which so short a time ago he had held in disdain.

With the joy came thrill. With thrill came more joy. With these, came renewed fire from within, and swifter steps. Soon, he was within full sight, and a scant few yards of His Entourage.

Eagerly, The Young One greeted His Company of Wayfarers. Warily, they greeted him, save for The Speaker. Joyous was his greeting, for now he was once again at His Mentor's side.

With great enthusiasm did The Speaker inquire regarding where The Young One had been and how he had found his way back. Yet too elated at being among the familiar, The Young One surprised himself. Responding not with annoyance, gladly did he share his erstwhile plight.

V. Awakenings

Finally at the village, The Young One lay grasping at the fringes of life. So perilous was the venom of the viper, and so fragile his state that for many days none speculated whether he should fall to the scourge of death or return again to walk with the living.

The sort of leader The Young One had been led some of His Entourage to voice privately, to themselves, their preferences for him. Some hoped for life, others for death. It wasn't that those who hoped for death hated him. They were dissatisfied and wished for more or different – or more and different – from The One they followed.

In the passing of many days The Young One drifted oft from and back into unconsciousness. At length he awoke fully alert for the passing of an hour. Not since the viper's attack had any seen him coherent for such a length.

In his first true consciousness, confusion was his state. Little did he remember for sure except the incident of the bite, and of The Old One and The Speaker coming quickly to his aid. He had also, shards of memories that suggested the work of The Followers in getting him to the care of the physician.

Truly, his thoughts were confused.

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"Are these true memories? They seem as though from a strange and foggy dream."

As he thought on the memories, he reasoned that The Old One had taken charge and brought them all forth under his command. After all, how could such a Company accomplish the task on their own? In his mind, they were a lot who would await his every command before accomplishing their assigned tasks.

"Indeed, that was a strange dream." With that thought, he fell into a restful sleep.

A while later The Old One came into the room to check on His Young Friend. With his entry The Young One awoke again.

"Welcome back!" The Old One spoke in delight. "We were quite beside ourselves with worry. Your condition was, to say the best, quite grave. We all thought we should lose you."

"All of you?" The Young One was scornful. "Surely you do not include That Rag-Tag Company of Wayfarers. I hardly believe they should feel so. Had they cared for me at all, they would have expressed it in their response to my command. They would have worked the harder, and not so much time would have been lost. Indeed, this condition of mine lies to their charge."

"Your condition lies to their charge? Do you suggest that they are responsible for the viper's attack?"

"Indeed!"

The Old One was perplexed.

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"Indeed? But how? From my perspective, it seems you owe them quite a lot. I see no manner in which they may be said to be responsible for your condition."

Not given to stating matters lightly, with great flourish did The Young One tell The Old One of his frustration and his actions which led up to the attack of the viper. No small detail was omitted. Many small details were raised to near-epic levels. It was not as though the embellishment were intentional. Rather, so intensely did The Young One feel, that the story seemed to him of much greater import than would mere reality reveal. Thus, much did he embellish his story.

It seemed to The Old One that the intensity in this tale had special meaning. The Young One seemed to seek him as a special ally against The Followers. His tone was adversarial. His words were angry. Even his posture was that of one about to do battle.

At length, The Young One concluded his embellished account.

"So, you see, had they done well in their work, I would not have kicked at the bush. I would not have lost these many days from My Journey."

Only after a long incredulous pause did The Old One speak again.

"They, not you, are responsible for your kicking at the bush? They, not you, are responsible for your attitude toward them? Further, it is your Journey, not theirs?"

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"Precisely: Had they not made me angry, I should now have reached my destination. I should now be reaping the rewards of My Journey Complete."

"Is that what this journey is all about; your journey; you reaping the rewards of success? Is success so limiting a concept to you?"

"Well, success is what it's all about. If you succeed not, then you are a failure. No one wastes the passing of the day with a failure."

The Old One was deeply annoyed.

"There seems little room in your idea of success for The Others involved."

"Truly there is room for others. You need them as stepping stones to the next stage of your success."

The Old One shook his head. "They are needed as stepping stones?"

The Young One was now on the defensive.

"What!? What is wrong with using people so long as you pay them fitting for their time?"

A lengthy silence passed before either of the friends spoke again. Then, The Old One spoke sadly.

"You cannot pay others sufficiently to justify such attitude from Their Leader. You cannot use them for your own purposes, with no say in their task and contributions; with no input into the process; with no control over the outcome. We simply cannot use people thus and achieve the success in life for which we strive. Others around you are what make living

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worthwhile. It is only in recognizing their unique gifts and contributions to your life that you begin to understand your own finitude. When you understand that you are not the only one deserving of success, and when you realize others' contributions to your life, then you will know true success."

To say that The Young One scoffed would tell not the half of his impudence.

"True success because of others; look you now! I'm in control; I am The Leader, and they The Followers. You were enlisted for my company. I had to have along someone whom I could trust."

The Old One turned sadly to leave the room. He could scarcely believe that despite the lessons of leadership he had taught The Young One through the years, more were needed, and The Young One seemed in that moment every bit as resistive as that first day when he was found frightened and alone and weak and hungry.

At the door, The Old One turned slowly.

"The sorrow I feel this moment is for us both. I feel sad for you because you make yourself a failure. I feel sad for me because I, too, have had an awakening this day. I have let myself believe I had succeeded in training you for life. Now I wonder, when will we ever learn?"

VI. What Must You Learn?

His strength not yet fully returned, The Young One lay restless. Much he wanted – much he ached to sleep. Yet, long after The Old One had absented the room, much did he ponder His Old Friend’s meaning: “When will we ever learn?”

Easily fatigued, in time The Young One drifted into fitful sleep. Many times he wakened. In his mind, The Young One journeyed again and again to the time he first met The Old One, His Trusted Friend, and to other times through the years. He recalled how he had learned at His Mentor’s feet.

The Old One was wise and patient beyond any he had ever known. How could he possibly have anything more to learn? Surely the question was rhetorical. Even so, partly from pride, and partly from weakness of body and mind, he sought for The Old One to have a need for learning. He could not yet fully embrace his own need.

In the next days, as he regained his strength, the full story was told him, how he had been brought to a physician’s care after the viper’s attack. Slowly he embraced his debt to The Followers. Little by little he grasped his need to learn. In time that need became a hunger.

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Finally, The Young One sought out His Old Friend. He was direct in his question and showed only a little fear of the answer.

"When you asked, 'When will we ever learn?' you spoke of mine own ignorance. Did you not?"

"Ignorance may well be a good word in this context. Its meaning is lack of knowledge, but the word ignore is much the same. How much knowledge do we miss because we choose to ignore it?"

Ever strong-willed, The Young One rose to the defense of both His Old Friend and his own view of him.

"Again you speak of me. Why do you speak as though you too have ignored something?"

"Because I have, My Young Friend; we both have. There is error to be laid to me for what I missed."

"But what could you have missed? You are wise beyond anyone I have ever known. You have taught me all I know that is of any substance and worth."

The Old One laughed in modest embarrassment. Clearly, he believed himself to be both student and teacher.

"I have taught you much, but certainly not all you know of substance and worth. Indeed, many times you have been your own best teacher and you have done well for yourself in the learning of those lessons. Even as now you have perceived that you have much to learn and have schooled yourself to accept it, just so is there much for me to learn.

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“One of Your Followers, The Speaker, put it to me well just before you rejoined us when he said to me, ‘My Dear Friend, are not we all both leader and follower in due time?’

“You see, My Young Friend, I forgot that I must continue to learn if I am to continue to teach. I must grow in my own knowledge of many things. On the other hand, as your teacher I must listen well to you and your errors, learning of you how you are best taught. I must not find fault, but rather understand that you have needs I might not meet with my teaching. I must follow you for how you need to be led.”

“I do not understand your meaning, Sir. It is strange to me that The Teacher should be taught of The Pupil ... indeed, that The Leader should follow The Follower.”

The Old One was careful that his meaning not be missed.

“The Teacher must always remember his part; remember that there is another in the relationship. The Teacher must make the teaching fit The Learner. Sometimes The Pupil learns from modeling. At other times the same one must be taught actively. You missed a valuable lesson of leadership, because I missed teaching to fit your need. I assumed that if I modeled it for you, you would naturally learn. Alas, it did not work out so this time. This lesson must be taught actively.”

By his own accounting, having done so poorly as a leader, and fearing that he might again do the same, The Young One took a long pause before he spoke again.

“This is truly strange to me. I do now understand that my way was not the way to lead, yet I know not what is the right way. Please, My Friend, help me learn.”

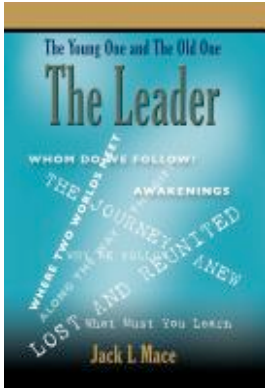
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“Very well; let us learn together. Much of your strength has returned and we must soon continue forth. Let us make the best of your remaining time of recuperation. For some of the lessons we must learn, we will assemble Your Followers and continue Our Journey.”

“But, Sir, if we are to learn a lesson need we not first pause to meditate on it?”

The Old One’s manner was gentle.

“Indeed, My Young Friend, but there is also a time to learn in practice. As a journey lies not in its destination, just so are life and learning not destinations but journeys. For those other lessons we will first pause for a time in study.”



The Leader narrative tells a story of two old friends on a Journey of Leadership focusing on 31 Leadership Axioms. Leading is taught as a journey in discovery alongside the Followers, not ahead in example or behind to push. The Young One has failed in his Leadership task. The Old One, his trusted mentor and invited Journey guest, teaches past his failure toward successful completion of The Journey.

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