

Politics and People

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English PDF edition

Politics and People

Kim Kyung-jin

An online AI Library book by Kim Kyung-jin on how politics begins with reading people, winning trust, keeping relationships, and enduring seasons of crisis.

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Prologue: Have You Ever Looked at Your Phone the Morning After Leaving Office?

Have you ever looked at your phone the morning after leaving office?

More people than you might think can nod in agreement with this question. You don't necessarily have to be a politician.

It could be someone who stepped down from an executive position at a company, someone who finished their administrative post at a school, someone who retired from the military after taking off their stars, or someone who stopped being a village head. While the scale differs, the texture of the experience is similar.

The people who sought you out until yesterday seek someone else today. That shift is quiet, swift, and thorough.

When the word "power" is mentioned, people usually think of presidential palaces or parliament buildings. However, the principles of power also operate in neighborhood meetings and apartment residents' representative meetings. When someone holds decision-making authority, people gather around them, and when that authority vanishes, the people scatter.

This is one aspect of human nature. It is not something to be morally condemned. However, one must look that nature directly in the eye.

If you don't gaze at it, you cannot prepare; if you don't prepare, you will get hurt.

In the world of politics, this principle is amplified.

This happened while I was at the National Assembly. There was a three-term lawmaker who failed to receive a party nomination. He was someone whose lunch appointments were booked solid through Friday afternoon.

Come Monday, everyone who wanted to have lunch with him disappeared. He sat alone in the cafeteria of the Members' Office Building, eating his meal. A young lawmaker who had just pinned on their first-term badge sat next to him, and they both picked up their spoons side-by-side without even knowing who the other was.

The shift of power reveals itself like that—in the landscape of a single lunch table.

I also saw young people who had worked for the camp of a candidate who lost the party leadership election knocking on the winner's door with their resumes. Can we blame those young people? They

also have lives to lead and dreams to fulfill.

It's not that leaving is heartless; it's that in a structure where leaving is natural, the fact that there are still people who stay is what's surprising.

The person who stays. This book is about that person.

The person who calls even after the power is gone. The person who treats you with the same attitude even when your title changes. The person who visits you first when you are in trouble.

How many such people are in your phone? Is it three? Or five?

That number is a politician's true asset. It's not the size of the organization that can be mobilized during an election, but the number of people who will pick up the phone even if you call at midnight that represents that politician's true capability.

Then the question changes. Why did that person stay?

It might be because they owe a debt of gratitude. It might be because of a long-standing friendship. However, in most cases, the person who stays holds a single common memory: "That person treated me like a human being when I was nobody." It is this one sentence.

There are lawmakers who greet the cleaning staff in the hallways of the National Assembly, and there are those who use informal language even with their own aides. There are lawmakers who remember the names of residents at local constituency events, and those who just hand out a business card and turn away.

When these two types of people face the same crisis, the reactions from those around them differ dramatically. People don't remember a politician's campaign promises. They don't remember the contents of policy white papers.

They remember the expression he wore in the elevator, whether he made eye contact when shaking hands, and whether he called them by name.

People remember attitudes, not titles.

This book is about how a politician wins people over. However, we must be wary of the misunderstanding that the word "method" can cause. Winning people over is not a technique.

It is not something achieved by mastering a set of skills. The only way to win people over is to treat people as human beings. It is an attitude, a habit, and sometimes something close to one's very nature.

Then why is this book necessary? If attitude is everything, wouldn't it end with a single sentence telling you to be a good person? That is not the case.

In the space of politics, a unique gravity is at work. Within the gravitational field of power, a kind attitude alone is not enough. Knowing when to approach and when to step back, who to reach out to first and who to wait for, how to process betrayal and how to accept departures—these judgments come from experience.

That experience is accumulated in the examples of political leaders throughout history and across the globe who have won and lost people.

Lincoln appointed his political rivals, who had mocked him, to his cabinet. Mandela invited the prison guard who had incarcerated him for 27 years to his presidential inauguration. Merkel led Germany for sixteen years without ever raising her voice.

King Sejong kept by his side until the end a high-ranking official who had been impeached twenty-one times. There is a common principle in the actions of these leaders. Extracting that principle and reflecting it against the reality of Korean politics today is what this book aims to do.

There will be moments when the historical examples appearing in this book seem to overlap with specific situations in Korean politics today. This is not intentional, but because the structure of politics repeats itself across eras. If you think of someone while reading the story of an expelled leader, that connection belongs to the reader.

If you see a scene from real-world politics reflected while reading about a leader who endured betrayal, that interpretation is also the reader's responsibility.

The author of this book spent four years in the National Assembly. In that space, I experienced the difficulty of winning people over and the chill of the moment when people are lost. I am now in a position to look back on those experiences as I have returned to being a legal professional.

This book is not a battle log of a sitting politician, but rather closer to a topographical map written by someone who has left the battlefield and is looking down from a hill. Having been close enough, I know the texture of the landscape; having stepped back far enough, I can see the whole picture.

Power comes from people. Elections prove it. Each and every vote comes together to create power.

And then, power returns to the people. The decisions made by politicians eventually touch someone's life. A single budget bill can change the fate of a neighborhood library, and a single piece of legislation can rob someone of their sleep at night.

The cycle of returning what was received from the people back to the people—when that cycle is healthy, politics works. When the cycle is broken, politics becomes a backroom deal.

If you are someone who dreams of entering politics, please check one thing first. Among the names stored in your phone right now, how many people will pick up your call even after you have lost all your titles? If that number is three or fewer, it is not yet time to start your political career.

You must increase that number first. That is the first message of this book.

Put down your phone, and let's turn to the first chapter.

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Chapter 1. People Remember Attitude, Not Titles

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Part 1: Reading People

Chapter 1: People Remember Attitude, Not Titles

November 2005, Berlin. Inside the plenary chamber of the Bundestag, the swearing-in ceremony for the Chancellor was taking place. The woman on the podium was not particularly tall, and her voice was not loud.

There were no grand gestures. Angela Merkel. A physicist who grew up as a pastor's daughter in Brandenburg, East Germany.

The first female Chancellor in German history. European media commentary that day was largely lukewarm. Many said Merkel seemed too quiet compared to the reformist drive of her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder.

One reporter wrote: "Does she have charisma? No. Then what does she have?"

We don't know yet."

Sixteen years later, on the day Merkel voluntarily stepped down as Chancellor, 75% of the German people supported her. At the time of her departure, her nickname was 'Mutti,' German for 'Mom.

' The fact that this person, who won four consecutive general elections over 16 years, was called 'Mom' rather than 'The Iron Leader' overturns conventional wisdom about political leadership.

Merkel was not a great orator. To be precise, she was not the type of politician to captivate people with speeches. Her sentences were long and complex, and sometimes the audience would doze off before she reached a conclusion.

In Germany, the verb 'Merkeln' was once in vogue. It meant 'to stall indecisively without making any decisions.' It was a form of mockery.

But as the word endured over the years, its meaning changed. 'Merkeln' later began to be read as 'to wait cautiously for the right time.'

The key lies in this change. People do not remember a politician's speeches. They do not even remember their policies.

What people remember is attitude. The way that person treated them, the expression shown in the face of a crisis, the posture taken before power. These accumulate to form an impression.

In Merkel's case, that impression converged into two words: 'humility and dignity.' According to the biography by Kati Marton, these were the two words Merkel chose for her own epitaph.

In psychology, there is a framework called the 'Warmth-Competence Model.' According to this model, formulated by Professor Susan Fiske's team at Princeton University, people evaluate strangers along two axes. The first axis is 'Is this person warm or cold toward me?

' The second axis is 'Is this person competent or incompetent?' There is a crucial sequence here. Warmth comes first.

Competence comes second. Before evaluating someone's ability, people first determine whether the other person is a foe or an ally. This judgment is made within three seconds.

The three-second first impression. This number comes from research by Alexander Todorov. This Princeton psychologist had experiment participants evaluate the trustworthiness of unfamiliar faces after seeing them for only 0.

1 seconds. The results were shocking. The impressions formed in 0.

1 seconds almost perfectly matched the impressions formed after sufficient observation without time limits. This means the human brain is designed to judge a person's trustworthiness instantaneously.

However, in the world of politicians, there is something much harder than a first impression. It is the skill of maintaining a relationship for 30 years. Gaining favor in three seconds is possible through natural looks and a smile.

But keeping people from leaving for 30 years is only possible through consistency of attitude. Merkel lived in the same apartment for 16 years. She did not use the official residence provided by the federal government.

After work, she went grocery shopping at the local supermarket, pushing her own cart. Whether this behavior was calculated or natural does not matter. What matters is the fact that it never changed once in 16 years.

Here, we must address a trap that politicians from elite backgrounds are prone to fall into. The moment competence overshadows warmth, people begin to be wary. In Professor Fiske's model, groups in the 'competent but cold' quadrant become objects of both respect and envy or hostility.

Professional groups, elites, and high-ranking officials fall into this category. They are people whose abilities are recognized, but who are not liked.

People entering politics from the prosecution are most susceptible to this trap. I can say this with confidence because I served as a prosecutor for 13 years. A prosecutor's eye is an eye that reads

depositions.

It is an eye trained for thousands of hours to find contradictions in testimony, cross-reference evidence, and point out logical loopholes. This eye is a weapon in investigations. But if you use this eye as it is in the political arena, people feel like they are being interrogated.

The moment the sensation that 'that person is analyzing me' is transmitted, the temperature of the relationship drops sharply.

As a prosecutor, I focused on finding falsehoods in suspect statements. My job was to read hidden facts between the lines of depositions. However, upon entering the National Assembly, I found that if I looked at people the same way, no one would come near me.

The eye that reads people in politics is fundamentally different from the eye that reads depositions. The eye for depositions looks at 'what is this person hiding? ' The eye for politics looks at 'what does this person want?

' The former starts from suspicion. The latter starts from interest. I spent more than half of my term as a member of the National Assembly realizing this difference.

The reason Merkel lasted so long ultimately lies here. She did not exude the 'scent of power. ' Whether she was leading negotiations through the night at an EU summit or when Europe was shaken by the Greek debt crisis, her attitude was not much different from that of someone pushing a cart in a neighborhood supermarket.

Like a scientist, she focused on breaking down problems, excluding emotions, and finding solutions. There is a saying attributed to Merkel during negotiations with Putin: "I am a scientist. I like to break problems down into their smallest parts.

There is no room for ego to interfere in that process."

The statement that there is no room for ego to interfere. For a politician to be able to say this, an attitude of putting results before pride must be ingrained. Flashy orators are forgotten once they leave the stage.

But the person who answers the phone on a night of crisis, saves the other party's face, and fulfills their promises is remembered for a long time.

In 2015, when more than a million refugees flooded into Europe due to the Syrian Civil War, Merkel opened the borders. It was a decision she made knowing her approval ratings would drop. While France accepted 30,000 people, Germany took in 1.

17 million. Far-right parties surged across Europe, and there was fierce backlash within Germany. Approval ratings fell.

But that decision created something. Germany's moral authority in the international community rose, and trust in Merkel deepened. The New York Times described her as the last trustworthy political leader in the Western world.

Titles disappear when a term ends. Chancellor, Chairman, Representative. These titles have a set time.

But attitude has no term limit. The total amount of attitude a person has shown ultimately becomes their political asset. Merkel was so respected that even after her retirement, the expression 'Merkel-possessing nation' circulated in Germany.

At the same time, criticism regarding her dependence on Russian energy and her decision to phase out nuclear power is intense. When the European Parliament tried to award her a medal of merit in 2026, boos broke out. She was not a perfect leader.

But when you consider how rare it is for a politician to exit after 16 years without a single corruption scandal, you can gauge the size of the asset created by her attitude.

If you are from the prosecution, the legal field, or someone who has lived with razor-sharp analytical skills as a weapon in a professional area, there is a question you must ask yourself the moment you step into politics: "Do I want to be remembered by people as a competent person, or as a warm person?" The ideal answer is, of course, both.

But if you must show one first, it is warmth. Competence is proven when you are given a task. Warmth must be shown before you are given the task.

The only person who remembers your title is the one who received your business card. The people who remember your attitude are everyone who has ever been with you.

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Chapter 2. The Human Terrain of Politics

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Part 1: Reading People

Chapter 2. The Human Terrain of Politics: Four Groups with Different Desires

July 1866, at the Prussian field headquarters immediately after the Battle of Königgrätz. The Prussian army had decisively defeated the Austrian forces. Wilhelm I wanted to capitalize on the victory's momentum and march toward Vienna.

His goal was to occupy the capital and impose humiliating peace terms on Austria. His generals agreed with the King; there was no reason for a victorious army to stop.

However, one person opposed this: Otto von Bismarck. As the Chancellor of Prussia, he argued that the King should offer generous terms to Austria. He insisted they should not demand territorial cessions and that reparations should be kept to a minimum.

Wilhelm I was furious. A heated argument broke out between Bismarck and the King, and Bismarck even threatened to resign. It is said that Bismarck even shed tears during this process.

Ultimately, Bismarck's will prevailed. The Treaty of Prague in August 1866 offered surprisingly generous terms to the defeated Austria. Why did Bismarck concede despite winning?

His calculation was this: Today's enemy can be tomorrow's ally. If Austria is humiliated, it will surely seek revenge. However, if Austria's dignity is preserved, it can be kept as a friendly neutral power when facing France later.

Bismarck's calculation was correct. Four years later, when Prussia went to war with France, Austria did not intervene. The final obstacle to German unification had been removed.

This anecdote of Bismarck reveals a fundamental principle of human relationships in politics: the people around a politician do not all want the same thing. Each person has different desires, and if you fail to read those differences, the relationship breaks.

Bismarck was able to persuade Wilhelm I because he saw that the 'enemy' called Austria was, in fact, a 'candidate for a future alliance.'

People in politics can be divided into four groups: Supporters, Comrades, Aides, and Sponsors. These four groups each want different things from a politician.

Supporters want to be moved. They are the ones who shout at rallies, post supportive comments on social media, and cast their votes at the polling stations. These people are not interested in the technical details of a politician's policies.

What they want is the sense that 'this person is on my side' and an emotional connection that says 'this person represents my anger. ' You shouldn't show Excel files to supporters; you should tell them stories.

Comrades want vision. Comrades are different from supporters. Comrades do not ask for immediate inspiration, but rather what kind of world will emerge if they follow this politician.

If the vision is clear, comrades will sacrifice their own interests. If the vision wavers, comrades leave. Since a comrade is someone who invests their life's time, they constantly seek to confirm whether the direction of that investment is correct.

Aides want trust. To an aide, inspiration or vision is secondary. What an aide wants is: 'Will my opinion be adopted?', 'Will what I say not be ignored?', and 'Will I not be used as a shield when a crisis comes?' An aide's loyalty is proportional to the level of trust. The moment trust is broken, the most capable aide becomes the most dangerous enemy.

Sponsors want the odds of winning. Sponsors are the people who provide funds, connect networks, and set the stage behind the scenes. They are cold-headed.

They are not moved by emotion, nor are they inspired by vision. What they see is probability: 'Can this person win? ' They invest if they see a chance of winning and pull out if that chance disappears.

There is no need to blame sponsors; however, mistaking a sponsor for a comrade can lead to great disaster.

Why is it important to distinguish these four groups? Because everyone reacts differently even to the same words. If you tell supporters, 'We will surely win,' you get cheers.

If you say the same thing to a sponsor, you get the question, 'What is the evidence? ' If you tell an aide, 'I'll handle it myself, so don't worry,' the aide feels they are being excluded. If you tell a comrade, 'Let's win the election first and then think about it,' the comrade concludes that the vision has vanished.

Outside of these four groups, there is one more distinction: the distinction between those who love power and those who care for the politician themselves. Political survival depends on this distinction. Those who love power come to your side when you have power, and they leave when it vanishes.

Those who care for the politician themselves remain even when you lose power. The way to distinguish these two groups is surprisingly simple: see who calls you first when bad news strikes. Many people call with good news.

Few people call with bad news. That rare person is your true person.

Bismarck's generous treatment of Austria stems from the realization that even enemies and rivals are people. Bismarck did not fix Austria as an eternal enemy; he left open the possibility that today's enemy could be tomorrow's ally. This was the core of Bismarck's diplomacy: no permanent friends and no permanent enemies.

Relationships are reorganized flexibly according to the nation's interests and goals. This principle does not only apply to diplomacy between nations; it applies equally to a politician's personal relationships.

If you fix the 47% of party members who opposed you in the primary as enemies, you cannot win the general election. If you treat fellow lawmakers who criticized you within the party as foes, running the floor becomes impossible.

Even if you win a landslide victory in the party leadership election with 62% of the vote, if you lose the remaining 38%, party management becomes half-baked. Just as Bismarck did not march on Vienna, true power lies in knowing when to stop even after winning.

People leaving is not an event that happens suddenly one day. Alienation accumulates. The experience of one's opinion being ignored accumulates.

The sense of unfairness accumulates. The moment these three things cross the threshold, people leave. And once they leave, it is already irreversible.

Someone who starts to feel alienated does not express that emotion in words; instead, they arrive late to meetings, they don't answer calls promptly, and the length of their reports decreases. If you fail to read these signals, you will one day find the office empty.

Bismarck was ultimately dismissed in 1890 due to conflict with Wilhelm II. What he built during his 28-year tenure as Chancellor were great achievements, but something else had also accumulated: the dissatisfaction of bureaucrats and the public who shuddered at his aggressive actions.

He is evaluated as having been generous to enemies but autocratic toward his own people. Bismarck's case shows that managing external relationships and managing internal relationships are separate skills. Dealing well with external enemies is a different capability from dealing well with internal people.

Bismarck was a genius in the former but failed in the latter.

This is what a politician must remember: internal people come before external enemies. If internal people leave, the very strength to deal with external enemies disappears.

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Chapter 3. The Skill of Reading People

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Part 1: Reading People

Chapter 3: The Skill of Reading People - Training to See Patterns

210 AD, Xuchang. A proclamation was issued from the Chancellor's Office. It was the 'Decree for Seeking Talents' (求賢令) issued by Cao Cao.

The content was as follows: "Since the world has not yet been pacified, it is time to urgently seek out worthy men. If one could only appoint upright scholars, how could Duke Huan of Qi have used Guan Zhong to dominate the world?"

This single proclamation encapsulates Cao Cao's eye for people. For 400 years, the Han Dynasty's standard for recruiting talent was 'virtuous conduct.' It was a system called 'Xiangjuli' (鄉舉), where people who were filial, upright, and polite were recommended for government posts based on local reputation.

This system worked during times of peace. However, in a chaotic era where the world was divided and warlords vied for power, filial sons and upright scholars alone could not win wars.

Cao Cao overturned this old order. In the 'Decree of Gengxin' in the 8th year of Jian'an (203 AD), he had already declared, 'In times of peace, virtue is valued, but in times of war, talent is prioritized' (平尚德, 亂尚才). Seven years later, in the 'Decree for Seeking Talents,' he took it a step further.

He would not ask about one's background. He would not look into past flaws. He would only look at talent.

'Promote Only the Talented' (唯才是舉)—these four characters were the core of Cao Cao's art of personnel management.

To understand how radical this was, one must know the context of the time. In the late Eastern Han period, to rise to office, one had to come from a prestigious family. A local power player had to recommend them.

To receive a recommendation, one needed a reputation for filial piety or integrity. This system eventually became a closed circuit for prestigious nobles. One had to be born into a good family to be recommended, be recommended to enter office, and enter office to recommend others.

Even if someone had talent, there was no way up without a prestigious family background.

Cao Cao himself was someone on the periphery of that system. Raised under a father who was the adopted son of a eunuch, he always lived with an inferiority complex regarding his background among prestigious nobles. Yuan Shao came from a noble family that had produced the 'Three Excellencies' over four generations.

Cao Cao had no such background. Therefore, he needed to create a system that looked at talent instead of family lineage. Personal necessity and the demands of the times overlapped.

The Decree for Seeking Talents was a declaration. It did not fundamentally change the actual personnel system. Talent was still recruited through recommendations, and many of those who played active roles under Cao Cao were of noble birth.

However, the effect of the declaration was significant. The message that 'under this man, one can rise through talent regardless of background' spread across the world, and even after his crushing defeat at the Battle of Red Cliffs, talented individuals flocked to him.

One reason his defeat did not destroy his authority was that his principles of recruitment had already become a kind of brand.

Cao Cao's case reveals what a political leader should look for when reading people. One must look at actions, not words, and recurring patterns rather than single actions. Cao Cao did not look at a person's character first.

He first looked at what the person could do. And he promoted those who produced results repeatedly, not just once. Patterns are more important than one-off achievements.

If there is a person who has achieved one great feat and another who has consistently built up small results, the latter is more reliable. Luck can play a role in a single great feat, but consistent results are evidence of true capability.

When reading people, one needs an eye for distinguishing types. People around a politician are roughly divided into four types: the Loyal, the Practical, the Ambitious, and the Value-driven. These four types are difficult to distinguish on the surface. They all work hard, and they all swear loyalty. The difference reveals itself when pressure is applied.

The Loyal Type is loyal to the leader as an individual. Whether the leader is right or wrong, winning or losing, the Loyal Type does not leave. They are the ones who receive the first phone call in moments of crisis.

The advantage is clear: they provide psychological stability in uncertain times. There are disadvantages too. They cannot correct the leader when their judgment is wrong.

If a team consists only of the Loyal Type, you end up trapped in a room of 'yes-men'.

The Practical Type is loyal to the work. They stake their pride on the assigned task rather than the individual leader. The Practical Type values results over emotions.

Their reports are accurate, they meet deadlines, and they do not mix emotions when diagnosing problems. However, the Practical Type is not significantly shaken even if the leader changes. This is because loyalty to the system precedes loyalty to the individual leader.

To keep the Practical Type by your side and prevent them from leaving, you must continuously provide meaning to their work.

The Ambitious Type is loyal to their own future. The reason they follow a leader is not out of respect, but because following that leader is advantageous for their own political future. The Ambitious Type is competent.

They are full of energy and produce good results. However, they leave when a better opportunity arises. There is no need to blame the Ambitious Type; it is a natural human motivation.

However, mistaking the Ambitious Type for a true comrade is a grave mistake. It is safer to present them with clear roles and paths for growth but keep them out of the inner circle of core decision-making.

The Value-driven Type is loyal to the cause. They are people who joined not because of the individual leader, but because they sympathize with the values and direction the leader pursues. The Value-driven Type is most dedicated when the leader moves in the right direction.

However, they are the first to object when the leader deviates from those values. The Value-driven Type is the one who speaks harsh truths. They are uncomfortable.

Sometimes they break the mood of a meeting. However, an organization without this type of person loses its way.

If you fail to distinguish these four types, you will fail in personnel management. Putting the Loyal Type in a staff position stiffens the organization. Putting the Ambitious Type as chief of staff leads to information leaks.

Putting the Practical Type as a spokesperson results in messages devoid of emotion. Putting the Value-driven Type in charge of a campaign causes friction between reality and ideals. 'The right person in the right place' (□□□□).

This phrase is cliché, but the reason it fails is not because we don't know the 'right person,' but because we don't know the 'right place.' The ability to judge what type of person is needed for which position is the core of personnel management.

A person's true nature is revealed in crisis situations. The four types, which were difficult to distinguish normally, diverge clearly when a crisis hits. Think of the events on the night of December 3, 2024.

When news broke that emergency martial law had been declared, who answered the phone? Who rushed to the National Assembly first? Who sat back and watched the situation?

Who turned off their phone?

The call list from that night is a politician's true human topography. There must have been people who swore loyalty normally but could not be reached. There must have been people who usually kept their distance but called first.

That difference is important. Crisis is an X-ray of relationships. The skeleton, invisible in normal times, is clearly revealed in moments of crisis.

What Cao Cao's Decree for Seeking Talents teaches is to look at talent rather than background. But taking it a step further, talent alone is not enough. There must be consistency on top of talent.

A person who remains the same in peace and in crisis. A person who is the same in victory and in defeat. To see that consistency, one must look at recurring patterns, not just a single impression.

A single great action can be an act. Ten identical actions are character.

During my time as a prosecutor, I was trained to analyze patterns in statements while listening to suspects' testimonies repeatedly. When the same question is asked at different times, if the core structure of the answer does not change, the probability of it being the truth is high.

Even if the details change, if the framework remains the same, it can be trusted. Reading people is the same. If you observe how a person's words change depending on the situation over a long period, you can see their framework.

You need someone with a solid framework by your side.

For a politician, the skill of reading people is not an option but a condition for survival. If you read them wrong, you are betrayed. If you read them right, you can know in advance who will answer the phone on a night of crisis.

And that person might not be someone with a flashy resume. As Cao Cao's Decree for Seeking Talents suggests, it could be someone wearing rough clothes, fishing by the Wei River. But to recognize that person, you must train your eyes in advance.

Fumbling through phone numbers on a night of crisis is already too late.

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Chapter 4. Seeds of Relationships Are Planted Ten Years Before Politics Begins

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Part 2: Gaining People

A. Lincoln's Days as a Lawyer — An Afternoon Spent Listening to Townspeople's Grievances Outside the Courtroom

In the 1840s, a traveling circuit court procession would set out from Springfield, Illinois. This was the Eighth Judicial Circuit, holding court across fourteen counties. Among the ranks of lawyers who spent half of every year—ten weeks each in spring and fall—on the dusty, unpaved roads of the prairie, there was an exceptionally tall and thin man.

He was Abraham Lincoln.

Other lawyers would head back to Springfield on weekends. They hurried home to their families, comfortable beds, and clean laundry. Lincoln did not go back.

After 1849, he was the only lawyer, besides the state's attorney, who visited all fourteen counties without exception. On weekends, he stayed at small-town taverns or in front of general stores. Stretching his long legs out from a wooden chair, he listened to the townspeople's stories.

They talked of disputes over fence lines, complaints about who should be responsible for a pig washed away by rain, or stories of the postmaster delivering mail to the wrong person.

Lincoln never charged a fee for listening to these grievances. It could hardly be called legal advice; it was simply time spent sitting beside them, nodding and listening. Occasionally, he would tell a lighthearted story to ease the scowl of a disgruntled merchant.

Judge David Davis later recalled that Lincoln was never happier than when he was on the judicial circuit. He never seemed as comfortable at home, in Congress, or anywhere else.

These moments accumulated. The townspeople came to know Lincoln outside the courtroom more deeply than the Lincoln within it. Rather than how meticulously he applied legal principles, they remembered his attitude—how he sat through a sweltering afternoon without even wiping his sweat to listen to a farmer's complaints until the very end.

When his name appeared as a candidate for the U. S. House of Representatives in 1846, voters did not meticulously analyze his views on tariff policies or the federal bank before casting their ballots.

Instead, they remembered those patient eyes that were so willing to share the weight of their mundane lives, and they marked the box next to his name.

The great tree of politics does not grow overnight at the noisy moment when elections begin and banners are hung. Its roots delve deep into the earth during dusty afternoons that no one notices, within hours of seemingly trivial conversation. The scales in the hearts of voters are already tipped long before a candidate bows in front of a camera.

Only the time silently given ten years before appealing for votes is accumulated as true political capital.

We must look closer at the nature of that capital. What Lincoln built during his circuit travels was not merely a 'network.' The word 'network' brings to mind the act of exchanging business cards and saving phone numbers.

What Lincoln accumulated was something far more lasting: a sense etched into people's memories, an intuitive conviction that 'This man is on my side.' This conviction is not planted through logic. It is formed only through the accumulation of repeated experiences and a consistent attitude.

Someone who sits and listens in the same posture for the eleventh time after meeting ten times—before such a person, people let down their guard.

In modern politics, a campaign period lasts only a few months. Most calculations to capture voters' hearts within that short window fail because it takes a long time for a heart to open. This does not mean that walking through market alleys and shaking hands just before an election is meaningless.

However, for that act to truly shine, it must be supported by the memory of having walked those same alleys on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon when there was no election. Lincoln did not stay in those towns for the sake of an election. He chose that life itself, and politics occurred as a natural extension of that life.

B. The Precondition That Made Liu Bei's 'Three Visits to the Thatched Cottage' Possible — The Asset of an Already Accumulated Reputation

The moment people hear the term 'Sango-choryeo' (the Three Visits to the Thatched Cottage), one scene almost automatically comes to mind: on a winter day in the middle of a blizzard, a warlord nearly fifty years old kneels in front of a thatched cottage, waiting for a twenty-seven-year-old youth to open the door.

Because all the spotlight is focused on this dramatic image, the actual precondition that made this meeting possible is buried in the shadows.

In 207 AD, rumors from across the land were already reaching the ears of Zhuge Liang, who was living in seclusion at the foot of Mount Longzhong. He was no hermit ignorant of worldly affairs.

Through the top intellectual networks of his time, he understood the situation of the Central Plains as if looking at his own palm and saw clearly who was leading what forces and where. Cao Cao possessed overwhelming military power, while Sun Quan held the fertile lands of Jiangnan and a foundation built since his father's generation.

Objectively, Liu Bei was inferior to both in every aspect, drifting from one feudal lord to another without even a base of operations.

And yet, Zhuge Liang chose Liu Bei.

The basis for that choice did not lie solely in the three visits through the blizzard. What Zhuge Liang saw was the trajectory Liu Bei had left across the Central Plains over several decades.

It was the attitude Liu Bei showed when Tao Qian of Xuzhou offered to yield his territory, the choice he made not to abandon the people following him even while fleeing from Cao Cao, and the patience he maintained without turning his blade against his subordinates despite being betrayed numerous times.

All these records had reached the deep mountains of Longzhong in the form of rumors.

In effect, Zhuge Liang had been vetting Liu Bei as a person for a long time before he ever opened the door of his cottage. The three visits were closer to a final procedure to verify the authenticity of that accumulated asset.

If Liu Bei had not possessed a reputation built over decades, Zhuge Liang's heart would not have been moved even if he had visited ten times in a blizzard. Simply performing a humble gesture one day without any prior trajectory will not attract great talent.

The lesson a modern politician should draw from this story is clear. The power to gather talent does not come from the terms of a recruitment offer. It comes from the 'scent' emitted by the entirety of the time a leader has lived.

That scent cannot be manipulated, for it is woven thread by thread from the choices made in moments of crisis, what was sacrificed in the face of profit, and the attitude taken toward the weak.

Who you ate with, whose difficulties you rushed to help, and what temptations you stopped before—all of these things before starting politics determine the quality of your political ranks later. The time it took for Liu Bei to earn the right to knock on the door at Longzhong was not the three days of the three visits, but the twenty years that preceded them.

C. The Time It Takes for a Career of Principled Investigation in the Prosecution to Become a Political Asset

The nights in Seocho-dong were long. While flipping through investigation records in an office brightly lit by fluorescent lamps, the phone would ring. The voice on the other end was sometimes overbearing and sometimes subtle, suggesting that things should be wrapped up 'at a reasonable

level.

' Hanging up that phone was an agonizing task. Hanging up meant incurring someone's wrath, and that wrath returned in the form of personnel appointments: demotions, minor posts, or transfers to the provinces. The price of sticking to principles was far from a romantic hero story.

The subtle glances from colleagues encountered on the way to work every morning, the silence of a solitary table at lunch—that was the actual cost of principle.

Over ten or twenty years, these choices form invisible layers. At the time, no one recognizes them. You are followed by evaluations of being 'inflexible' and whispers of being 'ignorant of the world.' In the meantime, those who skillfully crossed the lines are promoted, take good positions, and move into spacious offices.

But as more time passes, the landscape changes.

A moment comes when the world is in upheaval and the true face of power is revealed. A time when the public thirsts for fairness inevitably arrives. At that time, people's eyes turn not toward those with flashy careers, but toward the trajectory of someone who silently endured times of humiliation.

A history of drifting through minor posts suddenly begins to be read differently. There is a moment when the fact that 'that person did not bow to pressure' becomes a more powerful message than any policy promise.

A career of principled investigation in the prosecution does not turn into a political asset overnight. It is like groundwater. Rain that seeps into the earth passes through rock crevices and sand layers, flowing downward very slowly.

It can take decades. Then one day, when a drought occurs and all the surface water dries up, the groundwater rising from the depths saves the entire village. The groundwater of principle takes a long time to gather, but once it does, it does not easily dry up.

What is important in this process is not the mere fact of keeping one's principles, but the fact of having endured without breaking while doing so. If someone pushed to a minor post because of their principles just sat there and resented the world, that career would remain only as a wound, not an asset.

Only those who carried out their duties in their assigned positions while paying the price for their principles, maintained relationships, and prepared for the next opportunity will see the day they stand upon those layers again.

Politics is not made of light declarations. It is a contract in which one offers their entire past life as collateral to seek the public's consent. The weight of a single principle kept at a lonely desk in an interrogation room creates the qualification to stand before tens of thousands in a plaza later.

That weight cannot be transferred to anyone else, nor can it be created overnight. Only time can forge it.

D. Local Community, Professional Community, and Alumni — Three Branches of Natural Networking and Their Respective 'Temperatures'

The relationships a person forms throughout their life branch out like tree roots. There are largely three branches: local community, professional community, and alumni. These three differ in how they are formed, the temperatures at which they are maintained, and how they operate in times of crisis.

Networking in the local community smells of the earth. It is the woman at the dry cleaners encountered on the way to work, the neighbors sweating together at a badminton club on a weekend morning, and the faces nodding in greeting at a parents' meeting at the children's school. They do not judge a person by political ideology or professional achievement.

They see a person's core through fragments of daily life: the manner in which they set down trash bags at the recycling center, the tone of their voice when greeting in the apartment elevator, and the way they speak to a server at a local restaurant. The temperature of this root is lukewarm. It does not cheer heatedly, nor does it turn away coldly.

Instead, it possesses a rock-like quality that stays in place even when the wind and rain howl. Whether you win or lose an election, whether you wear the badge or take it off, these are the people you will encounter in the same alley tomorrow morning.

Networking in the professional community is cold and sharp. It is the lawyers who competed in arguments in the same courtroom, fellow prosecutors who stayed up all night writing reports in the same department, and bureaucrats who exchanged sharp questions at policy forums. They are not swayed by emotion.

They weigh a person using yardsticks such as work accuracy, judgment in crises, and consistency in fulfilling promises. Reputation within a professional community is difficult to verify from the outside, but its weight is greater than one might imagine.

No matter how brilliantly someone who is not recognized internally is packaged on the outside, a single cold evaluation from within the industry will tear that packaging apart. 'That person wasn't very good at practical work.' The speed at which this short sentence spreads is faster than you think, and the speed at which it is erased is slower.

Networking with alumni is hot. It has a warmth like a stove. These are the people who spent time together in their teens or early twenties, when they were not yet tainted by the world.

Memories of sharing ramen in the library the night before an exam and the feeling of singing together with arms around each other's shoulders during a festival remain. There is no filter of self-interest in this relationship.

More precisely, because it is a bond formed before interests could intervene, unconditional support is possible more than in any other relationship. When the world turns its back, the person who rushes to you at a single phone call to clink glasses comes from this group.

Each of the three roots has its own strengths and weaknesses. The local community is stable but can be shallow. The professional community is accurate but cold-hearted.

Alumni are warm but can be blind. A great politician accurately understands the temperatures of these three roots and does not lean toward any one side.

Relying only on the unconditional support of alumni leads to a loss of objectivity; depending only on the cold evaluation of the professional community leads to a loss of human warmth; and remaining only in the lukewarm relationships of the local community leads to a loss of depth.

Before starting politics, it is necessary to check how evenly these three roots have spread. If one branch is particularly weak, time must be spent there. A tree whose roots lean only in one direction will fall in a strong wind. Only roots that spread out in balance in three directions can support the trunk in any storm.

This is all that needs to be done ten years before starting politics. It is not a grand plan. It is greeting people on the way to work, reaching out to a colleague in difficulty, and asking after an old friend. These trivial acts accumulate layer by layer to become the bedrock upon which you step when you later climb the rugged mountain of politics.

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Chapter 5. How to Win the First Person

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Part 2: Winning People

Chapter 5: How to Win the First Person - The Weight of the First Aide

A. Kennedy had Sorensen, and Kim Dae-jung had Han Hwa-gap

In January 1953, a twenty-five-year-old young man visited the Washington office of John F. Kennedy, who had just been elected as a Senator from Massachusetts. He was Ted Sorensen, originally from Lincoln, Nebraska.

A top graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law, this young lawyer had never even had a cup of coffee or written a check in Washington. He was different in every way from the urban and sophisticated Kennedy, who came from a prestigious Boston family. Kennedy was Catholic, while Sorensen was Unitarian.

Kennedy attended Harvard, while Sorensen went to a public university in the Midwest. Kennedy was a natural socialite, while Sorensen, by his own admission, was clumsy at winning people over.

History proves what happened when the two sat across from each other in that cramped Senate office. Sorensen started as a legislative aide but soon became Kennedy's "intellectual alter ego." His role was to gather the fragments of raw thoughts scattered in Kennedy's mind and weave them into a coherent philosophy.

The two traveled through all 50 U. S. states together, meeting voters, and during this long journey, they came to read each other's thoughts perfectly.

Sorensen later remarked that when reporters wrote that he could step inside Kennedy's mind and finish his sentences, they weren't entirely wrong.

The inaugural address on January 20, 1961, the correspondence to Khrushchev during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and the speeches in Berlin and at American University in June 1963—Sorensen's hand was present in many of the words that defined the Kennedy era.

When Kennedy was assassinated, Sorensen wrote, "It was the most deeply wounding experience of my life." It was a loss that went beyond the sorrow of losing a boss; it was closer to losing half of himself.

A similar scene exists across the Pacific in Korea. Han Hwa-gap stood by Kim Dae-jung, who moved between house arrest and exile under the watchful eye of a military regime. During the pitch-black political winter, he silently performed the role of delivering his leader's message to the world and reconnecting the capillaries of a scattered organization.

He was a person who stayed by his side during times when there was neither power nor reward in sight, and when one had to risk their very life.

Appointing a "First Aide" is not merely a matter of hiring a staff member to help with the workload. It is about finding the one person to whom you can reveal your flaws and fears without reservation. Behind the persona a leader presents publicly, there are inevitably parts that cannot be shown.

The early dawn hours when judgment wavers, the moments when pride is crushed, or the meetings where one must swallow their rage—a person who witnesses these scenes and does not turn away, yet can still voice direct opposition when necessary, is what a "First Aide" represents.

Who the first aide is also serves as a declaration of what kind of politics that politician intends to practice. If you keep someone by your side who will use any means to achieve victory, that politician's politics will flow in that direction.

If you place someone who adheres to principles yet is skilled in communication at the forefront, those who follow will align themselves with that same quality. The shape of the entire formation is determined by where the first flag is planted.

B. The Courage to Recruit Heterogeneous Colleagues Who Fill Your Deficiencies

When seizing power or forming a new lineup, leaders instinctively look for people similar to themselves. People who understand with just a glance without needing long explanations, people who graduated from the same school and share the same experiences, and people whose sense of humor matches and whose targets of anger overlap.

It is comfortable to be with such people. Meetings end quickly, there are fewer disagreements, and decision-making is smooth.

Comfort is poison.

An organization filled only with people who resemble oneself is like being trapped in a room of mirrors. No matter where you look, you only see your own face. There is no way to know if there is a cliff ahead or if water is rising from behind.

When a crisis hits, such an organization thinks and moves in only one direction because it lacks the eyes to see blind spots.

Beside someone who has spent their entire life in the world of law books and precedents, there must be someone who can instinctively read the raw public sentiment of the marketplace. A cautious and taciturn leader needs a frontline commander who pushes forward without hesitation when faced with

obstacles.

Beside a meticulous analyst, a dreamer who draws the big picture should sit. Heterogeneous colleagues cause discomfort for a leader. Meetings grow longer, conflicts become more frequent, and energy is consumed.

Yet, it is precisely within that discomfort that new possibilities open up.

The relationship between Kennedy and Sorensen was like that. The sensibilities of a wealthy Boston family and the progressive sense of justice from the Nebraska plains were inherently different. As these two sensibilities clashed and blended, Kennedy's language gained a broad resonance that reached both conservatives and progressives.

If Sorensen had been a mere carbon copy of Kennedy, those history-making speeches would never have been born.

Acknowledging one's own deficiencies is the first step. Leaders often know their strengths well but fail to see their shortcomings. Or they see them but refuse to admit them.

This is often followed by self-rationalization: "I don't need to know everything about that field." Beside a leader who does not acknowledge their deficiencies, only those who bury weaknesses deeper—rather than those who cover for them—will gather.

To coolly face what you cannot do and what sensibilities you lack, and to seek out someone to fill that exact void—that is the first act of courage in building an organization.

Walking with a heterogeneous colleague is a continuous series of conflicts at every moment. Opinions differ, paces vary, and priorities clash. The thought "It would be faster to do it alone" crosses one's mind several times a day.

The moment a leader pushes away a different-minded colleague because they cannot bear that conflict, they return to the room of mirrors. One person's capacity is finite. To break out of that shell and embrace a larger space, one must willingly endure the friction caused by someone of a different nature.

C. That Evening I Accepted the Position of Chair of the Emergency Response Committee — Who Joins First Determines Everything That Follows

It was an evening with a biting December wind. The moment I accepted the request to take over the wheelhouse of a sinking ship, a massive storm was raging in my head. It was a decision to leave the world I had been familiar with for decades and walk into a mudflat where I couldn't see even an inch ahead.

Having taken on the role of rescue chief, the first thing I had to do was find someone to jump into the water with me.

To whom should I make the first call? This choice is not merely the act of finding someone to help with practical tasks. It is the first signal sent to the world. It is a message announcing which direction the ship will head and in what manner it will sail.

If you place a stable figure familiar with the grammar of established politics first, you can manage the immediate chaos. You can seek gradual change while minimizing internal resistance and maintaining the existing order. In return, external expectations cool down.

Sighs of "In the end, nothing changes" begin to flow. Conversely, if you appoint a new figure who has kept their distance from the existing system, internal backlash will be fierce. Voices of discontent will erupt from right next to you.

However, outside, the expectation that "they are truly trying to change" begins to blossom.

Every choice comes with a price. The important thing is the difference between choosing while knowing that price and choosing without knowing it.

The moment the first aide is decided, the topography of those who follow is naturally drawn. If you put a principled person first, people of a similar nature will gather. If you put a realist, realists will come.

The first person is like the primordial cell that determines the organization's DNA. The properties of that cell are replicated throughout the entire organization.

The position of Chair of the Emergency Response Committee is different from that of a party leader in normal times. It is a fire chief who has come to put out a fire in a crisis. The nature of the operation changes depending on whether the first crew member the fire chief calls is a chemical expert, a rescue specialist, or a bomb disposal technician.

Whose voice was heard through the receiver that evening determined the course of everything that followed.

D. How to Balance Loyalty and Competence in an Early Team

When forming an early team, a leader stands in a deep valley. On one cliff, the word "Competence" is engraved, and on the other, "Loyalty" is engraved. If you lean too far toward either side, you will fall.

If you gather people based solely on competence, the organization becomes a group of mercenaries. They are unrivaled in the quality of their work. The figures in their reports are accurate, the logic of their alternatives is solid, and their execution is fast.

However, the moment the tide of battle turns unfavorable, they coolly calculate their profits and losses. Is it advantageous to remain on this ship, or is it better to switch to the one across the way? If the calculation shows a disadvantage, they leave without hesitation because they have no emotional bond with the organization.

If you hire people relying only on loyalty, the organization becomes a gathering of blind followers. They are willing to act as human shields for the leader. No matter what criticism is poured out, they stand with their shields up, and the leader's word is law.

The problem is that they cannot put the brakes on the leader's judgment. Even if the leader is going in the wrong direction, they only repeat, "You are right, Chairperson." Often lacking the technical competence to solve complex problems, they fall into a state where they are overflowing with willpower but have no solutions when a crisis strikes.

Balancing the two seems easy in theory, but it is extremely difficult in reality. This is because it is hard to distinguish between the two values during peaceful times. Competent people appear loyal in normal times, and loyal people appear competent in normal times. Distinction becomes possible when a small crisis arrives.

When harsh criticism pours in from the outside, some aides calmly analyze the situation and prepare three different response plans. They present the best path by presenting data without being swayed by emotion. That is competence.

In the same situation, other aides stay in the office until late at night waiting for the leader's call, create rebuttal materials every time a negative article appears, and are the first to arrive the next morning to preemptively block anything that might upset the leader. That is loyalty.

It is rare to find these two values in one person at the same time. Therefore, a leader must combine the two types of people. One must constantly instill vision and philosophy into competent people to build an emotional bond, while providing field experience and roles to loyal people to develop their skills.

When competence and loyalty blend within a single vessel, that person finally becomes indispensable to the leader.

The composition of an early team does not end with a single decision. It is a process of continuous adjustment while running together.

There are times when someone with outstanding competence must be let go because they do not align with the organization's direction, and times when someone with deep loyalty must be moved because they show limits in their assigned role. If this adjustment is delayed, the organization gradually begins to tilt.

A leader's most grueling task is not declaring a vision or giving a speech. It is the fine-tuning of the balance between the competence and loyalty of those by their side every single day. That tedious and repetitive work determines the survival of the early team.

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Chapter 6. Values, Not Interests, Hold People Together Through Winter

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Part 2: Winning People

A. Those Who Gather for Interest Leave Once the Interest Is Gone

As the likelihood of winning increases, the corridors of the campaign office bustle with people. Experts with resumes, middle managers promising to bring entire organizations, entrepreneurs promising donations, and acquaintances demanding positions based on personal ties. From the outside, it looks like a massive wave of support.

The leader gets intoxicated by this scene. It feels good to know that so many people gather at the mention of one's name.

Here, we must stop and ask one thing: Why did these people come here?

The answer may be uncomfortable. Many did not come because they were moved by the leader's vision for the era. What they pursue is the shadow of the power the leader will hold.

Ministerial posts, heads of public institutions, government contracts, and political stakes—these are their true destinations. The leader is merely a means of transportation to reach those destinations.

Solidarity formed through interests dissolves the moment those interests fade. Anyone who has seen what happens to a defeated candidate's office the morning after the election knows this. Those who were most passionate until yesterday are the first to leave.

They are in a hurry to pivot toward a new center of power. The only ones left are those packing their bags. The phone becomes so quiet you might suspect it's broken.

This is not betrayal. For people who gathered for interest from the start to leave when the interest is gone is closer to the termination of a contract. The shock comes from the leader's own delusion—the delusion of believing that these people came because they loved them or agreed with their vision.

Therefore, when the noise of cheering is loudest, the leader must close their eyes and ask: 'Will this person smiling in front of me still be here when I have nothing left to give?' They must count how many faces they can confidently answer 'Yes' to. That number is their true asset.

The rest is borrowed. What is borrowed must be returned, and if it cannot be returned, it falls away.

B. Mandela and the ANC Youth League — A Lifelong Comradery Completed Before Imprisonment

1944, Johannesburg. Twenty-six-year-old Nelson Mandela, a law student at the University of the Witwatersrand, founded the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League along with Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. The place they gathered was not a fancy conference room.

Discussions continued late into the night in a shabby room in a narrow back alley of Johannesburg. What was spread on the table was not interests to be shared, but forbidden books and dangerous documents.

It is worth noting what it meant to jump into the Black civil rights movement in South Africa at that time. The National Party, which took power in 1948, began to legalize apartheid. In 1949, laws banning marriage between different races were created; in 1950, laws separating residential areas by race; and in 1953, laws dividing public places by race.

In such an era, participating in the anti-apartheid movement was not just about giving up vested interests; it was a choice where one had to risk their freedom and life. Police surveillance, arrests, and beatings were daily occurrences.

What bound Mandela and his comrades together as one heart was the value that Black people should enjoy equal dignity. This value had no price tag. Rather, holding onto this value could mean losing everything.

In 1952, Mandela opened South Africa's first Black law firm with Oliver Tambo. Legal activity itself was a form of resistance. From his arrest in 1962 until he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964, and during his 27 years on Robben Island, the solidarity of these comrades never broke.

While Mandela was imprisoned, Oliver Tambo campaigned for his release from exile. Comrades who remained in the country maintained the organization underground. These people were able to endure for 20 or 30 years not because they expected a reward.

Far from a reward, prison cells or bullets awaited them. The only reason they could endure was the conviction that the values they held were right.

An organization gathered for interest shatters the moment its leader goes to prison. As soon as people judge that the resources they bet on the leader have become unrecoverable, they scatter in search of an exit. An organization bound by values is different.

The leader's physical absence actually strengthens the bond. The shared conviction that 'the reason we walk this path is still alive' exerts a stronger centripetal force than the leader's individual presence.

When Mandela was released in 1990 and took his first steps toward freedom, he was met by the comrades who had lit the fire together in that narrow room in Johannesburg half a century ago. Time had etched wrinkles on their faces and turned their hair white, but the spark in their hearts had not gone out. Lifelong comrades are not gained on a glamorous stage.

They are finally completed in the middle of a cruel winter, walking together through the darkest and most desperate times.

C. The Memory of Becoming Party Leader with 62% Support is an Asset, But Not All of That 62% are Comrades

A gymnasium where the heat of the national convention reached its peak. The cheers grew louder every time the numbers on the electronic board went up. The moment the number 62% was confirmed, applause poured out as if the ceiling would collapse.

It was an overwhelming majority. It was the result of the party members' explosion of desire to shake off the long-standing defeatism and open a new path.

This number is a huge asset. It proves the solidity of the internal base and grants political legitimacy to move to the next stage. After the night of the festival, the next morning, one must sit calmly at their desk and dissect that number.

The 62% is not a single mass. Within it, at least four different types of people are mixed.

First are the supporters who fully agree with my vision. People who understand and sympathize with the meaning of the destination when I say where I am going. They are the true assets. They may account for less than half of the total 62%.

Second are those who chose me through the process of elimination because they disliked the opposing candidate. Their votes are a rejection of the other candidate rather than support for me. If the opponent changes or the political situation shifts, their hearts will easily move.

Third are those who follow the crowd. They are the group that jumps on the bandwagon because I am leading in the polls and likely to win. They are the first to pivot when the wind direction changes.

Fourth are the opportunists who lined up on the winner's side early on to secure political stakes. They will strictly demand compensation for their investment after the election.

A massive approval rating is like a sea fog. From a distance, it looks like it covers the entire ocean, but it clears in an instant when the wind direction changes. The moment a leader becomes intoxicated by the number 62% and mistakes all these people as their eternal allies, they begin to walk a dangerous path.

What needs to be done is clear: identifying real comrades within the fog of huge numbers. Distinguishing who shares the vision, who supports conditionally, and who is looking for an opportunity. If this distinction isn't made, one will experience the 62% rapidly shrinking to 20%, 10%, or 5% when a crisis hits.

Knowing who the 15% is that will not change even in a crisis is far more valuable than the delusion of holding 62% in peacetime.

D. Three People Bound by Values are Stronger Than Three Hundred People Bound by Interest

The inertia of politics leans toward counting heads. How many lawmakers you showed up with, how many influential people you gathered at a meal, what percentage you got at the national convention. The notion that numbers equal power is deeply rooted.

It is true that numbers are power—in peaceful times. On a calm sea, three hundred people form a majestic fleet. The sound of rowing is loud, the flags flutter in the wind, and everyone who sees it nods at its might.

When the sea gets rough, it's a different story.

When the sky darkens and waves begin to rise, the three hundred mercenaries start calculating. Is it advantageous to stay on this ship, or is it advantageous to find a lifeboat? If they judge the calculation is unfavorable, they leave the ship one by one. Scenes of pushing each other and stealing life jackets occur. The leader is left alone on an empty deck.

Three people bound by values are different. These three did not board looking for the spoils that would fall from the ship. They are people who climbed aboard themselves, believing in the meaning of the ship's destination. When sails are torn and water pours in, they hold the helm instead of running away. They stand by the leader and face the waves head-on.

History shows this difference repeatedly. When Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island for 27 years, it was not thousands of supporters but a few core comrades who kept the spark alive outside. Liu Bei was able to rise again after dozens of defeats because Guan Yu and Zhang Fei never left his side until the end.

Every time Kennedy overcame a political crisis, he relied on the intellectual capacity of one man, Sorensen.

What is the secret of the strength of three people defeating three hundred? It is predictability. A small group bound by values looks in the same direction regardless of the situation.

The leader can run looking only forward without needing to look back. The assurance that their back is safe. This assurance gifts the leader their most precious resource: 'focus.

' Behind three hundred people bound by interest, a leader must constantly look back. They must monitor who is leaving, who harbors dissatisfaction, and who is contacting the opposition. Half of their energy is consumed by internal management.

Of course, you cannot win an election with only three people. Ultimately, broad support is needed. What I want to say here is the question of what the core of an organization should consist of.

If the core is firmly built with a few people bound by values, you can layer the majority gathered by interest and expectation on top of it. If the core is weak, no matter how many people gather, it is a castle on sand.

A harsh winter will surely come. There is never a case in politics where winter does not come. Crises arrive even after winning, betrayals occur even during the term, and solitude strikes even after leaving office.

What can withstand that winter is not a net of interest, but the roots of values. The fiercer the wind, the more only the deep-rooted trees remain standing.

The question I want to ask the leader is this: Of the people currently by your side, how many will answer the phone even when you have lost everything? If that number is three, it is enough. Those three are your everything.

The rest will naturally gather on the magnetic field created by those three. The first thing to do is to find those three people, or to become someone who can be found by those three.

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Chapter 7. Voters Read People Before Policies

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Part 3. Winning Hearts

On a cold winter morning during the height of the election campaign, at a subway exit, a candidate hands out business cards to citizens commuting to work. On the back of the card, the name of the university they graduated from, their previous public office career, and a dense list of promises are printed in type.

Citizens take the cards, shove them into their pockets, or throw them away after a few steps. At the same time, a candidate in another district warmly grasps the hands of a street vendor opening their stall in the early morning with both hands.

Instead of unfolding a resume, they quietly tell the story of their own life—of a day in the past when they experienced a devastating failure and hit rock bottom. The merchant finds something in the candidate's eyes that resembles the weariness of the life they themselves have experienced.

Voters nod in front of a resume and then turn away. They stop in their tracks before the sincere story of a wounded human being. A list of credentials aims for the head, but a narrative of a person overcoming trials pierces the heart.

The difference between candidates who win and those who lose in an election is not the excellence of their policies, but whether or not they possess a narrative that reaches the hearts of the voters.

On the night of March 12, 1933, the history of American radio broadcasting changed.

The deep shadow of the Great Depression was covering all of America. Since the Wall Street Crash of 1929, about 5,000 banks had closed their doors, and depositors even hid their remaining money under their mattresses. On March 4, when Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as President, most banks across the country had already suspended operations.

Two days after taking office, he declared a nationwide Bank Holiday, and five days later, Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act. The system and laws were in place, but a core problem remained. The people had to trust the banks again.

Roosevelt sat by the fireplace in the White House Diplomatic Reception Room. He did not open the white papers written by economists. Instead, he opened his mouth toward the radio microphone like this: "I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking."

His voice flowed through the radio speakers of millions of homes. It felt as if a neighborly man sitting on a living room sofa was speaking warmly.

He did not package the banking crisis with macroeconomic terms like money multiplier or reserve ratio. He explained that when you deposit money in a bank, the bank does not put that money in a vault but lends it to farms and factories to keep the economy running.

He spoke honestly, saying that even a sound bank could not withstand everyone rushing to the bank at once to withdraw money. Then he added: depositing money in a bank that has reopened is safer than keeping it under a mattress.

The morning after this first Fireside Chat, an amazing thing happened. Citizens who had taken their money from under their mattresses lined up in front of the banks. They didn't come to withdraw money, but to deposit it again. Roosevelt's advisor Raymond Moley later recalled that capitalism was saved in eight days.

A 13-minute radio conversation accomplished what a precise policy report could not. What Roosevelt showed was not the perfection of policy, but the warmth of communication. A method of explaining difficult things to the people in simple language, honestly acknowledging a fearful reality, but offering the conviction that it could be solved together.

This is where the essence of political communication lies. Voters entrust their destiny to a leader who accurately points out their pain in a language they can understand.

Modern politics often loses its way, intoxicated by the numbers on social media.

A politician with tens of thousands of followers on a screen and thousands of 'likes' is under the illusion that they have gained immense public support. The actual election arena exists outside the smartphone screen. One must walk into the alleys of Seomun Market in Daegu or Gupo Market in Busan.

The rough warmth and grip felt when shaking the hand of a merchant who wipes their wet hands on an apron smelling of fish. This holds a weight that cannot be compared to ten thousand clicks in the digital world.

A handshake in the field is a physical oath where eyes meet and breaths mingle. In that fleeting moment, the voter reads the depth of the person from the thickness of the politician's palm, the wrinkles around their eyes, and the angle of their bow. Glamorous online images can be manipulated.

But the scent of a politician emanating from the middle of a cold early-morning market cannot be faked.

During my time as a prosecutor, there were days when I met the dawns of the Incheon, Gunsan, and Jeonju District Prosecutors' Offices while turning over interrogation records. Every time I worked in a small local city, I walked the alleys outside the prosecutor's office.

The texture of life that is not contained in a suspect's interrogation record was inside those alleys. The rough hands of a merchant working in an early-morning fish market, the bent backs of workers starting their day with a bowl of soup at a restaurant in front of an industrial complex.

The faces of the people I met in the spaces of daily life where I didn't need to show my prosecutor ID became a deeper political asset later than the walls of the meeting rooms in Yeouido.

It is not under the lights of a glamorous election campaign site, but the footprints quietly walked in the alleys of ordinary daily life where no one pays attention, that first tilt the scales in the hearts of the voters.

There is a fatal error that elite politicians often commit. It is the arrogance of thinking that their language will be transmitted to the public as it is.

The language used in meeting rooms in Yeouido or on the desks of bureaucrats is cold and dry. Words like 'macroeconomic soundness', 'prevention of fiscal leakage', and 'income-led' are nothing more than dead language at the common people's dining table. When voters hear these words, they don't nod their heads; they turn them away.

This is because it sounds like a story of a distant country that has nothing to do with their lives.

The essence of the technique Roosevelt showed in his Fireside Chats is here. Explaining the complex workings of the Federal Reserve, he started with a single sentence: "The money you put in the bank does not go into a vault." He explained the function of a bank as if explaining it to a neighbor.

When talking about national fiscal policy, instead of reciting a budget of tens of trillions of won, one must explain it by reducing it to the price of a bundle of green onions to be put in a shopping basket tomorrow morning and the pressure of the interest rate on a jeonse loan.

Only when voters receive their weary daily lives back in an accurate mother tongue through the politician's mouth do they feel that the politician is representing them.

Rather than trying to prove the excellence of a policy, the process of translation that shows how that policy will touch your harsh life is the core technique for gathering people in an election.

When I moved from the prosecution to the political arena, the absence of this translation ability was painful. I was confident in interpreting the articles of the law and writing indictments with logical completeness.

However, when a resident of the district appealed, saying, "It's a big problem because the school bus for my child has disappeared," it was of no help to rattle off the relevant laws and budget regulations. What that mother wanted was not a legal interpretation, but a single look that recognized her child's hardship.

The training to translate the language of the elite into the language of the common people is not completed overnight. It requires the tedious repetition of walking through market alleys, reading the desperation hidden in a petitioner's rough words, and speaking it back with one's own mouth.

A politician must use completely different muscles when designing a policy and when conveying it to voters. When designing, the precision of a lawyer is needed, and when conveying, the warmth of a storyteller is needed. It is rare for a person to be able to do both at the same time. Therefore, this training never ends.

The moment a voter enters the polling booth, what they recall is not the candidate's campaign book.

It is the look in the eyes of that person who held their hand at the entrance of the market on a cold morning, the patience of that person who listened to their story until the end, and the sincerity of that person who conveyed it in words they could understand instead of difficult words. Voters do not read policies. They read people.

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Chapter 8. Moments of Crisis Decide Support

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Part 3: Winning Hearts

Chapter 8: Moments of Crisis Decide Support

In May 1940, the skies over London were covered with dark clouds.

Hitler's panzer divisions were ravaging the French front and pushing toward the English Channel. Belgium had surrendered, and 330,000 British and Allied soldiers were stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk. Key figures in the cabinet pressured Winston Churchill to compromise with Hitler, suggesting Mussolini as a mediator.

Foreign Secretary Halifax argued that peace must be sought, even if it was humiliating. Mathematically, it was a rational judgment. Germany's military power overwhelmed Britain's, and there was no guarantee of American involvement.

Churchill rejected the temptation of compromise.

Standing at the podium of the House of Commons on May 13, he did not sugarcoat the situation or offer baseless optimism. Instead, he laid out the harsh reality before the people exactly as it was. He spoke bluntly, saying that all he had to offer was blood, toil, tears, and sweat.

He did not promise victory. He acknowledged that times of hellish suffering were approaching. In the midst of despair, where the shadow of defeat loomed large, he offered sincere resolve instead of false hope.

A remarkable turn of events occurred. Instead of being paralyzed by fear, the people were deeply relieved by Churchill's honesty. The mere fact that their leader was not deceiving them became a great source of comfort.

The existence of a leader with the firm resolve to share in the suffering, no matter how immense it might be, inspired the people to stand tall.

What Churchill demonstrated was not a trick of rhetoric. It was an attitude of facing the truth head-on without concealing it in the face of crisis. When a politician reveals a desperate situation without addition or subtraction, the public willingly entrusts their fate to that honesty.

The paradox is that honest pessimism, rather than false optimism, breeds trust. This is the first lesson to be learned from leadership in times of crisis.

Skipping across time and space, we look at Kyiv on February 25, 2022.

Russia's massive tank army was advancing toward the capital. Artillery fire tore through the night sky, and explosions echoed throughout the city of Kyiv. Western intelligence agencies predicted the collapse of the Ukrainian government within 72 hours. The United States offered President Volodymyr Zelenskyy transport for a safe exile abroad.

Zelenskyy was inside a bunker on Bankova Street, where the Presidential Office is located. In the underground corridors, hundreds of staff members were staying up all night monitoring the war situation. When the emergency evacuation offer came from the U.S., Zelenskyy replied with a single sentence: "The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride."

This short sentence turned the world upside down.

Zelenskyy walked out into the dark streets of Kyiv. Wearing an olive-drab t-shirt, he turned on his smartphone camera and, in the shaky footage, declared that he was here, that he would not lay down his arms, and that he would protect this land.

The international community, which had looked down on him as a 'comedian-turned-president' until the day before, fell silent at this single video. The crumbling will of the Ukrainian people to resist was instantly ignited, and the previously observant Western public opinion was completely reversed.

The decision not to flee when one's life is at risk pierces people's hearts more heavily than thousands of hours of flowery speeches. That short video of Zelenskyy accomplished what dozens of policy briefings could not. It gave a nation's people a reason to fight and created a cause for the entire world to help Ukraine.

Similar moments of crisis have existed in Korea's modern political history.

Imagine an extreme emergency where the nation's democracy is threatened. It is a pitch-black night when an unjust martial law has been declared. It is a fleeting moment when the threat of bayonets surrounds the parliament, and there isn't even time to pull out a political calculator.

Some people play it safe and wait with bated breath until the situation turns in their favor. In contrast, some politicians throw themselves onto the cold asphalt and over the walls of the tightly closed parliament without a second's hesitation to stop the martial law.

Intuitive action without calculation. It proves the politician's belief in democracy, carved deep into their bones. That momentary physical action, taken when both life and political career are threatened, is etched into the minds of voters like a permanent tattoo.

It remains a massive asset that cannot be brought down by any future political offensive. The single statement that they did not hesitate for even a second to block martial law carries more weight than a hundred pages of policy pledges.

The choice a politician makes in a moment of crisis is a litmus test that starkly reveals whether the values and beliefs they have spoken of are genuine. Anyone can eloquently speak of democracy in a conference room. Not everyone can throw themselves into the fray in the middle of the night when a gun is pointed at them. Voters know the difference.

The lessons these historical scenes teach us are paradoxical.

A leader should not try to forcibly transform a desperate situation into hope. Churchill said he had nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat. Zelenskyy did not turn away from the reality that the capital could fall. Both acknowledged the harshness of reality while pushed to the edge and showed themselves walking into the heart of that suffering.

Voters do not only love leaders who win perfectly. They respond to the struggle of an imperfect human being who, even in the face of painful failure and the fear of defeat, steadies their trembling legs and takes a step forward. The magnitude of a crisis is directly proportional to the amount of trust that can be gained by breaking through it head-on.

False comfort vanishes like bubbles. Solidarity forged atop a bloody reality supports a politician's foundation like a rock. A crisis is not a disaster for a politician, but an opportunity.

However, that opportunity only opens to those who face it head-on. And that moment of breakthrough must come from instinct, not calculation. Calculated courage is quickly spotted by the public.

Only courage that bursts forth from instinct remains in history.

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Chapter 9. The Art of Solidarity and Coalition

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Part 3: Winning Hearts

Chapter 9: The Art of Solidarity and Coalition

On June 24, 1995, Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg, South Africa, was packed with 63,000 spectators.

It was the Rugby World Cup final. The host nation South Africa's Springboks were facing off against New Zealand's All Blacks. The vast majority of the crowd was white.

In this stadium, rugby was a religion for white people. Throughout the era of apartheid, the Springboks was a name that symbolized the pride of white dominance, and to Black people, it was a sign of oppression. Within the African National Congress (ANC), there were active discussions about discarding the Springbok antelope emblem altogether.

Mandela himself later admitted that during his time imprisoned on Robben Island, he used to cheer for the opposing teams in rugby matches.

Five minutes before the match began, President Nelson Mandela knocked on the players' locker room door. When the door opened, the players saw an astonishing sight. Mandela stood there wearing the green Springbok jersey.

On his back was the number 6, the jersey number of captain Francois Pienaar. It was a replica jersey he had pulled from a plastic shopping bag.

Pienaar later recalled: 'A man who had spent 27 years in prison and had been against rugby appeared with the Springbok jersey over his heart.' The players felt like they could charge right through a wall.

As Mandela walked out onto the stadium turf, the crowd—overwhelmingly white—rose as one, chanting "Nelson! Nelson!" The match went into extra time, and with Joel Stransky's drop goal, South Africa won 15–12. At the moment Mandela handed the Webb Ellis Cup to Pienaar, both men were wearing the same jersey number.

The message this scene sent to the world was clear. The act of placing the symbol of the regime that had imprisoned him for 27 years upon his own chest. It was walking into the heart of the enemy while wearing the enemy's symbol.

Mandela willingly risked being called a traitor by his hardcore Black supporters. There was fierce backlash within the ANC. Critics, including his estranged wife Winnie Mandela, attacked him, claiming he was solely focused on appeasing white people.

Even while facing those internal fires, Mandela did not stop his walk toward inclusion. What he read was not numbers. He saw through the immense fear held by white people after the end of apartheid—the fear of retaliation from a Black government—and realized it was the core obstacle to national reconstruction.

He had the insight that resolving the enemy's fear was a more powerful political victory than crushing the enemy.

That single scene at the rugby stadium was a political masterpiece that broke the blood-stained chain of vengeance and gave birth to a nation of true unity.

Abraham Lincoln's year of 1860 dramatically demonstrates this art of coalition in American political history.

After Lincoln was nominated as the presidential candidate at the Republican National Convention, he faced three giants who had openly looked down on him. William Seward, a seasoned politician and former New York Senator, believed he was the natural choice for the Republican nomination.

Salmon Chase, the ambitious Governor of Ohio, was certain that he should be president. Edward Bates, a conservative lawyer from Missouri, considered it a disgrace to have been beaten by a mere country lawyer from Illinois. All three publicly stated that Lincoln's education, experience, and class were inferior to their own.

Immediately after being elected president, Lincoln invited all three men into his cabinet. He appointed Seward as Secretary of State, Chase as Secretary of the Treasury, and Bates as Attorney General. He placed the political rivals who had mocked him into key positions.

He completely set aside his personal pride. This was because he coolly recognized that to break through the unprecedented national division of the Civil War, he absolutely needed their superior intellect and political prowess—the very things they had used to ridicule him.

This cabinet of Lincoln's would later be known as the 'Team of Rivals' in Doris Kearns Goodwin's historical work. The boldness to take the blades meant to pierce him and turn them into his shield. Herein lies the essence of coalition politics.

In the brutal battlefield of an election, you can never lead a stable government with only the 51% of voters who passionately support you.

The problem lies with the rest. How will you view the 47% of party members who hate and oppose you? Even if you are overwhelmingly elected as party leader with 62% support, the remaining 38% are people who did not vote for you.

Among them are those who opposed you because of differing policy views, those who supported other candidates due to internal factional dynamics, and those who feel an instinctive discomfort with your background or career.

The moment they seize power, many politicians fall into the intense temptation to purge or exclude the forces that opposed them. Defining and attacking opponents as enemies can strengthen the solidarity of the core support base and provide temporary catharsis. It is a comfortable path, but a lethal poison.

Every time you create an enemy, your political territory shrinks.

A leader's path must head in the opposite direction. One must perceive the 47% who oppose them not as enemies to be annihilated, but as a piece of a massive puzzle that must eventually be persuaded and embraced.

Without going through the tedious and painful process of reaching out first to those who spit at you and listening to their grievances, you cannot steadily hold the rudder of the great ship that is the nation.

Mandela wore the Springbok jersey, a symbol of the regime that had imprisoned him for 27 years. Lincoln gave key positions to political rivals who had mocked him as a country bumpkin. Both men endured the anger of their own side. Both sacrificed the short-term gratification of their supporters to expand their reach. This is the core of coalition politics.

A leader who seeks to expand their outreach must, as a matter of fate, endure harsh solitude.

The moment a leader makes a gesture of compromise to embrace moderates and opponents, those who stab them with the sharpest daggers are their own hardcore supporters. Yesterday's passionate comrades gather in the square today to pour out their anger, branding the leader a turncoat or a traitor.

There are justifiable reasons for the anger of the hardcore supporters. They cannot bear a reality where their passion and devotion are rewarded with compromise toward the opposition.

A leader must not stop their walk toward inclusion, even as they suffer burns in that fierce fire of anger. It is comfortable to prolong one's political life by leaning on the fanatical support of a few. But that is ultimately the path that slowly withers the party and the nation.

To endure the arrows of criticism with one's bare body while silently breaking down boundaries and expanding the horizon of support—the ability to swallow that gut-wrenching inner solitude is the ultimate quality a top leader must possess.

Mandela's Ellis Park and Lincoln's 'Team of Rivals' cabinet. What these two scenes have in common is that the leaders first set aside their own emotions and pride. Neither wearing the enemy's symbol nor sharing power with political rivals is possible without killing something within oneself.

No election is won alone. Without embracing the opposition and without enduring the anger of one's own side, no politician can win the world.

The question is this: When you look at the 47% who reject you, is your first emotion anger or curiosity? The answer to that determines your political ceiling.

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Chapter 10. If You Cannot Win People Inside the Campaign, Outside Votes Will Shake

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Part 3: Winning Hearts

Chapter 10: If You Cannot Win People Inside the Campaign, Outside Votes Will Shake

January 2008, a worn-out and chilly campaign office in Iowa, USA.

The Barack Obama campaign was packed with volunteers from all over the country. College students, retired teachers, homemakers, truck drivers, and even unemployed factory workers. Compared to Hillary Clinton's established political machine, they were closer to a group of amateurs.

What fundamentally distinguished the Obama campaign from other election organizations was that it didn't treat these volunteers as mere flyer distributors or data entry devices.

The campaign gave every single volunteer specific authority and responsibility. They were appointed as neighborhood captains and given the power to knock on doors to directly persuade and organize their neighbors. They weren't just cogs moving on someone else's orders, but people armed with the pride of making history themselves.

The campaign's training manual had this line: 'Every single conversation you have with a neighbor is the power that changes this country. '

The explosive passion of Obama's grassroots organization led to an unexpected victory in the Iowa caucus, and that momentum spread across the country, eventually tearing down the walls of the establishment. The key was giving people meaning, not just tasks.

Telling someone to hand out flyers versus appointing them as a leader of change in their neighborhood creates completely different energy, even if the action is the same.

Only a campaign that knows how to give deep meaning to every person serving within it can change the world. In a campaign that treats people as consumables, everyone scatters the moment the election is over. In a campaign that gives people meaning, they gather voluntarily even after the election to prepare for the next fight.

Conversely, a campaign where internal trust has collapsed will crumble on its own even before Election Day arrives.

Imagine an election campaign where shouting matches are common in morning meetings and infighting and power struggles among staff are the norm. The candidate's closest aides waste their energy trying to seize internal power instead of fighting external enemies. This toxic conflict inevitably leaks out to the media.

Journalists publish stories about factional strife and mudslinging within the party every morning.

Voters feel disillusioned reading those stories. How can a political group that can't even unite its own people and points guns at each other lead the lives of tens of millions of citizens toward harmony?

Looking back at cases of painful defeats in past general elections, the direct cause was not the absence of pledges, but the division and distrust that festered and erupted within the campaign. It was a structural failure where internal toxicity completely swallowed the external positive message.

This principle worked the same way when I worked at the prosecutor's office. If there was discord within the investigation team, the direction of the investigation wavered, and that wavering was immediately sensed by the suspect and their lawyer.

The moment the prosecution's confidence crumbled in court wasn't when the evidence was weak, but when internal trust within the team was broken. To win the battle outside, solidarity inside must come first.

As the election nears its end, the candidate's body and mind are pushed to their breaking point.

Under the pressure of a packed schedule and nerve-wracking polls, the candidate's gaze naturally turns toward unknown voters far away. The undecided middle, the shiftable votes among the opponent's supporters, and the potential new young voters. Their eyes are always turned outward.

Politicians who seize victory know how to delicately soothe the fatigue of those staying by their side, even in that suffocating last-minute chaos. They are the first to notice the hunched back of an aide who stayed up all night refining a speech, or the chapped hands of a secretary who guarded the campaign vehicle in the cold wind.

It's not just about saying 'Good job'; it's about the action of personally handing them a warm bowl of soup at dawn.

In the final moments, it's not grand political ideology that ignites the eyes of the campaign staff. It's the warm gaze of a leader who recognizes their hard work. When the solidarity of those inside, willing to sacrifice themselves for the candidate, reaches its peak, that energy becomes an invisible wave and is transmitted perfectly to the voters outside.

Passion inside the campaign spreads outward. Cynicism inside the campaign also spreads outward.

The scene of a press conference held at an important political juncture sends numerous silent messages.

When a leader stands on the platform of a tense press conference room under the flash of cameras, observe carefully who is standing by their side. If seven core aides are standing behind them with firm expressions, it may look like a sturdy shield showing off their power.

But this scene also exposes a painful limitation. If a leader is barricading themselves behind a handful of loyalists who are perfectly aligned with them, it signifies a huddling inward rather than an expansion toward the outside world.

If the seven faces on camera are all the same color and temperament, voters read it as: 'That person only looks after their own side. '

The true value of political leadership is displayed when a leader can bring even those with different philosophies—who have sometimes been sharp critics—up onto the platform to stand side by side. If all seven lawmakers are from the same faction, it's a display of power, not evidence of a coalition.

If three of the seven were people who criticized the leader in the past, only then do voters see: 'That person is someone who can embrace different voices. '

Whether to stay within safe castle walls with only your own people, or to move out into the wider plains while enduring an uncomfortable coexistence with different voices—the answer to this question is revealed in the lineup on the press conference platform.

In Obama's Iowa office, every volunteer believed they were making history. At Mandela's Ellis Park, a president wearing the enemy's uniform turned the hearts of 63,000 people. In Lincoln's White House, political rivals who once mocked him sat at the heart of the cabinet and fought the Civil War together.

The common denominator of these three scenes is clear: you must win over the people inside the campaign to win the world outside.

Ultimately, a fine sense of balance inside the campaign determines the success or failure of winning the public heart. If the inside collapses, the outside will crumble on its own. When the inside becomes one, the walls outside will break down by themselves.

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Chapter 11. Election Is Not the Completion of Relationships but the Beginning of a Test

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Part 4. Protecting People

The air on the morning after an election has a completely different density than the day before. The moment the winner opens the door and enters the campaign office, stepping on the floor strewn with flower petals, the gazes of the people filling the room shift subtly.

The comrades who, until yesterday, stood shoulder to shoulder facing the cold wind to hand out flyers now instinctively calculate the physical distance between themselves and the elected official. Some take a step closer, while others retreat with their hands behind their backs.

Even before the scent of the congratulatory wreaths fades, low whispers begin in the back of the meeting room. Who will get which position, who performed a greater service than whom, and what is the appropriate reward for that service?

In that brief moment of seizing power, comrades who once shared blood turn into potential competitors fighting over limited resources and positions. Above the sound of thunderous applause directed at them, the winner must hear the sharp sounds of clashing desires. Victory in an election does not mean a beautiful bond of the relationships built until then.

It is merely the first step on a harsh testing ground that reveals the depths of human nature.

I remember going through two elections as I left the Prosecutor's Office for Yeouido and walked back into the heart of politics. The night of my first election victory felt like I had gained the world. Between the piles of congratulatory wreaths in my office, phones rang incessantly, hands reached out for handshakes, and invitations to dinner poured in.

The second experience was different. When I unwrapped the congratulatory packaging, what I found inside was not gratitude but an invoice. "Hey, help me out."

"Assemblyman, you remember me, right? I'm the one who supported you with a vehicle in Cheonan during the election." Winning an election is not a period that completes a relationship.

It is the first load of a stress test that pushes the durability of the relationships built over time to their absolute limit.

When the cheers die down and the heavy door of the office closes, a cold season of disappointment immediately arrives. On the journey toward power, a leader inevitably borrows small and large hopes

from countless people.

Everyone, from the lowest-ranking campaign volunteer to the businessman who donated a large sum and the local influential figure who gave a passionate speech, believes that a portion of the leader's power belongs to them. Seats are limited, and the resources available for rewards are woefully insufficient.

When a leader, who just yesterday embraced them warmly as if they would change the world together, starts to keep their distance using the cold language of bureaucracy immediately after winning, a sense of betrayal sprouts in the hearts of supporters.

The list of leaders who failed to manage expectations stretches long across all times and places. During an election, it is easy to give people the answers they want to hear. "Don't worry, I will definitely take care of it."

"I know exactly how hard you worked." These sweet promises become poison immediately after winning. The moment the total volume of promises exceeds the total volume of feasible resources, someone is bound to be disappointed.

A disappointed person does not leave quietly. They spread the wounds they received to other supporters and brand the leader with the most fatal label: "That person changed completely after being elected."

Wise leaders honestly set a ceiling for expectations starting from the election period. "There are things I can do and things I cannot do. I will certainly do what I can, but I will not make promises beyond my ability."

These words are unpopular at campaign rallies. However, the interest that returns after the election is completely different. The balance of trust left by a single honest word is always better than the debt of disappointment left by a sweet lie.

The pinnacle of power is essentially an isolated island. South Korea's modern history is like a gallery of tragedies created by this isolated power.

In the spring of 1960, what surrounded Gyeongmudae was not a concrete wall but a curtain built of people. President Syngman Rhee, at the age of 85, sat on the throne, and a small number of close aides surrounding him acted as a shield to block out the anger of the outside world.

Lee Ki-poong and core members of the Liberal Party minimized or distorted reports on the horrors of the March 15 rigged election. While students were shedding blood in Masan, inside Gyeongmudae, Syngman Rhee was receiving reports that it was the work of communists.

On April 19, when the shouts and gunshots of students filling downtown Seoul finally echoed over the walls of Gyeongmudae, reality finally reached his ears. However, it was already too late. On April 26, when five student representatives met him at Gyeongmudae and advised him to resign, Syngman Rhee said, "If the people tell me to leave, I will leave."

The lives of 186 people who shed blood in the plaza were the price of his failure to face reality from behind the curtain of his inner circle.

Nineteen years later, in October 1979, Seoul once again became the scene of a tragedy created by the isolation of power. President Park Chung-hee's last evening took place at the Gungjeong-dong safe house. Busan and Masan were boiling over with the Bu-Ma Democratic Protests, and the United States was exerting heavy pressure through human rights diplomacy.

At that dinner table, Director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency Kim Jae-gyu and Chief of Security Cha Ji-chul offered different solutions. Kim Jae-gyu argued for a conciliatory response, while Cha Ji-chul advocated for a hardline crackdown. Park Chung-hee took Cha Ji-chul's side.

"During the April 19 Revolution, Kwak Young-joo was blamed for firing arbitrarily, but this time I am the one with the authority to fire, so there will be no problem." Not long after these words were spoken, a pistol fired from within the coat of Kim Jae-gyu, who had been sharing drinks with them.

The leader who had led the nation with an iron fist for 18 years collapsed before the muzzle of his own trusted subordinate whom he had raised.

The common denominator of these two events is clear. The moment a person in power stops hearing the voices of the outside world, an internal explosion occurs.

Syngman Rhee, intoxicated by the sweet reports of his inner circle, failed to read the temperature of public sentiment, and Park Chung-hee looked at the world through the single filter of Cha Ji-chul and failed to sense the anger growing outside that filter.

Power trapped in a back room collapses from internal contradictions before it even loses the public sentiment of the outside world.

The trap of inner circle politics is like being trapped in a room of mirrors. Those who stay by the leader's side synchronize themselves with the leader's thoughts and preferences over time. They speak in the intonation the leader likes to hear and hide information that might anger the leader at the very bottom of the file folder.

As physical distance narrows, critical distance disappears. Every morning, the leader looks at the faces of the inner circle who wear the exact same expression as themselves and falls into the illusion that their judgment is perfect. Even if a storm rages in the outside world, the air inside the office remains tranquil.

This structure is not consciously designed but is the result of the gravity of human nature. Inner circles filter information out of loyalty to protect the leader or out of a survival instinct that their own status will be jeopardized if they upset the leader.

The leader also falls into confirmation bias, selectively accepting only information that aligns with their own judgment. When these two forces combine, a massive information vacuum is created. The leader sees only the world they want to see, and the gap between them and reality grows wider every

day.

If the distance is too close, you cannot see the overall outline of the other person. Just as a painting held right in front of your eyes reveals only the texture of the paint and not the overall composition, a leader surrounded by an inner circle loses sight of the great flow of the times and the suffering of the masses.

To see what is invisible, one must push away those standing nearby and directly open the window where the cold wind blows. One must step out from under the bodyguard's umbrella and feel the raindrops directly. One must walk into the noise and dust of the market alleys.

The first thing a leader should do immediately after taking power is to intentionally create channels where people can say things that are uncomfortable to hear.

They must overcome the temptation to fill the meeting room only with comfortable inner circle members and keep at least one person by their side who can look them in the eye and say, "This is wrong." The very existence of this person is the only vaccine that can detoxify the poison of inner circle politics.

One night, while the cheers of election haven't even faded yet, I sit alone in my office looking at my phone. I weigh the desires and the burden of expectations hidden behind the names of the people who sent congratulatory messages until yesterday. Can I handle this weight without losing my center?

If I cannot find the answer to this question, cheers quickly turn into sighs, and comrades quickly turn into enemies. Winning an election is not the end, but the beginning. And it is the beginning of a test that is incomparably harsher than anything encountered before.

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Chapter 12. Personnel Is Everything

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Part 4: Protecting People

Chapter 12: Personnel Is Everything

One day, while the morning sunlight flowed diagonally through the wooden pillars of Gyeonghoeru Pavilion in Joseon, another appeal for impeachment from the Saheonbu (Office of the Inspector General) lay on King Sejong's desk. It was a demand to dismiss Chief State Councilor Hwang Hui.

Hwang Hui had been embroiled in bribery controversies several times, and allegations of solicitation for appointments never ceased. The officials of the Saheonbu argued heatedly, exposing every detail of the high official's moral flaws. Sejong read that appeal over and over again.

The reason he did not give up on Hwang Hui was not personal sentiment, but state affairs. At that time, Joseon needed to reorganize its diplomacy with Japan following the conquest of Tsushima, and the defense against the Jurchens in the north as well as the reform of the agricultural system were proceeding simultaneously.

There was no one in the royal court to replace Hwang Hui in terms of the ability to coordinate these complexly intertwined interests and find compromises among conflicting bureaucratic groups. Sejong knew Hwang Hui's flaws precisely, but he did not discard the core competencies the nation required, even if it meant tolerating those flaws.

Hwang Hui subsequently held the position of Chief State Councilor for 24 years, serving as a pillar that supported Sejong's reign.

Sejong's personnel decisions did not stop there. Freeing Jang Yeong-sil, who was born a government slave (gwan-no-bi), and appointing him to the position of Daehogun (Senior 3rd Rank) was an exceptional move that overturned the common sense of the time.

In a class-based society where one's birth determined everything, Sejong gave him official robes based solely on his scientific talent for reading the stars and calculating the flow of water. Opposition was fierce. The aristocrat officials (yangban) considered it a disgrace for someone of slave origin to stand beside them in the royal audience.

Sejong did not waver. Jang Yeong-sil produced inventions such as the Jangyeokru (water clock), Angbuilgu (sundial), and Honcheonui (armillary sphere), raising Joseon's scientific level to the world's highest ranks.

Instead of digging out and discarding a person's flaws, the art of personnel management that thrust the 'blade' they possessed into the heart of the state opened the Joseon Renaissance.

In 206 BC, amidst the chaos of the Chu-Han Contention, the secret to Liu Bang's victory over Xiang Yu did not lie in his military prowess. Liu Bang himself knew this best. At the celebratory banquet held after unifying the world, he asked his ministers: "Why did I gain the world, and why did Xiang Yu lose it?"

When the ministers rambled while trying to flatter him, Liu Bang answered himself: "In terms of devising strategies within a tent to determine victory a thousand miles away, I am not as good as Zhang Liang; in terms of governing the country, comforting the people, and ensuring that military provisions never run out, I am not as good as Xiao He; and in terms of leading a million-strong army and always winning in battle, I am not as good as Han Xin.

However, I knew how to use these three people, while Xiang Yu could not even use one Fan Zeng. This is the reason I gained the world."

This confession of Liu Bang encapsulates the essence of personnel management. A leader does not need to be the most outstanding in every field. The role of a leader is to find people more talented than themselves, place them in the positions where they can perform best, and provide them with a playground where they can run to their heart's content.

Liu Bang entrusted Han Xin with full military authority. While Han Xin commanded the world, Liu Bang endured unbearable anxiety behind him. It was the fear that Han Xin might threaten him if he became too powerful.

However, Liu Bang did not take away Han Xin's sword until the war was over. He trusted but did not neglect; he gave authority but kept the string of checks and balances tight. Whenever the generals became arrogant, intoxicated by victory, he would unexpectedly visit their tents and collect the general's seal, leaving a chilling warning.

This sense of balance applies equally to modern politics. If a leader forms a team consisting only of people similar to themselves, the organization becomes as unstable as a ship tilted to one side. A leader from a legal background needs a field politician who has internalized the language of the market.

A taciturn and cautious leader should be paired with a vanguard commander who charges forward without hesitation. It is uncomfortable to keep diverse talents by one's side who fill in one's own deficiencies. Friction occurs at every moment, and differences of opinion are repeated.

It is precisely within that sound of friction that the sparks of innovation fly.

When an administration is launched, an invisible trench war begins between the Presidential Office and the ruling party. Over a single cabinet position or a single head of a public institution, the senior secretaries of the Presidential Office and the power players of the party clash, each holding a

notebook with their own list of names.

In this tug-of-war, if the leader fails to establish clear principles and starts handing out positions while only reading the room of both sides, the leakage of power becomes uncontrollably rapid.

Personnel is a message. Looking at who goes to which position reveals in broad daylight what the administration values and whom it fears. If 'parachute appointments' (nakhasan) that prioritize loyalty over ability are repeated, the public judges that the administration is more concerned with taking care of its own people than with the future of the nation.

Conversely, if an exceptional appointment is made where a suitable person is chosen even from the opposition, the public feels that the leader has a broad mind.

In the midst of the chaos where directives from the Presidential Office and the party's desire for its share clash, the leader must decisively apply an objective yardstick that both sides have no choice but to accept. "Who is the most suitable person for this position?"

In the face of this question, the contributions to the campaign and the party's factions must step back. Once a principle is established and upheld even once, people will align themselves thereafter. If the principle collapses even once, all subsequent appointments degenerate into backroom deals.

The fatal dilemma that the person with appointment power faces is the tightrope walk between rewarding merit (nongonghaengsang) and placement based on ability. The sense of debt—the need to take care of the 'founding contributors' who bled and fought by one's side during the election period—is an instinct that any human cannot help but have.

However, the giant machine called the state does not run on past loyalty alone.

Contributions should be rewarded with honor, and positions should be filled with ability. This principle is easy to say but bone-chillingly painful to execute.

You must endure the disappointment and anger that flashes across the face of a comrade who stayed up all night running with you throughout the election period the moment you say, "Your contribution is great, but this position requires expertise." If you cannot soothe those feelings, internal cracks begin.

If the boundary between rewarding merit and placement based on ability begins to blur, the morale of the entire organization collapses.

If the sight of someone who caught the leader's eye sitting in a key position instead of a worker who silently dedicated themselves is repeated, the members learn that the shortcut to success is not doing the job well but matching the leader's mood. At this moment, the organization begins to rot from the inside.

It may look peaceful on the surface, but beneath the water, dissatisfaction is settling like sediment.

When the generals reached the point of nearly having a sword fight over the order of rewarding merit immediately after the founding of the nation, Liu Bang gave the largest fiefdom to Xiao He first. The generals who fought for their lives on the battlefield were many and furious.

"Xiao He never drew a sword and only handled brushes and documents; why is he higher than us?" Liu Bang answered calmly: "In a hunt, it is the dog that chases and catches the rabbit, but it is the hunter who releases that dog. You have the merit of the dog, and Xiao He has the merit of the hunter."

This analogy was harsh, but it clearly established the standard that the merit of the person who managed provisions and manpower from the rear is not inferior to the merit of the person who wielded a sword on the battlefield. Once the standard was set, the dissatisfaction subsided.

People are not dissatisfied with the size of the result, but are enraged by the opacity of the standards.

The moment fairness is doubted, all relationships collapse. This sentence does not apply only to personnel management. Whether it is a political organization, a corporation, or a neighborhood volunteer group, if the principles of reward are not transparent, people withdraw their hearts without mercy.

People can tolerate not being sufficiently rewarded themselves, but they cannot tolerate others being excessively rewarded without a standard. A leader who decides on appointments must ask this question at every moment: "Can I explain this decision publicly in front of all members?"

If they cannot answer "Yes" with confidence to that question, that appointment should be reconsidered.

The old saying that 'Personnel is everything' (insa-ga mansa) is not a hackneyed proverb. Every single personnel decision a leader makes proves their philosophy, creates the organization's culture, and changes people's destinies.

When Sejong protected Hwang Hui and recruited Jang Yeong-sil, Joseon became a country with the most sophisticated astronomical observation system and the most scientific script in the world. When Liu Bang entrusted the sword to Han Xin and delegated the rear to Xiao He, the 400 years of the Han Empire opened.

Personnel is not the flower of leadership, but its root. If the root rots, even the most magnificent flower will wither.

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Chapter 13. How to Keep People Who Speak Hard Truths Nearby

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Part 4: Protecting People

Chapter 13: How to Keep People Who Speak Hard Truths Nearby

In 626 AD, in the palace of Chang'an, where the scent of blood from the Xuanwu Gate incident had not yet faded, Emperor Taizong of Tang, Li Shimin, was forming a new court. Having ascended the throne after killing his elder brother Jiancheng and younger brother Yuanji and pushing aside his father, what he needed most was a way to prove his legitimacy.

Most of the officials were keeping their mouths shut or offering flattery while watching the new emperor's every move. Then, one man appeared. It was Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng was originally an advisor to Taizong's brother, Jiancheng. He was also the one who had strongly advised Jiancheng to eliminate Li Shimin first. Taizong summoned him and asked, "Why did you try to drive a wedge between my brother and me?"

Instead of bowing, Wei Zheng looked Taizong straight in the eye and replied, "If the Crown Prince (Jiancheng) had listened to my words, he would not have met with today's disaster." An ordinary monarch would have had Wei Zheng beheaded on the spot. But Taizong laughed.

He instinctively recognized the value of a person who spoke the truth without flattering him.

Over the next 17 years, Wei Zheng gave direct advice to the emperor more than 200 times. When the emperor wanted to build a magnificent palace, he stopped him, saying, "The monarch is a boat, and the people are water. Water can carry a boat, but it can also overturn it."

When the emperor neglected state affairs by enjoying hunting, he challenged him, saying, "While Your Majesty's bow is shooting beasts, the public sentiment of the world is shooting Your Majesty." Taizong would sometimes fly into a rage and shout, "I will kill that country bumpkin!"

Each time, it is said that Empress Zhangsun quietly dissuaded him, saying, "The presence of a loyal subject means there is a wise ruler."

When Wei Zheng passed away from illness, Taizong cancelled the morning audience and wailed. "If you use copper as a mirror, you can adjust your dress; if you use history as a mirror, you can know the rise and fall of nations; if you use a person as a mirror, you can see your own gains and losses. Now that Wei Zheng is dead, I have lost one mirror."

This lament remains a textbook of leadership even today, over a thousand years later. Taizong's era of peace, known as the "Reign of Zhenguan," was a political masterpiece created by the sharp mirror that was Wei Zheng.

Having only yes-men in a leader's office is like a death sentence for an organization. When a leader proposes an idea at the meeting table and every advisor in attendance writes it down in their notebook and agrees it is a brilliant insight, the air in that room is already contaminated.

Healthy decision-making is tempered in the frictional heat of conflict and counterarguments. There must be at least one advisor in the room with a rebellious spirit who digs into the logical flaws in the leader's plan and ruthlessly shatters desk-bound theories that are detached from the reality on the ground.

When that one person disappears, the organization becomes a car with failed brakes racing at full speed toward a cliff.

The symptoms of an organization dominated by yes-men are not easily visible on the surface. In fact, it often looks very efficient. Decisions are made quickly, meetings are short because there are no opposing views, and there is no friction among members.

When a straight line appears on a heart monitor in a hospital emergency room, there seems to be no noise, but that is not peace—it is death. A healthy heart constantly creates irregular waves. A healthy organization must also constantly create clashes of opinion and tension.

A leader who treats disagreement as irreverence and takes direct advice as insubordination will eventually face ruin within the prison of silence they have built. This principle works the same way in the prosecution service, the National Assembly, and corporations.

If you suppress a junior prosecutor who raises objections to the direction of an investigation, the objectivity of the investigation collapses; if you exclude an advisor who points out flaws in a bill, the quality of legislation suffers.

Allowing advisors the right to fail is an important measure of leadership. The more outstanding an advisor is, the more likely they are to attempt unprecedented new projects, and in the process, they will inevitably make mistakes. Someone who walks a path no one else has taken before is bound to trip.

Under a leader who cuts down a failed advisor at once, no one takes risks. The surviving advisors master the art of playing it safe. They mechanically follow instructions from above and keep their opinions to themselves.

They never make creative proposals that carry responsibility. Such an organization has zero response capability when a crisis strikes. When a situation not in the manual occurs, everyone freezes and only looks to the leader's mouth.

On the other hand, a leader who pats the shoulder of an advisor who has tasted the bitter cup of failure and gives them a second chance breathes immense dynamism into the entire organization. "What did you learn from your first failure? What can we do differently next time?"

These two questions transform an advisor from an incompetent dropout into an experienced warrior. Under the firm belief that the leader has their back, advisors attempt policies without fear.

Giving a second chance and tolerating incompetence are completely different matters. A distinction must be made between failing while challenging oneself and failing due to negligence. The former should be given a chance to learn, while the latter should be held strictly accountable. Drawing this line clearly is a matter of a leader's judgment.

A person's true value depends on how they rise again not in the cheers of success, but in the dust of failure. A leader must have the patience to watch that process silently. The time spent helping a fallen advisor back to their feet is always more efficient than the time it takes to train a new advisor from scratch.

Those who have lived their entire lives as combatants in the political arena inevitably get labeled as scrappers. The role of striking the enemy's vital points and charging at the forefront of the camp elicits a primal enthusiasm from the public. Supporters cheer for a leader who opens fire on the opposition without hesitation.

Once intoxicated by that applause, it becomes difficult to break free from that image.

There are limits. A good fighter can win a battle, but to win a war, you must know how to win without fighting. Defeating the enemy is the virtue of a general, but making the enemy your own is the virtue of a king.

The scrapper image is effective for rallying the support base, but it becomes a barrier to expanding outreach beyond it. People who like you will be ecstatic, but those who don't know you or are wary of you will turn their backs even more.

Imagine a late night. A long-time advisor who has fought alongside you at the risk of their life empties their glass and speaks up. "Now you must put away that sharp sword and build the inner strength to embrace even your enemies.

If you remain a scrapper, this is as far as you go." The jaw of someone who has spent their life on the battlefield tightens. Rage boils up.

Their head knows why this person is saying this, but their heart cannot accept it. Is it that my fight was wrong? Has my method reached its limit?

Here, a fork in the road appears: the person who swallows those words and reflects on themselves, and the person who spits them out and protects their pride. The former can climb a taller mountain, while the latter ends their life on the peak where they currently stand. The ability to listen to hard truths is not innate.

It is cultivated only through the training of peeling away layers of pride every single day.

Just as Wei Zheng became a mirror for Taizong, an advisor who speaks hard truths is a mirror for a leader. A mirror reflects one's appearance exactly as it is. It shows both the beautiful and the ugly without distortion.

Breaking the mirror does not make the ugly appearance disappear; it only takes away the means to know that ugliness exists. Keeping someone who speaks hard truths nearby is uncomfortable. It hurts one's pride, ruins the mood, and is sometimes even insulting.

Only a leader who can endure that discomfort can correct their flaws and move forward into a wider world. The moment the mirror is broken, the leader walks alone in the dark.

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Chapter 14. Principles for Building and Maintaining an Organization

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Part 4: Protecting People

Chapter 14: Principles for Building and Maintaining an Organization

If you visit the local constituency office of a political party, you can immediately tell the health of that organization. In an office where people gather, the smell of cheap coffee and cigarette smoke mingles with the sound of laughter.

On the walls, next to faded election posters, are newly created lists of local civil complaints, and on the desks, someone has left dense notes with a ballpoint pen over an open resident registry. In an office where people are leaving, only neatly arranged desks remain.

Dust-covered telephones stopped ringing long ago, and only rows of empty chairs sit under a ceiling where a single fluorescent light flickers.

The difference between the two offices does not lie in the nobility of their ideology. What moves people are the transparent rules and predictable systems that sit behind the grand cause.

An organization where someone endures harsh overtime and stays up all night while another, who catches the leader's eye, climbs the ladder of promotion with just a few light jokes, will rot from within.

Members no longer pour their energy into work but instead immerse themselves in office politics—tracking the leader's movements and trying to suit their mood. In a structure where those who line up well, rather than those who perform well, rise to the top, those who actually produce results quietly close the door and leave.

On the other hand, in an organization where people gather, there are fair standards that anyone can accept. There is a firm net of trust that accurately weighs the sweat shed and holds people accountable while not depriving them of opportunities if they followed a justifiable process, even in failure.

In such an organization, people do not constantly watch the leader's mood but walk forward while watching each other's backs.

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel's way of leading her organization while reigning as the leader of Europe for 16 long years was the art of concession. Jumping into the cold, male-dominated political arena with the label of an outsider—a physicist from East Germany—she possessed no

flashy charisma.

Merkel did not browbeat her opponents or stir up the public with inflammatory rhetoric.

Instead, she waited. When the opposition launched fierce attacks, she listened silently with her characteristic diamond-shaped hands folded together. If there were reasonable parts to the opponent's argument, she would willingly modify her own policies and acknowledge the opposition's credit.

The media and the public criticized this as indecisiveness. However, as time passed, people realized that what Merkel conceded were the spotlight and the justification, while what she never conceded was the control of the steering wheel through which policies were realized.

The core of the Merkel style was not gaining the pleasure of victory by making enemies surrender, but absorbing the enemy's energy to keep the organization of the state rolling forward. During the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, she made the decisive move to accept over a million refugees, saying, "We can do this (Wir schaffen das)."

Opposition within her own party was intense. However, looking back after the crisis had passed, that decision became the foundation that established Germany as a moral leader in Europe.

Merkel's patience served as a powerful glue to unify divided politics. For 16 years, she embraced both the left and right wings of the party, constantly compromised with coalition partners, and never let the party split. This was not the result of innate character.

It was the result of calculated patience—swallowing pride at every moment and conceding small victories to achieve a larger one.

The fate of a political organization is sometimes helplessly torn apart by external, irresistible force.

I reflect on a day when I stayed up all night drafting an organizational reform plan with a heavy heart to cut out the party's chronic ills for future generations.

Those intense sentences, containing the voices of young people, giving up the privileges of the establishment, and increasing the transparency of the nomination process, were just about to be sent to the printer. The suddenly declared emergency martial law turned all democratic procedures into dust in the air.

That dawn, when the dream of reform vanished before bayonets, the organization was paralyzed and people scattered.

In that desperate moment, there are two choices: to fall into lethargy and give up everything, or to sift through the ashes to find a spark again. Amidst historical scars, a politician must choose the second. The reform of an organization forcibly halted by violence has not disappeared; it has merely been delayed.

If the seeds have burned, new seeds must be found. If the blueprint is torn, a more sophisticated blueprint must be drawn again.

Preparing the manual to be operated again after the oppression is lifted is true organizational reform. Every line of the reform plan that vanished due to martial law remains in memory. We must now start writing those sentences that could not be finished then.

This time, more meticulously, more realistically, and incorporating the voices of more people. The experience of having been frustrated once increases immunity for the next attempt. This is because we have already experienced what kind of opposition will come and what obstacles will be placed.

Loyalty is not obtained through coercion. If a leader who demands dedication to the organization fails to establish a fair reward system, that demand is no different from exploitation.

Consider a structure where the fruits of victory are monopolized by the leader and a few close associates, while the responsibility for failure is passed on to the workers who bled on the front lines.

What did the rank-and-file members, who roamed the alleys throughout the election period and ran until the soles of their shoes were worn out, gain after the victory? They were not even invited to the congratulatory dinner and had to watch as parachute appointments took key positions in the districts where they had worked.

Their dedication was treated as a given sacrifice, and they are called upon again when the next election approaches: "You must run with us this time too." They endure it once. They feel slighted the second time.

The third time, they don't answer the phone.

Fair compensation does not necessarily mean money or positions. Often, the confirmation that one's hard work is recognized, the sense of belonging that comes from participating in the organization's decision-making process, and the feeling that the leader respects them as a human being are more powerful than material rewards.

A 30-second phone call after the election where the leader personally says, "I haven't forgotten how you ran in the rain at Seomun Market back then," is stronger than a million-won plaque of appreciation.

The moment the cycle of transparent and rational rewards stops, the organization falls into a state of necrosis where blood no longer flows. You will find yourself facing an empty square where no one gathers even if the trumpet is blown for the next battle. An organization is not a building.

It is a web of connected human hearts. If one knot in the web breaks, the load shifts to the adjacent knot; if that knot breaks too, the entire web collapses. A leader's job is not to weave the web, but to check the knots of the web every day and sew up the broken parts.

It is ten times harder to maintain an organization than to create one. Revolutions begin with passion, but if that passion cannot be turned into everyday patience, the organization will self-destruct. The secret to how Merkel endured for 16 years lay in the tedious sincerity of repeating small compromises and small concessions every single day.

Not flashy charisma, but silent management. Not the declaration of a grand vision, but the fulfillment of promises. This is the boundary that separates an organization where people gather from one where people leave.

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Chapter 15. The Relationship With the Public Is a Living Organism

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Part 4. Protecting People

One summer day in 2003, a politician walked through a traditional market in Seoul. Without any bodyguards and with only one aide, he walked through the narrow alleys. He stopped in front of a fish shop.

A woman with glistening scales on her apron recognized the candidate. "Oh, aren't you the assemblyman?" The candidate took her hand and asked, "How is business these days?"

The woman sighed and replied, "With all this rain, customers have completely stopped coming. They said they would fix the market roof, but they still haven't." The candidate took out his notebook and wrote it down.

And three months later, when the construction on the market roof began, the woman was surprised to find that her words had actually reached somewhere.

This scene is not from a drama. It is a moment where the essence of politics is compressed. The relationship with the public is a living, breathing creature that cannot be reduced to numbers on an opinion poll graph.

If you let your guard down when the numbers go up, they drop in an instant; if you go down to the field when the numbers drop, they come back to life. The nutrients that grow this creature healthily are not grand policy declarations, but a hand held in a market alley or a single line of notes written in a notebook.

A politician's approval rating is a thermometer of the trust the public sends to a leader. On days when the red and blue line graphs plummet, the offices in Yeouido are enveloped in deep gloom. Urgent aides bring provocative policies to the briefing room to distract the public or use harsh language of attack toward the opposing camp.

What a leader should do when approval ratings fall is not to issue loud prescriptions. It is to stop walking, stand in front of a mirror, and gaze at oneself. The public does not turn its back because of a temporary policy failure.

The point where they become angry is when they feel their lives are pushed to the edge of a cliff, but the person in power is evading responsibility or looking elsewhere.

The way to stop the slope of a falling graph is surprisingly simple. It is to go down to the bottom without using tricks and face the public's cold anger with one's bare body. The courage to say "I fell short" without making excuses or blaming others.

This one short sentence is more effective than billions of won worth of promotional materials. The public does not want a perfect leader. They want a leader who honestly admits when they have made a mistake.

There is one thing I learned while working at the prosecution. Whether a suspect is truly reflecting or not is determined not by the content of their words but by the trembling of their eyes. It is the same with the public.

When a politician bows their head in front of television cameras and says "I'm sorry," the public looks at the sincerity in their eyes rather than the angle of the bow. The difference between a staged apology and a sincere one is sensed in 0.1 seconds.

The public is moved more by the meticulousness of a politician who treats them as a single dignified human being than by grand macroeconomic indicators or diplomatic achievements.

Imagine a scene where, after finishing a speech in a gymnasium where thousands of people have gathered, a politician steps down from the platform and approaches a citizen standing in a corner. "That civil complaint you mentioned in the market alley three years ago, has it been resolved now?"

The destructive power of this one phrase exceeds tens of thousands of official campaign materials. In a flood of countless faces and names, when they meet a leader who does not forget and remembers their small story, voters go beyond being supporters and become evangelists. They pass that experience on to their families, neighbors, and coworkers.

"That person is the real deal. He remembered my name."

This is not a matter of memory. It is a matter of the system. It is about creating a routine of meticulously recording the names, stories, and promises of the people met in the field and periodically checking them.

Politics that keeps small promises creates great trust. Grand pledges are difficult to verify, but a small promise to "fix the market roof" is confirmed right before one's eyes. When that roof is actually fixed, all the merchants in that market engrave that politician's name in their hearts.

During my time as a member of the National Assembly, I wrote down the names and stories of the people I met whenever I toured my constituency. Some were suffering from old sewer problems, and some expressed concerns about the safety of their children's commute to school. As the notebooks piled up, they became a map of public sentiment in the constituency.

Every time a civil complaint was resolved, that person changed from a simple voter to a political partner. A huge political vision is important, but flesh is added to the vision only when small actions that specifically touch each person's life are gathered.

In the digital age, politicians stand on the harsh condition that their personas inside and outside the screen must be perfectly consistent.

There was a candidate who bowed 90 degrees during a field campaign, held the rough hands of merchants, and smiled warmly. That evening, he logged onto his social media account and posted a message mixed with sharp ridicule and sarcasm toward the opponent.

The contempt and mockery contained in 140 short characters instantly evaporated the sincerity of the sweat shed on the market floor all morning.

Voters remember the cold poison of text longer and deeper than the warmth of the field. Only ten people present at the scene remember a handshake, but one word on social media is saved by tens of thousands as screenshots. Voters call the gap between the humility shown in the field and the arrogance revealed online "hypocrisy."

If the message flowing from the fingertips tapping the keys is different from the temperature of the palm shaking hands in the field, the public labels that politician as a thoroughly staged actor.

Social media is a powerful weapon for politicians, but at the same time, it is the most dangerous trap. When you sit in front of a keyboard, you cannot see the other person's eyes. You cannot see in real time what kind of wound your words are inflicting on them.

Harsh words that would never be said in the field easily pop out from behind the screen. The way to overcome this temptation is simple. It is to ask yourself before posting: "Can I read this sentence aloud in front of my mother?"

Will I not regret reading this sentence on the front page of tomorrow morning's newspaper?" If the answer to even one of the two questions is "no," then that post should not be uploaded.

The true face of a person in power is revealed in the everyday spaces where the public's cameras are turned off.

There is a sigh mixed with annoyance emanating from the back seat because an aide was a little late in opening the car door. There is an indifferent gesture of brushing off one's own suit collar while seeing an aide's shoulder getting soaked while holding an umbrella for them on a rainy day.

There is a cold look thrown at a waiter when food is late in a restaurant. These tiny fragments of attitude inevitably leak out.

A person in power's daily life is read before their message. An aide tells other aides, a driver tells their family, and a restaurant employee tells regular customers about that experience. "That person pretends to be humble in front of the camera, but they were a completely different person outside."

This rumor spreads the true character of a politician faster than any media report and more accurately than any opinion poll.

A senior prosecutor's words from my time at the prosecution have stayed with me for a long time: "A person's character is revealed in their attitude toward those weaker than themselves." Whether in an interrogation room in Seocho-dong or a conference room in Yeouido, this statement was true without exception.

A prosecutor who treats the subject of an investigation with dignity versus a prosecutor who gives them a sense of humiliation; an assemblyman who treats an aide as a colleague versus an assemblyman who treats them like a servant. The difference between the two is proven later by who remains around that person.

Before the public hears the values of justice and equality that a politician shouts in front of a microphone, they read with sharp instinct how he treats people in positions weaker than himself. Beautiful rhetoric in a speech is forgotten, but the small habit of saying thank you to a secretary is remembered.

Not the gaze looking down from the top of power, but the daily practice of checking the body temperature of those nearby first, wins the public's heart.

The relationship with the public is not a contract that ends once it is made. It is like a plant that must be watered and given sunlight every day. If you get lazy for just one day, the leaves wither; if you neglect it for a few days, it dries up from the roots.

Not losing the warmth of holding hands in a market alley in a social media post on Sunday morning, in a call to an aide on Monday morning, or at a solitary drinking session on Wednesday night—that is the only way to nurture the living organism called the public.

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Chapter 16. The Anatomy of Betrayal and Defection

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Part 5: Enduring the Winter

A. Betrayal Does Not Arrive Suddenly — The Process of Accumulating Alienation, Misunderstanding, and Injustice

In late autumn 2019, in a 7th-floor hallway of the National Assembly Members' Hall in Yeouido, Seoul, an aide to a four-term lawmaker stopped in front of the elevator. He was holding materials for a late-night meeting, and the lights in front of the lawmaker's office were out. The aide sent a text to the lawmaker.

Unread. He sent another two hours later. Unread.

He bought a can of coffee from a vending machine at the end of the hallway, drank it, and quietly left. Three months later, that aide was working at a rival candidate's campaign office.

In politics, the word "betrayal" is consumed daily. It is repeated incessantly on the front pages of newspapers, in front of microphones at press conferences, and among the anger-filled voices at drinking gatherings. When the word is uttered, the context is usually this: someone trusted suddenly turned their back.

The keyword is "suddenly." A leader perceives betrayal as an unexpected event. Because the person who bowed their head until yesterday drew a sword this morning, it is naturally a shock and naturally a cause for anger.

However, I realized one thing during my time reading investigation records at the prosecution. Every crime has a precursor. Before embezzlement is discovered, the numbers in the ledgers first go awry; before a murder occurs, the emotions between the victim and the perpetrator first become tangled.

The process of a person leaving is no different. Betrayal is not a lightning bolt. It is a rainy season.

Rainwater seeps in and the ground weakens over a long period until, at some point, a landslide occurs.

The first soil in which the seeds of defection are sown within an organization is a sense of alienation. The feeling of being excluded from the place where key decisions are made, the sensation that important information reaches me last. This is a matter of emotion rather than fact.

It doesn't matter whether one was actually excluded or if it was a misunderstanding. Once a sense of alienation sprouts, it becomes a filter that makes one interpret every situation in a direction unfavorable to themselves.

Not being invited to a meeting becomes evidence of being ignored, and a leader being too busy to take a call becomes a signal of intentional coldness.

The second soil is misunderstanding. In political organizations, misunderstandings occur structurally. A single word from a leader is transformed as it passes through several people, leaving only the conclusion while the original context vanishes.

"Let's review that matter further" turns into "They said to scrap that matter" after passing through three mouths. The person who stayed up all night preparing that matter becomes furious.

It is a misunderstanding that could be resolved by seeking out the leader directly to confirm, but someone in whom alienation has already taken root does not go to confirm. This is because they fear facing a situation where they are truly ignored more than anything else. Misunderstanding grows into a monster in silence.

The third soil is injustice. This is the most fatal. The experience of staying up all night to write a report only for someone else to take the credit, or the sight of someone with nothing but a silver tongue taking a good position while you were silently working on the ground.

Witnessing such a scene once leads to disappointment; twice, to anger; and thrice, to preparing to leave. People can endure physical hardship for quite a long time. The reason soldiers endure marches and students endure all-night study sessions is that they believe there is a reward at the end of the pain.

The moment one feels that their worth is not properly recognized or judges that the rules of the game are not fair, they disembark from the ship.

When these three soils overlap, defection is only a matter of time. When a leader fails to read the changes in the expressions of those around them due to being busy or out of the complacent expectation that "they'll handle this on their own," the foundation of the organization is quietly collapsing.

The moment of betrayal is dramatic, but the process leading to it is extremely mundane. The temperature of the greeting exchanged every morning, the way speaking opportunities are distributed in the meeting room, the order in which names are called at a ceremony to recognize achievements.

Those trivial things accumulate to make a person either an enemy or a lifelong ally.

I learned one more thing in the interrogation room during my time as a prosecutor. Most criminals have a narrative about why they acted the way they did. Because of poverty, because they were ignored, because they were treated unfairly.

Whether that narrative is objectively valid is a separate issue. In the person's mind, their actions are organized as something sufficiently understandable. The same goes for those who leave.

In the narrative of defection they have written, the leader is a cold and unfair figure, and they are a victim who endured enough until finally leaving as a last resort. From the leader's perspective, it is betrayal, but from the perspective of the person leaving, it is an escape.

The essence of relationship failure is the inability to narrow the gap between these two perspectives.

B. Caesar's March 15th — The Senate's Blades Did Not Appear Suddenly One Day

March 15, 44 BC, the Senate chamber prepared inside the Theatre of Pompey in Rome. As Julius Caesar, the Dictator Perpetuo, sat in his chair, Senator Lucius Tillius Cimber presented a petition. It was a request to return his exiled brother.

When Caesar waved him away with a gesture, Cimber pulled at his toga. That was the signal. About 60 senators, drawing hidden daggers, rushed him and left twenty-three stab wounds on Caesar's body.

The words he is said to have uttered when he recognized the face of Marcus Brutus through the blood became the most famous lament in history.

Viewed in isolation, this scene is the height of betrayal. A subordinate who had received grace plunged a knife into the chest of his benefactor. Caesar had spared and forgiven Brutus, who had sided with Pompey in the civil war, instead of executing him.

He had placed him in the position of praetor and treated him with special regard, added to by a private connection with Brutus's mother, Servilia. Despite this grace, he took up the blade, making him appear as the epitome of ingratitude.

However, the blades in the Theatre of Pompey were not suddenly sharpened that morning. It took years to sharpen those knives. When Caesar returned to Rome after conquering Gaul and winning the civil war, he pushed through reforms to distribute grain to the poor and provide land to veterans.

He increased the size of the Senate from 600 to 900 and filled it with a large number of his own people. And in February 44 BC, he became Dictator Perpetuo. For the senators standing on the tradition of the Republic, each step of this process was a time spent sharpening the blade an inch further.

Brutus did not hate Caesar personally. What he feared was the collapse of the system known as the Republic. Brutus's ancestor, Lucius Junius Brutus, was the founding father who had driven out the last king of Rome and established the Republic.

To a descendant of that house, the emergence of a perpetual dictator was the sight of the order established by his ancestor crumbling. Caesar's brilliant achievements paradoxically fueled the Senate's fear.

The more competent he was and the more successful the reforms were, the greater the weight of power concentrated in Caesar alone became, and there was a justification in the blades of those crushed by that weight.

There is a point pointed out by Nanami Shiono. This kind of tragedy usually occurs when someone who was highly favored by a person in power begins to feel alienated at some point. Caesar was intoxicated by his own overwhelming achievements and failed to sense the anxiety of those around him.

He read the silence of the senators as consent. Silence was not consent. It was the patience of waiting for an opportunity.

The lesson a leader must learn here is clear. The stronger the leader, the more they must look into the shadows of those obscured by their own light. As power is concentrated in one person, the air around them becomes thinner.

Those who cannot breathe will eventually break a window and leave. The way they break the window could be the blade of March 15th, or it could be a quiet defection. The forms are different, but the essence is the same.

It is the failure of a leader who could not protect the self-esteem of those beside them.

There is one more thing to note in Caesar's tragedy. It is the scene where Brutus gave a speech before the Roman citizens after the assassination. He shouted, "It is not that we killed Caesar because we hated him, but because we loved Rome more."

None of the crowd cheered. None of them jeered. There was only silence.

Brutus could not bear the weight of that silence and fled from Rome. In the traitor's narrative, he was a hero, but the moment he stood in the square, reality was cold to him. After the assassination, Rome fell into even greater chaos, and eventually, Caesar's adopted son Octavian established the Empire.

Betrayal failed its purpose, and the Republic did not return.

The dynamics of betrayal have not changed significantly in today's political arena, two thousand years after March 15th. Only the material of the blade has changed. Instead of metal daggers, the microphones at press conferences, revelations on social media, and leaks of internal documents become the blades.

The moment of the stabbing is dramatic, but the time spent sharpening the blade is long and quiet.

C. An Attitude of Not Making Those Who Leave Out to Be Villains Keeps Future Solidarity Open

There is a mistake leaders most commonly make at the moment of a political parting. It is branding the one who leaves as a traitor and publicly denouncing them before supporters. This is emotionally understandable.

When you are stabbed in the back by someone you trusted, anger flares up, and pointing out a common enemy to solidify the remaining members is an old instinct of human groups. The problem is that this instinct exacts a very high political price.

During my time at the prosecution, one of the principles to follow when handling cases was that even suspects must be guaranteed the right to defense. No matter how clear the crime, if procedures are ignored, evidence is contaminated and the trial collapses. A similar principle works in politics.

Demonizing someone who leaves may soothe immediate anger, but it shrinks one's political territory.

Politics is a living thing. It is a space where yesterday's ally becomes today's enemy, and today's enemy becomes tomorrow's coalition force. Those who have spent over a decade in Yeouido know this better than anyone. Yet, they forget this fact at the moment of parting. It is because the hormones of anger block the circuits of reason.

Saying "You've worked hard all this time" and opening the door for someone leaving is not weakness. It is dignity. When you do not make the other person out to be a devil, a justification remains to shake hands again later when the situation changes.

There are no eternal enemies in politics. What is eternal is neither interest nor ideology. What remains forever is only the memory of having acted with dignity.

This attitude is also a message to those who remain. Seeing a leader cruelly denounce someone who leaves, aides feel two things simultaneously. One is the fear that "I must never leave because I don't want to end up like that," and the other is the anxiety that "I could also become like that one day."

An organization bound by fear may look solid on the outside, but it rots on the inside. People fail to give honest opinions for fear of the leader's mood, and the leader gradually loses touch with reality within a play of false loyalty.

On the other hand, under a leader who respects those who leave, aides feel something different. "This leader does not throw people away recklessly. Even if I make a mistake, I can receive humane treatment."

This feeling is the root of true loyalty. Obedience born of fear and dedication born of trust may look similar on the surface, but they produce completely different results in moments of crisis.

History has shown many times that tolerance can be a more powerful weapon than revenge. The most effective weapon for dealing with betrayal is not hatred, but a sense of dignity that makes the other person feel embarrassed. The fact that I did not treat you as a villain remains as a debt in the heart of the one who left.

The day that debt returns is unpredictable, but it will surely return. In politics, time is not on the side of the leader. Time is on the side of the one who was tolerant.

D. Before the Blade of Expulsion — The Meaning of the Choice to Forgo Re-examination and Stand at the Press Conference Hall

For a politician, expulsion from their political party is akin to a professional death sentence. It is a level of pain different from having one's lawmaker badge taken away. A badge is something naturally laid down when a term ends, but expulsion is being forcibly evicted from the community one belonged to.

It is similar to being kicked out of one's home. Time is not even given to pack belongings, the door is closed, and the locks are changed.

In such situations, most politicians choose one of two options. The first is to buy time by requesting a re-examination. They engage in a war of attrition, raising issues with procedural flaws, mobilizing legal remedies, and waiting for a backlash from supporting forces within the party.

The advantage of this method is that it buys time, and the disadvantage is that one looks pitiful during that time. To the eyes of the public, the sight of an expelled person appealing to the party leadership while requesting a re-examination is pathetic. It is because it looks like someone who was kicked out is clinging to the door.

The second choice is to forgo re-examination and walk out the door on one's own. This is a much more difficult path. Even if there is a sense of injustice, even if one could win by fighting, one chooses this path when they judge that the fight itself would diminish their political narrative.

The moment one stands at the press conference hall, states their position in a calm voice, and walks out confidently before the cameras. That brief scene determines the politician's next ten years.

Forgoing re-examination and standing at the press conference hall is a declaration that one will not submit to the backroom decisions of internal power brokers, and at the same time, an intent to appeal the unfairness of that decision directly to the public in the square rather than in a courtroom.

This is not an act of giving up the struggle within the system, but an act of recognizing that there is a greater judge outside the system. The verdict handed down by the judge known as the voter is slower than the decision of a party ethics committee, but once handed down, it is difficult to overturn.

The attitude at the press conference hall is decisive. If one attacks the party leadership violently, consumed by anger, they lose sympathy votes. When the public sees an angry politician, they may seem to sympathize for a moment, but they soon grow tired.

The moment they truly open their hearts is when a politician shows sadness instead of anger, and conviction instead of attack. Expressing the unfairness of the expulsion while swallowing resentment, calmly speaking about the values one has upheld, and showing how one intends to live forward. That is the best one can do at a press conference.

The press conference of that day becomes both the beginning of winter and a ritual for planting the first seed for spring. The moment one's party affiliation disappears, all that remains for a politician is

solely themselves. The organization's brand, the party's logo, and the power of the floor negotiation group all vanish.

One must stand bare. Those who fear standing bare cannot endure the winter. Only those who accept that being bare-bodied is their everything pass through the winter and reach spring again.

The blade of expulsion is the most painful moment in a person's political life, but at the same time, it is the moment that teaches the most. Who are truly my people, and who were merely people of the party. The list of names remaining in the phone is the answer.

On the morning after being expelled, look into your phone. The names that remain there are your true assets. The path you walk with those names is your next chapter.

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Chapter 17. The Art of Enduring Political Winter

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Part 5: Enduring the Winter

Chapter 17: The Art of Enduring Political Winter

A. Churchill's Wilderness Years — A Decade After a War Hero Was Cast from Power

When the Conservative Party was defeated in the 1929 British general election, Winston Churchill retained his seat in the Epping constituency but lost his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was fifty-five. For a seasoned politician who had been active in politics for over thirty years, losing a cabinet post was not a first.

But this time was different. Even in the 1931 general election, when the Conservatives returned to power, Churchill was excluded from the cabinet list. The party leadership intentionally sidelined him.

This was the price he paid for clashing head-on with the party mainstream over the issue of Indian self-rule. Churchill called for a vote in the House of Commons against granting autonomy to India, but he suffered a crushing defeat of 43 to 369. Very few followed him.

From 1929 to 1939, Churchill spent what are known as his 'Wilderness Years' on the fringes of politics. Many judged that his political career was over. In London's political salons, his name was spoken of in the past tense. People would say, "Churchill used to be great once."

Looking at what Churchill did during those ten years, it is more accurate to say he was 'tempering' himself rather than just 'enduring.' Staying at his home in Chartwell, Kent, he immersed himself in a massive amount of writing.

In 1930, he published his autobiography, **My Early Life**, which became a bestseller, and he also wrote a four-volume biography of his ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough. Writing was not a mere pastime. For Churchill, it was a discipline to organize his thoughts and survey the world.

While writing, Churchill never stopped raising his voice in warning. When Hitler took power in 1933, Churchill was almost the only British politician to warn of Germany's rearmament.

He said the same things repeatedly in the House of Commons, in newspaper articles, and in speeches: Germany is expanding its armaments, Britain must prepare, and the policy of appeasement will bring disaster. No one listened.

Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared through the Munich Agreement that he had achieved 'peace for our time' by compromising with Hitler. Churchill was labeled a warmonger.

Precisely because he was pushed out of the core of power, Churchill was able to view the world objectively. Had he been sitting in a cabinet seat, he would have been bound by the government's official position. His ambiguous position as a minority within the ruling party, rather than the opposition, paradoxically gave him freedom.

Through secret intelligence sources, he obtained data on Germany's military buildup and used it in the House of Commons to prove that the government's official announcements were far from the truth.

After the 1938 Munich Crisis, and following Germany's occupation of the entire Czechoslovakia in 1939, public opinion slowly began to shift in Churchill's favor. The phrase "He was right" was heard everywhere. When war broke out in September 1939, Chamberlain had no choice but to appoint Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty.

It was the same position he had held during World War I. A signal was sent to the Navy: "Winston is back."

Churchill demonstrated three things during his ten years in the wilderness. First, he invested his idle time in self-discipline. He managed his mind and body by writing, bricklaying (he personally built the walls of the Chartwell garden), and painting.

Second, he did not bend his convictions. Even when he was unpopular or mocked, he repeated what he believed to be right. Third, he did not lose his expertise while being outside of power.

He maintained his intellectual presence through informal information-gathering channels and his parliamentary speeches and articles.

The art of enduring winter is not about simply killing time. It is about preparing the body to run immediately when spring arrives. Churchill's ten years were not empty; they were full. Without that time, the Churchill of May 1940—the one who cried out in the House of Commons, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat"—would not have existed.

B. Deng Xiaoping's Three Falls and Three Rises — The Archetype of Resilience

The protagonist of the most dramatic political resurrection in modern Chinese history is Deng Xiaoping. He was nicknamed 'Budo-ong' (The Tumbler), a roly-poly toy that always stands back up. This nickname is no exaggeration.

His first fall came in 1933. During an internal power struggle within the Chinese Communist Party, he was pushed out by the pro-Soviet faction for supporting Mao Zedong's line. During the Long March, he was criticized as one of the four 'criminals' (Deng, Mao, Xie, and Gu).

He was rehabilitated in 1935 when Mao Zedong's line was recognized at the Zunyi Conference.

His second fall was in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution. This time, Mao Zedong himself aimed the blade. Deng, along with Liu Shaoqi, was branded as the 'second-highest party official taking the capitalist road.

' He was dismissed from his post as General Secretary and sent to a tractor repair factory in Jiangxi Province to work as a laborer. While Liu Shaoqi lost his life in this process, Deng survived. Meanwhile, his eldest son, Deng Pufang, was chased by Red Guards and fell from a building at Peking University, resulting in permanent paralysis of his lower body.

Deng Xiaoping showed a specific attitude during this period. He did not burn with a desire for revenge. In Jiangxi, he maintained his health by taking regular daily walks and designed China's future in his mind.

He was aware that Mao treated him differently from Liu Shaoqi and waited for the right time to use that difference. When the Lin Biao incident occurred in 1971 and Mao's succession plan collapsed, Deng was rehabilitated as Vice Premier in 1973 on the recommendation of Zhou Enlai.

The third fall came in 1976. After Zhou Enlai's death, the Gang of Four attacked Deng again, and he had to step down from all his positions once more. However, the situation changed after Mao Zedong's death in September and the arrest of the Gang of Four in October of the same year.

In July 1977, Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated for the third time. He was seventy-three years old.

What can be learned from this trajectory of falling and rising three times? Deng Xiaoping's resilience came from two sources. One was the spirit of 'Seeking Truth from Facts' (Shishi Qishi).

It was an attitude of calmly identifying what works in reality instead of clinging to ideological purity. His famous saying—that it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice—is a summary of this spirit. The other was not letting his body and mind deteriorate.

Even in exile, he maintained a regular life and never let go of the small daily habits he enjoyed, such as eating croissants, playing poker, and playing mahjong.

This is where the core of the art of enduring political winter lies. Power can disappear. Positions, honor, and supporters can evaporate in an instant.

After all of this is gone, only two things remain: skill and health. If your skill remains, opportunity will surely come again. If your health remains, you can seize that opportunity.

If you fail to protect these two during the winter, you cannot run even when spring comes.

The reform and opening-up policy that Deng Xiaoping led after his third rehabilitation lifted China from absolute poverty to the world's second-largest economy. In 1978, China's per capita income was \$156. A generation after his death, it exceeded \$10,000.

An old man who was repairing machines in a tractor factory changed the destiny of a billion people. The seeds of that change were sown in winter. The blueprints drawn in the mind of an old man walking the same path at the same time every day in a dusty factory yard in Jiangxi eventually changed the landscape of the world.

C. Kim Dae-jung's Honeysuckle Network — The Secret to Not Losing People for 40 Years Was Writing Letters even in Prison

In the history of modern Korean politics, the politician who spent the longest winter was Kim Dae-jung. After losing to Park Chung-hee by a narrow margin in the 1971 presidential election, his life was a series of endless trials.

He was kidnapped in Tokyo by agents of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) in 1973 and nearly drowned in the sea, and in 1980, he was sentenced to death for sedition. Commuted sentences, house arrest, exile in the United States, return home, and house arrest again—his life was a pilgrim's journey between prison and the wilderness.

There were many forces that enabled him to endure this harsh winter, but if we were to pick one, it would be 'people.' Kim Dae-jung had the ability not to lose people when he had no power. The secret of that ability was surprisingly simple: letters.

While in prison, Kim Dae-jung constantly wrote letters to his family and acquaintances. He filled postcards with tiny handwriting, detailing his thoughts, his impressions of books he read, his feelings about the world, and greetings to the recipients.

These letters were later published as a collection titled *Letters from Prison*, becoming a record that testifies to an era. More important than the content of the letters was the act of writing itself. It was an expression of his will not to let go of relationships even in the extreme situation of prison.

What did the people who received the letters feel? The feeling that "he hasn't forgotten me." This seems trivial, but it is actually the most powerful adhesive that maintains a relationship.

When you have power, what gathers people are money and positions. If you offer a single cabinet post, people flock like clouds. However, keeping people after power has vanished requires a completely different kind of resource.

That resource is sincerity. It is not money or position, but the small, persistent act of constantly letting the other person know that you remember them.

Kim Dae-jung's network was built through this accumulation of sincerity. His supporters are often compared to the 'Indongcho' (honeysuckle), a plant that retains its greenness even in the dead of winter. The reason these honeysuckle-like supporters did not leave Kim Dae-jung's side for forty years was not just because of his charisma.

It was because the letters and greetings that arrived steadily from prison, house arrest, and exile accumulated in their hearts to form an unshakable stratum of trust.

This case teaches a clear lesson to leaders facing a political winter. The first thing you should do the moment you lose power is not to make a plan for revenge or a strategic vision. It is to open your phone or pick up a pen and contact the people who remember you.

To say thank you, to ask how they are, and to tell them you haven't forgotten them. This ordinary word is the anchor that holds people in the middle of winter.

A greeting sent when you have no power is ten times heavier than one sent when you have power. Kindness shown when you have strength is reflexively met with suspicion: "Why is that person being nice to me? What do they want?"

But kindness when you have no power leaves no room for calculation. Warm words from someone who has nothing to give are accepted as pure. That is why the seeds of relationships sown in winter have deeper roots than those sown in spring.

Kim Dae-jung finally won the 1997 presidential election and became president. This happened seventeen years after he was sentenced to death. Many of those standing by him at the moment of his election were the ones who had received his prison letters.

They were the young people who had debated with him in shabby back alleys forty years ago, and the nameless supporters who had secretly delivered envelopes of money amidst surveillance and oppression. These people, who did not leave even when the seasons of power changed, were the firmest foundation for the politician Kim Dae-jung.

D. The Meaning of Walking Through Seomun Market After Expulsion — Seeds Sown in Winter Sprout in Spring

Immediately after being expelled from a political party or losing an election, where should a politician go first? It is not a high-end restaurant to hold a countermeasure meeting with aides. It is not a lawyer's office to discuss legal action. The first place they should go is a market alley filled with the scent of people.

Consider Seomun Market in Daegu. A space where fruit crates are stacked in narrow alleys and the smell of raw fish mixes with the scent of boiling pig trotters. The merchants wake up at 4 AM to unload goods and organize their ledgers at 10 PM. Their hands are rough and their voices are loud. It is a world different from the smooth corridors of Yeouido.

An expelled politician walking through Seomun Market is not there to go grocery shopping. It is a visit to confirm their roots, to directly measure the temperature of the public sentiment at the bottom, and a physical confession of humility that they are starting over.

There is a sensation felt when grasping a merchant's rough hand. It is not the strength of the handshake, but the thickness of the palm.

Those hands, which have carried heavy objects, sliced fish with knives, and lifted pots of hot soup for decades, testify to something the moment they mix with the soft hands of a politician: that the weight

of life is different. Feeling that difference is the first education needed for a politician spending their winter.

The words heard in the market are different from those in Yeouido. Aides filter and deliver words the leader wants to hear. Journalists pick out words that make a story.

Market merchants have no such filters. "Congressman, what you promised last time still hasn't happened." "Politicians are all like that.

They only come during elections." Such words come raw and unfiltered. It hurts.

It hurts, but that pain is the medicine.

Whether cameras follow is a secondary issue. Initially, one must go without cameras. No press releases, minimal entourage—just walking alone.

People in the market have an excellent sense for distinguishing a politician's sincerity from a performance. They immediately notice a visit accompanied by a camera crew. "They're here to take pictures again."

They only open their hearts to someone who comes once, twice, and three times without a camera: "This person is truly coming."

There is a change that occurs in a politician walking through the market in winter. Things that were invisible in Yeouido begin to be seen.

The back of a street cleaner walking on rain-soaked asphalt at dawn, the urgent steps of an office worker jumping up subway stairs two at a time during rush hour, the back of an elderly person walking heavily with plastic grocery bags in both hands. These are scenes that are never seen in a Yeouido meeting room.

Landscapes that were passed by when wearing a badge only come into view after the badge is gone.

As these experiences accumulate, the politician's language changes. Instead of the phrase "macroeconomic health," the phrase "this month's electricity bill" comes out of their mouth first. Instead of "the direction of fiscal policy," the phrase "my child's academy fees" pops out.

This change cannot be faked. It is an internal transformation that only happens by directly stepping on, smelling, hearing, and touching the market floor.

Seeds sown while walking through the market in winter are invisible. they don't translate into immediate approval ratings or make news headlines. Those seeds slowly take root in the ground.

A merchant tells another merchant: "That person came without a camera. Their hands were warm." The speed at which this single phrase spreads from mouth to mouth is slow, but once an impression is planted, it is not easily erased.

The lifespan of a single political advertisement is three days. The memory of a hand held in a market alley lasts three years.

When spring comes and elections are held again, the market merchants go to the polling stations. They do not read the candidate's pledge book meticulously. What they remember is the look in the eyes of the person who came to their shop in the cold winter, when they had no power at all, ordered a bowl of soup, and asked if business was going well.

This is how the seeds sown in winter sprout. Only a politician for whom only people remained when power vanished can govern in the name of the people when power returns.

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Chapter 18. The Value of Building Strength Outside the Arena

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Part 5: Enduring the Winter

Chapter 18: The Value of Time Spent Building Inner Strength Outside the Arena

A. Nixon's Eight Years — What Did He Do Between His 1960 Defeat and 1968 Victory?

In November 1962, Richard Nixon stood before reporters after losing the California gubernatorial election. His face bore fresh wounds on top of the scars from his presidential defeat two years prior. When he lost the 1960 presidential election to John F.

Kennedy by a mere 110,000 votes, he believed there would be another chance. Thus, he ran for Governor of California to solidify his political base. Yet, he lost again.

This time, it wasn't by a narrow margin, but a definitive defeat.

At the press conference, Nixon uttered what is now a famous remark: "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore." It was essentially a declaration of severance from the press. Reporters took this as his political death certificate.

Time magazine ran the headline "Nixon's Last Press Conference." ABC aired a program titled "The Political Post-Mortem of Richard Nixon." In November 1962, everyone judged his political life to be over.

Yet, exactly six years later, in November 1968, Nixon was elected the 37th President of the United States.

What did Nixon do during those six years?

First, he moved to New York and joined a law firm. Although it seemed he had completely vanished from the political stage after his defeat in California, he built relationships with figures in New York's financial and business sectors while practicing law. Being a lawyer is a platform that allows one to naturally meet people from various fields.

Nixon made the most of this platform. While the political circles in Washington were forgetting him, he was building a new network with the economic elite of New York.

Second, Nixon took on the role of the Republican Party's "troubleshooter." When Republican candidate Barry Goldwater suffered a crushing defeat against Lyndon Johnson in the 1964 presidential election, the GOP was in pieces. During this period, Nixon traveled the country

supporting Republican candidates' campaigns.

He appeared at rallies for Senate, House, and gubernatorial candidates to deliver speeches, raise funds, and attend personal milestones. In the process, the number of people across the country who owed Nixon a debt grew. When he needed the support of delegates from each state during the presidential primaries, these debts were repaid in votes.

Third, he deeply studied diplomacy and international affairs. Based on his experience as Vice President and a presidential candidate, he traveled the world, meeting heads of state and establishing his own perspective on international relations.

In 1967, he contributed an article titled "Asia After Viet Nam" to *Foreign Affairs*, presenting a concrete vision for Asian policy. This article garnered attention among academics and policy experts, instilling the perception that Nixon was not just a political tactician but an individual with the intellectual capacity to design the world.

When Nixon emerged as a presidential candidate again in 1968, he was not the Nixon of 1960. The media called him the "New Nixon." Instead of his previous image of being aggressive and hasty, a new image of a seasoned and prepared figure took root. The six years following his defeat had reconstructed him.

The lesson to learn from Nixon's case is this: how one spends the hiatus following a political defeat or expulsion determines the quality of their second chance. If that time is filled with resentment and self-pity, even if they return, they remain at the same level as before.

If they invest that time in self-innovation, they return as a completely different person. Nixon's six years were not a time of flight, but a time of accumulation. Preparations for a counterattack were being steadily made out of sight.

Of course, there are Nixon's subsequent actions and the fatal mistake of Watergate. After becoming president, he failed to overcome the suspicion and sense of victimhood he had accumulated during his rise to power and ultimately self-destructed. This offers another lesson: the trials of winter do not automatically create a better human being.

Pain can refine a person, but it can also twist them. The mindset with which one spends the winter determines the style of governance after reaching the spring.

B. Time Spent Writing Books, Traveling the World, and Researching Policy Becomes the Qualification for a Second Chance

Paradoxically, the best time to study is when you have stepped back from the front lines of politics.

I recall a day while wearing the lawmaker's badge: a party-government consultation at 7 AM, a standing committee meeting at 9 AM, a media interview at 11 AM, handling district civil petitions all afternoon, a party meeting in the evening, and a fundraising schedule at night. This wheel spins without stopping. There is no time for deep thinking.

While one can skim through policy briefing materials, there is no leisure given to read a book from beginning to end and organize one's own philosophy.

When the badge disappears, time opens up. How you use that time is a crossroads. One path is being buried in the past—ruminating on why you lost, who betrayed you, and where things went wrong, vacillating between anger and regret.

This path leads nowhere. No matter how much you analyze the past, the past does not change. The other path is designing the future—researching what you will do when the next opportunity comes, what the nation's tasks are, and what the solutions are to solve those tasks.

The process of writing a book that contains one's own philosophy is the best form of discipline for a politician spending their winter. Writing a book is not merely the task of filling manuscript paper.

It is the process of organizing scattered fragments of thought into a single system, filling logical gaps, and distinguishing what one truly believes from what has been borrowed from others. Once a book is finished, the author's mind is completely different from before they started writing.

Things that were expressed vaguely in speech become solidified as they are organized into print. In a debate, someone who has written a book can respond much more precisely and persuasively than someone who has not.

Traveling the world is also indispensable. Korean politicians often lack overseas experience. Most overseas trips taken in the name of "parliamentary diplomacy" have such packed schedules that they only skim the surface.

When you are outside the arena, you can see the world at your own pace.

Visiting industrial sites in Germany to personally see the current state of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, studying Singapore's public housing policies, and experiencing Estonia's digital government system—these experiences provide a depth that cannot be compared to reading reports in a National Assembly meeting room.

Policy research is the link that connects books and travel. It is the work of establishing a theoretical foundation in a book, confirming models that actually work at international sites, and then redesigning them to fit the reality of Korea.

A politician's policy proposals that have gone through this process differ from those of a scholar, which only smell of theory, and those of an activist, which rely solely on field intuition. It results in policies that are both feasible and visionary, combining the strengths of both sides.

"What will you do when the next opportunity comes?" If there is no answer ready for this question, an opportunity becomes a disaster. The public does not give a second chance out of sympathy.

The door only opens when they are convinced: "This person has really changed a lot while resting; now they will truly do a proper job." What instills that conviction is not a flashy declaration of return,

but the weight of the inner strength built up during the winter.

Every time I changed professions—from a prosecutor to a lawyer, and from a lawyer to a member of the National Assembly—I felt something. To be recognized in a new position, you must not rely on your past career. The title of "former prosecutor" helps for the first few months, but it soon fades away.

You must prove new skills in a new field. A political comeback is the same. It doesn't work to rely on past achievements and say, "I used to do this kind of work."

You must show, "I can do this kind of work in the future." The evidence for that is the books, the policies, and the intellectual assets accumulated during the winter.

C. Book Concerts and University Lectures Are a Good Start, But Depth Must Follow

The most common windows through which a politician outside the arena communicates with the public are book concerts and university lectures.

Publishing a book, traveling the country to meet readers, and giving lectures to university students—these are useful in three aspects: the effect of rallying the support base, the effect of observing the reactions of the new generation, and the effect of natural media exposure. These are among the few means of maintaining a presence even without the badge.

However, one must be careful. If book concerts and lectures are filled only with emotional comfort and flashy talk, the resources will soon run dry. At the first book concert, supporters are moved: "As expected of our candidate!"

They are moved at the second one, too. From the third, people begin to ask: "So, what are you going to do?" If a concrete and persuasive answer cannot be provided to this question, the book concert will face criticism for being a mere political event.

It might become a fan meeting, but it fails to become a political act.

A lecture should be a place where one's inner strength is revealed. There must be a sharp analysis of current issues, one's own interpretation of the zeitgeist, and concrete solutions. Questions asked by students at a university lecture hall are unfiltered.

"What should job policy be like in the age of AI?" "What is the conservative alternative to the climate crisis?" "How will you reform the pension system?"

If you give vague answers like "That's a good question, let's think about it together," the students will be disappointed. University students are much more astute than politicians think. They intuitively distinguish between those who have real answers and those who are pretending to have them.

I learned something while investigating at the prosecution. The quality of a statement record depends on the quality of the questions. Good questions lead the other party to state facts, while bad

questions allow them to create excuses.

The same applies to a lecture hall. A speaker's capability is proven not by the splendor of the speech, but by the depth of the Q&A. Anyone can read a prepared script beautifully.

It is impossible to provide a clear answer by momentarily mobilizing one's philosophy and knowledge in the face of an unexpected question without inner strength.

Let's talk about AI for a moment. When I was writing *The AI Hegemony War* and *The AI Administrative Revolution* and comparing and analyzing the AI policies of 16 countries, what I felt most was that there are too few politicians in Korea who understand technology.

How many National Assembly members accurately understand global regulatory trends such as the EU's AI Act, the US AI Executive Order, and China's Interim Measures for the Management of Generative AI Services? If you dig deep into this field from outside the arena and make it your own expertise, you become an irreplaceable presence when you return.

Studying alone what no one else is studying is the most productive use of winter.

While receiving applause on the stage of a book concert is a pleasant experience, for that applause to become a political asset, the content on the stage must be substantial. One must compete with substance, not a show.

When emotional storytelling and intellectual policy capacity are combined, the time in the lecture hall finally transforms into political inner strength.

D. Is the Goal to Wear the Badge, or Is the Goal to Become President? — The Answer to This Question Determines Your Path

This is the most fundamental question to ask someone in a political winter. This question seems simple, but every action changes depending on the answer.

If the goal is "to wear the badge again," the path is short and narrow. You must immediately line up behind those who hold the power of nomination. You must maintain your presence by handling every local civil petition.

You must behave cautiously so as not to fall out of favor with the party leadership. In this process, conviction is pushed to the background. When what you must say to get nominated differs from what you want to say, you end up choosing the former.

The moment a politician makes the badge their goal, they lose their freedom.

If the goal is "to become a president who changes the world," the path is long and wide. Presenting a vision demanded by the times takes precedence over immediate nomination. Even if you clash with party leadership at times, you must walk in the direction you believe is right.

Even if you suffer losses in the short term, you must make choices that history will remember in the long term. This is a dangerous path. You might not regain the badge, and you might not become president.

However, for those who walk this path, one thing is certain: self-esteem.

Winter is the time to sort out the answer to this question. Only when the badge is gone can you truly face yourself. What remains of your naked self after the coat of a title, the fence of a party, and the limbs of aides have all vanished?

What do you have? What philosophy do you hold, what vision do you harbor, and what is your capacity to realize that vision? Honestly answering these questions is the first step to spending the winter productively.

The badge is a tool. It must not become the goal. It is true that there are things that cannot be done without the National Assembly badge.

You cannot propose bills, participate in budget deliberations, or ask questions during government audits. However, there are things you can do even without the badge. You can write books, research policies, meet people, and study the world.

If you stack these things up during the time without a badge, the weight of that badge when it returns will be incomparably heavier than before.

A person with the goal of the presidency and a person with the goal of the badge make completely different choices in the face of the same crisis. When the party leader makes an unreasonable demand, the person aiming for the badge bows their head. The person aiming for the presidency refuses.

When pressured to agree with an unjust decision, the person aiming for the badge remains silent. The person aiming for the presidency speaks up. It is clear which side is advantageous in the short term.

Bowing one's head and remaining silent is easier for now. However, the public remembers much longer than politicians think. They remember what choice was made in a moment of crisis.

That memory accumulates to become a person's political weight.

Some people's answers to this question change as they go through the winter. There are those who initially dreamed of the presidency but, exhausted by the harshness of winter, lower their goal to the badge. Conversely, there are those who initially only thought of the badge but come to harbor a bigger dream through experiencing the winter.

Either way, winter is a time to confirm one's true capacity.

You only need to remember one thing. If you make the badge your goal, the journey ends the moment you obtain it. Protecting the badge becomes a new goal, and a vicious cycle begins where that goal demands another submission.

If you make the presidency your goal, the badge is just one station on the journey. You can stay at the station, pass through it, or return to it. What matters is where the train is heading.

A person with a clear destination is not anxious even if they get off at a station for a while to rest. Because they know the next train will come.

No one knows when the end of winter will be. Spring may come tomorrow, or in three years. It may not come at all.

That is an area beyond control. What can be controlled is only the way the winter is spent. What determines that way is the answer to this very question.

The badge, or the presidency? The means, or the end? Once this answer is decided, the rest will follow.

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Chapter 19. The Art of Reducing and Embracing Enemies

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Part 6. Back to People Again

In the winter of 200 AD, flames rose over the plains of Guandu in Henan Province. As the smoke from Yuan Shao's burning granaries covered the sky, the morale of his army of 100,000 plummeted. Cao Cao's forces were less than half of Yuan Shao's.

Food supplies were running out, and Cao Cao was so cornered that he had sent a letter to his strategist, Xun Yu, about retreating to Xuchang. Then, Xu You, a strategist for Yuan Shao, defected. Cao Cao rushed out to meet him without even putting on his shoes.

Acting on Xu You's tip, Cao Cao launched a surprise attack on the logistics base at Wuchao, instantly turning the tide of the war. With Zhang He and Gao Lan surrendering, Yuan Shao's army collapsed.

While Cao Cao's subordinates were searching through the materials of Yuan Shao's camp amid the ruins of victory, a heavy chest was discovered. Inside was a bundle of letters. It was a pile of secret correspondence sent to Yuan Shao by generals and officials within Cao Cao's own camp.

These were traces of those who, judging that Yuan Shao would win when the tide was against Cao Cao, had tried to align themselves with him in advance. By checking the names of the collaborators, Cao Cao could have known exactly who had betrayed him. His advisors raised their voices, demanding that every name be cross-referenced and the individuals punished.

Their logic was that the traitors had to be rooted out and made an example of to restore military discipline. The anger of the loyalists, who had shed blood on the battlefield, was only natural.

Cao Cao looked at the bundle of letters. A brief silence followed. Then, without opening a single letter, he ordered them to be thrown into the fire.

To his subordinates who asked why, Cao Cao said, "Even I could not be certain of victory or defeat; how much more so for others?" While the flames consumed the letters, the hundreds of people present held their breath. Many of those who had sent the letters were likely standing right there.

They watched as the paper bearing their names turned to ash. Instead of the sound of their lives burning away, they heard the sound of paper burning. At that moment, when the fear of death turned into relief, gratitude for Cao Cao must have been etched into their very bones.

This scene is still talked about 1,800 years later not just because of Cao Cao's generosity. He read the structure, not the emotion. Identifying and punishing the collaborators would have satisfied an

immediate desire for revenge and earned the cheers of the loyalists.

However, it would have spread fear throughout the entire organization. Those who survived would obey out of fear, not loyalty. Obedience based on fear turns into more secretive and cunning betrayal when the next crisis arrives.

Next time, they would not leave evidence like letters, and they would secure an escape route in advance in case they were discovered. A politics of fear only makes betrayal more sophisticated; it cannot eradicate it.

By burning the letters, Cao Cao made a declaration to the entire organization: the past is forgotten; let's move forward together from now on. The moment the records of betrayal were incinerated, the collaborators became people who owed their lives to Cao Cao. A debt of life is converted into a debt of loyalty.

Dedication gained through gratitude lasts longer than obedience gained through fear. Indeed, after the Battle of Guandu, the cohesion of Cao Cao's organization grew noticeably stronger. The single act of burning the letters raised the level of loyalty across the entire organization.

Later, as Cao Cao seized control of the Central Plains and unified the North, talents from Yuan Shao's camp joined him in large numbers. This was because the story of the burned letters had spread throughout the world. The signal was sent to the whole world: "If you go to Cao Cao, the past is not questioned; you only need to show your ability."

In attracting talent, the trust that "I am safe under this person" was more powerful than a high salary or a fancy title.

This is where the difference between Yuan Shao and Cao Cao became stark. Yuan Shao imprisoned his advisor, Tian Feng, who spoke bluntly. Tian Feng was the one who had opposed the southern expedition and advocated for a war of attrition.

After the defeat at Guandu, people expected Tian Feng to be reinstated. They thought he would be given an important position since his prediction had been correct. However, Tian Feng himself sensed his impending death.

He believed that if Yuan Shao had won, he might have been forgiven, but since Yuan Shao lost, his very existence was evidence of Yuan Shao's misjudgment. As Tian Feng sensed, Yuan Shao executed him. He could not tolerate someone who had been more right than himself.

Yuan Shao's staff saw this clearly. After that, no one in Yuan Shao's camp spoke bluntly to their lord, and people like Guo Tu and Shen Pei, who only whispered sweet words in Yuan Shao's ears, took power. The organization rotted from within and completely collapsed after Yuan Shao's death due to a succession struggle among his sons.

On May 10, 1994, over 4,000 guests from around the world gathered at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. It was the inauguration of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first Black president. It happened

just four years after he was released from 27 years in prison.

One billion people worldwide watched the scene on television. In his inaugural address, Mandela spoke of the triumph of justice, peace, and human dignity. The emotion of that day lay not in the speech itself but in the guest list.

Mandela invited three white prison guards who had monitored him at Robben Island Prison to his inauguration celebration. He personally announced this fact during his inaugural luncheon speech. One of them was a prison officer named Christo Brand.

Brand was in charge of Mandela's cooking when he was imprisoned at Pollsmoor and Victor Verster prisons, and over the years, a friendship grew between them that transcended the racial barrier. When Mandela called Brand after being elected president, Brand greeted him, "Hello, Mr. Mandela."

Mandela is said to have replied, "Where did that 'Mr. ' suddenly come from? Call me Nelson, as you always have."

He maintained his title from his prison days even after becoming president. Brand worked as an administrative officer in Mandela's office after the inauguration and later became a tour guide after Robben Island was converted into a museum, sharing his and Mandela's story with visitors.

A prison officer named James Gregory was also on the guest list. Gregory was the person tasked with censoring Mandela's letters on Robben Island. Mandela invited the very person who had peered into and monitored his private correspondence for decades to his presidential inauguration to share in the joy.

In his autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom," Mandela wrote that Gregory "was a welcome contrast to the typical warder; he was polite and thoughtful." There is also a record that on the day Mandela was released in 1990, he gave Gregory a warm hug.

This strange human bond formed between the monitor and the monitored shows the essence of the person Mandela was.

Mandela also restored his relationship with Percy Yutar, the prosecutor who had prosecuted him. Yutar was the person who had requested the death penalty for Mandela during the Rivonia Treason Trial in 1963. In 1995, Mandela invited Yutar to dinner and prepared a kosher meal for Yutar, who was Jewish.

Mandela said that Yutar was simply performing his duty. The scene of having a meal with the man who had sought his death penalty—the weight of this scene is difficult to fathom.

At the inaugural luncheon, Mandela spoke from the heart without a manuscript. He spoke of the two forces that had shaped South African history. One was the force of arms and coercion that had dominated the country since 1910, and the other was the force of compassion, love, and loyalty to the country.

Mentioning the strong friendship built between Black prisoners and white guards, he testified to what happens when humans see each other as they are.

He also publicly spoke about Frederik de Klerk, the head of the government that had imprisoned him: he acknowledged that although de Klerk was the one who had made things difficult for them, he led the reform of South Africa through his personal change, courage, vision, honesty, and integrity. "We have forgotten the past. But we must know the past.

This is because, as we work together in the Government of National Unity now, we must know exactly what we have been through and what we must avoid."

If Mandela's forgiveness had stopped at sentimental tolerance, South Africa would have been engulfed in the flames of civil war. The white far-right had declared armed resistance, and the Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party was repeatedly clashing bloodily with the ANC.

In this explosive situation, the inclusion shown by Mandela was also a precisely calculated political act. Instead of making his enemies surrender, he saved their face and showed them that they also had a place in the new country, thereby removing the motivation for extreme resistance.

Establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to record past atrocities but approaching them through healing rather than retaliation was in the same vein. At the 1995 Rugby World Cup final, Mandela appeared on the field wearing the Springboks uniform, which was a symbol of apartheid, and received cheers from the white crowd.

By putting the enemy's flag on his own body, he turned the enemy into an ally. This single scene delivered a message of reconciliation more powerfully than dozens of pages of policy documents.

Eighteen hundred years lie between Cao Cao's burning of the letters and Mandela's invitation to the prison guards. However, the messages delivered by these two scenes are remarkably similar: how you treat your enemies after victory determines the lifespan of that victory. Crushing the loser feels gratifying in the moment.

Seeing those who betrayed your side punished draws cheers from the loyalists. However, those who are crushed will sharpen their blades in the dark. The embers of revenge are never completely extinguished.

On the other hand, giving the loser a place to stand earns the dissatisfaction of allies in the short term. Complaints like "Why forgive traitors?" pour in.

However, as time passes, enemies decrease and allies increase. Some of those who were forgiven sincerely convert, and the rest at least do not become active enemies. In the arithmetic of politics, reducing one enemy has the same effect as increasing one ally.

No, it is more than that. When someone who was an enemy becomes an ally, even the people they were leading come over as well.

The position of president is not the head of a faction, but the leader of the entire nation. For someone who aspires to be president, the day will inevitably come when they must sit at the same table again with those who once opposed them and those who hurt them.

If one has experienced the blade of expulsion from a party, they must imagine a situation where they have to work again with the people who brandished that blade.

The ethics committee members who voted in favor of the expulsion, the internal party opposition that led the expulsion, and the neutral faction that stood by in silence during the process—one must someday work in the same party supporting the same presidential candidate with these people.

At that time, will they face them with an angry face, or will they offer a handshake with a calm gaze? The answer to this question distinguishes the caliber of a president from the caliber of a faction leader.

There are two types of forgiveness. One is sincere forgiveness that comes from the heart, and the other is rational forgiveness that puts emotions aside for a greater goal. In politics, the second type of forgiveness is more frequently required.

Even if one cannot forgive in their heart, restoring a relationship where they can work together is the skill of a politician. When Cao Cao burned the letters, he probably didn't do it because he sincerely loved the collaborators. However, the result created by that act had the same effect as sincere forgiveness.

The action preceded the emotion. In psychology, this is called the resolution of cognitive dissonance. If you perform the act of forgiveness first, the brain adjusts the emotional side to resolve the contradiction between the action and the emotion.

By repeating gestures of forgiveness, you eventually experience the softening of your actual emotions.

However, there is a limit to forgiveness. A leader who forgives everything is not a generous leader but an unprincipled one. For acts that undermine principles, shake the foundations of democracy, or threaten the lives of the people, there should be accountability rather than forgiveness.

Mandela invited the prison guards to his inauguration, but he recorded and disclosed every detail of the structural crimes of apartheid through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While restraining personal retaliation, he precisely carried out the judgment of the wrong system. Forgiveness and forgetting are different.

Remembering but not retaliating; recording but not being trapped in hatred. The person who can maintain this boundary stands one step closer to the presidency.

Forgiving internal political opponents and forgiving acts that destroyed the constitutional order are issues on completely different levels. Those who slandered me in the primary, those who stood on the opposite side in internal party votes, and those who agreed to the expulsion are political

opponents. You can and must reconcile with them.

However, for acts that threatened democracy itself, such as the December 3rd emergency martial law, there should be a strict legal judgment rather than forgiveness. Making this distinction clear is principled forgiveness.

If someone enters politics from a prosecution background, they likely possess those cold eyes that used to interrogate criminals about their lies in depositions. Those eyes are an asset on one hand and a shackle on the other. If you look at political opponents with eyes that interrogate crimes, everyone looks like a potential defendant.

Everyone has weaknesses and flaws, so if you look with a prosecutor's gaze, there is no such thing as a flawless colleague. Training is needed to change those eyes into eyes that embrace.

Identifying an enemy's weakness with a prosecutor's eye but not attacking it with a politician's eye and instead putting it in a drawer—someday, the very fact of knowing that weakness becomes an invisible power in the relationship with the opponent. There are moments when the fact that you have a sword is enough without having to draw it.

Once you draw a sword, you can only use it once, but a sword kept in its scabbard can be used infinitely.

The surest way to reduce your enemies is not to destroy them but to make them stop being enemies. Cao Cao by burning the letters and Mandela by inviting the prison guards achieved the same thing in their respective ways. Their methods were different, but the principle was the same: opening an escape route for the loser after victory.

Choosing future stability over the sweetness of revenge. That is the training that builds the caliber of a president.

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Chapter 20. Raising a Successor Is the Most Difficult Politics

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Part 6: Back to the People

Chapter 20: Raising a Successor Is the Most Difficult Form of Politics

In 23 BC, news spread that Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire, was in critical condition. The Senate was in an uproar, and legion commanders began watching for any sign of change.

It had been only four years since this man, having ended the civil wars of the late Republic, began his de facto one-man rule under the title "Princeps" (First Citizen). If he fell, it was certain that Rome would once again be sucked into a vortex of bloody power struggles.

Less than twenty years had passed since the devastation of the civil wars following Caesar's assassination. It was a moment where the fate of the empire depended on who would succeed him.

Augustus had no legitimate sons; he had only one daughter, Julia. In Roman tradition, power was not hereditary but granted by the consent of the Senate, making the issue of succession even more complex.

Since he could not officially designate a successor, he had to design a succession structure indirectly through marriages, adoptions, and the granting of public offices. This design work became an incredibly arduous task that spanned Augustus's entire life.

Over forty years, Augustus realized poignantly that preparing someone to inherit the empire was more difficult than building the empire itself.

The first successor Augustus set his eyes on was Marcellus, the son of his sister Octavia. He was the young man closest to his own bloodline. In 25 BC, he married his fourteen-year-old daughter Julia to the twenty-three-year-old Marcellus.

This was the first stone laid in designing the future of the dynasty. Expectations were so high that the Roman poet Virgil depicted Marcellus in the *Aeneid* as a hero who would bear the future of Rome. However, Marcellus died suddenly of illness that same year at the age of twenty-three.

The empire's succession plan collapsed from the starting line. This was the first setback.

Augustus began designing once again. This time, he married his daughter Julia to Marcus Agrippa, his longtime friend and greatest general. This was in 21 BC.

Julia was eighteen, and Agrippa was forty-two. Though the age gap was large, the stability of the empire took precedence over his daughter's feelings for Augustus. This union was fruitful, resulting in three sons and two daughters.

Augustus adopted the two eldest sons, Gaius and Lucius, in 17 BC and began their imperial education from childhood. He paraded the two boys before the Roman citizens to instill an image of future leaders. Agrippa became a de facto co-ruler.

In 18 BC, he was granted tribunician power and shared command of the legions and governorship of provinces with Augustus. Coins issued at the time depicted Augustus and Agrippa side-by-side. As long as Agrippa remained, the succession structure was stable, as he could serve as a bridge until the two boys reached adulthood.

In 12 BC, Agrippa passed away from illness during an expedition. This was the second setback. Augustus lost a comrade-in-arms of nearly thirty years—a right-hand man more trustworthy than anyone else, whether on the battlefield or in politics.

Gaius and Lucius were still young boys, and the empire immediately needed an adult male to lead. Augustus turned to Livia's two sons from her previous husband, Tiberius and Drusus. These two stepsons were already making names for themselves as outstanding generals.

They were respected by the Roman legions for their distinguished service in the campaigns in Germania. Augustus arranged the marriage of Julia and Tiberius in 11 BC. Tiberius already had a wife he loved, Vipsania, who was Agrippa's daughter and had already borne him a son.

However, personal feelings were pushed aside in the face of the empire's needs. By Augustus's command, Tiberius divorced Vipsania and remarried Julia. According to Suetonius, when Tiberius accidentally encountered Vipsania on the street after the divorce, his eyes filled with tears.

Measures were subsequently taken to ensure Vipsania never crossed Tiberius's path again. Tiberius carried the wound of this forced divorce for the rest of his life. Behind the design of succession lay such personal sacrifices.

However, Drusus died in 9 BC of an illness following a fall from a horse during the Germania campaign. This was the third setback. Drusus, with his pleasant and sociable personality, was highly popular with both the Senate and the citizens, in contrast to his taciturn and cold older brother, Tiberius. Augustus had lost yet another strong candidate.

In 6 BC, an unexpected fourth blow came. Tiberius suddenly announced his withdrawal from politics and retired to the island of Rhodes. It was an unprecedented event, to the point where Augustus publicly criticized Tiberius's departure in the Senate.

Livia tried to mediate, but Tiberius insisted on his retirement, even going on a hunger strike. The surface reason was fatigue, but beneath it lay deep frustration. It was obvious that Augustus was pushing Gaius and Lucius as his successors.

Tiberius could not bear the situation where he, who bled on the battlefield to protect the empire's borders, would have to stand behind young boys with no political experience upon his return. His unhappy marriage to Julia also played a part. Julia's blatant infidelities were the talk of Roman high society and an indelible shame for Tiberius.

Tragedies continued to mount. In 2 AD, Lucius Caesar suddenly died of illness in Massilia (present-day Marseille). In 4 AD, Gaius Caesar passed away from the lingering effects of a wound sustained during the Armenian campaign.

It was the moment the succession structure Augustus had carefully cultivated for nearly twenty years since their adoption in 17 BC completely collapsed. This was the fifth setback. Marcellus, Agrippa, Drusus, Lucius, and Gaius—five potential successors had passed away or departed one after another.

No options remained.

Augustus summoned Tiberius, who had been living in seclusion on Rhodes for eight years. In 4 AD, he adopted Tiberius and officially designated him as the successor to the empire. At the same time, he set a condition: Tiberius must adopt his nephew Germanicus.

Germanicus was the son of Drusus and married to Augustus's granddaughter Agrippina; he was a young and popular general. Although Tiberius had a biological son named Drusus (the younger), Germanicus had to be placed first in the line of succession. This was the final insurance policy to continue Augustus's bloodline into the third generation.

Tiberius accepted the condition; he was in no position to refuse.

In August of 14 AD, Augustus passed away at the age of seventy-five. It had been forty-one years since he established the empire. Tiberius was a seasoned 55-year-old politician and a proven soldier.

The Senate approved Tiberius as the new emperor without any significant disturbance. The legions did not waver, and the provinces did not revolt. This peaceful transfer of power was the greatest legacy Augustus left behind.

Considering the thirteen years of civil war Rome experienced after Caesar's assassination, the final showdown with Antony, and the bloodshed of the Battle of Actium, the peaceful transition of power was an achievement bordering on a miracle.

The Roman Empire persisted for centuries afterward, and the Principate system Augustus created was maintained until the crisis of the third century.

What we should learn from Augustus's succession planning is not its brilliant success, but the fact that he never stopped despite devastating setbacks. He did not stop when Marcellus died, did not collapse when Agrippa died, did not give up when Tiberius departed, and even when Gaius and Lucius died in succession, he laid out his blueprints once again.

For over forty years, he repeated the work of searching for candidates, arranging marriages, adopting sons, sharing powers, and starting over from scratch when things failed. Scholars describe Augustus's succession structure with the concept of a "pool of candidates."

Instead of going all-in on a single successor, he raised several candidates simultaneously and responded flexibly to changes in circumstances. Creating a structure where the next person could step up if one fell was the secret to the empire not falling into chaos even in the worst situations.

This principle applies just as well to modern politics. Leaders who fail to raise successors have one thing in common: they cannot tolerate anyone more outstanding than themselves.

Seeing a subordinate ask a sharper question than their own in a meeting room makes them instinctively uncomfortable because they perceive them as a potential rival threatening their position. If this instinct is not controlled, only people less capable than themselves remain around them, creating a comfortable but lethargic organization.

It is the same pattern as when Yuan Shao executed the outspoken Tian Feng and favored the flattering Guo Tu. Even Augustus was not entirely free from this temptation. Obsessed with his own bloodline, he prioritized his young grandsons over the proven Tiberius, and as a result, paid the painful price of Tiberius's departure.

It is difficult to find cases in Korean political history where a succession structure worked successfully. Most political leaders spent all their energy maintaining their own power and showed little interest in raising the next generation. This is because, while at the peak of power, talk of a successor sounds like talk of their own exit.

Thus, they keep at arm's length the aides who bring up succession and suspect those preparing for what comes after them as potential traitors. Alternatively, even if they do raise a successor, they cannot escape the greed of trying to create a duplicate of themselves.

Setting up someone with the same career, the same tendencies, and the same way of thinking as a successor is a familiar and comfortable choice. However, a master's clone cannot surpass the master. A successor must be someone with different strengths than the master.

Identifying someone with heterogeneous capabilities who can fill the master's void and giving them the stage is true succession design. Augustus considered different types of candidates—the soldier Agrippa, the diplomat Tiberius, and the popular general Germanicus—because he did not try to fit them into a single mold.

The first competency required of a person who wants to become president is not being outstanding themselves. It is becoming a focal point where outstanding people gather voluntarily. And that centripetal force is generated when one raises the people who follow them.

A career starting from the prosecution, entering politics, and rising to the position of party leader is impressive. Legal analytical skills, organizational control, and crisis response capabilities have

already been proven.

However, to reach the presidency, one must select and raise individuals from among those who came up together who can grow into independent politicians. This is a capability of a completely different dimension from being good at something oneself.

Suppose there are seven "Pro-Han" lawmakers. These seven members standing before cameras at a press conference is only the beginning. Each of the seven must become a politician with a presence in their own district, in their own policy area, and under their own name.

A lawmaker recognized for expertise in a National Assembly committee, a lawmaker with overwhelming support in their region, a lawmaker leading policy debates within the party, and a lawmaker skilled in communicating with the media.

It is the leader's role to create a stage where such individual results can be achieved, allow space for mistakes, and support them from behind only during decisive crises. A person who shines only under the leader's shadow is a satellite, not a star. A satellite disappears when the mother planet is gone.

A star shines on its own. Creating seven stars is the most persuasive demonstration of capability as a presidential candidate.

A healthy tension must exist between a mentor and a mentee. While Augustus shared tribunician power and command of the legions with Tiberius, he also planted a check-and-balance mechanism called Germanicus. He maintained a gap where he trusted but did not blindly entrust, and checked but did not suffocate.

If this gap collapses, two problems arise. If the mentor tries to make the mentee their alter ego, the mentee suffocates. Space for independent judgment disappears, and they become a puppet unable to escape the master's shadow.

Conversely, if the mentor completely abandons the mentee, the mentee drifts. They lose direction, repeat only trial and error, and miss opportunities for growth. Watching from a proper distance, intervening only at decisive moments, allowing recoverable failures but preventing irrecoverable ones—that is the core of the art of raising a successor.

Running for the presidency is personal ambition. Raising a successor is the future of the camp. People do not bet their political lives on a politician who has only ambition and no future.

People gather around a leader who gives the conviction that "if I belong to the camp led by this person, I can also grow." More than a declaration of running for president, seeing the people who are together growing in their respective positions is a more powerful presidential message.

There is a paradox in raising a successor: one must accept the anxiety that the person raised might someday surpass them. It is not easy to watch a tree one planted grow larger than oneself. However, if the tree does not grow, there is no shade and no fruit.

When Augustus transferred power to Tiberius, he must have known that Tiberius would manage the empire in a different way than he did. Because the goal was stable succession, not perfect replication, he was able to accept that difference.

The reason Augustus invested forty years and did not give up on succession planning despite five setbacks was not for his own individual glory, but for the survival of the empire.

If a politician running for the presidency spends time and energy to raise the seven lawmakers by their side into politicians who shine in their respective fields, there is no more powerful action than that to prove their qualifications as president. The lesson Augustus left behind is that people must be raised before the empire.

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Chapter 21. Presidential Language and Presidential Dignity

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Part 6. Back to People

On February 20, 1444, tension filled the Pyeonjeon hall of Gyeongbokgung Palace. It was the day Choe Malli, the Associate Dean of the Jiphyeonjeon (Hall of Worthies), led six scholars to submit a formal protest.

They were putting the brakes on King Sejong's plan to promulgate the 28 letters of Hunminjeongeum—created the previous December—and use them to translate Chinese rhyming dictionaries. Choe Malli was the practical head of the Hall of Worthies, having served there for over 20 years.

A 12th-generation descendant of Choe Chung, known as the 'Confucius of the East,' he was listed among the 'Cheongbaengni' (incorruptible officials) and was a scholar of such strong conviction that he had submitted protests 14 times. The fact that such a man stepped forward meant the weight of the opposition was significant.

The protest had six main points. First, Joseon had followed Chinese systems since its founding, so creating independent letters went against the etiquette of Sadae (serving the great). Second, why was a new script needed when Seol Chong's Idu already existed?

Third, unjust imprisonments were a matter of official fairness, not a problem with the writing system. They raised point-by-point logical rebuttals, including the sudden implementation without discussion and the concern that the Crown Prince was spending too much time on this matter instead of his other studies.

After reading the protest, Sejong summoned Choe Malli and the others for a face-to-face meeting. The conversation from that day is preserved in the Sejong Sillok (Annals of King Sejong). Sejong asked, "Why do you say Seol Chong's Idu is right while what the King does is wrong?

Was not the original intent of creating Idu to make things convenient for the people? If so, would not the current Eonmun also be for the convenience of the people?" He continued, "Do you know rhyming dictionaries?

How many initials and vowels are in the four tones and seven sounds? If I do not correct those rhyming books, who will?" It was a declaration that he did this not because he had extra time in his old age, but because no one else could do it.

As the debate grew heated, Sejong issued a decree: "I summoned you not to punish you from the start, but to ask about a few things in the protest. However, since you have ignored reason and changed your words in response, it is difficult for you to escape your guilt."

With these words, he had the seven men imprisoned in the Uigeumbu (Royal Investigation Bureau). However, he ordered their release the very next day. Only Jeong Chang-son was dismissed from office, and further interrogation was ordered only for Kim Mun; all others were freed.

Choe Malli resigned after his release, returned to his hometown, and passed away the following year.

What is noteworthy in this anecdote is the direction of Sejong's anger. Sejong was not angry at the opposition itself, but at the attitude of responding insincerely and changing words during the debate. The expression "As my attending subjects, you clearly knew my intent" shows that the creation of Hunminjeongeum was conducted openly, not in secret.

He could tolerate opposition despite knowing his intent, but he could not bear it when they spoke inconsistently when summoned and questioned. Sejong was angry at their lack of consistency, not seeking retaliation for the opposition itself.

It is significant that Choe Malli's protest is recorded in its entirety in the Sejong Sillok. It was an expression of his will to leave even opposing views as historical records. By recording both the protest and Sejong's rebuttal, future generations can understand the motivation and background of the creation of Hunminjeongeum in detail.

If Sejong had suppressed the opposition and deleted the records, the historical context of Hunminjeongeum's creation would have vanished.

A monarch at the pinnacle of power listening to subordinates' opposing views, leaving those views in history, and not destroying the opponent even after rebutting them—this is the attitude of a leader, preceding even the language of a president.

The Haeryebon (Explanatory Edition) was completed exactly two years and five months after the protest. Scholars evaluate this Haeryebon as a scholarly response to Choe Malli's protest. Instead of emotional retaliation, he responded with a logical answer.

The Haeryebon was a work that systematically organized the principles of Hunminjeongeum's creation phonologically and philosophically, structured to dismantle the arguments of the opposition one by one. After the Haeryebon was promulgated, not a single protest was submitted. He did not suppress opposition with a sword but silenced it through persuasion.

Answering with academic completeness over two years instead of destroying the opponent in a moment of anger—this is the language of a leader shown by Sejong.

There is one more thing to note in Sejong's case. During the debate, Sejong honestly revealed his motivations. "In my old age, I merely find it hard to pass the days and make friends of books; how could it be that I do this because I dislike the old and like the new?"

This was a rebuttal to Choe Mali's portrayal of Sejong as a monarch obsessed with strange novelties. It contained the human honesty of an aging monarch immersed in the joy of linguistics. A person in power admitting their weakness and not hiding their motives has a surprising effect on the public.

People open their hearts to an honest leader more than a perfect one.

Across the ocean in America, the linguistic skills shown by Abraham Lincoln shine in a different light. Lincoln had a unique habit of managing his anger. When intense emotions toward someone surged, he wrote what he called a "hot letter."

He poured all his resentment and criticism onto the paper. During the Civil War, his anger toward generals who disobeyed his orders, political enemies who badmouthed him, and newspaper articles that mocked his appearance and abilities must have sparked like flames from the tip of his pen.

Then, he would put the letter in a drawer and wait until his emotions cooled. After a day or two, he would take it out and read it again. In most cases, he would write on the envelope: "Never sent.

Never signed."

According to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, a well-known example of Lincoln's "hot letters" was written right after the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. General Meade of the Union Army had let General Lee of the Confederacy escape without pursuit. Lee's army fled across the Potomac River.

Lincoln judged that a decisive opportunity to end the war had flown away and fell into deep frustration. He wrote a sharp letter to Meade. According to Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, Lincoln reportedly said, "It sometimes helps to write a letter full of harsh expressions and then throw it into the stove."

He did not send that letter intended for Meade either. He judged that reprimanding the general who had led the great victory at Gettysburg would destroy the army's morale. After Lincoln's death, this letter was found among his papers.

On the envelope was written: "To General Meade. Never sent. Never signed."

Lincoln's "hot letter" habit was a leadership principle that went beyond emotional control. He did not deny his feelings when he felt anger. He did not suppress them or pretend they didn't exist.

By fully releasing his emotions onto paper, he faced the reality of his feelings. According to brain imaging research conducted at UCLA, the act of expressing emotions in words itself has the effect of lowering the activation of the amygdala in the brain, reducing the intensity of the emotion. Lincoln had already mastered this principle 160 years ago.

The act of writing down anger is the act of placing anger outside of oneself. Anger placed outside becomes an object of observation. If you can observe it, you can control it.

Lincoln also had a habit of acknowledging the enemy's logic first. In the famous series of debates with Stephen Douglas during the 1858 Illinois Senatorial election, Lincoln first pointed out the parts of his opponent's arguments that made sense.

Winning a debate by making the opponent look like a fool might get applause from the audience, but it makes the opponent a permanent enemy. If you acknowledge the rational parts within the opponent's logic before rebutting, the defeated opponent can withdraw without feeling insulted.

After becoming president, he appointed political rivals who had mocked and ignored him to his cabinet, forming what is known as the "Team of Rivals." William Seward, who was appointed Secretary of State, was a man who had laughed at Lincoln as an "Illinois backwoodsman" after losing to him in the Republican presidential primary.

Lincoln embraced Seward as a core advisor, and Seward later became deeply impressed by Lincoln and was a loyal assistant. It is said that when Lincoln was assassinated, Seward wailed from his sickbed. A scene where a person who once mocked him wept for him—this was the fruit of the relationships created by Lincoln's language.

What we should learn from Lincoln's language is not the technique, but the attitude. Words intended not to defeat the opponent but to understand them; words intended not to prove one's own righteousness but to find a path to move forward together. Supporters cheer when a candidate bitterly attacks an opponent's weaknesses in a political debate.

However, once the debate is over, the opponent's supporters become permanent enemies. Conversely, if you acknowledge the opponent's strengths and then calmly explain why your alternative is better, the immediate applause may decrease, but people will cross over from the opposing camp.

Reducing one enemy is a greater asset in an election than winning a single debate.

The language of a lawyer and the language of a politician have the same roots but bear different fruits. The lawyer's language is precise. It is a language trained in a world where a single character's difference can overturn a judgment.

Sharpness that digs into the gaps of legal provisions and keenness that mercilessly strikes logical loopholes are the virtues of legal language. The precise linguistic sense developed over 13 years of writing investigation records and indictments as a prosecutor is a precious asset.

The ability to accurately organize complex issues, exclude ambiguous expressions, and tightly weave chains of logic shines everywhere.

However, the language of politics is not enough with precision alone. There must be warmth in the language of politics. In court, you persuade a judge with logic, but in the plaza, you must move citizens with stories.

Those persuaded by data and legal codes are few, while the majority open their hearts when they feel their life's pain has been acknowledged. A balance is needed: dissecting the problem accurately with a lawyer's scalpel while wrapping the wound with a politician's warm hand. Training to find this balance must be done consciously.

This is because lawyerly habits have been ingrained for over 20 years. If you are not conscious, you end up speaking in front of people as if reading a deposition. If you respond with a legal interpretation to the grievances of a mother met at Seomun Market, she will turn away feeling misunderstood.

The diagnosis that the conservative wing is at a shameful level in need of reconstruction is accurate. A party that has gone through an unprecedented event like the December 3rd Emergency Martial Law and reached the point of a presidential impeachment will be permanently turned away by the people if it does not reflect.

Few would disagree with the accuracy of this diagnosis. The problem is what comes after the diagnosis. Pointing out what is wrong is the work of a prosecutor; suggesting how to fix it is the work of a politician.

If you stop at the diagnosis, you are a critic. You must go as far as the prescription to be a leader. A concrete blueprint for who to gather, what policies to create, and what organizations to establish for the reconstruction of conservatism must follow the diagnosis.

The language of diagnosis must be sharp, but the language of prescription must be warm. When saying let's reconstruct conservatism, the millions of party members and supporters who have believed in conservative values must feel that "I can be part of this too." If it ends at pointing out shame, supporters will feel they have been defined as shameful beings.

Just as Sejong did not destroy Choe Malli while rebutting his protest, there must be a space to embrace the other between the diagnosis and the prescription.

A president's language should be sharp yet warm, accurate yet relaxed, and firm yet humble. Melting these contradictory demands into a single sentence is the dignity of a president. Sejong did not give up on Hunminjeongeum while listening to the opposing views of his subjects.

He responded to the opposition with the Haeryebon, a scholarly reply spanning two years and five months. Lincoln acknowledged the enemy's logic without bending the principles of the abolition of slavery. He wrote letters of anger but did not send them, so he did not lose his generals.

Keeping principles but softening expressions, having conviction but discarding self-righteousness—within that gap, the language of a president lives and breathes.

Once words are spoken, they cannot be taken back. Just as Lincoln kept his letters in a drawer, we need a habit of keeping posts intended for social media in a draft folder. Reading them again after a day, nine times out of ten, one concludes it is better not to post them.

The weight of trust built by a thousand words of careful silence is far greater than the momentary thrill brought by a single biting remark. In the conference rooms of Yeouido and Seocho-dong, in front of the cameras of television debates, and before the smartphone screen held in hand at 4 a. m.

, the habit of recalling Lincoln's drawer before speaking is the daily training that builds a president's dignity.

A politician's dignity is revealed not in the moments of speaking, but in the moments of not speaking.

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Chapter 22. What Leaders Who Changed Their Age Through People Left Behind

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Part 6: Back to the People

Chapter 22: What Leaders Who Changed the Era Through People Left Behind

On December 23, 1783, a short ceremony was held at the State House in Annapolis, Maryland. It was the moment when George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army who led the Revolutionary War to victory, returned his military commission to the Confederation Congress.

In front of members of Congress and onlookers, Washington read a short speech. It contained words of gratitude for the officers who served with him, hopes for the nation's future, and respect for the authority of Congress. Witnesses recorded that Washington's hands trembled while he read the speech.

As the commander in his military uniform laid his commission on the table, people inside the hall were moved to tears. It is said that Washington himself wept. It was the tremor of a man laying down the immense weight he had carried while sharing life and death with his subordinates on the battlefield for eight years.

The reason this scene is historic lies not in what he did, but in what he did not do. The commander who led an eight-year war to victory did not use that military power to ascend to a throne. In the world at that time, it was the natural course for a war hero to maintain power with the military in hand.

Julius Caesar of Rome did so, Oliver Cromwell of England did so, and later Napoleon of France would do the same. Washington could have done so as well; the army was absolutely loyal to him. In March 1783, near the end of the war, officers stationed at Newburgh plotted a military coup to protest the non-payment of wages by Congress.

Washington appeared before the officers and calmed them with a persuasive speech. It is said that as he took out his glasses, saying, 'Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray but almost blind in the service of my country,' the hardline officers burst into tears. Washington's influence was that absolute.

If he had wanted to be king, no one could have stopped him.

Instead, Washington returned to his farm at Mount Vernon, Virginia. He went back to the life of a farmer, plowing fields and tending to his vineyard. Upon hearing this news, King George III of Great Britain across the Atlantic reportedly said, 'If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world.'

' Even an absolute monarch was struck with admiration by the sight of a leader voluntarily relinquishing absolute power. Washington's choice, which even the absolute rulers of his day had to acknowledge, was a nearly unique instance of voluntary transfer of power in political history.

The outcome of Washington's voluntary return to private life was far grander than anything he would have gained by ascending the throne. The tradition of civilian rule took root in the fledgling republic of the United States.

The principle was established that the military obeys and elected civilians exercise power, rather than soldiers seizing it—all through the choice of one man. In all of American history since, no general has attempted to seize power by force.

This stands in sharp contrast to the numerous countries in South America, Africa, and Asia where military coups have been frequent and war heroes transformed into dictators. We know that South Korea, too, has not been free from this temptation.

Six years later, in 1789, Washington was elected as the first President with nearly unanimous support. Greater power returned to him precisely because he had not clung to it. The people were willing to entrust the nation to the man who had voluntarily laid down his sword.

After finishing two terms, he could have served a third, but he refused. He returned once more to Mount Vernon. This precedent led to the tradition of term limits for U.

S. Presidents, which was officially codified 150 years later in 1951 as the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution. One man's choice became a nation's Constitution.

The reason people gather around someone who knows how to let go of power is clear: it creates trust that they will not be consumed as mere tools. Around a leader who clings to power, everyone becomes a replaceable part used to maintain that power. The lifespan of such a part ends the moment its utility vanishes.

People who witness a leader using subordinates as shields to protect their position and discarding them once their value is gone work in fear that their turn will be next. Those who work in fear do only what they are told. Voluntary dedication disappears, and only face-saving remains.

Conversely, around a leader who knows how to relinquish power, people become colleagues working together rather than tools of the leader. A collegial relationship persists regardless of utility. The fact that people still seek out a leader even after they have stepped down is the true evidence of leadership.

How credit is shared reveals the caliber of a leader. Under a leader who says 'I did it,' members feel their contributions are not recognized. They stay up all night writing reports, tour constituencies on weekends, and block arrows of criticism with their bodies, yet at the press conference announcing the results, the leader stands alone before the cameras.

They can tolerate it once. They can understand it twice. By the third time, resentment builds, and by the fourth, their hearts depart.

As discussed in the previous chapter, people leaving is not an event that happens suddenly one day, but the result of layers of alienation and unfairness.

Under a leader who says 'We did it,' members feel like the protagonists of the victory. Who would leave a story where they are the main character? Washington's action in his Annapolis speech, where he first thanked the officers who fought alongside him, was the behavior of a man who had internalized this principle.

He attributed the credit for victory to his subordinates. During the eight years of the Revolutionary War, Washington experienced numerous defeats. He was pushed out of New York, chased from New Jersey, and during the harsh winter at Valley Forge, his soldiers walked barefoot through the snow.

Every time they lost, Washington took the responsibility upon his own shoulders. Instead of publicly blaming his subordinate generals, he requested support from Congress and revised his own strategies. Taking the blame for defeat while giving the credit for victory is easy to say but hard to practice.

The temptation to stand before the camera in the moment of victory is nearly instinctive. It takes willpower to overcome that temptation, step back, and bring one's colleagues to the fore.

Sharing credit also requires courage. Giving away part of an achievement one has built up in another person's name feels like one's own presence is diminishing. For a politician who needs media attention and must inform voters of their achievements, this is a painful choice.

Yet paradoxically, the more credit is shared, the deeper people's loyalty becomes, and that deepened loyalty returns as an even greater victory in the next election. The arithmetic that giving eventually leads to receiving more than one took holds true in politics as well.

True sharing of credit happens after the cameras are turned off. More important than the rhetoric at a press conference is the daily practice of whose opinions are reflected and whose merits are recorded in appointments, budget allocations, and policy-making processes.

People quickly see through a leader who says 'We did it' with their mouth but monopolizes the power of appointment. People are instinctively sensitive to detecting inconsistencies between words and actions.

Explicitly mentioning the name of the person who came up with an idea when adopting it in a meeting, detailing a staff member's contribution in an achievement report, and not omitting those who worked silently in personnel appointments—the accumulation of these small acts builds organizational loyalty.

A leader's way of relating to others creates a nation's political culture. Just as Washington's precedent of voluntarily returning power formed the American democratic tradition, a leader's attitude

toward people determines the culture of that organization.

Under a leader who uses and discards subordinates as tools, a culture of trying to use one another as tools spreads among the members as well. They learn that stepping on the weak to climb up is the rule for success.

Under a leader who respects subordinates as colleagues and shares credit, a culture of cooperation and sharing grows naturally among the members. They come to recognize a colleague's success not as a threat to themselves, but as an asset for the entire camp.

The relationship style of a single party leader can change the culture of the entire party, and the relationship style of a President can change the culture of the entire government, and by extension, the political culture of the entire nation.

I reflect on why 'leaders who leave people behind' have been rare in Korean politics. It may be because the duration of power was short under the five-year single-term presidency. Since results had to be produced in a short time, there was no room to nurture people.

When their terms ended, most political leaders experienced a rapid decline in power, and the people by their side scattered. As this pattern repeated, short-term thinking took root in Korean politics: 'Power is seasonal, so you must use it while you have it.

' However, it is precisely that short-term thinking that turned people into tools and made politics shallow. Nurturing people with a long-term perspective and building relationships that endure even after power has vanished—that is the starting point for breaking this vicious cycle.

Korean conservative politics now stands before a time of bone-deep self-reflection. The destruction of the constitutional order through the declaration of martial law occurred in the name of conservatism, and the responsibility for that weighs heavily on the entire conservative camp. The way to escape this weight is not through new policies or a new image.

It begins with changing the way people are treated. The reconstruction of conservatism begins with the reconstruction of people.

It starts with making eye contact with each and every party member and listening to their stories. It starts with remembering the names of residents in one's constituency and asking after a mother who was said to be ill last time.

More than a grand declaration of vision, saying 'I will listen to your story' to the person sitting across from you is the first step of reconstruction. Grand discourses cannot open people's hearts; specific concern opens them.

Calling someone by their name, remembering previous conversations, and keeping what was promised—these small things accumulate to become trust. Just as Washington's one moment of honesty at Newburgh when he took out his glasses stopped a coup, a single sincere small action by a leader can change the direction of an entire organization.

For someone who has decided to be a leader who shares credit, I recommend a daily exercise: once a day, publicly acknowledge something someone in your camp has done well. If a fellow lawmaker's questioning in a plenary session was excellent, saying 'I heard your questioning today, it was great' in the hallway.

If the materials a staffer stayed up all night to prepare proved effective, mentioning their name and expressing gratitude on the spot. When such habits build up not for a day or two but for years, a thick layer of people who voluntarily dedicate themselves forms around that person. This layer is the very engine that pushes one all the way to the presidency.

The significance of titles like 'Party Representative' or 'Expelled' depends on what kind of people were by one's side and who remained during those processes. A politician's true asset is not the list of titles on their resume, but the number of people who come to visit even on nights when the phone doesn't ring.

The question posed in the prologue returns here: Who is left in your phone? Why did they stay?

Cao Cao turned enemies into allies by burning their secret letters to the foe. Mandela turned an enemy into a friend by inviting his jailer to his inauguration. Augustus invested 40 years in nurturing a successor, failing again and again, but eventually completed the peaceful transition of the empire.

King Sejong completed the Hunminjeongeum while leaving the protest memorials of opposing officials as a matter of record. Lincoln did not lose a general because he wrote letters of anger but did not send them. Washington gained greater power by laying power down.

There is one thread that runs through these stories: winning people is harder than winning power, keeping people is more precious than keeping power, and leaving people behind lasts longer than leaving power behind. Power is finite. A President's term is five years, and a party leader's term is two.

When that time passes, power shifts to someone else. But people remain. The memory of working together, the bond of overcoming a crisis together, and the thrill of sharing a victory together do not disappear when a term ends.

They become the nourishment for the next challenge.

In South Korea, politics that uses and discards people as tools has continued for a long time. A politics that wins people, keeps people, and leaves people behind must begin. There are eyes watching to see what choice is made by the person standing at that starting point.

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Epilogue: "I Will Be Back" and the Weight of Saying You Will Return

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Part 6: Returning to People

Epilogue: "I Will Be Back"—The Weight of Saying You Will Return

In November 1962, Richard Nixon stood at a press conference after losing the California gubernatorial election. He had a two-day growth of stubble on his face, and his voice was cracked. He told the reporters, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference."

Political commentators who watched the broadcast wrote that Nixon's political life was over. ABC News aired a special program that night titled 'The Political Obituary of Richard Nixon. '

Six years later, in November 1968, Nixon was elected President of the United States.

What did Nixon do during those six years? He moved to New York, worked at a law firm, and contributed to foreign affairs journals. He traveled the world and met with global leaders.

Helping with the Republican midterm elections, he sent campaign funds to candidates nationwide and personally went to their districts to deliver speeches. When the Republicans regained 47 seats in the House in the 1966 midterms, many of the candidates who contributed to that victory owed a debt to Nixon.

For six years after being pronounced politically dead, Nixon built up his support, person by person.

Saying you will return is easy. Becoming someone who is capable of returning is difficult.

It is not just Nixon. There is a common pattern in the trajectories of the political leaders covered in this book. Those who rose again after losing power did one thing during their time away: they met people.

Even after being purged for the third time, Deng Xiaoping never stopped corresponding with local officials. Kim Dae-jung wrote letters incessantly from prison and exile. During his "wilderness years," Churchill continued to write while maintaining meetings with a minority group of anti-appeasement MPs.

They were able to return not because of a desire for revenge or ambition, but because they never let go of the threads of their relationships, even while they were away.

A distinction is necessary here. Keeping the threads of a relationship is different from "managing" people for the sake of a comeback. The other person feels the former, and they feel the latter too.

The difference lies in the presence or absence of an ulterior motive. When writing a letter, there are those who write calculating that it will one day return as a vote, and there are those who write because they are genuinely curious about how the person is doing. The recipient knows the difference, because the "temperature" of the handwriting is different.

This book has examined the process of how politicians gain and lose people across twenty-two chapters. Lincoln's cabinet, Mandela's inauguration, Merkel's silence, Sejong's personnel management, and Cao Cao's burned letters. Though the eras and continents differ, there is one sentence that runs through all these stories.

Power comes from the people and returns to the people.

This sentence must be read in both directions. Coming from the people means that the source of power is not institutions or titles, but the trust of living people. Returning to the people means that the decisions made by those in power ultimately change someone's daily life.

Politicians who understand this cycle see power as a tool. Politicians who forget the cycle mistake power for a possession. A tool can be set down once it has been used.

A possession causes anger when it is taken away.

In March 1797, when George Washington returned to his farm at Mount Vernon after serving two terms, there was no precedent anywhere in the world for a supreme leader voluntarily stepping down. Kings sat on their thrones until they died, and revolutionaries became new kings. Washington made a different choice.

On the day he left, John Adams, who was then being inaugurated as the second president of the United States, wrote that the tears in the eyes of the crowd at the inauguration were directed not at the new president, but at the man who was leaving.

There is a reason why people show deeper respect to someone who has laid down power. It is because someone who knows how to leave is someone who deserves to return. People do not offer loyalty to those obsessed with their positions. People gather voluntarily around someone who remains the same person even without a position.

"I will be back."

This sentence is familiar as a movie line, but in the world of politics, anyone who utters these words must bear their weight. Saying you will return is a promise. A promise comes with two conditions.

One is what you will bring with you when you return. If the same person from six years ago returns, there is no reason for them to return. Nixon returned transformed into a foreign policy expert, and Deng Xiaoping returned with a blueprint for reform and opening up.

Kim Dae-jung returned as the architect of Asian democracy. People do not open their doors to politicians who return empty-handed.

The other is how you lived while you were away. This is what people look at even before the policies or visions you bring back. Did you walk through market alleys during the winter, did you sit in the library and study, did you resent or forgive those who pushed you out?

The answers to these questions are proven only by actions, not words. People do not remember the sentences of a press conference; they remember the footprints left during the winter.

I will leave one final thing for the reader turning the last page of this book.

In the end, there is only one way for a politician to win people over: treating people as human beings. It means meeting people with the same attitude whether you have a title or not. This is not a technique, but a fundamental disposition.

A disposition does not change overnight. That is why, although I used the word "method" in the title of this book, it is in truth a story about something that can hardly be called a method. It is a story about an attitude that transcends methods, and a way of being that transcends attitude.

The weight of saying you will return depends on how the person who said it spends their winter.

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