



© 2009-13. *A Beyond The Ceiling e-book. All rights reserved.*

[www.danielbatten.co](http://www.danielbatten.co)  
[contact@danielbatten.co](mailto:contact@danielbatten.co)

	2
<b>About The Author</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The quest begins</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The First Secret</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Second Secret</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>The Third Secret</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The Forth Secret</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>The Fifth Secret</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>The Sixth Secret</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>One year on</b>	<b>84</b>

## About The Author

Daniel helps good people inspire action. These good people could be leaders wanting to inspire a team, professional wanting to inspire with their message about their company's product or services, or business owners wanting to create clear messages about what they do that inspires possible customers, employees and even investors to get into conversations with them.

He's written 2 books on clear messaging, and has helped several companies (including his own) go global through using the approaches you'll find in this book.

**Follow him on Twitter:** @dsbatten

## Introduction

I have a fundamental belief that influence can save someone's life: yours. It can save a life from being lived below the ceiling. Because without influence, you are at the mercy of your environment.

A person without influence is like a car without the ignition key switched on. Occasionally the car will find a slope and roll down it – creating the illusion of progress for a time.

But unless you have the ability inside you to fire consistently, irrespective of whether the road ahead is steep, flat or downhill – you will not be able to achieve anywhere near what you are capable of during your time spent on this planet.

The problem is: most people have encountered the wrong sort of influence in the past: inauthentic influence *techniques* to create a result that is good for the person “doing” the influencing, but not always for you. You won't find any of that here.

This book will show you how to influence people authentically. Nothing here is something you “do” to people, it is about how you *be with people*. And the results are far more powerful as a result.

Nothing here is about manipulating people, it is about how *you and the person you influence* get more than either of you had before your influence occurs. Nothing here will feel “icky” or underhand – but many things will be surprising and unfamiliar.

It is written as a dialog based on my experiences mentoring clients in influencing skills, because that way I'm not just giving you information – I'm providing one model for how influential dialog can look.

It is written as a *story* for reasons that will become apparent in the very first chapter. Also, the secrets in this book *demand* this context – and more would be lost than gained by writing it in an informational collection of facts, stats and case studies, rather than an inspirational narrative.

Those other things are also important, but most people already have an adequate grasp of how to “create a case” using facts/stats/case studies. So they are important; but they are nowhere near as important to influence as the six secrets you will discover in this book.

Finally, sometimes people comment that what I teach could be dangerous in the wrong hands. That is something I seriously considered before making this book available outside my personal one-on-one influence training programs.

And for this reason I did not publish this book until I had found a way to render the secrets in this book useless in the hands of those who seek to use it to manipulate or gain power over others. What you are going to read has been painstakingly designed to *only work* when you

- believe in what you are doing and
- your purpose is not only for your own good but also for the good of the person you are influencing
- you have at least some interest in the greater good.

If you are not in this category, please delete this resource and write to me and I will refund your purchase in full.

### **Where it all started**

My story started back when legwarmers were fashionable, Walkmans were new, and “Chariots of Fire” was top of the charts. I was a nervous twelve year old dreading school. I didn’t dread all of school, just one part that happened once a month, without fail and without escape.

As part of the uncommonly high emphasis our school placed on ‘oral language’ we had to prepare and recite a universally loathed three-minute speech to the class.

I reviled this day with all my thumping heart, stammering lips and clammy palms. Contracting a “rare illness” did not work - we simply had to do it upon our return; failing to rehearse didn’t work – we were made to do it unprepared.

After three woeful speeches, something strange happened. In recounting it to other people today, it feels about as sophisticated as Thomas the Tank Engine achieving his dreams by pumping out “I know I can” – but this is the way it happened, so this is the way I’ll tell it.

Something inside me said, “The only reason you speak badly is because you *fear* speaking badly. But the reverse is also true. If you expect to speak well – you will.”

Spurred on by this mysterious message, for the next three days, I practiced sounding courageous with my unbroken voice, and practiced looking confident in front of my mum’s full-length mirror until I was out of time.

Speech day arrived.

I opened my mouth, made a joke and waited for the groans. A few people laughed. I was staggered. I’d never told a joke that someone had laughed at before in my life. My confidence grew.

Was my strategy working? Spontaneously, my voice started incorporating what I’d practiced. I noticed the audience smiling and listening attentively. That was a new experience!

This became like a **virtuous upward spiral** every time I notice the connection with the audience deepen, my confidence in turn would go up, till by the end, the teacher could not believe that I was the same timid 12-year old.

One year later, despite overwhelming shyness, I had just spoken in front of 500 of my peers. In a state of post-speech calm, I heard with disbelief the words “Winner of the speech competition: Daniel Batten!”

The sequence of strategies I practiced back in 1982, however formative, had worked. What I didn’t know then was that this was to be a turning point in my life.

### **How can influence be taught?**

From that point forward I noticed that life surged ahead or stagnated depending on whether I spoke in a way that influenced people. As providence would have it, the lesson in 1982 was to be the first insight of six that life gifted me about how authentic influence occurs.

24 years later, I wondered “could what I had learnt be taught?” Remembering to the fact that my grandmother had once put me on a life-saving track through being influential, and my father had not taken a life-saving track because of someone’s failure to be influential – I realized that I had been given the mission to train people in a new form of authentic influence.

Through the teaching I have done since, it has become my fundamental belief that not only does anyone born with the gift of speech ~~had~~ have the potential for influential speech, but learning the art of influence is the single most neglected art in life which when mastered makes the biggest difference to the results we experience in life.

Influence will raise your market value, your company value and your value in the eyes of others. It will allow you to achieve more and work less, entertain people more and enjoy life at a higher level.

People regard influencers more highly, and yes you will even be able to find the way to convince your children why it is in their best interests to keep their room tidy.

Influence can even save someone’s life. And if you would like to learn how to do this authentically – then you must be doing something right in your life because providence has guided you to the right resource.

## The quest begins

Monday morning, 8 a.m. Lucie was getting ready for work. She'd just tried on her third floral dress, and had put enough mousse in her hair to set a tiramisu. In between gazing at her unforgiving clock, she scrambled to locate the contact lens case she'd lost in her flap, as her 8.30 team meeting approached. Then it started. Discomfort became 'queeze', and queeziness became nausea. Within two minutes she realized she wasn't going to work that day. However uncomfortable she felt as she doubled over attempting to breathe away the pain she couldn't help but notice a single lucid feeling: relief. Relief that her darts of discomfort had successfully jettisoned a Monday morning team meeting she really didn't want.

Across town, Anton had gut-wrench for another reason. He was about to deliver a message to the local authorities. Specifically, he was about to entreat the council to stop a new swanky apartment complex from encroaching onto a public park. His argument made perfect sense in his head. But once his lips parted and his words of righteous indignation spilt forth, he felt that no-one could grasp the plain sense of what he said. And then the butterflies started – although by now they felt more like large marsupials using his stomach-lining for trampoline practice. He looked down and noticed that a small bit of vertical wear had just encroached onto the knees of his corduroy trousers as he contemplated speaking to a group of unfriendly and bureaucratic strangers.

Three streets away, Don the musician was also preparing for work. Unlike Lucie, he loved his job, but he knew that even if today's gig were playing lead guitar next to Bono at Wembley stadium, it would give him little pleasure. He had everything: funky apartment complete with wardrobe of fashionably ripped jeans, great job, wide circle of friends, even a modest gathering of fans, but no-one to share his dreams and setbacks with. Yesterday had begun so promisingly, yet ended so despondently with those six familiar syllables, that fell on him like a six-pronged dagger to the heart with the piercing sound of 'I really like you but ...'

Far across town on the sun-bathed northern slopes, Mary slipped into her navy business suit. She didn't normally dress like this but today, like Anton, she was anticipating an important presentation. Mary's target however was not concerned citizens, but calculating investors. She'd completed an MBA. She'd soared through courses on writing and presenting business cases. She'd mustered up a reasonable career in sales but somehow all that now seemed as useful as her Year 10 "most improved player in 2<sup>nd</sup> XI Hockey" certificate. She couldn't win her pitch on what she'd done years ago, she had to win it on who she was today, and today she was an overly tense executive who in one hour's time would send her audience to sleep, not because she'd forgotten her words, but because she'd failed to make her words unforgettable.

Unbeknownst to these people, they all shared something else besides a bad Monday. That Monday each of them had made a phone call to the *Institute of Dragon Taming*. And each of them was about to come into contact with Johann Heller, a 6'5" blonde German, widely known for his unique combination of curt precision and indefatigable enthusiasm.

On that day, the 19th of August, true to form, Johann was to receive four messages and make four phone calls, within a ten-minute window. To each one he said only a curt Hello, followed by ‘Thank you for your call. I’m tied up for the next month, but have a small and unexpected opening today. Whatever you are doing, reschedule it and meet me at 1pm at the *Institute of Dragon Taming*.’

He gave the address to each one, and then politely yet purposefully ended the call.

As it happened, they all turned up at 1pm. Don and Mary were first to arrive at the Institute: a horseshoe-shaped building with wide arches in place of doors. Sometimes you meet someone and feel either instant accord or discord, but sometimes it is as though you are from parallel worlds – running through the same space and time with nothing in common. They both quickly ascertained that this was the case for them. Within minutes, they were relieved to have their awkward silence broken by the arrival of Lucie, followed soon after by Anton.

Don and Anton began chatting casually as Lucie struck up a tentative conversation with Mary – both conversations following similar themes about the oddness of their phone call and how they came to know Johann.

Five minutes later, Johann came in. He greeted them all with a wry smile, and a curt ‘thanks for coming’. Before anyone could ask questions, he began showing them around the office, where they saw other people who had met the Dragon Tamer.

They moved around the ‘office’ – but it was not an office at all. There were so many skylights and verandas; it was hard to be sure what was inside and what was outside. All around, they saw incongruous images: people in smart-casual attire picking and eating fruit from real fruit trees; three women in basketball gear reclining in lounge chairs; a man in a suit juggling. They walked up a set of spiral stairs past what seemed to be a crèche, and a little further along a woman playing classical guitar next to a group of office workers. The workers appeared to be recording conversations to themselves and playing them to others who were giving feedback. Among the more typical office scenes of talking on phones and tapping on keyboards, they saw animated presentations being practiced, people in a glass room having a stand-up meeting – no tables and no chairs, and a group of people playing volleyball in the courtyard.

As they soaked in the extraordinary and paradoxical sights before their eyes, Johann announced, ‘I’d like you all to meet someone.’

‘The Dragon Tamer?’ asked Anton.

‘Actually’ continued Johann, ‘you are each going to meet a different person who works here, called a ‘Muse’. But each person will be meeting someone who has met the Dragon Tamer and they will tell you something of their experience which will have relevance to you.’

Before they had time for a single question, he put up his hand in a policeman’s stop gesture, ‘But not today, you have seen enough for now. Rebook all appointments you have for next week and see me here at 8.30am next Monday morning.’

Their reaction was similar: conflicted. On one hand, “who was this Johann to assume I can suddenly forgo my schedules for a whole week, at such short notice?” On the other, “If this really will do half of what Johann is suggesting, I want to start right now.”

One week later to the day – Don, Mary, Lucie and Anton entered the *Institute of Dragon Taming*. After a week’s wait and a significant level of rescheduling, each brought with them a combustible mixture of nervousness and anticipation. Once more, Johann came to greet them, and reminded them that they would meet someone who had been through a situation relevant to them. He had through the help of the Dragon Tamer achieved the ability to inspire anyone – anywhere, and was now teaching others to do the same.

Don, whose mood had been lowest the week before, was particularly looking forward to meeting someone who could give him some useful advice on his romantic predicament. What he actually encountered was a Muse he immediately noticed to be more “business-like” than he would ordinarily mix with. The well-dressed Muse wore a black suit with a double-Windsor tie-knot of admirable symmetry. On top of the suit was perched a well-groomed head, clean-shaven face, and from the lips on that face he heard this person say that he had experience in ‘pitching for investment’. Don replied, ‘I’m sorry, I think there must have been some sort of mix-up.’

Mary meanwhile had gone to meet her Muse, only to discover that the Muse ran a successful dating agency. Mary told the casually dressed young lady with the wavy hair politely yet clearly, ‘I am single and happily so. I’m not looking for distraction; I’m looking for investors. I think you have me mixed up with *Dear Don*.’

This chaos was not limited to Don and Mary. Anton found himself with someone who was an expert on the interview technique and Lucie had been paired with someone who had expertise in fighting environmental and social causes in front of a large audience – something she had no interest in whatsoever.

Within five minutes, Johann received four phone calls. ‘You’ve got me mixed up’, ‘What’s the meaning of this?’ and similar variants piped down his cellphone, into his enduring ear. Johann’s patient yet brief response to each one was: ‘There is no mix up. There is method in the appearance of madness. If you don't want to give it a shot, you can leave now – no hard feelings. It's up to you. But give it a shot first.’

All except Mary decided to take the plunge. So Johann paired each of the remaining three, once again, with their original bizarre choice of a muse. Mary was about to leave with a polite ‘thanks anyway’, when Johann called out ‘wait’.

Mary stood contemplating the surrealism of last week’s office tour. She noticed consternation welling up inside, at having rescheduled a whole week only to be paired up with a woman who knew nothing about pitching for investment: the very thing she needed help with. Johann interrupted her train of thought. ‘Each one of you thinks your problem is completely unique. Yet it is exactly the same, don’t you see that?’

‘Honestly? No. And by the way, is Don getting advice on how to pitch to investors? I can’t believe that I just spent –’

Johann interrupted. ‘Mary, permit me to explain.’ Mary sighed audibly. While she felt somewhat less than ecstatic, she acquiesced. Johann continued. ‘Imagine that you are going through a forest looking for some valuable bronze coins you have heard were in that forest. During your search, you see an old suitcase. Inside the suitcase, unknown to you, is the world’s largest diamond. Because it does not match your description, you ignore it and continue looking for those bronze coins.’

Imagine that diamond is called “influence anyone in any setting” – isn’t that more valuable than the smaller and narrower wealth of money, investment capital or a good pitch? Wouldn’t this be a currency that you could exchange for everything you are looking for today, and still have a football-sized diamond left for other things you may not have thought of looking for?

‘I guess.’

‘Doesn’t everyone in the whole world want to communicate something of value, connect with and be heard by others?’

‘For sure.’

‘And yet nowhere has anyone told us how to do this. Maybe as a child, you are taught how to play a musical instrument. But you are never taught how to use your own words as an instrument to inspire people. And so we seek to inspire people, but we settle for informing people. Isn’t that what’s happened?’ asked Johann.

*‘He sure asks a lot of questions,’* thought Mary. ‘Yes. Yes it is.’

‘And those that never learn to inspire others end up destined to live beneath their potential. It’s as if a false ceiling hovers over your head. In life, this ceiling represents those key opportunities we either break through or bounce back. Right now, your ceiling appears to be that you haven’t won an investment pitch.’

But that ceiling could be a potential love match you win or fail to win, or it could be a job interview, a chance to influence a person about a cause you care about, a sales presentation or a chance to influence a whole community or company to do the right thing, couldn’t it?’

‘Yes. Okay, I see what you are getting at now. You are saying that if you paired me up with my subject expert I’d learn to inspire specific people in specific settings – but my Muse will supposedly teach me to inspire anyone in any setting?’ said Mary.

Johann nodded slowly, and then clapped his large hands together like a pair of cymbals signaling a shift in the tempo of a symphony.

‘Your Muse will start with you on the hour, which means you will need to wait until the next hour begins. In the meantime I’ll show you around the office a little more and you can help yourself to the fruit, music and volleyball. Okay?’

‘Okay.’

‘Good,’ said Johann. ‘But understand that this is not about me convincing you to do anything, this is about sharing a forgotten diamond in a world of bronze coins. You will go through many obstacles and neither I nor your Muse will always be easy on you. That is because there will come a time when you need to have the strength to face dragons. We take you to see dragons, because ... well, what do dragons guard?’

‘Treasure.’

Johann was silent for some time before he continued. ‘Mary, I am going to share something I don’t share with many people. I am going to tell you what got me into this all those years ago. I will share this with the other three if any of them make it to the dragon’s lair. But I am making an exception by telling you now. Do you know what started all this for me?’

When Johann told his story, Mary saw instantly why he had told it. It did have an uncanny resemblance to hers.

Johann continued, returning to his normal forthright tone, ‘as I say, I’ll tell the others the story too, if and when the time comes. But Mary, I couldn’t let you walk out of that door just now because if I did, I knew you’d miss something of great value.’

Mary and Johann both said nothing for some time, though the silence was not uncomfortable.

‘See you in 90 minutes’, said Mary.

She went to leave, but then turned around. ‘One more thing ... why do you want to *tame* a dragon. Isn’t the goal in every fairytale to *kill* the dragon, take their treasure and rescue the princess?’ she asked.

‘Wait and see.’

## The First Secret

Punctual to the minute, Mary returned, and was properly introduced by Johann to her Muse, again casually attired, this time in a bright summery dress and modest heels. Johann promptly departed, leaving the two of them together. Before Mary had time to feel uncomfortable about their earlier interaction, her Muse asked her to begin describing her business as though she were giving a ten minute presentation to investors. To show she was serious she took out a stopwatch and before Mary had time to think, said, ‘go!’

‘Hello everyone, thank you for coming. My name is Mary Louise. I’m here to tell you about my business, which is called ‘Back to Basics’: a franchise set up to help people improve their health through better osteopathic alignment of the spine, which is one of the best medically proven ways to restore health in the structure of the body, and there is a lot of interest in this industry right now. It’s growing 10% per year. It has a global \$1 Billion dollar market size, and the potential to be breakeven after 3 years.’

‘Stop’ said the Muse after having heard Mary’s well-rehearsed “elevator pitch”. The Muse contemplated this sequence of words for a few seconds and then, rather than commenting, in a rapid sequence of actions took out a device, typed something out on the screen, and placed it back in her pocket. Within 30 seconds, there was a knock at the door. It was Don, fresh from having completed his first encounter with *his* Muse.

Mary’s Muse asked Don to share his story ... the way he used to speak to people. He laughs a little at the way the Muse said, ‘used to’ – as though his first attempt to tell a story about himself was 60 months rather than 60 minutes ago. Don hit a button on a recording device he’d brought in with him, and a talking image of him appeared on the wall, to which Mary turned her attention.

‘Two years ago, I was feeling a wee bit dizzy. So I went to see the GP. He said you’re off to the cardiac ward. So I went to the hospital and stayed at the cardiac ward for about 10 days and yeah, that sort of changed my view on life. But since then, I see that I’ve gone back to my old ways, I don’t take the pills anymore that I’m supposed to take, although I do mind what I eat, and I have given up smoking. I figured that quitting cigarettes was a good idea and it was a big ask to do. And the pills – not that impressed with them. But it does alter your view of life when you are thinking, ‘Am I going to come out of this alive or not?’ Fortunately there were no long-lasting effects. But it gets you thinking ‘I better get in touch with all the relatives and my friends.’ You’re never too sure whether it’s going to be the last time you see them or not.’

Mary’s Muse turned to her. ‘I want your feedback to be as brutally honest as a prospective investor would be after they’d seen a 30 second elevator pitch.’

‘Honestly? Well, it meandered. He talked about things that were irrelevant to where the story was heading – wherever that was. Basically it wasn’t that interesting.’

‘Thank you Mary’, said her Muse, ‘And thank you Don for being a sport, and hearing a second critique. I’m sure your Muse has already riled you too.’

Don nodded emphatically.

‘It’s good. It will serve to reinforce in your mind that what you were doing is something you can never go back to. Can we hear your second version now - live?’

Don composed himself and began, ‘Two years ago, I was feeling a little queasy, so I went to the Doctor, and next thing I know I’m in the cardiac ward...

Before I know it, I find myself sitting in a wheelchair being wheeled off to have a heart bypass operation, at my age...

I jumped out of that wheelchair before they could get me there and gave up smoking on the spot ... and it was then they discovered there was another Don Bowman in the hospital – they’d taken me off by mistake.’

Mary’s jaw dropped. ‘You’re kidding me!’

Don shrugged ‘I swear it’s true.’

‘Why didn’t you say that bit the first time? It’s the most interesting bit.’

‘What was different?’ Asked Mary’s Muse – cutting across both of them.

‘Well’, says Mary. ‘Everything! It was in order. No repetition. It had a structure and a sense of direction and purpose. It built in intensity too, and he somehow got me interested in what was going to happen ... it was bizarre: [he said less, but I heard more.](#)’

The Muse thanked Don once more and as Don left, Mary raised an objection, ‘He obviously rehearsed that. But most of my business conversations are completely natural and spontaneous. Its one thing to write something down, cut the chafe out, learn it and say it – but how do you do all this *while* you are speaking?’

‘You will come to appreciate that talking the second way is the most natural way to speak, and what you have been calling natural spontaneous conversation is 99% chafe – but we’ll come to that,’ replied the Muse – outmatching Mary for frankness. ‘And how did you feel about the person speaking the second time?’

‘I wanted to know more. I was *curious* to know more. But I couldn’t use such a personal approach with the people I talk to.’

The Muse squinted one eye, as she looked at Mary ‘Couldn’t you?’

‘Could I?’

‘Think of all the spreadsheets you’ve ever seen in your life. If I were to ask you to remember what was in row-four-column-three of any of them would you remember?’

‘Of course not.’

‘Would you remember any numbers in any spreadsheet? Even if I gave you a clue about ~~what~~ the spreadsheet title and total? Or, what if I asked you to remember a shopping list from two years ago. Even if I told you the supermarket, the date, and a couple of the items from the list – would you remember the others?’

‘Perhaps bolognese sauce if you said spaghetti, but otherwise, no.’

‘But what if I said, “tell me the story about the wolf that went round bullying little pigs” – would you remember?’

‘I’d remember the whole story and what the wolf and the pigs said just by the title. Interesting ... I can’t have heard it for over 25 years.’

‘So what is your number one intention when we get in front of people to talk?’  
Asked the Muse.

‘To “[not be forgotten ... and to not be forgettable](#)”.

‘Nicely put. And what do you do?’

‘I guess I didn’t know how to do that, so I would focus on not forgetting what *I* say.’

‘And what happens in the process?’

‘I become utterly forgettable! The more I worry about messing up, and the less I know about how to do it properly, the more I fall back on what I’ve heard everyone else do – and so I am actually planning to become forgettable!’ enthused Mary, as if something had clicked inside her.

‘Nice,’ said the Muse

Mary wrote down a note to herself ‘Don’t worry about forgetting, worry about being unforgettable.’

‘But I don’t know how to do what Don did, and until I know, I’ll keep going back to what I know, even though I know what I know doesn’t work.’

‘Tell me how Don’s story worked,’ insisted the Muse.

‘Well ... it had three bits with big pauses in the middle. The first bit was what he was doing, the second bit was when something changed, and the third bit was what happened as a result.’

‘Exactly’ said the Muse. ‘Before, Turning Point, and After. This is what makes any story interesting.’

Mary wrote down ‘[before, turning point, ending – stories don’t have to be long.](#)’

The Muse continued, ‘Imagine if you went to a movie, and the hero was the same at the beginning and at the end: no turning point. You would be bored out of your seat. Yet isn’t this how 95% of people communicate in front of a group?’

‘I see what you mean. It’s as if we understand our own lives through story, like it is almost part of our DNA. So when we hear another person’s story, it’s like we are hearing our own story.’

‘Exactly. That’s what creates the connection,’ in fact you have just enunciated for your self the first secret’

‘First secret?’

‘Yes – you will learn six secrets at the Institute, should you make it past the test after session four. We nickname these ‘the six pack’. You have just discovered the first secret. [The first secret is that story is the vehicle of connection.](#) What this means is, as you said, we understand our lives through story; so whenever we hear anyone’s story we hear our own story, and this instantaneously creates connection.

Now it’s time for you to put it into practice. Stand up, and do you know how to do it this time?’

‘First, what I used to be doing. Secondly, what changed, and third what happened next,’ said Mary.

‘Exactly, tell me your story, your *personal* story of how you came to be doing what you are doing now and, for now, nothing else. No facts, figures or spreadsheets – yet.’

Mary’s eyes wandered to ~~the top of the room~~ ceiling as she thought back to what had led her down this track of her life, then she composed herself and began:

‘I was practising traditional osteopathy, and I found that I was always fixing the same problems over and over again.

Then one year for ages I couldn’t sleep the night through, and this went on for ages, and so in desperation I tried this new practitioner a friend recommended.

The first two sessions, I just laughed because I felt like nothing happened whatsoever. But after the third visit, I slept the night through for the first time in two months. And the next day, as I was driving down the road, I had a feeling that I’ve never really had before and I would say that the best word for that ... was gratitude.’

Mary took a few moments to come back from the memory into the room again. ‘But I could never speak like that to investors.’

‘Imagine you are an investor for just one minute’ encouraged the Muse, pushing a button and playing back what Mary had just said.

‘Wow, it does have quite an impact, doesn’t it? And I preferred hearing it that way.’

‘And I preferred hearing it that way Mary,’ said the Muse with a smile. ‘There is a time for lists and spreadsheets of course, but this is only *after* the story has been told. Everything has its place, and time, as you pointed out. The point is: your *story* earns you the highly receptive ears you need for when you fill in the details... And now the time has come for some spreadsheets and lists. Ready?’

‘Of course’, said Mary ‘You have created the context where they will make sense, and be remembered’.

The Muse started drawing a picture. It looked like a beaker she used at school filled with fluid.

‘Information is like water and the story is like the container. Most people start drenching and drowning people with information before they have built a container to house it.’

‘That’s what I did first time around wasn’t it – I told people the return on investment and market size before they had a container for that information,’ recalled Mary

‘Exactly. That information must be there. But not in the sequence you first told it. Your story is your container. The facts and numbers are the content. When the container and the content go together in that order, then people’s thirst to be inspired by what you say will start to get quenched by your words. It is the difference between pouring them a glass of water, and pouring the water onto them!’

‘No wonder people sometimes say they feel drowned by information’ pondered Mary.

‘But remember,’ continued the Muse, ‘unless you are telling the story purely for entertainment, the story is just the starting point. You would be handing them the empty glass without the water if you don’t follow up the story with the information. Story is not an excuse not to use details, it’s the vessel that allows all those details to be swallowed and savoured.’

Mary wrote that last bit down ‘Story is the vessel that allows whatever details you have to communicate to reach the hearts and minds of those you speak to.’

The Muse continued, ‘Remember when I compared a spreadsheet or a list to a story? A while ago some scientists did an experiment and they found that if a list was put into story form, people could sometimes remember 60% more. In other words, you will forget many of 20 random items such as hat, briefcase, cheese, tap-dance, car aerial, bandage, grass, and paintbrush. But if you say, ‘Yesterday, I’d just finished tap-dance class, and was nursing a bandaged foot while eating a big bit of cheese to build up my energy, when this guy wearing a grass hat appeared at the door carrying a briefcase with a car aerial poking out of the top, and announced that he was selling paintbrushes.’ Then you will remember not only the items in the list, but a whole lot more information about their use and the people using them. That’s because the information has a context or container, and that container is a story. If you ‘act out’ the scene using your body, it’s more effective again, because the story and the body are working as one.

Have you noticed that before the intellect will agree with anything, the imagination must be receptive? That's why Einstein said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' Story awakens the imagination, and the content awakens the intellect. Remember that dragons are mythical creatures ... it takes imagination to deal with them.'

Mary wrote down **Story is the container, information is the content. You need both – in that order.**

Then underneath she wrote

**First wake up the imagination; then wake up the intellect.**

Suddenly, the Muse went over to a cupboard in the corner of the room and started rummaging around in the shelves. Mary straightened her suit a little nervously; unsure of what might emerge from the cupboard and how it might relate to her. The Muse came back excitedly with three tennis balls.

*'Now, what happens in space when two heavenly bodies come close together?'* asked the Muse.

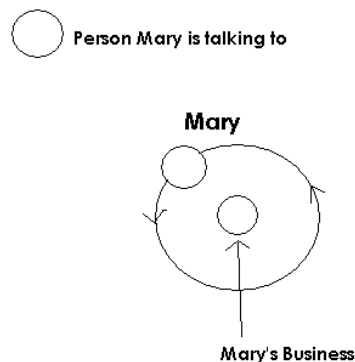
'One starts orbiting around the other.'

'And what is the attraction called?'

'Gravity.'

'Now imagine you are a planet, happily orbiting your business, trying to influence other meandering people to come into orbit. Where would you put yourself, and where would you put that person who you are trying to influence?'

Mary placed herself close to her business. She then placed the tennis ball about 10 times further away from her 'sun' than she was, so that they appeared in this formation:



‘How might you encourage this person into orbit?’ asked the Muse

‘I don’t know. With a big tractor beam?’

The Muse nodded slowly ‘A lot of what has been written about sales was about showing people how to build a ‘big tractor beam’. But there is a much simpler way to do this, and I would say, a more authentic, respectful way to do this, which will instantly make them and you feel more relaxed. Ironically, this way of doing things more often ends in a great result, and in a faster time. This way is not about having power over anyone but inviting, in your case your investors, on the journey, which is exciting to them and in which they are willing and conscious participants.

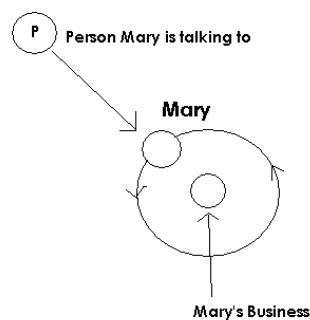
I am not going to tell you how you do it; you are going to tell me. All I’m going to do is move some tennis balls around,’ said the Muse.

‘Why doesn’t that surprise me’, responded Mary with a wry smile appearing on the corner of one side of her mouth only.

Mary started moving the ‘planet’ called ‘Mary’ around the other tennis ball representing the Sun she was orbiting called ‘Mary’s Business’.

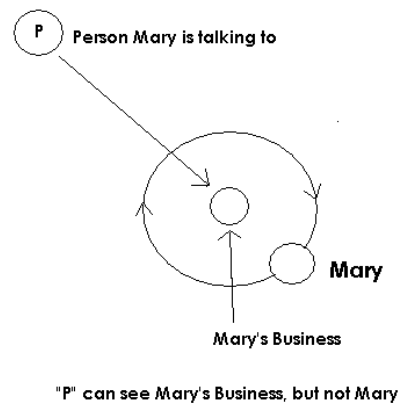
Mary looked at the Mary-planet, her business-Sun, and then way out to the investor-planet and then moved over so she could see things from the investor’s point of view. Having this helicopter view helped Mary see what was going on, and then it was as if a second light bulb was turned on inside her.

‘Oh – sometimes the investor can see only me ...



"P" can see Mary, but not Mary's business

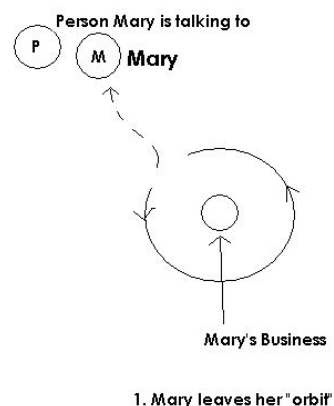
... and sometimes they can see only my business



... and only sometimes can they see both, but they can't focus or concentrate on either because I'm moving around so much, and I'm moving close to the business not close to them. So they don't feel any attraction or compulsion to move close to either!

'That's right, you are too far away from them to have any attracting influence on them. So what do you need to do?'

'Well, it's scary, but I need to come out of orbit and move closer to them.' Mary said as she repositioned her planet.

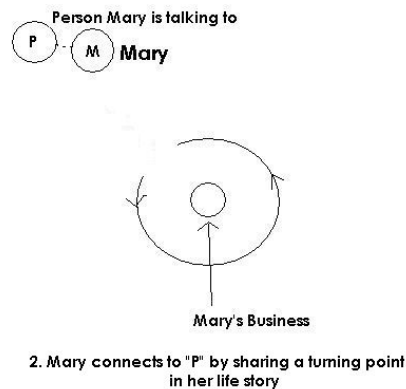


'Yes – your orbit has become your comfort zone. Go on.'

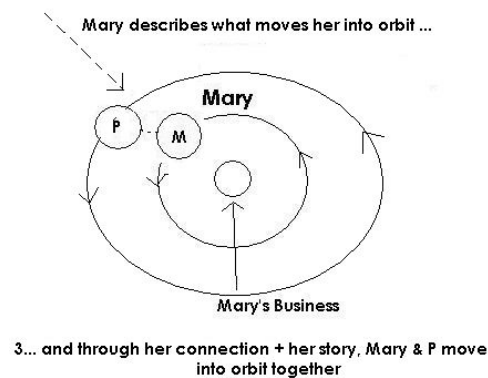
'Oh now I see exactly why the story in three parts works – it's all so clear.' Mary was getting so excited it was as if gravity had temporarily left the room as she jumped ever so slightly off the floor.

I need to go over to them and look at my sun from their perspective so that they can see *me* first before they see my *business*. That way they can see me standing still rather than spinning.

That's where I tell them the 'before' part of the story – part one. But I can't stay there, or neither of us will go back into orbit, so I need to *show* the person I'm talking to the big force that pulled me into orbit – that's the turning point – part two.



And then finally once we are connected I make sure we are both facing towards my business as I do the third part of the story: I describe what made me move towards my business and where that has led me as a result.'



As the Muse put both thumbs up, Mary took out some paper and rapidly wrote down:

Build the container before you start pouring the water.

1. Leave your orbit, see it from their angle by remembering the time before you were 'in orbit'
2. Tell them what pulled you into orbit.
3. Tell them what you are doing now

A quiver of doubt entered Mary's mind 'What happens if they don't follow you?'

'That seldom happens. But if it does, it's their decision,' responded the Muse. 'Your job is to capture in your story, the attractive force that moved you to your 'sun', using all of your skill.'

'I guess,' said Mary, 'the more skillfully and *human-ly* you do this, the more attractive force you will have – you will have a little of your own gravity?'

'Yes. You do this gently. And as you said, they will see their story in yours, and that's why they stick next to you as your story draws them.'

‘One thing I’m curious about,’ said Mary, ‘How come you know so much about pitching to investors? Wasn’t the reason you went to the Dragon Tamer because you wanted to become better at, well, dating?’

‘At some level everyone’s story is the same,’ said the Muse. ‘You were somewhere, something happened, and you ended up somewhere new.’ Whether you are pitching for investment, talking about an environmental cause, trying to sell a product, or trying to do a better job of describing ‘you’ to another person, you need to step outside of where you *are*, remember where you were, and develop the story back to where you *are*, so that they can imagine themselves undertaking the same journey.’

‘And if you’ve done your job well, they’ll be sitting there right next to you ready for the lists and spreadsheets.’ The delight on Mary’s face then became contemplative ‘I guess this has a far greater application than just talking to investors.’

The Muse just smiled. ‘This is just the first secret ... there are still five to go. Wait and see.’

### **The First Secret: Story is the vehicle of connection**

**Asking someone to retain information without a story is like giving someone a drink of water without the glass.**

**They won’t even be able to take it in, let alone retain it, let alone act upon it. Story is the requisite first step, without which nothing else matters.**

## The Second Secret

Anton's Muse was a tall slim man with blue-framed rectangular spectacles. He wore a fashionable shirt untucked over a pair of jeans. As Anton entered the room for his second session, the Muse greeted him cordially and motioned for him to take a seat in the same bright orange chair in which he had sat one day prior.

'Would you like to start off today with a story?' began the Muse.

Anton's eyes glinted like a child about to be offered a tale by a loquacious grandparent, 'Yeah, why not.'

'When I was a student' began the Muse 'I got a job being a clown – for ten straight hours in front of a large chain store that was having its opening sale. I was to entertain the children while the adults made their purchases. I had a few clown-tricks I could do half-well, one of which was juggling. The first day I ~~went in and~~ started juggling three balls. All the kids all went "wow" for all of about ten seconds. Then they got bored and said, "Can you do four?" That was a long day.

The next day I ~~went in and~~ started off by juggling one ball. I told a story about how I'd forgotten how to juggle after being hit by a juggling ball on the head, and that I needed all of them to remind me how to juggle again. I had them all entertained for a good twenty minutes as they enthusiastically explained the principles of juggling to me, which I applied incorrectly or literally to their laughter and loud "no's". By the time I finally 'remembered' how to juggle all three balls, they applauded wildly.'

Anton contemplated the story and wondered whether the Muse would relate it to the session as the Muse cut across his thought-process, 'So what do you think of the work you did on story yesterday?'

'It got me real clear on how to say more by saying less... ' Anton tapered off as a new thought lodged in his mind. 'But ... when you played my voice back to me, I cringed. It was so lifeless, it would still send everyone to sleep no matter how good the story.'

'Yes – it was like hearing a bad actor mutilate good lines.'

'Thanks' said Anton – ironic, but not hurt.

His Muse ignored the irony, 'That's okay. It's like you have painted your house, which has now highlighted the fact your front yard is a mess. Today we'll work on the front yard.

We will renovate in four steps. Then in steps five and six, we'll move you from the one-bedroom apartment to the penthouse suite.'

Anton smiled in appreciation of the apartment-metaphor. His brown corduroy trousers made a small high-pitched sound as they rubbed together while he unfolded his legs and relaxed somewhat. The relaxation was short-lived, as the Muse directed 'Stand up and start your story again.'

Anton stood up. But one millisecond before his first word came out the Muse said ‘Stop!’

Anton felt like a character in a children’s comic, with a question mark appearing in a speech-bubble over his head.

‘Stop what?’ he objected.

‘Look at yourself in that mirror.’

Anton reluctantly obliged and noticed the 3-day stubble on his face, the slightly unkempt hair and his own bemused expression.

‘Notice the way you are standing.’ The Muse directed Anton’s attention towards something he had not been noticing. ‘You said your *voice* lacked enthusiasm. How can you *sound* enthusiastic if you don’t *feel* enthusiastic?’ Anton wondered how the Muse was able to get away with emphasizing “sound” and “feel” so emphatically without sounding patronizing. ‘Do you *feel* enthusiastic?’

‘No. I feel nervous ... and scrutinized.’

‘So on a scale of one to ten of how much enthusiasm you *need* to relate to a group, and how much enthusiasm you currently *feel*?’ asked the Muse, again drawing out the vowels of ‘need’ and ‘feel’ and getting away with it.

‘You need 10/10. I feel about –20.’ said Anton without pause. Then he stopped in his tracks, as though the frank sincerity of what he’d just said, and how much work it implied he had to do, had caught him off guard. He continued. ‘Whenever I try to be enthusiastic, it feels fake ... but when I’m sincere ... I’m sincerely boring! I want to be sincere *and* interesting.’

‘Would you like to know how?’ asked the Muse.

‘More than anything,’ said Anton.

The Muse’s eyes flitted almost naughtily ‘At the same time?’

‘Yes.’

‘Mmmm. How much do you want it?’

‘A lot’ said Anton.

‘A lot’ pondered the Muse paying no heed to Anton’s impatience. ‘A lot ... a lot ... Do you know that most people are completely afraid to make a fool of themselves?’

‘I guess,’ said Anton – confused by the unrelated question.

‘What we do next will only work if your desire to understand how to be sincere and enthusiastic at the same time is bigger than your fear of making a fool of yourself.’

Anton's head moved viscerally backwards as though recoiling from a snake 'Oh.'

The Muse acknowledged Anton's apprehension. 'Many people feel uncomfortable at this moment. Most people want to stir others from their slumber without getting out of bed themselves. You are no different.'

Anton frowned 'I –'

'Stand up again' instructed the Muse.

Anton was barely given the opportunity to feel toyed with or criticized as the Muse sprung another surprise. Out of a bag next to his chair, he reached in and plucked out three juggling balls, which he threw at once to Anton.

'Do you know how to juggle?'

'No.'

'Good. Start anyway. As you drop them, I'll pick them up and throw them back. You just keep throwing them up.'

Anton started juggling and dropping the balls, as the Muse dutifully threw them back.

'Good' encouraged the Muse 'now tell me about this meeting'.

'Well I'm seeing the council' panted Anton, his words syncopated by the dropping and throwing of multi-colored balls.

'Okay. What are you going to tell them about?'

Anton kept juggling balls as the following story unfolded:

'Well, ever since I was a small boy I lived by a stream ... I had a younger brother and we'd watch frogs and sail boats and things there... we had all this space, and when I was six we moved into the city and there were more kids around, but one of the things I missed was all that space.

And since then I've seen all these big apartment complexes going up and thought 'OK – but what about space for the children to be children?' Closing off the space inside a concrete apartment and calling it public because you can is not the answer. I understand that we can't just all play in the streams all day and make houses out of sand and flax. But we need to find a way of doing development where the whole neighborhood benefits. So let's find a way to allow developers to do development that allows the rest of us to breath, to relax, to experience public space and the environment that we probably all have some experience of as kids.'

'How was that?' asked the Muse

'Exhausting,' panted Anton.

The Muse pushed a button, and Anton listened to his voice once more. ‘Was your voice still boring and flat?’

Anton could scarce believe the rich transformation that had come over his voice. ‘No. You are right. I can imagine other people catching the enthusiasm too!’

‘And yet we think that it is hard to have others catch our energy. Do you see now that it’s easy?’

‘I wouldn’t have before the juggling, but now, yes.’ Anton wrote down: *we believe that feeling animated is hard, but it is both easy and instant.*

‘If you feel enthusiastic you *talk* enthusiastic. If you talk enthusiastic, they *catch* your enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the opposite of yawning ... and it’s even more contagious!’ said the Muse with great enthusiasm.

‘But I can’t juggle when I’m giving a presentation.’

The Muse leant over conspiratorially and spoke in a hushed tone. ‘Leave yourself with no choice *but* to be enthusiastic. That is the second secret.’

Anton looked a little bemused. The Muse continued.

‘If from now on you only ever practice your talk after you *first* become playful and relaxed, it becomes impossible to do your talk in a stiff and rigid manner.’

Anton indicated that he understood.

‘*First* get enthusiastic. *Then* talk. Enthusiasm = ignition! It is as important an ingredient to talking as turning the car ignition key is to driving.

‘You mean whatever way we practice it, that’s how our talk will become?’

‘Yes, and more than that. What we *practice*, we *become*. If you practice without energy, you will become de-energized, as will everyone you talk to. Thankfully the reverse is also true.’

Anton said nothing for some time, and the Muse did not rush to fill the pause. These were new ways of thinking about things for Anton, but because he had *experienced* what he had practiced minutes earlier, he absorbed rather than rejected the information.

He wrote down a note for himself: ‘*Information can be debated; experiences can’t.*’

‘That’s different to how I’ve always prepared for presentations. I still feel a bit uncomfortable about juggling while I talk, even if it’s only for practice by myself.’

‘Yes. And you have two options when you feel discomfort: one is to go back to what is comfortable and the other is to push through it and in-so-doing experience something you previously thought was impossible.’

The Muse paused. ‘What else does this mean about the way we prepare to talk?’

‘It means that when we are preparing for a talk, we need to practice connecting with people. What I’ve done was the opposite. I’d be alone with the door closed and the computer on, typing: I was practicing being alone and cut off, then expecting that once in front of the council ... hey presto, I could instantly connect.’

The Muse digested what Anton had said. ‘So how would you apply the principle of ‘you become what you practice?’’

‘I need to routinely practice and do things that make me enthusiastic,’ reflected Anton.

The Muse nodded as he walked slowly over to the window. ‘So why did I tell you the story about my clown act?’

‘It was a story that shows it’s more important to have a good story than to do something perfectly... and of course it tells me where you got the wacky idea from about juggling balls ~~from~~ to make people more engaging.’

‘Yes, I learnt the difference between perfection and competence.’ The Muse clicked a button, and an image projected onto the wall.

	Incompetence	Competence
Connection	Messy	Sustained enthusiasm
Perfection	Boring	Initial enthusiasm

‘Most people doing formal presentations get quickly quite good at delivering something ‘perfectly’. The talk appears lacking in nervousness, the key concepts are communicated, any slides will always be professional, ~~the~~ and yet we all go to sleep. That was what I did on day one; I juggled “perfectly” and people lost interest. It was only when I replaced my intention for perfection with an invention for connection, and combined that *connection* with competence that I got the result I wanted.

Connection finds its roots in imperfection. This doesn’t mean you start speaking poorly, what it means is that you remind your audience that you are an imperfect human just like them. In my case, it was imperfect juggling, an imperfect memory, and imperfect listening when the kids told me how to juggle. That’s why a down-to-earth relationship-builder will generally outperform someone who smells a bit too much like the consummate salesman.’

Anton let out a sigh ‘that’s a great relief to hear. All the time I’ve wasted trying to be perfect. And you are right, it doesn’t help connection, it hinders it. I’m wondering though, does it have to be juggling though?’

The Muse looked up at the ceiling as if the answer might be hiding there. ‘It could be anything that makes you enthusiastic. You could do a sequence of bizarre gestures. You could put on music and dance to it. But there are two things that are unique to juggling, which I will tell you about a bit later.’

‘Another question’ ventured Anton, ‘what if I want to add other qualities? Say a sense of fun, or perhaps a sense of reverence that I am struggling to convey through my voice?’

‘There is a process I can take you through another time that will show you how to add any emotion or quality you want to your voice – confidence, authority, humility, compassion – you name it: or even all these qualities put together.’ The Muse looked at his watch, ‘but maybe another time.’

Anton’s eyes widened like a child who had just been shown a large lollipop then had it removed from sight. ‘Oh just a taste please.’

‘We are running out of time.’

Anton surprised himself with his own insistence, ‘A tiny sneak preview?’

The Muse looked at his watch once more, and then sighed. ‘Alright – but this is just the tip of the iceberg. Quickly then, choose one quality you want to have in your speaking.’

‘Fun,’ responded Anton without pause, ‘I want to have fun and show the councilors that sustainability can be both profitable and fun.’

‘We’ll leave the “profitable” bit to later discussion, but “fun” – okay, imagine your favorite food in the whole world.’

Anton told the Muse it would be a Middle-Eastern platter. He imagined the sun-dried tomatoes drenched in olive oil, succulent giant olives, creamy hummus, crisp pita, basil-infused feta, falafels, avocado sliced in perfect ‘U’s, and salted roasted almonds.

‘Breathe in and smell the food.’

Anton closed his eyes and breathed in the aromas.

‘Now take a bite. Feel the sensations in your mouth, hear the sounds and experience the heavenly taste.’

Anton smiled broadly.

‘Now what’s the sound you make?’

‘Mmm’ said Anton

‘Are you imagining a peanut butter sandwich? Come on, you are eating a delicacy.’

Anton broadened and deepened his sound. ‘MMMMMMMMmmmmmmmm.’

‘Do it three times.’

Anton obliged.

‘Now tell me how you arrived at the Institute this morning.’

Anton described his journey – and after about 20 seconds the Muse said ‘Stop.’ He then played back the description for Anton to hear.

Anton laughed. ‘It definitely sounded more fun to listen to.’

‘I could smell the falafels in your voice.’

Anton shook his head. ‘I can’t believe how easy it was. So are there really processes for combining say fun and reverence, or confidence and humility together, or any other – ’

‘Yes,’ said the Muse. ‘Doing it once is easy. The slightly less easy bit is having the discipline to use this technique each time before you speak ... Okay, take a breather. There’s one more thing I want to share, and then its spreadsheet time.’

Anton walked over to the window. Outside he could see the boats on the harbour: a mixture of yachts, launches and a single large cargo vessel dwarfing everything in its wake. For some moments he imagined himself on board one of the yachts feeling the silent exhilaration of traveling with the wind. He returned to his seat and adjusted himself into a more upright posture as though that would help him absorb what was coming. Perhaps it did.

‘In the 1980s’ began the Muse ‘Professor Albert Mehrabian published ground-breaking research, showing that communication consisted of:

7% verbal elements, 38% ‘vocal elements’ (voice), and 55% ‘visual elements’

‘What does ‘visual elements’ mean?’

‘Your image and your body language. And as often happens in such cases, the coaches and writers who followed knew that the vocal and visual elements were all-important, but didn’t yet understand how to train people in these things effectively. Books on body language rose but then faded. They told us what to do on the outside, not how to change from the *inside*. The gap between what Mehrabian discovered and what to do about it continued to exist for me right up until I met the Dragon-Tamer and did the enthusiasm process you did right now.’

The enthusiasm process you did works on all three levels that are necessary in communication. It makes your *content* more creative; it makes your *body* more relaxed; it also makes your *voice* more engaging. At the moment it's still raw enthusiasm we've unleashed, but we will craft this later.'

'So how would I combine this into writing and editing something that I would later say?'

The Muse reached into his bag once again and handed Anton a piece of orange paper on which the following was written:

The Enthusiasm process

Anton took some minutes to read through the process then folded it in half and placed it by his chair. Line eight says, "Edit out the chafe, and retain the parts of the story that work." We talked about chafe in the first session too. But how do you "Edit out the chafe?"

'This is a lesson in itself. For now, I will tell you two things:

1. First be clear on your intention, and next, ruthlessly ask "so what" of what you've written. If it doesn't further your intention, don't say it.
2. Never say anything that can be agreed with or disagreed with.'

'I understand the first bit, but I don't get the second point. I have to put arguments convincingly to councils and lobby groups. How can I do this if I don't say anything contentious?'

'You replace it with something more powerful that unites minds rather than dividing them. Don't worry, we'll come to that in a later session.'

Anton repositioned his weight against the back of his chair – disappointed not to have this gem revealed to him right now, but he also noticed that he had become even more curious as a result. He wondered whether that wasn't exactly what the Muse intended. 'So will you at least tell me what's so unique about juggling?'

'That I can. Juggling does two things at the same time. First, it eliminates critical 'self talk' that stops us daring to say what we might need to. Secondly, it accesses our right brain, which is our creative center. This is the place where original ideas and captivating voices are both born.'

Anton still had a look of doubt in his eye. 'But surely enthusiasm isn't always what you want. Sometimes it's a very serious talk to a very serious audience.'

The Muse cocked his head to one side, stood up and began adjusting a picture of the Institute of Dragon Taming, which hung on the wall, leaving Anton wondering for some time whether he had any intention of answering. 'Even a eulogy needs enthusiasm. In eulogies, enthuse about the departed. In business, enthuse about the product. In interviews, enthuse about your qualities. On dates, enthuse about your life-events. I invite you to remember how much more attractive and *attracting* you are to

listen to right now, simply because you did something that made you feel good moments earlier.’

Anton nodded then changed tack ‘Can I ask a question?’

The Muse motioned for him to continue.

‘This is off the topic, but that picture of the Institute of Dragon Taming reminded me. How do you get to have such a place to work in, with so many people?’

‘Less than 10% of the money we receive comes from payment from sessions. Many of the people we train are in business, and they all have the right, should they not experience a benefit, to pay nothing. If they do, they refer one other person and we invite them to contribute back in one years time a portion of the additional abundance that is in their lives as a result of what they have learned.’

Anton could not believe what he was hearing. ‘You *invite* them to – you mean they don’t have to. Then why would they?’

‘Actually, they are very happy to contribute back – in much the same way that a wealthy benefactor might leave money to a college.’

‘Yes but after their death – they give after one year. How did you convince them to do that?’

The Muse smiled patiently. ‘We didn’t convince them; we inspired them. Remember what *you* have come here to learn Anton. And remember that we don’t teach anything we haven’t already mastered.’

‘Clearly!’

‘Actually we don’t teach you at all. We give you the six things you need to train.’

Anton was initially confused, but then he resolved in his mind that surely the Muse meant, ‘we give you the six things you need to be trained in.’

‘We also have ways to keep our sales and marketing costs at close to zero’ said the Muse. But you will learn about that later.

Anton’s mind was abuzz with what seemed impossible, yet the evidence stood before him in the form of both the Institute and his Muse – saying that it was. ‘So when do we meet this Dragon Tamer?’

‘When you are ready,’ replied the Muse.

## **The Second Secret: Leave yourself no choice *but* enthusiasm**

**Trying to enthuse and influence people without being enthusiastic yourself is like trying to get people to spontaneously yawn without**

**yawning yourself. Virtually impossible, and a tremendous waste of your time and energy.**

**Enthusiasm is the world's most powerful contagion. And this state can be created in an instant. After story, it is the 2nd step without which influence cannot occur.**

## The Third Secret

Lucie entered the room of her Muse on day three with a polite ‘thanks’ for what she had learned about story and about enthusiasm on the first two days and said what a difference it had made. Her Muse, a tall lady with dark features and an angular yet attractive face, accepted neither her thanks nor her gratitude.

‘So far, you have only learned with your mind, you haven’t yet taken it and applied it. In your thanking me there is a polite formality that has no place in your life if you are ever going to enjoy Monday morning at work’.

Lucie was perplexed. All her life she had been told to be polite and convey gratitude, yet here was someone saying the opposite, and acting in an abrupt way at the same time. ‘Are you suggesting that I should be rude and informal? – I’m not sure that approach would help in my career either.’

The Muse persisted, ‘Do you remember how I said that most people are either competence/perfect, or incompetence/imperfect and that you need to combine competence with *imperfection*?’

Lucie nodded.

‘Do you remember when I said that most people convey either unconfident humility, or confident lack of humility, and that you need to combine humility with confidence?’

Lucie nodded again.

‘So why suddenly do you think that polite formality, or rude informality, are your only options?’

Lucie was silent.

The Muse, having put Lucie ‘on the spot’, relented with her ensuing explanation. ‘[Formality is the language of contact: it is not the language of connection.](#)’ stated the Muse. ‘Remind me about why you had queasiness and nausea a couple of days ago, before you were about to begin work.’

‘I don’t enjoy my job. I’ve been doing the same thing in the same office for the last five years. I’ve seen people who are not as good at what they do as I am get promoted while I’m still same position.’

‘And why do you think that is?’

‘I guess I’m timid. I achieve a lot in what I do, but I don’t like to talk about it. It’s vain. Most of my colleagues, especially that Nathan guy who sits next to me, spend more time and energy talking up what they’ve done than in doing any real work. And guess what. They are the ones who get promoted. I’ve tried going for interviews at

other companies. But it's the same problem. I know I'm good at what I do, and I'd really like a supervisor position – but when it comes time, I never seem to say the things that matter. I can't seem to let people know with my words what it is that I could offer,' said Lucie, finding her flow of words at last.

'And you would like to know how to change this?' asked the Muse.

'Obviously!' blurted out Lucie.

'Well, the good news is you don't have to do anything,' said the Muse. 'In fact, you need to do nothing.'

'Do you speak in a way that confuses people on purpose?' quipped Lucie

'Good question. I'll answer that later.'

'Imagine that I am interviewing you for a new job, and I ask you the question: 'So Lucie, tell me why you think you would be great for this job.' Answer me now, exactly as you would if I were interviewing you,' instructed the Muse.

Lucie straightened her body in an effort to regain her composure. What she said, exactly as she said it was: 'Well um, I've been doing what I'm doing for about, ooh for about um five years now and I guess I've learnt a lot in that time about ah, well you know, about systems and, yeah, both the systems and the people and yeah – all the things that –'

'Stop!' intervened the Muse, holding up a number on a piece of paper: the number nine. 'Do you know what this number represents?'

'No' replied Lucie

'When you were talking about other people's shortcomings just before you were so eloquent, yet when you are talking about your abilities it's painful to listen to. What you communicated in one quarter of one minute was ...' The Muse paused and held up a finger as if enunciating each point:

- 'I'm not sure how long I've been working at my job.
- I haven't thought too hard about what it is I'm good at.
- I'm uncertain what the core components of my job are.
- I'm unconfident and unsure of myself, and generally a poor communicator.'

'Wow – you don't hold back!' said Lucie.

'These are the things that you said about yourself. However, none of these things are actually true. That means that you are being dishonest, without meaning to, and that is why it is critical that you find a way to express yourself, which allows others to see your abilities.'

Lucie relaxed a little, and the Muse continued. 'The number on the card was the number of times that you said 'um' or 'ah' or restarted a sentence, or used a 'filler'

like ‘yeah’, or ‘I guess’ or ‘you know’. In your case, you used all three fillers, said ‘um’ or ‘ah’ three times, and restarted your sentence three times. And you did this all within fifteen seconds. That’s how long it takes for someone to form an impression about you. And if you read Malcolm Gladwell’s book ‘Blink’ about ‘thin slicing’ you will know that you have already lost your chance to get the job.’

‘But I was totally unprepared,’ protested Lucie. The stuff we did about enthusiasm and story is all great – but it doesn’t help when you have to think on your feet.’

‘It will definitely help even in this situation’ reassured the Muse. ‘But you are right: there is something more important to you than either story or enthusiasm. Something that, once learned, will change you forever.’ The Muse paused.

‘Yes?’

‘But I have to warn you’ cautioned the Muse, ‘once you learn this, you will not talk in the same way ever again. And, people will not look at you in the same way ever again.’

‘I can handle *that* side-effect. What is it?’ responded Lucie impatiently.

‘Okay,’ relented the Muse. ‘Every culture has this um/ahm/om sound in its religious or spiritual tradition. In Christianity it’s ‘Amen’. In Sanskrit it’s ‘Om’. In Islam it’s ‘Shalam’, in Judaism ‘Shalom.’ Scientifically speaking, sounds have a frequency or vibration. We hear sounds differently because of their different vibrations. These ‘ahm’ sounds have been observed through the ages, and now in Western laboratories too, to have a harmonizing effect on the body and mind: powerful when done consciously in private, and a clear signal that we are out of harmony when done unconsciously in public.

Similarly, when you say ‘I guess’ or ‘You know’ – you are saying that you are guessing, and that *you* don’t know – so you are looking at someone else to reassure you. You can use these words on occasions. I do myself. But use them deliberately, not unknowingly.

Finally, when you restart your sentence, you are saying that you open your mouth before you know what will come out– in other words, you get things in the wrong order: you are careless.’

The Muse paused for some time after this last statement then asked in a deliberate tone, ‘have you ever seen a powerful communicator using the word ‘um’?’

Lucie thought for a moment, and then shook her head.

The Muse continued, ‘If you do nothing other than eliminate all ums, false starts and fillers, people will perceive you completely differently... Ready?’

Lucie – a tentative excitement welling up inside at the promise which sounded almost too good to be true – nodded in accord.

There are three steps – the first thing you will do for the next ten seconds solid is you will say the word ‘um’ as many times as you can. Next, you will say the words ‘I guess – you know’ as many times as you can in the next ten seconds. Finally, you will say ‘there’s a – there is a good reason not to restart sentences’ for the next twenty seconds. I’ll prompt you. Ready? On your mark. ‘UM!’

Lucie reeled off a solid dose of exactly the phrases the Muse had asked her to avoid only seconds earlier. When she finished, smiling and puffing at the same time, she held one finger extended, ‘can I ask a question?’

‘Go ahead.’

‘Don’t all those books and movies such as *The Secret* tell you not to focus on the thing you want to get rid of from your life?’

‘There are two ways I can answer that,’ said the Muse. ‘One way will satisfy your intellect. The other will satisfy your imagination.’

‘I think right now it’s my intellect that’s struggling – I’d better take that one,’ said Lucie.

‘What you say about not focusing on things you want to eliminate from your life is correct, but only for things which you are already conscious of. If you want to find a great new job for example, then talking a lot about how much you hate your existing job, as you did so eloquently with me earlier, will help you stay exactly where you are.’

The words and phrases you just repeated are different. You have been using them *unconsciously* for a long time, and this exercise has brought them to your conscious awareness. Gaining conscious awareness of a pattern or habit is the first step to changing it.’

‘Okay, I get that,’ said Lucie.

‘But ... just out of curiosity, what would you have said, if I had said that my imagination wanted the answer?’

‘Too late – you can only choose one,’ teased the Muse.

‘Oh please – you’ve got me all curious now... besides, you said yourself that I need to stop focusing on ‘either this or that’ – so now I’m focusing on both. I want both.’

‘Just because you want something, doesn’t make it good for you.’

‘Okay, but don’t you say yourself that it’s important that the left and the right brain are happy – that’s why juggling’s good because it uses both, and that’s why story followed by information is good, because it creates the container, then fills it?’

‘Alright then,’ relented the Muse after a period of silence.

‘Many years ago, I trained to be a teacher. Part of our program required us to learn how to coach sports teams. One day, we were learning how to coach basketball. Our teacher gave us each a basketball, and you know what his very first instruction was?’

‘Bounce this ball as many times as you can in the next ten seconds?’ guessed Lucie.

‘Exactly – he was more generous than me, he gave us thirty seconds – but exactly... and why?’

‘Because he knew that if you got it out of your system at the beginning, then you wouldn’t be annoying him by bouncing the basketball while he was talking,’ guessed Lucie, with less certainty.

‘Exactly,’ enthused the Muse. ‘Most of us would have started bouncing the ball, without realizing how annoying it was to someone trying to speak. In the same way, most of us “um” and “ah” without realizing how annoying it is to the people trying to listen. But the coach did something else; he showed us the difference between showing and telling. He could have just *told* us “please don’t bounce the ball” – which would have been formal and boring. But instead he *showed* us that he didn’t want us to bounce the ball while he spoke. At the same time he gave us a fun activity to do – “bouncing the ball” which brought our awareness to the act of bouncing the ball, and “got it out of our system” so that no one bounced the ball the whole time he spoke. Make sense?’

‘I think I like that explanation better.’ Lucie wrote down ‘[showing is more powerful than telling](#). She paused, then wrote again as she made a connection between what the Muse was saying, and how it applied to her: ‘[Don’t say, “I’m confident”, show them “I’m confident” through the way I talk.](#)’

‘Interesting isn’t it. You thought you wanted the rational answer. But as you said – the time for the rational answer was *after* the imagination had already been engaged. What does this tell you?’

‘That we don’t always know what we need to hear most I g-’ Lucie stopped herself just in time.

‘Yes,’ said the Muse. ‘And similarly, when you ask for feedback about why you aren’t progressing at work, or why you didn’t get that job – you don’t get the real reason. You get a rationalization. What person is going to say, ‘because you said ‘um’ too much – even if they did notice its effect on their perception of you? The person will know you bombed, but they won’t know what they needed to hear most from you that would have made a difference.’

‘Fascinating’ said Lucie, noticing not only how much the Muse’s words resonated with her, but also how her own words uttered seconds earlier had been captured in the Muse’s response. ‘But will I really never say “um” again just after that one exercise? Surely it won’t be permanent?’

‘No – it will only be temporary. Just like the teacher with the basketball didn’t take away the urge to bounce a basketball forever, just for the next hour.’

‘Is there an exercise that takes away the urge to say “ums” forever?’ ventured Mary.

‘Yes, but we will leave that for another day. Now its time for step two: let’s throw some hoops...’ said the Muse standing up, but then pausing to reflect and sitting down again.

‘You know Lucie,’ the Muse continued, ‘this isn’t completely related, but for some reason I’m going to tell you anyway.’

‘Go on.’

‘Well, a while ago at MIT, a study was done on a group of college basketballers. They were divided into three groups. The first group only shot free-throws for the whole week. The second group practiced no free-throws for the whole week. The third group again was allowed to throw no free-throws, but they were instead instructed to lie down and close their eyes and for the next ten minutes imagine throwing perfect free-throw after perfect free-throw.

Group Three outperformed not only the group that had not practiced, but the group that practiced throwing *real* free-throws,’ recounted the Muse. ‘I’ll be honest, I haven’t yet discovered why I’m telling you this,’ laughed the Muse.

‘Maybe because I should lie down for ten minutes each day and imagining doing perfect interview after perfect interview?’ offered Lucie.

‘You know Lucie, I think you’re right.’ In fact, now that you mention it, I remember the first talk I gave after meeting the Dragon Tamer. It was to a large and slightly hostile audience in their town hall. I was telling a group of locals – some of whose jobs depended on logging – why we had to stop logging native forests. For ten straight days leading up to the talk, I did the exercise of lying down for a few minutes visioning how I wanted the talk to go. I also vividly imagined one word. One word that was the quality I wanted my speech to have. That word was ‘inspiring.’ After my talk, I was fortunate enough to see the written feedback people gave. And you know what the most common the word was?’

‘Inspiring,’ replied Lucie, not so much guessing, as completing the story.

The Muse nodded. ‘It was as if that word had flowed from my imagination into the my words, into their ears, into their imagination, into the ink on the feedback paper back through my eyes and into my mind again – just like an imagined perfect free-throw that was once seen only in the mind, and now was real.’

‘How on earth did you get those guys to think you were inspiring? Most people would settle to not be eaten alive by them. I’m sure there was more to it than thinking of a word.’

‘Of course. In the same way as if I were to imagine shooting perfect free-throws for a week, I’m sure I would still miss 90% of the baskets. The point is, it supports and

enhances the other practice you do. I suppose there were a couple of things I did that I haven't told you about yet though.'

'What?'

'I remember one day we were all sitting around the fire and one of the group of protesters that I was in said "We are doing all this protesting, but we are not talking to the locals. We need to arrange a talk and one of us needs to address them and explain what we are doing so they don't see us as interfering outsiders." We all looked around and I realized that virtually none of our group could possibly talk to them. We all looked far too much like a bunch of lentil-eating hippies. These locals were small town conservatives who liked meat, beer, coal mining and logging. Coming from a long line of political protestors, my mother had drilled into me two messages "the more radical your message, the more conservatively you dress" and "never attack anyone. See their point of view. Get inside their head, then show them another possibility." Having heeded my mother's advice, I was the only one who looked like I could fit in, and since I'd been to the Institute of Dragon Taming I said "I'll do it."

'What happened?'

'I immediately wished I hadn't volunteered. But it turned out to be the breakthrough talk I gave. From that point on I knew nothing could scare me. I did what my mum said. I dressed in a way that blended in with them. I didn't attack anyone. I imagined how they must feel threatened by us telling them what to do. I started by talking about the things we had in common by recounting a story in my life growing up in Australia with an Australian father and a Samoan mother, when after my father died and my mother had 4 of us to raise, the authorities came in and tried to tell my mother how to raise her children. So I said I had no interest in telling anyone what to do –I had learnt to respect others' roots.'

'But I digress' said the Muse, as though raising the stage curtain again after a musical interlude that had not finished.

'No, please tell me what you did next. That might have created a connection, but how did you win them over?'

'By the time you have finished your six sessions here, should you make it that far, you will know the answer yourself.' The Muse then went over to a bookshelf and pulled out an old leather-bound book. The Muse handed Lucie a copy of *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and asked Lucie to read the first paragraph – but with a difference: she instructed her to insert a number of 'ums' and 'ahs' at a conversational frequency, and informed Lucie that the results would be recorded. Lucie began reading.

The Muse thanked her then requested that she read the passage again, only this time with no 'ums' or 'ahs', but a few 'blank spaces' where she might have said um or ah in the past.

As Lucie handed the book back to the Muse, she was jolted by the recorded sound of her own 'umming' voice. Lucie listened intently. Then she listened with equal intent

to the second reading. As the recording ended, the Muse looked up at Lucie with that same particular knack of asking a question without using any words.

‘What a load of rubbish that first one was,’ said Lucie. ‘I couldn’t take in a thing that was being said. It was like the ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’ were amplified and the actual volume on the words was turned down.’

‘Nicely put.’

‘You can use it if you like,’ joked Lucie.

‘Thank you, I’d like to,’ said the Muse, completely deadpan. ‘And what of the second one?’

‘It was okay. I could *absorb* what was being said. I *get* what you are saying totally about those ‘ums’ and false starts and things. It’s like they mutilate words. Particularly when the words are well written. It’s like seeing a good script murdered by a bad actor.’

Lucie paused.

‘Yes?’ encouraged the Muse.

‘Well ... there was something else. It was like even though I was leaving that blank space in totally random places, it sometimes kind of worked. I’m not quite sure what that’s about though. Maybe it was just my imagination.’

‘Isn’t it interesting this phrase *‘just my imagination,’* said the Muse whimsically.

‘So I did notice something important. Is that what you are saying?’ asked Lucie.

‘Are you ready for Act Three?’

‘Act Three?’ puzzled Lucie grappling at once with both the term, and yet another oblique answer to one of her questions.

‘Every good story has three acts: a beginning, a middle and an end’. The way you are learning right now is also following a story-pattern. That’s why you will remember it forever,’ said the Muse with a smile. ‘In the beginning, there was ‘um’, in the middle, you found out the significance of ‘um’, and in the third act, something unexpected will be revealed.

Sometimes I ask people to write down the word ‘um’ on a bit of paper. It represents more than ‘um’. It represents every filler, false start and ‘um’ you ever use in your speech – monolog or dialog. I ask them then to look at the word ‘um’ on the piece of paper they have written on, and as they look at that word say, ‘I am looking at this word in order that I never again say it.’

Then I invite them to do something like screw up the paper and throw it in a wastepaper basket.’

‘You are not going to ask me to do this?’ asked Lucie.

‘It’s a lovely technique – but you no longer need it. You are ready for Act Three.’

‘Are you going to tell me what act three is, or do I have to guess?’ asked Lucie.

‘Now that you have removed these words from your speech, you need to replace these ‘somethings’ with something.’

‘Like a nicotine patch after you quit smoking?’ asked Lucie.

The Muse laughed ‘Maybe more like a life supporting stress elimination process to replace smoking – but that’s another story’ the Muse said with a far-away look before snapping back to focus on Lucie once more. ‘Actually, you replace those somethings with nothing.’

‘What?’ said Lucie.

‘Have you ever played a musical instrument?’ replied the Muse, again playing ‘question tennis’.

‘The piano when I was a kid,’ replied Lucie.

‘Perfect,’ said the Muse. ‘And do you know what Johann Sebastian Bach said about where music took place?’

‘In a concert hall?’ guessed Lucie.

‘He said ”music is what takes place between the notes.”’

‘Yes?’ said Lucie.

‘In the same way, [communication is what takes place between the words. That’s the third secret.](#)’

One of those expressions occurred on Lucie’s face that doesn’t have a name, but if it did, it could be said that her face ‘light-bulbed.’

‘So I was right about those blank spaces. They did do something!’ enthused Lucie, ‘but I still don’t get what.’

‘I’ll try to explain,’ said the Muse. ‘Actually I won’t try to explain. I’ll –’

‘Tell me a story?’ interrupted Lucie.

‘Exactly. Three years ago, I was giving a keynote address at a conference. There were around 100 people there. I hadn’t prepared too well, although I did have some extenuating circumstances. You see I didn’t have very good luck with my parents’ longevity. My father had developed terminal cancer and I’d spent almost every spare

waking moment with him. As a consequence, my entire one-hour opening address was confined to a few notes on one napkin.

I was about half way through thinking ‘this is actually one of the better talks I’ve given’ when it happened. I went completely blank. It wasn’t even that I’d forgotten what to say next; it was that I had absolutely no idea what to say. Maybe it was because I had given a lot of talks in the past, but I think more likely it was something about that sharp juxtaposition between life and death, which my father’s illness had given me, which had put the relative discomfort of ‘not knowing what to say’ in context; but either way, I felt no fear.

I just waited until the words came. But they didn’t come! So I took a deep breath in ... and out. And they *still* didn’t come. So I looked around the room as I paused. I looked deep into the eyes of a number of people and after what felt like 15 minutes, but was probably just 15 seconds, the words flowed anew.

After the talk, a number of people came to convey their appreciation. But what struck me most was how many people commented that they felt deeply moved at a particular moment in the middle of my talk, where I held everyone captivated while saying nothing, and how poignant the words I said after the pause were, and how those words would stay with them always.’

The Muse paused for some time, in what seemed to Lucie to be genuinely reflecting rather than just using a technique to illustrate a point.

‘But I was a slow learner,’ said the Muse less pensively. ‘I guess we don’t always fully treasure our discoveries at the time. So a whole year later, I was preparing some audio CDs for a group that the Dragon Tamer got me to train.’ A nostalgic self-deprecating laugh overlaid the Muse’s ensuing words. ‘I figured I could increase efficiency if I reduced the length of all pauses.

‘Great!’ I thought to myself. I’d saved almost 30 seconds of a ten and a half minute recording, thus keeping it down to the required size.

Fortunately, I tried it out on my mother who I happened to be having lunch with the day before I handed the tapes in. She listened dutifully, and said nothing. So I prompted her ‘What do you think?’ She replied whimsically, ‘I don’t know why, but after about two minutes, I couldn’t take in a thing you were saying. I can’t quite put my finger on it, but it was like it was unrelenting. It didn’t seem to flow the way you normally talk.’

The Muse laughed once more at this past folly, and this time Lucie couldn’t help but join in.

The Muse continued. ‘But this mistake made me wonder, ‘if a small *decrease* in the pause-length turns good into bad – could a small *increase* in pause-length turn good into great? For hours I listened to speeches by Churchill and the Martin Luther Kings of our history – the speakers who changed the world with their words. I found that they not only used long pauses, but they spoke around 20-30% slower than the average public speaker. They said less ... but inspired more.’ The Muse pondered for

a minute on those last six words and seemed to get lost in a train of thought temporarily, before continuing. ‘Anyway, its time –’

‘To fill the cup with information?’ interrupted Lucie.

‘Good guess. Yes and no’ said the Muse. ‘This time we’ll take it a bit further. Sometimes you want to fill your cup with water – but sometimes you might want a juice. That’s where metaphors come in. Just because you are in the ‘explanation bit’ having built your container using story, what happens next can still be juicy and explanatory both at once. As you said, don’t settle for either/or. Sometimes you want water, sometimes – like this time – you want mango lassi.’

Lucie laughed.

‘Pauses take people deeper,’ continued the Muse. ‘They allow people time to assimilate what you say. Have you noticed that when you water a plant, if you just keep pouring a stream of water without pause, it runs off the surface, particularly if the soil starts off dry. Your audience needs your pause, so that they can absorb your stream of words.’

The Muse waited for Lucie to absorb this before proceeding.

‘You know the term *train of thought*?’ asked the Muse.

Lucie nodded.

‘Have you noticed that there is a train of speech too?’ continued the Muse. ‘Your words are the train that will either transport them some place else, or leave them at the station. But for them to go some place new, you first need to get them on board the train. Sounds simple, but that’s what most people forget. They rush ‘some place else’, without picking up the passengers! So pausing is like opening the doors of your train of words, and waiting for as long as it takes until you are sure they are happily on board. That’s where the figure of speech ‘bring people on board’ comes from.’

Lucie was contemplative for some time. Finally she said, ‘You know I’ve had training in presenting, and I’ve had training in elocution – though you wouldn’t guess it now, and it fascinates me that nobody trains people in this stuff about pausing. Everyone should know this. But instead, well it’s like I’ve only been shown how to polish the paint on the outside of the train as it zooms past everyone I should be stopping and waiting for. And they just sit there bored or annoyed that the train has left them at the station! I think what you’ve been politely telling me all along is that I talk without pause, because the stuff I say is familiar to me. But that means that I leave everyone behind – I never connect with them.’

‘Yes, I’ve often wondered why more attention isn’t given to the art of saying nothing,’ reflected the Muse. ‘I wonder why that is the case?’

‘Maybe it’s because it sounds too simple and we all want a complicated answer because a simple answer sounds too simple to trust?’

‘You know Lucie, I think you’ve hit the nail on the head there,’ said the Muse. ‘It was said in ancient times that as soon as words are spoken, untruth is spoken because truth can only ever be expressed in silence. I’ve pondered on this for some time, and the more I do, the more I think that’s right. Words can be beautiful, but only true silence gives each idea you communicate time to drop into a person’s mind like a bead of nectar. I often say to people that all communication is dialog. Do you know what I mean by this?’

‘Not exactly. Well, no. Not at all, to be honest,’ said Lucie.

‘Have a guess.’

‘Okay. I guess it means that even if only I am talking, the other person is still having a conversation. But it’s a conversation in the other person’s head that I can’t hear.’

‘Exactly,’ enthused the Muse. ‘[There is no such thing as a monolog: it’s just a dialog with the mute button pushed.](#)’ So if all communication is dialog, what does this mean if we don’t give the other person time for their part in the conversation?’

‘We’d think the person speaking was hogging the airtime, insensitive, and full of themselves, and we’d quickly grow bored and start talking over them,’ contributed Lucie

‘And this is what happens,’ affirmed the Muse. ‘Except in a ‘monolog’ the *talking over* happens as an internal monolog, while the speaker drones on oblivious to the fact that now two conversations are occurring. And this has all happened because of one very simple thing. The speaker never allowed sufficient pause for the listeners to absorb what was being said.’ Changing gear, the Muse glanced at the clock on the wall adjacent to Lucie and said ‘OK – I want you to give it another shot. This time, you know the instructions.’

‘Replace all ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’ with pauses, and if I’m not sure of a sentence before I start, pause until it’s formed in my head?’ suggested Lucie.

‘Yes. The wonderful side effect of pausing is that you gain more time to consider how you are going to turn your thoughts into words.’

‘But when I pause, won’t it just look like I’ve forgotten what to say?’

‘Only if you look worried.’

‘But it doesn’t feel natural to pause like this.’

‘Have you noticed how people tend to say ‘it feels unnatural’ when what they mean is ‘it feels unfamiliar’. That’s why practice is important. The more you practice, the more natural it becomes, just like touch-typing. To start with it will feel more awkward and less natural, but after a short amount of practice it will deliver you superior results and it will feel unnatural to do it any other way.’

‘Okay.’

‘The second reason you need to practice this is so that you don’t shorten all of your pauses as soon as you have an audience.’

‘Yes, I noticed that’ said Lucie. Even when I was reading *Great Expectations*, when I left some blank space as you called it, it felt like a long time when I was talking, but sounded shorter when I was hearing it played back. Why is that?’

‘Time speeds up when you are nervous,’ said the Muse. ‘Your heartbeat and breath are like your metronome. They set your internal rhythm and timing. When you are nervous the heart and breath speed up, you can pause for three heartbeats, which feels like a long time. But to the listener with a relaxed heartbeat – it only lasts two beats and feels a fraction too short. Do you see the difference?’

Lucie nodded.

‘Time is relative – and when you speak it is relative to the heartbeat. So always pause for a beat longer than that which feels comfortable to you. [The principle of ‘a moment more than comfortable’](#) is very powerful in many other ways too. Look into people’s eyes for a beat more than what’s comfortable. Draaaaaaw out your vowels for a moment more than what’s comfortable. There are many other ways this principle can be applied too. But this is ‘Advanced Dragon Taming’. For now, simply understand that *your* time will run faster, and the remedy is to go *beyond what feels comfortable* in your pausing.’

‘You are right – that will feel a bit unnatural at first. Just like it feels almost contrived eliminating all ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’ from my talk. I guess I will just keep reminding myself that it is not unnatural, it is just unfamiliar.’

‘In fact, it is unnatural to say ‘um’ a lot, and to talk without pause, but we start doing these things as our naturalness is replaced with fear and we forget that people, unlike computers, do not communicate and understand in ‘bit-torrents’.’

‘When will this way of speaking feel natural for me?’ asked Lucie.

‘If you practice, about the time it takes to learn to touch-type,’ replied the Muse. ‘Which is pretty good, considering the rewards are so much more life changing.’

‘So that’s what you meant on the first day when you told me ‘You learn the work by doing the work’?’ asked Lucie.

‘There are three components... always three. [Prepare, practice, present ... in that order.](#)’

‘But you said your best talk was one you didn’t prepare for?’

‘It turned out I had prepared by spending countless hours having heart-to-heart conversations with my father that I had always meant to have years ago but somehow never got around to. You remember on the first day how we talked about how if you

lock yourself away in a room with a computer and ‘Powerpoint’ for the week prior to your talk then what you have practiced is introversion and *disconnection* from others? The other thing I learnt on the day of that keynote was the true meaning of ‘preparation’. Do you know that musical and theatrical improvisers spend countless hours ‘practicing’ improvisation? Likewise I had prepared by giving literally hundreds of actual talks – plus hundreds more visualized talks. And, as Tiger Woods says ‘The more I practice, the luckier I get.’

The Muse motioned to Lucie to begin talking before she had any chance to prepare it in her mind. She reflected that the Muse seemed to be asking her to jump straight into practice without preparing what she was going to say, but then she reflected that maybe she had prepared already – just a different way to what she was used to doing, and maybe anything still unprepared she could also prepare in her mind as she was speaking. She cut short her thought-process and began, remembering one last time the instruction ‘replace ums with pauses.’

‘I am well qualified for this job,’ began Lucie ‘for a number of reasons’ *Oh my God I can’t believe I just said that, thought Lucie. Now I’m going to have to think of not just one reason, but many.* She paused. ‘Firstly’ she said – pausing again, ‘I have five years of experience working with people, receiving and quickly actioning instructions. I give great priority to doing things efficiency and reliably.’ *Phew, thought Lucie really feeling that she was in an actual interview – bought myself some breathing space. Now I have to think of a second reason though.* ‘Secondly’, she paused, ‘I am familiar with the systems that are used in this job. In fact I would say I am familiar enough with them to train others, which I do today.’ *Where did that come from? thought Lucie. Certainly something to be said about pausing giving you time to think! Works so well it almost feels like cheating. Now for a third,* ‘Thirdly, I’m a good communicator.’ *Oh my goodness, now I’ve told a huge fib. I’ve never said that before...but maybe I am? Maybe it’s true what the Muse said and I am a good communicator, I just need more practice. Well, not any practice, the right practice with the right tools.* ‘For example’ *hesitated Lucie stifling an um just before it was even conceived,* ‘I understand when to talk and when to shut up so that ... other people have a chance to absorb what I am saying. This is a skill and a balance I believe every manager needs,’ said Lucie, growing in confidence, ‘and I offer this combination.’

The Muse beamed, as Lucie placed her hands to her mouth as though disbelieving the words that had just come out. She took some moments to come out of the mixture of emotions she was feeling at the transformation she had noticed, and back into the room with the Muse who sat silently waiting for her return. When she returned, the Muse pushed a button on a device and Lucie heard what she said again. As the words faded out, she again sat silent for some time, before pulling herself back to the room.

‘I need to know something.’ Lucie’s speech had spontaneously slowed right down. ‘At the beginning, we were all told that each of you Muses would model the communication you wanted us to learn.’

‘That’s right.’

‘You have been talking about raising curiosity and getting people to complete the dialogue themselves rather than you doing it for them. So my question is... when you went on that tangent about free-throws, did you really not know why you were telling that story?’

‘What would the alternative have been?’

‘That you pretended you didn’t know, in order that I felt involved in discovering why you were telling it.’

‘I was genuinely improvising.’

‘Oh’ replied Lucie.

‘I’m glad you asked though. It’s very important that you are always in your integrity. Otherwise none of what any of us give you to train will work.’

Lucie nodded, thinking to herself ‘surely the Muse means ‘to be trained in’’, and contented herself that even her Muse didn’t always get her words 100% correct.

‘If you say ‘I am going on a tangent and I don’t know quite know why’ – this has to be true, or you will no longer be authentic, and your connection with people will weaken,’ explained the Muse. ‘If you are connected with your listeners, they will find the meaning for you. They will be *honored* that you trusted them enough to find the meaning. They will be *honored* you took a risk, and as you pointed out, they will feel they are watching a ‘live game’ – which is has more atmosphere than something pre-staged.’

‘Sometimes trust is hard.’

‘We will talk more about trust in the next few sessions.’

‘And I have another question. Did you know that I would be so curious that I’d ask for the explanation for the imagination too?’

To this question, the Muse remained silent, responding only with what appeared to Lucie to be a slight wink.

Lucie sighed – a contented sigh followed by a wry smile and a shake of her head. As she was making to leave she vocalized one final thought, ‘I don’t suppose you are going to tell me when we will meet the Dragon Tamer?’

‘When you are ready’ replied the Muse with a lilt in the voice and a barely perceptible smile.

**The Third Secret: Communication is what takes place *between* the words.**

***Pausing*** may seem so small a factor, you wonder why it is essential, and dismiss its relevance. That is like saying “Baking soda is so small a thing – I’m sure I can make this cake without it.” Just as baking soda creates the air-pockets of space in a cake that has the cake rise,

**Pause** creates the air-pockets of space around your words so that your influence-levels rise.

**Pause** is the difference between your message rising, and falling flat.

## The Forth Secret

Don entered the room and greeted his Muse on day four, feeling more comfortable than he had in the first couple of days. He admitted, ‘I didn’t believe that someone whose experience was in raising investment capital through pitching could have anything useful to say about looking for romantic relationship.’

‘You could say that when each one is successful, they result in a ‘marriage’’ said Don’s Muse.

‘So what are you going to teach me today?’ asked Don. A sense of anticipation hung in the air.

‘I don’t teach – I train. And so do you.’

Don wasn’t entirely sure why the Muse had corrected him in what seemed an uncharacteristically pedantic manner, but he didn’t feel it was worth bringing up.

‘There was a time when the ability to captivate someone’s attention with words was revered above any other skill,’ began the Muse. ‘This was the Elizabethan age: the age of Shakespeare, the age of wordsmiths, of beautiful love-poetry, the age when English spread and became the dominant language of the world. It was also a time of unparalleled economic expansion in the British Empire. Knowing what I know about the relationship between your choice of words and the success of an investment pitch – I don’t think these things are coincidental.’

Don leaned forward, transparently drawn in by the parallel the Muse had developed, and the Muse continued.

‘In this age, we are taught very little about words and how to use them. We are taught instead: ‘A picture is worth a thousand words’ in other words ‘a word is only 1/1000<sup>th</sup> as valuable as a picture. Sadly, for people who have not learned how to craft words effectively, this is probably true. But something else is also true: and that is that one word can be more powerful than any picture can ever be. That’s because a word, unlike a picture, allows for the person planting that word to sow a personalized image directly into the imagination of the person listening.’

‘That sounds almost dangerous,’

‘It is – in the wrong hands ... that is why there are certain things I will not train people until I know their intention. And the things I train only work for someone with the right intention.’

‘Really?’

‘Let me show you what I mean. Think about the word ‘Apple’. Merely by my saying it – you form a visual picture in your head of an apple. Isn’t that so?’

‘Yes.’

‘Without any choice there was suddenly an apple there?’

‘I guess so, yes.’

‘Now supposing I’d said a stronger word like ‘freedom’ ... ‘hope’ ... ‘terrorist’ ... ‘communist’ ... what happens?’

‘I don’t so much form an image in my head – but a reaction, an emotional reaction I would say’

‘Not just an emotional reaction, but a physiological reaction,’ said the Muse. ‘If I was a scientist and I had some electrodes and LCD displays, I could show you that your body chemistry changes in response to hearing certain evocative words. Now if a single *word* has the power to sow images in the mind of a listener and change their body chemistry ... can you see where I’m going with this?’

‘Yes – just imagine the power of a whole sentence, or a whole speech.’

‘Exactly.’ said the Muse. Then very deliberately: ‘[Words change worlds.](#)’

Don pondered for a moment ‘But what about Albert Mehrabian. I thought he showed that in communication, only 7 percent of what mattered was the actual words used?’

‘Good question. What Mehrabian said was correct: words, *the way we normally use them*, count for very little of the effectiveness of a speaker. However, there was something else that his research didn’t show, which was being unveiled by those in the field of neuro-linguistics, the science of how words affect and impact the brain. The neuro-linguists found that the brain needs a way to structure our reality, and it does this through language *structures*.’

Don remained unsure of what the point was.

The Muse by contrast suddenly became highly animated, almost flying out of the chair with his extended arms gesticulating.

‘Don’t you think that is incredible? They found that the brain understands reality not through language *content*, but language *structure*. They showed that the *structure* of language mattered more than the *content* of the language.’

‘Really? You mean it doesn’t matter what you say, it’s only about how you say it?’

‘No – both matter, but the ‘how’ matters more, and that’s what the untrained pay no attention to. [Language content speaks to the intellect. But language structures speak to the imagination. That’s the fourth secret.](#) Knowing how to apply this secret is the difference between a picture being worth a thousand words, and a suitably structured sequence of words being worth one thousand pictures.’

Don looked unconvinced.

‘Let me give you a simple example. Read these two short paragraphs aloud.’

The Muse handed Don a small piece of paper with the following words on it:

100 years ago, Abraham Lincoln, whose statue is behind me, signed the emancipation proclamation. This great decree gave hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been adversely affected by slavery.

But today, the Negro has not enjoyed the full benefits of freedom. For example, he still must endure segregation, discrimination, and a level of material comfort below the national average – to the extent that he feels disenfranchised in his own country.

‘It is informative ... and clear,’ said Don.

‘Now have a look at this piece of paper.’ The Muse’s animated expression had become a poker-face, giving Don no clue as to how he was ‘meant to’ respond. Don was handed a piece of paper with a short extract from the “I have a Dream” speech.

‘Wow. Is that Martin Luther King?’

The Muse nodded.

‘It’s hard not to feel drawn in even by the words on the page. Its funny, I didn’t think the first one was too bad, I stand by what I said that it was informative, but this one is ... *evocative*.’

‘Why?’ quizzed the Muse.

‘It’s telling a story, like you taught us to... but it’s doing something else. He is using words so differently. I mean, that ‘Five score years ago’ doesn’t add any more information, but it has an effect. He uses metaphors around slavery too. It’s like he’s putting images of slavery into my head by the way he’s using words. Almost everything he says is a metaphor actually isn’t it.’

‘What else?’

‘Well ... he’s repeating key things, such as that ‘one hundred years later’ bit.’

‘Good. Now watch...’

The Muse pushed a button on a device on his desk and a projector flicked on with the famous Martin Luther King ‘I have a Dream’ speech cued to go. A couple of minutes into it, the Muse turned it off and turned to Don.

Don – transported some place else – took a deep breath, and came back into the room. ‘So much about what you have been saying is in the way he speaks. It’s slower, he pauses forever, and he draws out his vowels. To be honest, I’m not sure I could talk that way across the dinner table,’ joked Don.

The Muse wasn't going to allow Don to lighten the tone just yet. 'What did you notice about the repetition of 'one hundred years later'?'

'The last time he said it – I think it was the fourth time – he said it a bit quicker, and it sent shivers down my spine, and that was when the audience started applauding.'

'Almost, but watch more attentively. Watch *when* they start applauding.'

Don thought he'd done pretty well, and yet no compliments were forthcoming. He watched again.

'They applaud after he says "One hundred years later."'

'Correct. So what does that *mean*?'

Don, visibly starting to struggle, offered: 'that they like what he is saying?'

'But what has he just said?'

'He's said ...he's said nothing actually,' said Don, suddenly realising: 'he's simply said the same thing 'one hundred years later' a fourth time. The audience has applauded not because he's said anything new, but ... because of the way he's making them feel stirred inside.'

At last there was a congratulatory tone in the Muse's voice. 'Yes! They responded not to new content, but to the language structure that King uses.'

Don nodded in understanding. He wrote down, *people's feelings change not because of the content, but because of the language structure.*

The Muse continued, 'The timing of their applause is proof that we respond primarily to the structure, not the content of language. Everyone should know this, but virtually no-one does.' You could say he has 'taken them *some place nice*'.

Don smiled. 'I must admit, I don't always know where you are going with your ideas, but when you get to the punch line, it's worth waiting for.'

The Muse laughed. 'Isn't a story exciting precisely *because* you don't always know where you are going?'

'You mean you are a bit cryptic on purpose sometimes?' asked Don, assimilating the Muse's own style of answering a question with a question.

The Muse gave a shrug of the shoulders. 'We could spend a whole session just looking at the first two paragraphs of King's speech. But what I want you to remember is that he structures language very differently to an average speaker. He structures it in a way that captures the audience's imagination. The 'five score years ago' tells them something. You don't hear the word '*score*' very often – but it is in the Bible. He is telling them they are going to hear a story, but not just any story – a story of biblical proportions. He uses metaphor that creates mental images in our head that

reflect what he wants to talk about: the themes of oppression and freedom: light and dark, and he uses the story-telling structure of repetition to build power and intensity around an idea.’

‘You don’t sound like an investment pitcher if you don’t mind me saying so.’

‘Learning more about language enhances your understanding of many areas of your life,’ responded the Muse. ‘You will start to notice people who use language patterns effectively, ineffectively and the vast majority who don’t use them at all. The point of this is that if you want to take anyone some place nice, you don’t have to go to the Bahamas. You don’t even have to take them outside your front door. You can do it using the fastest and most powerful transportation device on the planet: your words.’

‘Carbon neutral too.’

‘Carbon neutral too,’ agreed the Muse. ‘If more people knew more about how to unlock these secrets inside us, I have no doubt that the ‘travel’ industry would come to mean the industry of transporting people with words, and we’d all use a whole lot less carbon.’

Don became contemplative. ‘I guess in my case, it would be the same thing – I need to get better at telling stories that evoke the imagination, but my themes will be a little different.’

‘A little.’

‘Can you give me an example?’

‘Well, I’ve been in a relationship for 18 years now,’ said the Muse, ‘so my application is a little different. But I am always learning more about language, because until we have mastered telepathy, words are the main way we have of communicating:

**Words are key to communication, and communication is key to relationship.’**

‘So if you want to deepen your relationship, you need to deepen your understanding of the way words work?’ asked Don.

‘Exactly’ said the Muse. ‘Your fascination is music. Mine is language and entrepreneurship. Just last week, I said over the dinner table, ‘you know it just struck me that words are actually waves: waves of sound. Have you ever wondered what makes a wave so powerful?’ My partner was intrigued. I continued. ‘A wave is a pulse of energy, a peak of energy followed by a trough. If a wave is not followed by a trough, then it isn’t a wave – it’s a wash – and it struck me that that is why leaving silence around words is so important. Whether it’s waves, or communication, or the seasons, it seems to me that everything in life that has value seems to be about the rhythm of going forward then pausing.’

‘What happened?’

‘It led to a fascinating discussion and a scintillating evening,’ said the Muse. ‘People are grateful when you share with them something you have thought about in a way that is not only unique, but which stimulates their imagination.’

‘Yes – but how did you do it?’

‘Well, let me ask you, if I had started off by saying ‘You know, a wave is a peak of energy followed by a trough.’ Where might the conversation have gone?’

‘Nowhere?’

The Muse rested against the back of his chair once more. ‘Probably. But I used the phrase ‘*Have you ever wondered* (what makes a wave so powerful)’, which engages the imagination. In fact it engages it so effectively that it completely bypasses the rational part of the mind that says ‘yes that’s true – words are waves/ no that’s not true – how are words waves?’ and just gets carried along for the experience.’

‘And of course you were using a metaphor to make the point appeal to the imagination.’

‘So what might you say?’ asked the Muse

‘I could talk about music ... about harmonics, or about how strings of a guitar vibrate together – but I’m not sure how to do this without being too technical and losing her,’ admitted Don.

The Muse pondered for a moment, then began ‘Have you ever noticed how there are certain notes on a guitar that just sound right when they are played together?’

‘You are good,’ said Don.

‘It’s practice,’ said the Muse. ‘Start with that and see where you go.’

Don continued, ‘Have you ever noticed that certain notes on the guitar just sound right if you play them together?’ Don paused and then began with his own words with the tentativeness of a baby taking its first steps. ‘If you listen very carefully, you can hear that every note is actually a sequence of notes – a dominant one and what are called harmonics.’

The Muse, while not overwhelmed, nodded encouragingly to Don. ‘Now liken that to two people meeting and feeling a mutual connection.’

‘I think that when two people meet and find that there is a harmony between them it is like the strings of a guitar: the dominant notes may be different, but there are harmonics beneath the surface of that note that are resonating deeply,’ said Don, surprised that what he was saying was, eventually, going somewhere interesting.

The Muse paused, and changed tack. ‘That was OK , although I would avoid the word ‘dominant’ altogether, as it is suggesting something you don’t intend. But before we

go further, tell me what you have already read or heard about connecting with a love interest.’

‘Well ...’ started Don a little sheepishly. ‘Probably a lot of things that are useful, but to be honest, nothing I felt that I could apply without feeling insincere. Something I read said you should say you analysed people’s handwriting, because then you had the chance to take conversation to a deeper level and at the same time reveal how perceptive you were about that person. Another suggested reading up a little about palmistry, because it gave you an excuse to establish physical contact and at the same time increase intimacy. Another book said that it was important to maintain the eye-gaze for longer than normal, because that’s what people in love do, so the other person would start to respond as though there was a love connection. One article said that humans were good at feeling things, but not good at working out why they felt things, so use this to your advantage by taking your date some place nice like bungee-jumping, sky-diving, or roller-coaster riding because then the date will associate the feelings of excitement of that event with ‘being with you’.’

Don looked at the Muse searching for some reaction behind what had become a poker face.

‘What do you think of all that?’ asked Don, looking for some sort of reassurance.

‘What do *you* think of all that?’ asked the Muse.

Don pondered, ‘They are techniques. I’m sure they all work, and have worked for many people. But somehow I don’t feel comfortable doing them. It’s like I almost don’t feel ethical doing them.’

‘Unless you have the intention to become the person who does these things habitually, then yes they will just be techniques. And there is plenty out there written about techniques to achieve a certain result, but I know you are looking for something more meaningful than that.’

‘Yes!’ said Don emphatically.

‘As I say, that doesn’t mean don’t do these things, but do these things because you want to become the sort of person who does these things *habitually*. Then they won’t be techniques; they will be part of your nature.’

‘In other words, don’t go bungee jumping if you hate adventure sports,’ suggested Don.

‘Or don’t read about palmistry if you are a scientific rationalist,’ responded the Muse. ‘Or become interested in hand writing unless you have a genuine interest in how hand writing is an expression of someone’s personality. If you are genuinely interested then go for it. But in anything you do, technique is always of secondary importance to authentic self-expression... That’s not to say that technique isn’t also important, and that you don’t need both, you understand.’ the Muse added.

‘Understood’ said Don. So what you are saying is to become the sort of person who does these things, but only if that is the person you want to become?’

‘There is this wonderful line in the Will Smith movie ‘Hitch’,’ began the Muse, ‘Smith plays an advisor who equips people with the style, speech and circumstances to pursue love interests. At one stage he is changing the wardrobe of a particularly bad dresser who objects, ‘I just don’t think these clothes are *me*.’ Smith looks at what he is wearing and reflects on how different it is from the old wardrobe saying ‘I’d say what’s *You* is a pretty fluid concept right now’. It’s like we talked about the first or second time you came here: you have to go a little beyond your comfort zone. Authenticity doesn’t mean ‘being yourself’ as many people mistakenly believe, it means *becoming* yourself.’ explained the Muse.

‘Become who you are,’ said Don. ‘I like that. It has an element of challenge in there that ‘be yourself’ doesn’t.’

‘Ah yes – challenge,’ said the Muse full of purpose. ‘One thing I have observed whether someone is pitching for investment or pursuing a romantic interest is that people often fall into the pattern of either conquest, or appeasement. Appeasement is when you’d do anything to get the interest of the other person, and conquest is when you are so aggressive in your approach, you almost bully the other person into doing what you want them to do. If you are hearing things like ‘Let’s just be friends’ it’s no different from a prospective buyer telling a sales person: ‘You have a really nice product but...’ In each case, what they are really communicating is that you have failed to do two things:

1. Capture their imagination, and
2. Challenge them.’

‘Why would challenging someone be a good thing?’ asked Don.

‘Many reasons,’ said the Muse, then remained silent.

‘Can I ask you an unrelated question for a moment?’ asked Don.

‘Tangents are essential to learning,’ said the Muse.

‘When I ask a question – you never give a straight answer. Why?’

The Muse smiled, and Don became aware of the irony of his question and laughed, rolling his eyes.

‘It’s a good question,’ said the Muse good-spiritedly. ‘And it’s not that tangential either – as I can relate it to the point about ‘challenge’... Answering every question exactly as it is formulated is one definition of appeasement. There is a skill in seeing the question underneath the question. If a prospective investor asks me at the end of a presentation: ‘Have you thought about doing x?’ The real question is: ‘Are you open to listen to my input?’ In your situation, there are certain set questions you will be asked about your tastes, interests and future plans. So anticipate this and prepare unique and surprising answers. Let me give you an example. Do you know what the Dragon Tamer says when people ask ‘So what do you do?’’

‘Yes – I was going to ask you about that, when are we going to meet this Dragon Tamer?’

‘When you are ready. But can you imagine what response the Dragon Tamer gives?’

‘I tame dragons?’

‘Exactly. But only if they haven’t already seen a business card with this title on it. It has to be unexpected. Why this response?’

‘Because it’s enigmatic I suppose, and it arouses curiosity?’

‘And? ...’ pressed the Muse

‘I guess it is a sort of a challenge. The Dragon Tamer is not in a hurry to give everything away, so it challenges the person to ask for more information.’

‘Exactly. Rather than the Dragon Tamer having to explain and self-promote, the listener is now requesting the information. Apart from being a more confident way to communicate, it’s more interesting for the person doing the asking. Their asking proves their interest, so the conversation goes better for both people. Can you imagine how many more great conversations, great connections, and unique humour there would be in the world if everyone used this approach when asked ‘and what do you do?’?’

Don nodded slowly as he imagined the scene.

‘And since we all know we will be asked this question hundreds of times in a lifetime, everyone in the world should have a great enigmatic answer ready. There is no excuse not to,’ concluded the Muse.

‘That’s so different to how we normally talk. I mean I’m always in a hurry to say the perfect thing first time. It never occurred to me to say ... well, virtually nothing,’ said Don.

‘It’s not quite as simple as saying nothing though, it’s saying a very little something that excites further interest, then having the guts to wait, assuming that the interest will come. What do you think that conveys?’

‘Confidence!’ said Don.

‘Yes’, said the Muse. It says, ‘I have a story I believe you would like to hear. But I also have the ability to withhold information and challenge so as to stimulate your interest. And I also have the confidence to challenge you to ask for the story before I offer it.’

‘What if the person doesn’t ask for more though?’

‘I could say ‘then the Dragon Tamer has avoided wasting two people’s time’ but that would be answering your question directly. I’d rather answer the question behind the question.’

‘You mean, you’d rather challenge me?’

‘Yes. Would you prefer that?’

Don gave an expression of anticipation and nodded – noticing how the Muse had challenged him in a way that was respectful rather than confronting.

‘*What if*’ stops us taking action. It is the question a person asks when they have too much fear inside them. And it leads directly to failures in business and personal life. The best antidote for ‘*what if?*’ is ‘*so what!*’ *So what* if the person isn’t interested, Don. You cannot control that. All you can do is to create opportunities for people to respond positively by setting up the optimal conditions.’

Don wrote down ‘[My job is to create opportunities for people to respond.](#)’

‘When you asked ‘*what if* the person doesn’t ask for more’ you are really telling me that you are afraid that someone won’t ask *you*, Don, for more, and secondly that it would be a bad thing if they didn’t. Correct?’

Don conceded with a small nod.

‘This is because you, like most people, have been placing too much emphasis on outcome.’

‘But isn’t the outcome important?’

‘Let me answer you this way: imagine there is a sales person who is a little pushy, and you can tell that the sales person is focussed 100% on the outcome of you buying no matter what. Have you had that experience?’

Don reminisced, ‘Oh yes.’

‘And?’

‘It makes me feel like they aren’t listening; that I’m less important than their product and their commission.’

‘And if the same sales person came in and had as a genuine possibility in their mind that they were going to create an opportunity for you to get something they truly believed in, but wanted to talk to you to understand if you needed it?’

‘I see what you are saying. I would be much more likely to be receptive.’

The Muse became quite laconic. ‘There is something incredibly magnetic about someone who is not attached to an outcome.’

‘Wait,’ said Don. ‘I want to write something down.’ Don wrote down hurriedly ‘care for the person, but be unattached to the outcome. Most people do the opposite.’

‘Do you mind if I see what you’ve written?’ asked the Muse.

Don, seizing the opportunity to apply what he had just learned challenged, ‘What if it’s a secret?’

‘That’s OK. Depending on what it was, I was going to suggest a way you could use it,’ said the Muse.

‘Actually, it’s not a secret, I was just practicing that thing about withholding information,’ admitted Don.

‘And it worked. It made me more interested in seeing what you had written,’ said the Muse.

‘But you didn’t let me know that, you stayed unattached,’ said Don, showing the Muse what he had written ... ‘And you did the second bit too – you suggested a way you could help me, which encouraged me to share it with you.’

‘I like what you have written,’ said the Muse. ‘The words will be more powerful too, because they are yours. Use this as your mantra whenever you feel like you are going into the dragon’s den. I’d suggest it would be useful in your music performances too.’

‘Definitely,’ said Don, as though remembering the many times he did not heed this mantra.

‘There is one more thing I think you are ready to know about questions,’ said the Muse.

‘Tell me,’ said Don.

‘But I’m not sure you are ready. What I’m about to say carries with it great responsibility to use this knowledge with a good intention,’ said the Muse.

‘Please. I’m ready,’ responded Don.

The Muse relented after a long pause. ‘Yesterday, I heard an inspiring speaker talking about the nature of the mind. At one point, he stopped us all in our tracks by saying ‘See what is happening in the mind right now?’ He continued, ‘You are listening, but what else is happening – you are judging ‘This is good/this is bad, I agree/I disagree – aren’t you?’ He continued ‘Whether you agree with me or disagree with me doesn’t matter, what is important is to be aware that this is what is happening in the mind, and that as long as you are either agreeing or disagreeing you are only saying ‘Yes’ to everything you already know, and ‘No’ to that which you do not yet know.’ I realized that the speaker was right: As soon as speakers start trying to appeal to the rational mind – they are lost.’

Don nodded his head and screwed up one eye a little as though slowly absorbing this, then repeated slowly to himself, ‘As soon as you appeal to the rational mind – you are lost.’ He paused then observed ‘This speaker was also challenging you, right?’

‘Very effectively,’ said the Muse, and then continued. ‘Have you noticed that that's a mistake most people make? They try to convince someone of something – the merits of a product, a cause, a company or themselves?’ asked the Muse, almost rhetorically.

‘Definitely.’

‘I invite you to remember that the rational mind says ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to things. If as a speaker you only engage their ‘*yes-or-no* mind’, then they will act based on past prejudices. You have given away all power to show them new possibilities, so ‘you’ no longer matter to them. More importantly, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ leave no room for ‘wow!’”

‘So how do I talk in a way that doesn’t address this rational mind?’

‘By doing what you already know how to do: engaging the person’s imagination, through story-telling language *structures*.’

‘Got it.’

‘See, if I had said to you ‘Don, as soon as a speaker starts trying to appeal to the rational mind – you are lost’ what would have happened inside your head?’

‘I would have thought about whether you were right or not.’

‘And even *if* you decided I was right ...?’ tailed off the Muse, expecting Don to complete the sentence.

‘You would have lost, because you only engaged my rational mind, not my imagination – the bit that goes ‘yes/no’, not the bit that goes ‘wow’.’

‘So what did I do instead, because I cared about you understanding at a deeper level what I was saying?’ asked the Muse.

‘You withheld a little by saying you had a secret, which you decided I was ready to hear, which excited me because it made me feel I was about to hear something of value, and then you didn’t disappoint me because you told me a story where the result of the story was the punch line you wanted me to understand: to excite people we have to go from yes/no to wow, and we do this through story-telling language structures.’

‘And you would also have noticed at the time that I didn’t actually ever make the claim ‘as soon as you appeal to the rational mind you are lost’ – can you remember what I did instead.’

‘Mmm, something like that you noticed that whenever a speaker appeals to the rational mind they are lost... Oh I see!’ said Don with excitement. ‘You told it as part of the story where someone in your story with great authority said this, so you woke

up my imagination first, and then placed this idea there as more of a suggestion than a statement. So I let the suggestion straight in, rather than labeling it true or false.’ Don paused to reflect. ‘That is powerful,’ he said softly to himself.

‘It was still up to your imagination to let it in. It always is. But once you have accepted it in, I have related to you at a much deeper level; shared something with you of greater value. As soon as I make an offer to your imagination, and your imagination lets it in, you have a gift: something that will stay with you in your unconscious mind. That’s why even though it may have felt like I was teasing you, there was in fact a true intention where I was working out whether this was something I wanted you to know because of its power.’

‘What made you trust me?’

‘I remembered that everything leading to this point has been carefully structured to screen out the sort of people who would abuse this knowledge,’ responded the Muse.

‘I have noticed that actually,’ said Don. You often say things like ‘have you noticed’ or ‘have you ever wondered’ or ‘Imagine if’

‘Now you know one of my secrets.’

‘Does knowing this secret make it any less powerful?’

‘In my case, it makes it more powerful’

‘How so?’ asked Don, bemused.

‘Because in sharing this secret, I’ve shown trust in you. And because your trust in me has also grown because I chose to be transparent to help you grow, rather than hoard a secret. Both ways, trust has grown, and so our connection has grown.’

Don couldn’t deny that he was feeling a level of connection with the Muse right now that he never imagined he could feel for someone he’d previously labeled as too ‘*businessy*’ to connect with.

‘Everything in the way I speak and interact with you is an illustration of what I train. What any of us Muses train only works because we have been trained ourselves to model everything we say in the way we train it. That makes what you are experiencing at the Dragon Taming Institute quite unique: you are learning not only on the level of ‘what’ we say, but also ‘how’ we say it. This is true of almost nothing else. If you learn math, commerce, horticulture, athletics or cooking, you don’t learn more about the subject by paying attention to the way your teacher is communicating. That’s partly why we don’t pair you up with people who have expertise with your specific ‘issue’. The Dragon Tamer doesn’t want any of you to think that it’s just a one-to-one pairing to solve a problem in one facet of your life. The aim is that you see why you came here was to enter a portal into a world where more intense, more authentic and more inspirational communication would occur in every aspect of your life. I could be talking to you about the moulting season of badgers, and if I were to give you a recording of the session, which I will when you are ready, you would still

learn by listening to me, something about how to talk in a way that connects deeply with people and inspires.’

‘It’s like [when you deepen your relationship with language, all other relationships deepen.](#)’

‘I like the way you put that. So hopefully that answers your question about questions?’

‘That was a long tangent ... I’m still trying to work out how you managed to turn it around and use it to talk about challenging and talking to the imagination at the same time.’

‘Remember, you will get the recording and a transcript of everything. So you now have all the tools to go back and work it out for yourself. It will stay with you that way. If I spoon-fed you, it would have passed on through you. You would have a nice feeling at the time which felt like learning, but the next day/week/year you would find that you were not applying what you’d supposedly learnt to a single part of your life.’

‘Is that because you are not attached to the outcome of me learning, but you care about me learning?’

‘Yes. And I care deeply about setting up the optimal environment for you to be profoundly moved and changed by what I share – but if you don’t want this I cannot force you. So let me ask you a question – if you were going to give this session a name, what would you call it?’

‘How to take people some place nice without opening the front door.’

‘It is short, and it invokes curiosity: I would say that’s perfect.’

Don beamed.

‘So now that you are feeling pleased with yourself, time to have another go.’

Don knew exactly what the Muse meant. And his smile disappeared from his face as he nervously took a deep breath thinking about what he was going to say.

The Muse read what was going on inside him, and said the words he needed to be reminded of, ‘Relax. Don’t get attached to the outcome, it’s only your second try at this.’

Don began, ‘Have you ever noticed on a guitar how there are certain notes that just sound right when they are played together? ... *Okay, that was the easy bit, the bit the Muse did for me, at least I’m allowed to pause heaps ...* And sometimes even if the notes don’t sound perfect ... *Uh oh, where am I going with this. That’s not the suggestion I want to make.* All they need is a little tuning, and then they sound like magic together? *Phew, nice recovery.*

I think that when two people meet and find that there is a harmony between them it is like the strings of a guitar. When there is a connection, the strings end up getting more and more attuned, until they play together in perfect harmony.’ *My goodness. Did I say that? It actually worked!*

The Muse extended both hands enthusiastically with thumbs up. Don let out an audible exhalation and reclined back in his chair as though he’d just been exhausted by a long run.

‘One more question before we finish?’

The Muse gestured for Don to continue.

‘All this stuff about using the imagination – can you really do all this if you are say doing a hard-hitting fact-based presentation, say to a board of directors, or maybe in my case when I ask a group of sponsors to help fund an overseas tour?’

‘Can you? You must! Listen – this is where people typically bow out. They think ‘this learning is very nice but ...’ then find some reason why it isn’t appropriate to do to it in a particular situation because of the circumstance, audience, timing, weather, you name it. All this stuff about ‘hard hitting’: remember that it is not an either/or Don – hit them with the facts, but wake up the imagination first.’

‘Sorry – I know we are covering old ground.’

‘Sometimes it takes more than one strike of the spade to reach water. Never apologize for not having fully absorbed something first time. Look, I want to share something with you. I don’t normally read this to people, but I think you need to hear it to blow away the cobwebs of resistance to the slightly scary notion that you can communicate this way any time you choose.’ The Muse flicked through some pages from a bookshelf nearby. ‘Here we are – just listen to this:

You look at that river gently flowing by; you notice that leaves are rustling with the wind. You hear the birds, you hear the tree frogs; in the distance you hear a cow. You feel the grass; the mud gives a little bit with the bank. It’s quiet. It’s peaceful, then all of a sudden it’s like a gear shift inside of you and its like taking a deep breath and going ‘oh yeah, I forgot about this.’

‘Do you recognize it?’ asked the Muse.

‘No’ said Don.

‘Where do you imagine it came from?’ asked the Muse.

‘My ‘*New Age*’ ex-girlfriend. She was into creative visualization – it sounds like something out of one of her books,’ said Don.

‘Could you imagine the Vice President of the United States of America talking this way?’ asked the Muse.

Don looked at the Muse with disbelief.

‘You haven’t seen ‘*An Inconvenient Truth*,’ have you?’ asked the Muse.

‘Are you telling me that Al Gore says this in *An Inconvenient Truth*?’ asked Don.

‘And where do you think he said it?’ asked the Muse.

‘Well if he knows anything about how to inspire people ... he would say it before he says anything else,’ said Don.

‘Yes he does,’ said the Muse. ‘It’s the very opening words you hear him utter. And this is a film on the very scientific topic of Climate Change.’

‘Also a very depressing topic.’ reflected Don.

‘And yet he still manages to take people...’ tailed off the Muse.

‘Some place nice.’ completed Don.

‘Don’t you think that if it’s good enough for a former vice-president of America to talk in this way as lead-in to a predominantly scientific documentary, with gentle music, birds and cicadas in the background, that it might just give permission for you to do it, with more creative topics like love and music?’

‘Is that really how he opens the film?’ exclaimed Don.

‘Come back Don – it is. And did you hear my question, or rather challenge to you?’

‘Oh yes – yes, that’s just my way of saying you have totally and utterly convinced me,’ replied Don.

‘And how did he easily and instantly take us from his idyllic scene back to reality?’

‘He used a metaphor – that bit about the “gear shift.” And you are right – it directed my thoughts exactly where I imagine he wanted them directed.’

The Muse nodded.

‘Metaphor is the single most powerful language structure you can use. That is why at the end of each session – the summary is given as a metaphor. Metaphors stick to the subconscious mind like glue. Anyway, go and see the film. When you see it, you will realize how much influence is dependent on how you structure the language, how you sequence your information after waking up the imagination, how you tell a story, and how you make yourself a little bit vulnerable to others so they see your humanness and love you all the more. The triumph of this film is that it shows the power of learning, as Gore himself put it in the film: ‘how to communicate it real clear’. That is

worth more than another 900 studies showing how climate change is caused by increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.’

The Muse paused, ‘which leads nicely into what we are going to talk about in the next session’

‘You are not going to tell me are you?’

The Muse raised a shoulder nonchalantly.

‘I knew it. But I’m sure you aren’t going to be talking about CO<sub>2</sub>.’

‘Actually, in a way, that’s exactly what we will be talking about.’ The Muse paused for long enough for a seed of intense curiosity to germinate in Don. ‘And this time, you’ll get to meet and listen to some people that you have met and yet not met too.’ ended the Muse, leaving Don to ponder the meaning of an enigmatic cliffhanger as he handed Don a sheet of paper; a single folded sheet of blue paper.

**The Forth Secret: Language content speaks to the intellect. But language structures speak to the imagination.**

**The best structure you can start incorporating right now is metaphor. Average influencers build a great case. Top influencers build great metaphors.**

**Asking someone to be influenced by a message without metaphors is like asking someone to watch YouTube on dialup: time-consuming and jarring; with a high probability they will give up and stop trying.**

## The Fifth Secret

Four days after they had first met, Don, Lucie, Anton, and Mary met up for a second encounter in a small auditorium. Once again, Don and Mary arrived first. This time, the atmosphere was completely different: they both smiled upon greeting. Mary grabbed the opportunity first, ‘So Don, I never asked you - what is that you do?’

‘I move people using six pieces of string.’

‘Six pieces of string? So let me guess ... you are, some sort of a basket-maker?’

Don laughed harder than he could remember for some time. ‘Some might say a basket case, but not basket maker. Let me answer you this way ‘When I was at university, I studied film. One day, while watching American Graffiti, I realized that what moved me most was not the moving pictures, but the soundtrack to those pictures. That evening, I picked up an instrument with six strings, and played it ‘til my fingers bled. And ten years on, I count myself blessed that I am able to earn a good living by playing guitar in a way that moves people the same way that music moved me to change my life direction.’

Before Mary could respond or Don could ask Mary about her profession, Anton and Lucie entered, and the conversation took a different turn from where it might have gone. Each one excitedly shared their experiences with each of the Muses. Four days of training had given them all a sense of kinship, which broke the ice, for now they each had something significant in their lives in common. They also knew from each of their folded blue sheets of paper that entry into the second stage of the program was not a straightforward mission. So they congratulated each other repeatedly.

After ten minutes of high-spirited conversation, Johann arrived. He was more formal than anyone had seen him before. The stern expression on his face seemed to be worn by his whole body as he walked. The atmosphere stilled to silence within seconds.

‘As you are all aware – there is one final test you must all pass before you can all proceed to the next stage,’ began Johann. You have all prepared your answers to the questions you were given, and now it is time to share them.’

With typical forthrightness, Johann continued,

‘Mary and Anton, you were asked to coin a phrase that describes the process of eliminating ‘ums’, false starts and fillers, and replacing them with pauses. Please read out your responses.’

Mary stood up and spoke first ‘From filling the pause to feeling the pause.’

Anton followed ‘From Um to Amen.’

With less feedback than a quiz show host, Johann simply proceeded to the next question: ‘Don, why is story-telling like dating?’

‘In each case, you give a little and hold back a little. Dating and storytelling both practice the art of skilful withholding until the time is right to heighten intensity.’

‘The first bit was OK. The second bit combined two qualities: explanatory and forgettable. Work on it, and use a metaphor so it enters my imagination next time,’ reprimanded Johann.

‘Lucie, why does the same principle apply in pitching and selling?’

‘If they feel they have all the information they need after your first pitch, the curious mind will not demand the second meeting.’

Johann gave no feedback, which the others were starting to realize might be a good thing, then continued,

‘Mary. In one sentence, tell me how might you suggest to a very left-brain thinker that story was the key to relating any message of significance? Everyone else, pay close attention to the answer.’

‘Einstein said, ‘Imagination is more important than knowledge.’ Have you ever wondered why? You know how, when you are in a movie, you are so engrossed in the story it’s as if you just stop and imagine that nothing exists except this story, these words, this moment: this moment where we begin to experience how story awakens that imagination by putting us in a state where all else follows.’

Johann immediately turned to Don, ‘What are three things she said that spoke straight to the imagination?’

1. Presupposition – saying ‘have you wondered why?’ presupposes that Einstein’s quote is true.
2. The phrase ‘have you ever wondered’ appeals to the imagination’s sense of wonder.
3. Three, three, oh yes, she used an *embedded* command ‘Stop and imagine.’ Because it was embedded in a bigger sentence, the rational mind doesn’t resist as if she had said ‘Stop and imagine’ but the impact on the imagination is the same: the imagination accepts a command that the rational mind would reject.’

‘A bit long-winded on the third one, but otherwise good, you’ve redeemed yourself after the first answer,’ responded Johann.

The mood in the room had become tense and intense. All four of them felt ‘on the spot’; all four of them were feeling nervous; and all four of them were remembering what they had been told on the four days prior about breathing, pausing, and about maintaining the enthusiasm even in tense circumstances. Don in particular was feeling relieved that he’d juggled as he’d prepared his response to the question about the commonality between story-telling and dating. He knew the moment that Johann had pointed it out that his ending had been forgettable, that he’d not delivered a ‘punch line’ – but he also knew what he had to fix, and that it could be fixed. He was grateful for Johann’s criticism, because it would help him improve on his fledgling competence and confidence.

Don also knew that on day one, he felt he had neither competence nor confidence, and this level of frankness would have knocked what little of each quality he did have right out of him. The session continued for some time. Each one responded in turn, each response in turn helping them to melt the icy atmosphere that had descended like a winter fog upon the room. Mary's thoughts wavered for a second, how long would they continue, and would any of their contributions be good enough to be used by the Institute in the future? That very same instant Johann fired a question at her.

'In your sessions Mary, your Muse talked about the need to blend confidence with humility in your attitude. How would you sum up in 20 words or less the importance of blending these two qualities?'

Mary paused for reflection for some moments before gathering her words together. 'Confidence without humility becomes arrogance. Humility without confidence becomes weakness. Confidence and humility bring congruence.'

'Possibly, just possibly usable' responded Johann. 'What is the language structure you are using?'

Mary responded, 'Each sentence has the same grammatical structure, rhythm and the same number of words. This makes it memorable. The third sentence blends the first two – bringing them together.'

'Lucie' continued Johann 'at an interview, they ask, 'do you have any questions of us' – what do you say?'

'I understand that the hardest question at an interview for either of us to answer is often the question of how I would fit into your organisation on a day-to-day basis. So my question is this: 'Imagine that I have been recruited from this company and I am working on your office environment. Three months on, we are both very happy. It's fun, and I'm fulfilling all my responsibilities to the point that I am now looking for new challenges. What scope does your organisation have to give me those new challenges and responsibilities?' replied Lucie.

'Why do you think this response would be effective?'

'Firstly, it invites them to visualize me in their office environment,' began Lucie.

'OK. Someone else?' interrupted Johann.

Anton offered, 'When she said, 'Let us imagine that you have employed me', the unconscious mind, which the Muses told us recognizes language structures over content, is invited to receive the suggestion 'you have employed me'.'

'Yes, yes – something new we haven't yet commented on,' said Johann.

Well, began Mary, 'She's given them a non-threatening challenge. She's taking as a given that she will work well. Her challenge 'how will you keep me stimulated?' non-

threateningly suggests to them that she is a star performer, who upon quickly gaining mastery of things will look to take on new areas of responsibility.'

'Yes,' said Johann. 'Don, tell me why even though 58% of communication is image and body language, that books on changing body language did not achieve a revolution in the quality of the world's communication.'

'The body's language is changed from the inside outwards, not the outside in,' replied Don.

'Explain,' prompted the Muse.

'It's the difference between a coach saying to his actor, 'That was great, only do it again with more intensity' versus the coach saying, 'I want you to remember and feel that flood of excitement that ran through your body the first time you kissed her. Now, run those lines once more.'

'OK, but venture beyond the romance metaphors now Don.'

Don blushed in good humour, and the others broke the tension in the air with a laugh.

'Mary,' commandeered Johann.

'Because confident body language is the natural end result of feeling confident because you are practiced, prepared and knowledgeable in the skills of speaking. Changing the body language to appear confident from the outside is like putting lipstick on a gorilla. You will just add insincerity to your lack of confidence. Change the gorilla, not the lipstick.'

Johann tried to suppress a smile, and almost succeeded. 'Anton.'

'Great speaking is like a great cake: memorable, smooth, content-rich. Rather than looking from the outside at a nice sweet cake and trying to copy it, you need the recipe that gets you inside that cake.'

'My friends,' said Johann softening 200%, 'we could go on, but that is enough for now. Thank you for sharing your sample of answers, and for the answers you wrote down but have not yet shared. You may consider yourselves to have given something of value back to the Dragon Tamer, and you may all proceed to the next stage. Congratulations.'

The four turned to each other and shared their mutual relief with sighs and laughter, which Johann as usual cut short.

'What we have done here is review, and consolidation. The reason we do this is because, as you have learnt, repetition in key places makes what you hear more memorable. The temptation is to use whatever speaking time you have to cram in more content. As the great speakers of our time have showed us, the opposite approach works.'

Pause more ... repeat more ... wait more.

Build a case less, craft a story more.

Inform less, inspire more ...

Educate less, evoke more.'

Johann was in full flourish now, illustrating what he and the Muses had taught more than ever before.

'Does warming up our voice make a difference? Is practicing our voice important? Can we learn to permanently change the intensity of our voice? These questions you have asked your Muses during the sessions, and you received no answer as you were asking the question before you were ready for the answer. Now is the time for each of you to receive the answer to each question in turn.

Should we warm up our voice? Imagine that you go to a concert, and all the musicians in the orchestra take out instruments, no tuning up, no warming up, and immediately begin playing them. Doesn't matter how good the musician is, what will it sound like? Do we not do exactly the same thing with our voices?

Is practicing our voice important? You are a parent who understands that learning an instrument is important, and so you book your child in for music lessons. One in 1000 of these children will make it to the sort of orchestra you just heard in concert. 50 of them will play instruments occasionally at social gatherings. The other 949 will never use their instruments again. Meanwhile every single day, as 1000 of them grow up, as 1000 of them enter the adult world, as 1000 of them enter a society where success is defined by the words you play on an instrument called your voice, a handful – by luck – will learn to play sweet music. Meanwhile, the vast majority, not for want of skill but for want of knowledge, will play their voice with the sophistication of a screeching first time violinist. Imagine if that same orchestra you paid money to hear not only failed to tune-up their instruments but failed to take music lessons. Do we not practice the same neglect with our voices?

Can we learn to permanently change the intensity of our voice? In a world where what matters is not that we can move mountains, but that we can move people, how many learn this skill? In a world where the most overused phrase in a CV is 'great communication skills', how many pay homage to this quality? How many know that Churchill won the Nobel Prize not for peace, but for literature. How many people know that he spoke with a lisp and a speech impediment? How many know that he was terrified of public speaking and considered it his weakness? In a world where history has consistently been changed more by words than by weapons, how many of us are investing time to ensure that our words will sow seeds of connection, endeavour, and responsibility into the heart and minds of all those we share our time on this planet with? Have we not forgotten to discover, as Churchill did, the power in our own voice?'

Johann paused in both gaze and words, as he lowered his tone.

‘I ask you all to cast all judgement aside, as we for a moment transform this auditorium into a theatre. For many centuries the tools of the theatre stayed inside the walls of the theatre. It is time to move these things out of the lab and into your lives.

You are now going to learn three techniques of the actor to warm up the voice, to practice and train up the voice, and to increase the intensity of the voice. In short: **tune up, train up, and move up. These three things in this combination, in this order will give you intensity:** the other quality, beside authenticity, that you need to master in order to be able inspire anyone anywhere.’

‘Everyone start walking around the room,’ instructed Johann in full voice once more. ‘The voice and the body are not separate. The voice only exists because of the vocal chords, and the vocal chords are part of the body. If your body is tense, your voice will be tense... Start making the sound ‘*mmm*’,’ instructed Johann.

They dutifully obliged, albeit with perhaps more emphasis going into making sure they weren’t the only one doing it, than giving it their 100%.

‘Feel where in your body is vibrating as you make this sound. The head, yes? Make the sound with a low tone ... now a high tone ....now a medium tone... now make that sound as though you are a cow chewing its cud. Relax your jaw muscles – you will only ever produce a tense sound if your jaw is tense... now you are going to unleash that sound wave like a tsunami. Open your mouth very wide – wider than is polite, and make the sound big ‘MAAAAAAAAA’. Do not strain the voice, but ‘send’ the voice to all corners of the room... Stop in your tracks now. Look at one corner of the room... Your sound waves are now going to hit that corner. Open your mouth and make that sound again ‘MAAAAAAAAA’. Do the same for the other corners ... you are still being polite.

Come on, that is pathetic! This is the time when you practice what you learnt about playing. Do you want to have some nice theories about the voice when you leave here, or do you want to know how to use your voice to send shock waves down people’s spines? Well start moving your sound waves out of your body and into the atmosphere right now!’ directed Johann.

Suddenly the volume and intensity increased. Judgements dropped. All four at last became fully immersed in a peace-shattering sequence of high, low and medium ‘MAA’ sounds.

‘That’s better,’ acknowledged Johann, having to shout to be heard. ‘You have all been using a fraction of your voice projection, and a fraction of your vocal range and a fraction of the ‘colour’ in your voice for the last 30, 40, 50 years. And you have failed to inspire anyone as a result, because no-one can be inspired when they are asleep!’

‘Now stop,’ continued Johann. ‘Poke out your tongue and leave it there.’

They all looked at each other a little nonplussed, but encouraged out of their comfort zone by the previous warm-up, they also obliged.

‘Your tongue, cheeks, jaw, palate, teeth and lips are all involved in caressing the sound that comes out of your mouth. But we get lazy and rely purely on a tongue to do most of the work, which creates a dull boring sound. You are going to rediscover your entire vocal instrument.

Repeat after me ... ‘articulatory agility...is the desirable ability...manipulating with dexterity...the tongue, the palate and the lips.’

‘Keep that tongue out!’ reprimanded Johann on seeing Don sneak it back into the comfort of his mouth. ‘Don’t settle for missing one consonant sound. Find the way to express the sound as perfectly as you can with your tongue out of position ...now say it faster ... fast as you can... slow it down and add emphasis and pitch variation to what you are saying ... start using gestures ... meet a partner and say it to them as though it is the most important thing you have discovered in the last minute... now put it back in your mouth and say the whole thing again ‘articulatory agility is the desirable ability manipulating with dexterity the tongue, the palate and the lips.’ Did you notice how expressive and articulate you are now?’

Having finished both the exercise and their gales of laughter, they were all amazed to find that he was correct. They had suddenly spoken with clarity and colour not previously achieved, simply by doing what seemed like a childish exercise.

‘Now take a mini-break,’ Johann instructed. ‘Are your voices warmed up?’

‘Yes,’ boomed back the enthusiastic response in unison.

‘Now they are warmed up, time to practice and train them. You must all be familiar with the phrase ‘does that resonate with you?’’ asked Johann.

They nodded.

‘So tell me, how is it possible for anything you say to resonate with anyone unless you own voice is resonating?’ said Johann.

They said nothing, deeming this to be a rhetorical question, which indeed it turned out to be.

‘Do you know what is meant by a *resonant voice*?’ asked Johann.

‘It’s a voice that is pleasing to listen to because the bass, mid and high frequencies are all vibrating fully and richly,’ offered Don.

‘Yes – the musician has the answer. There are exercises that improve the resonance of the voice and make it both easier to listen to, and more likely to resonate with someone. But this next exercise is by far my favourite one, because it does other things too. Stand up everyone, and leave your judgements behind on your chair once more as you walk to the centre of the room and form a circle of four facing opposite a partner.

This is called the ‘Ha’ process. It improves the resonance of your voice, while energizing both voice and body simultaneously,’ explained Johann.

‘Most people never allow themselves to do the exercises that make them most influential, because they are afraid of looking foolish. However, until you decide you want to let go of this fear, you will not influence anyone strongly. Not only do these exercises improve your voice; but each one has been carefully calibrated to activate what is called the “forth brain”. Most people use this brain very little: it is the intuitive brain, also called the pre-frontal cortex. It is where all genius arises. And it is also where all influence arises.

Stand with your left foot forward, or right foot if you are left-footed, and the right foot back at 90 degrees. As you breathe in swing the arms in together as if you are holding a rugby ball and passing it to your imaginary audience, maintaining eye contact with them all the while. Synchronize your out-breath with the swing-forward of arms and the transfer of weight to the front foot. Like you are passing a rugby ball with your hands, for those who have also visited New Zealand, otherwise just focus on bringing both hands forward on the out-breath towards your partner and let them sway together backwards across one side of your body on the in-breath... Good, now listen to the instructions as you continue the rhythm you now have. Do not lose eye contact with your partner for one second.’

Johann instructed them to make a sequence of sounds, one after the other in turn and then quickly instructed each in turn to tell the others to describe the sensation of eating breakfast this morning, which they duly did.

‘OK, what did you notice?’

‘My voice sounded much fuller,’ said Lucie. The others made noises of affirmation that they had observed the same thing in each other’s voices.

‘I love it,’ said Mary. ‘I mean OK I’ll admit it seemed pretty weird to start with but I remembered to leave my judgment behind like you said and play, and well, the result speaks for itself really.’

‘The only problem is,’ commented Anton, ‘well, you can’t exactly say ‘scuse me a moment’ and go through all that any time before we have to say something of note to people, can we?’

‘Fortunately, you don’t have to,’ said Johann. ‘I’ll explain why in a minute, but first let me say why this process works. There are three resonators in your body. One is in the middle of your chest, one is in your throat center, and one is in your head. The high ‘hee’ sound activates the top resonator, the ‘Hey’ activates the middle resonator, and the ‘Ha’ and ‘Hoo’ work mainly on the lower resonator in the chest. Most voices have very poor resonance, because one, two or all three of these resonators are blocked like a drainpipe full of muck that hasn’t been cleared since you were a child having a good cry. This process clears all three drainpipes. But it does more than this. It improves your voice modulation – did you notice?’

They nodded in agreement.

‘Have you noticed that often well-meaning books say things such as ‘modulate your voice when speaking to make it more interesting’, which as Mary pointed out, is like trying to put lipstick on a gorilla: you’ll only upset the gorilla, and waste your lipstick. As Anton pointed out, you might as well say ‘See that nice cake over there, I want you to bake one that looks just like that.’ Now you have one actual recipe for increasing voice modulation. I’m not sure to be honest why no one trains people in this – it seems so simple. Maybe it’s because it seems unusual, or maybe it’s because no-one previously had thought that the theatre was rich enough to plunder for its secrets and share them with the world. But the dragon tamer always knew, having been an actor, that it was a gold mine.

Anyway, the “Ha” process does more too. Can anyone tell me what else?’

‘It synchronizes the breath and the body’ offered Don.

‘Next’ said Johann.

‘It synchronizes the breath, the body and the voice too – so all three in fact,’ offered Mary.

‘Next.’

‘The physical action we make of passing the football – I imagine that prepares you subconsciously to pass on *your message*.’

‘I hadn’t thought of that,’ said Johann, ‘but yes you are right. That is really the reason I ask what a process does; so I can find out what I am doing.’

They all laughed.

‘So, have you trained your voices?’ asked Johann.

‘Yes,’ returned a chorus of resonant responses.

‘No you haven’t’ replied Johann. ‘But you’ve done the first 3% and you have learned a short cut whose results will tantalize you into practicing more. You are going to need to do this same exercise repeatedly – doesn’t have to be to another person, you can do it to a wall or whatever. But without break, without excuse, without a blemish, for the next 30 days you will do this exercise. It’s like creating a new path through the jungle. A new path won’t form behind you the first time you choose a new route. But by the 30<sup>th</sup> time it will have. 30 days consecutively is the minimum amount of time that training takes, because 30 days is required for the new neural-connections to occur in your brain which in turn will build the new prototype of ‘you’ which has a resonant voice.’

‘Now, to increase the intensity of your voice,’ Johann paused for reflection. ‘When I was in my early 20s, like many young Germans I went to a country called New Zealand. The indigenous people, the Maori, have an intense chant with full body actions called the ‘Haka’. You might have seen it before if you have seen their

national rugby team in action. I learnt that there are many haka, and that contrary to popular belief, the haka is not a battle cry – but a challenge. Ultimately it is a challenge to the person doing it to be everything they can possibly be: to live or die on this knife-edge of a moment called ‘now’. ‘Haka’ literally means ‘breath of fire’. Are you starting to make a connection now to dragon taming?’

Johann smiled, imagining that four images of fire-breathing dragons had just formed all at once in each one of their imaginations, as he observed four ‘aha’ moments occur in the visible expressions of the four eager faces before him.

‘To tame a dragon, you must gain the respect of a dragon, and this means you yourself must learn to breathe fire. Remember that the voice is nothing more than your own breath passing over hot coals. The hot coals are your vocal chords, which have been ignited from the fire that lives in what the Maori call your ‘puku.’ That’s your gut. It’s probably why people say it takes guts to speak with confidence. Your voice starts with your in-breath, which itself starts deep inside your puku. Your task is to share the fire that lies dormant in your puku, with the world. Share your spark ... and turn it into a pyromaniac’s birthday party!’

They laughed, expecting a more quotable quote from the set up and pause of his last sentence.

‘Projecting a voice that commands to be heard is not about volume, it is about the penetration of your sound wave – and just like a 500-amp stereo system seldom uses its full volume, but having that much power allows it to play with great clarity at any level of intensity. You too must have the confidence of knowing that you have ‘amps to burn’ in reserve whenever you use your voice.

We will not be doing the full haka today. That’s the ‘202 class’’ said Johann with a smile. ‘But you will be accessing your fire while making the short sound ‘Ha’ then the long sound ‘Aaah’.’

Each of the four in turn made each of the sounds to Johann’s intense encouragement. ‘Remember: inspiration = authenticity + intensity. Never before have any of you done an exercise that focuses more on the intensity of your voice than this one. The reason that good speakers fail to become great is because at the final hurdle, they do not summon up the courage to be intense.’

Johann spent extra time with Mary. ‘Mary, you are shouting from your vocal chords, and you will wear them out in no time. Don’t worry about being loud; see the sound coming deep from here in the centre of your stomach. See a circle of fire that lives there that has not been allowed to get out until now, which is why you have not yet connected the things you care about deeply to other people. It takes more than a whimper to ignite the same level of fascination inside them. Take a deep breath from your stomach as you place your hand there too and feel it filling up like a balloon. Now from deep down let that long penetrating fire breath out of you.’

‘AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH’ let out Mary.

‘Good,’ said Johann. ‘Now sit down and have a drink of water all of you. Have a lot to drink. Every internal combustion engine needs a good water-cooling system. Always drink water before you speak. It lubricates the moving parts of your vocal instrument. It refreshes you afterwards too, as speaking a lot will dry the mouth and ultimately the body – especially when you are breathing fire.’

‘You have done well today,’ said Johann. ‘I have pushed you, but only because I knew you could respond, and because I care about you progressing to the next session.’ This session has also been less of a conversation and more of an occasion: an occasion to really put something into practice.

So are there any questions?’ asked Johann.

Mary immediately responded, ‘Yes – is there a fifth secret?’

Johann looked at Mary. Then he looked at each of the other three, and then at the ceiling. Had he forgotten? Was he waiting and expecting that one of them would remind him? Was there a fifth secret at all? Was he making up on the spot what he was about to say? He wasn’t telling.

‘The fifth secret is the complement to the first secret, which is?’

‘Story is the vehicle of connection,’ volunteered Lucie.

‘And suppose that this vehicle is a land-based one, what does that vehicle need to get to where it’s going?’

‘A road,’ responded Anton.

‘So **the fifth secret is that voice is the road on which story, the vehicle of connection, travels.** Got it?’

They nodded.

‘This means that if you have the vehicle, but you have not built the road, you will get nowhere. If you have a road but no vehicle, you will take forever to get where you are going: which is in fact exactly how you all used to communicate before you started structuring what you said into concise stories. And now you know how to construct both the vehicle and the road. Any more questions?’

‘Yes’ replied Don. ‘When do we get to meet the Dragon Tamer?’

‘At 8.30am tomorrow morning,’ replied Johann. ‘See you then,’ and with those last three words he departed.

**The Fifth Secret: If story is the vehicle of connection; then voice is the road.**

**Trying to get your message to resonate with a voice that doesn't resonate is like driving cross-country: Possible, but slower and bumpier than driving on a smooth road.**

## The Sixth Secret

*The foursome learn to 'feel the fear, and do it better'*

This time the four were summoned to a small humble room at the very top of the building. It was a room of utter silence: a room that they had never set foot in before. A buzz of anticipation filled the air and everyone who breathed it, as they awaited the emergence of the Dragon Tamer at last.

They stilled to a frozen hush and spontaneously all stood up as they heard the door handle turn, and the door open. From behind the door emerged ... Johann. They sat down once again as Johann paced around the room as though inspecting the different corners. He stilled himself and then gazed at each one of them deliberately. He then took a very deep breath before commencing his address.

'I want to share with you a story.' He glanced almost imperceptibly at Mary, who noticed and knew what the glance meant, and then began.

'This story begins in the days when Sony Walkmans were still in vogue, before anyone who wasn't a geek knew what a dotcom was, and 'Eminem' meant a sweet chocolate, not a colorful rapper. Imagine the scene:

University of California, San Diego, first day of fall in 1998, a rookie entrepreneur strolls out into a room, with a crisp suit and crisper Power-Point presentation, or so he thinks, in tow. He quickly feels overdressed as he surveys his audience, a sea of friendly looking faces in Hawaiian shirts and board shorts. In an effort to raise capital for his company, he is about to pitch to a mixture of lawyers, field experts, financial gurus, academics, angel investors and venture capitalists as part of the University's entrepreneurship programme. It's a formidable crowd of talent who between them have seen over 1,000 pitches. Some 15 minutes later, the PowerPoint presentation is over, and the rookie entrepreneur waits for the sound of chequebooks being extracted from top pockets. What actually happens next is a half-hour mauling by ten dragons in Hawaiian shirts, at the conclusion of which the best feedback is, 'I liked you but I really disliked your pitch'.

The person giving the pitch that day was me. The Dragon Tamer who started this company had called me and instructed me to do a presentation to raise investment, just as Mary does today. In my case, the purpose was to get the Institute of Dragon Taming started.

I tell this story for several reasons.

1. So that you understand unequivocally that great speakers are not born, they are made.
2. So that you no longer fear failing. Permit yourself the chance to fail, as I did. It was the best learning I had ever got in either business or communication.
3. So you remember that things that are hard to go through will at the very least give you another great story.

4. So that you cease your fruitless attempts to *overcome* your fear. I can see from your responses that you are perplexed by this last comment, so let me explain:

Around the time I was being dragon-mauled, Jerry Seinfeld observed ‘According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.’

You all know that feeling when you get those butterflies in your stomach? Someone once pointed out that your task is not to remove those butterflies, but to get them to ‘fly in formation’. What they mean is that these butterflies are here to help you.

What happens on a physical level when you feel fear is that your heart rate increases, blood flow to the brain, heart and lungs increases, and more adrenaline is pumped into your body. You are being prepared for fight or flight just like in a life or death situation. The body does this to help you make instantaneous decisions.

The fact that you have more blood around your vital organs is good. The fact that you have more adrenaline is good. The fact that you are on-edge is good: it prepares you for greater risk-taking. It is in this state that you gain the means to transform your every word from informational to inspirational.

And as Dragon Tamer would say, ‘your task is to turn those butterflies into dragons.’ The concept of feeling the fear and doing it anyway never went far enough for the Dragon Tamer. It suggests that the best you can do is to *negate* the presence of fear. The Dragon Tamer will show you the secret is to know how to *harness* that fear and tame the dragon.’

Each of the four had their eyes transfixed on Johann. The Muses had been more interactive in their teaching, but Johann was modeling before their very eyes what the Muses had said about all monolog being dialog. There were spaces like lakes around his words, and he seemed to have all the time in the world to deliver what he had to say. Wearing black, against this room which resembled a theatre with its black walls, Johann looked striking – his head became like a full moon moving around the horizon, entrancing all the creatures that bathed in the moonlight.

‘Everything prior to this point has been about ‘out’: being more *outward*, more *outgoing* and speaking *out* with more confidence. This bit is about going *inside*. Your dragons exist inside you, and so inside we must go to tame them. But to skip to this bit without first going outward would have been impossible. You needed much training and much preparation, even to be in the same physical presence as your dragons without being incinerated by them.

And like a ‘HA process’, today is just the beginning. But it is the beginning of a whole new magical world, which is in fact without limits, and which all of you have access to.’ Johann paused so long and breathed so deliberately that by the time he spoke again they had naturally started observing the instruction he was about to give.

‘First, become conscious of your breath,’ began Johann in his soft voice, but losing none of its strength. ‘Simply become aware that you are breathing. Do not change anything. Simply notice as you breathe in ... and as you breathe out.’

Breath is to voice as money is to business. Breath is to voice as blood is to the body. If you cannot breathe well, you cannot speak well. This is the sixth secret. It is also the simplest. It is also the most easily taken for granted. It is also by far the most powerful point you have learned.

Maintain that awareness of your breath as you become aware of the word ... ‘inspiration’. *Inspire* literally means to *breathe in*. *Expire* literally means the opposite: to breathe out. This is the original meaning of the word: ‘to breathe life into’. And this ties together everything you have learnt about pausing. For what it means is that *inspiration can only happen on the in-breath, because ...*

### Inspiration *is* the In-Breath

What does this mean about the only time inspiration can occur?’

No one said a word.

‘Correct. It means that *inspiration can only possibly occur when there is silence*. Remember the third secret?’

Lucie responded, ‘communication is what takes place between the words’.

Johann continued. ‘And now we are going a step further ... *inspiration can only occur* between the words.’

Each time *you* breathe in air, *they* breathe in the sequence of words received on the cadence of your last out-breath.’

Johann was using extremely long pauses now, and the effect on the foursome was electric. He pointed to the wall behind him.

‘Do you know what lies behind that wall?’

‘The Dragon tamer?’ offered Anton.

‘A dragon?’ suggested Lucie, and they all laughed.

‘150 of the team in this company who have gathered to hear you give an impromptu one-minute recital on how to tame dragons.’

They looked at each other a little nervously, unsure of whether he was joking or not.

‘This is not something I am asking you to imagine, this is a reality that will be your imminent future,’ continued Johann before their minds had the collective opportunity to think of objections. ‘Now close your eyes, and follow my instructions.’

‘Once again, become conscious of your breath ... each *expiration*, and each *inspiration*. Very slowly deepen your breathing and slow down the pace of each breath. Take a very deep breath in, and breathe out completely...notice any feelings of fear in your body. It may be a tightening, some feeling of heat, a faster heartbeat, or some sensation in the stomach. Whatever it is, it doesn't matter. Do not try to change this feeling. Simply become aware of it. Allow the feeling to get bigger...go into the middle of that sensation. Continue simply to observe what you are experiencing as you take deep long breaths in and out. Keep your eyes closed completely through the whole process. You are going to continue to do nothing but observe the in-breath and the out-breath for some time. No matter what happens, what discomfort occurs, what thoughts appear, do not open your eyes until you hear my instruction,’ commanded Johann.

Don did exactly as Johann instructed. His mind wandered relentlessly, but in between it reached moments of stillness. He started to feel calmer, as though at least a few of the herd of dragons in his stomach were in control, if not all of them. He noticed also that the more he focused on his own breath and became aware of it, the more he felt at peace with the idea of speaking ... although he immediately then tried in his mind to analyze why this might be. But returning to his breath once more, he felt a natural urge to connect with people was beginning to take over. It was as if focusing on something as essential as air, and an activity as simple as breathing, was cutting through everything that made him feel different and disconnected to other people, and was reminding him of the things which all human beings shared, and had shared since time began.

After what felt like an eternity, but was probably no more than 30 minutes, Don heard Johann faintly whisper in his ear, ‘Take my hand, but keep your eyes closed.’

Johann led Don by the hand into the next room, and stopped him when he was in the right position. Again, he whispered in his ear,

‘In 20 seconds, I am going to ask you to open your eyes. Upon opening them, once more notice any feelings inside you, and simply observe them. Continue to take deep long breaths in and out, and spend a full 15 seconds before you utter a word simply breathing – nothing else at all – while you look at each person in the room and stand there being nothing and no one other than Don. Then and only then take one more long inspiration, and begin speaking for no more than one minute on how to tame dragons ... open your eyes.’

As Don opened his eyes, Johann handed Don a card on which was written the sixth secret, and then left. Don looked at the card, and then looked up and saw what indeed was a large gathering of well over 100 of the Institute’s employees, all facing him, all awaiting whatever it was he was about to say. Immediately a wave of fear came up in Don. Though the circumstance was different, it was the same fear he felt when out on a date, wondering if he would be liked. But then as he remembered what Johann whispered in his ear, something different happened. He noticed the fear as Johann had instructed, and avoided the temptation he had always had in the past to ignore it and push it away by layering meaningless words on top of it like an earthmover putting a couple of layers of topsoil over a landfill. Instead he noticed all of the fear and simply took a very deep breath.

He remained silent as he looked into the eyes of several of the people in the audience. They were no longer scary dragons that could rip him apart by committing the scorching act of not liking what he had to say, they were his fellow-human beings – probably wishing him well – breathing the same air he was, wanting as he did to establish a connection with them. And then something unexpected happened. Something that Johann had not said, nor had he read anywhere. He realized the folly of trying to establish a connection. In his mind the question reverberated “how can you try to establish something that already exists?”

He already was connected. They were all connected by the same breath, the same air, the same life stories of birth, loss, hope, setback and triumph, the same bodies, the same brains, the same DNA and the same universal peculiarly human condition of communicating most effectively through story. A wave of calm came over him at the same time as the adrenaline pumped through his body. It was as if in that moment, the tempestuousness of a white-river had expanded into the calm of a mighty ocean. He no longer worried whether he would connect, he was already connected. He no longer wondered whether he could be inspiring, he was already inspiring. He opened his mouth, inspired once more, and began speaking.

90 seconds later, Don found himself returning to the room, where the other three were waiting for him with eyes wide open, beaming with the euphoric post-adrenalin high and post-fear relief that can only come from taming dragons in front of a large gathering. They all applauded loudly as Don walked in. Don was perplexed. And then it dawned on him that the joke was on him: he had been the last to speak. Johann had already taken each of the other three to face their dragons in the room next door so stealthily that Don had not noticed their disappearance. No wonder it felt as though his eyes were closed for such a long time. Don laughed to himself, as he once more looked at the card on which in elaborate calligraphy was written

The sixth secret:

**Breathe!**

For once, Johann did not cut short their conversation, or their jubilation. And the others sensed too, even as they celebrated what they had achieved, that Johann’s allowing them at last to break free, was signaling an ending. After some time, Johann at last spoke again ‘Surely you have not forgotten, there is still someone’s identity you would like to know, yes?’

‘Yes!’ they all said in unison.

‘Have you guessed yet?’ asked Johann.

‘It’s you isn’t it Johann. It was you all along,’ chanced Lucie.

Johann, *inspired* deeply and replied:

‘In every life there are princes, princesses, heroes and heroines, and there are also dragons: little dragons guarding little treasures, and huge dragons guarding huge

treasures. And people's hugest dragon in the whole world is fear of talking in front of a group. Most avoid the dragon, a few kill the dragon, and I help people to tame the dragon so that you get to share the dragon's power, the dragon's luck, and the dragon's magic at any time you need to open your mouth and breathe words of fire... into the souls of those who stand mesmerized before you.

My dear ones, I am the trainer of dragon tamers, but I am not the Dragon Tamer.’

‘It’s us isn’t it?’ said Don, and each one of them nodded in recognition at the same time. ‘Each one of us is our own dragon tamer. You said yourself that the dragons exist not outside us but inside, and we must go inside to face them once we are properly prepared – prepared to attend, to breathe with fire, to stand confidently and authentically, to soothe the dragon with story, to seduce the dragon with play, everything we learned. So everything we have done has made us into a dragon tamer, and that last talk was the final challenge to test we had tamed our dragons.’

‘Don,’ said Johann, ‘and indeed all of you...well done!’

And having uttered his first unmitigated compliment he beckoned for them to stand up.

Johann addressed them all with transparent admiration for their achievement: his genuineness changing what he said from what might have otherwise sounded like a generic pep-talk into a sequence of words that resonated one after the other like the arrows of a Zen Archer twanging as they struck their target with unerring precision.

‘The Dragon Tamer is you. Not the ‘you’ that you were, but the ‘you’ that you have become, and will continue to become. We can teach you much, but there is no course and notebook that can do it for you. These things point the direction, but they cannot provide the impetus to move in that direction. That can only come from you: and from that knowing we *all* have in our gut, that you have merely *rediscovered*, that says, ‘I know I can tame a dragon.

At The Dragon Taming Institute, we don’t teach, we train. Actually, we don’t train – you do. We give you the equipment to train. Yes – you must all have been wondering why your Muses corrected you on this point, or why they said “we help you to train.”’

Don, Mary, Anton and Lucie all looked at each other and realized that what they had thought was the Muse being pedantic or ungrammatical was in fact planting the seed for something to be concealed, and now revealed when it had germinated.

‘My friends, you visit your dragons by train! Remember the six secrets

1. Story is the vehicle of connection.
2. Leave yourself with no choice *but* enthusiasm.
3. Communication is what takes place between the words.
4. Language content speaks only to the intellect. Language structure and metaphor speaks to the imagination.
5. Voice is the tracks on which the vehicle of connection travels.
6. Breathe.

1. ‘Your vehicle is a **train**.
2. Enthusiasm is your **train fare**.
3. Between the words are the train stations, where the **passengers** board – but only when you pause.
4. Your language structure is the **driver** who structures your train journey.
5. Your voice is the **train tracks** upon which your train travels, and ...
6. Your breath is the **fuel** that powers your train.

The destination is inspiration, and you need all six in order for the train to reach its destination. Use these six secrets, and you will inspire.

Our mission at the Dragon Taming Institute is not just to train, but to fast-track the communication ability of people who seek to positively impact the world, by sharing the most effective techniques known to humanity, from whatever sphere they came, which turns your train of speech into a horizontal rocket of inspiration.

Don’s music has been noticed, but he’s not going to succeed until he gets that love partner in his life that will end his distractions, and support his music as he takes her ‘some place nice’ each day of her life. Lucie is going to make a big difference influencing senior executives to change corporate behavior, but she can only do that now that she has the skills to win interviews for the jobs and projects she loves. Mary will make millions and give most of that back to philanthropic causes, but she will only do that once she learns to attract investment, customers, top employees and advisors through her inspirational use of language, and Anton will go on to successfully lobby not just local authorities but governments to adopt models of sustainable urban development, but he will only do that now that he understands how to connect with the same people he used to alienate; care about the people he used to see as his adversary; and share with them a common story that they can all feel part of.

As you leave you will carry the audio-recording of your sessions, the video of your dragon taming and some written reminders of some techniques. You will carry these in your hands, but you will carry forth your ability to inspire anyone in any situation in your own puku.’

Johann paused one final time, not for effect, but because he needed to tame a tear of both happiness and sadness, and collect and compose himself as he uttered his farewell.

‘May you go forth ... tame dragons ... and make the world a happier place for us all.’

**The Sixth Secret: The stronger and deeper your breath; the stronger and deeper you inspire.**

**Influencing without inspiring is like living without breathing: impossible!**

## One year on

*Mary had won not one, but several investment rounds for her company. Her product sales had taken a little longer to materialize than planned, but she had been able to tell the story of the progress they had all made in such an inspirational way that she had not only been able to attract the additional capital the company needed to get them through the initial phases, but the same skills had attracted her dream employees to work with her, as well as a pool of advisors that would be the envy of a company 10 times the size of hers. Moreover, she was more relaxed and paused more not just each time she talked, but throughout her day and her life to breathe in all of what life had to offer.*

*Anton had not only successfully lobbied the local authorities, but had talked to a group of property developers and persuaded them to voluntarily change their plans to incorporate more genuine space for the entire community. When others asked him how, he just laughed and said he still wasn't quite sure, but if they really wanted to know he would tell them a little story about dragons. He had been asked to give talks to a number of other community action groups on how to lobby successfully for change, and had just been asked for the second time in two days by someone to run for the local council.*

*Lucie had moved on from her job after finding a great supervisor's position some ten months ago with great conditions which she was able to negotiate as a result of having three job offers come through in the same week. She had a team around her who loved her way of talking and engaging with them, giving them just enough but not overloading them with information, and allowing them time to contribute their own ideas. In her extended leave-time she had negotiated with her work, she had begun writing a book for her industry called 'the shut-up interview technique: how to get your dream job by saying less.'*

*And Don, Don was loving his music more than ever. His concerts were going better than ever, not so much because he was playing better music, but because he had started playing the audience: something that had always terrified him. Now, he freely ad libbed and exchanged views with his audience before and after songs, and he was getting bigger and bigger audiences each time. The fear of performing was still there, but it was a fear he looked forward to, was in control of, and used in order to 'become himself'. Oh, and he had also met a very nice lady some time ago with whom it transpired he had many shared interests including acoustic music and hang-gliding, who he had just last month persuaded to move in with him: an effervescent and attractive young entrepreneur. Her name was Mary.*

I wish you well on your influential journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D S Batten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "S" followed by "Batten".

Daniel S Batten  
Founder, Beyond The Ceiling  
[www.beyondtheceiling.com](http://www.beyondtheceiling.com)