



LEADING THE CHEER

The midmorning drive to the airport on Saturday was less than a sixty-mile trip, and on almost any road system in the United States it should have taken an hour at most. But when combined with his trancelike state, the serpentine roadway that led back down the mountain turned Matt's sober trek into a two-and-a-quarter-hour journey. The sun was intermittently in his eyes as it rose ever higher into the morning sky or was flashing brilliantly against the steep rugged mountains to his left or right as he traced his way down from High Summit's nine thousand feet above sea level to Colorado Springs's mere six thousand. Driving through the town of Divide, Matt shook his head in bemusement. Divide, indeed. He was at a divide, and what his personal one was about was greater than a continent.

Finally through the last twisting turns in and around the Garden of the Gods, the airport now only another twenty minutes away, Matt felt his anxiety growing. It had all seemed so clear, finally, the night before. David and he had talked till after midnight, and then he'd made his choices. The course was set, and he had been prepared, as he went to bed, to live with the consequences.

Now he wasn't sure. High Summit Ranch to his back, the airport fast approaching, he felt a growing insecurity about what he had resolved to do. It could have all been so clean, he told himself as he parked his rental car. A consultation finished,



notes collated and neatly packed, new plans drawn, and a couple hours of sublime first-class flight—plus drinks—would have pushed the ranch, the kids, and everything else into a softer and rapidly diminishing focus. Walking toward security, Matt shook his head, unable to suppress the grin that was spreading across his face.

He could have escaped was what he was thinking—could have, but hadn't. Standing before security, waiting patiently, he felt the wonder of being empty-handed. He'd let it all go. Just let it go. And as though to underscore the point, he'd left his luggage, clothes, and even neatly collated notes behind, all of them still tucked into the desk and dresser drawers in his room back at the ranch.

When he'd awakened in the early predawn light, he checked his voice mail. The message that greeted him held great promise, and with that promise, he'd quietly dressed and slipped out of the ranch to face his prospects.

His trip back down the mountain to this airport was so different than he'd planned, so empty-handed, so light. The only things in his pants pockets were his driver's license, a little cash, and the keys to the car that he should have returned to the rental agency hours before.

And then, like a miracle, she was there, and she was embracing and kissing him, and it was all so totally unexpected—foolish on so many levels—yet wonderful. He had asked her without notice only twelve hours before, and she'd actually come!

"I do love you, Matt," was all Alice finally said, pulling herself into him tightly. As he held her, he wondered about the big, wide, empty first-class seat that was by now at least beyond the Mississippi River taking the phantom Matt from whom he'd

divided himself, back to New York. And he wondered about the small narrow bed back at the ranch that tonight would *not* be empty. What an upgrade I got, he thought, kissing his wife on the top of her jet-black mop of closely cropped hair.



"They're teaching these children how to achieve their life's biggest goals," Matt was explaining to Alice as they sat together in the outside patio of the Balanced Rock Café, buffalo burgers half eaten, the buzz of the Garden of the Gods Trading Post providing them with perfect anonymity and privacy. They needed time together before arriving into the crush of youth and curiosity back at the ranch. "Step by step, they show these youths what to do with their dreams, how to pursue them, and how to work them out. It's amazing."

"Would they show us?" Alice asked, her face a study in pain and longing. "Anybody would say that we're really successful, Matt," she implored, "but it's a joke! What about all the things we dreamed? What about our goals?"

"They'll show us," Matt answered simply but emphatically. A goal achievement team could just as well be a married couple as a corporate division, he'd figured out, or a group of golf buddies, neighbors, colleagues, or girlfriends. "What helps these kids will help my team at Lumina," he elaborated, "but it'll just as well help you and me and us together." He reached across the table to grasp Alice's hands. "Have you thought about it?" he then ventured to ask.

"It's huge, Matt." Alice paused, a look of worry in her eyes. "Of course I've thought about it. I could hardly sleep. But, honestly, I can't even begin to imagine it."



Matt nodded his understanding. Tyler shouldn't be imagined, he was thinking—couldn't be, for that matter. Tyler needed to be experienced firsthand. He just squeezed Alice's hand.

"Looks like we're sharing a single bed tonight," he added. Matt wanted to give his wife time, a little breathing room, some lightheartedness.

She raised her eyebrows and peered at her husband over the reading glasses she also wore to eat. "That used to work quite nicely as I seem to distantly recall," she replied playfully.

"How did we end up so far apart?" Alice suddenly went on, her voice immediately stripped of its playfulness and now filled with grief.

"The king-sized bed did it," Matt deadpanned. "It's so big I need a map."

"The king-sized bed and every other bloody thing we've stuffed into our lives," Alice agreed, her voice edged with anger. "Work and stress and hurt and so much silence." Her words were spoken across the table with complete directness and no recrimination. She held Matt's gaze with a look of tremendous sorrow. "So we filled up our lives with more and more stuff and ended up both pushed out onto the street to live like beggars. Is any of this what you actually wanted?" Alice added, her voice a plea. "I wanted adventure and togetherness. And all we got is busy and burned."

"I watch these kids, Alice," Matt replied, "and the process for goal achievement they're taught gets them the adventure that they want and the togetherness. They learn how to pursue their goals and achieve them, but what's really going on is that they're being shown the purpose of their lives. And they get to have their adventure in the company of friends. Life is crazy," Matt went on, his voice now very animated. "All these aban-

doned kids already know what we don't know. They're learning what we need to learn, how to follow your dreams and achieve your goals. And even more importantly, how to get your life turned back on, to work with others, and to help each other.

"What I should say," Matt added more reflectively, "is that life is wonderful." He looked at Alice—really looked—and felt grateful. "We could complain that we're only getting a chance to learn what we need to learn in our forties—that it's too late, I mean. But it isn't too late. And I think most people never ever learn it at all."



"Matt and I spoke last evening, Alice, about how important it is to know that an adopted child can't replace some other child, one you lost or one you dreamed of having." David and John were sitting with Matt and Alice in David's office. David had asked Matt and Alice to spend some time with him when they returned before meeting the youths on the ranch. He had also asked Matt if it would be okay for John to join them.

The warmth with which David greeted Alice when they'd finally arrived back after their long lunch meant a great deal to Matt. David had walked quickly toward them before they'd finished getting Alice's luggage from the car and had embraced her with a father's ardor. Alice could not have been more powerfully swept into this new circle.

"Matt told me," Alice said simply, reaching a hand over to grasp her husband's. He'd told her many things at lunch, all of them good things, she felt, yet things she needed time to process.

David nodded his head, encouraged by everything he was seeing, and made his decision to proceed.



“It goes the other way around, too,” he added, a look of puzzlement appearing on both Matt’s and Alice’s faces. “A new mom and dad don’t replace the mom and dad a child loses,” David clarified. “These kids desperately need new moms and dads, but the operational word is ‘new.’ They’ll always still have lost the old ones.”

“For the ones who knew their parents,” Matt offered. He meant that David’s comment might not apply to every adopted child, maybe not to the ones adopted at birth.

“Every situation’s different, Matt,” John chimed in. “Every child’s different. So you’re right to suggest that things can’t be generalized. We’re talking about little human beings here, every one unique.”

“But there are still patterns,” David continued, “and even kids adopted as infants face questions other kids don’t. Where’d my dad go? Why’d my mom give me up? Didn’t they want me? Is something wrong with me?”

“Am I lovable?” John added, cutting to the heart of the matter. “People who really understand the grief felt by adopted kids sometimes call this the ‘primal wound.’ It’s a deep, intimate trauma that you need to understand, Matt and Alice, before you go too far forward in your thoughts about Tyler.”

Matt and Alice looked at each other, their thoughts sober. “You’re warning us,” Alice said, directing her comment to John, “that an adopted child feels more than gratitude toward his new parents.” She knew that this was true, of course; she wasn’t naïve. It made sense to her to actually state it. “There are struggles,” she added.

John’s smile couldn’t have been warmer. He really liked Alice—a sentiment David shared—and let it show. “I’ve brought David nothing but struggle, that’s for sure,” he said

playfully, “but the papers were signed seven years ago, so he’s stuck with me.”

“I needed John in my life as much as he needed me,” David said quietly, looking over at his son, “more, truth be told.”

“Oh, that’s a lot of bull!” John laughed, his face radiant. “This is a fight I’m never going to let him win,” he added.

“What does it look like?” Alice pressed on, “the struggle, I mean.”

“In broad brushstrokes, Alice,” David answered, “you get one of two kinds of behavior to look for. One, the child does things you don’t approve of to test if you’ll reject him. Is your love for real, or is it just a hobby? A kid can work hard to get himself rejected by his new parents. And he hopes against all hope that his efforts will fail though he’ll never let you in on any of this. In all likelihood, he won’t understand it himself. He’ll just flail and rage and test and sabotage.”

David gave them a moment to absorb what he’d just told them.

“Quite a rude disappointment to an adoptive parent who’s trying to make up for an earlier wrong,” Matt said.

“A huge disappointment,” David agreed, “unless you realize where this child’s coming from. Unless you know that it’s not about you is what I mean.”

David and Matt locked eyes for a moment. As enraged as he’d been at his mentor the night before, Matt was now utterly grateful for what he’d learned, what David had helped him understand and do.

“What’s the other kind?” Alice asked, persistent in her questions.

“The perfect child,” John answered, his face uncharacteristically devoid of its customary smile. “My kind,” he then added,



there being no joke intended. “You spend years trying to earn a mom and dad, and finally you get one, so you have to be just perfect ‘cause you know that, one screwup, and you’re gone!” John then smiled again, a sad smile, and looked over in the direction of David.

“The old man needed to teach me that perfect was impossible. That being loved had nothing to do with being perfect. That it’s always a gift, never a right or a reward. I thought that the kids who had parents had a right to be loved and that the rest of us had to earn it. David taught me it’s the same for both kinds of kid; love is a gift. Always! Once that sank in, I started to know what it felt like to breathe.”



“You can’t imagine how important our parties are, Matt,” David started to explain. John had departed to attend to his duties, and Alice had gone to the kitchen to help set up for the planned Saturday evening festivities. She did this in part because the kitchen was always where she wanted to be when a party was in the works. More to the point, Tyler was on kitchen crew. It had been agreed that a chance to meet Tyler apart from Matt—no strange dynamics of expectation—was a good idea. Tyler knew nothing of Matt’s thoughts, wouldn’t know who Alice was, and wouldn’t be in performance mode. Alice had agreed to come to the ranch and check things out. She had not agreed to step into an emotional trap and insisted on keeping control of the steps she might take. David had agreed with this plan and would have laid it out the same way himself.

“Everything you’ve seen so far with our Engagement Equation is effective in getting the kids moving in the right direction,” David continued, “but aiming in the right direction is

one thing. Staying on course and remaining motivated to give your very best effort over time is another thing. So let me cheat on my rules again, Matt, and fill out the rest of the picture for you. I was going to introduce you to the third capability in our equation on your next visit,” he added and gave Matt a broad grin as he got up from his seat to write on the large sheet of paper hanging on the wall amid the dozens of horse and youth photos to the right of his big desk.

“By way of review, trust is the baseline character requirement of leadership.” David wrote as he talked. “We work every day to close the say-do gap by keeping our promises to our staff and kids. It’s the foundational work we do to set a stage of trust with our workers.”

“It’s a multiplier,” Matt interjected. “You write T times the C s, rather than T plus the C s,” he added.

David smiled. “An astute observation, Matt. Trust is not an additive. If trust is zero, your results will be zero, regardless of how strong your capabilities are.

“So, you’ve been introduced to the first capability,” he continued. “Challenge is the preparation stage. With clear vision in mind, the leader lays out the plans, fitting strengths to roles. Do you remember what I stressed here?”

“Learning to receive,” Matt answered. “Your team brings you value, and you must look for it, and learn to appreciate what’s there, instead of focusing on what’s not there.”

David wrote the word “Challenge,” adding the words “Preparation Stage—Plans, Strengths, Roles,” as well as “Learn to Receive” just beneath.

“And the second capability?”

“Charge. Both you and Teddy stressed that in this stage, you should expect your plans to go off track. So you innovate, scan, adjust,” he added, showing his mentor he was ready for more.



“Charge,” David wrote, adding “Implementation Stage—Innovate, Scan, Adjust” and “Learn to Release” underneath.

“What’s the importance of learning to release, Matt?”

“Course corrections are normal. You have to let go of what’s not working.”

“And as we discussed, your mistakes too. You have to let go of the little mistakes, and the big ones. Move on.”

David and Matt smiled at each other. They’d covered a lot of territory in a very short time.

“And the third capability?” Matt’s smile had broadened. “Let me guess it has something to do with throwing a party.” David simply filled out the chart, writing the words “Evaluation Stage—Measure, Reward, (Re)Prepare.”

David then added the words “Learn to Rejoice,” to the chart, completing his review and update.

“The evaluation stage, when carefully designed to reinforce your purpose and your plans, produces kids who finally start to act like owners rather than unwilling laborers. The party, as you call it, locks the entire process into place.”

“Can you tell me more about this?” Matt asked, now sitting up very straight, his eyes fixed on David’s words on the newsprint.

“The first thing a goal achievement leader does is make sure that the goal and the plan are crystal clear. Leaders do this with their teams in the challenge stage. When team members show they can clearly and accurately present the leader’s goals and objectives, we give it a cheer.

“The second thing we do is a constant review of progress against our goals. The implementation stage provides lots of celebration points, Matt. Every positive step gets celebrated, every adjustment gets celebrated, and every abandonment of

$$T \times 3C = E$$

Engagement Equation

T (closing “the say-do” gap)

Trust (credibility)

3C (closing “the paycheck-purpose” gap)

Challenge (preparation stage)

Plans, strengths, roles

Learn to receive

Charge (implementation stage)

Innovate, scan, adjust

Learn to release

Cheer (evaluation stage)

Measure, reward, (re)prepare

Learn to rejoice

effort that isn’t working gets celebrated. We throw That Didn’t Work! parties,” David added, “right alongside We Did It! parties. If it helps us make progress, we cheer it.

“I told you that we teach these kids how to lead in such a way that the switch gets flipped from off to on. Way back on Wednesday, if you can recall back that far,” he added, smiling warmly.

Matt nodded his head. David had laid out the Engagement Equation for him, but he still hadn’t explained how all of this flips the switch to full engagement.



“What I didn’t tell you is that the research also diagnoses the cause of worker disengagement.”

Matt’s gaze was now level, his eyes unblinking.

“It’s a lack of trust in leadership, Matt, not just personal trust in the leader’s integrity, but systemic trust in the whole operational discipline of the organization. At one level, workers don’t trust that leaders will do what they say.”

“The say-do gap,” Matt responded.

“At a deeper level, workers don’t trust that the challenge they were given will be remembered down the line when stuff goes wrong. A little setback and to hell with the purpose and the goal. Workers watch their leaders cover their behinds all the time or throw their plans to the wind at the slightest provocation. You know it’s true, Matt.

“Or the project succeeds,” David continued, more animated now than ever. “The goal was reached and it’s evaluation time, bonus time, promotion time. How many examples can you give me,” David asked, his bearing electric, “of when a boss tells a worker to accomplish something in a certain way and for one reason or another the worker who did his part is overlooked or, worse, punished for doing exactly what he or she was asked to do?”

“Why on earth bring your whole self to the job under these circumstances, right?” David was imploring his charge to understand the point. “If your boss is fickle and undisciplined, sets out an important challenge and then abandons it at the first sign of difficulty, or more routinely, doesn’t carefully tie the evaluations and rewards to what he said he wanted . . .” David left the sentence unfinished.

“Better to play it safe and see how things turn out,” Matt filled in, feeling very ashamed. He’d blamed Randy for losing

his drive and for becoming uncommitted. Randy had turned into the perfect example of a disengaged worker, and in his mind, Matt had blamed him for lots of things as he’d sat alone in his office staring at one pathetic report after another.

And the thought of Molly only deepened his remorse. Where Randy had become apathetic and noncommittal, Molly had become hard and bitter. She was worse than disengaged; Matt had already begun to contemplate ways to get rid of her for her growing negativity. And it was he, Matt, who had hurt her, he now realized. He’d robbed her of the reward for work well done, penalized her with what he’d thought of as a promotion, and blamed her for everything that had resulted from his own poor leadership.

Talk about fickle and undisciplined. Talk about not tying rewards to the positive things that were accomplished. It sickened Matt to think about what he’d done; it was unwitting on his part, to be sure, but he’d done it nonetheless.

Deb was another matter, and Matt resolved to ask her how she kept herself so positive. She remained engaged, but it was no credit to him. It was as if she showed up for work already fulfilled rather than coming to work in order to get fulfilled. He was very fortunate, he realized, to have her.

“All of it’s trust, Matt,” David added, “trust in you and trust in your operational discipline.”

Matt nodded soberly. He was getting it.

“Turns out,” David continued, “that, aside from a couple of scoundrels, most workers would actually like to like their jobs. Most workers actually have ideas about making improvements at work that they’d like to share. Most workers would like to go home at the end of the day and tell someone a story about how they made a difference. But why bother.”



“If your boss can’t be counted on to stay the course,” Matt filled in.

“If your operational practices lack the daily discipline and the tools required to stick to the purposes and plans of the enterprise,” David elaborated.

A silence fell between them.

“So the *T* is the leader’s necessary character baseline. The leader must close the say-do gap.”

It was well-rehearsed territory and required no response from Matt.

“The *Cs* are the imperatives of daily operational discipline and consistency. The leader must close the paycheck-purpose gap.”

“Sara mentioned that. What does it mean?”

“Great leaders take tremendous care to tie their inspiring speeches to the daily, picayunish operational realities. What’s stated in the great purpose shows up again when it’s party time. It’s not just words is what it means, Matt!

I can’t explain it, but your credibility as a leader hasn’t been fully established until there’s a party. When you stick to your word all the way through to the party, your followers finally know that you really said what you said, meant what you meant, and want what you want.” David walked back up to the newsprint and wrote his formula on the top of the newsprint:

$$T \times 3C = E$$

“Work the equation,” David concluded, “and your business becomes more than a paycheck to your employees. It becomes part of their sense of purpose and meaning. Work the equation,

and the result is true engagement. And, Matt,” David added with emphasis, “when your team is truly engaged, hang on to your hat!”

“That’s the warning you gave me on the phone, David,” Matt interjected, chuckling.

David looked puzzled.

“I asked you what hands on meant, and you said that hands are real good for hanging onto my hat. Scared me half to death, I must tell you.”

David remembered and laughed along with his younger charge, enjoying the realization of how far Matt had come in this short while.

“I told you hands are good for more than that,” David retorted.

“Wasn’t a fair contest, David.”

“No. Not fair. But you have to know that I never saw this bond you have with Tyler coming. I was sure that, if there was any blood in your veins, you’d be touched. But Tyler is the architect of everything else. He chose you.”

“And I him,” Matt responded, his voice quiet, his face reflective.

“Nervous?”

“No. I’m at peace. What should be will be. Alice and Tyler will connect, or they won’t. She comes first. Tyler has no future with me if he has no future with Alice.”

David’s eyes filled with gratitude. He could not imagine hearing better words than these. Matt and Alice were going to be okay. This was foundational, and nothing he hoped for Tyler came before it.

“So, let’s head over. Time to party!” David said these words with a sense of profound consequence. They were about to



learn something important, and until they walked outside and crossed the courtyard to the dining hall, they'd have no idea what the future was about to become.



Matt preceded David through the doorway to the dining hall, crossed the threshold, and froze in his tracks. The scene was bedlam. Kids were stringing ribbon across great sections of the ceiling; others were working over a helium tank blowing up balloons; others were setting plates, cups, and silverware around tables; and still others were hanging a giant banner in the front of the room bearing the words "Matt James: Official Cowboy!" He'd thought this was Sara's sixteenth birthday party. Even though her actual birth date wasn't until tomorrow, he'd bought the ruse. They were going to throw Sara a big party, and wasn't it great that Matt was staying an extra day to join in. He was stunned by the beehive of energized happiness abuzz in the room, all of it marshaled for his sake.

But this scene of good-spirited chaos was not what had stopped him in his tracks. Across the room, facing him from the far side of a worktable, stood Alice and Tyler, oblivious to his arrival and immersed in the task of icing a great sheet of birthday cake. They both had icing on their faces—clearly the work of mutual tomfoolery—as well as on their hands. They both were laughing, pointing at their masterpiece, and exchanging ideas for its improvement. And they were both leaning in toward each other in an easy closeness, Alice with one hand resting on Tyler's shoulder, and Tyler tucked in close beside her, his eyes glancing up again and again to catch hers, to catch her nods of approval, to catch her smiles and acknowledgments.

And they looked alike. Jet-black mops of closely cut, tousled hair, pale white skin, dark penetrating eyes, faces that often wore a look of uncertainty. He hadn't thought of it before this moment. Tyler tugged at his heart in some of the same ways Alice did—the longing, the guardedness, and the hidden capacity for joy that could break free from its restraints and fill his entire being with light.

Alice looked up, saw Matt across the room, and leaned down to say something to Tyler. She kept her eyes on her husband as she spoke quietly into his ear. Tyler looked up, spotted Matt across the room and nodded his head in answer to whatever she had just said to him. Tyler then said something else to Alice, both of them now watching him, Alice now taking her turn nodding. And then Alice smiled across the room, her eyes penetrating the distance to capture her husband's attention. She leaned down to Tyler a second time, and said something else to him, her lips close to his ear. Tyler cocked his head, the lines of his forehead furrowed as he tried to put together the pieces of information he was being given. She said one more thing, his eyes flared in astonishment and then he grinned his biggest smile yet, gesturing wildly for Matt to come over to where they were standing. This arrangement proving to be unsatisfactorily slow, Tyler bolted from his position beside Alice to meet Matt halfway across the room in order to escort him back to his rightful place beside the woman he had just learned was not only his newest friend, but his other newest friend's wife.

Matt gave Tyler a hug, took his hand, and strolled across the room toward the lady in waiting. He gave her a hug, too, and then a kiss on the lips. Tyler watched in embarrassment and awe.

Noticing the cake finally, Matt let out a huge guffaw. Crudely, but not without artfulness, Alice and Tyler had iced a



picture of a running horse, legs stretched out in full flight, with the figure of a man—no doubts as to which man—clutching with all his might to the pommel with one hand and to his hat with the other. Across the top of the cake, they had written in icing, “Matthew James—Ride ‘em, Cowboy.”

“She’s your wife,” was the first thing Tyler said. It was a happy exclamation, but also slightly tutorial, as though he was filling Matt in on a crucial point.

Matt tousled Tyler’s hair and looked at Alice. “She is indeed, Tyler. She’s my wife.” Alice regarded Matt with a loving gaze. A page had turned in their relationship, she was thinking, and the hopes she used to have were coming back to life.

“So how’d she treat you?” Matt continued, speaking to the boy with a tone of confidentiality, as though Alice weren’t standing right in front of them hearing their conversation loud and clear.

“I like her,” Tyler beamed, his eyes trained on Alice.

“Me, too,” Matt replied, standing before his wife as an art lover would stand before a favorite masterpiece.



The party was like no other Matt had ever attended. Never having been roasted or honored, he found it overwhelming to hear men and women, boys and girls speak about the value they had received through knowing him. How could this be? His fourth night on the ranch would be tonight. He’d barely gotten acquainted. And now the children were verbalizing, point by point, what Matt had offered them during this visit, what they had received and learned from him. It humiliated him to think about the fact that he led a corporate division and had done

nothing remotely approaching the power of this for any of his fine people. *And a child shall lead them*, he thought, unable to locate in his memory the source for this ancient quotation.

“Matt, Saturday and Sunday nights are spent indoors, rather than out at the fire circle.” David had brought the long—and sometimes hilarious—round of affirmations and observations to a close and had taken his place at the front of the ranch’s assembly to wrap up the evening’s celebration. Everyone was on their feet, circled into a loose knot of bodies. Alice took Matt’s hand, and Tyler moved in to stand behind them. Feeling the child’s warmth pressed in against them, they lifted their interlocked fingers back and over his head to draw him forward between them.

“I promised you I would teach you what you need to know to turn your division around back in New York. I didn’t mention that I’d have help.”

Matt gazed around the group, amazed at their evident interest in his well-being, and their generosity of spirit and time.

“I have one final thing to say to you before we bid you farewell. I’ve been stressing the importance of getting your people fully engaged. And I told you a little while ago that it’s all about trust.” He waited to receive Matt’s acknowledgment of this point. “And several times during your visit I’ve revealed to you a deep truth that leaders must grasp if they want to create a company of full engagement.”

Now Matt’s head stopped nodding. This “deep truth” he’d somehow missed.

“No worries, friend,” David continued, his face kind. “I showed it to you, but I never straight out told you.

“Every Child a Hope, Every Child a Home.’ Our ranch’s tagline,” David began. “Hope springs up from belonging,



Matt,” he continued, “and belonging is experienced in a circle of people who trust and rely upon each another. Each one has something to give. Each one is able to receive.

“Home is what we call that place of belonging. When we search for our home, it is belonging we are searching for. We’re working our tails off here to find each of these children a home,” David added, his voice rising in passion for the words he was speaking. “But first and foremost, we are creating Home right here. Or to say it in more businesslike terms, we’re creating a culture of full engagement here at the ranch. At High Summit, we create a culture of trustworthiness and welcome—which is what home is—in which these children discover that it’s safe and good to bring their whole selves to the adventure.

“Our Engagement Equation doesn’t just make the work go better, Matt,” David concluded. “It creates an entirely new culture in which people choose to invest their whole selves. The deep truth, is that leaders don’t actually ever engage people.”

Matt blinked, waiting for his mentor to connect the dots.

“People engage *themselves*, Matt,” David said. “They do their part if we do ours. Leaders make the difference first—we set the stage. And then followers make their difference by bringing all of who they are to the enterprise. We must do our part—we must work the Engagement Equation with integrity and daily discipline—and then they’ll do theirs.”

All eyes were on Matt. David’s words had created in the group a feeling of bigness and significance. His message was aimed at each of them, they all felt, but it was also aimed in a special way at Matt. Matt knew that David had just wrapped up this business consultation.

“A reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans,” David said, bringing everyone back from their private reflections. “This

life you received from God has replaced your old life of slavery and fear. No longer castaways and slaves, your new life is a life of adoption, for you now belong to the home of God. Now you can live adventurously, greeting God every day with a childlike “What’s next, Daddy?”

“Time for bed, everybody,” David added, his eyes trained on Matt and Alice. “Sleep! Dream! Be restored! Tomorrow’s a new beginning. Let’s find out what it holds!”