

Poets & Plumbers

--By Mike Horsfield

For some, leadership is structure
For others, it is story
For a few, it is both
A quiet- beautiful tension
Of being both a Poet and a Plumber

A role imagined as clarity
Decisions clean and confident
Systems humming
People aligned
A place where answers live

And then...
You begin
And you realize
Leadership is not certainty
It is contradiction
You are asked to be strong
And soft
Decisive
And unsure
Clear
And kind
At the same time

Because
The work is not choosing one
It is holding both
You build systems
That move people forward
And then remember
People are not things to be moved
You create structure
To reduce chaos
And then feel
How structure can quietly remove
meaning
You chase alignment
Through metrics and models
And then notice
The moment connection begins to
fade

Becausefull
It is easier to be right
Than to be curious
Easier to control
Than to stay open
Easier to go below the line
Where certainty lives
Than to stay above it
Where questions breathe

So you build
Tighter systems
Cleaner incentives
Clearer expectations
Not because you don't care
But because you do
Because pressure pushes you there
Responsibility pulls you there
Fear disguises itself as precision
And slowly
The work shifts
From meaning
To measurement
From ownership
To compliance
From people
To process

Until one day
You feel it
The quiet distance
Between what this was meant to be
And what it has become

Because
Leadership was never meant to be
plumbing alone
And it was never meant to be poetry
alone
Systems without humanity
Create compliance
Humanity without systems
Creates chaos
But together
They create something rare
Something alive

Because
The best leaders
Are not the ones who solved the
paradox
They are the ones
Strong enough to stand inside it
To hold tight their values
Without closing their minds
To stay grounded
While staying curious
To say:
"This matters"
And also:
"I might be wrong"

Holding that tension until a nuanced
idea is born
One that creates something that works
better
While never forgetting
Who you are building it for

Because
The real work is not perfection
It is presence
Not answers
But awareness
Not control
But connection

And somewhere along the way
If you stay
If you keep choosing curiosity
Over certainty
Connection over control
You begin to notice
You are no longer just building
systems
You are building people
And they
Are building it with you

Because

The advantage was never the model
Or the metric
Or the plan
It was always this
The willingness
To stay human
While building something that works

So as you stand
In the tension
Between plumbing and poetry
May you
Not rush to resolve it
Nor retreat from its weight
But learn
To lead within it

Because
That is where meaning lives
And that
Is what people follow