PART 1

The First 10 Moves

Ten men. One move each.

RAZPE CARLSON

Under the Pillow

Alexander the Great · Asia, 334 to 323 BC

Alexander the Great was king at 20. By 32 he had marched an army from Greece to India.

He took one book with him. Homer's Iliad.

He called it, in Dryden's translation, “a perfect portable treasure of all military virtue and knowledge.”

He slept with it under his pillow, next to his dagger.

That detail comes from one writer, Onesicritus. Plutarch passes it on. Take it as one source.

The next part is better attested. Among the treasure taken from Darius, the king of Persia, was a precious box. Alexander asked his friends what was worth keeping in it. They each had an answer.

He put the Iliad in it.

Look at what that book was. The story of Achilles, the greatest fighter the Greeks ever told about. Every night it was the last thing near his head. He went to sleep inside the life he wanted.

You become what you read before you sleep. Pick one great book and keep it close.

> **Your move:** what one book will you read before you sleep tonight?

It’s all on you.

Plutarch, Life of Alexander 8, 11, 26 (trans. Dryden, Perrin). Arrian, Anabasis 7.28

Two Scribes

Julius Caesar · Gaul, 58 to 50 BC

Julius Caesar did not have the body for war.

Plutarch says he was thin, with soft white skin. He had headaches. He had fits.

He did not use that as an excuse. He used war as the cure. Hard marches. Plain food. Nights in the open.

He slept in carriages and litters, so even his rest kept him moving. A slave sat beside him and wrote as he talked. On his first trip from Rome to Gaul, he reached the Rhone in 7 days.

In Gaul he dictated letters on horseback.

Two scribes at once.

Oppius, a friend of his, says even more.

Most men save their messages for the desk. The desk is where they pile up. Caesar never waited for the desk. He cleared them while he moved.

Don't wait to sit down. Clear it on the move.

> **Your move:** what message are you saving for later that you could send on your walk today?

It's all on you.

Plutarch, Life of Caesar 17 (trans. Perrin)

The Work-Room

Napoleon · on campaign, as emperor

Napoleon ran an empire from the road.

Méneval was his private secretary. He was there, and he wrote down what he saw.

Wherever the Emperor stopped, he writes, “whether at a castle, a cottage, or a hovel, his first care was for his work-room.”

His papers came out first. His maps. Two or three mahogany boxes that held his travelling library.

They went on tables, if there were tables. If not, on planks. Or on doors laid across trestles.

If there was only one room, his little iron bed went in there too.

Then he dictated his orders.

He did not wait for a good room. He made whatever room he got into the place where the work happened.

Set up the place for the work first. Then the work has somewhere to land.

> **Your move:** where is your work-room, and what would it take to set it up today?

It’s all on you.

Méneval, Memoirs to Serve for the History of Napoleon I, vol. 3, pp. 37 to 39 (trans. Sherard)

Before the Day

Marcus Aurelius · Carnuntum, on the Danube

Marcus Aurelius was emperor of Rome.

He kept notes, written to himself. Today we call them the Meditations.

Book 2 opens with an order for the morning, in George Long's translation:

“Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busy-body, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial.”

The most powerful man alive, naming the people who would make his day hard.

He did not hope for an easy day. He planned for a hard one. Then he decided, before any of them showed up, that none of them could hurt him. He would not get angry. He would not hate them.

At the end of that book is a note. This in Carnuntum. A Roman base on the Danube frontier, far from any quiet library.

Don't hope for an easy day. Name the hard people first, and decide now.

> **Your move:** who will test you tomorrow, and what will you do when he does?

It’s all on you.

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 2.1, and the note closing Book 2 (trans. Long)

The Note-Book

Augustus · Rome

At 18, Augustus inherited a famous name and no army. He went on to rule Rome alone for 44 years.

Suetonius says that even in the middle of a war, at Mutina, he read, wrote and practiced speaking every day.

After that, he never spoke to the Senate, the people or the soldiers without a speech written out first.

Not because he couldn't improvise. Suetonius says he could.

He wrote out his talks with single people, too.

Even the important talks with his wife, Livia.

He wrote them down and read them from a notebook. Suetonius gives the reason. He was afraid of saying too much, or too little.

Think about that. The man who ran the Roman world did not trust himself to wing it. Most of us wing exactly the talks that matter most.

The words that matter don't get improvised. Write them first.

> **Your move:** what is the one conversation this week you should write out first?

It's all on you.

Suetonius, Life of Augustus 8, 84 (trans. Rolfe)

The Oath

Hannibal · his father's altar, age 9

Hannibal was 9. His father was about to take an army to Spain.

His father made a sacrifice, then sent the others back a little way. He asked the boy if he wanted to come. Hannibal begged to.

His father led him to the altar.

He had the boy lay his hand on the sacrifice and swear never to be a friend of Rome.

We know this because Hannibal told it himself, years later, to a king named Antiochus.

Then he lived like a man who had sworn something.

Livy was a Roman who hated him. Even he wrote this. Hannibal ate and drank what his body needed, not what he wanted. Heat and cold were the same to him. He was often seen asleep on the ground among the guards, wrapped in his soldier's cloak.

First into the fight. Last to leave it.

Swear it once. Then live like you meant it.

> **Your move:** what oath would you swear today, and what comfort will it cost you?

It's all on you.

Polybius, Histories 3.11 (trans. Paton). Livy, History of Rome 21.4 (trans. Roberts)

Combing Their Hair

Leonidas · Thermopylae, 480 BC

In 480 BC, Xerxes, the king of Persia, marched on Greece with a huge army.

At a narrow pass called Thermopylae, a small Greek force waited. The Spartans were led by their king, Leonidas.

Xerxes sent a rider to see how many there were and what they were doing. The Spartans happened to be posted out in front of the wall.

Some were exercising. The rest were combing their long hair.

Nobody chased the rider off. Nobody seemed to care that he was there. He counted them and rode back.

Xerxes thought it was ridiculous. So he asked Demaratos, a Spartan king who had lost his throne and joined the Persians. Demaratos told him. When Spartans are about to put their lives in danger, they do their hair.

They held the pass for 2 days. Leonidas died there, fighting.

Train first. Then get ready like it matters. The hardest thing of the day gets your best.

> **Your move:** what is the hardest thing you face tomorrow, and how will you get ready for it?

It's all on you.

Herodotus, Histories 7.3, 7.208 to 212, 7.224 (trans. Macaulay)

The Trophy

Themistocles · Athens, after Marathon

In 490 BC, Athens beat the Persians at Marathon. The general was Miltiades, and everybody was talking about him.

Themistocles was still a young man.

Plutarch says that after Marathon he changed. He sat wrapped in his own thoughts. He could not sleep at night. He stopped going to his usual drinking parties. People asked why.

He said the trophy of Miltiades would not let him sleep.

Everyone else thought Marathon was the end of the war. He thought it was the beginning.

So he went to work. Athens had been splitting the money from its silver mines among its citizens. He asked them to stop, and to build warships with it instead. They did. Those ships fought at Salamis, against the Persian king himself.

Plutarch tells the sleepless nights as something “it is said.” So take that part as the story goes. The ships were real.

Let another man's win keep you up. Then turn it into work.

> **Your move:** whose trophy should be keeping you up at night?

It’s all on you.

Plutarch, Life of Themistocles 3 to 4 (trans. Perrin)

Alone First

Scipio Africanus · Rome, the Capitol

Rome was losing Spain. Scipio's father and uncle had both died there.

Livy says no one dared to take the command.

Then a young man stood up where everyone could see him, and asked for it. It was Scipio. Livy says he was barely 24.

Livy also tells us about a habit he kept from the day he became a man. He did no business, public or private, until he had gone up to the Capitol.

He sat in the temple. Alone.

He kept it up his whole life.

Livy is honest about it. It may have been partly for show. People came to believe the gods spoke to him, and Scipio never told them otherwise.

Either way, he kept it. He took New Carthage. Years later, he beat Hannibal at Zama.

Sit alone before the world gets a say in your day.

> **Your move:** where will you sit alone tomorrow, before you touch your phone?

It's all on you.

Livy, History of Rome 26.18 to 19 (trans. Roberts). Polybius, Histories 10, 15

Earn the Meal

Cyrus the Great · Persia

Cyrus began as king of a Persian kingdom that answered to the Medes. He ended up ruling the Medes, Lydia and Babylon.

The Greek writer Xenophon wrote a whole book about how he was raised and how he ruled.

In it, Cyrus keeps one rule for his body.

He never ate the evening meal until he had sweated for it.

He took his men hunting, because the hunt trained them for toil and hardship, cold and heat, hunger and thirst. He set the same rule for his soldiers. No meal until they had sweated.

Xenophon gives the reason. In Dakyns's translation, Cyrus was convinced that “no one has a right to rule who is not superior to his subjects.”

Xenophon's book is an idealized portrait, partly fiction. Read it as the picture of a king that lasted.

Earn dinner. Every day.

> **Your move:** what will you do to sweat before you eat tonight?

It’s all on you.

Xenophon, Cyropaedia 2.1.29, 8.1.36 to 38 (trans. Dakyns). Herodotus, Histories 1

You just read what they did.

Reading it changes nothing.

Each of these is a move you can make
starting tomorrow,
long before anyone is watching.

Making them yours is Part 2.
It's called Pantheon.
enterthepantheon.com

It's all on you.

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