REFLECTION SHEET

The Shadow You Lead With

It rarely shows up as the obvious vice. It shows up disguised as your greatest strength.

Richard Rohr has a line that follows me around: what we do not transform, we will transmit. He is mostly talking about pain. It is just as true of the parts of ourselves we have never looked at directly — and a leader transmits those at a volume nobody else in the building can match. The shadow is not the evil in us. It is the denied part, which goes on operating anyway, from underneath, with all the force of something that has never been questioned.

A Practice to Begin

Write down the sentence you lead by — the one you would paint above a door. Then sit with the half of it that cannot be said: what the sentence has no room for, and who has been paying for that.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the strength you are known for?
2. Where does that strength run past the point where it was useful?
3. Drive becomes a refusal to let anyone move at their own pace. Decisiveness becomes an allergy to being slowed down. What does yours become?
4. What is there no room for, in the air the people around you breathe?
5. Who has paid for that, and have you ever said so to them?
6. What were you more afraid of than you ever let anyone see?

An Invitation for the Week

Tell one person the rest of the sentence — the part you were not able to say at the time, because you had not met it yet.

I thought I had painted a standard above that door. I had also painted a ceiling.

— The Shadow Nobody Wants to Lead With