SAMPLE

The Weary Warden

The Personality That Has Guarded the Long Road Too Long

Aiman Sterling

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

Buy the full book:

Payhip
Carousell
Lulu

Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Signature — the Weary Warden at a Glance

Chapter 2: The Core — the Post That Never Rotated

Chapter 3: The Instrument — the Endless Post

Chapter 4: The Craft — the Endurance Craft

Chapter 5: The Cost — the Ledger of the Unthanked Years

Chapter 6: The Dark Side — Numb Guardianship

Chapter 7: The Weary Warden at Work — Career, Teams, and the Boss Relationship

Chapter 8: The Weary Warden in Love and Friendship

Chapter 9: The Matchups — Companions, Rivals, and the Other Types

Afterword

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

You know this person, or you are this person. The one who has held the same post so long the post has become the person: the aunt who has hosted every holiday since before the nieces were born and cannot now be persuaded to sit down; the keeper of the family spreadsheet nobody asked for and nobody dares touch; the supervisor who has covered the night shift through three managers, two restructures, and one quiet breakdown; the neighbor who has swept the shared stairwell for eleven years and would be embarrassed to be thanked for it — and the energy underneath is the paradox this standing stone must keep in view: this is not a person who loves the work — not anymore, and the cairn is unsanded about anymore — this is a person who cannot locate themselves when the work is taken away; the duty was assigned once, decades ago, by a world that has since forgotten the assignment, and the Warden has never once gone back to check whether the order still stands.

This is a bounds standing stone on the Weary Warden: the personality that has guarded the long road too long.

The first summit is the stretched road: the child in a house where someone had to hold a stretch nobody else would hold — the parent whose illness made the household tilt, the younger siblings who needed ferrying and feeding, the small family enterprise that ran on one exhausted adult until a second, smaller one stood up and took an end of it — and the discovery, made young, that the child could hold it. That is the founding beat, and the file wants it named precisely: not that the child had to — other children had to and did not become Wardens — but that the child could, and that the world, which had been holding its breath, exhaled, and the exhale was the reward.

The praise came once, warm and total, and then it stopped coming, because the road held was a road no longer noticed — and the child signed the quiet contract that runs the whole life: the holding is the worth; the post is the self; the order does not expire.

And the standing stone will honor what deserves honoring, because the endurance is real: this is this highland's most load-bearing loyalty — the mountain guard who keeps the bridge inspected long after the bridge is everyone's assumption; the continuity of families, teams, and small institutions is carried on such spines, and this book will not pretend that the civilization of the everyday runs on anything more reliable. But the ledger audits honestly, and this ledger's flaw is built into the first summit: a duty that was a season's assignment hardened into a life's identity — the act of holding became the self who holds, and the self who holds cannot be relieved,

because a relief would be, in the Warden's oldest arithmetic, an ending; the cairn's plain sentence, held for the whole book: the Warden has mistaken being replaceable for being worthless — and would rather break at the post than discover, at the post's emptying, that they were a person there too.

And the shadow: numb guardianship — the road held past all reason and all rotations, held until the guardian resents the very travelers guarded: the wave to oncoming traffic that thins, year over year, into a toll-collector's gesture; the exhaustion converted into evidence of virtue and displayed, heavily, to whoever will listen; the successors who approach the post and are turned away with a courtesy that has a fence inside it; the file's most diagnostic finding: the Warden does not fear hardship — the record proves they can absorb decades of it; they fear retirement of the self, which is a different country — the discovery that when the road is finally handed over, the person remaining is someone the Warden has never met, and never fed.

And the gained ground: the rotation accepted — not the endurance amputated, the endurance re-aimed: the discovery, in the redeemed bounds, that the post was never the point; the keeping-safe was the point, and keeping-safe can be done by a team, in shifts, by a successor trained with two years of the Warden's own generous craft — that the torch passed is not the fire extinguished; the Warden grown is the one who finally reads the original order, finds it expired decades ago, signs the handover with the same fidelity they gave the post, and — the standing stone's closing finding — walks down the road they guarded, for the first time in their life, as a traveler.

If you are this type, the route book's wager is precise: the road you are guarding has been clear for years, and the gratitude you are still rationing against was spent, in full, by people who died or moved on or simply stopped noticing — and none of that means the holding was worthless; it means the holding worked, and the working is exactly why the world will let you hold it forever, right up to the collapse, without ever once sending the relief. If you love one, your instruction is patient and exact: do not fight the duty — the duty is this type's spine, and attacking it starts the shadow, not the gained ground; fight instead for the rotation — the named relief, the scheduled rest, the successor introduced as an honor rather than an obsolescence — and when the Warden finally sits down at your table with nothing to carry, hand them, deliberately, something small and warm to hold instead, because you are teaching the post that it is allowed to have a person on it.

Turn the page. The Warden is still out there, at the far gate, in the last light, waving the travelers through — and the standing stone's promise is that the road was never the enemy; the road was only the first place the child went

looking for proof of worth, and the proof, the whole book will show, was portable all along: the worth was in the holding, not the post — and the Warden grown is the one who finally, comfortably, rests as well as they guard.

Chapter 1: The Signature — the Weary Warden at a Glance

You will know the Warden by the groan. Not the dramatic groan — the Warden does not do dramatic — the small, involuntary sound when they sit down, the body filing its complaint in the only register the Warden permits; and the file's first observation is the posture itself: the weight carried slightly forward, the shoulders squared to the road rather than the room, the hands that rest on things — the rail, the counter, the small of someone's chair — as if the whole building were one long load being kept level. The Warden stands the way lighthouses stand: not because they enjoy it, but because standing is the job, and the job, in the Warden's spine, has never been formally ended. The hands, watch the hands: they are never empty. A dish, a leash, a list, someone's coat — the Warden in an empty-handed moment looks briefly, unmistakably unemployed, and will find a load within eleven seconds, every time, and the finding is sharper under observation.

The voice is the second tell. It runs quiet, level, and in charge of itself — the volume of someone who has spent decades being the steady one in emergencies and has forgotten the volume was a tool and not a temperament; and underneath it, the timing: the Warden speaks last in most rooms, not from shyness — from duty, having counted the room as something that runs more safely once someone has absorbed all its facts; and the dryness, the famous dryness, the jokes that arrive flat and true and always, always about the work — the Warden's humor is a maintenance log with a wry margin note.

Watch the tell when someone offers to take a task: the half-second where the Warden's face does the arithmetic — will they do it right; will it go wrong; will I have to redo it — followed by the warm, practiced, absolutely final I've got it, and the Warden's face as they say it is softer than the words; the file notes the mismatch for later: the refusal is delivered kindly because the Warden knows exactly what it is like to be turned away from a post, and would never knowingly make another person feel it, even while doing precisely that to the succession.

The third tell is the calendar. The Warden's time is not spent; it is posted. The same grocery run for the same neighbor since the neighbor's surgery in a year nobody at the table remembers; the third Saturday of the month that has belonged to the same three errands since the century's first decade; the phone answered on the second ring at any hour because the ring is the road calling — and the file's sharp finding on the calendar, uniform across every Warden in the record: the entries get heavier as they get older, not lighter; the

post never shrinks; it accretes — one more standing duty added per year, on average, by a world that has learned the gate is always staffed, and the Warden's own hands keep adding shifts because the hands do not know how to be idle in a building they love.

Ask the Warden what they do for rest and watch the answer: a pause, genuine, several seconds, the face of someone searching a shelf for a book they were told was there — and then the list that comes back is not rest; it is lighter duty, and the record holds its finding: the Warden calls the lesser watch a holiday.

The founding comes in two versions, and the file has both, and they converge.

In the first version, there is a collapse: the parent who went — illness, absence, the long shift, the leaving — and a household that tilted, and a child, oldest or sturdiest or simply the one who noticed, who stood at the low end of the tilting and held. The child was nine, or eleven, or thirteen; the age matters less than the arithmetic the child completed that year: the adults were finite; the work was not; therefore the child became, in function, an adult, and the house was level again, and the child learned in one season the lesson that will run the life: someone must hold it, and I am someone.

In the second version, nothing collapses. There is simply a stretch of road nobody else would hold — the small family shop's Sunday opening, the grandmother's weekly ferrying, the class, the crew, the committee where the same child, unbidden, kept showing up and keeping things running — and the discovery, gentler but identical, that the child could hold it, and the world's response, which is the true founding beat: the world exhaled. The praise arrived once — one warm, total, memorable season of being seen as the reliable one — and then the road the child held was a road no longer noticed, because held roads are invisible; only the unheld ones are events, and the child, watching the attention move to the loud and the new, signed the quiet contract that the whole book will audit: the holding is the worth; the post is the self; an order once given does not expire, and I will hold until relieved.

And the file's note on the word relieved: no one ever came. That is the signature's completing beat — not the taking of the post but the silence after it; the child waited, in the way children wait for things they cannot name, for the rotation that the grown-up world receives and children are owed; the rotation never arrived; and the waiting converted, over the years, from an expectation into a posture, and the posture into a personality, and the personality into the Warden at the far gate in the last light, waving the travelers through, certain the relief was promised, unaware the relief was never actually assigned.

The album opens on the standard photos: the child at the sink, standing on a chair to reach it; the child walking the younger ones to school, holding the smallest one's hand with the grip of a crossing guard twice their age; the birthday where the child received a watch — a watch — and wore it, the file notes, with a seriousness that the other children gave to bicycles. The album's second page is the school photo, and the tell is in the eyes: while the other children perform delight, this child performs readiness — the smile of someone on duty; the camera, over the years, catches the same expression at seven, at eleven, at fifteen, and the file's finding: the face is not sad; the face is staffed.

The third photo is the one the family calls the responsible one — the child in the doorway of the shop or the kitchen or the hospital corridor, keys already in hand, and the family's laughter around it, and the caption, written in an adult's hand, the little manager — and the file flags the caption, because the family meant it fondly, and the child received it as a commission; the album's whole silent argument, page by page, is that this child was praised exactly once per photo, and the praise was always for the post, never for the person on it; there is no photo in this album, the record confirms after a long search, of the child asleep, or doing nothing, or held.

And the album's most telling photo is the one nobody will take out: the last one before the leaving — the parent's hospital wristband at the frame's edge, or the packed car in the background, or simply the morning of the tilt — and the child, already, unmistakably, at the post: the bags gathered, the younger ones dressed, the face composed; the child already the adult, and the adult, the standing stone will show for nine more chapters, still following the child's orders.

Energy: Low, banked, and duty-fed — the Warden runs on a fuel the file can only call obligation: the voltage rises exactly when the road needs it, and flatlines when it does not; watch the paradox, diagnostic across the record: the exhausted Warden who is offered a week off returns more tired, because the engine idles badly when uncoupled from the load — the type's rest, in the founding arithmetic, is not a right; it is a stolen good, and the body bills for it in guilt.

Ambition: Horizontal, total, and uncredited — the Warden does not climb; they hold ground, and the ground held grows by accretion; the career shape is the indispensability that never gets promoted because it cannot be replaced, and the file's sharp entry: the type wants — genuinely — exactly two things, continuity and a competent relief, and has never once asked for either out loud, because the order, as received in childhood, did not include a request clause.

Vanity structure: The uncomplaining ledger — the Warden's vanity is not a mirror; it is a logbook: the years held, the shifts covered, the collapses averted, all kept, accurately, and displayed in the currency of exhaustion — the sigh that is a receipt, the I don't mind that is a monument; the file's finding on the trap: the ledger must keep growing, because its balance is the self's proof, which means rest is entered as a loss, help is entered as a threat, and the successor, most dangerous of all, is entered as an error — proof the post never needed the Warden after all.

Loyalty: Bottomless, unnegotiated, and unpriced — the Warden keeps faith with people who stopped keeping appointments decades ago: the friend who moved away, the boss long retired, the dead, especially the dead; and the honest entry: the loyalty is real, the realest thing in the type, and it is rendered without terms — no anniversary observed, no gratitude required, no end date recognized; the cost, gathered across the files: the loyalty flows almost entirely outward, and the Warden treats the receiving of loyalty as a disruption to the schedule rather than the schedule's purpose.

Weakness: The expired order — everything the Warden cannot do is a form of checking whether the duty still stands: the rest taken, the help accepted, the post handed over, the feelings attended to — all deferred to the relief that was never assigned; and the blindness riding with it: the mountain guard genuinely believes the world assigned this, that holding is simply what they are for — the first summit's oldest sentence, someone must hold it, generalized for decades into a life in which the someone is never permitted to be anyone else.

Unspoken need: To be relieved by name — the experience, once, of being seen not as the post but as the person on it: told, explicitly, you have held this long enough; sit down; the road is ours to carry now; we want you at the table, not at the gate; and beneath it, the need the first summit made unspeakable: to discover that the worth survives the setting-down — that the child at the sink was loved for being a child, not a fixture, and that the adult at the gate, off-duty, is still, unmistakably, someone the road was for.

At a party: the Warden is in the kitchen — always the kitchen, or its regional equivalent: the door, the grill, the sink where the glasses accumulate; the type attends the party as staff, and the file's dry note: the Warden at a party is the reason the party works, and has not been a guest at one in living memory; watch the tell at the toast: the Warden raises the glass a half-beat after everyone, gaze already back at the oven timer, and when the host insists they sit, please, sit down — the direct quote, from the record, is I'm fine standing — the Warden smiles as they say it, and the smile is the saddest object in this chapter.

In a new job: the quiet annexation — the Warden does not arrive; the Warden reports for duty: within a month the mountain guard has absorbed the tasks nobody wrote down, the supplies nobody orders, the colleague nobody else helps, and the standing stone's finding on the arc, uniform across the careers: the first year earns gratitude, the third earns assumption, the seventh earns invisibility — the job the Warden holds becomes the building's weather, noticed only when it fails; and the promotion that would mean training a successor is declined, politely, because the post, in the first summit arithmetic, does not outsource.

Under sudden pressure: the great heart's finest hour — the crisis finds the Warden already standing: the voice drops half a tone, the lists start, the youngest person in the room is assigned the door, and the emergency is walked, calmly, to its conclusion; and the standing stone's careful correction: the crisis is home — the Warden has been on duty since childhood, and an emergency is simply the road finally being as difficult as the Warden's posture always assumed; the pressure this type actually cannot handle is the quiet one: the retired day, the empty nest, the healthy budget, the year when nothing happens — the cairn shows Wardens who ran collapse after collapse flawlessly and came apart entirely in the peace.

In a boring meeting: the Warden is the meeting's infrastructure — the agenda remembered, the minutes kept, the follow-up actually performed; and the file's entry: watch the Warden's face when the meeting drifts into philosophy — the patience is real, the tolerance is wide, but the eyes do a small perimeter check, the hands find the pen, and the body quietly reorganizes toward next; the boring meeting, for this type, is not boring; it is off-post, and the file has never once seen a Warden doodle.

On holiday: the itinerary as second post — the Warden travels the way a garrison travels: the route planned, the documents in a folder, the folder in a bag the Warden carries for everyone; the tickets, the medication schedules, the aunt's luggage, the children's beach rotation — the holiday is run, beautifully, as a small institution, and the file's diagnostic: the Warden does not exactly rest abroad; the Warden changes posts — and the type's whole relationship to rest is in the group photograph: everyone laughing, and the Warden slightly outside the frame, taking it.

The nearest neighbor is the Steadfast Guardian (Volume 2) — the type that holds everyone up — and the difference is the date on the order: the Guardian holds because holding is a love expressed in the present tense, and puts the held one down, gently, when the arms tire or the held one grows able; the Warden holds because an order was issued, once, decades ago, and holds it

past its own life span — the Guardian asks who needs me; the Warden has stopped asking, and the telling detail is the tenses: the Guardian's loyalty is a verb, the Warden's has become a post; when the Guardian rests, the love continues by other means; when the Warden rests, the Warden — this is the file's central finding — goes missing.

The second neighbor is the Immovable Colossus (Volume 54) — the safe place that never steps back — and the difference is the direction of the holding: the Colossus is a shelter with a pulse, present-tense protection for whoever leans in, warm at the surface, awake to the leaning; the Warden is a road — the protection runs on a schedule, along a line, toward people who are mostly not present, and has gone on so long the warmth has frozen into procedure; the Colossus is the wall you sleep against; the Warden is the wall that keeps the hillside off the valley, and you have never touched it.

And the hinge test, one question, sharp enough to split the neighbors from the subject: offer to take the watch. Offer, concretely, to assume the duty — the Sunday run, the night shift, the holiday hosting — and read the face: the Guardian, offered relief, is grateful, and hands it over with training and thanks; the Colossus considers it, and either shares the leaning or declines with an ease that leaves the relationship warm; the Warden — the subject of this file — smiles the soft refusal, says I've got it, and inside, the ledger opens a new line: one more who tried to take the post — and the file's instruction to the reader standing at that face: you have met the Warden; turn the page, and learn why the refusal is kind, what it costs, and how, alone among the three, this type must be relieved rather than helped.

And the signature standing stone closes with the refined field check the herd count has waited the whole this highland to deploy, because the endurance reads as reliability at first contact and as the endless post by the third act, and the seam between the two acts has never been measured — and the refined check is run not at the guarding but at the relief: watch what happens when the rotation finally arrives. the pathfinder's log of a recorded bounds: the mountain guard at forty-one, the post certified at three decades — the groan when sitting, the travelers waved through, the road kept clear, all real — and the instrument is the ordinary offer, deliberately waymarked: the successor, named, trained, ready — the relief, scheduled, the first rotation in the post's history — and the herd count's readings, taken across the handover week: the body, bracing — the cairn should mark the tell with its driest care: the warden, at the gate, training the relief perfectly — every rung, every log, every traveler's name — and the readings at the last shift: the old frequency, the first summit's own arithmetic — rest arriving and registering as abandonment — and the pathfinder's key weather eye, the one the warden's cabin has

waited the whole trek to log: the mountain guard cannot let the post stand unmanned. the cairn should mark it plainly: the rotation, lugged honestly, was offered — and the mountain guard, the readings certified, returned to the gate at midnight, off-shift, "just checking" — and the successor's exit interviews, the herd count's collected set, converge on the sentence the standing stone has waited a generation to log: "the most dependable person this road has ever had, and the cairn should log the difference: he didn't train me to take the post — he trained me to hold it while he watched — and the watching, the whole boundary report, has never once stopped."

And the check's one measurement, aimed past the endurance at the cost underneath: count the shifts actually surrendered. the herd count ran it across the patrols: shifts held, in the waymarked month — every one, certified, the cairn spotless; shifts handed over and left — the post, walked away from, at rest, the warden's body off the road — zero, and the cairn should log the boundary report with everything it has: the mountain guard, at the check's deepest probe, was sifted the trail code's trail-proven question — 'what happens if you leave the gate for a week?' — and the answer, after the longest silence in this volume's interviews, delivered with the old gate calm, verbatim: "the road finds out it never needed a permanent warden.

I'd rather the road never found out." And the field check's one-line finding: the Weary Warden is the only constitution in this highland whose identity is the post itself — the endurance, the whole false trail, was acclimatized from act to identity at a stretch of road nobody else would hold, and the rotation, lugged honestly, now reads as the deletion of the self — and the arithmetic, lugged honestly, is the great heart in miniature: the child learned that worth is proven by holding what others drop; the adult holds everything, forever, past all rotations — and the road, the cairn certifies, has been clear for years — and the warden, the whole boundary report, is guarding the proof long past the travelers who spent it.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io

Read the rest

THE WEARY WARDEN

The full book continues past this sample.

Get it here:
https://ko-fi.com/s/2b9cb12e97

Pay what you want, S$1.90 or more. No account needed. Instant PDF + EPUB.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.