

Me and the Dude Go Looking for My Leader

Let's have some fun just for a moment:

Suppose you're sitting on the deck overlooking your backyard, a cup of coffee in hand and the promise of a good day before you. It's just after dawn, and the rising sun sheds its gentle glow over the yard and surrounding woods. You bask in contentment and in nature's bounty.

Suddenly a whirring fills the fresh air, drowning out the crickets and bird calls. A beam of light sweeps the yard, splashes across your face, and the next thing you know a vehicle shaped like a wok and about the size of a Ford F-650 pickup touches down on the grass. A door slides noiselessly open, and a creature wearing a blue blazer, a white shirt open at the throat, and khaki trousers steps onto the lawn. Putting aside his green-tinted flesh and yellow eyes, he might have stepped from a bank or a church meeting.

As you watch, stunned and unable to move, he strides across the dew-spangled grass, gracefully ascends the steps to the deck, bows slightly, and says in a crisp voice, "Greetings, Dude. I come in peace. Take me to your leader."

And now you're really stuck.

Suppose this happened to me, I wondered yesterday when my mind was at play. Suppose some alien creature appeared in my backyard and delivered that request made famous in Sci-Fi cartoons: "Take me to your leader."

How in the heck would I respond? Who, I wondered, was my leader?

Were I living in North Korea, the People's Republic of China,

or any of a dozen other nations around the world that are totalitarian in nature, the question would require no thought. My green visitor and I would trot off to the nearest government facility, where I'd hand him over to the proper authorities.

But here in America? Who was my leader? Was it Joe Biden? Not by a long shot. Nor am I sure any other president in my lifetime would qualify. Besides, if I took this alien to the government, I doubt we'd be embraced like those illegal migrants pouring daily over our Southern border. The two of us would more likely land in some lab or place of incarceration more hidden from public scrutiny than the prison holding the Jan. 6th prisoners.

I might have introduced my new friend to my former co-leader, my wife, but she passed away years ago. I'm self-employed, as I have been for 40 years, so there's no boss waiting in the wings. I treasure friends and family members, beloved folks I would trust with my life, but they don't qualify as my leaders.

Then I considered taking my space traveler—by now I'd begun to think of him as “Dude,” a word he'd picked up from repeatedly watching [The Big Lebowski](#) while hurtling towards planet earth—to the chapel at my church, which remains open 24/7 for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Here I could point out the Host on the altar and whisper, so as not to disturb the others at prayer: “There's my leader.” I might then add: “I have to tell you, I'm no great shakes as a follower.” An interesting approach perhaps, but the explanations would take too much time with days of conversation as Dude and I delved into Scripture and apologetics.

And then a thought blew me away, a truth I had almost forgotten.

“I'm an American,” I would tell Dude. “We don't really have

leaders. At least, not the kind you might be thinking of.”

This concept would also need explaining, but here actions might prove louder and clearer than words. “Let me show you,” I’d say, and I’d pop Dude into my Honda Civic, which he would doubtless regard as primitive as a horse-and-buggy, and we’d just tool around Front Royal. We’d hit Martin’s, where shoppers would be busy selecting foods from all over the world. We’d swing by the Padre Pio Homeschool Co-Op and watch the kids with their backpacks and lunchboxes trooping into the building, the sons and daughters of liberty-loving parents. We’d head out to Christendom College, where young Catholics of their own accord had decided to get a classical education. Then I’d treat Dude to breakfast at McDonald’s, where he could witness the customers ordering whatever food they wanted from the menu.

“Here in America,” I’d explain, “we’re free. We make our own decisions most of the time and take responsibility for ourselves. It doesn’t always work that way, but that’s the concept. We lead ourselves.”

And here’s the best part of this fantasy: Dude nods and without missing a beat says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

“You’ve done your homework,” I’d say in admiration.

He would smile. “I try.”

“Well, you nailed it, Dude. And yep—that’s pretty much how it’s supposed to be.”

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