

The Wolf of Poyais

A True Story

By Sam Went

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SECTION 1: SELL ME THIS PEN

AUDITORIUM

The stage is dark. Off centre, on an easel, is a large whiteboard on which is written "Gregor MacGregor's Eight Rules For Success". Nearby is a flip, the first page of which is blank. While the stage is still dark a voice over speaks:

V/O

Good evening honoured seminar attendees and welcome to Time Talks. Please make sure you deactivate all electronic devices as these can interfere with Time Talks equipment. Now please, put your hands together and welcome to the stage tonight's speaker. The Hero of the Peninsular War, Hero of the Venezuelan Revolution, Liberator of Florida and Cazique of Poyais, General Sir Gregor MacGregor!

Eye of the Tiger by Survivor begins to play. The lights celebrate in time with the music as GREGOR MACGREGOR runs into the auditorium dressed sharply with a visible head mic. He should ooze charisma from the moment we see him. He interacts with the audience, making his way through them, greeting them and amping them up as the music continues to play.

MACGREGOR finally takes the stage, continuing to amp the crowd up and enjoying the music. Once the crowd is sufficiently amped up MACGREGOR signals for the music to cut, which it immediately does and the lights enter their base state.

GREGOR

How are we all doing!?

Await response

GREGOR

How's the energy in this room?

Await response. If the energy is insufficient MACGREGOR should amp them up.

GREGOR

Are we excited!?

Await response

GREGOR

You should be excited! Because if you are here, if you have made the *decision* to come here today, then you are going to be rich. You're here because you *know* you deserve success. Most people don't. I know that might not be the politically correct thing to say anymore, that doesn't make it any less true. But you understand what you're worth. By choosing to come here you have already shown me that you're one of the exceptional, the elite. Stand up. No, I mean it, stand up!

Wait for the audience to stand

GREGOR

Now I want you all to shout "I am going to be rich!" Shout it in three, two, one, I am going to be rich!

Await response.

GREGOR

Louder! I am going to be rich!

Await response. MACGREGOR raises his arms.

GREGOR

Put your hands up and shout "I *deserve* to be rich!" Because that's the attitude you need to have if you're going to make it. Put your hands up, three, two, one I *deserve* to be rich!

Await response

GREGOR

Now keep your hands up and in three two one shout what you're going to buy when you're rich! Three, two, one a fucking lambo!

Await response

GREGOR

You can sit down now. That felt good, didn't it? One in a million achieve success, but I look out over this crowd and I see a room full of ones in a million! And I personally guarantee that by being at this seminar, by listening to me and living by my eight rules you are going to be a success. 'Who am I?' You may be asking? Why should I listen to you Gregor MacGregor, you died nearly two hundred years ago? I'll tell you why. You, sir.

MACGREGOR picks out someone in the audience.

GREGOR

Sell me this pen.

MACGREGOR mimes holding out a pen to the audience member.

GREGOR

You may have noticed I am not actually holding a pen. And it's not because the organisers were too cheap to buy me one. You see, any idiot can sell a pen. It takes a genius to sell a pen that doesn't exist. But we'll get there. The First Rule.

MACGREGOR goes to the flipchart and flips to the first page. On it is written "1. Create The Person You Want To Be"

GREGOR

Create the person you want to be. Sir,

MACGREGOR selects a new member of the audience.

GREGOR

Who are you?

Await response.

GREGOR

Alright let's start with your name?

Await response.

GREGOR

And where are you from?

Await response.

GREGOR

Steve from Peckham. That's terrible. No one is going to be excited by the prospect of Steve from Peckham. It's not your fault, Steve, most of us are not blessed with an interesting origin story. Which is why we need to:

MACGREGOR indicates the first rule.

GREGOR

(leading the chorus)

"Create the person you want to be"

Beat

GREGOR

You need to make yourself someone people will look at and say "Yes! I want to be in business with them!" No one will have access to your complete, peer reviewed biography, so why not spice it up a little? Take me for example, and for the sake of the demonstration I am unfortunately going to have to be honest with you. On the surface there was nothing special about where I came from. Born 1786 near Stirling in Scotland. Technically we were minor nobility, but all this really meant was we had a big farm. And I could have stayed there, lived comfortably, securely but unexceptionally as a gentleman farmer. But should we settle for such a life?

Await response

GREGOR

No! If you said 'yes' or, worse, hesitated then you have no business being at this seminar. Unless you *know*, absolutely, in your bones that you are destined for greatness you will never achieve it.

Comfort is the enemy of greatness and we must throw it away without a second's thought if we are to gain success! I knew I was destined for greatness, greatness I would never find on my family farm. The good news, there was a war on.

The sounds of 18th Century warfare, cannons, musket fire, drums, begin to fill the auditorium accompanied by, triumphant, period appropriate military music.

GREGOR

A General called Napoleon Bonaparte decided that revolutionary democracy wasn't for him, overthrew the young French Republic and determined to spread his new Empire across Europe by force. Lucky for me. War has helped no shortage of men find success. On that note, you've all chosen an excellent time to attend my seminar. I joined the army, buying for myself the rank of Lieutenant. I hear that's not how it works anymore, but at the time military rank was something you purchased. I think this worked well, rank went to the men most prepared to invest in themselves. With my shiny new Lieutenancy in hand I was ready to win glory and advancement against the hated French! It came as something of a blow then when I was assigned to Kent.

The sounds of warfare and triumphant music cut.

GREGOR

The regiment was called the Steel Backs, a nickname earned for how frequently they had to be flogged for incompetence. Our job was to wait in Ashford, just in case the French invaded. And since that never happened I was left with plenty of time for other pursuits, namely cigars, drink and women.

We begin to hear the sounds of an 18th century tavern, the clatter of glasses, the din of conversation and music. MACGREGOR picks up a glass of spirit from somewhere and drinks it in one go

GREGOR

I was popular in Ashford. And it was here, and for this reason, I started to experiment with creating the person I wanted to be. I want to ask the men in the audience who has their height on their hinge profile?

Await response.

GREGOR

And, of you, who has their *actual* height?

Await response.

GREGOR

Then you know exactly what I mean! Instead of introducing myself to the women of the town as simply any member of Clan MacGregor I would...lead them to believe I was the Chief of Clan MacGregor! A minor alteration to my biography, but one I would maintain for the rest of my life. And a Scottish Chieftain was a much more exciting prospect for the women of Ashford to spend the night with. And there were many women of Ashford and many such nights for Chieftain MacGregor!

MACGREGOR pauses in his revelry as he spots one woman across the bar in his memory.

GREGOR

One such woman was Maria Bowater, who would become my first wife.

The sounds of the tavern cease.

GREGOR

There was much to recommend Maria, most of all her family. Her Father had been an Admiral in the Navy, but his best quality, and one I recommend in any prospective father in law, he was dead. Her Uncle, the new family patriarch, could not suffer a mere Lieutenant in the family so he bought me a promotion as a wedding gift. Now at the very least I was a Captain in an embarrassment of a regiment doing fuck all in Kent. Was this the place to win the success I deserved?

Await response

GREGOR

No! So I left the army and moved to London!

Pause

GREGOR

However, shortly after I resigned, the Steel Backs were finally deployed to fight the French in Portugal and, in some of the bloodiest, dirtiest, most dangerous fighting of the entire war, they acquitted themselves excellently. Stories of their heroism became a regular feature in the London press. They even earned themselves a new nickname, the *Die Hards*.

Pause.

GREGOR

This presented an opportunity to build my personal brand. I had been a member of the *Die Hards*, and it's a better story if I was there when they won their glory. I started telling people that, not only had I been with the *Die Hards* as they earned their very cool name, but even among this exceptional company I had displayed unparalleled valour and, for my bravery, had been knighted personally by His Majesty the King of Portugal!

Pause

GREGOR

Tell me, who would you rather associate with? Who would you rather be in business with? Who would you rather be taking this seminar from? Gregor MacGregor, a man born with a silver spoon in his mouth, who joined the army, achieved nothing and then left? Or Sir Gregor MacGregor, the humble farmer, heir of a once great lineage fallen on hard times, who joined the army to reclaim some of that lost martial glory, who fought in the bloodiest theatre of the war and returned home a knight and war hero?

Pause.

GREGOR

Never let reality get in the way of telling the story you need to tell in order to succeed. We must be ordinary yet magical, relatable yet with something special in our history that marks us out for greatness.

Jesus has the ideal backstory of an entrepreneur. The son of God, but also the humble son of a carpenter. If you're like Steve here -

MACGREGOR indicates his victim from earlier

GREGOR

- you must invent the special. If, however, your origins are a little too special. Say you come from generational wealth. Your family owned an emerald mine, to pick a random example. Well that hardly makes you relatable, so you find a way to move the special from your background onto you. Instead of apartheid jewels your success comes from the fact you are "the smartest man in the world". You're not selling the truth, you're selling an image. And don't worry if that image is a little outlandish, because, here's the trick, they want to believe you. They want to believe in a world where, no matter where they started, the special people can rise to the top on their own innate talents. Because they believe that's them, and that's when you have them.

MACGREGOR lets this moment of darkness land before smiling and returning to his life story.

GREGOR

I had been content to live off my reputation as a hero of the Peninsular War and the money provided to us by my wife's family. Selfishly, Maria died. And with me no longer part of the family her Uncle was no longer willing to subsidise my lifestyle. While I was, obviously, sad at the time my wife's death turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me. A worry free existence living off Maria's family money was no life for a man of destiny, a man for whom success was only waiting. It gave me the push I needed to seize the opportunities that were presenting themselves, and opportunities were presenting themselves.

SECTION 2: THE PRECURSOR

MACGREGOR goes over to the flipchart and flips to the next page, on which is written "2. Take Risks"

GREGOR

The Second Rule, take risks. London was abuzz with news of revolution! Not in Britain, of course, God save the King etcetera, but in South America! After Napoleon deposed their King, Spain's colonies decided they no longer wanted to be ruled by far away monarchs. They struck out for independence, liberty and democracy! Things that found ready support in Britain, so long as they weren't found at home. What's more the new South American Republics were recruiting! They wanted veterans of the Napoleonic Wars to fight for their cause and were offering a bump in rank to any man who signed up. Now was not the time for timidity! Fortune was waiting for me in the New World! I signed up immediately, sold my land in Scotland and booked passage to the new Republic of Venezuela!

Pause.

GREGOR

Before I left they asked me what rank I'd held in the British Army. I'd been a Captain, which would have earned me a commission as a Colonel in the Army of Republican Venezuela. But I was hardly likely to win fame and glory as a Colonel, and it's not like anyone was going to check my references, so I told them I was already a Colonel and sailed to Venezuela as General Sir Gregor MacGregor! Viva la revolución!

MACGREGOR retrieves a mannequin on a stand that had previously been hidden somewhere on stage. He begins dressing the mannequin in an early 19th century military coat and hat.

GREGOR

The reputation I had invented for myself in London preceded me in Caracas and on arrival I was introduced to the leader of Republican Venezuela, Supreme Chief Francisco de Miranda.

MACGREGOR has finished assembling the mannequin. The lights on most of the stage fade creating a small, illuminated playing space just for MACGREGOR and the mannequin (MIRANDA).

MACGREGOR looks at and treats the mannequin with the same reverence he would have given his old role model.

GREGOR

There had been men who thought they deserved authority in my life before; my superiors in the army, Maria's Uncle. But meeting Miranda in his office was the first time I recognised a kindred spirit. He had spent the last forty years trying to free South America from Spanish domination. His previous attempts had not gone to plan, hence his trying again. But here was a man so convinced of his own destiny, that he, Francisco de Miranda, would be the one to liberate South America, that people believed him. They became convinced he was the indispensable man. That the continent could not be free without him. Through sheer force of his will.

MACGREGOR turns away from MIRANDA to deliver his lesson to the audience:

GREGOR

A lesson anyone who wants to succeed in business must learn. Believe. Believe so strongly in yourself, in your inability to fail, that everyone around you is forced to submit to that belief.

MACGREGOR leaves a beat to let this land. He then puts his hand on MIRANDA's shoulder and laughs as if MIRANDA has just told a joke. The lights rise and return to illuminating the whole stage and the sounds of a raucous officers' club rise.

GREGOR

Miranda and I got along famously.

As he's speaking MACGREGOR retrieves a bottle of spirit and pours two glasses for himself and MIRANDA.

GREGOR

Since every time he was in his home country he tried to overthrow the colonial government Miranda had spent most of his life in exile in London as a favourite guest of the great and good. Consequently, he preferred the company of his British officers over his fellow countrymen. Especially the great Sir Gregor MacGregor.

MACGREGOR offers one of the glasses to MIRANDA. MIRANDA, obviously, does not take it so MACGREGOR pours the contents of the second glass into his own and drinks both.

GREGOR

Miranda was always eager to hear stories of my exploits with the famous Die Hards. And I was always happy to make them up.

MACGREGOR returns both glasses to where he found them.

GREGOR

My friendship with Miranda paid off, I was given command of a cavalry battalion and sent to fight the Royalists.