

## **Master Woo's Summit**

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Long before the grasshoppers hopped and the woodpeckers pecked, there lived the most curious little creatures on Earth. Each one was tinier than the head of your grandmother's smallest straight pin, and they all looked identical, apart from the stylish little hats that adorned their curly-topped heads. Each hat signified a special talent or skill. No matter what shape or style hat the little creatures wore on their itty bitsy heads, their brilliant and beautiful eyes always looked eager to help and to please the leader of their great camp. His name was longer than the alphabet sang thrice, so I shall refer to him as Master Woo.

Master Woo and his followers were sweet little creatures, and they swam, crawled, and flew around meadows, brooks, and hills doing what they did best. Ming Sing knew how to sing happy tunes to brighten the sun on a cloudy day. Thistle Whistle could gather all the herbs needed to cure any little sneeze. Boxey Troxey knew how to punch the stars in the galaxy with enough zest to produce the most glorious firework shows every year for their annual critter celebrations! Each critter knew his assigned task so well that he could do it backwards. Together, they could do amazing things!

Master Woo had the most natural way of getting his troop to perform all their little tasks without one

snippet of a fuss. In fact, all the other families of critters on Earth, from the faraway hives of the Yellow Jackets to the giant hills of the Red Ants, admired the way he led his camp. King Yellow Jacket and Queen Red Ant often scratched their heads in wonder of how Master Woo led his kingdom in such a peaceful way. They decided to call a meeting of the heads of critters on Earth, all three hundred of them, to learn the secrets of leading his critters in a peaceful way. They sent Master Woo a golden invitation with the request and honor of being the speaker of their summit. He, of course, accepted the honor and began to pack his tiny leather bag with his favorite critter snacks.

Master Woo requested Wumpet Trumpet to summon all the curious critters in his camp with his brassy bugle call. All the tiny critters gathered together near Master Woo's garden in their finest little hats. Master Woo announced his departure and bid the critters a friendly farewell. He gave them no instructions other than to enjoy their peaceful existence among one other until his return. Just before leaving, Tidy Midy tidied Master Woo's round white cap on top of his little balding head. Everyone patiently waited for Ming Sing to begin the first verse of their good-bye song, and they giggled in anticipation of Miss Jig Wig's accompanying happy dance. Ming Sing sang,

Good-bye, Master.

Good-bye, Friend.

Good-bye, Master,  
Until we meet again.

Everyone joined in singing the refrain of the song. Master Woo quickly unpacked his leather bag and threw all of his favorite snacks to his crowd of friendly followers. As he flew away, the critters jigged Miss Jig Wig's jig, and they waved good-bye to him. Nothing satisfied Master Woo more than seeing his critters happy and content. As he journeyed to the other end of the continent, his little critters finished their jig and tidied his garden. They returned to their usual duties and continued to live peacefully in their critter camp. It would be days before they would see Master Woo again.

When Master Woo arrived at the leadership summit, all of the heads of the kingdoms bowed before him. He quickly bowed down to each of them as well. When Master Woo stood up, he noticed the brilliant colorful surroundings. Flags representing every kingdom were hung around the summit. Kings and queens, dressed in their most beautiful garments, stood together in harmony. The sky was light blue, and the lake was calm. These sights brought a sigh of happiness to Master Woo's little heart. Suddenly, he felt a soft pat on his back. Queen Red Ant summoned him to the podium for his anticipated speech; however, Master Woo requested her permission to have all leaders sit together along the perimeter of Lake Summit. She, of course, agreed to his plan and instructed the leaders to follow it. Master Woo instructed each leader to bring a

tiny pebble to the lake with them. Kings and queens began searching for pebbles, and those who found more than two pebbles shared them with others. Finally, they all sat and waited with their pebbles.

Master Woo said, “Greetings, my friends and fellow leaders. I am honored to be your speaker. I would like to begin my speech with silence.” No one quite understood why he requested silence, but everyone respected his wish. A few heads bowed down in silence. Then eyes began to look around. One minute passed, and no one spoke. More eyes shifted from side to side. Master Woo smiled at each leader, and each leader smiled back at him. Then, with a little chuckle, Master Woo rolled backwards and jumped into a snappy little pose. Everyone began to laugh. Then, he said with another chuckle, “It’s your turn!” One leader looked at the other with a bit of confusion. Confusion was followed by more smiles. Before long, everyone was having a grand time acting silly.

After a few minutes of being silly, all the leaders settled down. Master Woo referred to his pebble as he spoke. “We are each holding a pebble, and no pebble is exactly alike. Just like pebbles, we are all different from each other.” The leaders listened to him intently. “We each have strengths in how we lead our little kingdoms. I will begin by telling you my strength as a leader. First, I believe my kingdom needs to balance fun with work, and I believe work should involve the gifts of my critters. I believe each of my critters has a gift to share

with my kingdom. My strength is allowing my little critters to use their gifts to make my kingdom better. When each of my critters is happy, my entire kingdom is happy.”

Master Woo threw his pebble in the lake, and he reminded the others to watch the ripples it made. “As I watch the ripples grow from my pebble, it reminds me of the critters I touch each day. Like the pebble, we can all touch so many of our followers.” Everyone clapped upon hearing his words. Then, one by one, each leader took a turn to tell the others about their strengths. After each leader spoke, a pebble was thrown into the lake. Clapping could be heard at the conclusion of each speech, and the sound of the applause echoed for miles.

President Wasp had an idea after the last leader shared his strength. “I have a brilliant idea! Let us each take the strengths of one another to lead our own kingdoms! We will surely have the most wonderful world if we do!” His idea appealed to the entire congregation. Everyone agreed to be more like the other. Master Woo wrote down a long list of their cumulative strengths. There was quite a buzz around the lake. Leaders were reminding each other how they led their kingdoms. “Don’t forget to have your critters march in files,” commanded Queen Red Ant.

“Remember to work with sounds of buzzing,” said King Yellow Jacket.

Master Woo was just about finished copying the list of leadership traits for the others, but then, he

realized the plight of his poor grandfather. “No!” he shouted. “Even though we can all learn from each other’s strengths, we must remember to lead with our individual strengths.” Everyone stopped, and many of the leaders looked confused. Master Woo asked everyone to sit quietly as he told them the sad story of his grandfather’s reign.

“Many moons ago, when my grandfather ruled my tiny kingdom, he was influenced by the individual strengths of the critters in his colony. Of course, in order to acquire any of their strengths, it was mandatory that he wore the hat that matched the accompanying strength. He learned to strategize first. The tiny red strategy hat was placed over his white cap. I must say that he looked quite handsome in the red and white attire. Next, he learned to encourage others. The encouraging hat was green, and it was slightly taller than the red one. He learned to organize, communicate, nurture, and achieve. With every new skill he learned, the hats kept piling on top of his little head. Finally, the hats became so heavy that my grandfather could no longer balance them on his little head. He toppled to the left and then to the right. His kingdom of critters flew around in confusion, for they did not understand him any longer. When he could no longer remember his own strengths, he began to weep. He wept, and all of the critters heard him. They quickly removed every hat until his little white hat was revealed. They brought him to the lake to see his tiny reflection, and he began to feel happy again. His

kingdom was revived, and his white hat has been passed down to me!”

The leaders sat around the lake and reminded themselves of their strengths. They honored each other for their hard work, and they each took another pebble to remind them of the summit. As the light blue sky turned into a peaceful navy blue, the leaders bid each other farewell until the next summit. Master Woo left the summit with peace in his little soul, and his tiny white hat could be seen in the sky as he flew back to his happy camp.