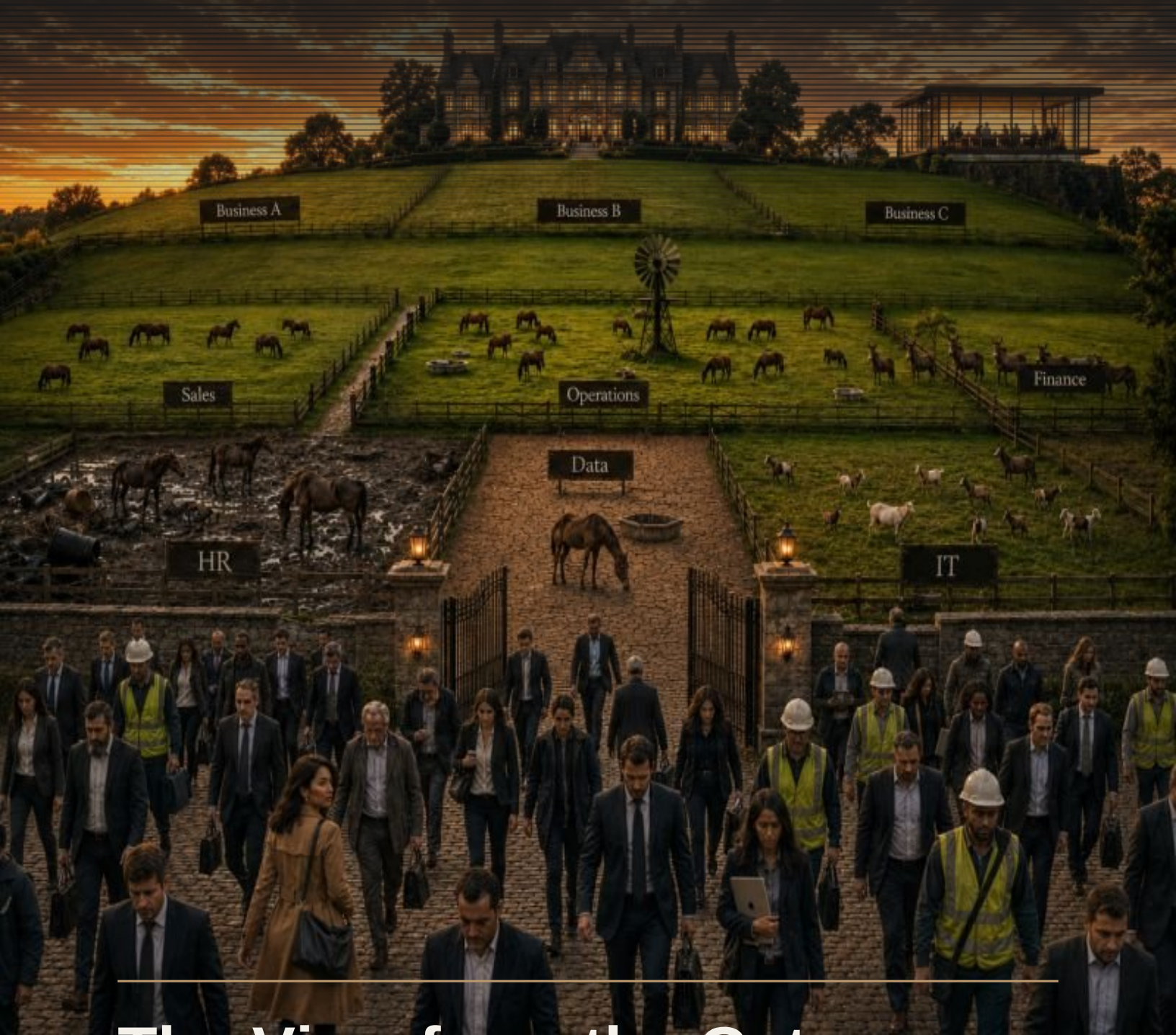




The View from the Gate

A preview · Book coming soon

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Most people who work inside a struggling organization do not see the whole property.

They see their paddock.

They know their conditions — the mud, the dry lot, the empty trough, the grass on the other side of the fence that someone else seems to always have access to. They do their work. They absorb what comes down the hill. They process what the organization cannot say out loud.

They rarely get close enough to the glass room to understand what is shaping everything below it.

This book starts at the gate.

Not at the house.

The gate is where most people actually live — arriving with something to offer, leaving when the conditions make offering it impossible, sometimes mid-turn, not quite sure yet which direction they are going.

What you are looking at is not a farm.

It is an organization.

Every paddock on this property was designed — intentionally or not — by someone who does not live in it.

. . .

Stand at the gate for a moment before you walk in.

Look at what is closest to you.

To your left is Human Resources — muddy, waterlogged, debris scattered across the ground. To your right are the goats of Information Technology, present and resourced, moving independently, not particularly oriented toward anything happening around them. Directly ahead is the smallest paddock on the entire property — a dry lot with cracked earth, an empty trough, and one old horse standing alone with his ribs showing.

That is the Data paddock.



Behind those three, further up the hill, are Sales and Operations — active, lush, horses grazing, a windmill turning, water troughs full. At the top of the hill, the manor house sits lit from within. To its right, slightly elevated and separate, is a glass room. Floor to ceiling windows. You can see the figures inside — executives seated around a table, visible to everyone on the property, looking out over all of it.

They can see the whole property from up there. Whether they are looking is a different question.

More people are walking away from this property than toward it.

That is what happens when explainers have a louder voice than knowledge seekers. That is what happens when alignment at the top is weak. That is what happens when the truth is unwelcome no matter who carries it.

What the paddocks are telling you

A paddock is not just a space. It is a set of conditions — the fencing, the forage, the water access, the social structure of the animals inside it, the decisions made above it about what it receives and what it doesn't. Two paddocks on the same property can look entirely different from each other not because of the animals living in them but because of the choices made by the person who owns the land.

The owner sets the conditions. The animals live inside them.

Organizations work the same way. Every function on this property — Human Resources, Data, Information Technology, Finance, Sales, Operations — exists inside conditions it did not design and cannot fully control. The resources available to each function, the authority granted to it, the protection offered to the people working within it, the degree to which its voice carries up the hill — all of that is set above the paddock level.

The condition of every paddock on this property was decided by someone who does not live in it.

That is the first thing Change Shepherd asks you to see. Not who is performing and who is not. Not which function has the right talent or the wrong attitude or the best process. Before any of that — what are the actual conditions, who set them, and what is the paddock telling you about the decisions made above it?



Data, the dry lot

The Data paddock is the smallest on the property. It is also the most telling.

A dry lot is a specific management decision. It is not an accident or an oversight. You put an animal in a dry lot when the regular pasture would be too rich, too competitive, or too dangerous for that particular animal. You control the intake. You manage the access. You decide what goes in and what stays out.

Data teams in organizations are frequently managed exactly this way — not because anyone sat down and made a deliberate decision to deplete them, but because the decisions made above the paddock level consistently produce the same outcome. The tools arrive without decision rights attached. The reports get built without anyone agreeing on what the numbers mean. The requests come in from every direction simultaneously, each one urgent, each one representing a different executive's version of what matters most.

The trough is empty not because no one ordered water. It is empty because the systems that were supposed to fill it were never connected to the right source.

The old horse with the ribs showing is not lazy. He is not resistant. He is not the wrong hire. He has been working in a dry lot for a long time, doing the best work he can do inside conditions that were never designed to let him thrive. Before you diagnose the horse, look at the paddock.



Data becomes a depleted dry lot when everyone has their teeth on the rope.

HR and the mud

There is a function in every organization whose entire purpose is to hold the humanity of the place — not the strategy, not the revenue, not the technology or the process or the quarterly numbers, but the humanity.

Human Resources is where the organization's relationship with its own people lives — the hiring and the firing, the onboarding and the exit interview, the complaint that needed to be filed and the conversation that needed to happen before it got that far. It is where people go when something has gone wrong that the org chart does not have a category for.

HR hears the pulse of the organization before anyone else does. They feel it too.

Which is why when you want to understand the true health of an organization, you do not start with the revenue figures or the engagement survey or the strategic plan. You look at the HR paddock.

When it is muddy — look up the hill before you look at them.

HR does not create those conditions. They inherit them, process them, and carry them on behalf of everyone the organization is unwilling to hear directly. The exit interviews they conduct tell the real story — the patterns in who is leaving, when, from which teams, under which leaders — and those patterns are the organization's honest autobiography, written not by the people in the glass room on the hill but by the people who walked out through the gate.

HR absorbs what the organization cannot say out loud, carries what the organization refuses to metabolize, and stays in the mud because someone has to hold the humanity of the place — and they are the ones who said they would.



The glass room

Every organization has a glass room.

Sometimes it is a literal conference room on the executive floor with floor to ceiling windows and a view of the city. Sometimes it is a weekly leadership meeting that certain people are always in and certain people are never in. Sometimes it is the informal network of conversations and decisions that happen before the official meeting starts — where the real direction gets set, where the real trade-offs get made, where the real authority lives.

Glass is a particular kind of barrier. You can see through it without feeling what's on the other side.

When the people in the glass room leave with a shared path forward — when they have genuinely wrestled with the competing priorities, named the trade-offs, and agreed on what matters most — the paddocks below them can work. Not easily, not without friction, but with enough clarity to move.

When they don't, the unresolved conflict doesn't stay in the room. It moves downstream. It becomes competing priorities for the teams doing the work. It becomes conflicting definitions for the data team trying to build one version of the truth. It becomes impossible trade-offs for the middle managers caught between two executives who left the last meeting without saying what they actually decided.

Organizations often call this an execution problem. It is almost never just an execution problem. It is alignment debt — the organization borrowed clarity from the future and handed the bill to the people closest to the gate.

The glass room is visible to everyone on the property. Visibility is not the same as proximity. Most people on this property can see the glass room. Very few of them have ever been inside it when the hard conversation happened.



The people at the gate

Look again at the people walking away.

They are not a homogeneous group. They are not all disengaged or underperforming or culturally misaligned. They are business professionals and plant workers and data analysts and HR managers and knowledge leaders of every kind. They arrived through this gate with something to offer — skills, experience, institutional knowledge, the particular kind of insight that only comes from being close enough to the work to see what is actually happening.

Some of them tried to hand that insight up the hill and watched it come back unchanged. Some of them were never asked. Some of them learned, over time, that the cost of speaking plainly in this organization was higher than they were willing to keep paying.

There is a difference in every organization between the people who explain and the people who seek to know. Explainers are fluent in the language of the organization — they know how to frame a bad result, how to manage a narrative, how to make a number tell the story that the room needs to hear. Knowledge seekers are fluent in a different language — the language of what is actually happening, what the data is actually saying, what the pattern underneath the visible behavior actually means.

Organizations need both. They tend to reward one.

When the explainers have a louder voice than the knowledge seekers, the knowledge seekers begin to leave. Not always loudly. Not always immediately. Over time, the people who could see the pattern clearly and were willing to say so out loud find that the cost of staying exceeds the cost of going.

The organization loses its own immune system without ever quite noticing that it happened.



Come sit with me.
I see what you've been carrying.
Let's name it together.

This is not a textbook. It is not a leadership manual.

It is a book for the people who already know something is wrong — who can feel the pattern before anyone names it, who have been told they are too sensitive or not seeing the full picture, when the truth is they are seeing more of it than most.

Change Shepherd is for them.

The book is coming.



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