



## Acts of Kindness

Fingers crossed it is well-received!

I am about to gift my first ever cactus plant. Over the past few months, I have participated in Ryan Holiday's [Read to Lead](#) course which I have thoroughly enjoyed. Within this curriculum Ryan sets ten reading 'challenges' to his participants, the third challenge was to re-read a book you love. I immediately thought of one of my favourite books which I read around the time of finishing secondary school – *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay.

What a gift it was for me to immerse myself back into the world of Peekay, Doc, Hymie, Geel Piet, Mrs. Boxhall, Miss Bornstein and more. Peekay is a young English boy growing up in South Africa in the 1940s, he goes through many challenges and hardships, but he also has many amazing and inspiring mentors. I had remembered so much of the story, but also forgotten various nuances and twists. To bring this story back to life in my mind and my body was very special. There were countless passages that resonated but one in particular has given me new insights and has led to a new action for me.

This passage is relatively early on in Peekay's relationship with his dearly loved and trusted mentor 'Doc'. Doc's full name is Professor Von Vollensteen, and he is a German professor of music who lives on his own in a small town in South Africa where Peekay comes to live. Whilst we never learn Doc's age, we assume he is well into his 80s and he is certainly full of wisdom and metaphors for young Peekay.

Doc's passion is his incredible and extensive cacti garden, and he shares with Peekay the amazing qualities of a cactus plant. On page 189, Doc explains to Peekay "... It has humility but it is not submissive. It grows where no other plant will grow. It does not complain when the sun bakes its back, or the wind tears it from the cliff or drowns it in the dry sand of the desert or when it is thirsty. When the rains come it stores water for the hard times to come. In good times and in bad it will still flower. It protects itself against danger, but it harms no other plant. It adapts perfectly to almost any environment. It has patience and enjoys solitude. ... It has my enduring respect and is my passion."

This wisdom from Doc has made me look at cacti in a whole new way. Instead of seeing a cactus plant as a somewhat ugly, prickly, unfriendly plant – I now have new insights and readily and easily see the many resilient and endearing properties of such a diverse plant, coming in all shapes, sizes and colours. I couldn't help myself to purchase a little cactus plant for myself, and then one for my wife Jeanette, then ones for various family members, and then certain friends came to mind, and then ...

I'm looking forward to gifting these little cactus plants and sharing some of Doc's wisdom of the beautiful qualities of these succulents. I do hope these little plants are well-received, particularly as



it is well-known how hardy cacti are! I'm thinking that if it is not well-received at first, it promises to be around a long time and will hopefully grow on them!

I hope when you next see a cactus plant you will look at it with fresh insights. How rich our world can be when we are open to looking at things in new and hopeful ways.