

### 3. THE FREEDOM TRAIN

“You see this. It’s a claim form for a gold mine in the Yukon. It was my grand uncle’s. He went there on a lark. But he discovered what he had been looking for all his life.”

“He found gold?”

“He found happiness. Something a lot more valuable.”

“Doesn’t gold buy happiness?”

“It does for a little while. Then prices go up. And you need more gold to buy the same thing.”

“Doesn’t gold go up in price?”

“Not always that fast. So you’re left holding the bag. The bag of gold.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You can’t eat the stuff. It might be better to have a bag of sugar. Or flour.”

“That’s the point. You don’t eat it. You just let it increase in value.”

“It can’t quite keep up with your expectations.”

“Things get out of control.”

“Here’s a story about a man looking for the opportunity to redo his life.”

“It’s not always that simple.”

“What are you telling me? That a man can’t have his cake and eat it too.”

“That happiness isn’t something that you can find.”

“Is it something that you make in the heart?”

“It’s something that you make, and then what you make has an effect on how you feel in your heart.”

“Like making a cake.”

“You’ve got to have heart.”

“If I knew that you were coming, I’d have baked a cake.”

“Cake is the way to a man’s heart.”

“Or gold!”

“And diamonds are a girl’s best friend. A nicely cut stone.”

“Before you cut it, you have to mine it.”

“Back to the gold mine.”

“Which he freely went off to find.”

“Did the mine bring him gold? Did it bring him happiness?”

“He found something greater than gold.”

“All that glitters is not gold.”

“But some glitters shine brighter than any gold.”

“He found love!”

“He found happiness. He may have lost love. Lost direction.”

“What are you telling me?”

“He may have got caught in a storm. He may have never found gold.”

“He was caught in the great blizzard.”

“He was caught up in a mining disaster.”

“Or in the great cold speculation.”

“The great baked cake speculation.”  
 “All of the above. You eat a little, you have a little for later.”  
 “We’re going to end up hating our creators.”  
 “It doesn’t have to be that way.”  
 “Of course it doesn’t. They just have a way of making us want what we cannot have.”  
 “How does that work out?”  
 “I guess that it’s basic human nature; we are ungrateful for the sacrifices that others make for us.”  
 “Martyrs are major pushovers.”  
 “Do you feel like the world is taking advantage of you?”  
 “The world is taking advantage of me.”  
 “I didn’t realize that you were a saint. I could use some lessons.”  
 “Didn’t you just spend some time in rehab?”  
 “It wasn’t exactly rehab.”  
 “You did spend some time isolated from the cruel world.”  
 “You do cut close.”  
 “That is my job. I’m giving you my first lesson for free.”  
 “So what’s the next lesson.”  
 “How to be a respectable person.”  
 “And how do I do that?”  
 “Quit thinking about yourself too much!”  
 “What does that mean?”  
 “You haven’t got over your little problem.”  
 “At least, I have the courage to admit that I had a problem.”  
 “The only reason that you did that was so you didn’t have to face what is really wrong with you.”  
 “And what is that?”  
 “That you are talentless. And you spend all your time with sycophants who flatter you all the time.”  
 “What are you offering me instead?”  
 “A real connection to your past.”  
 “My humanity?”  
 “Isn’t that what you expected from me?”  
 “I thought that you would tell me why I am so attracted to cruelty.”  
 “A bad reaction to your own curiosity.”  
 “Why am I so aggressive?”  
 “You can’t accept who you are. Do you think that I enjoy all the work that I have to do just to be myself?”  
 “You are my model for respectability.”  
 “Should I feel good about that?”  
 “I don’t know, Do you feel that you are living up to your billing.?”  
 “I guess that the most important thing is for a person to come to grips with their past. To realize what she can and cannot change.”

“You have done that.”  
 “I’ve changed everything about myself that might have been objectionable. I have to be a moral paragon if I am going to stand in judgement of the world.”  
 “I think that was the problem with all the other paragons.”  
 “It’s not as I’ve done anything wrong!”  
 “Confessing to a Cassandra complex?”  
 “You are using myth to try to limit the import of my personal decisions.”  
 “I thought that myth was your thing.”  
 “No one listened to Cassandra.”  
 “Do they listen to you?”  
 “I would say that I have a gift of prophecy.”  
 “So you have got everybody to accept a day of lament.”  
 “That doesn’t make sense.”  
 “You don’t know about *Crying Wednesday*.”  
 “*Crying Wednesday*?”  
 “It’s a day that everyone laments the state of the world.”  
 “That is commendable. It gets them thinking about the world and its problems.”  
 “Then there’s *Shopping Thursday* where we all figure out what we can buy to make the world look like a better place.”  
 “New costumes for an old theater.”  
 “I’m surprised that you didn’t think about it.”  
 “I did. I wrote about it in *Credit for the New Millennium*.”  
 “You never wrote about anything so silly.”  
 “I might as well by the way that you are talking about me.”  
 “What is the role of myth?”  
 “Like the one about gold in the Yukon.”  
 “There was gold in the Yukon.”  
 “But not in the recent era. And people wasted their lives running out there in the hopes of a better life. All that they found was snow and ice.”  
 “That is a myth in itself.”  
 “Why myth? Why not just stick to the weather report, and its effects on the human body.”  
 “Belief goes a long way to changing how we perceive things.”  
 “Like the Florida woman who kept a snowball in the freezer from the only storm in her lifetime.”  
 “A little like that. Sometimes it’s better to make a myth about something more permanent.”  
 “Our ability to see color.”  
 “Or our blindness to that very fact.”  
 “Those who err are somewhat color blind.”  
 “That’s a way of putting it. It’s as if they are deaf to the cries of human suffering.”  
 “Some people are able to shut out the misery of others.”  
 “Is it any better if they hear the cries, but don’t do anything about it?”

“It could be music to their ears. And they let the melody blend in with everything else in their lives.”

“A sad state of affairs. We could be losing our ability to listen.”

“Or we learn how to tune things out.”

“That sounds pretty accurate.”

“So I have been successful at getting my message across.”

“If that’s all that mattered.”

“What does matter? What have I not told you?”

“Something about erasing the past.”

“It’s not my past to erase. I just made the best of it.”

“What about those who couldn’t?”

“You can always do something to make it better. Even if it’s only a little bit.”

“A miracle. Giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf.”

“I’ve read about those stories too. And they have been inspiring to me.”

“That is great. I wish that I could feel as intimate with the events of history.”

“It would be much worse to ignore things.”

“We do what we can. We don’t all have the benefits of hindsight.”

“No one does. But it’s not as if the world changes into something completely different overnight. There are warning signs.”

“I am trying to observe the signs. To see if there is some kind of pattern. But not everyone has that blessing.”

“What can I do about that? I want to awaken the senses of those who I touch.”

“They have to feel the touch. You are carrying on a long line of miracle workers.”

“I am fortunate to have been blessed that way.”

“It’s so much easier saving those who have already been saved. Of making contact with those who already have the gift.”

“Everyone has to start somewhere.”

“What about those who grope in extreme darkness?”

“The power of faith implies that the light can illumine the most extreme darkness.”

“That works as long as you can really see. But there is something out there that is even more obscure than your eyes can take in.”

“I think that I address that darkness.”

“For those who have already been redeemed. What about those who curse your miracles?”

“Why would they do that?”

“They are the ones who feel the same about your miracles as they do about the last set of miracles.”

“If things are bad, you can make things worse yourself.”

“There are those people who suffer in a most extreme darkness. And you can’t see them so you never direct your touch in that direction. And even if you did, your miraculous touch would not be sufficient.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.”

“Have you ever considered that you exist in this darkness?”

“That feeling never lasted very long. I never had the time to dwell on my problems like that.”

“This is not a problem. It is the very condition of their being.”

“This is another myth. Plato’s parable of the cave.”

“They are slaves, and Plato mocks their servitude by offering the sop of rational thought. No wonder they kill their supposed liberator.”

“You’ve got the story all wrong.”

“You do too. No one would accept gifts from their persecutors.”

“People have done so all the time. The occupiers have a human face!”

“But if you make them too human, you only diminish the humanity of those that they persecute. You can’t find liberation sleeping with the enemy.”

“That is a saying. You can’t take it literally.”

“I guess that’s something that you learned in college. But what about those who don’t sleep with the enemy. What can they expect?”

“That they spend less time in darkness. I don’t know. What do you want me to say? This is your puzzle. You’ll get mad at me whatever answer that I give you.”

“Why not just say it? You’re the one who’s using puzzles.”

“I’ve always used puzzles. How else can I protect myself against the world? I learned that at a young age. I learned to hold my tongue. And I talked with pictures. I used my hands to demonstrate my story.”

“And when you were older, you put away the things of childhood.”

“That has never been my story.”

“No, you told the story about finding gold in the Yukon. The one about the greed that drove the friends to hate each other.”

“You’re peddling some story about hatred for a stranger. Someone that you don’t even know.”

“It’s also a story of betrayal.”

“It’s not my story.”

“But you are involved.”

“Not that I know of.”

“Your sister.”

“I’m not my sister.”

“Your husband’s brother.”

“I never slept with anyone that I shouldn’t have.”

“You are a paragon of virtue.”

“What do you want me to say? Everything in life isn’t connected. What happened to you may have nothing to do with something that I did or didn’t do.”

“You’re the one who used the fabric image.”

“What?”

“That all life is connected like a fabric.”

“It’s a great image. But that doesn’t mean that one crossing of threads has knowledge about another crossing that could be so remote to have no effect on the other.”

“But you have to know. The waves that roll across the fabric. That is what connects it all

together.”

“That is another myth. Agamemnon and Clymnestra.”

“I was thinking about Ariadne.”

“You have to get your stories straight if you’re going to apply them to your life.”

“Life is a tangle of stories. And you pick those stories which get you off scot-free.”

“Would you want it to be any different.”

“I’d just like us to admit to some things that we may have done.”

“Like burning down the kitchen.”

“I’m a pretty good cook.”

“Cooking isn’t like sewing. All the threads are wound much tighter.”

“Is this a comment about story telling?”

“You know what they say: the proof is in the pudding.”

“There are those who write stories, and there are those who read stories. It’s important to know the difference.”

“I don’t want to be you.”

“That is a good thing.”

“I just want what you have.”

“Envy?”

“I’ve got a machine that can make images of everything that I want. This could be the beginning and end of civilization.”

“How is that?”

“You don’t see the potential.”

“But all that is synthetic. I’ve got the real thing.”

“But I don’t! And you are refusing to share.”

“What if I only have enough for one?”

“It’s not something that you can really use on your own.”

“You have your machine. Isn’t it built for solitary pleasure.”

“It’s made to provide an image of the real thing. Something that you can see and touch.”

“There’s the seeing part. But what really brings it to life is the touch.”

“That’s the fundamental part of the myth. The touch.”

“How to touch a naked man.”

“Isn’t that a Cosmo article?”

“That’s where I got the idea. Even when you’re touching, you’re thinking about touching something else.”

“That is the source of myth.”

“Where’s the science?”

“The machine. I told you that I have this machine!”

“The machine does the touching.”

“The touching creates the image. Are you understanding this?”

“Not really. I can’t even figure out who’s talking here. There’s a man with a machine. And a woman who is asking about touch.”

“Does it make a difference which is which?”

“I can’t imagine a woman making a machine.”

“Why not?”

“It doesn’t sound organic enough. Our problems started when man started making machines.”

“Or when women started using them.”

“Anyone could make one. It just takes some parts and an idea.”

“What about when people use machines for things for which they are not intended?”

“This is too difficult to understand.”

“Turn it on, and let it do its thing.”

“It replaces people.”

“It makes things easier. You could make a hundred cakes in just one day.”

“Or write a novel. All this is so fascinating.”

“Better than keeping the touching to yourself.”

“It’s the right thing to do. I gave you an idea. That’s not enough.”

“Quit complaining. It’s all there just for you.”

“Like in the fairy story.”

“Like in the myth.”

“You know the principle: you don’t work, you don’t eat.”

“Does it follow if you work too much, you eat too much?”

“Not necessarily.”

“So you have a little extra to share with a friend.”

“Not unless you’re really hungry.”

“Are you trying to generalize for the world?”

“I didn’t know happiness was for sale.”

“It’s not.”

“Why don’t you come with me?”

“I can’t come with you. It’s ridiculous.”

“What are you going to do here?”

“Paul is going to ask me to marry him.”

“Paul’s a child.”

“No, he’s not. He’s serious about his life. He’s a lawyer. You have this hair-brained scheme to conquer the West.”

“It’s not a scheme. I’ve planned it out. It’s going to bear fruit.”

“I give you my blessing. Just go on your adventure.”

“You won’t come?”

“I told you that I have a life here.”

“You could be with me.”

“That’s not realistic. You don’t have a pot to piss in.”

“I have a dream.”

“We all have dreams. You have nothing here. You barely have a place to live.”

“I can’t see just giving my life to some amorphous cause. I want something to show for my life.”

“I just want to break things. To destroy the crystal visions that we hold dear.”

“Words can’t buy happiness. You could just wait for things to thaw, and it would all be

Ok again.”

“Not everyone survives through the winter.”

“You can’t remake the world in your image and likeness. Someone already tried that.”

“Do I have to change if I want you to be with me?”

“How would you change?”

“I don’t know. I guess that I’d do something that would make me more attractive to you.”

“What would you do?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I’m asking you.”

“It’s not as if you can just push a button and change your character.”

“I have to work on my character?”

“I was only using that as an example.”

“What do I do then?”

“You have to be yourself. It’s not possible to transform your personality. Even if you alter one part of yourself, you’d probably just go back to who you are.”

“So there’s nothing that I can do to make you liked me.”

“Let’s say that you changed part of yourself. And it was the wrong part, then you’d feel let down.”

“There is something that I need to change.”

“I’m trying to tell you that’s not a good idea.”

“What should I do?”

“Don’t do anything.”

“And if I do nothing, and you end up not liking me, I’d feel let down.”

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore.”

“Is something wrong?”

“You can’t just change for me. You’re acting like a puppy dog. I’m not trying to teach you tricks.”

“Are you getting impatient with me?”

“Just give it a rest.”

“Give what a rest?”

“Things aren’t going to get better out of the blue. I need some time on my own.”

“Should I learn to be less obnoxious?”

“Don’t do anything for now. Just let me be.”

“You don’t like me.”

“You’ve got to give it time. You can’t program a person like a computer.”

“You need to give me a chance.”

“I’m trying. All this is too confusing. You are expecting too much.”

“Should I go?”

“That might be a good idea.”

“You don’t want to see me again.”

“I’m not saying that. Things just happened too quickly. I need some time.”

“They say that time heals all wounds.”

“Don’t think of it as a wound.”

“So it will heal in time.”



“You shouldn’t give your heart away that easily.”

“What am I supposed to do?”

“I don’t have all the answers. It’s hard enough just figuring out things for myself. Don’t ask me what you need to do.”

“You just want an audience. To air your suffering in public.”

“I do what I need to do. And you need to do the same.”

“You’re repeating yourself.”

“I’m learning how to get it right.”

“Where did you meet this guy?”

“I was standing there waiting for a commuter train, and he just started talking to me. He was funny. He told good jokes.”

“And that’s how you started going out together.”

“More or less.”

“What else does he do besides tell good jokes?”

“He’s a hard worker. He loves me. What else is there?”

“I don’t know.” “

Does he make you feel creative?”

“It’s not as if I was ever that creative in the first place. I liked to paint. I was pretty good. But I was never going to become a well known artist. “

”Do you write?”

“I don’t like books all that much.”

“I always imagined that you were a big reader. You’ve always had profound things to say.”

“I don’t really think of myself as deep.”

“You look mysterious.”

“Thanks! I guess that you mean it as a compliment.”

“I did!”

“Sorry, if I seem so weird. I’m not used to guys going to so much trouble. I mean we usually just hit it off.”

“Like that guy that you’re with.”

“Exactly. He never makes me feel uncomfortable.”

“Am I making you feel uncomfortable.”

“No. It’s just that I don’t like to get all wound up about things.”

“So this is the guy that you’re going to get married to?”

“Heavens, no. We just like to hang out together.”

“Hang out?”

“You know!”

“So you are going together?”

“Well, yeah.”

“I just thought that maybe we had something going.”

“I told you before. We’re friends now. It wasn’t working out. It never was. We don’t belong together.”

“If we had no history together, the torture wouldn’t have worked.”

“If it’s torture, you made it that way. It’s not as if there’s some train that you can hop upon, and it’s going to lead you to happiness.”

“The *Freedom Train*.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The *Freedom Train*”

“Is that like your happiness machine?”

“It’s all the same effect.”

“You have to find happiness in yourself.”

“And this can stimulate the inside.”

“A train.”

“Just hop on board, and it will do the rest.”

“Why didn’t you just do that in the first place. Why did you expect me to do something for you?”

“That’s what you advertised. You said you had the answers. And when I took you up on it, you told me that they were only your answers. Like in a myth. I had to find my own. You have my answers.”

“How can you say that? There are way more answers than you can know.”

“What if there are only a finite number? And you have most of them.”

“It’s not like that.”

“You wouldn’t know it if you held in your hand.”

“Speak! There is more gold than you have dreamt up in your economic theory.”

“What’s gold but some numbers that you write in that little book of yours. Give me the book.”

“You can buy your own.”

“I’ve been writing my own. But no one seems to be reading them. I want yours.”

“There’s nothing special about mine. It’s just like all the copies that you can get in the bookstore.”

“You have notes in yours. You explain things.”

“Things are explained enough in the original.”

“I couldn’t make sense of what happened. And then I started to feel afraid.”

“Why were you afraid. You knew where you were.”

“You always seem to know where you are. I thought that you could guide.”

“Get your copy of the book. And read it over and over again. It will make sense in good time.”

“Is that how you made it make sense for you?”

“I have enough reference point to make things clear.”

“Is that why you didn’t come to the Yukon with me?”

“I didn’t know that you were making that offer.”

“You don’t like to travel.”

“I have a routine.”

“I can stay in one place very long.”

“I knew that about you. I’m different than that.”

“What does that mean?”

“I enjoy my surroundings. Things fluctuate. But I’ve got used to it. It’s like the seasons. On the other hand, you can’t be happy living anywhere. You like to wander!”

“You have to answer for the way things are.”

“For what? Eating too much candy? Eating too much cake?”

“For things done in your name. In your family’s name.”

“I don’t know what you mean?”

“It’s in the blood.”

“I’m not related by blood.”

“Your blood still moves in that direction.”

“That’s a myth.”

“You’re not going to get away with it.”

“With what?”

“You all have that tendency.”

“That proves nothing. What are you going to do: torture it out of me?”

“I had thought about it.”

“Seriously.”

“Isn’t that what you want? That is how the myth is put together.”

“I’m not in that story.”

“It’s in the family.”

“Not by blood.”

“How do you survive on the road.”

“I move myself, move my house. I learn how to adapt.”

“You need a little more knowledge to go on.”

“Knowledge.”

“Organized knowledge that’s been tested out.”

“What about the family story?”

“That’s been tried out as well. We are looking at another story.”

“A science story.”

“A science fiction.”

“Someone can help me. Help me to get another face. To start a new story. To escape.”

“You need blood money.”

“I’ve been telling you that all along. You’ve just found a way to make it respectable.”

“I close my eyes and pretend that nothing has happened.”

“You’re answerable for all of this. You just close your eyes and pretend that someone else has done all of it.”

“It?”

“The trip to the Yukon, the search for gold, the wandering, the cake, the sweets, the location, the traveling, the *Freedom Train*.”

“I’m not really getting the hang of it.”