

37. THE WAY OF THE WORLD

There was a host of souls who sought an interplanetary convergence to provide sufficient guidance to rectify the political order. For them rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's meant according human kind with a natural harmony that was already present in the universe. Man simply had to be reminded of a more lasting truth. In my readings to Cody, I noticed another mix to our political nature. No single planetary alignment could account for the rich complexity of social interaction. Politics was an intentional creation by people that took advantage of all our decision-making powers.

Some people made every effort to deny the richly-woven patterns of communication. They longed for a simpler solution that highlighted their particular vision at the expense of those who didn't fit the spiritual plan that they wanted to impose on the universe. They were ready to pass into the kingdom of heaven without ever knowing the chaos that gave life to human awareness.

June imagined herself among the chosen few. Any doubts that she had about her own life were quickly put aside once she felt that she had subdued her uncontrollable passions. It wasn't so much that she abjured her physical nature. She discovered all the material rewards to satisfy her spiritual longing. She simply wanted to discourage others in their pursuit of happiness if it didn't further enhance her own sense of self-admiration.

In her imagination, June saw heaven's gate slide open to a choir of angels paying tribute to the narrow conformity of a common faith. The scene sparkled with the wholesome faces of a genetically-correct people who seldom had an idea that deviated from the official script. There was little doubt that such a scene was well-accommodated by a celestial design that left no visual imperfections to cause the mind curious to question the overall the intent. Even the comfortable wardrobe was tastefully selected to reflect the implied leisure in this worthy paradise.

Far be it for me to have burst dear mother's bubble! She was ready to fight to the death for her basic truths. Admittedly this was quite a radical revision of Madison and Jefferson's social contract. But people had to adapt for the times. And June was all the more adept at offering her own legal interpretations to match the needs of her revolution. I just found it impossible to march under her flag.

For all my commitment to remain with Cody in my cloister, there was a time when I would have to venture out into the world and advance my own brand of democracy. Unlike June, I saw my self as no savior to mankind. I would probably simply wander the plains looking for a slew of like-minded reprobates to spark a renegade pilgrimage to the new Eldorado. In our wilderness city-state we could enjoy the benefits of our new independence.

June would have had nothing to do with this free-spirited attitude. For her, freedom meant the right to pursue her dream if meant flying against the mainstream. At least that was what she claimed. In fact, she had found a way to catch a tail wind. So she really had no idea what it meant to go against the current to defend her beliefs. Her fear of the unknown made her combative. Reason was simply a more aggressive restating of her argument. That was why she always kept her eyes on me. It wasn't simply her parental prerogative. She was going way beyond her station. She had adopted her methods from the intelligence services. She never wanted to countenance the thought that contrary beliefs might enter her household. When I

became too far gone for rehabilitation, she wrote me off. And I disappeared in the darkness.

I had retreated to the relative anonymity of the Brainerd house. With my new life came a degree of comfort that allowed me to forget about June's conflict of ideas. My attacker reminded that I had not completely achieved the balance that I was seeking. It wasn't simply a refusal to identify with the frightening calm of Bill and June's strict regime. June had only exposed a deeper contradiction inside of me. In reading to Cody, I worked to outline the contours of this perspective. Far away, in another world for now, opposing forces clashed in a political battle for the soul of the nation. Inside of me, I waged a struggle of my own to overcome the forces of darkness. I presented my lesson in such stark terms because it captured a debate about the nature of the republic that dated back to the founders.

For Cody's purposes, a more neutral approach might have been more effective. It would have been mistake to embroil him in the petty squabbles that had distracted the governance of the people. A great deal of the most heated disputes had been based on a trivial framing of the argument. Rather than educating Cody, I would have been leading him along a similar winding road that led nowhere. But there had been a reason for my running away. My intent extended further in an attempt to minimize the influence of Lee Tate on my charge. So I was convinced that I needed to carry on with this strategy.

When I lived at home, I had strayed from the path. Now I was ready to right my craft. Political philosophy provided me with the ability to project my beliefs onto the world. I would not have to continue to suffer my isolation. Satan's temptation came at the same price as the venerable king's crown that was offered to George Washington. Washington's refusal paid deep tribute to the power of the people. But the apparent crisis over leadership demonstrated how easy it was to abandon principle in the heat of the moment. The spoils of battle could overcome even the most upstanding citizens. And I feared that my own beliefs would perish beneath the intensity of the noonday sun.

My escapades with Rose had surely put me in jeopardy. I hardly cherished every one of our meager victories. But it wasn't as if Rousseau was going to accompany me on my future journeys. I could sense the vain homilies of the Marquis de Sade would offer more appropriate counsel for the wild days ahead. I just wanted to avoid such a tumultuous resolution.

Rose and I were never able to enter the game without a little smoke or some good stiff whisky. I still recognized the need of courage that flowed from inside a bottle. But I could hardly dispense such medicine to Cody. Lee Tate had been hardened with the wisdom of a cruel world. He had formulated a more articulate version of June's philosophy. Both Lee and June would have argued that my enlightened attitude was simply the effect of my withdrawal from the world. My only ally was a comatose patient who couldn't speak in support of my frail manifesto. Even Rose's defense would dissolve under scrutiny.

I wanted to know how I could fortify my position. I didn't imagine myself scouring abandoned tenements trying to score a fix for my blighted consciousness. Under such conditions, some contemporaries did their best to disgrace the goals of Jefferson and Madison. There was certainly sufficient reason to modify their social compact. But I did not want to give up on need for a forthright declaration.

It was one thing to preach to my enfeebled congregation. Could I carry my message forward to the rest of the people? The success of such a move would depend on a systematic

expression of my thoughts. My education of Cody had taken just such a form. But who had served as the stenographer to collect the all the minutes from these intimate conventions? Was my own memory that accurate in capturing every moment of our development? Even if it was what would it matter?

If Rose had her own moment of clarity, it must have occurred before she was thoroughly overwhelmed by the hoopla of the bright lights and the big city. On one of her truly wild nights, she believed that she had finally corralled all the power of the soul. She had tapped the pulsating energy that held together the universe. And the chaos engaged an even more dazzling interplay of the heavenly firmament. Her mysticism passed triumphantly through the way of the flesh. Despite such moments of grandeur, the end of the revelry always found her face down on the ground gasping for breath. I was having enough problems trying to implement my plans. Where did she go so completely wrong every time?

Rose was ready to buck my ivory-tower elitism. If I ever really let go, I might feel a passion for life. Then it would be nearly impossible to crawl back to the philosopher's throne. If anything, she was playing the part of Satan in this updated drama. But she was turning the moral on its head. It took a real skill to tame the pleasure instinct. Rose did what she could to train her body for the arduous tasks ahead. She couldn't help it if most of the guys that she worked with had none of her concern for the finer points of mysticism. She settled for what they did have and tried to make up for the rest. That was why she needed to get high. It allowed her to drown herself in these troubled waters.

I never had her faith in the transmigration of souls. But the next day she'd awaken as a new person all set to go through the same ritual again. I just expected her to fall over once and for all. I could watch her self-destruct only so many times. Her resilience was too much to fathom. It became exhausting hanging around. If I stayed, I would have had no choice to follow suit. I would have had to get more messed up so I could put June and Bill's reprimands out of my mind. The cycle would have been interminable until I completely went over the edge.

What hope did Rose have in trying to maintain the program that she had created for herself? So many times, she was hardly there. This only gave guys more of an advantage over her. She pride herself on such situations. She believed that she was in control.

"I'm getting what I want. Guys like me for that."

She felt that she was getting down a skill. She mocked my inexperience.

"You're only holding yourself back. You've got to learn to enjoy it."

She was never going to be really alone. At least, that was what she thought. I couldn't stay around to help nurse the wounds. There was no safe vantage point. Everyone was slipping down the same slide.

"What if you get so far out there that you can't come back?"

"That is what artists are all about. They keep pushing their bodies until their souls reach that feeling of transcendence."

I couldn't believe that guys had been telling her this. She had just wanted to answer me in a way that didn't make her life appear trivial. That wasn't my intent. She was just letting the worst part of her life speak for the rest. And it was becoming harder and harder to say anything had any meaning in and of itself.

"Rose, what if I don't want to get high anymore?"

“What if you decided that you didn’t want to eat anymore?”

“Are you saying that it’s the same thing.”

“It’s what I do to survive.”

What was Rose surviving? She never filled in the rest of her story. Maybe the story itself set up expectations that weren’t worth pursuing. It wasn’t as if I had soothed all my own doubts.

Here. I was observing a deep fault line in my own psyche. I was really glad that my sinecure had allowed me to pull back just in time. A life in the road could have complicated every problem that I faced with Rose. I could put behind all those experiences. But that didn’t diminish the hollow that I continued to feel. This was about me, not something that could be done to me. My nightmare had a sense of blessing for me. This was scary. It reminded me how alive that I was. Even in the depths of nighttime, I could be affected by these obscure experiences. The dream reminded me of something more ugly in my world. No matter how much therapy, I could never shake this dark spot.

Rose offered me a glimpse of the problem. It wasn’t that I feared for her safety. I was ultimately trying to protect my own being. I was glad that I carried my regret with me. I didn’t want a hangover to throw me back into the maelstrom. When we hung out together, I let it all get to me. And a bad night sent me hurtling over the edge again. She had a passel of friends just like her. Each one was adept at falling on her feet. But I’d also watch them wipe out and occasion. And it was never a pretty sight.

I started to practice my own falls just so I could fit in. But the key to really getting blitzed was that there was no safety net. I wanted to play with the big kids. It just got more and more depressing. I needed to stop. And I blessed the day that I walked out the door for good. My two problems went hand in hand., And I dropped both of them for good.

Rose had discovered her own form of conformity. She didn’t really want to change the status quo. She only wanted to erase the bad effects. She would let adults do all kinds of unspeakable things to her. And she denying what was really going on. She just stopped trying to make it different. I could only watch because she herself had learned how to turn a blind eye towards it. What was she going to do? She wasn’t ready to put up a fight. Her only answer was to keep away as much as she could. And she needed to pretend that none of this was happening to her.

How did I know that I had the self-control to stand up to that kind of abuse? With Bill and June, I kept taking the easy way out. I was avoiding the fact that they were getting to me. I created these mind games so that I wouldn’t have to face their intimidation head on. And Rose introduced me to all this randomness in my experience. I could tell where it was all headed. At a certain point, it would no longer be possible to keep my wits about me.

If I had embraced June’s way of life, I wouldn’t have been standing on my own two feet. Everything in her world was utterly predictable. Even her scatterbrained attitude seemed accounted for by her overall belief. She had really never questioned the grand plan since she was a kid. The fact that she didn’t become more wealthy didn’t phase her. She kept living the charmed life. Rose appeared to deny the sense of revelation that sustained June. But her loss of hope only confirmed the ultimate significance of June’s belief. In other words, Rose saw no other connection to hold things together. She just accepted the power of the present moment. She simply tried to steer herself towards the most pleasurable experience of that moment. Like

June, she recognized no other pattern but the immediacy of her world.

June wasn't using her faith to create a deeper spiritual connection. Instead, it just confirmed how important were the rewards of the moment. She claimed to derive her satisfaction from a recognition of her past. But there was no real history in her world. She could never learn from her experience. She had insured that it would always be constant. Rose threw herself in the present with the same kind of conviction. Both were fairy tale characters. One leaned towards the fabulous, and the other favored horror.

I wanted to discover a fabric that held us to our primitive history. Even in our words, there was an echo of that wind that had wafted our ancestors. I put my ear to the primal ground to hear the voice. We were not enslaved to the past. Only our speech brought the words to life. So we were active participants in creating our present. If I had stayed home I would have never recognized this mission.

Our political identity arose from our ties to history. We needed to make the connection active. It wasn't about going through the motions. Or just following orders. It was easy to see how the political contract had suffered in recent times. I did my best to show the timeline to Cody. It meant thoroughly invigorating the words of Lincoln and Jefferson. Why had this legacy fallen in disrepute?

I explored the almost sacred vocation that these thinkers had associated with the role of the Chief Executive. I was also becoming better acquainted with the analogous role intent of the literary author. Such was the poet's craft. Words afforded us the opportunity to know our world. Many writers assumed that the connection between words and things were automatic. It was like ordering from a menu. A ruler simply had to issue commands and the people would follow. This was how things had become distorted. Justices ruled from the bench with no equanimity for the citizens. But such an approach was doomed from the beginning. It was as if they were trying to change the course of a mighty river with their words. The country ran with a current. And these imposters did their utmost to dam up and redirect the river. But their meager levees would not hold when met with the onrushing stream of water. The embarrassed politicians would straight-faced look down their constituents as if nothing had happened. When Jefferson had spoken of "nature's God", he understood how law proceeded from a scientific enlightenment, a respect for the wishes of the people.

The politician now assumed the role of the magician. He wanted to convince the public that their eyes were fooling them. And he got loads of people to follow the movement of his hands. Pretty soon they had no idea what was going on. But the more that these pretenders acted like vain emperors, the more that the people eventually saw that they weren't wearing clothes. Magic spells fell on deaf ears once the effects had worn off.

Each time that the people were fooled became an excuse to repeat the same trick again. This would never work with an informed public. But that didn't stop the magicians from trying. If they all conspired together, the people would start to believe that they no longer had a chance. I think that Rose's cynicism was born of the same kind of disenchantment with the human spirit.

How could activism take root in a world so absorbed by utter resignation? While demagogues continued to do backflips and handstands, the people needed to revitalize themselves on the principles of democracy. This was not as simple as the nineteenth century promise of the fecundity of the land under the hand of the citizen farmer. Even the great turbines

of the twentieth century seemed to be grinding to a halt. Now, the pulsating video screens projected strings of numbers in elegant procession. The viewer did his best to tabulate the metaphysical sum in the hope that he could cash in on some invisible commodities market implied by the display. He passed his time under the belief that he was super-connected to the great machine hidden away in some guarded jungle enclave. Under its yoke the price of labor was being reduced to next to nothing. As long as the audience could still glean a few trinkets by mail order, no one would unplug the idiot box.

The will of the people been reduced to the artificial construct of public opinion. Paid consultants learned to play this instrument like a grand piano. Everyone had to get in on the great events of our times. To be left behind was to be exiled to the world of the horse and buggy. Even the undercurrents of popular sentiment rushed in a complementary direction and broke upon the same shore. When natural phenomenon moved at a faster rate and left the pundits holding the bag, they all got to their knees and begged for mercy. Then they jumped to their feet and continued on with their garbled litanies.

The complex arrangement of home and work made it more and more difficult for the individual to get in touch with any real feelings created by material contact with the world. Every reaction to an experience became the sign for something else. A person tried to follow the trail back to an apparent source. There, he'd only discover another machine with its power cord detached from the wall. And so-called getaways from the hustle and bustle were equally orchestrated to yield a quantifiable result. Climbers fought to conquer the new Everest. Hikers logged miles and recorded them in their phones. The new pioneers re-conquered the beckoning wild. All the while, the machines blipped and squeaked back to each other about accruing more time off.

Expressions of democracy were not impossible within the amusement park. The current savior just had to blend in with the other clowns and keep the entertainment pumping. How could the good news not get lost amidst the cacophony of the carnival barkers? Even the inspired chant was only another riff in a free jazz run that left most of the listeners gasping for breath. Many a hardened Philistine would yell back to keep it simple. And the message lost all shape and just rattled around like all the bouncing melodies that were now yesterday's blues.

The militant wasn't ready to deliver only metaphor. He wanted to dish up some unconditional truth. A good picture could lead a revolution. But a lack of clarity would only steer the faithful into a swamp. There he stood in his mud bog trying to tell everyone that it was going to be a better day. Perhaps history offered more constant models.

While the abolitionist's cry may have faded into history, his struggle was paramount in the definition of the democratic ideal. Could his modern-day counterpart vision resist the slew of stock hominem attacks and get to the heart of the matter? Indeed, didn't it take a pound of gossip to grease the wheels of any issue. How could I paint the rigors of virtue to Cody? Did my political lesson rest upon a moral ground? Or was expediency the centerpiece of a political understanding? Ideology was simply the icing on the cake, whatever happened to work for the moment. Power tasted the same no matter what your political persuasion.

The implementation of a political ideal was fraught with its own troubles. Details that were so critical in the laboratory were rendered useless in the field. The most wide-eyed reformers were ready to cut a deal at any cost if it meant saving their careers. Where was the

lasting impact of real political transformation? Nothing seemed to get done without lining the fat cats's pockets. That ended the hope for significant change. Outgoing politicians waited on lucrative retirement packages with industry lobbyists. No wonder the citizen was unable to make any headway in the craziness.

I wanted to familiarize Cody with the historical battles for the attention of the American voter. We examined the influence of the railroads and the rise of industrialism. We studied banking and labor. I read him accounts of the Pullman strike. We learned about the Haymarket Riots. We followed the illustrious lives of the cattle barons. We observed sheep herders and gunslingers. We documented the influence of Hispanic culture. We walked in the footsteps of the Navaho and Commanche chiefs. We learned about the governmental structure of the Iroquois.

To carry on the legacy meant not surrendering one's ideals to the sparkling facets of the moment. The new pragmatism argued that you couldn't maintain your ideals without success. So the mavens traded freedom like any commodity. The liberty granted corporate raiders seemed the impetus of a philanthropy based on fostering the entrepreneurial spirit. If there were pockets of society that remained immune to this message, they would eventually suffer for their resistance to change. We were right back to the arguments about the horse and buggy.

Was I holding on to a new asceticism? When I hung out with Rose, I hardly subscribed to such a narrow viewpoint. But here, in my retreat from the world, I embraced a more austere perspective. It was as if I was conducting a think tank for a new social order. I couldn't ignore the benefits of raging consumerism. But something wasn't right with the world. And a trip to the mall would never cure that ailment.

Rose had come upon a repertoire of appealing emotions. And she stood guard by her booth and hocked her wares for an interested clientele. The products were all a little bizarre. But ultimately their intent was no different than the glittering delights that one could find at a jewelry store or ensconced in the perfume display cases. She wasn't lining up to buy five-thousand dollar pairs of shoes. And she didn't show off her purchases with a victory lap around the mall. But her excursions appeared to offer equally direct answers to confusing personal questions. A puff or a swallow was the key to open the required door. And the penitent could find the absolution that she so wildly cherished.

My rejection may have seemed all the more surprising. How could one turn away from salvation? I simply realized the next step. I knew that I was crossing the point of no return. And I pulled back while I still had my wits about me. Did I have too much consciousness to live life to its fullest. That was what had tempted me to her side in the first place. I couldn't have managed it on my own. And I needed to throw myself into the chaos. But I asked for rescue before I had really gone all the way. I had barely gotten my feet wet. Admittedly, I did have go through some crazy trauma. And I couldn't get anyone to acknowledge what I had been through. So there was little reason to proceed.

I could already sense that moment when the appeals of Rose's lifestyle were becoming so overwhelming that I didn't know how to make it back. And I got so caught up in the sheer momentum that I was simply carried along by the rush itself. There was no easy way to extricate myself from what was happening. Instead, I wanted more. The roller coaster hadn't even crested. And I was getting worked up by the thrills.

There was nowhere to catch my fall. I threw my hands in the air and let the chips fall where they may. I could feel the butterflies in my stomach. I gasped. I briefly let go. Oh damn! I was hurtling downhill. Lights were flashing all around me. I was being torn apart.

I didn't relish remembering experiences like that. In that world, the regret was never enough to restrain a person from doing the same thing over and over again. Once, I crossed the line, I wanted more. I wanted to stay in that place forever. And I was so lucky to get out.

Rose believed that was what it meant to be human. She didn't give any credibility to a knowledge that existed separate from the madness. The artist capitulated totally to the manifest energy. Boom!

I reset myself on the perch and looked down what we had wrought. There was no heading back. I had put it behind me. If I was denying myself, so be it. I would have to take the baby steps just to make the necessary recognition of who I was, where I was. If I was faking it, that was that. I couldn't take any more than that.

I used to feel pressured to come up with an answer. In teaching Cody, I saw all that I needed to see right before my eyes. I could walk outside and feel that I was part of the earth. This wasn't some kind of hippie consciousness. It was more logical. Similar to the harmony that Newton observed. I could put my awareness into words. There was passion. But I was not drowning in my emotions.

I slept well that night. There were no late-night visitors. The next day I was prepared to continue our journey. The wagons were loaded, and Cody and I started to make our way. If there was a dynamic to my creation, I felt that I was approaching a conclusion. I hoped that his health would oblige us. The words had a life of their own. And his mind was assimilating this progress. In a while, he would be able to right himself. He could tell me what I needed to hear.

My readings began to veer more towards political philosophy. Rather than inspirational readings about leadership, we were looking at anthropological analyses of political institutions. We explored the belief that politics arose from a need to compensate for regret. Greek tragedy focuses on ritual's ability to help us expiate our offenses. The tragedy depicted a more explicit manner to conduct society's affairs in light of a severe rift created by internal rivalries.

The anthropologist did his best to give an air of seriousness to his study. How different was the ritualized response to tragedy from morning after regret. Was civilization only the gloss that covered centuries of tawdry gossip? If political belief had a great deal in common with worship, was the nature of such practice linked to fetishized worship of object associated with the ruler? I was doing my best to escape Rose's world. Did these great thinkers glorify communities that were similar to Rose's?

The theatrical presentation allowed the viewer to be entertained by the experience without getting wrapped up completely in the emotion. There was enough distance from the play that the viewer would obsess over night about what she saw. She might use the occasion to ask herself questions about her own life. But if the theater became more real than her actual experience, it wouldn't provide her with the skills to deal with her own life.

Reading to Cody wasn't simply an abstract experience. I was becoming totally involved in what we were doing. It was affecting my dreams. Art offered a deeper emotional connection to what was happening. Was the artist offering something that was more provocative than political scandal? Or did the artist simply use scandal as a pretext to write his own work? We

had used these books as a foundation of an important lesson. That significance arose from our actually putting the ideas into action. Wasn't that the very stuff of theater. The successful politician learned to invoke memories of his audience that encouraged identification with his message. These ideas weren't meant to stop with Cody hearing what I said. He needed to leap out and act out the story.

My actor wasn't taking my direction. Maybe I needed to impress more clearly my intent. I needed to be more forceful. And Cody could imitate my gestures. He could learn by watching. I stood up to read the book. I felt a little self-conscious. Why should I? He needed me to offer him more of myself. Was this what I needed from June? Cody had no one else.

Did politicians need handlers? Were they all drifting in a deep trance? Their managers guided them. They just followed their direction. Cody was already in a hypnotic state. He needed suggestion. It had to be my urging that brought him along. I couldn't let Lee interfere with my work. But I had little authority here. If Cody ever woke up, he wouldn't know who I was. He might chase me from the room. I couldn't have that happen to me. I felt viciously protective of him. Lee would not have my Cody.

It wasn't as if I loved Cody Brainerd. I barely knew the man. If I did, I think that I would probably despise him. He couldn't be all that different than Lee. I wanted to pretend that I had formed him in my image. But he resisted this likeness. He barely reacted to all my efforts. He was rejecting me. How could I be devoted to someone who was rejecting me?

I felt pathetic. I didn't have a life. I was hoping that Cody would cherish what I had done for him. But he didn't care. He couldn't care. There was nothing between us. He hadn't demonstrated any sort of concern for me. Still, I wanted to believe that there was something going on. Worse than pathetic, I was losing my mind. I had recognized this from the moment of the bad dream. Now it was coming to this.

I had spent the past few days talking to Cody about the ideal political leader. Why did I care? Why did he care? Here was the rub: was it possible to link our discussion to something that directly influenced our lives? Why was Jefferson convinced that we needed an appeal to government. Did the king's abrogation of law mean that the whole notion of law was in jeopardy. Why defend its future application?

Without law, it appeared that an agreement among friends could replace the more rigid application of law. But what if an individual could never break into the narrow circle of friends. Would he forever be on the outs with regards to his needs? We were closing in on the heart of matter. The notion of *human rights* appeared to be based upon an abstraction. That abstraction only became a justification of governmental institutions that clogged up the fair administration of justice. On the other hand, rights only became real in judicial appeal. The citizen appealed to the people at large to redress the slight perpetrated by an exclusive circle of friends, an oligarchy. Without such an appeal, others could ignore his rights. He sought fairness from the people. More than that, the people needed to be reminded of their commitment to those rights even if they had lost their commitment to those rights. Democracy needed to be reinvigorated once more.

Government drew its authority from the citizens. Without its authority, the people could not maintain those rights that were essential to every form of social transaction. Lee was entrusting me with a critical task. I was reminding Cody of his connection to the body politic.

This would be the basis for his resuscitation. He was bringing to life our social contract. That was why his education was so important.

Why did some people fear the notion of judicial appeal? How had that appeal been distorted through the application of privilege? The people could not rely on their leaders to give them their rights. The process needed to work in reverse. The leaders needed to follow the wishes of the people. This meant that the citizens needed to make themselves aware of their rights. They could not allow the manipulation of public opinion to make people afraid of their own rights. If a minority of the citizens tried to corral government only for their benefit, it was incumbent on the majority to stand up for their rights. If this minority took it as their right to steal away benefits of the nation only for themselves, then it would be criminal if such an oligarchy fought to resist the application of just laws.

Where could the people find the authority to defend their rights? Once the people give away this responsibility, they left themselves vulnerable to tyranny of the few. Therefore, the effective protection by law had to flow directly from the people. That was why my instruction was so important. It examined the ideas that gave rise to the republic. Without such information, the self was helpless against the decay of the social order. Education was the key to participation in government. More than that, the self was able to express the nature of its isolation by focusing on where our inalienable rights had been trampled on.

It was essential that political opinion flowed from an effort to orient the listener to her participation in the advancement of our basic rights. Opinion did not exist independently from this appeal. When an opinion demonstrated contempt for the will of the people, it needed to be analyzed and opposed for its noxious character. It was important that individual recognized in his own reasoning that there was a deep connection to others. Our education had carried us through the fabric of this interconnectedness. I hoped that Cody would not use these ideas only for his own benefit.

There were commentators who clung to the original intent of the Founders. For them, this simply meant that they had distilled their own ideas down to a few basic principles. They simply assumed that the Founders shared the same beliefs. They only feared government to the extent that it advanced the rights of the citizens. But they only paid lip service to those rights that contravened their power grab. Thus the free exchange of ideas was ultimately discouraged. Free speech was simply an excuse to be offensive towards their opponents.

I wondered how some people had been able to poison the well. They were the ones who called out a hired gun to intimidate the citizens to accede to their point of view. While their minions did their dirty work, they remained behind the scenes. We were now ready for the chiefs of industry to show their faces. Democracy meant accountability.

Even if people didn't see life as fair, law was meant to advance fairness. It was the one refuge for the individual. What had made people frightened of this redress? It was a lot like Rose's situation. Unless she was totally down and out, she didn't want anyone's help. She didn't want to appear weak. The sports metaphor had a great deal of appeal. Losers weren't supposed to complain. They were just supposed to get ready for the next game. How long did it take the players to realize that the game was rigged.

The Revolutionary War heroes didn't wait the British to make amends. Of course, a large segment of the population was betting on the colonists to lose. Today, that segment spoke louder

than ever. They really didn't care if their message didn't resonate with the majority. They were ready for a coup of their own making. If you're hanging out in a full sports stadium with thousand of others just like you, you start to believe that the whole world is just like you imagine. It takes a great deal for you to see the larger picture.

"It's lucky that you just read books to him."

"What do you mean by that, Lee?"

"You are a good reader. I've listened to you. You never stumble over the words. But it's not as if you're qualified to teach him anything."

"You hired me. I didn't come to you with a resume."

"That's not what I mean."

"Are you afraid of my opinion?"

Lee did his best to backtrack. He had no intention to relieve me of my job. He wasn't trying to correct my approach. He only wanted to tell himself that he was controlling every detail of Cody's recovery. Ultimately, he didn't worry about the selection of material that I chose. He knew that history spoke against his viewpoint. That didn't frighten him. For him, history was just that—the Past. So it really couldn't do anything to upset the present reality. That was the final step in the lesson. He wanted his contemporaries to recognize how much things had changed. Therefore, you needed to counteract all these beliefs from the past.

Would it be that easy for Lee to undo the lesson from centuries? He understood the vanity of contemporary culture. He believed that he could work people's desperation to his advantage. And he also felt certain that he would eventually win over Cody. He just needed me to prepare Cody to tackle the arguments of all his potential opponents. So Lee and I continued to tolerate each other.