

Chapter 10 of *The Debate* by B. Douglas Robbins

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In the octa-final round, the first elimination round. We had an audience. Sixteen teams battled for eight spots and then it went from there. Everyone attending had come to see the broken glass and bone.

University of Vermont PB had their evidence strewn about from the absolutely beat, beat, beatest brown cardboard accordion files, taped together with duck tape—brown and silver cardboard boxes. P of PB was Allan Pennington. He searched through a Kinko's box, "God-damn it Boroughs! It must be here somewhere!" The two judges in the room—waiting for the third—appeared unimpressed and perturbed.

"Okay! Okay! That's it! We're not starting this round until we find Quasi! Okay?" Boroughs ranted in turn. Debaters were more superstitious than baseball players. Cornish and Wiezen had been known to tote around a live mallard duck to major tournaments.

"Okay! I found him! He was hiding! Crisis averted . . ." Pennington set a small Quasimodo figurine at the helm of his desk while the last judge filed in. I put a Danish cookie tin, sealed with heavy gauze and tape, at the front of my desk.

We had hit Pennington and Boroughs many times last semester, and each and every time, we grounded them to dust. We were bane to UV. They were a well respected team. They had beat teams that had beat us. They just hadn't beaten us. At times they'd won on the Flow—meaning in terms of pure argumentation, what was said and recorded on paper—and the judge picked us up anyway, based on reputation, based on rhetoric—debate was a game of belief, never forget—and based on the fact that we had beat them so many times before. Judges in debate were like judges of law, they

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respected and were even reverential of precedent. Pennington and Boroughs wanted to beat us so bad they were salivating like curs. There was a lot of talk that they were going to do it this time too. They hadn't lost a single Affirmative round all semester. But they were going to lose this one.

Krash Everett stuck his head into the icy classroom and shouted at me, "Don't let them rock you for a double!" The audience (my audience) laughed because they understood the portents.

"Very-fucking-funny," I muttered while arranging files and folders on the desk. "We are going to win this fucker if I have to burn down the building," I told Christian. A raging fire in the midst of a spring shower. The authorities would have called it inexplicable. I needed a win here to put me in line for Nationals. With UCLA's A-Team on sabbatical, Christian and I had a clear opportunity to take it home. It was my senior year of eligibility. Graduation may have been a semester or two away but this was my last year of debate, and I was going to end it right. Hundreds of team attended Nationals every year and only one ended their season right. That was going to be me.

Vermont ran straight-up freedom of speech in England. They claimed that the English government oppressed their people's freedom of speech (FOS). The Plan called for economic sanctions against England in order to stop the violation of human rights. Easy. Pennington read a sloppy 1AC; white foam lined his upper lip like a thin milk mustache, all vile. The thin string attached itself to the lower lip, then the upper again, threatening to drip fizzy and slick on his Case with each double gulp. It strung across his black wailing mouth, attached to both lips, refusing to release. Stretching, stretching long beyond its expected breaking point, stretching further, burbling over the garble, flapping milk sludge, and frothy buttons.

Christian slid around the edge of the spittle trajectory, grabbing each page of Case Pennington put it down. Pennington slowed down at the end of his speech, two minutes shy of eight, punctuated by searching tongue. (**Lick!** Swipe—the spittle eaten alive! Gulp. Down the gullet with you my friend. A friend is a friend you get something from.) A six

minute speech read like a foaming idiot on speed, and he had two minutes left. I was pissed.

Christian hurriedly prepared his speech while I asked, "Want some free prep time?"

"Free?"

"Cross-X time running," yelled the stout-and-round time keeper, Jack and Elric's little friend. He appeared excited about being trusted with the long hands of time. Not bad. It really wasn't so much for time I needed to spank Pennington, but for territory. The debate is often for ground, but this kind of ground they never teach you at debate camp. This was higher ground, ground of the divine right of kings, the ground of pronouncements, and only those with It were vested in fee simple. This was the ground of pure sophistry.

"Uhm, time keeper?" a signet of respect, "We'll take our cross after the 1AC."

"1AC's done dude," chuckled Pennington.

"Nope. You still have a minute and a half left," I retorted.

"No—no—no, we **are done**, there ain't no more," he blared as his face changed from yellow to sallow: the inchoate implication took sprout.

"Well, you may be done but the 1AC is eight minutes long. Cross examination time starts **after** the 1AC. We still have a little over a minute left."

"Nooooo Hobbes!" more Valley accent, "We have **up** to eight minutes to present Case. We're not required to **use** all the time, and our speech is done!" Looking at the soft time keeper, "Start the cross time. Let's go."

"I don't know what kind of inbred, New England rules you boys play in Vermont," scattered laughter from the iodine heads, "but you're in California now and we play by CEDA's rules, and CEDA says the 1AC is **eight minutes**, that's two minutes longer than six, get it? Our cross examination begins **at** the eight minute mark. You're not going to punish us because you turned an eight minute speech into a six minute garbled mess. Comprende mucho macho?" Giggling took hold burying Pennington, "Judge! Let's get going! This is stupid!" but his was on the slick side of time and before he could finish I began ranting, taking up space:

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“Hey, amigo—you know what ‘amigo’ means, right?” and laughter littered the hall because they were on my side, “Amigo means friend. It’s a Spanish word, and I bet you didn’t know California and San Luis Obispo were at one point, Spanish territories. Yes, hard to believe.” A roar of whooping because I was talking pure nonsense, in total control, “I bet there’s even still a mission around here if you looked real hard. You know why the Spanish liked missions so much don’t you?—”

“Time keeper, **run** the time!”

“It’s because they were Catholics on a mission from God. It’s not too different from a holy war, of course,” I waved an imaginary sword nonchalantly. “Now if the Scotts were on a mission from God, they wouldn’t have gotten nearly this far.”

The soft time keeper looked at me and then our judges who weren’t so sure what CEDA rules said, if anything about this, *judges just don’t intervene. Blank slates all*. The rules were nebulous, flexible, amendable. They were theoretical and forgiving.

“Look, I’m starting my timer” said Pennington. He beeped three times and hit the start button, “Cross starting.”

“Your little timer doesn’t work here,” I hissed, “You’re on the slick side.” Scattered chuckling, but I doubt anyone knew why. Idiots all.

“Time is running, Hobbes. You’ve got 2:50 left,” he was crooked and sweating. Warped eyes in red. Poorly shaved side-burns, pasty strips, with little, black pointed dots. He really should have shaved.

“Nope, 15 seconds to cross.”

“That’s not a question . . . You got a question gringo? Gringo, that’s a Spanish word isn’t it?”

“Yeah, do you know what it means?” I asked.

“Is that your question? Well, my answer is—”

“It’s rhetorical,” my timer chimed, “That’s time. I’ll start my cross now.” I stared at the stout time keeper until he broke and pressed the button.

“CX time starting,” Softy said, smiling.

“Now, I want to know why freedom of speech is a right.”

“Oh, we’re gonna finally start?”

“Why is freedom of speech a right?”

“You sure you’re ready now? You don’t need some more free time?”

“Why is freedom of speech a right?”

“Hobbes, I’m very disappointed in you. If you can’t keep up and need extra time, just ask! Really.”

“Do you want to talk about the Case or do you want to piss and moan?”

“I tell you what, next time, I’ll try to slow down for you, okay? I didn’t mean to SPREAD YOU OUT OF THE ROUND.” Some laughing crept around the desks and aisles.

“The only thing you spread, Pennington, was a lot of saliva,” and the laughter burst like a bomb.

By the end of the cross examination, the soft time keeper called out and Christian stood up instantly, “Okay, I’m going three off then on,” which meant three Off-Case positions, either Disads, or Procedurals, or Critiques, and then onto Case directly. Pennington scrambled for his seat in a way that was not supposed to appear rushed. I sat down carefully, my knee beginning to cramp from the rain. I lovingly repositioned the tin.

“Ready?” the silence. “CRUSH” radiated outward from the evidence bin planted on our table, the makeshift podium, and Christian began to wind, “The University of Vermont has committed clear clear error. Their intentions are good but the effects are bad, and you can’t eat good intentions,” he beamed steady concentration, hands fixed on the rubber bin, “They neither understand the implications of their advocacy nor do they grasp the contradictions inherent in their Case . . . I’m on the first Disad, Liberalism . . .”

While Christian rained hell down on Vermont, and the judges scribbled small, cryptic symbols in red pens, and green pens, and black pens, and knees shook, and the sea of bowed heads rocked and etched, Pennington lounged lazily by his evidence boxes, appearing bored

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and bothered. He laid on his side like a crazy Roman Emperor. He thumbed through his stacks, absorbed in ennui.

The sleepy Caligula rose, and sauntered over to my partner. Christian put one foot in front of another, and rocked back and forth. He sprayed out arguments in succession indicting the West's most heart-felt values, while Pennington stood beside, peeking at Christian's down-turned stack. Pennington turned the pages over, looked at them curiously and returned them, with a comment, "You're not so fast." Pennington strutted back, and laid down next to his treasure box again, sleepily. He smoothed his oily hair with a sweeping hand.

I climbed down into the evidence cellar. I needed information: Nano? no. Governmental incarceration? no. The spark? no. Lie detectors, subterranean monsters, white flight, Amazon nation, moral exclusion, WOMP, climate, pharmaceuticals?...Deeper into the vault, the dank undershelter: computer virus, ice age? The Dialectic?----Yes! In the Dialectic:

Here! This card.

Yes! This one.

One more----

Impact, yes . . . the voter.

I climbed out of the underworld of secret evidence and handed the shell to Vollique, "Do it."

Without pause he segued into, ". . . my next Disad, uh Critique, is the Dialectic, please follow me to the A sub: Debate is the Dialectic, from Heinlein in 88 . . ."

Pennington squinted. I winked lovingly. His pasty white jaw ground side to side, under the cool fluorescents, *and crush the strong as if they were weak.* (All that jazz.) His partner scribbled like mad, looked worried, barked for Pennington to pull the body language file, changed pens from red to black then back again. From their perspective we were red, they black. He was very good at shuffling pens, I thought.

Christian barked, "The violation is clear, the Negative violates the Dialectic by reclining during speech making! You must PUNISH WITH THE BALLOT. IT IS YOUR ONLY RECOURSE." Pennington was an

abomination to the Dialectic, the respectful discourse between equals, as well as a personal insult to the judge, and an affront to the forensic community—a nation under god, no less! And Pennington, that stupid-son-of-a-bitch was stuck. He was permanently plastered to the floor, frozen on his side, like a monument to what was supine and indolent, because to get up was an admission to the violation. To rise was to fall. He had full power of imperium, but not a single liberty.

“This round is over. The ballot is clear,” papers shuffled and heads rose at the beeping of timers.

Pennington began his inquiry, leaning up against a Rubbermaid bin, still flat on his ass, “Okay, Vollique, how are we violating the Dialectic?”

“You’re lying down,” said Christian matter-of-factly.

“So when I stand up I no longer violate it, and it goes away right?”

“No, you’ve already impinged on my 1NC. The damage is done.”

“Okay, why is reclining bad?”

“Gesticulations are key.”

“Why does the Dialectic care about gesticulations. Wouldn’t content be more important?”

“Communication is wide and varied,” Christian invented firmly.

“But shouldn’t we be looking to content first?” asked Pennington.

“Not to the exclusion of body language,” like lightening.

“Okay, who makes up these conventions?” Pennington was grinding.

“We, as a community-”

“I mean why should we abide by them?”

“Because it facilitates the MOI, and FOS, ever heard of it? You know, the stuff coming six minutes out of your 1AC?” Pennington and Borough defended Freedom Of Speech because it provided the predicate for the Marketplace Of Ideas, a metaphor for the free exchange

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of thought, and knowledge, that is bartered, and shared in the intellectual market place.

Pennington back-peddled, “Oh and the tyrannical conventions of the Dialectic that force me to communicate one way but not another fosters freedom?”

“You can make that argument,” said Christian, slightly weaker.

“I am. I am right now. I’ll ask you: if the Dialectic is free discourse, as you claim, why aren’t I free to express myself as I please?”

“You are, but there are consequences.”

“No, I can’t. Those aren’t consequences, those are sanctions. Your VI seeks to **punish** us for our particular free expression, right? You say I should **lose** this round because I choose to lay on the floor. Who made you God of discourse?”

“I don’t punish you! My voter doesn’t say to spank Vermont with a paddle. You punish yourself.”

“What?-What’s that?”

“We don’t set up the value system; **you** establish at the 1AC that FOS is paramount. That’s the value paradigm that **you** construct. That’s the paradigm that we’re supposed to work within. Now, the Dialectic is **clearly** impacting that criteria, your criteria—right? First you tell me freedom of speech is good then you do something to damage it,” Christian was spanking him with a paddle.

Pennington blasted: “Why doesn’t the Dialectic eat your Liberalism Disad?”

“Why—?” Christian drifted into quiet eyes. Pennington was arguing that our Critique of the Dialectic contradicted the assumptions in our Liberalism Disad because the Disad argued against the sort of freedom of speech that the Critique endorsed. That is, why wasn’t the Disad a Critique of the Critique? Christian had to somehow argue that the Disad wasn’t talking about the Critique, that it was only pertinent to the Case. When caught in a contradiction, draw a distinction. If they overlap go deeper—seek shelter below... “The Dialectic doesn’t eat Liberalism because the Dialectic isn’t Liberalism,” yes!

“No, no, wait a minute, the Dialectic **is** Liberalism,” Pennington got on his knees and waved his hands.

“No it’s not.”

“It advocates Freedom of Speech, that’s what you said. I heard you.”

“It does so within your Case paradigm, because that’s the way you think to discover truth. But it’s not necessarily so, that’s the thesis in the Liberalism Disad.”

“That’s absurd...”

“Okay, how do you know Freedom Of Speech discovers truth, how do you know it just doesn’t discover more sophisticated lies?” Christian found the spark, and fire rushed through the esophagus, into the cold air.

“That’s the thing,” said Pennington on the defensive, “You never know the truth, that’s why we need to keep searching for it through free discourse.”

“So you don’t know.”

“No, that’s not what I’m saying. You know the method. That’s what you **know**.”

“But if you never know the truth how do you know your methods are sound?”

“Cause, cause you test them.”

“How?”

“Through the Market Place, through . . .” Pennington on the alter to a jealous god.

“How do you know **that’s** the way to do it?”

“That’s time!” shout the time keeper.

“Cause you test them!”

“You already said that,” Christian pounded the bin where “CRUSH” radiated, in foot-high letters, “Sounds like someone’s begging the question.”

“Time guys!”

“No, I’m not begging-It’s a test Vollique. Get it?”

“Get off your knees,” I muttered, and the front row burst out laughing and the kids behind asked what was said.

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I'd have to say in all honesty, we beat the living shit out of Vermont. By Rebuttals Pennington spent about three out of his five minutes on the Dialectic alone. And then in the 2NR I punted the damn thing, so it went away, and spent all five minutes on the other Disads, the ones he hardly answered at all, and ground his face into the dirt. Pours at his sideburns packed with ashen earth. The decision was 3-0, three judges for us, none against, and Vermont boiled in their stew.

In the hall outside, Pennington was so pissed, he charged up, poked my chest, and said the whole Dialectic thing was bullshit, and the whole Cross-X time stall was bullshit, and that if it were a fair debate, he would have kicked my ass all over the room. Woulda, shoulda, didn't, I replied. Then I reprimanded him for being a pussy and pushed him back. He charged me with a fist over his right shoulder like a baseball pitched for my head. I tried to limp to the side but I was too slow. I reached for scissors and raised them. Christian stepped in-between and pushed him off balance and Pennington fell over. Christian berated him: "What's the matter with you, man?"

I was going to KILL Pennington with my scissors and stick him in the eye with my Pilot pen. Christian knew it. And he knew that if I hurt Pennington bad enough, no one would ever think of me as their faggot ever again, and he couldn't stand by and let that happen. Christian needed me to be his shadow bitch, to make others believe that I bent over and filled my ass with cock. He couldn't bear to ever let anyone suspect that I was a man, and that I had a dick of my own to fuck women, and a Pilot pen to kill Pennington. If they knew of my fire and rage, they'd know Christian was a fake.

Just like when Perry Gulliver, asked me to stand with him in a fight, I did. And we forced these other guys to back the fuck down, and after that Perry Gulliver hugged me in front of everyone because he couldn't bear to let anyone think I was tough and not a fag. He used me to get out of a fight and then tried to make me the class fag, because he hated me, because he could smell me. Just like when I was seven and my brother, Jesse, touched my penis and said he wanted to suck it and I told him

that he shouldn't do that. I told him. And he was so embarrassed that he told our parents that I asked him to suck my penis and they sent me to a psychologist and everyone in the family believed that I was the cock-sucker, when in fact it was Jesse. He told kids at school, and things were very bad for a very long time. I was too young to know what to do then.

I could feel the protective gaze of the beautiful Beekeeper on my skin. His lips sown tightly and he loved me like pure warmth. No one ever loved me with as much heat. He presented, with a wave of a hand, the noble Blueman just behind. I was safe while the Blueman rode the Wall of stone. Between the stones oozed flesh for mortar, and the flesh seeped down the side like weeping. It was strong glue. Flesh built the Pyramids, flesh erected the columns of Greece and Rome, flesh built the Temple in Jerusalem. They say it burned because it was made of cedar, spruce, and pine, but it was something else. It was the flesh between the stone that burned. Flesh is the only thing that can feel the love of heat, or the blistering humiliation of incineration. Flesh held the Wall.

The iodines, intent on scoring a fight on paper or in marrow, dispersed when Christian grabbed me and pushed a path through the bodies. (You want me to say "coming through the rye" now, but I will not, and any acquiescence with regard to that issue is evidence of indulgence, weakness, and pity. Punish with the ballot.)

The quarter-final round against Cornish and Wiezen was set in a smaller classroom, with even more debaters in attendance. Cornish strutted into the arena because he had a spy at Cal. "Remember the U2," I told him, but he replied that Duran Duran was better.

Cornish's squad, a gang of seven or eight, set up evidence boxes. They positioned a portable stereo box on

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top of the stack. A tall kid slipped in a CD and an old Duran Duran tune cried out. KSU loved old Duran Duran. *In touch with the ground, I'm on the hunt, I'm after you!*

Krash poked his head in the door like a groundhog from a hole, "Richard won 16 straight rounds. No shit!" He moved to the center of the class, "And then he awoke in a puddle of his own jism!" They all laughed at me. Christian and I Negated the Resolution, as we had Affirmed it against them in a pervious prelim round. A round we won, by the way. "Let's do Hasty-G," I sleepily suggested. . . . *Mouth is alive with juices like wine . . .*

"Okay."

"Here," I handed him a stack, "I made some changes from Paulie's draft. I'm going to tell them."

"Why? We're on the Negative. They're the ones with infinite prep time."

"Yeah, but they don't know what to do with it," I slinked like a salesman, "Besides, if I don't tell them, it will be a slaughter. You don't want that do you, all that blood on your hands?"

Christian squinted as if in apprehension of the strange and unusual, "Okay . . . whatever, Saint Hobbes."

KSU conferred with a hoard of debaters, among them, Brice Duff from UMKC, and Sherman Lizeint. . . . *Smell like I sound I'm lost in a crowd . . .* Upon my approach, Cornish put eyes in corner sockets. Below us were squares of linoleum and above, squares of perforated tile. Florescent rectangles provided light and misty rain attached to the exterior panes. Like a movie theater before showing, the chatty buzz and body rumble dominated. Many were importing Taco Bell, McDonalds, and 7-11 Big Gulps. Cornish sucked on a Snapple. Duff and Lizeint busied themselves with files on my arrival.

I put my arm around little Cornish because we were friends, "David, we're running the fattest Hasty-G you've ever heard. And I think we're going to bury you with it." I was tempted to remove a shoe and bang it on the table for effect.

“Really?” Cornish was unfazed. *Strut on a line it's discord and rhyme, I howl and I whine I'm after you.*

“Yeah. I thought you ought to know. As a matter-of-fact that's all we're running. We're going to do a Counterplan and Hasty-G. That's about it.”

“Don't you want to know what you'll be running the Counterplan against?”

“Not really.”

“Well, you run your little thing, Richard. We'll do our best to think up some answers.”

“I wouldn't bother,” I strutted away.

Cornish read the 1AC; the Plan outlawed the use of landmines and funded a clean-up in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

I whispered to Christian, “I'm doing the Hasty-G. Nothing else Off-Case.”

He thought it was imprudent and nodded negatively, “How about modeling or Cultural Imperialism?”

“No, just the Critique. We will win this. Bet,” I offered my hand, “A pack of Reds.”

“Fine cowboy,” he shook it, “At least I'll have something to smoke while we watch semi-finals.”

In the First Negative I offered the Counterplan of shutting down the landmine factories, and spread the Hasty-G Critique as fast as humanly possible. I was unclear, mumbly and all the worst things that people hate about spread debate. Anyone who claimed they understood what I was saying was lying to protect their weak sexual identity. Debate, like many sports was wrapped up in power, and domination, and thus by extension, sex. It didn't take long. I spent sixty whole seconds grandstanding and taunting KSU for fun.

Wiezen's speech was somehow predictable. Call me a seer but I could have sworn I had heard that first line before: “I hate Hasty-G's because they're idiotic arguments, and I'm beating the hell out of them. The 10th answer: no threshold . . .” Foam seeped from his lips and sweat spread patches under his arms as he waved them frantically. “It's really, really disheartening that I have to debate this lame schlag

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here at the quarter-final round. Berkeley knows better than to run this novice shit, and if they'd done their research they wouldn't have to . . . At a varsity level elim round, I expected better."

I stood at my desk for Cross Examination, "Let's talk about Hasty-G, Teddy."

"Sure," he straightened paper, his tie, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. The room re-shuffled. A few left for the bathroom, a difficult task as the walkways and doors were clogged with bodies.

"Can I see your block?"

"Sure," he handed me the file where all 15 answers were written out neatly in 12 point Helvetica, maybe Ariel.

"Let's look at the first one. You argue, 'preponderance of the evidence.' What does that mean?"

"It means your standard is unworkable, and that we only need to provide a preponderance of evidence to make claims. **Your** standard is 100% evidence. Ours is more reasonable at 51%."

"Okay, so you think the standard-"

"Right? Because no one is ever 100% about anything! That's ridiculous. That's an over-burdensome standard, okay?"

"Okay, so you think the standard of inductive proof should be at 51%?"

"That's what I said!" Teddy Wiezen shoved files in folders, "And it's not just me, read the-"

"Okay, granted."

"-read the cards. They are excellent, and remember-

"Okay it's granted-"

"Remember the B point on your own Counterplan is not 100%, it just says 'most,' and-"

"It's granted Teddy," I came around the front of the desk and sat. Christian scribbled behind me.

Teddy craned his neck. Uneasy laughter sprinkled around like the weather.

I continued, "Your second argument is, 'uncertainty always precludes.' What does that mean?"

"That means that you're arguing for absolute proof, but no such thing exists. Your argument perpetuates the illusion that there could be certainty and at the same time rigs it so that certain conclusions are always precluded, so-

"So the process is, by nature, uncertain,"

"Of course, and that's why your argument always always contradicts itself!"

"Okay, I can agree with that." Giggling and mooing slid over me. Teddy grew a crack of a smile and turned his head my way. "Let's see," I thumbed down the brief, "The third argument is that I'm 'infinitely regressive.' What does that mean?"

"If I explain it, will you grant?"

"Maybe." He didn't seem happy with that answer.

Wiezen continued less enthusiastically, "Well, that means that your Procedural says that the more important and dire the problem is, the more evidence we need to confirm it, but the more evidence we provide, the more dire and important the problem appears to be, and thus requires more evidence still. It goes on like that forever, and that's regressive."

"So no amount of evidence is ever enough-

"Sure. But we have to act now. Landmines are hobbling children now, we can't wait for certain knowledge-

"Because you'll never get it."

"Right, because it can't be got-

"Okay, that sounds reasonable to me. I'll grant it." Open laughter erupted. I was giving away the kingdom. I looked over to Christian. He was untouched. He grinned and went back to prep work.

"Did you bother to read my Hasty-G?" I asked sweetly.

Teddy Wiezen glanced at his partner, "I heard your speech."

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“I wonder. Let’s review. My A Subpoint reads ‘Induction is inherently flawed.’ Your first answer is that 51% is good enough. Fifty-one per-cent is failing. It’s an F. That sounds like a flaw. Then you argue ‘uncertainty of induction precludes all knowledge.’ Precludes all knowledge? Another flaw. Then you argue-”

“But the context-”

“Then you argue-”

“But Hasty-G assumes-”

“Then you argue, excuse me, then you argue that induction is regressive. Flaw.”

“I didn’t say induction-”

“Are you sure you’re clashing with me? I think you’re just feeding me, and I’m Hungry Like the Wolf.” And I did a cute Molly Ringwald dance. A massive chorus of laughter droned out Wiezen’s sniveling.

“The Procedural-the Procedural,” and he had to wait for the din to dissipate. Timers chimed, because my Cross was over.

The next two speeches were Christian’s and mine. Christian explained point by point how their answers fed and bolstered our Critique. Much like Whole Res, it was critical of induction, the process of deriving conclusions through the collection of incontrovertible example. So it wasn’t a Procedural at all. I emphasized that there were to be no new arguments in Rebuttals, and then commenced in copious posturing.

Cornish was outraged, “This is an out-and-out con job! This position is named Hasty-G! We argued against Hasty-G. And now it turns out it’s not at all about making Hasty Generalizations, it’s about induction. So why wasn’t it called that? Because they know the only way they’re going to beat us is with confusion and trickery. Do not let them get away with it. This is an unacceptable debating strategy; vote against abuse and vote against cheats!”

Christian asked me to back him up, “Come in with the locomotive about the thirty second mark.”

“Right,” I adjusted the Danish cookie tin at the front of my desk for good luck.

His last Negative speech was never more enflamed, “In the 2AC Wiezen calls Hasty-G a ‘generic’ and ‘infantile’ argument. He says that sort of stuff is okay for Novices, but he expects something better from seasoned open debaters. Well it’s a sad day for debate when its National Champions fumble the ball on a generic and infantile argument. It’s an even sadder day when these same National Champions no longer condescend to even READ THE DAMN ARGUMENT. What do they do? They run a generic first line block, 15 answers long, all against the wrong argument. Is it laziness or arrogance? It is certainly an error.

“Then Cornish has the gall in the 1AR to whine that our Critique has the wrong title and how were they supposed to know? Well you know what? Try listening to the argument. If you can’t Flow fast enough, ask to see it. Even a novice debater know to do that. And if they **HAD** bothered to look at the thing before going off half cocked, they’d have seen,” Christian turned the brief around, holding it by the corners in front of his chest, like a breast plate, “that the title is a Critique on the Flaw of the Hasty Generalization. That is,” he tapped the title on display below his chin, “an analysis on how induction and the fallacy of the hasty generalization is a flawed approach to debate.

“Abuse? Trickery? Cheating? **Pleeeeeeeeeeease!** When 15 out of 15 of the 2AC answers feeeeed the Critique, you know they’re eating it hard. And it is an act of desperation that incites them into McCarthyite accusations of wrong doing. Protect us from scurrilous accusations, protect us from new arguments . . . I’m on the line-by-line . . .” And point by point Christian reiterated the 15 point Turns and shored up the CP.

I creped over to Cornish, who was hunched like a frustrated Prince at schoolwork, “I don’t know where the hell you got these answers but they’re fucking awful. I hope to god you didn’t write them yourself.”

He shot me a look that occasioned *deja vu*. He wanted to kill me too. They all want to kill me eventually because my fire is hotter, and I beat them down.

At my desk I pumped my arms back and forth like pistons and sang, “Choooo! Choooo! Chuga, chuga, chuga, chuga”

The Debate

Christian chided, "This round is a train wreck-"

"Woooo! Wooooooo!"

"There's no recovery from a disaster like this-"

"Chuga, chuga, chuga, chuga, chuga"

"And the train conductor said take a break Kansas State. Kansas State take a break, you've been on this shift too long," Christian howled, "This is the end of the line!" and applause and whistles broke out as if he were a rock star. He was.

A 3-0 decision for Christian and me. Some kids came to pay Flow, meaning they took their Flow, folded it over and indicated the winner in large block letters: B-E-R-K-E-L-E-Y. In red and black they paid. It was an old tradition coming back into style. They shook our hands, one by one, and offered up Flow: fuel for an all consuming fire. Christian smiled at me as the Flow piled up on the desk. It was an overwhelming win, one sanctioned not just by judges, but peers alike. Receiving Flow was not only an indication of having won, but of having humiliated the opposition. A glorious sensation.

Collin Coboarae stepped up to shake my hand.

"Did you pick up?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "But congrats."

"Thank-you," I smiled coyly, "But I really owe it to you." Shaking his hand, I refused release.

"You do?" he was baffled, watching his hand move up and down.

"Yeah. And if you ever betray me again, I swear to fucking god, I will crush your goddamn spine, and I won't give a shit about the cost . . ." I smiled angelically, and brought him closer with the gripped hand, "You think fucking with me, is fucking with no one," whispering into his ear, "But I have the nine bridges in me. And they burn."

His eyes gaped like little moons behind glass. He opened his mouth, about to say something, then shut it.