

Chapter 15 of *The Debate* **by B. Douglas Robbins**

douglas@medialawgroup.net
d Robbins@owrlaw.com

Copyright © 2000 by B. Douglas Robbins.
All rights reserved.

Professor Jill Pyre flitted her hands like precious white birds, “. . . Let’s imagine we’re playing Monopoly. Now, the rules of the game apply to everyone equally,” she paced behind the long ebony lab table, “Everyone gets one turn, no one is allowed two turns in a row, everyone uses the same dice and the same number of dice. None may re-roll adverse numbers, and none may demand a re-roll upon other’s favorable numbers . . .” Pyre stood still with large bulging eyes and loose jowl skin. Her breasts hung low beneath a cardigan sweater. A chunky gold necklace hung even lower. She had worked a long time to attain her position, and Time, in turn, had exacted its own toll. “So it may appear upon first glance that the game is fair to the extent it does not favor one player over another. The rules appear impartial. But suppose at the start, certain players were given but a dollar in play money, while other players were given thousands. Are the fair rules still fair? Of course not. The rules, in fact, become an integral part in maintaining the play money inequity. And it is for that reason we must be highly suspicious of protecting all principles and laws of the status quo. Principles, in this way, can turn out to be barriers to real equality and distributive justice-” Pyre let out a sigh, “Yes Collin?”

“Dr. Pyre, if the distribution of play money is unfair, wouldn’t it be more equitable to redistribute the money than to change the rules of the game? After all, the rules are the part that work.”

“Well, in this metaphor you can do that, but in real life you can’t just redistribute race or gender. I can’t become a man, for example.” A few undergraduates, near the front laughed at the absurdity. Of course she couldn’t be a man.

The Debate

I never imagined I could be so free until I found debate. In debate, black things burned hot. At the next meeting in plain-jane Dwinelle, Christian showed up with a tub of evidence, “This is all I have,” he announced, “So there’s no reason to call me.” Then he quickly explained, “I’ll no longer be debating. The LSAT is coming up and I have to get serious.”

Paulander cut in, “Why are-”

“I’ve had a wonderful time . . . these last years . . .” Christian scanned the room, avoiding my eyes, “. . . I’ll miss debate, but it’s just a game and I’ve got to get serious now.”

Paulander tried again, “Hold on, why would-”

“It’s a great game,” he stared Paulander down with an expression bordering on tears, “But it’s just a game and you guys will kick ass at Nationals, and I don’t want . . .” He turned around quickly and walked out.

“What is going down?” Paulander slammed a desk with his palms, “What is fucking going down?”

“Girl trouble,” I remarked.

After some consternation, I promised Paulie I would go talk to Christian. Not too much later I was elected President, mostly at Collin’s insistence.

“When values collide we always default to equality, because it is equality upon which all other values rest,” Pyre consulted her notes with sharp eyes when Collin chimed in:

“Why doesn’t equality of means trump equality of results?”

Pyre looked up and intoned in an off-handed manner, as if she were addressing a bratty child, “Because equality of means is only good to the extent it delivers equality of results. One is justified in terms of, and thus dependent upon, the other. We have to be practical here. We have to be realists, and we have to be pragmatists. The reality is that ideals, like any other human venture, serve the ends of the author of those ideals.”

Collin and I attended the San Francisco State Tournament as partners. I ate Oreos as Boroughs from Vermont Crossed me, “But you would concede-”

“I never concede anything,” with a mouth rimmed in chalky black cookie, “Economic hegemony is a double edged sword. The more wealth is concentrated in the States, the less buying power the East can exert.”

Boroughs started in with the right wing schlag, all about the infinitely expanding economy, “The market is not a zero sum game. Our wealth does not preclude Chinese wealth.”

I twisted an Oreo apart, “There is no known natural model where wealth, population, or energy can expand infinitely. To assume the economy is some sort of exception is counter-intuitive. Sorry, there’s a price to be paid for everything.”

And then in the quarterfinal round . . .

My old partner from high school, Philip Pelsner was at it again, “Okay Hobbes, so you’re willing to trade off tens of thousands of lives in a regional war to save a few hundred’s Fourth Amendment Rights. There isn’t even a Fourth Amendment in China and-”

“Some things are just the right.”

“Like war?”

“See here Philip,” I enunciated each word distinctly, “Your advocacy is that we can’t risk war to protect human rights. So in 1860 you’d be shouting for the preservation of slavery because civil war was imminent. Give me a break,” I exhaled with indignation.

Philip stood back as if just whacked with a stick. He and his partner had lost to me with that argument less than a month previous, but not because it was a bad argument. It was in fact a great argument, but it had to be delivered a certain way, with a certain amount of unflinching condescension, and plenty of heat. He lost, not because it was a bad argument, but because he didn’t have it, and because he didn’t believe in breaking glass.

Collin Coboarae chewed Sherman and Philip, as if they were Judas and Brutus, “. . . secondly, there is not a word out of Cornell’s mouth that answers the

The Debate

Temporal Fallacy argument. Ever, ever! So please cross apply the Time Bomb here . . .” Which of course was a lot of nonsense. Cornell was afraid to admit they didn’t understand what a “Time Bomb” was so they made up shit even more implausible. Collin asked Sherman in Cross Examination, “You put five answers on the Time Bomb. Don’t you think you under-covered the position, just a little?”

Sherman stood at rigid attention, “No, I think we beat the Time Bomb.”

“What are you going to do when my partner blows it up in the 1AR?”

And just then I had crept up behind Sherman, and tapped him on the shoulder, and shouted out, “BOOM!” He leapt like a jack in the box, and then tried to re-compose himself, but it was all over. I ripped Philip a new asshole in the 1AR, and smoked Marlboros right through the remainder of their prep-time. A complete Clockwork Orange Crush.

“Suppose the author has as hers ends,” asked Collin, “the elevation of humanity?”

Pyre did not maintain her distance on that one, and let out a chortle, “Really!” she thought the notion was quaint, “Look carefully at anyone who advances such a premise. Aristotle argued that the highest sort of activity was philosophical contemplation. It’s not just a coincidence he was a philosopher. And ask a hundred scientists who are the most important minds of the 20th Century. Chemists will rattle off the names of notable chemists, physicists, physicists, and biologists, biologists. They can each justify their selection with a custom crafted ideal. White people vote for white candidates, and espouse ideals about the elevation of humanity, and fairness for all. Remember the doctrine of ‘Separate but Equal’ was a principle upheld by the highest court in the land for generations. I can go on . . .”

As Collin and I won or placed tournament after tournament, I imagined what classes I would take at Harvard. Harvard was the place where I could finally

find permanent shelter. No one would ever suspect about the Walls, or the Blueman there, and the inner miasma would be forever secured from view. No one cares about black rot when it's draped in lovely crimson. I dropped by Moffit to browse through the Harvard Law Bulletin.

“You know, Dr. Pyre, all this time I thought we would never see eye to eye,” Collin’s voice soared into LeConte’s empty space, the triple-eyed eagle, the girded desks running up and down, and side to side on Greek steps, “But this time, I’m right with you.”

At SFSU, beating Speed and Zoë in the semi-final round was sweeter than honey. Collin wrecked their shit. Christian would have glimmered off the ceiling. Collin crashed through, fearless of sharded glass, and the sight and smell of blood. After losing, Speed and Zoë raced away, “You’re going to miss all the flow getting paid here,” but they were gone. And at the final round .

..

I stood with hands on my hips, “They’re real intellectuals. That’s their weakness.” Collin nodded soberly. Elric lost the coin toss, and Collin called Negative, which is usually considered a risky move, but the boys from Stanford had been running the quirkiest of Cases based on a Narrative, and final round judges hated quirk. Other squads, including Cornish and Wiezen joined us on a creaky wooden stage. The auditorium was a good size, like LeConte, but with nylon/polyester seats that folded up, and carpeting to control sound.

Little Cornish stood only a head taller than Collin sitting. He shook imaginary bangs out of his eyes. Hair slicked to the side like a banker, he high-fived my new partner, “I knew you’d do it.”

“Elric is still pretty easily spooked by any reference, no matter how oblique to the forgery thing,” I explained softly, “So at every opportunity, make allusions to tainted evidence, or ghost evidence, and anything else that might associate with cheating.”

The Debate

Cornish shook his head in disgust, “I don’t even know how he got his eligibility back. When we popped him, I thought, ‘Okay, that’s the end of him.’”

“No judge is going to vote for them at any rate,” I added, “The price is too high, and they’re all fucking cowards.” Wiezen nodded knowingly and Collin scribbled pre-flow. Cornish took me aside and tried to make nice. He wanted an alliance. “How am I going to benefit?” I asked.

“You’re benefiting now,” meaning that even being seen with K-State conferred prestige and the power to intimidate.

“I want the Senator’s Scholarship,” I said plainly, “If you can help me get it, then fine, I’ll join your little club.”

Because he had won it last year, he was ineligible now, “If you don’t join the club, you won’t win the Scholarship.”

“That’s one way of looking at it. But I want a little more than that. I want it sweeter for me than for you. I want to be your first in line, not UMKC or anyone else.”

“Want, want, want,” Cornish chided, “You sound like a child. I have no reason to do for you over what I’d do for Duff and Espinoza.”

I cringed and clenched my eyes, “Except I crushed their spine in the sixth round.”

“You, my friend, have no respect,” Cornish crossed his arms and dropped his head, “Another judge, another day, and it all goes the other way.”

I grinned like Collin for a long moment, “See you at law school.”

“I can’t wait.”

At $\Omega\pi$, I presented Melissa with the Speaker Award I had won at Cal Poly. “Wow!” she held the plaque to different parts of the wall for size. To the right of the goalie mask. Under the crew paddle. As she stood on the bed holding the plaque high, I climbed up behind and slipped my hands under her shirt, “That’s pretty good.”

“Here?” she asked.

My hands creeped up her ribcage like tacky spiders, “Little left maybe.”

“How’s that?”

I held onto her breasts and the nipples grew into the middle of my palms like new spring, “Everything has a price.”

“Of course,” Melissa crouched to her knees with the Speaker Award still in hand, unbuckled my pants, and put my soft penis in her mouth. It grew hard spreading her lips apart. First she sucked on the end, cheeks drawn like an anorexic model, then shoved the shaft down her throat, lips wrapped around the base, and then came up for air, tongue swirling like pom poms. “God, I love sucking your dick,” she gasped.

“And you’re very good at it,” my legs began to buckle, “And I’m not doubting you’re sincerity, but who told you to say that?”

“No one,” she murmured and began bobbing back and forth evenly, and then stopped and looked up at me, “I just like sucking your dick, that’s all.”

“Really? Is there something special about my dick?”

“It’s attached to you,” and she smiled and went back to work.

“I can buy that.” At least I hadn’t heard it before.

Beyond Virginia Pierce and a few fellow members of San Francisco State, Jack and Elric were alone. They seemed vulnerable to me. It was time to crush the weak. All that jazz.

“I’ll be right back,” said Collin Coboarae, “There’s a little business I need to wrap up.” After a commotion in the hallway, he returned with a bulging eye, and a puff-bloody lip. Speed was apparently very upset with the drop. A rapist and a bully. Collin sat bleeding on the desk. Brown paper towels plastered to his head with the sticky adhesion of coagulation.

“Jesus Christ. Melony get some more paper towels, and something cold, like a Pepsi, for the swelling” I

The Debate

barked, “You **will** be debating. I hope to fucking god Speed looks worse,” but I couldn’t imagine how.

Collin nodded and blood flicked off and pin dotted the 1AC, “Sheth!”

I assuaged the judges, “Everything is fine,” I told them, and they nodded.

Denise bent over, prone on my bed, like a submissive animal. I mounted her from behind. Three o’clock, and McLaughlin tried to get Eleanor Clift to concede that Clinton was a lame duck president. Eleanor roared back for Pat Buchanan to stop interrupting her. I shoved Denise’s head down to get a better look, and fucked her, ass in the air. Jack Germond’s illuminating analysis amounted to “If not Clinton, who?” I reached around front and fondled her button. Denise moaned as if giving up all hope. John McLaughlin asked the panel on a scale from zero to ten how damaging the Character Issue was going to be for Clinton, “Zero meaning zero damage, ten meaning metaphysical implosion, I ask you Fred Barnes.” Barnes gave it an eight. Eleanor pecked like a chicken, held up a peace sign, and gave it a two. McLaughlin said the answer was ten. Denise rocked back harder and shuddered as if ten was an atrocious estimate. I asked her if Christian ever fucked her like this. She swore he did not. I asked whose dick was larger. She said mine was. I asked specifically about width. She said I was practically splitting her in two. Right answer. I grabbed flesh at her hips and drilled for oil.

When Melony returned I handed her scotch tape and scissors, “Tape the towels to his head. And here,” she handed me the Pepsi. I popped the top and sucked it down.

“Hey! Whath about ma headt?” Collin asked.

“You want some? Should have asked while you had the chance.”

Melony stared at me blankly with hands on hips, and a sweatshirt that read “Berkeley” around her waist.

Elric and Jack ran a Narrative, which was an unusual Case, if you can call it that, in which fiction replaced fact. The tenuous justification for storytime presented itself as an alternative to the dehumanizing and spuriously rigid nature of logic. Fiction was an ostensibly more ecumenical and natural conveyor of human experience and knowledge. But between the Narrative, and the theory that necessarily bore it, laid a horrible tension. Theory cannot justify that which is superior to it, I argued. I smacked the Danish cookie tin repeatedly for emphasis.

Collin sprayed blood and vicious Turns all over Case. I ripped off Elric's head and shoved it up Jack's ass. Eviscerated the both of them for good measure. Guts falling out of the chest cavity, and kerosene everywhere, and all up in flames. Double-Turns and black contradiction swarmed Stanford like flies over rot, and in the end, flow was paid to the hated Champions. They still hated me, of course. I wasn't so delusional as to deny that, but if you cannot make people love you, you can certainly make them fear you. The Blueman nodded in agreement.

As they paid us yellow flow, Caius, the soft sophomore from Stanford asked if I would have room for my San Francisco trophy, given all the others I've won.

"I'll have room," I answered listlessly.

"Cause if you don't," continued the sophomore, "I can take it! Haaa! I have plenty of room! Haw! Haw!"

I stood up too quickly, and as if I were trying to catch my balance, I launched a foot up, and brought it down on Caius' toes. A soft popping sound at my ears. I apologized. Caius made a twisted smile with lips going up and down, and up and down, as if measuring an earthquake. He told me it was alright, and asked if I was okay. I said I was, and warned him to look out in the future. He agreed to try.

"What happened to your partner?" Jack Watco drank beer.

"Got into a fight," I replied.

"No, Christian."

The Debate

“Oh,” I crossed my arms and drank with one elbow in hand, “He wanted some time to study for the LSAT, and besides we had a falling out because I’m fucking his girlfriend, and I can make her come and he can’t.”

Jack had no reply.

After the win at SF State, Paulander held a victory party at his condo. Katie Vaffen and her squad from Chico showed up, as did Michigan State, Cornish and Wiezen, Tim Eccerby from Santa Cruz, SIU, and even Jack and Elric. Collin Coboarae mixed drinks in the kitchen bar. I spilled beer all over the oak floors.

Krash Everett insisted that the secret to making a girl come was, “First in the fingers and second in the music. And if she’s got something battery operated, definitely use it.”

“A rubber dick?” I asked.

“Chicks dig it. As far as they’re concerned if it quakes, it rocks,” Krash pounded the top of my fists and then I did his.

“Well, I guess Speed didn’t meet Cindy’s expectations,” I remarked, and Krash quit laughing.

Jack bristled, “You’re a real prick, you know that?”

“I can be a prick and still be right,” a pause, then, “I’m kidding! I’m just joking. He beat my partner’s face in. I have no sympathy for that. Speed’s a rabid dog,” blank stares all around, “He rapes little girls and then gets Zoë to lie for him.” Still no reaction. Debaters shuffled around, the floor creaking, and sticking to the soles of my shoes. “Stayin’ Alive” played on the stereo, “Zoë’s a lying bitch.”

Jack stared at me like a caryatid under extreme weight, “Do you **know** something about that incident?” Cindy was Jack’s squadmate, so his offense seemed ass-twisted, like wire. I probed a little further, and soon Elric Grundle pranced over, and got himself pretty well worked up, and took a swing at me, but I whacked him in the stomach with the trophy, and he escaped, bent over, through the front door to throw-up.

I handcuffed Denise to the legs of the bed, face down. Jack Germond argued that Paula Jones had little

negative effect on Clinton's numbers. I extracted a black leather belt from the closet and beat Denise with it. She cried and screamed, "Richaaaard! This hurts!" I smacked her ass with a braided black belt that I had bought from J.Crew a few days previous. It was a nice belt. Denise jumped around like an experimental animal hooked up to household current. "THAT FUCKIN' HURTS!" she sparked, and I watched her sob, trying to care, "Let me go now, I'm not plaaaaaying!"

"If you call the coin four times in row, I'll let you go," and I stood in front of Eleanor Clift, naked, with an erection and flipped a quarter, "Call it."

"You fucking asshole."

"You started this. I'm not paying this toll all by myself," and I beat her cream white ass until it came up colors: blue and black and yellow. She jerked her naked body around like a marionette, and screamed. I wrapped silver duck tape over her mouth, and around her head, because I couldn't hear what Fred Barns was saying, and besides there's the neighbors.

She asphyxiated herself and passed out. Life underground ran into the room, backed up and scurried out. I retrieved cooking oil from the kitchen and fucked her ass. John McLaughlin asked on a scale from zero to ten, how likely was Bill Clinton's re-election, ". . . with zero meaning total and complete doom . . ."

Christian may have been born healthy, but I began to wonder if that was not some sort of weakness. I tried to contact him a few times throughout the night. Paulander's party grew in momentum, just as the Jack and Elric were leaving. Too bad. I sat down in a big chair, in the corner of the room, with a fresh beer, and called Christian again. When I finally got through, he didn't seem to be in a very convivial mood. "I just wanted to let you know how sorry I am. I want to take the whole thing back. I was so drunk . . ."

Christian said something, but You Should be Dancing filled the room. "What?" I yelled, and plugged my free ear.

"Uh-huh," Christian sounded morose.

"You're not serious about quitting debate."

The Debate

"I think I am. I'm . . . too busy right now."

"You're my partner, man. I wish the whole thing never happened. She said she wasn't dating you anymore, and I thought you were seeing Miranda . . . god . . ."

"Don't bullshit me, Rich. You've been sleeping with her for a while now."

"No. That's not true. I'm your friend. You know I'm your best friend."

"There's a weird brand of condom you like to use. It's not made of latex and it's bright red. You've got a box of them at home," he was referring to the polyurethane.

"So?"

"So, if you go to her shelf, all of her books are fucking full of those USED CONDOMS."

Doesn't she ever read? "This is so stupid," I gritted my teeth, "So I'm having an affair with your girlfriend, AND I've been putting used condoms in her Thoreau? You are losing it. Paranoia will destroy ya."

"No, there's something wrong with **you**. I've protected you for a very long time because you go into fits and do things you don't remember, and I thought it wasn't your fault, but I don't give a SHIT!"

"Christian, you're my best friend," and I sniffled into the receiver, "and you're right I don't feel so well anymore. I've done things I'm not to proud of right now, but you've always helped me to be a better person," heavy breathing, "I think I can change, I just hope you believe me . . . I feel so badly I want to die . . . Just think about all this before you make any permanent decisions, okay?"

"I don't know."

"Just give me a week."

"Fine. I don't care. I'll think about it."

"The thing is I can prove to you what I'm saying," and I coughed.

"How?"

"Okay, ask Miranda."

"What does she know?"

“Okay, the thing is,” my voice cleared and dropped like a hollow bass drum, “I’ve been fucking her for weeks, SO THERE WASN’T ANY TIME FOR DENISE. RIGHT?” I screamed into the phone, while the Bee Gee’s asked *what cha doing on your back?* “I MEAN I’VE JUST BEEN FUCKING, AND FUCKING MIRANDA, and GOD does she LIKE TO SUCK COCK. FOR HER IT’S JUST SUCK, SUCK, SUCK! So there just wasn’t TIME you see-”

“Richard, you are a FUCKING SOCIOPATH-”

“-WRONG AGAIN! I’M MAJORING IN PHILOSOPHY! AND-” but he had hung up.