

Chapter 5 of *The Debate* **by B. Douglas Robbins**

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The debate meeting was held every Tuesday in austere Dwinelle. Strawberry Creek ran along Dwinelle's southern boarder. A wide bridge connected Dwinelle Plaza to Upper Sproul passing through a patina filigreed gate with female nudes, white and smooth, affixed to the posts. The blanched beauties, you would assume, knew nothing of the life underground.

The creek carried many toxins from the Lawrence Berkeley Labs, up in the hills, and this tended to wipe out the less hardy forces. Some, however, were tougher than that. They were survivors, and as such, burdened with the weight of carrying on even when, all considered, it was a useless waste. (And thusly we were alike. Even when it's utterly meaningless I never perish. I've died more times than I can remember only to come back. They call me the resurrection kid. I would survive it all. And it's a voter.)

Most of these forces were insects. Vile black things with glossy carapace, that cracked into sharp kernels of glass when crushed in hand. But there were others as well. Under each of the nine or so bridges lived small brown and black forces, hair covering their body, warm-blooded, air breathers, bearing their young live, with a set of symmetrical mammary glands, and a complex social organization. They could have been anything, made by time, and deep theoretical necessity. But all small, hairy, and vicious. All survivors.

"You okay?" asked Kelly Wozniack.

"Sure. Why?" I replied.

"What happened to your eye?"

“Oh. Nothing,” my legs went tingly, “It’s stupid. It doesn’t look that bad does it?”

“It looks pretty bad,” Kelly’s eyes bent at the edges.

“Well, if anyone asks, I want you to say the other guy looks way worse.”

Kelly smiled and nodded quickly. She knew how to be one of the boys when necessary, be reticent when necessary. Debate’s was a male ethic. That sometimes meant dogged loyalty, reverence to meritocracy, and a healthy respect for space and silence.

Paulander Lee shook his leg, “Hey Rich.”

“Hey Paulie,” I answered. I let Paulie call me Rich because I’ve known him too long to start re-writing history now.

“What happened to your eye?”

“Long story. What are you working on?”

Silence: “Mountain of Foam,” he shrugged, and sat on the small desk at the head of the room.

The meeting hall held forty, stiff, oak desks with perfectly flat writing surfaces, all just a little too small, as if built during a time when people were, on average, smaller. Each desk was bolted to the Formica at military distances. The walls rose an extra half story to meet spartan foam tiles.

The squad had no adult supervision. After Michael Tang, our last adult coach, left to continue his post graduate work, back in 1993, when I was a freshman, U.C. claimed they were unable to fund forensics anymore, and the squad almost folded.

Jacob Schubert and Melony Rodregez, a novice team with little experience, ambled over. They had cleared every tournament they attended, and Melony even claimed the Top Speaker award at USC, last week.

“Okay, so it’s basically a Hasty-G position with a twist. Everything’s with a twist, right?” Paulander swung around the table, poking glances at everyone. He spun a finger as if caught in the spoke of a small wheel, “You run the Hasty-G and two other mother-fucking Procedurals. That’s the Mountain. For every thirty seconds spent putting it out, the Aff has to go a

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minute. If they go over, you punt, and if they're way under you stick."

Collin and Christian walked through the propped door, talking. Christian asked, "What happened to your eye?"

Paulie vibrated, "It's a foamy, confusing air suck. Gonna suffocate! and Crush!" He pounded knuckles into the table top, "Fuckin' phat, mo-phat!"

Time was the superset. Time sucking the Affirmative was the equivalent of going faster. If the Affirmative was winning some argument, but they spent a lot of time to do it, then you would often kick-out of the position, concede it. Unless it was absolutely crucial, you could typically make up for the loss, and then some, by pounding home the stuff you were getting over. The Mountain of Foam wasn't so much about winning with Procedurals, winning on the technicalities, but shifting time across the more substantive fields of debate, slowing the Affirmative down in foam and cold mud.

"A recipe for doom," said Paulie, "Doom, doom, doom."

"Temple of Doom," added Melony.

"Temple of Foam," squeaked Kelly.

"As if the 1AR didn't **already** have hell to pay for the Negative bloc," said Paulander twitching.

The Negative bloc was a funny thing. The debate would start with the First Affirmative Constructive or the 1AC. The Case was sometimes referred to as the 1AC, being read then. The next speech, the First Negative Constructive, or the 1NC, was followed by the Affirmative's, 2AC, and last, the Negative's 2NC. Then a peculiar thing would happen, the speaking positions would switch and the Negative would give another speech, the First Negative Rebuttal, or 1NR. That was the Negative bloc. The eight minute 2NC was back to back with the five minute 1NR. The 1AR then had five minutes to cover thirteen. The 1AR had to really know about time.

Westley and his hippie girlfriend wandered in. She would sit quietly in the corner, sulking and staring a

hole into the back of Westley's head until he cut out early to buy her a capp.

Christian announced, "I want to congratulate everyone on their very hard work over the weekend. Especially sweeping and mopping in the wee hours. I know that sucked—"

"Go Paulie!" yelled Kelly.

Paulander raised a fist in triumph.

"We netted over \$8,000, enough to take two teams to Nationals . . ." The squad's only source of funding was the annual High School competition, the largest, most prestigious one in the nation. Thousands of high school kids from all over the nation came to Berkeley during the Valentines Day week-end to compete in our tournament. The fees collected were our operating budget for the year. Absent that, we each had to spend our own money and rent our own mini-vans. We were on our own.

"So, to hear Speed tell it, she was all over him," Paulander held the edge of the desk and leaned back in his plastic and aluminum classroom chair. The conversation turned to gossip.

"That doesn't mean anything," interjected Kelly.

"I didn't say it meant anything," Paulander turned his head suddenly, "That's what **Speed** said."

"When did you talk to him?" Collin asked.

"Last night's e-mail," said Paulander.

Speed from UCLA attended a party in Bel Air the week-end before last, the night of his and Zoë's win over us at USC, where Cindy Wahlschbaun, a sophomore at Stanford said he raped her.

"Who do believe?" I asked stroking the bubble under my eye.

"I don't know," Paulander put hands on his head, "To hear him tell it . . . I don't know . . . It sounds like **he** doesn't think he did anything."

"Were there any witnesses?" Collin interjected.

"Oh, Jeezus—of **course** there aren't any—" blurted Christian's complaint.

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“No, no—hold up now,” Paulander cranked his neck as if his collar was too tight, “Now, check this out. **Zoë** says she saw the whole event.”

The room deshuffled and I heard myself chuckling. Melony slowly sat upon a desktop at the front row of class wearing an indigo sweater that read CAL in block letters, shadowed in gold felt. Kelly crossed her arms firmly. Christian retreated, sitting at the desk beside Melony. Collin kneeled on his skateboard and shimmied side to side:

“You’re saying Zoë watched Speed rape Cindy Wahlschbaun?” he sorted, eyes wide.

“No, no” Paulander’s features squirreled and finger spun, “Get down on this, Zoë didn’t watch Speed rape anyone, she watched Speed **fuck** Wahlschbaun.”

“Oh for godssakes,” Christian broke. Some groaning, then giggling. My eye hurt to laugh.

Collin cut through, “Will Zoë say this?”

“Yes” retorted Paulander.

“So why hasn’t Wahlschbaun gone to the police yet?” asked Collin.

“So maybe she has,” Paulander jolted his shoulder back like a Talking Head, “I haven’t spoken to her.”

Kelly added, staticly, “Maybe she doesn’t have a case.”

“Oh yeah!” spat Melony, “She’s going to tell all these strangers she’s been raped for **fun**.”

“So, she hasn’t told anyone, as far as I know,” Paulie defended his partner.

Collin interrupted, “And Zoë saw it? Why was Zoë watching Speed and—I mean, do you buy that?”

“Uhm-” Paulie paused for a short moment, then jerked, as if coming to, “Yeah, I buy it. You know, I think Zoë **would** do something like that.”

Collin wobbled back and forth on the board, “Is it possible that Zoë watched Speed rape that girl?”

“I guess it is possible,” Paulander smoothed the sides of his head, “but that would assume Zoë witnessed a

crime, failed to stop it, and failed to report it. I don't know about that. That would be a long shot."

"And Cindy was okay with Zoë watching?" asked Collin.

"I don't think Cindy knew."

"Weird," Christian mumbled.

"So Cindy may or may not have pressed charges, as of yet but Speed already has a witness to deny them," Collin's blonde shock shook side to side, "Sounds sketchy."

"Of course it sounds **sket-chee**," echoed Melony, "someone's been raped."

"You don't **know** that," jumped Kelly.

"You don't **know** it didn't happen," charged Melony.

"Accusations are not enough, my dear. They're a dime a dozen. One-shiny-dime," Kelly held up an imaginary coin.

"That's not how it works. You should know. The Cards say only 16% of all rapes ever get reported. There's like 105,000 rapes annually in the United States, that's one every 3 and a half minutes."

"And therefore by that brilliant analysis, Speed raped some chick. Fuck that."

"Well, it increases the likelihood--"

Kelly railed, "No, it DOES NOT—it increases the likelihood of your **thinking so**, but it does not **in fact** increase the likelihood. You want inherency? Fine you win, but just because rape is a big problem does not in and of itself indicate that Speed is a criminal. Absent evidence we presume innocence."

"Alright kids!" interjected Christian, "Shall we have a Card war?" Mild laughter. A moment passed before Christian broke, "Sorry boys and girls, we will not be having a learning experience tonight, we will not be getting in touch with our inner child, and no one—you hear?—no one will be finding it in their heart to forgive their parents for not loving them enough. Okay?—**Speed Drills!**"

I rose from the huddle while Christian sorted through a blue Rubbermaid bin that donned a large

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bumper-sticker reading “RRRRAGE,” on one side and “CRUSH” on the other. Westley announced he had to leave because he had a paper, and then he changed his mind and said he had a quiz; his dour girlfriend trailed after, as if on a string.

Collin smiled at me through glasses that glared white panes. “Where’s your partner going,” I asked.

“He’s going to a dance party at I-House tonight,” grimaced Collin, “Walk into a closed door?”

“He’d rather dance than speed drill?” I smirked, and flipped him off.

Collin nodded, “He’d rather dance than win debate rounds.”

Christian passed out manila files. They were labeled “CIA Blows” and “Eco-fem B” and “Nano” short for nanotechnology and “LOST” (Law Of the Sea Treaty) left over from an old Resolution; and “Malthus”; and “AIDS Rocks,” meaning it was a good thing. I got the CLS or Critical Legal Studies file, a theory position that claimed there were fundamental flaws, injustices, and sophisticated sorts of repressive mechanisms in the Liberal American legal system, and in the very rule of law itself. We ought to destruct the law to eliminate its inherent dehumanizing aspect, and bias toward the rich and the strong. The beauty of CLS was that it never advanced a solution. What would rise from the chaotic rubble of the deconstruction? No one knew. No one could know. The advantage in debate terms was, you got to dump all over the legal system without having to propose an alternative. In debate, destruction was the easiest thing.

Over the chatter Kelly rang out, “Not leading!”

Then another, “Not leading!”

And another, “Not leading!”

“Not leading!”

“Not leading!” like firecrackers.

Jacob was last, “So, not leading.”

“Too late my compadre,” Melony put her arm over Jacob’s bony shoulder. Jacob took a small, white, electronic stopwatch.

“Nice sweatshirt,” remarked Jacob.

“Thanks. It’s new,” blushed Melony.

Jacob grabbed a tag attached to the garment by a translucent plastic strip, pulled it off with a snap, and handed it to her.

“Oh thanks,” Melony put the tag lovingly in her backpack.

I took a seat at one of the center desks. A few others stood at the front. Collin Coboarae laid on his belly on the skateboard, rolling fore and aft.

Jacob pressed the timer rapidly *beep-beep-beep*. Standing at the front desk, “We’ll start with three minutes flat out. Okay, one-two-three-go!” And in a blasting unison, the room wailed a sonic **smack** when the entire mustering debate brim let out the spreading gut—the rapid fire mess of spreading words like machine gunfire. *Do you hear the voices? I can hear them now.*

Media crisis = fabricated crisis

McDawson in '91

The tendency is for the small forces of self codification to freeze critical faculties. Fabricated social crisis will attract more attention to itself than an authentic crisis when the former promises to obscure the forces of change and growth that may threaten media privilege. Media repression, in this way works to maintain its environmental niche much like a symbiotic virus that seeks to keep its host ignorant of its presence.

-and more barking like rabid hounds, sick and swollen,

FBI paranoid

Ackwood '92 (CQ April 2, p. 796)

Full force, high encryption technology would shut the FBI out of the electronic surveillance game indefinitely. The political claim articulated first in the U.S. Constitution’s preamble for “common defense” and “domestic tranquillity” has been the FBI’s rallying cry on this issue and others.

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However, a more fundamental mechanism of agency goes far further in explaining the Bureau's obsession with eavesdropping, namely paranoia.

-and I cranked the wheel to a high pitch monotone achieving 300 crystal clear words per minute, three taps per word, 900 taps of the tongue to the tooth and palate plate:

Legal reasoning is an inherently repressive form of thought

Fusque, 1992 (Stanley, "The Exegesis of Hardened Legal Reasoning," *The CLS Reader*, ed. Peter Raskin, p. 17-18)

Legal reasoning is an inherently repressive form of interpretive thought which limits our comprehension of the social world and its possibilities.¹ This interpretive thought emerges within consciousness at moments of uncertainty about the legitimacy of the concrete world within which we find ourselves. The Law's function is to institutionalize—with the help of such overpowering psychological symbols as robed judges, quasi-ecclesiastical schools, the Profession, and the Tribunal, the boundaries of a legitimate rationality. It is therefore

The collective sound wound up like a positive feedback loop. One end cranked up the noise, then the other, until the whole expanse spun faster and faster like a turbine that feeding logarithmically, ascending by appetite . . .

Guns actually deter violence

The Atlantic Monthly, 1993 (Jan., p. 101)

Jacob slapped his blue jeans in time and rocked side to side as if praying,

This observation suggests an unlikely paradox: if a better armed individual makes for an unattractive victim, a better armed society is to that extent more lawful. And

since murder rates per capita in the Wild West were significantly lower than we have today, it may be inferred...

Next to him Kelly smoked her own blaze, and together they made harmonies; and then Kelly breathed in, and for a split moment her tone blipped out, and then back again, and then Christian breathed deeply and the sub-sonic ground fell away, and then back again like a resting contra-bass; and then for brief instants: **overtones**. Christian hummed low and clear near my left ear,

Porn = physical assault

Golding in 94 (Sue, *New Statesman and Society*, June 3, vol. 7, p.44)

Rather than be seen as a form of speech, pornography is now condemned by MacKinnon as an imposition "on individuals against their will." As such it carries "all the characteristics of a physical assault" and should be counted as action.

In the busy hum I read with the multitude but daydreamed about other things, a special scholarship, a doorway to the future. The Senator's Scholarship, named after the retired Senior Senator Victor Emanuelle, was awarded yearly to a national debater who displayed the three criteria of (1) exemplary leadership, (2) superb skills of argumentation, and (3) sportsmanlike conduct. The last contingency was more of a popularity clause than a real evaluation of moral fiber. Some real unsportsmanlike assholes got the Scholarship. Traditionally, it was awarded to a member of a top seeded team, usually a semi or final round competitor at the CEDA National Debate Tournament. The Scholarship itself was a meager \$1,000 subsidy to attend law school, but the prestige of the award had bloomed into a *de facto* E-ticket to the lofty Crimson Yard, the holy Word of Power into Harvard's 1L class. In exchange, Harvard acquired bragging rights to, "most Senator's Scholars" and incidentally CEDA National Debate Champions.

Beeeeeeep! "**Time!**" yelled Jacob, "Okay, **pens!**" I stuck a pen sideways in my warm mouth and began the drill again, "Tshree minins, wome, too, tshree,"

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struggled Jacob, “GO!” The crescendo walloped and flopped under a struggle of pens clinking teeth, and lips fighting tongues for space. A crew of echoing freaks.

“Time!-Now ‘oh’ before every word. One, two three, oh go!” The oh room oh was oh enrapt oh in oh choppy oh social oh analysis oh split oh by oh vowel oh sighs oh no oh more oh lengthy oh than oh a oh forgetful oh oh. Separate oh the oh mind oh from oh the oh substance oh.

Read backwards. Lie on your back. Hold a box aloft. I held one end, Christian held the other. I spread a single breath. Paulander Lee, once a choir boy soprano, went far beyond, while others ran out of air. He intoned the last of his link Card without company, and continued to a second on the one breath:

NATO will die without U.S. leadership

Learner in 95 (Sen. Sansom, *Fed News Service* (D-CO) Dec. 29)

It has been charged that NATO’s many parts belie a fundamentally schizophrenic structure but surely no worse than any other republican body. It seems obvious to me—and again I am a long time NATO booster—that the relationship between NATO and the U.S. is that of son to father, and I would surmise that without parental support—and I’m speaking here explicitly about dues—the inchoate youth, will die off like an historical irrelevancy...

“One last drill,” Jacob shouted like a boot camp sergeant (drop your cocks and grab your socks, ladies; I don’t know but I’ve been told, Eskimo pussy is mighty cold! We’re all going to hell now. Please drop down below.). “All out. I like Kiss! I like it LOUD! One, two THREE, GO!” AND ONCE MORE, BLUE IN THE FACE, RED IN THE LIPS, WHITE SPITTLE FOAMING, AND SCRATCHY VOICE BOX CRACKING: I LIKE IT **LOUD**.

-beep, beep, beep, beep— “Time!” shouted Jacob

“That was good,” commented Kelly. Paulie agreed.

“If we did nothing but flat out and pens, I’d be happy,” suggested Melony.

“Yeah, those are the two best ones,” agreed Christian.

“And the bin,” added Paulander..

“Are we done here, Vollique?” I asked my partner.

“Almost,” he said distractedly, “These are the evidence assignments,” he held a stack of papers above his glossy head, “I will collect evidence next week, same bat time, same bat channel.” He passed out the Xeroxed list that matched names to assignments. Some were to find Cards that said capital punishment was good. Some were to discover that magic mushrooms were linked to something, anything, like the economy, or global warming, or the resurrection of dinosaurs through biotechnology, (the Crichton scenario) it didn’t matter. Some were to research space migration. I was to find new North/South answers and since there was some confusion on the matter, develop the final word on *fiat* abuse.

Christian turned to me like a tree house confidant and smiled, “So, let’s go to Strada.”