

# Act II: Year Three

## Scene One: June the Fifteenth

### TO STAY OR LEAVE

**T**he Old Crow, she basically loaded the bullet into the chamber that would be the first shot to fire when the trigger was pulled. There was no spinning of the cylinder, no blind chance. It was murder through and through. Sure, I knew the odds of death were one in six. But no one ever talks of those five chances at life! In this case though, my chances for survival were more like one in a hundred. They say to not waste good liquor on mixers. Sure, I agree. But I'd add, don't waste a good cocktail on cheap liquor. This hangover tomorrow will be the death of me...

That was earlier. A quarter of a day ago. All these constructs of time, just ways to add up insignificance. It's the existentialist in me. He emerged too young to understand the words that then directed his life with blind luck. Maybe it wasn't blind, I just wasn't really searching *for* anything. I only sought to escape from the things I found I didn't want. And so existentialism was my unknowing guide, pressed somewhere in my subconscious, leading me to drift aimlessly for that first decade of adulthood. Eyes always for the horizon, even if they, often too frequently, drifted into the mundane trap of the consumerist life. A white picket fence. Could a more oppressive symbol exist? Indeed it does, the fence is easily seen, easily avoided, easily climbed over or broken through. It is the White Curtain that immures so many.

No one really dies in this story. Then again, no one really dies in any story. It's just the constant cycle of death and rebirth every time a story is began anew. Maybe that's what our agrarian tribal ancestors meant with their various concepts of reincarnation. The trouble is we never know of the knowledge we need until it is needed. How else would you describe blind luck? C'est la vie.

The hangover already came and passed. The Sun, both culprit and remedy. I thought maybe it was depression, then perhaps the melancholia of Sartre's *Nausea*. (I don't get seasick, but there is certainly humor in the relationship there.) But it wasn't any of that. I'm happy at times. My existentialism though, it isn't the humanist of Sartre and his bourgeois upbringing (and for similar reasons I rebuke Marx). As much as I respect the man's work and mind, his status in society (as it was with Marx) both afforded him opportunities not available to those born on the lower rungs, and saved him from knowing the true struggle, the suffering, of the proletariat.

Ah, but I'm preaching politics. That is not this story... My existentialist soul, it is that of Camus's absurdist rebel. At least it was. It's absurd to be a rebel. More so though, in this world, it's rebellious to be absurd. That consumerist life I mentioned, that is not absurdity, it's commodified conformity. Still, no, it's not an existentialist absurdity anymore that guides me. I've gone backward in time. I'm now the Nietzschean nihilist, Dostoevsky's man from the Underground. Maybe I'll be a Christian when I die after all.

Unlikely. It's my own Underground that's brought me to nihilism, both physically and emotionally. My mental state is fine, mostly. The Sun helps. The warm weather more so... He's banging on the floor again. The Man Above from my place in the Underground. Banging the floor and making his noises, a mixture of agony and pleasure. I've no interest in knowing the truth of what happens above me. My ears have already translated enough information I wish to not have. I suppose that's why I'm writing this, well, about that specific thing. To make you suffer just a fraction of what I have endured.

No, no! It's not out of spite! I couldn't just simply tell you that a wine tastes *good* could I? Well, my friend, it's the same for the bad. You must at least taste some form of my suffering to come to an understanding with my world. There are many other things I'd prefer to taste than suffering though. The peaches around here are quite delicious. It's almost Summer. I'm not certain how to feel about that.

It's become almost pleasant when the noises are mostly just muffled voices from the television and the sound system's bass sub-woofer shocks. It wouldn't bother me so much if it weren't for the vacant third story he never utilizes. It wouldn't bother me so much if I didn't live here either. But then again, it doesn't bother me so much really. It's more that I don't even want to be here, in this city. But hope for a future not living paycheck to paycheck is a powerful drug. More powerful than the drugs that the Man Above feeds on to fuel his marathon bouts of self-flagellation. The trouble is the rent. Wall Street is pricing people out from being able to live on their own.

There I go with the politics again. Do you think the queen of an ant colony or bee hive knows when a drone dies? Do they care? Is there any recognition amongst any of them when one from the tribe dies? I know mammals mourn, as do the birds. I saw them, the birds. The murder of crows circling around their departed, crying out in chaotic unison; that came first, but that didn't mean anything. The ones I saw, I didn't see them really. I don't know if they were sparrows or swallows (or some other small bird), but they were huddled around one of their own deceased, like motionless humans, heads somberly bent over a freshly dug grave. I thought they were just debris in the snow covered road... Mourning makes life so vulnerable. Their cries of terror still haunt me.

They were chirping outside my window this morning, some small birds. Another night of partial insomnia, waking at two, only falling back to sleep once the Sun quelled the darkness. I heard their calls before any crow. Maybe it's the heat, and the cloudless sky. There's also the wind. It's funny, that same wind that can make a mild sunny Winter day so intolerable, it can turn the sweltering late Spring Sun into a pleasant incubator to thaw a frozen heart. It's a beacon of some sort, my heart. I haven't quite figured that out yet.

Do I want another drink? Certainly! Will I get another? Probably not. I'm no good at figuring out much of anything these days. I've lost the shade that allied the wind. The Sun is becoming oppressive. (How are they so bad at parking? It's really

no matter.) That poor man though. I think he just wanted to feel like he was among people. No one seemed particularly bothered by him initially. I never thought I'd see the day when cigarette smoke bothered hipsters. I figured it out though. They're something new. Yuppie hipsters. All the terrible style with a bourgeois elitist attitude.

They really have been quiet today. The crows. It's as if they mimic my silence. But it's not my own silence. It's the Silence I met three years ago. I wonder if the Man Upstairs hears my classical and jazz, or my reading to the Silence aloud. Or does he only hear the breakdowns, as infrequent as they now are? But breakdowns *ain't* fractures. And that will always keep me going, to sustain my hope and belief.

I was often admonished for saying ain't when I was of school age, that it wasn't a word. But the dictionary disagrees. It's a conservative ideology, deciding what's 'proper' English. But it's not even their own past conservatives hold onto. It's a collective past of humanity's failures, or antiquated successes that have since evolved, for better or worse. Liberals, in a way, seem to be developing their own form of conservatism.

There I go. The politics again. I'm going to escape this White Curtain that has draped over me, but this may be the last real chance I have. I have always supposed a life of *contentment* could suffice.