

## COYOTE RAMBLINGS: TWO

### Thoughts That Have Taken Up Residence and Recur at the Most Inopportune of Times

\* An innocent man who spent decades in prison once asked a question that has stayed with me for years: If you were going to be put in solitary confinement for the rest of your life and they would only allow you one book to take with you (which is what they told him was about to happen), what would it be? I know the book I would ask for, nevertheless, the question still haunts me.

\* Once upon a time the United States built great buildings, state houses, courts, the interstate highway system, initiated care for the elderly, showed by example that it was a great nation through its creations. Now the roads are in tatters, the bridges failing, the electrical grid responsible for fires and deaths as it fails from lack of repair. The Europeans and Asians build the world's finest rail systems, we live in a rapidly collapsing third world country. When will any of the elite (republican or democrat) look around and be ashamed of what they have done?

\* Every one of us, sooner or later, sometime during our lifetime, seek out those with similar wounds. It helps us feel less alone when we have the companionship of those who have been hurt as we have. But as I look over my life, I realize that sometimes I have used that companionship to hide from the terrible challenges that the healing process has placed before me. Still . . . there are times I wish I could hide in that warm companionship forever.

\* My son told me the other day that those few people he has met who were raised without wounds have felt compelled to find or create a wound sooner or later. I think about this a lot; what an interesting thought he gifted me that day. I wonder if the reason this is true (for I could feel the truth of it ringing silently inside the words my son spoke) is because everyone around them has such a wound and they no

longer want to feel different. Or maybe it is in response to some inherent demand of the soul that they need to create or find such a wound. Maybe without such a wound it is impossible to find the direction our life must take to fulfill our reasons for being here. Psychologists of course have simple explanations for these things . . . still, I am not sure that the field of psychology wants to understand that their job is about the soul and its journey. I am pretty sure that all of them have forgotten that the word psyche means soul.

\* It is common in the United States for most people to believe that the wounds we are given are an error (irrespective of the forms they can take). But what people always forget is that there are a million ways to *respond* to the events of our lives: the good, the bad, or the terrible. That is why siblings are often so psychologically different despite growing up with the same crazy parents, the same brutalisms. The truth is: We *make* the life we live by how we internalize and respond to the events of our lives, by the story we (or others) tell us about our wounds. The trick is to live the life we have as if it is holy. Because the truth is – it is.

\* The Crow nation scouted for Custer during the Lakota wars. They would have been perfectly happy for Custer to have won the battle of Little Big Horn. There is a reason for that. Some important truth is hiding in there. If we don't understand it then it is impossible to understand the reality of the indigenous tribal groups of the United States.

\* An important truth, always overlooked, is that the treaties the US government made with the hundreds of tribal groups in the United States can be unilaterally abrogated at any time by an act of congress. Treaties are only agreements, the US steps away from them all the time. What will happen as climate change and national crises escalate? All nations become thuggish when their survival is at stake. Eminent domain for national security overrides all morality when nations become afraid.

\* When did it become acceptable to write about suffering and illness and immediately translate that into economic losses to business and the nation's GDP? Human life is not, as *Homo economicus* believes, reducible to financials or statistics. The well-being of the citizens of the country is in and of itself a core value, fundamental to the health of the country and its democracy. When did Americans forget that?

\* China has been nurturing a long term sense of loss of face and humiliation visited upon them by the West over the past few centuries. They have long memories and are a very clever people. Revenge truly is a dish best served cold. I am pretty sure they understood that before the Klingons.

\* When did it become a waste of time, a stupid thing to do, to wonder about the purpose of life, to read the great writers (of whatever country, sex, era), to spend one's life on the journey to the self? What happens to a nation that teaches its people to avoid their interior lives?

\* Funny, I run into people in their 60s all the time who were shocked, shocked!, by their diagnosis of a terminal disease. What in the world did they think was going to happen?

\* All of us have heard the rumor that we are going to die, none of us really believe it. Every single person I have met thinks god will make an exception in their case.

\* Environmental activists always think that the Earth loves them better than corporate polluters; I am not sure the Earth makes that kind of distinction. I don't think it thinks in terms of good and bad but rather simply responds to what is. None of us can escape the fact that we are ecological beings on an ecological planet.

\* I always think it funny in a terribly grim sense of the word when a social justice activist confronts me or anyone else about a word we have used or the food we eat or the color of our skin or our sex or our profession or our hair style or our spiritual path because everyone of them (as they confront others) is holding a modern cell phone in their hands, the components of which were almost certainly mined by children and enslaved laborers in Africa.

\* I have been contemplating the nature of humility for a long time and as I become less ignorant I think I am beginning to understand that it is something that emerges from the body and the deep self over time, that it is something that only life itself can teach and that in the most painful manner possible. It is not something that can be conveyed in words or taught by another human being (though our loved ones do point us in the right direction . . . if we are willing to hear what they are telling us). I have not met very many humble people but I knew every time I did that there was something in their faces that was important for me to learn and so I stored those moments of touch away for later, when it would be my time to make that particular journey. All of us need the guidance that such moments of in-sight bring, I am not sure how many of us realize it enough to store them away in our memories.

\* I think that every person who has ever been born, if they asked themselves when they were going to die, would know the answer, even at a very young age. My mother was very uncomfortable with that conversation; it didn't last long. (And yes, I have always known.)

\* Why is it that so many people in America think that if a person doesn't live to be a million years old or that if they get a disease before some ridiculously advanced age it is a failure of character? In America, a British person once told me, it is no longer possible to die of old age . . . it is always because of some bad lifestyle choice the person made. (We have been marinating in the christian concept of sin for millennia; it shows up in every community no matter what kind of label they put on it.)

\* Without true elders to model what it means to be a human being the young make up all kinds of things about the old.

\* What happens to a culture that, as a matter of course, hides birth, illness, and death away from the young?

\* The young get all squeamish about their aged relatives having sex. They shy away from the image of those wrinkled bodies slapping together in naked frenzy in the night, scrawny legs tangled in the sheets, moans filling the house. This reveals far too much about one of the fundamental neuroses of our western culture. (And who the hell wants to spend their life controlled by that crap kind of thinking?)

\* Intimacy is the most erogenous zone that exists.

\* My great-grandparents ate nettles and dandelion every year, harvesting them as they grew all on their own, without pesticides or farming. They did not get (or have access to) routine vaccinations or eat processed food or sit around watching television. By the time each of them died they were in their 80s and 90s. Their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have been dying in their 60s and 70s.

\* If you discount child mortality and the end-of-life-intensive-interventions that physicians seem so addicted to, the people in every culture on Earth lived about as long as we do – the average life span in hunter gatherer tribes, for example, was around 77. (I don't just make all this stuff up you know.)

\* How did the chemical industry convince us that all that shit they make is benign? Oh, yeah, television commercials and proselytizing rationalistic utopians who believe it possible to control nature. (Have you

noticed that in nearly every movie and television show at least one character, every day, is taking pharmaceuticals of one sort or another?) How's all this workin' out for us?

\* If it is true that the shortest distance between two human beings is laughter, then social justice activists have made a very bad mistake.

\* Nearly all "bad" words reference something below the waist. Hmmm.

\* My maternal grandmother hated the fact that she existed below the waist. Everything down there was "dirty." It is exceptionally ironic that she died of impacted bowels.

\* One of the greatest acts of disobedience that we in the United States can engage in is self-forgiveness.

\* The emotional impact we feel on the day we realize we have more past behind us than future in front of us is something that has never been adequately put into words.

\* I know a physician who quit and instead became a plumber and another one who became a sculptor, both of them are a great deal happier. (As one of them once told me, training as a physician is something that many doctors never recover from.)

\* There is a young woman who, once upon a time, was driving home to get something she forgot to take to her new apartment. She was going down a street with cars parked on both sides when suddenly a small child ran out in front of her in just such a way that she hit him before she even registered he was there. In that strange state that shock sometimes puts us in, she felt the double bump of her tires going over his body. She stopped just as the boy's young mother ran into the street. Holding the shattered boy in her arms the woman began to scream the loss that was now running through her heart, her life.

All the young woman's friends told her it was not her fault (which it wasn't). Yet it is also true that she was/is the agent of the boy's death. Nothing will ever erase that truth. Her old life ended on that day and she has not yet found a new one. Her struggles, her depressions, her self-castigation, her nightmares (despite all the therapy) have gone on for years. Every day she wakes up unable to escape the fact that she is a killer of small children.

The real world is trying to tell her a truth that everyone else in America is doing their best to hide from. *All of us* have run over little boys but we do it in ways subtle enough for us to ignore them – every day of our lives. And so we continue to believe untruths about ourselves (and make Disney billions in the process).

As the young woman began to write (and publish) articles about what had happened to her, hundreds of accidental killers eventually read what she wrote. They had found, at last, a place where someone was talking about it, trying to bring this truth from the heart of the real world into being, struggling to give it words so that this thing that all of us are hiding from can somehow become integrated into our cultural life, into ourselves. Slowly, stumbling over their words, they began to write as well, adding their own experiences to the story that brave young woman had the courage to speak out loud.

Maybe if enough of us speak out, tell our own stories about the moments we killed the young child (whether a plant, an insect, an animal, or a person – or even the child *in* a person), then maybe our country won't have to go overseas and kill children who don't look or talk like us.

Still . . . I wake in the night sometimes and her story comes alive inside me, the scene opens itself, plays out on the screen of my inner vision. I always try to stop the boy, to stop the car, but the bumps still come in the night. I still see the mother screaming and holding her broken son. The Earth will never give up trying to get me to understand and integrate the truth of things into my life. It loves me far too much to allow me to remain in the dark.