

Grampy hung his hat and coat on the vestibule hook, before pausing for a moment in the entrance room. Leaning against one of the abandoned love seats, he turned to me, "I'm going upstairs to put up my feet."

"Grampy, you wanted to show me a passage from a book?"

Grampy reflected a moment and, then, told me to follow him into the Pine Room. We passed through the living room—tables, chairs, a sofa edged with cushions—and continued on down the hall, by the row of closets, and into the Pine Room—framed with its galaxy of captains of industry, politics, and a soothsayer or two."

Grampy stopped in front of the far bookshelf, his hand moving over the titles, before resting on an old volume, which he took down. I watched him as he leafed through the pages, until he came to a marker. His eyes passed over the words before turning to me, "This was written by the first successful Republican candidate for the presidency." Grampy handed me the book. "Have a look; you may understand more of what I was saying on our walk." Grampy's tone was tired. He paused, then added, "It's one thing, Stuart, to question and criticize. It's another to step into the arena, where one's hands are cut, scraped, and soiled."

Our glances met. Over his shoulder, his cartoon likeness, Secretary Weeks, glanced out at me from his coliseum dungeon. I nodded. Grampy turned and headed upstairs.

My steps led me over to the sofa beside the fireplace. The house was quiet. I sat down, my eyes lowering to the page:

*You can not strengthen the weak by weakening the strong;  
You can not keep out of trouble by spending more than your  
income;  
You can not help small men by tearing down big men;  
You can not help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer;  
You can not establish security on borrowed money;  
You can not further the brotherhood of men by inciting class hatred;  
You can not build character and courage by taking away a man's  
initiative and independence;  
You can not help men by permanently doing for them what they  
could and should do for themselves.*

Abraham Lincoln. I reflected and then turned the pages, my eyes

passing over other passages by Lincoln—some familiar, some less so—until they stopped on the text of his Second Inaugural Address. Cousin Ned's words about Martin Luther King—dreams/nightmares—awoke within me, bringing back glimmers of a lobster bake from an earlier summer season. I read the lines to myself:

*On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending Civil War. . . . Neither party expected for the war the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease without, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.*

*Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any man should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully.*

*The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense come, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him?*

*Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away; yet if it be God's will that it continue until the wealth piled by bondsmen by two hundred and fifty years' unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*

I breathed in.

*With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.*

I rested the book on my lap. “Malice, . . . charity,” Lincoln’s words echoed on within me, as my glance lifted to the musket above the fire-place. Yes, it took the avenging angel of a civil war, and the sacrifices of a Lincoln, Colonel Cross and thousands upon thousands of other Americans, for us to realize that we couldn’t own LABOR—slaves, *human* beings.

And LAND, the second traditional element of the economic process? It had taken the destruction of all too much of the forests of northern New England for us to realize that we can’t simply “own” land, our very foundation, if that ownership carries with it—as it so often did—the privilege of exploiting our common resource, the rape of the earth. Other ties, less restrictive and more creative, more responsible, are required: stewardship, community land trusts, and the National Forest System that Great-Grandfather had helped to establish.

In a more reflective moment, Great-Grandfather’s vision led him up the White Mountain trail, “As he climbs through the hardwoods and Hemlocks into the Spruces and Firs and through the Gnomewoods into the Fir Scrub toward the summit, he finds no more boundary posts. He realizes that as a citizen, he is joint owner not only of the mountain but of the whole range.”

I lowered my gaze back down at the book. And CAPITAL? The third traditional element of the economic process and bulwark of the opposition that manifested itself in the labor and land issue? What was it going to take before we realized, along with Ben Franklin, that we can as little “own” capital, as we can possess—take possession of—those very realms from whence our ideas originate? I thought back to an internal dialogue that had arisen in me during my time in France, a response

to the refrain that was often voiced overseas: *The American just chases the buck...*

*And what's behind the buck?  
Once upon a time, a gold standard ...  
And what's behind the gold?  
Originally the sun ...  
And what's behind the sun?  
What is the American really chasing?*

The Pine Room was silent. I paused, listened. Are we able to decipher any longer the words inscribed on our almighty dollar, *In God we Trust*? A verse from our national song, forgotten, forsaken, passed across my lips: ... *America, America, may God thy gold refine, till all success be nobleness and every gain divine*. I took a breath. When will we Americans awaken from, and to, our dream?

My glance lifted to the photos—statesmen, military leaders, tycoons—that lined the far wall, before resting on the old “Communist” Marshall Tito, sharing a good laugh with Grampy. The argument appeared over. Politics aside, they had found a common cause. Two bulls, ... the cow was conspicuously absent. I lowered my eyes again to Lincoln’s words, returning my searching gaze over the page.

*... It may seem strange that any man should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat from other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged.*

I breathed out, closed my eyes. *The better angels of our nature...* Yes, Godfather Abraham, how do we give them wings?