

Day Four: Pandora's Clubhouse

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 13 November 2016 20:00

Thanks for coming by later in the day today than we've been meeting lately. I'm sure that you, like me, just wanted to linger under the warm blankets until, oh, say -- the mid-terms. I don't blame you there.

Getting up on any cold morning is tough to do: You've spent all night warming up the spot. And now, so soon after Tuesday of the Damned, seeing your breath in the room, perhaps you also feel like you're rising for your daily appointment with the firing squad.

The nightmare from Pandora's Box is this: One of these days, the bullets will be literal and real, not merely figurative and surreal. Until then, *we can have us some brunch and potluck* -- thanks, everyone -- up at the back. Help yourself, then take a seat, and we can get started with Group, whenever we're ready.

* * *

Anyone else been thinking about those **checks-and-balances** the Founders envisioned? Who is going to sign up to keep Herr Drumpfkopf in line, and all the other Berserkers in the House and Senate, and within SCOTUS, once the whack-jobs have seized all three branches of government?

I know it's a cliché, but we are seeing the definition of seizure of the asylum by the inmates here. I'm thinking a lot of mysterious **checks** are going to be written on the Treasury, by a lot of **unbalanced** people.

* * *

I've been thinking about the old *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* a lot lately, for some reason. Part of it has the sensibility of protective escapism, like the protective-and-soothing mind-cocoon which happens while watching the old, great Looney Tunes, and from the release from stressful reality that laughing out loud provides. Here, I'm now seeing the beset characters in that

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amazing film,

nched in misery, in chains, frog-marched into church, in order to take a load off, watch a few black-and-white cartoons

Sullivan's Travels, dre

There's an element of escapism here, sure, but there's also one of release, watching improbable cartoon violence and hapless schadenfraude somehow. After all, as a country we are nothing if not a death cult, and violence is our favored national *Clockwork Orange* release.

If you don't believe me, give some thought to how many of our entertainments are built around violence -- how much football we watch, how many murder shows we consume, how much death and destruction we release on the screen, and how much fake blood and funs makes it into life, and is real...

We didn't exactly play fair in building this country. First, we stole it from the natives already living here successfully after "discovering" it, then we proceeded into genocide to keep the new tenants "free," and to help keep the land prices close to zero, and limit the damages we'd have to pay if and when anyone objected...

... then, we layered in slavery as a foundation for generations of wealth-ownership, and the construction of a form of cutthroat capitalism so vile as to insure the ongoing domination of the masses by the select few, which has continued, nearly unchecked, to this day.

...minus the stray inventor or lottery winner here or there who escaped the mold, otherwise proving the rule.

Our form of capitalism, of course, is unsustainable and planet-killing. This may not matter, if the button-pushing and planet-killing starts for real -- however, since King DT and Pouty Putin have their strange-bedfellows bromance hot and rolling, *we* may not start the End of the World, but we *might* get sucker-punched first by Russia -- especially if Putin lulls Lord Donnie-Boy to sleep with enough bedtime stories.

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But, speaking of fear, and of the depth, breadth, and type that only the Cuban missile crisis and the cold war brought to our doorsteps in living color, let's get back to those cold-war-era cartoons with Rocky, Bullwinkle, Boris Badenov, and Natasha Fatale...

... and, of course, to *Fearless Leader*.

We now have our own cartoon versions running in parallel, starring our own, soon-to-be *Clueless Leader*

I keep hoping Dudley Do Right, the good-hearted, well-meaning member of the Canadian Mounted Police on the show, might still swoop in and rescue Nell and us all, somehow, and forever thwart Snidely Whiplash and the GOP. But, I don't *expect* the Canadians would be willing or even able to take in 59 million refugees from this sad, SAD country.

Someday, I'm thinking, this will all make some sense. You know, in the same way that -- *and I'm not trying to be disrespectful or insensitive here to anyone* -- but in the same way that without Hitler, a lot of accidental positives didn't happen *waaaaay* far down the line. Things that might not have happened, I mean.

Yeah, there was so much pain and loss and outrage, and it's hard to know how many such things were accidental by-products we would have gotten onto or not ... but hindsight makes me go back to thinking about how little we humans have to go by, in making our decisions. Then, there's that whole Free Will versus Destiny and Fate thing...

This is why I'm watching cartoons right now -- it's distracting my attention away from the very real pain and fear, mostly, and helping me live in a world where violence doesn't hurt, even though it's every bit as absurd, when *WHAM!* you run into a wall or fall off a cliff.

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As the creators always said: those cartoons were always made for adults -- kids snuck in under the radar back then, and decoded our adult civilization when we weren't looking.

* * *

Yeah, I hear what you're saying. Strange, but I've been thinking a little bit of the same things, while I process my grief at the current state of the nation, along with the levels of *unthinkable* madness half of this nation has now visited on us all.

I keep thinking that -- *like you, no offense meant, now* -- that, if we're not careful, we're going to soon be building yet *another* "never again" scenario for the world to try to remember. I don't say that lightly, and I honestly mean no disrespect to anyone, anywhere, at any time in history.

I am simply and very honestly frightened, in my own country and for my own country -- and for the very first time.

The nation has been veering between fascism and oligarchy for decades, since the coup by fascists and financiers failed in FDR's time, in the 1930s. Don't believe me? Look up a checklist of symptoms. *Your spine will ice up.*

Not only that, but I came across a study done -- a sort of accounting-and-history look at various periods in time, in various countries -- it was discovered that, after an especially shattering period of financial meltdowns or mayhem of some sort, those societies soon fought back against financiers, however they could, by swinging far right to the single-strongman-and-savior model of government.

Well, let's see now -- we're *STILL* emerging from a financial meltdown, thank you very much, greedmongers and Wall Streeters and GOP politicians who prevented a few regulations from being put in place to prevent such catastrophes against the regular people...

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... and, hey! Guess what? Here we are, swinging far right, to a strongman-savior type of government!

Maybe we're being an historical object lesson for others, for some society up ahead, at some point, but we just don't know it yet.

From *American Exceptionalism* to *American Destructionism*, and in just a few generations -- even less! And, who knows? Maybe we'll limit our new knee-jerks to our own destruction, or maybe help spread it across the globe, while it's already festering elsewhere - that's one hell of a sobering thought.

Like the man said -- *Albert Einstein, I think* -- that he didn't know how World War Three would be fought, only that World War Four would be fought with sticks and stones.

Right now, I'm in a zombie daze, trying to come to terms with stupid, frustrated people who don't yet know they have been betrayed, and have been for decades, and by the very people the masses have been cheering on as their champions.

We've gone from watching people actively and enthusiastically voting against their own best interests, year after year, supporting Republicans and Tea Parties and Libertarians, and so on, to this day -- and now, we're watching them just as enthusiastically run through whirring buzzsaws, and sprinting into the propellers of revved-up airplanes, smiling the whole way through.

I've read about all the reasons people had, or what they were feeling this election-- but I just don't understand wishing mass suicide onto your own tribe of people, for lack of a better way to put it, but, then, onto *others* in the whole country, and maybe your *entire country*, as well.

Don't talk to me about patriotism, when we are full up with dupes who are as close to traitors as I'd care to meet -- no matter how desperate they were to send a god damned message. If you

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don't like the path that you're on, you don't threaten to cut off the legs of everyone in the country!

* * *

I see where many of you are headed in your thoughts. I'm there, too, a lot of the time, but I seem to be dwelling on the *evolutionary* side of the story, somehow. What I mean is, I don't understand the cultish thinking of the Trump followers -- they treat him like some kind of emperor god-king, or some Jesus-Mussolini mash-up, where no wrong can ever be done, seen, or acknowledged, no matter how clear, numerous, or long the list of offenses may go.

But, I keep wondering, as I try to make sense of this, if some new form of human being isn't being forced into being. You know -- survival of the fittest, and all that. Now, before you start in on me, please let me just say that I'm not going into those insulting, higher-lower forms of life comparisons, that they're deplorable and we're better -- although a primal part of me sure wants to blare out that belief -- but, then, I'd be no better off than them, and no further down the idea trail, and I'd be even less likely to be able to find differences between "us" and "them," you know?

Instead, I'm thinking we've hit some sort of population wall, or resource use, or climate trigger -- something -- where another form of human life will be nudged into making a play.

Again, it would be too easy to stand up here and make crude -- *but pretty funny and humor-relieving* -- suggestions about who and what these new humans would be, and so on...

... you know, herds of throwbacks, of these reverted, crude beasts with no heart or soul, with no ability to empathize or care about the welfare of anyone except themselves -- but that would be unfair.

Difference, as most people know, is not automatically bad or wrong or abnormal or something to be penalized or destroyed or feared. But, I have to say, as I have been wondering along these

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lines, it is very difficult to understand why this is happening, now, or at all -- or who or what the "new" people will be.

(I'm thinking brain function might not be high on Evolution's list. Looks to be a bad idea so far, after all, judging from history, and this unbelievable gift of the present.)

I just know there are a lot of people out there who don't want education, and who seem to insist on keeping as ignorant and unexposed to information and ideas as possible -- and that scares me.

I also can't help thinking about H.G. Wells's Eloi and Morlocks -- nor how many times in history this same storyline pops up, with one group of people doing all the labor and dirtywork, while a smaller, select group of elites lounges in comfort, at the top of the food chain, at the top of the pyramid scheme, having all their needs met, by the lowly troglodytes down below.

We could be crossing over into Elysium, or -- well, take your pick. This scenario comes up over and over, There might be a reason for that... maybe if there is such a thing as *Instructivism* in human genes, operating like instincts that are passed along for survival in other species, or like the gut feelings we get in some situations.

Right now, as much as I want to resist, and urge Dems in Congress to play the 100% Block-and-Obstruct Game, like they did -- my gut is just aching, feeling like it's been mule-kicked a couple-dozen times too many.

* * *

OK, well, for me, I've been all over the boards, and it seems to come down to this: Part of me wants to be an adult, accept the consequences of the election, and move forward -- doing whatever I can to help us avoid a repeat of this in future, and help the country and everyone survive this collision of cultures.

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Another part of me wants to be as childish and as out-of-control as Republicans have been since the 1930s -- and just ruin the place with wild parties, just like they do, with no care for costs or for anyone else's needs, then have some other adults come in and clean up the joint, and apply the hangover remedies. Just not **us** this time. Someone else. Some other bunch of adults, for once.

I've been stuck in the middle of this since Tuesday, seeing the crowds growing larger all the time, hollering and shouting against sanity and reason. I don't want to have to choose between fear and civilization. But, we may all have to choose, and a lot sooner than we think. Not to scare anyone into my own nightmare, but we keep underestimating these people, and, now, they're pounding away at the city gates.

Before long, we may have the hordes invading, so to speak, and have no way to stop them. ☐ It may already be too late. ☐ And where that puts us, I'll be damned if I know.

See, I'm already grieving for a way of life that's been lost this week, for a country that is disappearing before my eyes -- a country I fought for, I thought... even though I came to realize I was fighting for corporate profits and insane people. I mean, hasn't anyone else ever thought it's odd that we keep having perpetual wars for no real reasons, or for reasons which turn out to be straight-out lies?

Anyone else ever thought that we -- I mean, *Americans* -- are the terrorists, are the evil empire? And, just as quickly, has anyone else ever thought that Republicans are that one element of America terrorizing the world, and terrorizing its own people? I know, I should shut up, before the UnAmerican Police from the New World Order get called, and I get dragged away in irons.

I keep thinking about the thoughts of Trump's ghost writer, and psychologists, who tried to warn us of Trump's projections of self-flaws onto others -- hence his "rigged system" comments. ☐ Trump knows full well the system is rigged: ☐ It's rigged by Republicans. ☐ It's rigged by the wealthy, by the few at the top.

In the versions and thoughts others here are having, the Republicans are the Eloi, the Republicans are the fascists, the Republicans are the riggers, the Republicans are the evolution -- *or devolution* -- of the species...

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We're all saying the same thing, I think, and trying to see this from all the different angles which help us to each make some sense of the senselessness of this event, as we try to understand all the needless loss, pain, and suffering we fear is waiting up ahead.

I'm not good at speeches, but I know that Trump supporters acted out of fear, and childishness, and selfishness, and ignorance, and lack of knowledge and understanding -- and that's how we got here, today. Bit by bit, over time, and, as the globe changed, and America changed, and people started feeling unheard and left behind.

We get that -- all of us have been unheard and left behind, some more than others. Now, we have to try to find a way to rid ourselves of that fear, to remain adults, to do the selfless thing, and with the greatest amount of intelligence and understanding we can muster.

Because, once they relax into the feeling, and get used to having all three branches of government at their control, Republicans are about to throw the biggest damn party, and raid on blood and treasure, that this world has ever seen -- and the rest of us will be spending the next five or six generations picking up the bodies after them, and helping them all sober up.

Who knows -- by the time we clean up, we might even still have a country we can call our own, if the vultures haven't pounced while we argue and party and slip off into the night. Otherwise, we'll be cleaning up the wreckage for someone else, and hope the new masters will treat us better than our forebears treated native populations and slaves.

* * *

You know, I'm not religious, but I really wonder what Jesus -- or the head of any of the world's religions -- would do or say when appearing to believers, if it were to happen today, tomorrow, or next week. I mean, how would those conversations go? To be a fly on the wall for all those conversations, huh?

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If I could ask those people to consider anything right now, I might have enough mercy in me to beg them to consider their actions in light of their faith before shredding the strata and structures of this new world we've been suddenly dropped into.

Then again, just to go with it for a sec -- I might also have a tough time fending off the *Old Testament kick-ass approach*, if things start getting out of control, which is incredibly self-defeating, painful, wasteful, and futile, I know -- but, what are you *gonna* do? We've got primate blood on the one side, pulling at us, and a still-developing brain on the other, pushing us somewhere else.

We're a schizophrenic species, and weve been developing multiple personalities within the human family for the last few thousand years.

Maybe it's all a big cycle, from Ice Age to Dark Ages to Enlightenment to Dark Ages to Ice Age again, Maybe this is the 4th or 25th time the experiment called Humanity has been run. Intriguing sci-fi has it down as a possibly-maybe.

All I know is I'm sure wanting to break out of this sequence, whatever it is, and get back to some peace, love, and understanding -- and to hell with clubbing each other to death with nukes, or money, or fear.

So, yeah -- I'm swinging wildly back and forth in my grief over my lost country. I feel like I'm in an elevator in the Grief Building, and I keep zipping up and down between floors, and the pit of my gut has had quite enough. I want off.

* * *

Well, here we are -- the last day of our emergency support group. It's been a helluva ride this week, to say the least. The venting of my own spleen as we depart? I'm all over the map. Some part of me wants to go fight these bastards as the terrorists that they are -- but how can I

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hurt anyone, let alone people pretty much like me, who have been pushed around by powers way outside all our control?

Some have been zapped by the electrocuted sensibility of hopelessness and fear, fed from power cables for decades, filled up with propaganda and fear. The Republicans have been simmering the pot under all of us frogs, and now, some of us want out. Well, me too, damn it. Most of us do. We just disagree on who-and-how should do the stopping -- with precision and fine-tuning, and by blowing up everything in sight.

So many thoughts, so much contradiction, so little true clarity right now -- which is why I would urge everyone to not make any big life decisions until we, ourselves, all of us, start to level out a bit. ☐ And until the dust settles a bit.

We got blindsided. We expected one battle -- a meltdown of Trump supporters when he lost -- and we're now getting surprised by a different sort of meltdown, when, of all things, the unthinkable happened, and he won. This may be what our elders felt at the news of Pearl Harbor -- the grief of loss, the specter of conflict, the anticipation of needless battle, the certain knowledge of what path lay ahead. Maybe this is the kind of uncertainty and fear the Brits experienced during the Blitz... maybe this time is like lots of things, none of them very happy or pleasant for those who had to go through them, in order for the following generations to have things be better.

Maybe, to put it simply, none of us want to have to clean out the porta-potties of democracy -- not on our watch. ☐ But, you know, I can't help but feel we've been skating on the hard work of our grandparents for decades. ☐ They knew democracy was hard work, and needed looking after every day, by all of us. ☐ Lately, though, we've been too busy with our toys and our TVs and our celebrities to care -- so we farmed it out for others to handle. ☐ And they took us to the cleaners.

We can all sense we're in the cross-roads, or maybe the cross-hairs, of History, in many ways. It's no fun looking down the barrel of history, no more than it's amusing to look down the barrel of a gun, from either side -- although one is clearly worse than another. But, we have to resist the urge to feel like we are helpless rag dolls in the jaws of raging beasts, or we are lost.

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We must limit our exposure to the terrible and terrifying news, but not ignore or whitewash events. I have been living in the news cycles nonstop since Tuesday, and I tell you clearly, there are no satisfying answers, and there are no accurate and guaranteed predictions of whatever comes next.

We are way past the outer markers of sanity now. □ In this new normal, we can hope Trump will put out the order, firmly and repeatedly, with no waffling, to calm down his supporters, and put the brakes on their destructive and terrorizing behaviors RIGHT NOW. If he does that, sincerely and without question, with no doubt, there is hope; □ if he does not, we will get that message loud and clear, too. □ Something tells me, as much as this man speaks-but-says-nothing, we are all going to have to get mighty good at spotting signals, decoding body language, reading between the lines.

America has to renovate itself and become an ownership nation for all, not just for a few at the top, with the rest of us as renters, hounded by landlords, and tinkered and toyed with by those few, merely puppets for the amusement of the idle rich.

So, among other things: After endless millions of dollars have been futilely spent, in tens of dozens of attempts to evict the Affordable Care Act from the body politic, it looks like that one, and many other good and helpful laws, will have come to an end. Maybe this is the call of America coming to a natural, or unnatural, end -- I do not know. I hope not.

My sense is one of unwanted and added weight and fears, and feeling myself personally aged by this latest crisis --- maybe of an aging America too. And a humanity which is older, too, but not much usefully smarter, where it really counts. But, I know this may be a natural process and a consequence of vibrant health for so long. After all, things going awry and badly wrong is one way Nature has to evict us from our bodies -- sometimes slowly, over years, and sometimes violently, fast.

We are in the midst of clear and present dangers, not the least of which is a man voted into office who will prove easy to steer toward decisions desired by the powerful -- easier, even than George W. Bush, which is saying more than it may seem even laughably possible to imagine or say, let alone seriously consider.

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In our Post Election Stress Disorder symptoms and grief, I know we are going to have to find a common language with the other side, or we will find ourselves in another civil war, with privations in trenches, starving each other out in underground groups.

We weren't able to speak with the opposition very well in the past -- but, those were different times. They hadn't managed to back us all -- as well as themselves! -- into the corner, before. Somehow, with bizarrely *geometric logic*, they managed to do that to us all, and with just one set of votes!

So much for checks and balances, and the balance of political power and checkmates, and the needfulness of voting, and our all being, as the Founders put it, informed and active participants in our republic -- if we were to keep it.

Put your strength not into weeping, but into loving, and keeping each other close. And, since we will use our limited energy in whatever it is we choose to do in this life, we must now carefully consider how we will use it for best effect, how to use it so it really counts, before we run out.

We have a series of crucial Zen lessons descending on us. Rarely are so many offered an opportunity to Learn Well or for such high stakes, here in Pandora's Clubhouse, now that the Box has been popped open again.

Remember: Laughter dissipates stress, so use it often. Plus, the only difference between Laughter and Slaughter is an "S," so keep your "S" down and stay safe, where and when you are able.

Thanks for coming tonight. I wish you all well. Good-bye and, of course: *Good luck*.

Oh, and -- the lasagna, baked beans, fresh cornbread, potato salad, brownies, and apple cobbler were all to *die* for, and I mean that. (And here's hoping we'll never *have to*.)

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Goodnight, thanks again, and farewell.

LINKLAND:

Breaking it to your kids -- one link:

http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/11/aaron-sorkin-donald-trump-president-letter-daughter?mbid=nl_CH_5824acb8364154776b0ba9aa&spMailingID=9854265&spUserID=MTMzMTgzNzQxMjg2S0&spJobID=1040835787&spReportId=MTA0MDgzNTc4NwS2

Breaking it to your kids - another link:

[http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/how-i-explained-the-election-to-my-six-year-old-daughter?mbid=nl_111316%20Borowitz%20Newsletter%20\(1\)&spMailingID=9865456&spUserID=MTMzMTg0NzY3NDAYs0&spJobID=1041035742&spReportId=MTA0MTAzNTc0MgS2](http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/how-i-explained-the-election-to-my-six-year-old-daughter?mbid=nl_111316%20Borowitz%20Newsletter%20(1)&spMailingID=9865456&spUserID=MTMzMTg0NzY3NDAYs0&spJobID=1041035742&spReportId=MTA0MTAzNTc0MgS2)

Helpful hints from a nice guy:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/george-takei-advice-after-trump_us_58232639e4b0e80b02ce240c

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Making sense of the senseless:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/opinion/absorbing-the-impossible.html?action=click&contentCollection=Opinion&module=RelatedCoverage&ion=EndOfArticle&pgtype=article>

Lessons in Optimism (even if it seems way too early):

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/opinion/ten-step-program-for-adjusting-to-president-elect-trump.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=span-abc-region&ion=span-abc-region&WT.nav=span-abc-region&r=0>

Geometric Logic:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0046816/quotes>

Two more links about trying to upload this new load:

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/talking-to-kids-about-trumps-victory>

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/aftermath-sixteen-writers-on-trumps-america>

Perspective:

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<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/13/501854717/closest-supermoon-since-1948-arrives-monday-tips-on-seeing-and-photographing-it>

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