

## SHAFTED, SUCKERED, FLIM-FLAMMED: A POST MORTEM

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When the dust has settled over the recent elections, when the pundits are done with their words of wisdom, when the ones who guessed wrong have explained why *not really* and the ones who guessed right are done gloating, is there much left to say?

Was it really all along, as everybody kept insisting, about one man's compulsive lying and boundless ignorance? About his monumental lack of empathy? About his never seeing a coal mine he didn't love or a national park he didn't hate? About his insatiable greed and insufferable sense of entitlement? About his reflexive demeaning of women and migrants and non-Christians and all those quaint wrong-colored *others*? Somehow, I doubt it.

Was it then about who won and who lost? About red and blue states, governorships and Senate seats and who controls the House? Or, nearer to home, about whether our next Assessor or Treasurer or Sheriff or Commissioner will take care of our mundane needs with bright-red or true-blue skills? Somehow, I doubt this too.

Was it really then, as the most perceptive commentators have noted--the ones who came closer to the truth but then skirted blithely past it--about the clash of tribes, about two cultures at war? On one side those long-suffering, hard-working, church-going rural folks, high-schooled and burger-fed, scotch-guzzling and gun-totting, with their shrinking prospects, failing health and fading hopes. On the other that arrogant elite, college-bred and tofu-fed, tech-savvy and Godless, who hog all the cushy jobs and inflated salaries. Somehow, I still doubt it.

Let me take you by the hand then and guide you through the plain unvarnished tale of how we--both tribes--have let ourselves be duped. Yes, together, bright-red Right and true-blue Left, hard-scrabble Country and espresso-soaked Town, how we've been had, suckered, shafted.

Two stories were dumped right in our lap during the last few weeks of the election, both well publicized, both over-interpreted, both designed to turn us--bright red and shining blue--against each other, make us see each other as the Enemy.

The first story concerned poor Judge Kavanaugh, whom we were tricked to consider only for his politics or alleged abuses. We were asked to either adore or despise him, or his detractors. We were rushed to precipitous judgement. And we were invited to ignore the real story about this scion of moneyed comfort and exclusive breeding, his tale of posh private academies, Ivy League schooling and Yale Law, of supreme privilege and rank entitlement.

Above all, it was the sordid tale of how the one-percenters have been writing and adjudicating our Constitution and laws and tax codes since the dawn of the Republic; how they declared us all equal but then barred the poor, the female, the black, the Native and the foreign born from the franchise; how they conspired to fix it all to their profit and to our loss, all of us, red *and* blue.

The second story depicted the Artful Dealer, who claimed to have started from scratch like the rest of us suckers but in fact got his boost from daddy's half-a-billion greens; whose fancy accountants and sharp tax-lawyers have spared him from paying taxes like the rest of us losers; who defaulted on his debts, cheated sub-contractors and customers alike, and filed for multiple bankruptcies; who attended spiffy private academies and the bastions of Ivy League. A posturing patriot who never served his country, a scion of rare privilege and insufferable entitlement.

We were told it was about collusion and obstruction or lack thereof, about Comey and Muller and Sessions and Manafort and poor Mike Cohen. And we were deflected from the real-- same old-- story of exclusive privilege and gross entitlement, of how the one-percenters have been oppressing us *both* all along, and how they have dupe us to think we were each others' enemy.

In his account of the Peloponnesian Wars, the Greek historian Thucydides tells us how Athens didn't lose the war and its fragile democracy because of the might of Sparta or the treachery of the allies. It lost because its people--classes, tribes, *demes*--let themselves be pitted against each other. Will we now go on bickering across the fake class divide they have erected between us while *they* keep hoarding their obscene gazillions? Or will we band together and rise to tell them, as we did with Teddy and then Franklin Roosevelt--lay off, no more, *ya basta*.

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