



At the general teacher's meeting, 3Pete talked about the usual big issues—kids wearing hats, I-Pods, cell phones, bringing coffee to class, walking around the hallways without a pass (*Why is it always the same kids?*), teachers not taking attendance, teachers not standing outside their rooms when kids are passing between classes, teachers being late for class, teachers calling in sick on Friday, teachers not turning the blinds the proper way at the end of the day, teachers being mean to kids by not rounding up their averages, teachers flunking too many kids, teachers not calling parents, and teachers collectively farting in the main foyer at the end of the day. I made that last one up. But you can see my point. Anyway, I was fading in and out until I heard one thing that really rankles me, so I raised my hand and asked 3Pete if I had heard him correctly:

“Did you say that I should be calling my junior and senior parents, Principal Peters?”

“Certainly.”

I could hear people low-groaning, sighing, and ass-shuffling in their seats. This was one of my all-time favorite topics.

“Let me get this straight, Pete—”

“Roger.”

“Sorry. Mr. Rogers: These kids are now seventeen, eighteen, nineteen—some are even twenty years old—and I have to call *Mommy* or *Daddy* to tell them to get their *children* to do their *homework* or, worse, *behave* in class?”

“Your point, Oliver?”

“My point is pretty obvious, Pete: These kids are about to go into college, the military, or the real world (college is not the real world), and nobody is going to call *Mommy* or *Daddy* in the real world. Don't you think it's time we prepare them for this now? We don't want to be *Lawnmower Teachers*, do we?”

“What the hell is that?” asked Oorraine Nixon (who changed her name from ‘Lorraine’ for some New Age reason. I loved taunting her. She's another one who hated my guts. I'd never fix the copy machine for her. Ipso facto—no particularly nasty weather for Oorraine).

“Oorang, let's go for a facial and I'll explain it to you.” “Go fu...”

“Enough! What do the rest of you say? Mr. Metzger?” Oh, that's rich.

“Yeah, Flash. What do you say?”

“Mac, just call the parent, for God's sake.”

I looked at Joan with raised eyebrows. With her eyebrows also raised high, she lifted her shoulders in no-brainer befuddlement. “Dr. Metzger, I think this is good advice, and I shall follow it to the letter. Thank you.” The meeting proceeded despite universal indifference.

“Mac, where do you *really* want to eat tonight?” Joan whispered. “I can’t think about food while I’m grading.”

“Okay, then let’s make out right here and now,” she pursed her lips.

Right. “You win: For tonight, I thought we’d do something a little more romantic, maybe do some barbecue—but isn’t it your choice?”

“Oliver: look at me. Not into my eyes—at me. I want you right now. This is what we’ve been waiting for—what you’ve been waiting for. You’ve already lost your job. You have nothing to lose, unless you are a virgin. In that case we both have something to lose. But it’ll be worth it. We must make love—right here, now. We need to start building memories for our children. Let’s start now. Right here. On this table. During this meeting. Let’s show the world what love really is.”

“You want to tell our children about this?”

“Stop stalling! Take me, Mr. Prudejuice MacDuff.”

Prudejuice? *How’d she know? Time to reform.* “Okay.” So, I have to tell you, I started kissing her, and it was pretty damn thrilling. I had my eyes shut, but I knew as soon as 3Pete stopped talking that all eyes were on us. This Joan is quite the gal.

Get a room! I heard in chorus.

“What are you two doing?” demanded Buffalo Dick Mulfar, in his lowest, jacked stentorian Marine voice yet.

Joan parted lips. I was hallucinating with love. Joan spoke for the both of us, I think:

“We’re kissing, Vice Principal Mulfar. And the reason we’re kissing is because it was not on your list, or Principal Roger Peters’ list, of things that we have to watch out for. Did it make you uncomfortable? Huh? Huh? It made me a little squeamish. Sorry, Mac. But I thought this was the only way to bring it to your attention. These kids are making out in the corridors like maniacs, and it has to stop. It’s already too hot in this school. I’m sure you’ll all agree with me. Yes? Anybody? **You— Heather?**”

“Why are you asking me?”

“Well, I thought these sex things bothered you?”

“Why, ‘cause your fucking boyfriend asked if he could tickle my ass with a feather and wants to get in my pajamas?”

“He did?” Turning to me: “You did?” “I did.”

“Why...you son of a ...!”

And with that, Joan fake-slapped me in the face, called me an *elf-skinned pignut*, and ran out of the cafeteria screaming: Thy kiss is comfortless as frozen water to a starved snake [Damn Bard!]. The teachers were, of course, applauding, as I grabbed her stuff and my stuff and ran after her, yelling: *Joan, let me explain. It was a momentary lapse of poor judgment. I don't even like pajamas. I prefer buck naked...* And I was gone.

I caught up to Joan in her classroom, and she proceeded to stick straws in her nose. It was by far the best escape plan ever for a faculty meeting. She was thinking about taking her blouse off and complaining about the girl's dress code, but she wanted to save that one, and besides, she needed to implicate me. It was sheer luck that Heather was still fixated on her ass being tickled by a feather. "So, where are we going for dinner tonight?"

"I think tonight is a *Sub Stan Shelly's* night. We can save our romantic barbecue for the weekend."

"I have not been to *Sub Stan Shelly's* in ages."

"Ollie, do you know that he takes his sweet onions, slices them like Paul Servino slices garlic in *Goodfellas*—with a single-edged razor blade—and then soaks them in vinegar and olive oil over night. He uses sugar-cured Mortadella and imported Provolone, not supermarket crap. Aged imported Salami and fresh Prosciutto. Everything is fresh—the pickles, the tomatoes, the lettuce—"

"Not a big fan of lettuce on an Italian—interferes with the meat— but that's me. Good call, Joanie."

"Thanks. Best of all, it's another step backwards in our diets and some certain problem for our aortas, but it'll be good memories for our children when we tell them that we developed heart disease soon after they were born, and that's why we will be living with them as they struggle to raise their own children."

"They'll thank us for it."

"It will teach them a good lesson." "Of course— we're teachers!"

The great thing about Metzger's English Department meetings is that by the time everyone in the department shows up, there's only twenty minutes left to do anything. I was the first one there and our assignment was to do *curriculum mapping*, a seven step program where teachers align in real time what is actually taught to students in a given subject. No one on Earth knows what all seven steps are and fewer people know where they are going once they figure out what they are teaching, simply because good teachers instinctively know that their next crop of students will need different strategies, so the freakin' map is constantly changing. Therefore, it's always the best practice to individualize and make that map go down as many roads as possible instead of one highway, which would be easier to understand data-wise, but not kid-wise and learning-wise.

My job today is to map out what I do in my “Literature of Protest” elective. It’s my favorite course. My seniors love it and I measure my success and their success by how often they tell me they’re planning on blowing up the school. I discourage this because I’m in the school, but when I’m not here anything goes. [Note to Joan: Tell her about my kids wanting to blow up the school.]

I begin my “Literature of Protest” class every year with a graphic sex scene from Jean Jacques Annaud’s overlooked cave man film epic, *Quest for Fire*. This keeps the secular kids in line and those creationist students furious for the first week. I use the scene where Rae Dawn Chong, a most vivacious cave girl, is getting it on with, I think, Ron Pearlman (that guy is just too much all the time, isn’t he? Didn’t he learn one freakin’ thing from Linda Hamilton in *Beauty in the Beast*? Hmmm. That said, she **was** Sarah Connor!).

Anyway, other cave guys are very jealous and there is much Neanderthal protest. Actually it’s BIG TIME PROTEST— CIVILIZATION’S BIGGEST PROTEST—if I may be so bold (with apologies to Will and Ariel Durant). Meanwhile the creationists are whining like hell, and THAT, my friends, is the second stage of protest. It’s a win-win situation. Add the parents and administration protesting about what the hell I am doing in that class—and there’s so much protesting going on that the kids have their first major assignment within days of beginning the course. It’s win-win-win-win situation. Finally, in some years when I have to defend *Quest for Fire* to the School Board, when some of the more Post-Neanderthal male board members get a gander at Rae Dawn Chong, they invariably allow me to “use my own discretion,” of which, if you’ve been reading, I have none.

Then I put it on the map in order to do—you guessed it— *curriculum mapping*. I locate the *Quest for Fire* cast in some parts of Africa, North America, throw a few of the more hairy, robust ones in the Ukraine, two or three demure, fragile ones in South America, and toss a few surfer types onto a few islands, like Tierra del Fuego and St. Martin. For the creationists I draw crude pictures of Adam and Eve somewhere in Iraq— I believe that’s where the Garden of Eden was (Ain’t that a kick in the pants for the anti-Muslims!).

In the meantime, Joan drops by, looks at what I’m doing, and says: “You have no idea how to do *curriculum mapping*, do you”? And I say, “Who said anything about ‘mapping’? I was *curriculum napping*.” I’m so annoyed with her. I tell her that for the first time in twenty years of PD-ing, I’m getting something done. She doesn’t care. She informs me that our public make-out session backfired.

Apparently, VP3 Buffalo Dick Mulfar stopped by her room to check on her (she still had straws sticking out of her nose. I have no idea why she does this). Buffalo Dick informed her that he just wrote a new policy on student kissing and wanted her to proofread it to see if it met with her concerns. He wanted it to be read over the intercom tomorrow, Friday, so the kids would have something to think about over the weekend and wouldn’t spend the week complaining about it, seeing how the week would be finished. Pretty good call...for Mulfar.

We both thought this was a good use of administrative time and tax dollars. Joan told him that she would read it, edit it, and return it to him by the end of the day. I guess my work on *curriculum mapping* would have to wait.

“You really messed things up, Joan. Kids not making out? Help me out—I’m trying to reform myself. What were you thinking? That was the last taboo. The next things are oxygen and gravity.”

“I know.”

“I don’t want to live in a world without love. Please, lock me away.” “Don’t sing your sad song to me, Buster.”

“Hey, don’t call me Buster!” *Reformation over.*

“Sorry. Maybe instead of kissing you, I should have beat the shit out of you in front of the faculty, then Buffalo Dick would be crafting a policy about more hand-holding and more smooching.”

“Now why can’t you trust those kinds of instincts?”

“I know. My instincts are way off.”

“I know. That’s why we should have slept together the very first night. I should never have trusted you.”

“I’m sorry. Oh, well. Can you be a friend and help me edit Mulfar’s no kissing policy?”

“I’m going to help you this one last time, but I’m not going to be a part of any more of your hare-brained buffoonery. I have *curriculum mapping* to do, and I’m going to get it done, even if it takes me five more minutes. Now, let’s put our heads together... and take those straws out of your nose.”

So, Joan and I re-wrote Buffalo Dick Mulfar’s policy in its entirety. However, we gave him a copy of a slightly edited version of his own, but planned on giving Miss Paisley our own manifesto, replacing his, copied on *his* stationery, to slip into the announcement folder, which is time-coded and to be read by 3Pete in the AM.

The next day, after The Pledge, some sports scores, team and extra curricular meeting announcements, Joan and I braced each other to hear Mulfar’s Memo.

Here’s the key to understanding this memo: *The edited memo— italics*; **Pete’s on-the-spot, on-air, improvised corrections— boldfaced**:

PHS Announcements * Date _____ AM _____ PM _____

Now if I can have your special attention, dear studnets...I mean, students: It has been brought out straight out to our attention that curtain stutents...Sorry, certain students...are lingering with their lips...What the? Sorry. There's too much...much going on between the lips—I mean the hallways. There's too much making out with the corridors. [Giant pause]. Let's see... [Scanning, reading] The faculty feels that there is a time and a place and now is not the time and place. Maybe space or taste is what, you ask? It's difficult to talk about. It's a tough issue to revile, but revisit it we must. So in the meantime, just be careful. Kiss, Kiss. Chitty Chitty, Bang, Bang!

[Thinking he is off-mic] **Who the fuck wrote this?** Mulfar!!! BUFFALO DICK!!!

It was worth being suspended a day for this. I took the hit for Joan in exchange for a full month of hot passionate sex, which I hope I *live to see* (Her words. She still wants to beat the shit out of me before the faculty).

3Pete suspended my suspension because the union was going to grieve it, especially after I informed my building representative that I was going to be fired. Peters asked me how I knew, and I told him that I sneaked a peek at my folder and that one crappy evaluation would not hold up at any grievance level, according to my rep, and that I was willing to be laid off anyway, because I had had it with all the bullshit around here. I told him that I always wanted to be a Flamenco dancer, so this was a good opportunity to realize my one true dream in life. I told him Joan would soon be following me out the door, as she was currently studying Flamenco guitar.

“Don't you two have it backwards? Shouldn't you be the guitarist and she the dancer?”

“You disappoint me, Pete—“

“Roger.”

“You are right, but that's such 19th Century thinking. The best Flamenco dancers over the last 100 years have been men. Bernardo Poncé de El Flameñdoya! Roderigo Sanchez El Bonaparté Disestablishmenté! Fuenté El Fuenté-Fuenté! Beligero El Resentementé! How can you not know the Masters of the Dance? This is why I have to leave. This is too provincial for me, too suburban, too smürish.”

“Well, I hope you're both happy. We'll be losing one-and-a-half good teachers.”

Now I thought that was very funny, especially coming from 3Pete. I think saying “Fuck” over the intercom liberated him a bit and he was feeling full of that stuff that comes from a well-placed *f-bomb*.

“You were once good, Oliver; no, actually, very good. Something happened to you...and, well...something happened to you.”

Now, a **big man would say**: *I’m sorry you see it that way. I just think some people know when to move on. An even bigger man would say*: *You may be right; I hope I can find what I’ve lost. Thanks for being a good friend, a mentor, and finding the rare courage to tell me the hard truth. It really means a lot to me. A great man would say*: *Something did happen to me, and I’m fortunate that it did before I became too blind to see it: I found grace. But in order to find grace, Roger-Pete, sacrifice is required: One has to give up a part of one’s soul to find grace and that’s what I gave up right here, in this school, for these kids. So, yes, I may be half a man to you, but the fullness of my being is not so much in the present, but exists in the warm memory of past deeds and the fertile future of still hoped-for promises. I add those up, and with a little luck, some time, and even more sacrifice, by the end of my days, I will have lived more than a lifetime.*

But this is what I said: *Say what you want, Triple P, but you will never dance the Flamenco! Hola! Hasta Mañana!* Then I danced into the sunset of my career.

By the way, I did work a few more minutes on my *curriculum mapping*, and when I was through, I wished I had thought of this sooner and never listened to those older teachers, like myself, who poo-poo everything because they’re so exhausted from real teaching that any extra stuff they’re asked to do just seems like extra stuff they have to do. So, I’m not sure, but you young teachers out there: Ignore these backwards veterans who just play with themselves in the back of the class (Oops, wrong book). Anyway—*curriculum mapping*—it’s where you find a way out of redundancy, which is the key to living...or get miserably lost!

I also realized when mapping things out for my “Protest” course, I had to determine what really mattered to these kids. For example: Everyone is into Indians these days, especially those casino tourist types. I’m not rich or wise enough to see the logic in that, but in terms of what’s best for kids, is it better to teach Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, or Kevin Costner’s film *Dances with Wolves*, or argue if Shawnee Indian leader Tecumseh’s beef with Indiana Governor William Harrison really resulted in the untimely death of a President every twenty years since? I mean Reagan and Bush did not die in office, so is this so-called *Twenty Year Curse* a legitimate protest for another betrayal of the rightful citizens of this land, for the true indigenous inheritors of America’s breathless bounty, for the genocidal and imperial crimes of our bloody colonial westward expansion? I guess when I put it this way—Yes! But it is a lot more fun to give kids their own Lakota tribal names like, “Chews Gum Like Cow” or “Can’t Sit Still, Pants Need Glue” or “Sleeps Through Class” or “Grubs for Grades” or “Never Shuts Up” or “Poops in Pants” or “Raises Hand Anyways,” and so on.

And what about the Chinese kid who goes out for an errand and just happens to take a short cut through Tiananmen Square, and the damn Chinese tanks won't give him the right of way? It's a cross walk, damn it! Isn't this a first world country? Isn't this right to cross the street the most basic right? Hey! People's Party: Give your pedestrians the right of way, especially when tanks are coming? It's plain and simple. What kind of country is this? He has a little plastic bag and you have 80mm Howitzers, or something. He just wants to do his own thing.

You really have to wonder about what those in authority are doing when they don't let others do their own thing. They're almost always doing the wrong thing. Shit! I'm not going to let this slide. It stays in the course!

And my *curriculum mapping* went on. I couldn't get rid of anybody in history who raised his or her ire against authority, whether the kids were interested or not. Couldn't even begin to take the kid's feelings and needs about this into account. They don't know what they need or feel, do they? I didn't when I was their age. Is this the first stupid assumption we make about kids—that they know anything? I had to spare them my own adult sensitivities. What can I say so I can really—I mean authentically and profoundly—move them from self-obsession to self-awareness and to other-awareness? I don't even know if I'm there myself. It's a constant conversation with a lot of babbling and blah, blah, blah. I only have ever protested from a distance, so I'm a charlatan. My corporate friends say that teaching is a form of protest. I'd love to tell them how many teachers are in lock step to teach whatever they are told to teach by *Textbooks of America*, no matter what swill is cobbled together from what bullshit sources.

Teaching protest in an American high school is a not a popularity contest, though. Truthfully, I didn't care about Allen Ginsburg or Jello Biafra's potty mouths offending administration; didn't care if the kids thought Frank Zappa's music was too weird or Vaclav Havel's plays were too esoteric; or Steve Earle and Phil Ochs's bluntness made anybody feel shitty; or Bob Dylan and Martin Luther King and Malcolm X gave us a permanent case of social and civil rights migraines; or how Eugene Debs and Barbara Ehrenreich and Mother Jones and the WTO Protest and Tom Morello and The Occupy Movement made us think twice about the disappearance of work, the middle class's short term memory about labor unions, and the illusion of wealth in America; or if the 1961 Women's Strike for Peace, or the Stonewall Riots about gay rights, or if the French Riots in 68, or Attica, or Ghandi's Salt Satyagraha protest, or Thomas Paine's writings, or Christopher Hitchens' clear-minded blasphemies made them think about human dignity, selflessness and community in ways that made them re-think their own comfort zones; or that all our democratic institutions work entirely for the goals of unchecked capitalism. I just didn't care. My mapping was off-road, up against the wall, down the creek, and there was no way I was going to get away with this kind of course in an American high school much longer, not with my own generation of Woodstock fakes sitting on school boards.

I already have the Christian Right upset at me for suggesting that Jesus's entire life was one big protest. Think about it: Drops out at age thirteen and his folks are not even angry with him;

gets a dazzlingly elevated education with the Essenes—the *original hippies of Earth*, I might add; talks about radical ways of civilized behavior on the Mount— behavior worthy of *Monty Python*; kicks bankers out of the Temple, loves the poor, the bums, the whores, the ne'er do wells; promises a thief happiness in the afterlife, and here's the kicker: he forgives some of the biggest assholes ever for beating the bejesus out of him—Holy Cow! No wonder the Right thinks I am Wrong.

Anyway, my map is done and I guess I'm all over the map! Can't wait to give this to Metzger. I even slipped in the recipe for my grandmother's *Egg Salad*:

Mrs. McDuff's Egg Salad

4 Hard Boiled Eggs, chopped

2 Scrambled Eggs, chopped

1/4 Cup Potato Flakes, tossed in with the scrambled eggs 1/4 Teaspoon

Tarragon

Dash of Pepper

Pinch of Chives

1 Tablespoon of Mayonnaise

1/2 Teaspoon of Mustard

Decent Bread Rolls, preferably Egg (Why the hell not?)

I would say: "Fuckin' great egg salad, Grammy." She would say: "If you keep swearing, I'll wash your mouth out with soap."

