The Logic of Happiness

A JOURNAL OF ONE FATEFUL SUMMER

SHARON KAYE, Ph.D.

Royal Fireworks Press
UNIONVILLE, NEW YORK

Royal Fireworks Press
P.O. Box 399
41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com

ISBN: 978-1-63856-128-6

Publisher: Dr. T.M. Kemnitz
Editor: Jennifer Ault
Book and Cover Designer: Kerri Ann Ruhl
Bonus Riddle Answer: Silence

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York,
at the Royal Fireworks facility. 29au23

local 363

PROLOGUE

Happiness.

It had been missing from my life for so long that I didn't realize it was missing. Once I finally found it, I resolved never to let it slip away again.

These days people talk about happiness as if it's a psychological problem—as if it's just a matter of balancing your brain chemistry. Balanced brain chemistry is probably a necessary condition for happiness, but it's not enough. Even though your brain might be chugging along just fine, you might be completely miserable. And you might not even really realize it.

That's because happiness is a matter of values.

Psychology has absolutely nothing to say about values. No science has anything to say about values. It can't. Science is about facts—the way the world *is*. Values, on the other hand, concern how the world *should be*.

Am I a good person? What is a good human life? How do I make the right choices? What, if anything, do I owe the world? Who should I try to become?

Those are value questions. Values are the domain of philosophy. It's not like philosophy actually hands down a set of answers to those questions. It's more like philosophy shows you that you already know the answers; they're just buried under the mound of stuff that other people have been dumping on you since the day you were born. Your family,

your school, your religion, your culture—they all unload values on you. They may have the best of intentions, but it doesn't matter. You have to learn how to make value judgments of your own. As it turns out, that's not as hard as you might think. There's a logic to it.

I figured this out one summer—and a few other things, which I want to tell you about.

CHAPTER ONE

It was Friday afternoon, May 17, 1963. I was trudging back to my dorm room after my last final exam: chemistry. I was pretty sure I had done poorly enough to flunk the course. Although I knew that that had been my unofficial goal, achieving it didn't make me feel any better.

In fact, I had a cramp in my gut that had started some time after lunch. It was growing into a sharp pain, making it difficult for me to walk normally. I had experienced these mysterious cramps before—starting when I'd arrived at Harvard a year and a half ago. They seemed to increase as my college career went down the tubes. Come to think of it, maybe they weren't so mysterious after all.

I kept my eyes on the brick path underfoot, glad that I'd packed my suitcases that morning. All I had to do was get myself to the train station.

That's when I ran into Juniper Hopkins. She was coming my direction from an intersecting path. I thought nothing of it, since I often ran into her coming from the English Department. Students generally stuck to the pathways at Harvard, though I had witnessed Juniper cutting through the grass on a number of occasions.

"Hi, Everett," she called with a cheerful wave.

"Oh, hi," I managed.

"Professor Quine just posted our grades," she informed me.

I nodded acknowledgment, trying not to grimace as pain ripped through my abdomen. Though I was a chemistry major and Juniper was an English major, we were taking the same philosophy course with Professor Quine. Juniper turned onto my path and started walking with me.

"How did you do?" I asked, trying my best to make polite conversation.

"Pretty good!" she chirped. "Better than I thought I would. Um, are you okay?"

I had come to a halt, my right arm clamped across my ribs. "Sorry," I mumbled, humiliated. "I'm having a cramp."

She frowned sympathetically. "You probably could use a hot water bottle. Do you have one?"

I shook my head. "I'll be okay." I started shuffling forward again. My dorm was almost in sight.

"You can borrow mine," Juniper suggested. "I use it all the time. It really helps."

"It's okay," I repeated. "I think I just need to lie down. But thank you."

I had broken out in a sweat—whether from the pain or the embarrassment, I didn't know. It was a cool spring day. April had been wet, making the Yard lush with greenery. Daffodils and crocuses were popping out everywhere. There was an electric hum in the air as students finished the semester and prepared to depart for the summer. They would have a bonfire down at the river that night, I knew, with a raucous celebration. But I wouldn't be there.

Juniper and I walked in silence for a moment. I watched her feet. She wore white moccasins with leather tassels and tiny red beads sewn to the top. She had small feet. Being on the small side myself, I appreciated a slower walker. It was nice not to have to run to keep pace.

Soon we reached the path to my dorm. "I'll just go get it," she said.

I had already forgotten what she was talking about, but I wasn't in any condition to follow up. So I just raised a hand in farewell before lumbering up to my room as best I could and collapsing on my cot.

I must have fallen asleep. My watch said an hour had passed when I heard tapping on my door. I sprung to a sitting position, wincing as my cramp reasserted itself. I couldn't think who would be at my door. The only thing I could picture was my chemistry professor, angry as a hornet.

The knob turned, and Juniper poked her head in. "Everett?" she rasped.

"Juniper!" I pulled her in, quickly checking the hallway to see if anyone had seen her enter my room.

"It's okay," she assured me. "There are a lot of family members around because of the move-out. No one's patrolling for rule-breakers today." She handed me a hot water bottle.

"Oh, wow." My head felt fuzzy with sleep. She must have walked all the way to her dorm and back. In those days, women were not admitted to Harvard University.

They enrolled in Harvard's sister school, Radcliffe College, which was about a mile away. From there, they could attend classes on Harvard's campus, but they weren't allowed in the library or other places—especially dorm rooms.

"Nice digs," Juniper remarked, venturing in.

My roommate had moved out that morning. The room was sparse—two cots, two desks, each with a lamp and chair, and two dressers—but it offered an excellent view of the river.

Juniper paused at the window, tracking a rowboat drifting downstream, its two riders laughing and passing a bottle wrapped in a brown bag between them. The late afternoon sun slanted through the window, casting a golden glow on Juniper's hair, which was pulled back in a low ponytail. She brushed her bangs from her eyes as she turned back to me. "Fill it with really hot water."

"Right." I went to the bathroom shared between my room and the room next door. While the tap heated up, I splashed some cold water on my face and looked at myself in the mirror.

Juniper came up behind me to supervise my progress. "You don't look so good," she remarked, reading my mind.

"Thanks," I snapped, wondering why I didn't just throw her and her hot water bottle out. But I had some time to kill before leaving for the train station, and I really didn't want to leave with a cramp.

"Where exactly does it hurt?" Juniper asked.

I indicated my left side. "All through here."

"You're probably constipated," she pronounced.

"What?!"

"From all the stress."

"What are you talking about?" I objected.

"I'm talking about the stress that's causing you to flunk out of school."

I felt myself growing angry. Who did this girl think she was? She hardly knew me! She had no right to barge into my room like this.

"Sit right here," she instructed, throwing my roommate's pillow on top of mine so I could lean against them.

I did not sit. "Look," I said, ready to ask her to leave, but pain so sharp tore my side that I doubled over.

"Everett!" she exclaimed.

I crawled onto my bed and crumpled into a fetal position. "I'm okay," I croaked. "Just let me sleep."

She picked up the hot water bottle, which I had dropped on the floor, and pressed it gently against my left side. "I can't leave you here by yourself," she declared. "What if you have something really bad, like a ruptured appendix? You could die."

"I'm not going to die," I protested.

"Well, then, why don't you tell me what's got you all tied up in knots."

I sighed. I had spoken with Juniper in and out of class enough for her to know that I didn't care about school anymore. She had scolded me, saying that I should realize how lucky I was to be at such a good university—to be at any university at all—and that I should take advantage of every moment of it. Conversations with her always left me feeling worse because I knew she was right. She was even luckier than me, and she knew it. Enrollment for women at Harvard was limited to twenty percent of each incoming class.

"You already know. I'm flunking out of school," I told her.

"But I need to know *why*," she countered. "Come on. You'll feel better if you tell someone."

Would I? I considered the matter as Juniper's hot water bottle began to melt the stitch in my side. It occurred to me that she might be right.

"I'm all ears, Everett," Juniper urged. "Tell me the whole story."

So I did.

I told her that my father was president of the Ruby Chemical Company in Newark, New Jersey, which manufactured pesticides and herbicides. My education at Harvard was all about training me to follow in his footsteps. The problem was that I'd never really wanted to. My lack of interest in chemistry had turned to outright aversion several months earlier when I'd read Rachel Carson's latest book, *Silent Spring*.

"Have you read it?" I paused to ask Juniper.

She shook her head.

"It's a study of the harmful effects of the insecticide DDT."

Juniper's lips puckered into a small *o*.

"Carson's book was the last straw for me," I continued. "I never wanted to spend my life producing pesticides—even before I knew about DDT. But once I knew, I had to do something."

"So what did you do?" Juniper asked.

"Well, nothing at first," I admitted. "I think I actually wasted a lot of time putting off the inevitable confrontation with my parents. I tried a million times to call or write a letter, but I couldn't. I just couldn't. Meanwhile, my grades kept dropping."

I shook my head, realizing how lame I sounded. Juniper folded her arms across her chest, probably thinking about how lame I sounded. But she waited for more.

"So then, when I went home for Christmas break, of course my parents found out about my grades, and we had a big fight. This all probably sounds pretty lame to you."

Juniper didn't rush to my defense, as I was hoping she would, so I rushed to my own defense.

"You have to understand something else that happened last fall: my brother made lieutenant in the U.S. Army and shipped out to Vietnam."

Juniper's eyes grew wide.

"Where, by the way, the U.S. military is spraying DDT and other toxic chemicals, like Agent Blue and Agent Orange, all over the place."

"That doesn't sound good."

"It's not good, Juniper." I felt my face flush. "It's turning into a war. In order fight a war, you need justification. Kennedy's justification is this: If we don't fight North Vietnam, South Vietnam will fall to communism. If South Vietnam falls to communism, then Laos will fall to communism. If Laos falls, then Cambodia will fall, and so on, and so on, until communism takes over the world."

Juniper nodded. "I heard my roommate making the same argument earlier this week."

"Everyone's repeating it," I muttered. "They call it the 'domino effect.' But it's a bad argument. It's the biggest example of the slippery slope fallacy in history."

"The slippery slope fallacy?"

"It's a rhetorical tactic used to scare people—like: 'Don't drink beer, or things will lead to things, and before you know it, you'll be hooked on heroine.'"

Juniper scoffed. Then she frowned thoughtfully. "But wait. Sometimes things *do* lead to things."

"Yes," I shot back, "when there's a causal connection. You have to prove a causal connection. But copying your neighbor isn't what causes communism. Poverty is what

causes communism. And this war is just going to cause *more* poverty—"

"Okay, okay." Juniper raised her hand to steady me. "You're supposed to be relaxing, remember?" She pushed me back down against the pillows, which I had risen from in order to emphasize my point.

"So," Juniper summarized, "you're flunking out of school because you're in the wrong major."

I gave a reluctant nod, feeling betrayed by how small she had made my problem sound.

"Everett, the good news is that your problem can be solved. You simply need to switch your major."

"You don't know my father," I returned flatly. "When I went home for Easter, he gave me the choice to finish my chemistry degree or join the army. He called last week for my decision. I rejected both options. He told me not to come home."

"Ouch." Juniper gave me a sympathetic frown.

"Yeah," I sighed.

"And your mother?"

"She always goes along with him."

"But your suitcases are packed," Juniper observed. "So where are you going?"

I blew out a great gust of breath, feeling disinclined to tell her. She waited.

"I'm going to Montreal," I revealed at last, realizing that it was the first time I had spoken my plan out loud to anyone. "I have an old friend whose family has a horse ranch near Montreal. He and I worked there during the summers in high school. They always need extra summer help."

"And then?"

"And then who knows? I can't think that far ahead right now. But I do know that Canada is against war in Vietnam, so it would be a good place to be when the U.S. starts drafting soldiers." I raised my chin defiantly, expecting her to scold me for being cowardly or un-American. But she didn't. She sat quietly, considering what I had told her. Meanwhile, I gingerly stretched my legs out on the cot and felt no pain in my side. "You were right," I remarked. "The hot water bottle is helping."

"Good." She flashed a mischievous grin at me. "Then it's my turn."

"Your turn?" I echoed.

"Yes, Everett." Juniper stood and went back to the window. "I hate to tell you this, but it wasn't by accident that I bumped into you in the Yard today."

"It wasn't?"

"No. I was actually sitting on a bench watching for you because I knew you would be passing by after your chemistry exam, and I wanted to talk to you about something."

I frowned, wishing that we could rewind the conversation and stop before she'd started "her turn." This is how it always

was with Juniper. Just when you started feeling comfortable with her, she did or said something that threw you for a loop. It was unsettling.

"Well, what is it?" I demanded.

"I want to offer you a summer job."

I felt my eyebrows knit together. "I guess you need to tell me the whole story."

So she did.

Juniper's Aunt Laura ran a boarding school called Hopkins Academy in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, which was Juniper's hometown. Enrolling about fifty high-school kids in a given year, Hopkins Academy was housed in a nineteenth-century mansion built by a millionaire named Edward Searles. Aunt Laura had long wanted to expand her program to younger students, and she saw her opportunity when another mansion built by Edward Searles became available to rent for the summer. So she rented it and designed a summer school enrichment program for children in grades seven and eight. It targeted gifted kids who knew they were college-bound and felt unstimulated by the standard school curriculum.

Aunt Laura's idea was a hit. Forty children enrolled, many of them younger brothers and sisters of Hopkins Academy's high schoolers. The rented mansion occupied several acres of beachfront property on Block Island, which was nine miles off the coast of Rhode Island. While that unique location no doubt helped attract wealthy students, it made finding teachers a challenge. The ferry to and from

the mainland was impractical for commuting. The teachers would need to live at the mansion for the summer. Aunt Laura had managed to convince some staff from Hopkins Academy to take the job.

"And she hired *me* to teach poetry and creative writing." Juniper paused with an eyebrow raised when she saw me shaking my head.

"I'm sorry, Juniper," I said, "but you can stop there. I'm not cut out to be a teacher."

Juniper stuck out her lower lip in a mock pout. "You haven't even heard what subject yet."

I sighed. "Okay, what subject?"

"Philosophy."

"Philosophy!" I exclaimed. "You're going to teach philosophy to kids?"

"No, *you* are."

"Juniper, that's madness," I chuffed. "No wonder your Aunt Laura couldn't find anyone for the job. It can't be done. Grown adults can hardly understand philosophy. How are children going to understand it? You're never going to find someone to do that job."

"Oh, but we did," Juniper countered. "Aunt Laura had a good teacher all lined up to do it. Too good, actually. He was offered a position at Cambridge University and dropped us like a hot potato."

"I don't need an offer from Cambridge to drop this job like a hot potato." I folded my arms across my chest.

Juniper planted her hands on her hips. "You know, people used to think that poetry was too hard for kids, but that's not true. Lots of kids love poetry. They do it in their own way. They can come up with really interesting interpretations of the classics, and they write insightful stuff. Of course, you wouldn't want to force poetry on a kid who wasn't interested, but if a kid is interested, why would you keep it from him?"

"You've got kids who are interested in philosophy?"

"Yes! They've registered and payed their tuition. Classes are supposed to start in a week. Staff meetings start Monday. Aunt Laura called me this morning in a panic to see if I could help her find someone. She's really stuck."

I sighed and sat up. Juniper sat down next to me on my cot. The hot water bottle had gone cold. I handed it to her.

"You're good at philosophy, Everett," Juniper argued. "You love it, and you should be doing what you love. Come on. How can you choose horses over children?"

"I assure you that I would choose horses over children any day of the week, my friend," I said. "So that's that."

Juniper scowled at me. Then she got up, went to the bathroom, and started opening cabinet doors.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm looking for a cup. You're probably dehydrated. You need water. That cramp is just going to come back if you don't get your system running properly."

"You won't find any cups in there." I knew that my coffee cup was tucked among socks in one of my suitcases, but I didn't feel like digging for it. Instead, I stood and stretched, feeling much better. "Juniper," I said, "I feel I owe you a cheeseburger for dispatching my stomach demons. Would you like to join me at The Tasty?"

"If you promise to order a tall glass of water."

"Deal."

So we slipped more or less unnoticed out of my dorm and walked to Harvard Square. By the end of the meal, I'd agreed to stay another night so that Aunt Laura could tell me more about the job by telephone on Saturday morning. By the end of my conversation with Aunt Laura on Saturday morning, I'd agreed to take the job. By the end of the day on Sunday, I was on the ferry to Block Island.