# Chapter 3: Cold Rain

“Freedom fighters / We’re freedom writers like Bob Moses / The chosen, freedom writers like Voltaire” — Jay-Z

It started with a clinic.  
  
Cones everywhere. Reps on reps. Kids moving fast but thinking slow. Everything looked sharp—but nothing felt real.  
  
They called it skill development.  
  
But I watched a kid go through ten minutes of ball handling without making a single decision.  
  
And that’s when it hit me: We’re not developing players. We’re developing puppets.  
  
The 12–13 season at Ranney had already cracked something open in me. We lost more than we were used to. But it wasn’t just the record. It was the emptiness after each game. The long drives home replaying possessions. The growing frustration that what I knew—what I \*believed\*—wasn’t reaching them.  
  
It felt like we were speaking different languages.  
  
I didn’t need a motivational quote. I needed a translator. A bridge.  
  
So I went looking.  
  
Late nights. YouTube spirals. Pages of academic research with words like “perception-action coupling” and “non-linear pedagogy.” I didn’t know what I was diving into. But it felt true.  
  
Chris Oliver. Alex Sarama. Rob Gray.  
  
British guys. A Canadian dude. But they weren’t selling drills. They were teaching learning.  
  
I was hooked.  
  
Because the more I studied CLA—the constraints-led approach—and ecological dynamics, the more it started to feel like home.  
  
It was how I learned the game as a kid.  
  
Not in clinics. Not with cones. On blacktops. With busted rims. With four kids trying to simulate five. With rules we made up as we went.  
  
We were adapting.  
  
We were learning through constraint—because we didn’t have a choice.  
  
Now the science had a name for it.  
  
And I realized: I wasn’t discovering something new. I was remembering something ancient.  
  
So I started applying it.  
  
Practice changed. I scrapped perfect drills and built messy ones. I stopped explaining and started designing. I gave players a problem and let them solve it.  
  
One kid told me, “Coach, this feels like chaos.”  
  
“Good,” I said. “That means you’re learning.”  
  
But it wasn’t easy.  
  
Parents had questions. Other coaches made comments. Some kids missed the comfort of structure. I missed the comfort of control.  
  
And there were days—frustrating, silent days—where I asked myself, “Is this even working?”  
  
But then I saw it.  
  
A player recover after a bad decision without looking at the sideline.  
  
A team adjust their spacing on the fly without a timeout.  
  
A kid who once froze in drills now improvising mid-drive.  
  
That’s when I knew. This wasn’t soft.  
  
This was strong.  
  
This wasn’t hands-off. It was hands-deep—just in different soil.  
  
The old way was about control.  
  
This was about emergence.  
  
And emergence is messy. But it’s real.  
  
I wasn’t here to sell drills. I was writing futures.  
  
Not just for basketball. For life.  
  
The methods we use to coach and parent aren’t just preferences. They’re philosophies. They shape people.  
  
And I’m done shaping players to please.  
  
We need to shape them to adapt. To think. To own their learning.  
  
Because drills without transfer are noise with sweat.  
  
Because polish without pressure is performance, not preparation.  
  
Let’s build adaptable, resilient problem solvers—or stop calling it development.  
  
This isn’t about being trendy. This is about being true.  
  
I’m not reinventing basketball. I’m just remembering what it always was—  
  
A place to become.  
  
So yeah—  
  
We’re freedom writers now.  
  
So what are we writing?