

# The Tree Frog, the Toad and the Chameleon

*A Purple Parable of Our Times*

**By Charles Harris**



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## Episode 1

### Prelude

Once upon a time, there was a garden. Some said it was the most beautiful garden the world had ever seen. It had lakes and hills, trees and flowers and abundant resources for a wonderfully diverse population of garden creatures who had learned how to work together to make the garden better for all of them. Getting along was not always easy, and mistakes were made, but their efforts slowly but surely contributed to making the garden a more perfect place. The garden was governed as a democracy—a republic really, given the structures and controls that earlier generations had imposed against mob rule.

While many different creatures lived in the garden, the tree frogs were the elite among the garden's myriad animals—or so the tree frogs believed. Most of them came from important families and attended elite schools. They were the intellectuals, the creatives, the professors and the upper strata of garden society. They could jump farther than the other creatures ever dreamed of, an important skill for both physical and political survival. The tree frogs had an outsize influence in the politics of the garden.

Most of the tree frogs lived in trees around the biggest lake. The most important lived in a huge Live Oak that the

tree frogs called the Tree of Power, but most creatures just called the Great Tree.

Many years ago, a good-looking tree frog named Joey grew up in the garden. He was a popular frog who liked politics and became one of the youngest frogs to serve in the garden's Grand Convocation, which passed rules to manage the garden. Joey had an innate sense of what his constituents wanted to hear. He always seemed to know where he should be in the Great Tree to win over the other garden creatures. When the winds of change were blowing across the garden, Joey would spring across the Great Tree to be where the wind was blowing.

Joey was a member of the Blue Party. After many years of representing the other creatures in the Convocation, he was asked to be vice president for a new, younger tree frog named Barac (pronounced *Barrrock!* after a famous frog call). With Joey at his side, Barac would become the first African tree frog ever elected president of the garden. Barac and Joey served two terms together.

As Joey aged, the other creatures began calling him Uncle Joey. Although he wanted to run for president when Barac's term was up, Barac preferred an older female frog named Hil, who had been an important officer in Barac's cabinet and was married to a former president of the garden. So, Uncle Joey didn't run.

Everyone thought Hil would become the first female president of the garden. But she lost! To the surprise of

most of the creatures, a Red Party toad called Big Donnie eked out a victory in a very close election.

The Blue Party supporters could not believe it. They hated Big Donnie. The tree frogs who lived in the far-left branches of the Great Tree and their friends in the media (all Blue Party ravens, according to the Red Party supporters) especially despised him. They had done everything possible to defeat him, even spreading rumors that he was working with bad creatures from other gardens to get elected. All these naysayers thought Big Donnie was a crude, rich, dishonest, egotistical bully who did not deserve to be president. He sat around croaking and calling the other frogs names. Worst of all, he was not one of them. He was a toad! He could barely waddle, much less soar like a tree frog. He didn't live in the Great Tree. He accused the media ravens of spreading fake news about him, yet constantly made up facts and superlatives about himself that could not withstand even a quick fact check.

Big Donnie and his Red Party followers had some media on their side too. Wolf News particularly irritated the Blue Party voters and their ravens who criticized it as hateful and dogmatic—an echo chamber for creatures who lived in the far-right branches of the Great Tree. Everyone knew Wolf had been created to give conservatives a media voice. It was staffed with falcons—fast, beautiful birds eager to attack their prey. Progressives and liberals had their own echo chamber media hosted by the most

extreme ravens. The problem for the Red Party was that the garden's mainstream media—including the so-called newspapers of record—masqueraded as being objective when they actually tilted strongly toward progressive viewpoints and were staffed with media ravens.

Freedom of the press had been important to the garden's success since its earliest days. The garden's founders believed that freedom of speech was essential to any democracy because informed creatures would make better choices about their leaders. They expected the media (which consisted of newspapers back then) to provide the information and debate voters needed. Historically, the papers expressed their opinions on their editorial pages, and delivered the news, objectively, in their articles. Opinions were opinions and facts were facts.

When Big Donnie dared to run for president as an obnoxious toad, a rough political outsider who threatened the status quo, the elites and (according to the tree frogs and the media ravens) even democracy itself, media raven activists argued they had a moral duty to stop him. To do this, they had to be advocates, the activists said, and not merely reporters of the facts. When Big Donnie won the election over Hil—an event none of the media ravens thought remotely possible—the media ravens knew their activists were correct. Democracy and civilization (and elite power and

influence) were at stake. Fairness and objectivity in reporting must give way to exposing and attacking anything and everything associated with Big Donnie, including his supporters, half of which Hil had called a “basket of deplorables.”

The Wolf News falcons and the other Red Party echo chambers were ready to return the favor.

Politics in the garden moved into a post-fact, post-truth world—an uncomfortable, dangerous place where objectivity and facts were replaced by subjectivity and opinions, where who said something was less important than whether it was true, and where each creature could have its own perception of the truth and “my truth” could trump yours.

Once Big Donnie was sworn in, the Blue Party politicians and the media ravens did everything they could to make it hard for Big Donnie to govern—a tactic that the Red Party politicians in the Grand Convocation had deployed against Barac years earlier. The ravens went further, publishing dozens of articles condemning Big Donnie’s character and warning he intended to become a dictator.

Despite all this and continuing attacks from most of the media ravens, some of Big Donnie’s policies eventually gained some respect, at least from the Red Party members and more than a few independents. But the garden remained deeply divided.

## Episode 2

### Uncle Joey's Turn

**T**hree years later, almost two dozen Blue Party animals battled among themselves to decide who would run against Big Donnie when his first term ended. Uncle Joey decided he had to run.

The Blue Party primary race was wild, and Uncle Joey struggled to compete. One Blue Party candidate was a chameleon named Kammy who lived in the far-left side branches of the Great Tree. She attacked Uncle Joey in a debate and damaged him badly. But that was her high point. She soon quit the race. For a time, everyone thought another frog from the far-left branches would win, maybe even a crazy old progressive frog named Bern.

When it looked like Uncle Joey would have to drop out, he remembered the strengths that had propelled his political career: Go where the voters are and tell them what they want to hear. He jumped to the center of the Great Tree and pledged to bring the garden together. He promised to bring calm and stability to the garden instead of the chaos that would come from Bern or Big Donnie. Just to be sure he could win the critical next primary, he pulled in the support of a respected old African frog named Cly, who delivered the African votes.

Uncle Joey's plan worked! He won the primary and quickly wrapped up the nomination—not because he was necessarily the best creature running, but because he was *not* Bern, and he was *not* Big Donnie.

Uncle Joey would remember that lesson. So would Kammy.

But Uncle Joey still had to face Big Donnie, who had no intention of losing.

Uncle Joey knew what he had to do. He would attack Big Donnie's character, which was easy, and make all the frogs afraid of what Big Donnie and the other frogs on the far-right side of the Great Tree would do to destroy the peace and beauty of the garden. Uncle Joey would be the garden's savior. When Uncle Joey was finished, no one would want that ugly, rich, narcissistic toad to continue to be their president. Uncle Joey was confident the ravens would help spread his message of fear and chaos, and they were happy to do it.

Still, Uncle Joey worried. He knew Big Donnie had received millions of votes when he was elected the first time. Uncle Joey had to be sure he could rally all the Blue Party creatures, especially the growing number who lived on the far-left side of the Great Tree. So, he cut a deal. He would stay in the center of the tree, where he could say he would bring people together. But he would promise Bern and his supporters to adopt many of the policies from the far-left branches of the Great Tree. And, as a



final demonstration of his loyalty to Bern and Cly, he would name Kammy as his vice president, so the Blue Party would not only have the first African woman but also the most progressive senator in the Grand Convocation as their vice-presidential candidate.

The presidential race was bitter and tight. Big Donnie was impeached by the lower house of the Convocation just weeks before election day but found innocent by the upper house.

Once again, Uncle Joey's political instincts were right. He won the presidential election! The vote was extremely close, but the Blue Party barely swept both houses of the Grand Convocation as well. Uncle Joey was in control.

Big Donnie was not amused. He and his supporters claimed fraud and set out to overturn the election. It was an ugly, dangerous time in the garden. Big Donnie and some Red Party members did some very foolish things. There were violent riots at the Capitol. Big Donnie was impeached a second time, just days before Uncle Joe was sworn in as president. Again, Big Donnie avoided being convicted. Ultimately, democracy prevailed, and Uncle Joey was inaugurated as president.

Although Uncle Joey promised in his inaugural address to bring the garden together, just as he had during his campaign, his Blue Party friends on the far-left side of the Great Tree had other ideas. They moved rapidly to collect on the deal Uncle Joey had made with them. They knew

the election had been close and their margin in the Grand Convocation was very thin, but they pressed Uncle Joey to govern like the election had been a progressive landslide. They wanted to use their victory before the Red Party or even the Blue Party's own members could put up any roadblocks.

Still croaking that the election had been stolen by Uncle Joey, Big Donnie refused to help the Red Party mount an effective opposition to Uncle Joey's legislative agenda. For Big Donnie, everything was all about him. Policy fights fell to the wayside as Big Donnie croaked and croaked about the stolen election.

The far-left Blue Party members were delighted with their wins in the Grand Convocation and demanded even more. The independents and Red Party voters who had crossed over to support the Blue Party were furious, believing they had been misled by Uncle Joey's pledge to bring the garden together. As he moved farther into the far-left branches of the Great Tree, Uncle Joey began to see himself as a hero, perhaps the most important and influential president the garden had ever seen. The far-left Blue Party members fed that delusion, encouraging Uncle Joey to govern even more toward their side of the Great Tree. Uncle Joey obliged by doing exactly that.

Uncle Joey's election as president is a strange story, made stranger still by the disruption of the Great Virus that swept the whole world toward the end of Big Donnie's first term, the supply chain issues and soaring

inflation that followed and the bitter political and social divides that grew out of school closures, vaccine mandates, massive layoffs and wildly expensive government support and recovery programs.

Some of the best political observers in the garden (mostly old owls plus an eagle or two) say the partisan divisions fueled by the Great Virus were the final blow to the social and political cooperation that had enabled the garden to grow and prosper and become the envy of the world. If strike one had been the Red Party's concerted efforts to make Barac's presidency ineffective and strike two had been the even uglier efforts by the Blue Party and the raven media to sink Big Donnie's first term, strike three was the viciously-divided political, cultural and social reaction to the Great Virus.

In a garden where science had always been respected, everything became politicized. Facts and assumptions that one side or the other had decided were "settled" could not be discussed and those that dared to do so were effectively canceled, usually by the raven media and the tree frog elites. "Following the science" came to mean following the *political* science that your side wanted to be true. And it was not just the Great Virus. Climate change was even worse.

Politics suffered. Instead of working together to find common ground and compromise on realistic solutions, the Blue Party and the Red Party both adopted a "winner-take-all" approach to governing the garden. Once

heralded as the mark of a great statesman, seeking compromise by negotiating with the opposing party became viewed as disloyal, almost an act of treason.

As this winner-take-all attitude permeated the garden's politics, it drove two political strategies: 1) winning at any cost; and 2) eliminating constraints that reduced or delayed the spoils of winning. Both of these strategies resulted from how closely divided the garden's voters were. Out of many, many votes cast, just a few could make the difference between winning and losing. So, it made sense to do everything possible to win.

But the garden was not a pure democracy, it was a republic that included three branches of government and multiple checks and balances to safeguard the minority from the majority and, particularly, from hotheads and mob rule. These constraints, which had protected the garden for decades, could get in the way of politicians who won a slim majority and expected to be able to do anything they wanted to do as a result.

Many of the Blue Party tree frogs wanted to eliminate the garden's structural impediments so they could pass even more sweeping legislation with their narrow control of the Grand Convocation. Uncle Joey held back on some of the most controversial changes, knowing that the Blue Party might be on the wrong side of the changes someday. A few of the Blue Party members of the Grand Convocation agreed, but it was very close. The threat of

these changes hung over the garden's politics like doom itself.

By the time mid-term elections to the Convocation took place, the Red Party was out for revenge. Uncle Joey's move to the far-left side of the tree was out in the open and the Red Party was expecting big wins, partly because the incumbent president's party typically loses Convocation seats in the mid-terms. But Big Donnie was still croaking about the stolen presidential election. Worse, he was throwing his weight around by endorsing Red Party candidates he thought were loyal to him and railing against the others. Once again, Red Party politics became all about Big Donnie. Unfortunately, the best Red Party candidates were often not the ones that Big Donnie liked. Seeing this, the Blue Party supporters donated to the candidates loyal to Big Donnie in the primaries, knowing they would lose in the general election.

And then there was the issue of abortion—a difficult matter to explain in the context of the garden. Suffice it to say that the Blue Party and the Red Party had very different views and many female creatures strongly supported the Blue Party's position.

So, instead of a Red Wave sweep of the mid-term elections, the Blue Party retained control of the upper house of the Grand Convocation. It also flipped several governorships and local legislatures. The Red Party gained a slight edge in the lower house, but (unlike the

Blue Party) struggled to rally their members to take a common stand on legislation, especially when Big Donnie created havoc by throwing in his two cents from a distance.

Big Donnie was still around, croaking about his stolen election and doing his best to impose a personal loyalty test on all the Red Party members of the Convocation. Two years into Uncle Joey's first term, Big Donnie still believed Red Party politics was all about him.

## Episode 3

### **The Rise of Kammy**

**W**hen he was running for president, Uncle Joey told the tree frogs he saw himself as a transitional president. That thought resonated with the voters. After all, Uncle Joey was very old and getting older. But things got in the way as they often do. And when things happen, politics can become very complicated.

Even though the Blue Party threw everything they could against Big Donnie to ruin his beleaguered reputation, destroy his wealth, convict him of state and federal crimes and put him in prison, the toad just kept coming.

The media ravens and falcons could not decide whether the Blue Party wanted to take Big Donnie out of contention as a potential candidate or leave him running but severely weakened, financially and politically. As it turned out, the lawsuits (which some called “lawfare,” as a take on “warfare”) brought Big Donnie a lot of sympathy and campaign contributions. Ironically, the contributions helped pay his lawyers.

The contest became more and more personal on both sides. Uncle Joey wanted to beat Big Donnie a second time, and Big Donnie wanted revenge against Uncle Joey

for stealing the first election contest between them. It was almost as if they were baiting each other.

No matter what the Blue Party threw at him, Big Donnie would not give up. Eventually, he announced he would run against Uncle Joey a second time.

Egged on by his family and closest advisors, Uncle Joey had to run. Being president at his age was heady stuff for him and them. Plus, if Big Donnie was going to run again, Uncle Joey was convinced he was the best man to beat him. He had done it before and he could do it again, the same way, only bigger and better. After all, Big Donnie was still a toad. Besides, Uncle Joey knew that if he did not run the most likely alternative, Kammy, would be a disaster for the Blue Party. Uncle Joey knew how poorly she had performed as vice president. But he could not figure out how the party could refuse to nominate an African/Indian chameleon who was already vice president.

As the election drew closer, polls showed that most of the voters in the garden were tired of Uncle Joey and Big Donnie. The garden creatures did not want a rematch! Both of the prospective candidates had absurdly low approval ratings. Still, Big Donnie won overwhelming support over capable competitors in the Red Party primaries and Uncle Joey swept the Blue Party primaries to the extent they were held.



One of the garden's elder jurists, a wise Barred Owl, summed up the situation all too well: "We are on a collision course with destiny, led by two disastrous choices we fear but somehow still selected. We are making a mockery out of our democracy."

As the creatures of the garden prayed for some alternative, Uncle Joey's public persona began to crack. Despite efforts by Blue Party Convocation leaders and Uncle Joey's staff to protect him from the press and the public, concerns about his cognitive capacity continued to grow. The denials and assurances shattered when the garden creatures saw Uncle Joey's disastrous performance in a live debate with Big Donnie. Suddenly, the raccoon was out of the can, as they say in the garden. Pandora's Box was opened and the ugly truth flew out.

Sadly, the Blue Party concerns were not about whether Uncle Joey had the cognitive capacity to govern or who was running the government if he was not. They were about one thing: whether Uncle Joey could win!

Once the polls made clear that winning was increasingly unlikely, the Blue Party tree frogs pounced. After assuring the garden and the tree frogs that he would run, Uncle Joey reversed his position and announced he would not. Minutes later, he endorsed Kammy as his successor.

While the Blue Party elders were discussing how they should select a successor and, in particular, what to do about Kammy, Kammy announced she would run—and

she took off like a skink. As a former prosecutor, Kammy was not about to wait and see what or who developed. She knew she had to seize control. As she coalesced support from convention delegates, Blue Party politicians and the media ravens who had panned her just days earlier for her poor approval ratings, giggly smile and snarky attitude lined up to praise and endorse her. Kammy became an overnight success, a TikTok darling, an Instagram sweetheart, quickly overshadowing Big Donny, who croaked and croaked, “Watch me, watch me!” but no one seemed to care. He had finally become old news.

The Red Party advisors told Big Donnie not to worry. Kammy was in her honeymoon period. The voters were just excited that she was *not* Uncle Joe. Once the frothy adoration passed, the creatures in the garden would remember that she was from the far-left branches of the Great Tree, that she was superficial, ineffective and unprepared to be president—as she had demonstrated during her three and a half years as vice president.

But as days passed, Kammy created a new persona. She erased the policies from her past and Uncle Joey’s administration that could offend swing voters and replaced them with new ones. She spoke only in uplifting generalities, smiling and laughing about making the garden a happier place. She quickly attracted the younger animals and the African animals and began

winning back the creatures from other areas of the garden who had abandoned Uncle Joey for Big Donnie.

Big Donnie's consultants urged him to be patient, assuring him that the press would soon expose Kammy's past and her true far-left views. But Kammy had already decided not to hold press conferences or interviews. And the media ravens loved Kammy. She was no longer clumsy and unable to speak spontaneously. She was fresh and new and young (well, at least younger than Uncle Joe and Big Donnie). She was exciting news! Best of all from the perspective of the media ravens, she was running circles around Big Donnie!

When Big Donnie demanded to know how Kammy had done this, one of his political advisors, a wise old hawk, told him. "Remember how Joey would jump around the Great Tree to be where the wind was blowing? How he could change his positions to meet the times? Well, Kammy doesn't have to do that. She's a chameleon—and a very special one at that. Because she is an African/Indian chameleon, she can change her color as she needs to and even bait you to focus on that."

The hawk continued, "She can also change her personal and political personas depending on who she is talking to. It's almost magic. The Blue Party voters see her as a passionate progressive because they know her past. They know the things she supported when she was in the Grand Convocation and when she ran against Joey in the primary. But the independents and Red Party voters only

see her newly generated personas. To them, she is upbeat and optimistic and seems like she's from the center of the Great Tree."

Big Donnie scowled as he croaked. "She can't believe she'll get away with that," he said. "I'll rip her apart. So will the media."

The hawk stared away, as only a hawk can do. "The media ravens love her, sir. She'll get nothing but softballs from them, if she lets them talk seriously with her at all. Remember how Joey hid in his nest when he was campaigning during the Great Virus Crisis? And how he used teleprompters to hide his mental decline? The Blue Party is doing it again. It worked for Joey. Kammy believes it will work for her if she can keep it going."

Big Donnie nodded somberly.

The hawk said, "Kammy knows that just one mistake could expose her ruse, so she has decided to avoid press encounters, interviews and even informal comments unless they are fully scripted or totally without substance. She has cultivated a chameleon-like image—quite brilliantly so far—and she intends to preserve that charade at all costs."

"Then I will have to do it," Big Donnie croaked. "I'll tear her to shreds. I am so much smarter than she is. We'll have one debate, maybe three. And I'll have huge rallies, everywhere."

The hawk paused and finally said, “Sir, I know we have discussed this before, but with due respect, you, uh, sometimes veer off message.”

“I’m never off message,” Big Donnie croaked. “It’s my message!”

“Uh, I meant off-script, sir. Off-script,” the hawk interjected.

“You hawks still don’t get it,” Big Donnie croaked. “I am a showman. Did you forget about *The Apprentice*? I know when something works. That’s what makes me so good against these stupid career politicians. I know my voters. I can sense when they want me to fire them up by reminding them the last election was stolen, or when I need to call out some stupid jerk who failed to support me.”

“Sir, that’s part of the problem. You have those voters. You need to attract some new ones, and they want to know what you are going to do for the country. They get turned off when you call people names and complain about the stolen election. If we let this election be about personalities and popularity, you could, uh, it could, uh, be difficult for us. But if we make it about the issues and drive those issues home, we can win, and win big.”

Ignoring the hawk, Big Donnie croaked, “Do you seriously think Kammy could be a TV star?”

The hawk thought twice but said it anyway, “Uh, yes sir, she’s doing pretty well so far.”

## Episode 4

### **The New VP Candidates**

In the garden, the party with the incumbent president has its nominating convention second. So, in 2024 the Red Party convention was held first. At the time, Big Donnie had a strong lead in the polls, which was fueled by Uncle Joey's disastrous physical and cognitive performance in their initial debate two months earlier. After considering some other more experienced candidates for vice president, Big Donnie settled on a young senator called Van who came from a hardscrabble background, attended an elite university law school and worked for a time as a venture capitalist before being elected to the upper house of the Convocation only two years earlier. He had written a heartfelt book about his difficult earlier life that became a best seller and a movie. Although he was a toad like Big Donnie, he had some tree frog talent from somewhere. Interestingly, he was married to an Indian tree frog.

Big Donnie liked Van. He could be a showman, but he was loyal and would never overshadow Big Donnie. He would appeal to the swing state voters. With the election looking better and better, he would be a solid candidate to carry Big Donnie's "Make the Garden Great Again" culture forward to the next generation.

The media ravens immediately criticized the choice, claiming Van was just an understudy of Big Donnie's "MGGA" culture (often pronounced "MAGA"). Some even called him a parrot toad because he mimicked Big Donnie so well. The ravens parsed every comment Van ever made and used them to tarnish his reputation. Van had a rough start with the campaign, dropping some foolish soundbites that the media ravens amplified and used against him. Still, he looked like a good choice to tackle Kammy in the vice-presidential debates.

Everything changed when the doors blew off and Kammy became the Blue Party's presidential nominee. All bets were off. Kammy moved up in the polls and Van had no idea who Kammy's vice-presidential pick—and Van's opponent—might be.

Once Uncle Joey agreed not to run again, Kammy immediately turned to the selection of her VP. Time was short, as the Blue Party convention was only weeks away. Despite the lack of an effective Blue Party primary, she had some strong choices from swing states. After she was close to her selection, the tree frogs on the far-left branches of the Great Tree objected to some of the potential picks. With little time left, Kammy pivoted to a lesser-known governor named Walls—or Coach Walls as the campaign would sometimes call him.

Walls was an interesting selection. He was a folksy toad from the Midwest who had been a teacher and a high school coach before he got into politics. He served in the

lower house of the Grand Convocation as a popular Blue Party representative from a traditionally Red Party area. After he was elected governor and gained a Blue Party legislature, he became significantly more progressive. He was in the National Guard for many years. Although Walls was only a year older than Kammy, he looked much older. Kammy did not miss the fact that he made her look much younger—all the better to appeal to her new TikTok fans and contrast her with Big Donnie.

To some, Walls was a walking contradiction. To Kammy, he was a canvas she could paint as she liked, much as she was using her own talents as a chameleon to portray herself as she wanted the different groups of garden voters to see. Walls was also unlikely to threaten or overshadow her. His almost complete lack of international experience and minimal financial assets made Kammy look rather worldly and successful by comparison.

To the Blue Party voters, especially those on the far-left branches of the Great Tree, Kammy would make Walls appear to be the dedicated progressive he had proven to be during his recent years as governor. But to the Red Party voters, most of the independents and many of the Blue Party voters who were in danger of crossing over to Big Donnie, she would make Walls appear to be a kindly grandfather who was once a teacher and a coach, a man who grew up in the Midwest and spent his career serving others, a man with years of military service who once



received the highest rating from the NRA, a man of modest means rather than capitalist wealth (albeit provided almost entirely by government salaries and pensions). Perhaps best of all, Walls could portray either role, playing the humble servant or a tough attack dog, as the need might be.

Just as Kammy expected the raven media to cover her own flexible portrayal of her current and earlier political positions, she knew they would do little to expose Walls' true political leanings. The media ravens understood the importance of applying a double standard to their investigative reporting and news stories as well as their Op/Eds and editorials. They would dig deep into every comment that Big Donnie and Van ever made and remind their readers daily about the continued evidence in those words of bias, discrimination, rudeness, misinformation or inconsistency with contemporary standards of decency and political/cultural correctness. But the media ravens would never apply the same energy, interest or coverage to the content, consistency or current implications of earlier comments made by Walls or her.

Kammy's one fear was that Big Donnie or Van would have the discipline to reset the election conversation to the issues that the voters in the garden really cared about. Issues like the economy and immigration. She had three strategies to deal with this. Her first strategy was distraction. With plenty of help from the media ravens,

she and Walls would continually bait Big Donnie and Van with questions about foolish, insulting or incorrect things they had said. History showed they would bite and forget about whatever substantive issues they were supposed to be talking about.

Her second strategy involved generalities. She and Walls would have enough happy, positive sound bites to appeal to every voter in the garden. Once they spouted the right encouraging words, she was sure that the voters' short attention spans, simple voter laziness and careful control of the raven media would negate any voter interest in learning the important details behind the buzzwords.

Kammy's third strategy involved controlling the format of election stories on the raven media. This involved two steps. First, having the media lead with positive, uplifting videos and stories supplying the latest news on the Blue Party candidates. Second, having the media provide some apparent effort at balance by including a negative or embarrassing story about the Red Party candidates—typically something they said that others rebutted as factually incorrect or a bad idea—always ending on a negative note about Big Donnie and Van and a warm, happy feeling for Kammy and the coach. The goal was simple: occasionally equal time but never equal coverage.

[To be continued.]

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