

The Tree Frog, the Toad and the Chameleon

A Purple Parable for Our Times

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Episode 3: The Rise of Kammy

When 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.”