

Chapter 3
*Dorothy Barrymore, Director of Press/Outreach
Operations*
Campaign to Elect Brad Tapelson 2012
5:03 am

“Thank you for getting out of bed this morning. I can assure you that it is vitally important that we have this meeting before the start of the day.”

Yes sir, Agent Singer sir. Not that I was given a whole hell of a lot of choice. Guy with an earpiece knocks and pounds on your door and tells you to come. You come. Jesus, how much sleep did I get? What time is it? 5:03. Man. Good thing I had the clean blouse by the door. My mouth tastes like crap. Is fuzzy a food group? Any calories?

“We believe that there is a credible threat to the life of the candidate.”

Whoa, what? The candidate. Brad? “The Mime?”
Well isn’t that their job? My job is to get him elected.
Dorothy Barrymore, girl wonder. Handle the press.
Their job is to keep him alive. Suits, *et. al.* You do
your job. I do mine. Fine, you have said your piece.
Now can we get out of here and I can some real work
done?

Wait, did he say credible? Credible? Incredible. I do
NOT need this right now. I am the voice of the fucking
mime, and when he does his magic Houdini stuff they
come to me and ask what does he really mean, and I
have to say about a billion times a day the candidates
views are clearly expressed for one and all to see, and I
know it’s all bullshit because it is not clearly expressed
for one and all to see, because if it was so clearly
expressed I would not have to go back and craft some
kind clarification statement that of course clarifies
nothing. And of course all the time I am thinking, what
DOES he mean? Oh sweet Jesus, like that umbrella
stunt last night. Where did they come up with that
one? And couldn’t SOMEONE have given me a heads
up? Obviously not. The Press, they are going to be
all over me. Damn I got a couple hundred messages on
it already and it’s not even been 5 hours. No advance
notice from “The Mime”, no time to prepare, no idea
what the...

“And we think someone is this room is responsible.”

Whoa. What? *Responsible* responsible? I am so NOT

responsible for anything that goes on around here. I am just trying to hang on by a thread here. God, I will never get a job again. Unless we win this damn thing. I could handle being the press secretary to the President of the United States. Looking good behind the podium. Lose, I'm the idiot that tried to speak for the mime. Win, I'm a genius.

Roll the dice, take your chances.

Of course, it would be nice if the guy devoted two brain cells to thinking about what he might do if elected. Man, remember Dallas? The NSA guys giving him a briefing on the latest fuck-up in the Middle East and he's like, yeah the Middle East, I've got to think about that. And he looks over to Clynell, his lighting guy, those two guys are just weird they are so joined together, and they look and Clynell says the dog bit and Brad says the fence bit and Debbie says the neighbor guy and Brad gets all excited and then they all jump up and start talking gibberish, and then Brad looks over at me and says something like "Its cool, we got the Middle East covered."

And the next thing you know we are in Madison giving what I have been hyping as a Major Policy Statement on International Relations in general and the Middle East in particular and the current front-runner for the nomination of the Republican Party for President is on stage acting for all the world like he is a dog. And this dog is walking down the street minding his own

business just ambling along and he passes by this house that has this other dog in it, and the dog inside the house goes completely nuts, cause like this other dog is pissing on his lawn. So the current front-runner for the Republican nomination for President is a dog pissing on a yard of this other dog and I am PRAYING that it doesn't become anything more solid, and this angry dog in the house is like going nuts, but there is this wall he keeps running into and the more he runs into it the more angry this dog gets all while this other dog is just like happily going on with its business.

I gotta admit he really did the two different dogs well.

So then the angry dog like breaks through the wall or jumps over it or something, and shakes itself like whoa, sees the other dog and throws himself at the other dog like he had been doing, but this time instead of hitting the wall, he keeps going and you can see the angry dog going, yeah I'm free, I'm going to get this mother fucking dog that has been pissing on MY lawn, but then like as the angry dog is running the angry dog begins to realize that is it no longer safe behind its wall, and it's like, umm, maybe I should reconsider this, and begins to slow down and wag its tail, and the dog that has been pissing on this yard is just like standing there holding its ground, and so by the time the two dogs meet they are like hey, how's it going, nice to meet ya, nice place to piddle, how's the wife and kids, hey you got a pretty good smelling butt, well have a nice day, you too, see ya.

And that was it. Cue the applause and I felt the entire press corps swinging their attention to me, “The Oracle” to “The Mime.”

And like the rest of us, the ones not clued into the harmonic convergence which is like the essence of “The Mime,” especially me who is like supposed to explain this shit as a Major Policy Statement on International Relations in general and the Middle East in particular; who is trying to figure out how this could possibly be a Major Policy Statement on International Relations in general and the Middle East in particular are going nuts because, because clearly as a Major Policy Bla Bla Bla this is a pure dog shit.

And I have to make it seem Presidential.

Admittedly the crowd goes nuts for several minutes, which usually doesn’t happen at Major Policy Statement on International Relations in general and the Middle East in particular. Of course it was a professional mime up there. In watching “The Mime” I realized that was one thing he really brings to the world of politics.

He does know how to milk it.

So this time I corner “The Mime” as he comes off stage, well me and a couple of my equally intrepid staff, and I demand to know what was the point of this, and how is it an answer to what is wrong with the

Middle East, and how the hell was a pissing dog the solution to 5,000 years of conflict?

Bill Diggins, an intrepid staff-member who is an amiable also-ran I have known since like college says,

“It’s brilliant. I get it. Strong fences keep the rabid dog away from the good dog.”

Sue Finney was a not so intrepid staff-member who is one of those southern blondes whose cleavage is deep and brain is shallow, but if you reversed it and told it to her face she would hate you forever. We picked her up from Senator Vittner’s campaign after another hooker got caught with his phone number on speed dial says,

“No, sugar. My momma could tell you it is about the dog on the street that doesn’t back down and stares that rabid dog down till it calms down and is willing to sit down at the table and be nice and neighborly to all its neighbors like.”

“No, no, no, no.”

This was from Isaac who really WAS intrepid but always felt you had to know exactly how brilliant he was. I think the whole frizzy hair, socially inept, continually plugged into at least three electronic devices was an affectation thing, myself. He was one frustrated dude on this particular campaign where brilliance, to put it mildly, was not prized. Hopefully his big paycheck was compensation enough.

“No, the fence makes the dog rabid and once it’s not longer behind the fence there is no need for it to be all angry.”

They all looked at Brad, and Brad smiled.

“Yes,” was all he said.

I got to admit I got sort of mad after all this miming bullshit and called him on it,

“You know, Mr. Tapelson, with all due respect, if you get elected president and suddenly have to do something about the Middle East or whatever, a cute little dog and pony show is not going to cut it, and “yes” is not much of a response. So what is it? Good fences. Calm, strong dog. No fences. Pick one.”

I spread my hands to indicate the three choices.

Brad smiled. And did that enigmatic hand thing.

That pissed me off even more. It had been a long night, I knew I was going to be asked about it, and there was no way I was going to be able to explain his position on the Middle East whose main point, as near as I can tell, was an amazingly empathetic version of a dog and a tree.

Of course for most people a dog and a tree was about as deep as they thought about stuff like the Middle

East, but still this guy was running for President. And while most people moved from thinking about the dog and the tree and the Middle East without much more thought, this guy would actually have to do something about it...

So I pushed him just a tad.

“So tell us hot shot. Say you are the President and the Israelis are building new settlements and bulldozing orchards and the Palestinians are shooting rockets. We still get our oil from there and we still got troops in Arab countries. What are you going to do, Mr. President?”

It suddenly got quiet around us. Even his crew got that settled look that meant that I had gotten through and looked at Brad too. The difference was that they looked at him like they knew what he was going to say would be a good thing to hear. They really believed in the guy. The rest of us, I would say, were a bit further back on the drinking kool-aid enthusiasm meter. I think even the Secret Service guys were listening, in their watchful bland sort of way.

“OK, Dorothy,” he began.

His speaking voice was surprisingly very low, quiet, deep, well articulated and resonant.

I mean the man was focused and had been focused on this public persona, this mime thing, for his entire adult life. He only showed to the world what he wanted, and he chose to withhold his voice from public consumption. He never said a word if there was an outsider with any kind of recording device around.

When he was in public or on stage he was “The Mime” and he trusted his crew to make any sounds he might need for him.

Of course, it was only within the past six months anyone had actually cared what his voice sounded like.

But at any rate, unlike every other politician who has thousands of hours of audio recordings out there, for “The Mime” there was none. And while no one displayed the slightest interest in those thousand hours of audio from other politicians, for “The Mime” there had arisen a considerable cottage industry of people who supplied “The Mime” voice-overs of Mime images.

It was actually brilliant. Nature abhors a vacuum and all. So people basically took footage of “The Mime” (of which conversely there was a lot out there and we made sure was freely available), and added their own sound tracks. Of course, almost of all of it was pretty low-brow. Honestly, almost all of it was so low if there was a category for no-brow they would have fit well there. For instance, dialogues as if “The Mime” had

a voice like that of Alvin and the Chipmunks were incredibly popular. Him going “HEH HEH HEH, that’s SOOOOOO FUNNY,” became a catch phrase with a life all its own.

Another series imagined his dialogue consisting entirely of TV or movie catch phrases. I have to admit a mime doing the whole, “Go ahead punk, make my day,” thing while holding an invisible flower was pretty funny.

And if there WAS one thing “The Mime” was clear on, it was that he was totally OK with whatever anyone did with his image as he appeared in a public space. It totally fascinated him to see what other people had done with his performances. I was told that before I got on-board and things had taken off, in the early days of the campaign watching mash-ups of him was the major form of his recreation. I believe he called it “research.”

As the campaign got more money, the one thing he made sure that all his performance stuff was out there both with and without the sound effects that he had originally used.

Good, bad, indifferent, pro, con the reaction didn’t matter, he welcomed them all. And he told me to tell everyone in the world that they could put anything under his image. Thank God that bandwidth kept getting cheaper, ‘cause we kept eating up more and

more of it almost every week.

And as we were running as a Republican Mime, you can imagine there were a lot of pretty creative talented who where more or less perpetually pissed off at us, and sometimes the shots that some people took were not entirely meant in fun, or even good taste.

There was even entire sub-genre of Mime tapes using sound tracks from pornography that was incredibly popular.

Those ones amused the motley crew and “The Mime” most himself, I heard.

Some people added jazz.

Cool jazz.

Sick fucks.

But “The Mime” was OK with it.

And so with porn and jazz openly accepted, the message that anything was OK clearly got out there.

At the start of the campaign they had tried to run all of the videos from the Diet Dairy web site, but as the campaign caught on it overwhelmed them and Uncle Charley slid over some of his dollars and we set up a special “The Mime” domain.

And while, “The Mime” might be vague on the Middle East, the budget, abortion or just about every other real god damn issue thing out here in the world, but when it came to “The Mime” videos, “The Mime” insisted that someone, then a room of someones, then a whole conglomerations of someones, keep tabs on the stuff that was out there.

And show him the good stuff.

And since he considered these videos “the press” and since I was press person, that whole operation was my bailiwick.

So soon ohhjtmyoom, MoNnMn and my own personal favorite ScruffyDoggg became minor celebrities in their own right as their sound loops became incorporated into the campaign narrative.

In a way it was that was just another aspect of what made him so good as a candidate. He was always comfortable accepting what other people projected onto him – he actually courted it. Instead of him insisting on an image, other than the whole being called “The Mime” thing – he accepted what ever they wanted to see in him. He used the videos to see what they wanted him to be, and then gave them back more of it.

He was a genuine creature of his audience. He learned a lot about Angry Outsider Railing Against Corrupt Authority from what people did to his videos

It was almost frightening, actually.

The other thing about him being so silent for such a large part of the day was that when he did speak, you actually paid a lot more attention.

“OK, Dorothy, it is like this, if I am actually elected President of these here United States that means the majority of the people will want what I want and they want what I show them.”

“But what they have seen so far is you as a dog pissing on a tree.”

“And that’s all they are going to see. And if I am elected that is the President they will get.”

“But they assume that there is some more there.”

“I am not responsible for the assumptions of others. If people choose not to think beyond the surface, that is their choice. But I am honestly presenting who I am. Each movement is pure.”

“You are a dog pissing on a tree.”

“Exactly. The people will get the President they vote for. They will get the President they deserve.”

“And when people find out that their assumptions are wrong and that President is just as clueless as they are?”

“Hopefully they will have learned that they should look beneath the surface and think for themselves.”

“But in the meantime, things are fucked up.”

“Perhaps.”

“You bastard.”

“Perhaps. We Buddhists have been called many things.”

“You’re a fucking Buddhist?”

He smiled enigmatically. Kind of like Buddha, actually. The funny thing is we had been given a pretty much a pass of Brad’s religion because every time anyone asked him he would just put his hands together and look upward. And do the enigmatic smile thing. You could practically hear the angels. And, I know this sounds stupid in retrospect but everyone assumed he was some kind of Christian because he looked like the way a Jesus was supposed to look. One of those Jesuses that you see on candles, or in Woolworth’s or on air fresheners. Thick, brown wavy hair. Crystal clear, blue eyes.

Sturdy lithe body. He just radiated Muscular Christianity in its most pure form. When asked by pollsters to guess what religion Brad was, 97% of people said whatever religion they were. This included atheists and agnostics. The only consistent outliers on this question were Mormons living outside the state of Utah. But since they were not much of a voting block (even in the Republican Party) we never spent much time figuring out why.

For me the occasional question from the press as to his religious beliefs had gotten the “The candidate has been quite clear on this topic and his record speaks for itself,” bullshit.

I really could say it asleep and sound convincing.

The motley crew reacted like the news that Brad was a closet Buddhist was the delivery of a punch line to a joke that had been months in coming. They seemed to enjoy the discomfort of the rest of us.

“Just when you were planning on sharing this little tidbit with the American people?”

I admit I was a little ticked off. Just another thing for me to “explain” of course. “The candidate has been quite clear on this topic and his record speaks for itself. Clearly, looking upward with your hands pressed together means ‘Buddhist’.” Christ, I was going to have to say that with a straight face.

Fuck.

“I am thinking after the election.”

Or not. Not bringing it up was actually a good idea if we could pull it off, but if it came out before the election, it could be trouble. Nice when Buddhist principles coincided with political reality.

“Good. Let’s keep it that way. Anyone know you are Buddhist?”

“It not like there is a central registry for us, Dorothy.”

“Good. But I why the fuck haven’t you told anyone explicitly what you are?”

“I know in my mind that my path is laid out and clear. If people think I am full of knowledge and Christian, and I never claim that I am, and they elect me then I have been true to myself. And America will get the President and the lesson that it deserves. And the Buddha will be satisfied.”

And now it seems that one of us wanted this Buddhist bastard dead.

I wonder who?

Aside from me, of course.

I mean for me it was just part of my job.

Excerpt from

MIME TIME
A POLITICAL MYSTERY

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