

PREDATORS

by

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I have never met Jacqueline Kennedy. When George told me that he was sponsoring a fundraiser for Teddy Kennedy in New York on Thursday with all of the family in attendance, it seemed like a chance to meet them and pick up some conversation material. My uncle Pat was a great friend of The Ambassador. That's how some people identified Joseph Kennedy. I don't know why, but that was the job that seemed to stick and if you referred to him as The Ambassador, it meant you were in on it and had to be connected to the clan in some way. If you were Irish and from Massachusetts like I was, being connected somehow to the Kennedy family was a useful thing. Not useful in the sense that it would be useful to really have them involved in your life so that you could do things to people, but useful in that it gave strangers something to talk about when they met you. Maybe it was my appearance, but when people heard my Irish name and that I was from Massachusetts, they assumed my people worked for the state and spent their spare time stuffing ballot boxes. Well, they were right, but that isn't the point as far as I was concerned. There were other things to talk about, or at least I thought

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that I had other things that I felt like talking about, but somehow that family kept coming back into the conversations.

So, here is what I know. Yes, I did meet the president when I was very young. He wasn't president then, but that doesn't matter. I met him. He said hello and we drove along together on a motorcade while he and my dad were campaigning for office in the late 50's. He was running for the U.S. Senate again and my dad wanted to keep his job as the District Attorney of Middlesex County. Middlesex County, you should know, has Cambridge in it, so there were a lot of Harvard guys who worked on the campaign. They also worked for Kennedy and were going to run the world eventually. At eleven, I did not know that, but I sensed that the people around the motorcade felt they were doing something very, very important. My job was to get into the car or the boat when I was told and be quiet.

In those days, the picnics and parties were the places to see the politicians. Television was an immediate hit when it came out, but it took some time before people used it as their access to politicians. The newspapers still counted then and the candidates would drive around the state and talk to crowds at church picnics, Jewish community centers and meetings of the Sons of Italy. There were no live television cameras around, just newspaper photographers and some movie cameras. I never saw radio people, but they must have been there. That made for a lot of stop-action scenes when everyone would hold still, hold up their hands and smile, but say nothing. I think of it as a photo-bite, which to me is the direct ancestor of the sound-bite. Now they call it the photo-op, but it was dif-

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ferent then, because there was no sound-bite opportunity. It had not been discovered yet. Radio was still a sincere medium and usually carried whole sentences. It takes a good visual to deliver a real sound-bite. The picture was the thing and Kennedy was great at it.

But, he still had to make a speech. There were people and reporters around and they would publish something about it for those people who didn't stop with the picture. There were not many readers like that, but the downside of a bad speech was significant. If Kennedy said something really stupid, it would be a headline, so people wrote good speeches for him. I know because I listened to it very carefully.

His speech was delivered with wit, enthusiasm, power and drama. I was mesmerized. I did not appreciate who he was since I was young and I was there to provide a family prop for my father. I wasn't totally uninformed though. I knew he was our senator and that he was a Democrat. There was another senator then named Saltonstall, but he was a Yankee and a Protestant and his people wanted to kill my people or send them back to starve in Ireland, so we would not spend much time talking about him. Kennedy was different. He was a friend of the family and one of us. Even at eleven, I knew that being one of us was the only real test for legitimacy in politics. Figuring out who was one of us when the names were no longer Irish was a constant problem for me, however.

But, getting back to the speech. He ended it by asking for his cape and his whip for he had promises to keep and miles to go before he could sleep. I caught the rhyme and I know it was a metaphor because we were going by car to the next

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picnic, but it was very moving. The crowd loved it. I loved it. He stood still for a few minutes with his hand raised and smiled for the cameras. Then I had to run to the car and get rid of the hot chocolate, because it was time to leave. We drove in convertibles through little towns outside of Cambridge and I was freezing. For some reason, the temperature seemed to drop once we got into the cars and started driving. Apparently, the concept of wind-chill hadn't made it to the politicians in Massachusetts. No one told me to bring a hat or coat, so I froze and waved at people. Kennedy had the first car; we were in the second. When we stopped it got warm again, but the air was threatening rain.

At the next picnic, Kennedy made the same speech. He had the same wit, enthusiasm, power and drama. The crowd laughed at the jokes and cheered at the same pauses as the last crowd. It moved too quickly for me to understand what I was feeling, but somehow it did not seem right. When we hit the next picnic and I heard the speech again, I thought the whole thing was a big scam. None of the people in the audience seemed to know that he had made the same impassioned and witty speech three or four times already and that the sincerity and pathos were losing their hold on me. So, I focused on the food. There was a consistency in the picnic menus. I had a lot of hotdogs, hot chocolate (I was still freezing) and cookies. As long as I was around to be introduced to the crowd with my brother as Gilmore's kids, I could do whatever I wanted. So, I ate.

In retrospect, I was unkind to the Senator. What else could he do but use the same speech? It was new material to every-

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one at the picnics. None of the people in the motorcade listened because they had heard it before. I did notice their lack of interest from the start, but it took me a while to realize that they had other things to do than listen to a speech they probably knew by heart. The campaign people were in the crowd smiling, talking and acting like everyone was their pal. No one spent any time talking to my brother or me, but we got used to it as the day wore on. Like the cars, the bumper stickers, the hats and posters, we were campaign materials. In the daze of the experience, I had no idea what I was. I went where I was told, stayed clear of my dad when he was talking earnestly to someone and hung around the food table until called. I wish now I had spent more time watching the Senator, but no one told me he was going to be shot in a few years. The speech and the spectacle had grown old in the course of the day and I have no particular memories until dinner.

When it got dark, we finally got into a regular car. The Kennedy people went somewhere. My dad told me that we were going to meet the Sons of Italy. He told me that this was important because a lot of Italians were Republicans, which was a bad thing, but the Italian Democrats were the best. I sensed that the good Italians and the bad Italians were all Sons of Italy, so that the dinner was some kind of showdown. I was wrong though. The dinner was a dinner and I was next to my dad at the head table. After a day of having nothing to say to me, he turned and said, "Dan, the Italians like it when you eat, so eat everything they give you."

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After a day of hotdogs, hot chocolate, candy, cookies and coke, the lasagna on my plate looked enormous. There was no room. I could get it into my mouth, but I did not think I could do anything more. As my dad looked over, I could hear the command. He did not have to say it. I swallowed and my stomach expanded before my eyes. It rumbled and strained, but I kept at it. I stared at the food until it was gone. I felt terrible. I remember nothing further until I threw up at home later that evening. It was red, orange and smelled awful. The stench came back to me when I was in the cab on the way to the Ted Kennedy party.

I did not know about Teddy's party until George Roth told me to come by as his guest. George was an investment banker and raised a lot of money for Democrats. I had first met George ten years ago when I selected him as a consultant in the AmCal bankruptcy case. It was a big case back then and George made a couple of million dollars on it, so he kept in touch in the hope that I would send another case his way. George made a lot of money, but he could not stay away from politics. His wife told me that he wanted to be the secretary of the treasury some day, but he hadn't made it yet. I had not seen either him or his wife for several years. They were involved in a nasty divorce when I had met George for dinner that week and we didn't talk much about it. He had been trying to get rid of her for a while. Ten years ago, he had put me in her path and I had spent four terrific years visiting New York whenever I could and screwing his wife. She liked to have the three of us get together for dinner during my visits. I think she got a charge out of sitting between me and

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George at dinner and then showing up at my hotel after George had gone to sleep.

She was a beautiful woman and I could not understand why George had nothing to do with her. They lived together in a magnificent co-op overlooking Central Park and kept a house in the Hamptons. She told me that she had given up on George and that he did not care what she did with her life as long as she was around to hostess his parties. She said that he had no idea what she did with her time. Mostly, she spent her time working out, running in Central Park, and picking out restaurants for dinner. That was fine with me. She was energetic and focused when we spent our time together. I did miss the sleep, but I could make it up at home.

George was too subtle for me to catch on to his hard work at getting Sally and me together. I think he had an even better time than Sally at our dinners suggesting that Sally should show my wife around the city sometime when I brought her along for a business trip. Sally said she would be delighted and I said we would have to make some plans. I had no intention of putting the four of us in the same place at the same time. My idea of an affair was to keep Sally in New York and the wife in Chicago. Things did not work out that way, however, and Sally found more ways to get the four of us together. Colleen, my wife, thought Sally and George were wonderful. For Colleen it was just a matter of values: the Roths were rich. With George and Colleen being so cooperative, Sally and I had no problem getting together in Chicago, New York and any other place we felt like visiting. Sally, of course, understood that George and Colleen were very happy for us. I

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think George realized that Sally needed something to do with her time, and Colleen was glad to see me out of the house and on the road. I thought I was being very discreet. Things were going along pretty well for a few years until Sally realized that I was still seeing Martha.

I was supposed to have gotten rid of Martha. I should have gotten rid of Martha, but I didn't. Somehow, Sally figured it out and that was that. I think George was even more disappointed about it than I was. When Sally and I were still an item, he was trying to decide whether he was better off getting divorced or just setting her up with an allowance and a boy friend. After Sally got rid of me, she went after George for everything he had.

George was still trying to get divorced when we reconnected. Sally was holding out for a lot of money. He could not get her to make a deal. I think he blamed me. Instead of moving her out of his house and keeping her entertained, I gave her a hobby to follow while she plotted her assault on George's fortune. George had made a lot of money in the 80's. He was much richer after he passed Sally on to me than he was when he first set us up. I sensed that he held a grudge about that, but I did not see that it was my fault. I had kept up my end by chasing Sally. If she was giving him a hard time about money, I could hardly be blamed. I had had my own problems. Colleen and I had split up and we were having our own nasty divorce. I was now living in New York with Laura who wasn't finished with her own divorce. When I finally told Martha that I was going to get married to someone else, she sued me.

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George and I were still friends though and it seemed like a good idea to get together for dinner. I wasn't seeing Sally anymore, George and I hadn't seen each other for three or four years, and I was at last moving to New York. We had a lovely dinner. I brought Laura and he brought his girlfriend. That seemed right to me since we were trying to get off on the right foot again. Bringing along Sally's daughter Hannah from her (Sally's) previous marriage, however, was puzzling. I didn't figure that one out until dessert. Hannah looked exactly like her mother. So, George wanted to have Sally there after all. And he wanted to make sure that I knew that he knew about me and Sally. That should have alerted me to the problem with the Kennedy party.

There was nothing wrong with the party itself. How could there be? George and his friends had the "21" Club for the evening to raise money for Ted Kennedy. Teddy was supposed to be in big trouble with his reelection and all of the Democratic money people in New York were tripping over themselves to help. They all knew that he was going to win, but they could pretend they were rallying around him in his time of need. The theme was also a good way to raise money from people who didn't really know the score. Despite all of his personal wealth and rich friends, the contributions from the people outside the group could add up to some real money. For me, the draw was Jackie. I could see myself telling my friends how marvelous she looked at Teddy's party at "21" the other night. If I could speak to her, that would be even better. I knew some people who lived in her building. We could exchange Jackie-siting stories.

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It was a famous place, but no one with any sense would go to the "21" Club to eat. The food has always been terrible. Lunch is the big meal there, but since the regular crowd is usually shooting down gin or bourbon, no one notices the food. The place got its start during Prohibition and is still one of the few continuously operated speakeasies in the country. The "21" Club sign is very small, but people locate the place by looking for a row of little three-foot jockey statuettes lined up along the outside wall. The interior of the restaurant is dark and wood paneled. There are toy fire engines, hats and other thrift-shop items hung from the ceiling to give it a festive feel.

Sally liked to take me there for a late meal since no one she knew would be eating there at night. One of the genuine perks of seeing Sally was that she insisted on using George's money for everything. She had a passion for restaurants and spent a lot of time keeping up with the cuisine in the city. She was much more reliable than a food guide since she and her friends were on top of the scene on a daily basis. With all of that food on her plate, she never gained any weight. I didn't pay close enough attention to see where the food went, but I am certain she ate some of it.

My guess is that she and her friends spent the day at their clubs in training so they could do the restaurants at night. She was in terrific shape when I knew her. George was not. She told me that she had been pushing red meat on him for the past few years, but it didn't seem to be doing any good. He was getting fat, but he was still alive. I thought she was joking at the time, but I didn't really know her then. Sally rarely joked.

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George was a marked man if he didn't get rid of her. But he knew that and that was where I was supposed to come in.

Thoughts of Sally and the meal at the Sons of Italy some thirty-five years earlier were mixed together as I came to the restaurant. For some reason, I always think of food when I think about politics or women. I was not prepared for the crowd. The party had been heavily hyped in the press. Apparently, Jackie didn't go to a lot of political parties and the appearance for her brother-in-law was a big deal in New York. As people walked the gauntlet of photographers and fans, they got the once-over. If they had some celebrity status, the cameras flashed. The rest of us just went on past the lines of cops, security guards and restaurant flacks to the reservation table.

"Hi, I'm Dan Gilmore. George Roth invited me." The charming young woman looked at her list, but I wasn't there.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gilmore, but you don't appear on our list." There was a crowd lining up by this time since everyone else had been on their list and checked-off with a smiling welcome.

"Are you certain?" I asked with a diffident tone. "Mr. Roth is a sponsor and told me to come as his guest."

"I'm quite certain, Mr. Gilmore." She looked over to a very large man in a very expensive suit who was standing next to another large man, also nicely turned out. Kennedy never went anywhere without big friends in nice suits. That made sense to me since the poor man was undoubtedly a target of a never-ending stream of nuts and party-crashers. It did not take much time for me to appreciate George's sneaky move in getting me to the table at the fundraiser without putting

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me on the list. I would either have to give the nice woman from the DNC the six thousand dollars that bought a ticket to the party or my fiancée and I would get the bum's rush through the restaurant and out into the street.

Laura and I had not been thrown out of any restaurants together as long as we had known each other. I had been on my best behavior with her. My last memory of being tossed from a restaurant was quite vague. It was a tacky bar in Louisiana and I was too drunk at the time to know what I had done, but I do remember being tossed across a room and into some chairs. For a second, it felt like I was flying. I thought about that event, but dismissed it. The Kennedy crowd had more class than that. We would just walk out like we had walked in on the wrong party. They should be nice about it, I thought, but Laura might not get the humor of it. Laura and I had not really gone over my history with George in sufficient detail for her to see it from his side. He had to pretend that he didn't know what was going on with Sally so that I would think it was a challenge and feel clever. Now that it was over, he couldn't let it go without making it clear to me that he was in on it from the beginning and that I was the clown in the program, not him. If Laura had been with me at George's home the night I had to go down the servants' stairway while George was coming in through the main entrance, she would have had a better perspective. George had made a lot of noise coming in that night and gave me plenty of time to get dressed and get out.

If George wanted to see me humiliated and carried out of the room by Kennedy's security guys, he had some justifica-

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tion for it. I had been screwing his wife for a few years and had never really asked his permission. In fact, I really thought I had him fooled at the time. He was entitled to take a shot, cuckold though he was. Nevertheless, I thought it was a nasty trick to play on Laura. She was a non-combatant and he had only just met her at dinner two nights before. And, besides, he had wanted me to screw his wife. You might say I was doing him a favor. While I was keeping her busy, he could do whatever he was doing without worrying about her checking up on him. So, I wasn't certain as I stood there observing the charming young woman signaling the goons in the Armani suits whether I should be angry at George. I certainly didn't have six thousand dollars for Teddy Kennedy. Laura was looking at me by this time. I think she saw the high sign to the goons as well. I decided that George deserved a little revenge. Even though he didn't mind what Sally and I were doing, he was her husband and he probably thought it appropriate to make a fool out of me on my first week in New York. He knew that Colleen had cleaned me out and that I didn't have the cash. I knew that Sally would hear about it from her friends at the party and get a good laugh. Then Vicki came over. Vicki had been my law partner. More important, she was now Mrs. Teddy Kennedy.

Though I had not seen her in a few years, Vicki is a terrific sport and gave me a big hug and a smooch. She had no idea that she was rescuing me from the gorillas at the door, but I asked her to introduce me to Ted and brought Laura along into the room. With Vicki's arm around me, I passed on by the gatekeepers. As we passed George, I said "Hi," and he smiled

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like he expected me to be there all along. I planned to visit with him in a few minutes.

Teddy was greeting everyone with a few personal words. He knew a lot of the people there since they had been giving him money for years. I had not spoken to him myself since I was in college. He did know my uncle Pat, I assumed, since Pat had been tight with The Ambassador.

"Ted, I want you to meet my partner, Dan Gilmore."

"Hello, hello."

"It's so good to meet you. I'm from Lowell, you probably know my uncle Pat."

"Yes, yes, the Gilmores. Pat was very kind to my aunt. They are a wonderful family. Wonderful. But then there was the one who went to California. Now he was something else." Teddy laughed and blustered. He has a very large head and when he opened his mouth to laugh, it seems to get bigger.

Teddy's merry laughter was understandable, but not what I had expected. The fellow he was talking about was my father. I did not want to remind Teddy about my father. I always have identified myself as Pat Gilmore's nephew when I speak to Massachusetts politicians. Everyone loved Pat because he gave people money. My dad Michael ("Mick") Gilmore was a different story. When Teddy was getting caught cheating at Harvard, Mick Gilmore was a successful young politician in Massachusetts. In the late 1950's, he was elected district attorney in one of the largest counties in Massachusetts and had his sights on the governorship.

Mick got in trouble when his mistress went to the papers with her story in the middle of his last political campaign.

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Despite the scandal, Mick won the election and had a six-year term ahead of him. Unfortunately for Mick, when he paid off the mistress and had his uncle Pat get her out of town, she got hold of a telephone and gave the papers enough dirt for a week of headlines. The papers said she had been kidnaped. Things got too hot for Mick after a while. Jack Kennedy and the rest of the Democratic establishment told him to forget about ever getting elected to governor or anything else. They also suggested he disappear since Kennedy was getting ready for a presidential race and they didn't want to have Mick and his problems around when the campaign started. Pat couldn't help him once the papers got the story. That was thirty-five years ago. It was definitely old news when I said hello to Teddy.

I should have known that Teddy would still have the story stored for ready access. There was a certain amount of irony somewhere in the story, but Teddy was not the guy to tell it. He should have seen my dad as a fellow traveler, but he didn't.

"Senator, I want you to meet my fiancée Laura. She is Peter McMann's cousin. She's from Lowell, too."

Laura did not like the introduction. The rumor was that Teddy had asked Peter to say he was driving the car at Chapaquiddick that night. True or not, it was bad form to bring it up at a fundraiser. Laura turned to me in disbelief.

Teddy kept the smile going, put out his right hand to Laura and said, "Nice to meet you."

He moved his right hand and his left foot together. He brought his left arm around to sort of almost pat Laura on the back and moved on. It was an impressive move and took

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about two seconds, tops. He was gone. Vicki was gone. Laura and I were alone.

"Why did you say that to him?" Laura was still glaring at me. She had not heard Teddy laughing about Mick.

"Sorry, it just came out."

The crowd was growing larger and people were getting restless. I still had George to deal with, so we pushed on through the crowd, shook some Kennedy hands, and made it to the corner where George was talking to one of his finance friends.

"Hello, George. This is a great turnout. Thanks for mentioning it to us. We were in Washington this morning and almost forgot about it."

"Glad you could make it, Dan. This was supposed to be a smaller group. I don't know where everyone came from."

"This is a big one for Ted. He's up against a Mormon." I hoped that George would respond to that comment since Mit Romney's personal and family life bothered Teddy's people a lot. Vicki took care of that problem though. She was beautiful, intelligent, faithful and impossible to fool. Teddy had cleaned up his act. He was a reformed man and people were ready to forgive.

"He's got nothing to worry about, Dan. We raised over two million for this party alone and we did it in two weeks. Everyone knows he's going to beat Romney, but they want to say they were with him when he was in trouble."

George had been treasurer of the Democrats in New York for a long time and was a reliable source when it came to money and elections. He often said that people did not

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understand money in elections. People think that money buys elections. That is not untrue, but it misses the real point. As George explained it to me, to get the money to buy the election, you need a candidate people think will win even if he didn't have any money. Now, everyone knows that even a candidate who could win without any money could never win if he really didn't have any money, so they want to give him money to be sure that he remembers that they gave him the money he needed to win. It does sound a little circular, but that's how it goes. You get the money because people think you are going to win. You win because you have the money. George and his friends raised the money.

Now, there are exceptions to the general rule, but they usually involved people who have a lot of their own money, like Kennedy, but are so bizarre in their politics that people feel badly about all that money being wasted on a nut case. Forbes, Huffington, Perot were the examples George liked to use. The Kennedy bet was a sure thing for everyone in the room. George and his friends had no trouble rounding up the supporters, but he was not happy with the party.

"Jackie isn't coming," he said when I came by to say hello. "Teddy says she's got the flu, but I think there's something going on." Later on we found out that the poor woman had cancer, but the crowd at "21" felt personally slighted to have paid all that money for the party. Like everyone else in the world, it was really Jackie they wanted to see and she wasn't coming. When I shook hands with her son earlier, I didn't think to strike up a conversation with him since I was still looking for his mother. By the time people realized that Teddy was

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not going to produce Jackie, the room was full and it was too late to leave before the speeches. I could not get over to John Kennedy and at least have a few quotable words with him before he left since it seemed that everyone else had decided to do it ahead of me, so I listened.

Laura will still unhappy with my introduction to the Senator, so we weren't talking when the speeches started. I could not tune into the speech at all. Part of the problem was that Teddy no longer spoke in sentences. As he took the podium, he looked to his left and said, "There are millions of people who will never see their Social Security taxes if we don't take a stand now." I expected him to continue to talk about the stand, but I was wrong. After the applause and the camera flashes, he paused, turned to the people on his right and said, "We must have a defense policy that insures that we will be strong, but not at the cost of educating our young people. They are our future." Another pause, and then directly to those of us in front, he added, "We must never forget what Martin Luther King taught us. Every American has the right to equal opportunity and our laws should ensure those rights for all Americans."

I was stunned. It was as though his internal wiring had come apart and he was shouting out slogans like an old record with the needle skipping. But he didn't stop. It kept going on and on. In a matter of minutes, he hit every liberal issue of the past ten years in short quotable sound-bites. While I was listening to it, I thought I was watching a psychotic breakdown, but the crowd seemed to like it. Each sound-bite was followed by cameras and reliable applause. When it was over, I felt like I had

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been hallucinating. I don't drink any more. I quit after Sally and I split up. Apart from a cigar now and then, I don't smoke. But I felt truly disoriented as he waved to the crowd and left the podium. It took a while to understand what had happened to me.

The experience became coherent the next morning when I watched the news about the event. The television showed the gauntlet of photographers lining the entrance to "21" just before the party. Thanks to Vicki, there was no footage of me being tossed out the door for trying to crash the party. The cameras scanned the crowd. Everyone looked excited and enthusiastic. Then Teddy appeared and the sound-bites followed. He sounded very good. His eyes were on camera; the delivery had passion; and his comments were to the point. For the television audience who were not standing in the room with Teddy while the sound-bites came out in sequence, there was nothing to it. I realized that there was nothing at all wrong with Teddy that night. If he had used more than two sentences on any topic, the television stations would not use the material. He was speaking to the cameras, not to the people in the room. Once again, I realized that I was the jackass in the story. I had watched his older brother speak to a crowd over thirty-five years earlier without understanding what was going on and now his little brother was doing it to me. But, there was a difference. I think John Kennedy knew that he was delivering the same speech to different audiences when I went along on that campaign tour. He was an actor in repertory from that perspective, but his material made sense

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when I heard it. Teddy made no sense when he spoke. To me that made a difference.

As everyone predicted, Teddy had no problem with Romney. George has not invited me to any more of his fundraisers. I think we're even for now.

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