

CONSIDER THE END

NO ONE KNOWS CANDIDATE **ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.**'S PROBLEMATIC HISTORY BETTER THAN HIS FAMILY. *JOE HAGAN*
TALKS TO THAT RELUCTANT INNER CIRCLE ABOUT KENNEDY'S PAST AND THE STAKES FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

By Joe Hagan *Vanity Fair*
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TWENTY YEARS AGO

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Appeared In An HBO Documentary About The Dangers Of A Nuclear Power Plant On The Hudson River. *Indian Point: Imagining The Unimaginable*, Directed By His Sister, Rory Kennedy, Pits The Crusading Kennedys, Pictured Flying In A Helicopter Over The Nuclear Facility, Against Entergy, The Power Company. The Film Argued That The Surrounding Environment Would Be Made Inhabitable If The Plant Came Under Terrorist Attack.

This Was Necessarily A High-Stakes Confrontation. In Anticipation, Rory Warned Her Production Team They Had A Potential Liability: Her Brother, Though A Prominent And Successful Environmental Lawyer Known For Suing Polluters, Could Be Fast And Loose With The Facts. "He Can Say Some Crazy Shit," She Told Them, According To A Person Involved In The Film. Kennedy's Interviews Had To Be Thoroughly Fact-Checked "Even Though He

Might Come Across As An Expert,” She Said. “That’s Who He Is.”

Sure Enough, The Film Had Already Been Edited When Producers Discovered That Kennedy’s Interviews Were Littered With Inflated And Inaccurate Claims, Rendering Portions Of The Film Unusable. “It Was Like, Holy Shit,” Says Another Source Familiar With Events. “We Have To Get The Audio And Cut Certain Things Out. We Can’t Really Say This. You Can Be Sued!”

The Experience Of Having To Tear The Film Apart And Reedit It Was Deeply Frustrating For Rory, Especially Because HBO Had Wanted More Bobby, Not Less. When Her Brother Gave A Speech At The Film’s Premiere, Wowed Audience Members Asked Rory Why She Hadn’t Included Some More Of His Dramatic Points In Her Film. She Couldn’t Tell Them It Was Because They Were Untrue.

Long Before He Entered The 2024 Race With A Wagon Train Of Conspiracy Theories, The Wider Kennedy Family Was Intimately Familiar With RFK Jr.’s Problematic Personality — The Outsize Confidence Masquerading As Expertise, The “Savior Complex” (As One Family Member Called It) That Drives Him To Take Up Quixotic Causes And Cast Himself As A Lone Hero Against Established Powers, And, Above All, As One Old Friend Calls It, His “Pathological Need For Attention.” A Few Months Ago I Began Talking To Kennedy Family Members And Close Friends, Some On The Record, Others On Background, To Get Insights

Into The Man They Know Well, And To Ask Some Pointed Questions: Rather Than Merely Rubber-Stamping President Joe Biden's Already Fatally Faltering Campaign, Shouldn't You Be Telling Voters What You Know About Your Brother And Cousin, Whose Candidacy Threatens To Swing The Presidential Election To **Donald Trump** And Upend American History Forever? With The Future Of The Country Riding On The Narrowest Of Polling Margins, Shouldn't You Be Describing In Fine Detail The Acute Dangers Of The Person You Know So Well — *Before Your Own Family's Tragedy Becomes The Nation's*"

To Describe The Family As Reluctant Is An Understatement. Behind The Scenes, His Siblings, Especially Brothers Max, Chris, And Joseph II, Are Furious Over His Candidacy. Sisters Kerry And Rory Are Heartbroken. But Their Desire To Preserve Their Relationship With Their Brother, Combined With The Long-Standing Kennedy "Blood Oath" To Protect The Family Reputation (As Someone Close To The Family Described Their Loyalty), Has Prevented Them From Pulling Back The Curtain On The RFK Jr. They Know, Instead Choosing To Focus On "Policy" Differences.

The Kennedy Campaign Did Not Respond To Detailed Questions From *Vanity Fair*.

After Initially Denouncing His Candidacy Last Summer, Most Of The 105 Kennedy Relatives, Including Bobby's Eight Siblings, The Largest Branch Of The Family — Had Hoped His Campaign Would Collapse Under The Weight Of His Many Bizarre Claims And Alliances With

Anti-Vax Cranks And Trumpworld Figures Like Steve Bannon And Tucker Carlson. Instead The Family Has Played Defense, Going Public Only When Kennedy's Statements Went So Far Out Of Bounds They Had No Choice, Like When He Suggested COVID Was "Ethnically Targeted" To Spare Jewish Or Chinese People; Or His Claim That Anti-Vaxxers Suffered Worse Oppression Than Anne Frank (A Statement Sister Kerry Called "Sickening And Destructive"); Or When He Claimed There Was A Mysterious Alternative Shooter In The Death Of His Father In 1968 (Going So Far As To Interview Sirhan B Sirhan In Prison And Proclaim Him Innocent); Or That The CIA Was Possibly Involved In The Assassination — Claims That Caused Deep Pain For His Siblings.

Their Private Efforts To Get Bobby To Drop Out — Or At Least Wait Until 2028 To Run — Have Also Come To Naught. "I've Spoken To Bobby About This Race, About What's At Stake, About The Importance Of Supporting Joe Biden, Of The Impact Of The Trump Presidency On Our Country And On The World," Kerry Kennedy, Who Leads The Nonprofit Robert F Kennedy Human Rights And Is Disciplined In How She Speaks Of Her Brother, Tells Me, "And I Was Clearly Unpersuasive."

Asked To Share Insight Into Her Brother's Motives And Psychology, She Begs Off: "Well, You Need To Have A Degree, Which I Don't Have."

Loyalty Has Always Been The Highest Virtue In A Family That Has Lived For Decades Under

The Public Microscope. Stories Of Ethel Kennedy Keeping Ancient Friends In Her Social Orbit For Favors Performed Decades Earlier Are Legend; Speaking Out Is Verboten. But The Genteel Approach Has Made It Easy For RFK Jr. To Dismiss Them — And To Even Suggest There Is A Sizable Faction Of Supporters In Their Ranks, Though In Truth Only One Other Cousin, Anthony Shriver, Has Publicly Backed Him. When 50 Kennedy Family Members, Including The Branch Known As Generation 3, Or G3, Appeared On The Lawn Of The White House With Biden On St Patrick's Day, It Was Supposed To Be A Powerful Show Of Solidarity. But The Event Was “A Compromise Among People Who Didn't Necessarily Agree About What To Do,” Says A Person Involved. A Month Later A Public Event In Philadelphia Generated A Series Of Choreographed Videos Of The Cousins Voicing Support For Biden, But It Had No Discernible Effect On RFK Jr.'s Polling Numbers Even As The Cousins, To Prove Their Strategy Was Working, Clung To A Single Poll Showing Kennedy Would Take More Votes From **Trump** Than Biden (Other Pollsters, Like John Della Volpe At The Institute Of Politics At Harvard's Kennedy School, Say The Opposite). Since Then, Kennedy Has Managed To Get His Name On The Ballot In The Swing State Of Michigan And Is Spending Millions In Other States To Do The Same.

A Few Kennedy Cousins Have Pushed For A More Aggressive Approach, With One Mockingly Referring To The White House Photo Op As The “Leprechaun Event.” Behind The Scenes There Is A Growing Panic That The Family Must Do More To Prevent Their Rogue Cousin From Causing A Political Disaster, Especially In The Wake Of Biden's Debate Performance.

As One Family Intimate, Andy Karsh, Who Has Known Kennedy Since 1972, Has Put It To Bobby Directly: If **Trump** Is Elected, “You’ll Go Down As One Of The Great Villains In American History.”

“[Bobby] Risks Damaging The Legacies Of Both His Father And Uncle At A Time When Those Values And Ideals Could Not Be Any More Important,” Karsh Tells Me.

The Portrait Family Members Paint Of Bobby Is Of A Man Of Exceptional Charm, Wit, Brains, And Generosity Who Has Championed Important Environmental Causes, But Whose Worst Traits — An Unnerving Ease With Blending Fact And Fiction, A Powerful Ability To Deny The Collateral Damage Of His Own Destructive Actions — Have Engulfed His Better Angels. The Source Of These Pathologies, They Observe, Are Found In His Long And Troubling Biography, A Life Story Marked By Personal Trauma And Addiction To Drugs, Sex, And, Perhaps Most Perniciously Of All, Public Adulation.

“You Can’t Reason With Addiction,” Says Stephen Kennedy Smith, A Cousin Of Kennedy’s Whose Father Ran The Elder Bobby Kennedy’s 1968 Presidential Campaign. “And What We Know About Addiction Is It Leads To Bad Judgment — Extremely Bad Judgment.”

LAST YEAR ROBERT Kennedy, Jr. Texted A Photograph To A Friend. In The Photo RFK,Jr. Was Posing, Alongside An Unidentified Woman, With The Barbecued Remains Of What He

Suggested To The Friend Was A Dog. Kennedy Told The Person, Who Was Traveling To Asia, That He Might Enjoy A Restaurant In Korea That Served Dog On The Menu, Suggesting That Kennedy Had Sampled Dog. The Photo Was Taken In 2010, According To The Digital File's Metadata — The Same Year He Was Diagnosed With A Dead Tapeworm In His Brain.

The Picture's Intent Seems To Have Been Comedic — Kennedy And His Companion Are Pantomiming — But For The Recipient It Was Disturbing Evidence Of Kennedy's Poor Judgment And Thoughtlessness, Simultaneously Mocking Korean Culture, Reveling In Animal Cruelty, And Needlessly Risking His Reputation And That Of His Family.

Though He Did Not Respond To *Vanity Fair*, After This Story Was Published Online, Kennedy Said Publicly That The Picture Is Of A Goat, In Patagonia, Contrary To What He Texted His Friend (And Has Deployed A "G.O.A.T." Meme. Kennedy Later Told snopes.com It Was A Lamb, Not A Goat). The Friend Says That Kennedy "Sent Me The Picture With A Recommendation To Visit The Best Dog Restaurant In Seoul So He Was Certainly Representing That This Was A Dog And Not A Goat. In Any Case, It's Grotesque."

When Kennedy Was Married To His Second Wife, Mary Richardson, He Was Known To Text Other Damning Images To Friends As Well — Of Nude Women. Those Friends Assumed Kennedy Himself Had Taken The Pictures, But They Didn't Know Whether The Subjects Had Consented To Having Their Genitalia Photographed, Let Alone Shared With Other People.

When One Friend Lost His Phone, He Panicked That Somebody Might Discover The Images.

Theories About Kennedy's Reckless Behaviors Abound. Long Before It Was Reported, Members Of The Family Knew About The Brain Worm, Which In Court Testimonies Kennedy Conjectured He'd Picked Up From Food He Ate In South Asia. He Said The Tapeworm Consumed A Portion Of His Brain And Led To Protracted "Brain Fog." But More Often His Family Points To Kennedy's 14 Years As A Heroin User, Which Began When Kennedy Was 15 And Didn't End Until He Was 29. Kennedy Has Made His History Of Addiction Part Of His Campaign Narrative, Arguing That He Is More Equipped To Fix America's Addiction Problem. Critics In His Family Feel Otherwise. One Kennedy Has Circulated A Report From The National Institutes Of Health On The Impact Of Long-Term Heroin Abuse, Which Surmises That The Damage Can Alter The Physiology Of The Brain," "Creating Long-Term Imbalances In Neuronal And Hormonal Systems That Are Not Easily Reversed" And "Which May Affect Decision-Making Abilities, The Ability To Regulate Behavior, And Responses To Stressful Situations."

At Harvard In The Mid-1970s, Kennedy Was Regularly Injecting Speedballs, A Mixture Of Heroin And Cocaine, And Became A Pied Piper To Friends And Family, Regularly Shooting Up With His Troubled Brother David Kennedy, According To Multiple Friends From The Era. Addiction Shadowed RFK, Jr. And His Entourage, Including His Best Friend, Chris Bartle, Through College And Law School And Into His Early Professional Life Working In The

Manhattan DA's Office.

On One Level, Kennedy's Substance Abuse Was Comprehensible. He Had Seen His Own Father Murdered On The Public Stage, A Traumatic Event That Altered History, Haunted His Family, And Deepened The Weight Of Expectation On Young Bobby, Who Was 14 At The Time. Of All Bobby Sr.,s Children, The Namesake Son Was Considered The Most Promising Dynastic Heir. Square Jawed And Twinkly-Eyed, He Looked And Sounded The Most Like His Father, With Charisma And Public Profile To Take Up The Mantle If He Chose. His College Roommate, Peter Kaplan, The Acclaimed Editor Of *The New York Observer* Who Died In 2013, Once Noted Bobby's "Almost Frightening Facility With Language." By Birthright And Training Kennedy Was Presidential Timber, With Family Friends Like Robert Coles, A Psychiatrist And Professor At Harvard, And Lem Billings, A Close Friend Of John F Kennedy's, Expending Considerable Effort Trying To Mentor And Tutor Him After His Father's Death. "Jack [Kennedy] Was Lucky," Billings Once Said. "He Didn't Have A Lot Of Kennedys Getting There Before Him Everywhere A Boy Like Bobby Looks, There Are Footprints, All Of Them Deeper Than His Own."

Many Tried An Failed To Get Him Off Heroin. Instead Of Guiding Him To Greater Glory, Billings Followed Bobby Into Heroin Addiction. Meantime, Kennedy Looked For Heroes Outside The Family Bubble, Befriending Roger Ailes, The Late Fox News Founder Who At The Time Was An Independent TV Producer And Adviser To Richard Nixon. In 1972, When

RFK Jr. Was 18, Ailes To Kennedy To Kenya To Shoot A Wildlife Documentary In Which Kennedy Appeared Shirtless And Running From A Rhinoceros.

Family Lore Had It That Kennedy, While Attending Harvard, Once Leapt The Gap Between Two Six-Story Buildings. He Kept An Owl In His House And Carried A Live Snake Around Campus. Because Of The Drug Taking And Risky Behavior, Bobby Was Often At Odds With His Mother, Ethel, Who Regularly Threw Him Out Of The House. Jackie Kennedy Onassis Forbade Her Own Children, John And Caroline, From Fraternizing With Him And His Brothers. “Like All The Rest, Bobby Grew Up Feeling That Being A Kennedy You Could Do Virtually Anything You Wanted,” Kennedy’s Cousin Chris Lawford Told The Authors Of *The Kennedy’s: An American Drama*, A Controversial 1984 Book. “It Was Good Because You Got Away With Things Other People Wouldn’t Dream Of; It Was Bad Because It Destroyed Your Sense Of What Was Worth Doing.”

One Of The Authors (The Other Died In 2019) Could Attest To That: David Horowitz Remembers Bobby Being So Cavalier That He Cut Lines Of Cocaine For His Brother Michael Kennedy And Allowed Him To Snort A Line In Front Of The Writer — And Only Then Did He Introduce Horowitz As A Reporter. (Horowitz Also Recalls That Kennedy Asked Him For A Ride To Harlem To Score Drugs.) In 1983 RFK Jr., By Then An Assistant DA In The Office Of Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, Was Discovered Overdosing In The Bathroom Of An Airplane.

When An Excerpt Of The Kennedy Book Was Published In *Playboy* Magazine In 1984, The Family Turned On David Kennedy For Airing The Family's Addiction Secrets, And He Stayed In A Separate Hotel During A Family Gathering In Palm Beach. "Bobby," David Had Told The Book's Authors, "Was Our Last Illusion."

The Next Day David Died Of An Overdose At Age 28.

AFTER KENNEDY WAS Arrested For Possession Of Heroin, His Cousin Michael Skakel, Also A Recovering Addict, Supported Him Through Recovery, Which Kennedy Said Brought Them Close Together. He Would Say He Knew Skakel "As Well As One Person Can Know Another."

Skakel Later Became The Chief Suspect In The 1975 Murder Of 15-Year-Old Martha Mosley In Greenwich, Connecticut, Having Confessed To Private Investigators In The Mid-1990s That On The Night Of The Murder, *He Had Climbed A Tree Near Moxley's Bedroom Window And Masturbated*. She Was Found The Next Day Beaten And Stabbed To Death With A *Broken Golf Club*. Though He Was Not Initially A Suspect, Skakel Had Also Intimated To Boarding School Friends That He Had Committed The Murder.

By The Late 1990s Kennedy Had Found His Calling As An Environmental Lawyer, Running The Nonprofit Riverkeeper, Starting An Environmental Law Firm, And Leading The Charge Against Corporate Polluters, Pressuring General Electric To Spend \$1.7 Billion To Clean Up

PCBs The Company Had Dumped Into The Hudson River. He Regularly Attended AA Meetings, A Model Of Recovery And Renewed Purpose.

The Other Kennedy Men Of His Generation, However, Were Busy Blowing Up The Family's Legacy. Cousin William Kennedy Smith Was Tried For And Acquitted Of Rape In A Highly Publicized 1991 Trial; Brother Michael Kennedy's With An Underage Babysitter Was Exposed Before He Died In A Skiing Accident In Aspen In 1997; Older Brother Joseph II Bowed Out Of A Race For Governor Of Massachusetts After His Ex-Wife Wrote A Damaging Tell-All In 1997; And Then Cousin John F Kennedy, Jr., Who Was Considered The Quintessential Kennedy Of His Generation, Died In A Plane Crash Off Martha's Vineyard In 1999.

When Greenwich Authorities Reopened The Motley Murder Case In 1998 And Later Charged Skakel, The Kennedy Family Publicly Distanced Themselves From Skakel, Who Had Previously Worked As A Driver For Cousin Michael Kennedy Who Was Then Running His Brother Joseph Kennedy II's Power Company, Citizen's Energy, While He Ran For Governor Of Massachusetts. People Believed An Angry Skakel Leaked The Story Of Michael Kennedy And The Babysitter To *The Boston Globe*, Which Blew Up Michael Kennedy's Career And Marriage. (Skakel's Lawyer Did Not Respond To *Vanity Fair's* Questions For This Story. The Same Year, Skakel Circulated A Book Proposal To New York Publishers For A Memoir Titled *Dead Man Talking: A Kennedy Cousin Comes Clean*, Which Promised To "Lay Bare The Devious Workings Of A Propaganda Machine That Works Night And Day To Hide The Sordid Truth

Behind A Scrim Of Patriotic Idealism, Hero Worship, And Religiosity.” The Kennedy Family, He Claimed, Had Accused Him Of Trying To Extort Money From Them. Skakel Painted Of Bobby And His Brothers As Rutting Satyrs And Alleged That Michael Kennedy Had A “Three-Way Tryst With His Secretary And His Brother Bobby’s Wife.”

When Skakel Went On Trial For Murder n 2002, RFK Jr. Blamed *Vanity Fair* Columnist Dominick Dunne For Helping Reopen The Moxley Case By Publishing A Thinly Veiled Fictional Account Of The Murder, In 1993, Called *Season In Purgatory*, Which Seemed To Implicate A Skakel Family Member. Around The Same Time, Skakel’s Father Hired A Private Investigation Firm; Their Report, Later Acquired By Dunne, Cast Suspicion On Michael Skakel.

Dunne And Kennedy Engaged In A Heated Public Feud Over The Facts Of The Case, Trading Volleys In Published Articles, Including Kennedy’s 14,000 Word Defense Of Skakel In *The Atlantic* Magazine. In An Interview At The Time, Kennedy Accused Dunne Of Twisting The Facts And Using Suggestive Language To Make His Arguments Appear More Credible.

He’s Very Clever About The Way He Does It. If You Look At How He Couches His Accusations, It’s Always “Somebody Told Me This.” “An Anonymous Source Said This.” So He’s Not Saying It’s True, But The Average Reader Misses That Nuance. For Some Reason, The Voice Of This Pathetic Creature Has Been Amplified By The Willingness Of Talk-Show Hosts To Allow Him On To Spout This Stuff, And By His Publishers, Who Publish Stuff Without Fact-Checking.

Bobby Was The Only Kennedy To Defend Skakel, Showing Up Twice To The Connecticut Courtroom. Theories Abound About Why Kennedy Felt Compelled To Defend Skakel, Including Speculation Was Blackmailing Him. According To One Of Kennedy's Diaries, Obtained By The *New York Post*, He Thought That His Cousin Was "Delusional And Paranoid" Even As He Publicly Maintained That Skakel Was Innocent Of The Murder.

For His Part Dunne Drew A Pointed Conclusion From Kennedy's Defense: "If You Were To Take Kennedy's Word That He Knows His Cousin As Much As Any Human Being Alive," He Wrote, "And You Believe Skakel Murdered A Girl At 15, The Concluding Logic Isn't So Great For Bobby."

Skakel Had Served 11 Years Of A 20-Year Sentence When, After Years Of Appeals Arguing That His Lawyer Had Botched The Defense, The Conviction Was Vacated And Skakel Was Released Pending A Retrial (Prosecutors Opted Not To Bring It Again). In 2016 Kennedy Published A Book Defending Skakel Called *Framed: Why Michael Skakel Spent Over A Decade In Prison For A Murder He Didn't Commit*. Kennedy Pinned The Murder Of Martha Moxley On Two Teenagers From New York City, One Black, The Other Multiracial, Whom Investigators Had Already Discounted. Ghostwritten By Reporter Andrew Goldman And Published By Skyhorse Publishing, Which Also Issues Kennedy's Anti-Vaccine Books, Kennedy's Book Claimed To Have Solved The Murder.

“I Am Dead Certain They Did It,” Kennedy Told *The New York Times*. (Both Men Have Denied Committing The Murder.)

Asked About Kennedy’s Conclusions, Moxley’s Mother, Dorothy, Said She Had “Never Seen The Truth So Twisted And Manipulated In My Entire Life.”

Kennedy Conceded That His Claims Were “Controversial.” “Anytime You Do Anything Controversial, You Lose Constituents,” He Told *The Times*. “You Lose Support Because People Have Opinions.”

The Book, Hyped By Alan Dershowitz (Also A Skyhorse Author) And Bill O’Reilly, Further Buttressed Kennedy’s Identity As A Serial White Knight Jousting With The Prevailing Establishment, Whether It’s The Justice System, Corporate Polluters, Or The Pharmaceutical Industry — Or Later, Biden, The Democratic National Committee, And His Own Family.

IN 1994 KENNEDY Married Richardson, Who Had Been Kerry Kennedy’s Best Friend Since They Attended Putney School In Vermont Together. She And Bobby Had Four Children, Conor, Kyra, Aidan, And Finn. In Fall 1998, The Kennedy’s Hired A 23-Year-Old Woman, Eliza Cooney, As Their Part-Time Babysitter. She Was A Recent College Graduate, Interested In Working On Environmental Causes And Had Looked After Kerry’s And Max’s Children In Hyannis Port That Summer. Cooney Moved Into Bobby And Mary’s Family Home In

Mount Kisco, New York, Taking Care Of The Kids And Assisting Bobby At His Environmental Law Clinic At Pace University During The Week.

One Night Cooney Attended A Meeting In The Family Kitchen With Kennedy And Another Young Riverkeeper Volunteer Named Murray Fisher To Discuss Business When She Felt Kennedy's Hand Moving Up And Down Her Leg Under The Table. She Tried Making Sense Of The Incident In Her Diary, Which I Have Read. In An Entry Dated November 7, 1998, She Wrote:

From Everything Everybody Says About The Kennedys + Their Babysitters, They Had Me Worried. Like I Have To Watch Out, Be Careful. And The Other Night In The Kitchen w/Murray, I Could Have Sworn He Was Touching My Leg + Hand. It Seemed Like He Thought I Was Somebody Else Or Wasn't Paying Attention. Like He Would Come To Every Once In A While And Snap Out Of It Or I Would Move Away. It Was Like He Was On Something Or Really Tired Or Was Missing Mary Or Was Testing Me.

"In The Back Of My Mind, I Was Hoping It Wasn't What It Actually Was," Says Cooney, Now 48. (Reached For Comment, Fisher Says He Worked Closely With Cooney And Liked Her But Wasn't Aware Of Her Alleged Experiences With Kennedy At The Time And Feels Bad For Her.)

Weeks Later, She Discovered Kennedy Standing In Her Bedroom. She Saw That Her Diary,

Which Chronicled Her Daily Activities And Detailed Her Romantic Life With A Boyfriend, Was Open Next To Her Bed. And She Was Shocked When A Shirtless Kennedy, Then 45, Asked Her To Rub Lotion On His Back. “I Thought, Isn’t Mary Home?” She Recalls. “Doesn’t She Do This For You?”

She Did It Reluctantly And Quickly. “It Was Totally Inappropriate,” She Says, Adding That She Stopped Recording These Experiences In Her Journal, Fearing Kennedy Would Read Them.

A Few Months Later, Cooney Says, She Was Rifling Through The Kitchen Pantry For Lunch After A Yoga Class, Still In Her Sports Bra And Leggings, When Kennedy Came Up Behind Her, Blocked Her Inside The Room, Putting His Hands On Her Hips And Sliding Them Up Along Her Rib Cage And Breasts. “My Back Was To The Door Of The Pantry, And He Came Up Behind Me,” She Says, Describing The Alleged Sexual Assault. “I Was Frozen. Shocked.”

He Was Interrupted By A Worker Who Entered The Kitchen. To Announce His Presence, The Man, According To Cooney, Said Something Like, “Don’t Do Anything I Wouldn’t Do,” Or “Don’t Do Anything You Wouldn’t Want Your Wife To Know About.”

Cooney Stayed On The Job For A Few More Months But Says The Experience Damaged Her Confidence And Diverted Her From Environmental Work. At The End Of Her Diary, Cooney

Wrote A List Of Things “To Leave Behind In 1999,” With “Bad Men” At The Top. (After This Story Was Published Online, Kennedy Told The *Breaking Points* Podcast In Response To Cooney’s Allegations That He Is “Not A Church Boy ... I Have So Many Skeletons In My Closet.” When Pressed To Respond Directly To Her Claims, He Told The Anchor, “I’m Not Going To Comment On It.”)

Cooney Kept These Incidents Secret Until The #MeToo Movement Began In 2017, When She First Told Her Mother, Holly. “Was I Horrified? Of Course. Was I Surprised? Not Really. And Not Because Of The Kennedy Name As Much As Knowing What The Culture Was, Especially In The World Of Privilege,” Holly Cooney Told Me. “I Remember When We Talked About It The First Time, She Was Agonizing Over How Public She Felt She Was Ready To Go.” In The Spring Of 2023, After Kennedy Announced He Was Running Against Biden For The Democratic Nomination, She Told Two Close Friends And A Lawyer, Elizabeth Geddes, Who Had Prosecuted The Rapper R. Kelly. Geddes Suggested Cooney Could Still Bring A Civil Suit Against Kennedy Under The Adult Survivors Act, But Cooney Ultimately Decided Against It. His Candidacy For President Impelled Her To Share Her Story Publicly Now.

In 2010 RFK Jr. Began A Relationship With Actor Cheryl Hines, Of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* Fame, And Separated From Richardson. Richardson Had Been Enthralled By The Kennedys Since Childhood, And Her Identity Was Bound Up In The Marriage Even As It Became An Unbearable Burden. She Fell Into Alcoholism And Depression. According To A New Book

Called *Ask Not: The Kennedys And The Women They **Destroyed***, By Maureen Callahan, When Richardson Found Evidence Of One Of Kennedy's Affairs, She Became So Hysterical That She'd Run Out Of The House, Gotten Into Her Car, Backed Out Of The Driveway, And *Accidentally Run Over And Killed Porcia, The Family Dog.*" [Ed. Note: R-I-P, Sweetheart; What A Lovely Name For A Female Canine ♡♡]

According To Callahan's Reporting, Kennedy Asked Richardson's Therapist To *Diagnose Her As Mentally Ill, But The Therapist, Who Spoke To Callahan For The Book, Declined.* [Ed. Note: Kudos To You, Dear!]

After Kennedy Left Her, Richardson Proposed She Live In The Guesthouse While Kennedy And Hines Lived In The Main House — And That She Keep The Kennedy Name. He Declined And Then Tried To Avoid Paying Her Child Support, Using His "Brain Fog" As A Medical Excuse For *Alleged* Financial Straits. [Ed. Note: Is This A *Stand-Up Guy*, Or What, Peeple? And Did Bobby Get Hissel A *Second* Opinion? Why, It Coulda Been "**A\$\$WHOLE Fog**" Instead Of "Brain Fog."] Richardson, Her Behavior Increasingly Erratic, Eventually Lost Control Of The Children To Kennedy. The Kennedy Family, Including *Kerry, Who Had Once Been Like A Sister To Richardson*, Began To Distance Themselves From Her. *On May 16, 2012, Richardson's Housekeeper Discovered Richardson Hanging From The Rafters In The Barn.*

After Her Death, A “Sex Diary” From 2001 That Kennedy Kept Leaked To The *New York Post*. [Ed. Note: I Know, Yet Another. What-The-Pfuck Is It With *These Peeple* And Their Goddamned Diaries? Is It Not Enough To Engage In All Manner Of Vile And Otherwise Skanky Shit That They Feel Compelled To Record It For Posterity? Jesus Motherfucker!] According To Reporter Isabel Vincent, The Back Page Listed The Names Of Two Dozen Women Kennedy Had Been Involved Including A *Scorecard* [Ed. Note: Is This From Bobby’s High School Days?] Of How Far He Got With Each Woman. Kennedy Reportedly Described Himself As Plagued “My Lust Demons” And Spoke Of Being “Mugged” By Women Who Came On To Him Or Responded To His Advances (Meaning He Was Somehow Targeted By Women With Whom He Had Affairs; He Once Recorded That He Was “Mugged” By Two Women At Once). (Kennedy Told The *Post*, “I Have No Diary From 2001.”) [Ed. Note: Riiight — Just A Steaming Pile Of Bullshit *Memories*. Why, I Rightly Reckon **THE DONALD** Would Likely Say, “You, Too?!”]

Kennedy’s Family And Friends Weren’t Surprised. As A Former Friend Of Richardson’s Recounted To Me: “*Mary Says To Me, ‘Poor Bobby, He’s A Sex Addict, He’s Taking Medication. It’s So Hard For Him.’ That’s How Sweet This Woman Was. ‘My Husband Is A Sex Addict. My Poor Husband, He’s Sick.’”*

Riffing On Nora Ephron’s Famous Quote About Her Ex-Husband Carl Bernstein (He Was “Capable Of Having Sex With A Venetian Blind”), Kennedy’s Friends Would Joke: “It’s Safe To Say He Would Sleep With An Ottoman.” [Ed. Note: ? Must Be A New England Thang. Or

Maybe There Were Drugs Stashed In The Ottoman.] One Longtime Friend Had Warned Him That He Needed To Be More Discreet. [Ed. Note: Ya Think?] “Listen, I’m Not Being In Any Way Judgmental,” This Person Told Him, “But You Have To Rein It In. Everybody In New York Has A *Story*.”

Kennedy *Insisted He’d Been Faithful To His Wife* [Ed. Note: Please Define *Faithful*.] — And Appeared To Believe What He Was Saying. “That Was The Scary Part, “ The Friend Told Me. “He Really Was Pathologically Involved With That Narrative.

The Richardson Family Has Never Forgiven Kennedy, Privately Maintaining That His Boorish And Insensitive Behavior Was A Factor In Mary’s Death, Hiring An Investigative Firm To Explore A Possible Wrongful Death Suit Against Him, And Accusing Kennedy Of Psychological Torture. The Kennedys Blamed Richardson’s Depression. Kerry Remained Loyal To Bobby, Who Had Richardson’s Remains Buried On A Kennedy Family Plot *Against The Wishes Of The Richardsons*. [Ed. Note: How’s That For A Parting PFUCK YOU — To Mary Richardson And Her Family?]

AGAINST THIS BACKDROP — THE Tragic Deaths Of Cousins And Brothers, The Michael Skakel Case, Richardson’s Suicide, The Leaked Sex Diary, The New Marriage To Hines — Kennedy Was Beginning To Discover The Cause That Would Consume Him For The Next 20 Years.

His Work At Waterkeeper, The Environmental Nonprofit Dedicated To Protecting Waterways And Drinking Water (Distinct From Riverkeeper), Had Centered Around Mercury Levels Found In Migratory Fish. When Conor, His First Son By Richardson, Suffered From Allergies To Peanuts And Soy, Kennedy Went Looking For Answers And Found A Suspect: Mercury. He Told Cooney, The Babysitter Who Also Worked At Kennedy's Environmental Project, That Conor's Allergies "Were Likely Because Of The Shots He Got When He Was A Baby Because They Had Mercury In Them."

By His Own Telling, Kennedy Met Mothers Around This Time Who Insisted He Read Research Alleging That Autism Is Caused By Mercury In The MMR Vaccine. The Idea Of Vaccines Causing Autism Had Just Entered The Mainstream After Andrew Wakefield, A British Doctor, Published A 4,000 Word Paper In The Medical Journal *The Lancet* Attempting To Link Vaccines To Autism In Children. His 1998 Claim, Simultaneously Speculative And Sweeping, Became A Cause Célèbre In Hollywood Circles, Fanned By Actors Jenny McCarthy And JimCarrey. Oprah Winfrey Publicized Their Claims On Her TV Show.

It Was Just The Kind Of Cause Kennedy Was Attracted To — Counter To Prevailing Wisdom, With A Huge Payoff In Heroism And Public Glory. His Friend, Jann Wenner, Founder And Publisher Of *Rolling Stone*, Agreed, Along With The Editors Of Salon, To Copublish A Story Kennedy Wrote About Vaccines, Which Echoed Wakefield's Research. It Took Five Years For Wakefield's Research To Be Debunked And *The Lancet* To Retract His Paper, Which Prompted

Rolling Stone And Salon To Pull Kennedy's Story In 2011.

By Then, However, The Damage Had Been Done, And Kennedy Was Now Linked With A Fellow Anti-Vax Crusader Named Del Bigtree, A Former TV Producer With No Scientific Background Or Medical Training. Bigtree, Who Had Been A Producer On A TV Show Called *The Doctors*, Began Cultivating A Following Through Books And TV Appearances And Held Anti-Vax Rallies In Places Where Skepticism Was Already Strong, Like In Hasidic Jewish Communities. In The Next Few Years, Kennedy And Bigtree Would Both Appear Publicly With Wakefield, Publishing Books Of Unfounded Conspiracies And Trolling CDC Officials At Public Events, Haranguing Anthony Fauci, The Leading Immunologist For The Government.

Kennedy Was Still The Highest-Profile Member Of His Enormous Family, Feted In Hollywood For His Environmental Activism. Starting In The Late '00s, He Was Having Regular Conversations With Bill Clinton, Who Revered Kennedy's Father. Clinton Considered The Son The De Facto Figurehead Of The Family And Attended Events Memorializing The Anniversary Of Kennedy Sr.'s Assassination And The Rechristening Of The Triborough Bridge As The Robert F Kennedy Bridge. "Clinton Viewed Him As The Family Emissary," Says A Clintonworld Insider.

For Years Kennedy's Inner Circle Of Friends, Like Kaplan And Kirsch, Had Stoked His Lifelong Political Aspirations. But Most Of His Old Allies Gave Up Hope. Kennedy Had Too

Many Demons, Too Complicated A Past. In 2014, Kennedy Married Hines, In A Wedding Attended By A Glittering Array Of Friends, Including Larry David And Julia Louis-Dreyfus, And Moved To Los Angeles. The Move Marked A Reinvention Of Sorts, Distancing Kennedy From His East Coast Network And Perhaps Removing Some Of The Built-In Guardrails That Had Tempered His Worst Impulses. In Addition To Consulting For Companies Seeking His Environmental Seal Of Approval, He Chaired The 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Children's Health Defense, Which Began In 2007 Under The Name World Mercury Project And Inveighed Against Vaccines And Fluoride In The Water.

During This Period, Figures Like Alex Jones, Glenn Beck And **Donald Trump** Mainstreamed Conspiracy Culture, With **Trump** Seeding His 2016 Presidential Run By Hyping The Racist Conspiracy Theory That President Barack Obama Had Faked His Birth Certificate And Was A Secret Muslim Born In Kenya. Kennedy, Having Pushed Discredited Anti-Vaccine Views For Over A Decade, Saw An Opening. When **Trump** Was Elected President In November 2016, Kennedy Secured An Audience With Him At **Trump** Tower. Friends Warned Kennedy Not To Take The Meeting, Concerned He Would End Up Like Mitt Romney, Whose Attempt To Curry Favor With **Trump** Over Dinner Left Romney Publicly Humiliated. When Kennedy Emerged From **Trump** Tower In January 2017, He Claimed To The Press That **Trump** Had Asked Him To Chair A "Commission On Vaccine Safety And Scientific Integrity." That Same Day **Trump** Adviser Hope Hicks Said The Two Talked About Autism But **Trump** Didn't Commit To A Commission On Vaccines.

Kennedy's Meeting With **Trump** Was The Inflection Point That Broke His Relationship With Riverkeeper, The Nonprofit For Which He Was The Chief Prosecuting Attorney And The Public Face. For Years The Board And Staff Had Been Engaged In An Uncomfortable Internal Debate About Whether A Science-Based Group Like Theirs Should Be Led By A Man Making Anti-Scientific Claims About Vaccines And Who, For Good Measure, Opposed Eco-Friendly Wind-Powered Turbines Off Hyannis Port That Happened To Mar His Family's Ocean Views. His Allies At Other Environmental Groups, Like The Natural Resources Defense Council, Had Already Had Similar Conversations And Parted Ways With Kennedy Over The Vaccine Issue In 2014.

“On Monday Morning He's Giving A Speech Saying, ‘Do Not Believe Any Scientists [On Vaccines],’” Recalls A Person With Close Ties To Riverkeeper. “And On Tuesday, ‘You've Gotta Believe The Scientists When It Comes To Climate Change Or What We're Doing To The River.’”

The **Trump** Meeting Spurred a Revolt Inside The Nonprofit, With Employees Threatening To Quit En Masse If Kennedy Wasn't Ousted. In A Series Of Meetings Between Kennedy And His Board, They Agreed To Treat Kennedy's Exit From Riverkeeper As A Resignation And Not A Firing, Though In Fact He Was Pressured To Leave.

With Each Public And Private Rejection, Whether The Retraction Of His *Rolling Stone* Article Or His Breakups With Environmental Groups, Kennedy Dug In Deeper And Deeper.

Increasingly His Anti-Vaccine Work Was Taking Precedence. In 2018 Kennedy Involved Himself In A Largely Forgotten Vaccine Controversy In Samoa. That Year, Two Children Died After Receiving The MMR Vaccine, Sparking A Furor In The Island Nation. Though It Was Later That Two Nurses Made A Critical Error Administering The Vaccines, Accidentally Introducing Expired Muscle Relaxants Into The Formula, Kennedy's Nonprofit Took To Social Media To Hype The Deaths As Evidence Of Vaccine Dangers.

Under Public Pressure, The Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Maliellegaoi Halted MMR Vaccines Nationwide. In June 2019 Kennedy And Hines Flew To Samoa, Lending Celebrity Wattage To Local Anti-Vax Advocates, Giving Press Interviews, And Taking Private Meetings With The PM.

Over The Ensuing Months Samoa Was Hit By The *Largest Measles Outbreak In Its History*, Infecting 5,707 Citizens And Killing 83 People, *Most Of The Children*. The Outbreak Was So Lethal, The Prime Minister Declared A State Of Emergency And Ordered *Mandatory* Vaccines, Eventually Curtailing The Spread. Later One Of Kennedy's Critics, A Pediatrician And Member Of The FDA's Advisory Committee On Vaccines, Paul Offit, Told PBS That "Robert F Kennedy Jr. Had Everything To Do With That. And That Shows You How Disinformation Can Kill."

In An Interview With Filmmaker Scott Hamilton Kennedy (No Relation), Who Made A Documentary Called *Shot In The Arm*, Which Will Appear On PBS This Fall, RFK Jr. Becomes Vividly Agitated When Confronted With The Facts Of The Samoa Case, Insisting That “I Had Nothing To Do With People Not Vaccinating In Samoa, I Never Told Anybody Not To Vaccinate.”

He Had Met With The Prime Minister To Discuss Implementing A Medical System That Would, In Kennedy’s Own Words, “Measure Health Outcomes By Following The ‘Natural Experiment’ Created By The National Respite From Vaccines.”

In November 2019 Kennedy Sent A Letter To The Prime Minister, Obtained By Scott Kennedy And Shared With *Vanity Fair*, Speculating That The Measles Outbreak Might Be Attributed To The Vaccine Itself.

Clearly Caught Off Guard, Kennedy Asked The Filmmaker To Let Him “Approve” The Footage Of Their Interview. The Director Refused. Scott Kennedy Has Since Shown The Documentary To RFK Jr.’s Sister Rory Kennedy. She Declined To Comment To *Vanity Fair*.

THE YEAR AFTER The Samoa Episode, The COVID Pandemic Began, Ultimately Killings Millions Of People — But It Was A Stroke Of Political And Financial Fortune For Kennedy, Who Found A Ripe Audience For His Anti-Vaccine Claims, Tapping Into A Newly Fertile

Online World Of Misinformation, Conspiracy, And Distrust Of Pharmaceutical Companies On Podcasts And Social Media. High-Profile Podcasters Like Joe Rogan Allowed Him To Spout His Conspiracy Theories Unchecked, And Kennedy Built A Following Among Pseudoscientists And Self-Styled Influencers Hawking Supplements And Alternative Medicines Under The Banner Of “Wellness,” Aligning With Figures Like Aubrey Marcus, A Podcaster, Poet, And Self-Styled Guru Of “Total Human Optimization “ Who Hosted A Fundraiser For Kennedy In Austin Last March.

The Man Had Met His Time.

During The Next Three Years, Kennedy Would Publish Half A Dozen Books On The Dangers Of Vaccines, Costar In A Documentary With Andrew Wakefield (*Vaxxed II: The People's Truth*), And Launch A Full-Scale Assault On Anthony Fauci, Disseminating Misinformation To An Anti-Vaccine Movement That Politicized Health Measures To Protect The Public From COVID, Which Led To Untold Numbers Of Unvaccinated People Dying Unnecessarily.

Consequently, Money Poured Into The Tax-Exempt Children's Health Defense, Doubling Revenue In 2020 To \$6.8 Million And Increasing Kennedy's Annual Salary To \$510,515 In 2022 From \$40,200 In 2016. Kennedy's Twitter Feed, And That Of Children's Health Defense, Grew To Hundreds Of Thousands Of Followers.

When Meta Shut Down His Instagram Account After Kennedy Disseminated Misinformation On Vaccines At The Height Of The COVID Pandemic, Kennedy Was Enraged And Sued The Biden Administration, Which He Accused Of Pressuring Meta, Turning The First Amendment Into A Pillar Of His Broader Crusade And Eventual Campaign For President. As One Family Member Put It To Me, Blocking Access To His Social Media Audience Was Like “Taking His Stash.” Last Summer During An Interview With *Vanity Fair*, Kennedy Told Me The Biden Administration “Lost Me 800,000 Followers.” (The Suit Is Still Pending.)

When Kennedy Emerged As A Candidate In April 2023, His Body And Face Had Become Transfigured By What He Has Called A Regimen Of “Organic Testosterone.” Kennedy Showed Off His Unusually Puffy Body In Campaign Workouts, Going Shirtless In An Infamous Push-Up Video. “I Mean, He’s Unrecognizable,” Says A Family Intimate Who Has Known Him For Decades. “It’s Like A Body-Snatching Thing.”

His Campaign Became Pumped Up, Powered By Cash Infusions From His Vice Presidential Pick, Nicole Shanahan, The Ex-Wife Of Google Co-Founder Sergey Brin, And From Tim Mellon, An Heir To The Mellon Banking Fortune Who Has Given \$30 Million To The Super PAC Supporting Kennedy While Also Giving \$50 Million To **Trump’s** Campaign — An Alignment Of Interests That Critics Suspect Is *Strategic, Financing Kennedy’s Campaign To Draw Votes From Biden And Thereby Boost Trump.*

Many In Kennedy's Family Believe That Their Cousin's Pursuit Of The Presidency Has Left Him Vulnerable Not Only To The Draw Of His Followers And The Conspiracies He's Employed To Attract Them, But To The Influence In His Own Inner Circle, Including Bigtree, His Stalwart Fellow Anti-Vax Crusader, Who Now Serves As His Campaign's Director Of Communications And Has Drawn Down \$265,000 Through A Campaign-Aligned LLC. His Campaign Manager Is His Own Daughter-In-Law, Amaryllis Fox, A Former CIA Agent And Wife Of Bobby III, Himself An Actor And Screenwriter Who Once Ran A Website Dedicated To Fact-Checking Political Statements. The Two Met At Burning Man. [Ed. Note: Of Course They Did.] Fox, 43, Took Over For Dennis Kucinich Last October And Has Since Been Paid \$223,000. Fox Had No Previous Experience In Campaigns, Unless You Count Her Acting Role As A Campaign Manager In *Fear And Loathing In Aspen*, A 2021 Film Based On Hunter S Thompson's Quixotic Run For Sheriff, Written And Directed By Bobby III. (The Role Was Originally Intended For His Sister, Kick Kennedy.)

Fox Published A 2019 Memoir Detailing Her Career As An Undercover CIA Agent, Which She Publicized Before Getting Agency Approval. The Book Includes A Story Of Fox Meeting With al-Qaida-Linked Groups And Averting A Nuclear Bomb Detonation. Apple Bought The Rights Before It Was Even Published. (Fox Told NBC News That She Had Altered Aspects Of Her Story And Created Composite Characters To Protect National Security.)

Perhaps The Most Influential Figure In Kennedy's Orbit Is Jay Carson, Who Worked As An Aide To Bill Clinton When Clinton And Kennedy Were Friends And Neighbors In Westchester County. Disenchanted With Politics, Carson Moved To Los Angeles And Reinvented Himself, Becoming A Producer For *House Of Cards*, And Creating The Series *The Morning Show*. After Divorcing His First Wife Producer Sarah Treem (Creator Of *The Affair*), He Befriended Kennedy In An AA Meeting And During The Pandemic Became A COVID-Lockdown Skeptic. He Got To A Self-Described "Journey Designer" In Topanga Canyon, [Ed. Note: Where Else?] Started Attending A High-End Survivalist School In Utah (Whose Clients Also Include Lachlan Murdoch And Drew Barrymore), And Became A Close Adviser To Kennedy.

Last January, While Carson Had Care Of His Three Children With Treem, Who Were 7 And 11 At The Time, He Brought A Flock Of Lambs Home To Topanga Canyon For The Kids To Befriend And Asked Them To "Keep Them Calm." Then, Along With Friends From The Survivalist School, He "Slit The Throats Of The Live Lambs, Hung Them Upside Down, Skinned Them, Decapitated Them, Butchered Them, Cooked Them, And Fed Them To Their Guests, Including [The Children], According To Los Angeles Court Records. Carson Cut Himself So Badly During The Butchering That He Required Medical Treatment. [Ed. Note: Obviously, He Didn't Cut Himself *Badly* Enough.] The Children Were Traumatized, School Counselors Became Involved, And Carson's Ex-Wife Filed For A Restraining Order That, In Part, Bars Him From Killing Animals In Front Of The Children. [Ed. Note: Before We Collectively Lose Our Shit Here, Let's Consider The Plus Side: The Kids Had A All-To-Realistic

Experience Of Where Their *Meal* Came From. I Imagine Additional Counseling May Be In Order Down The Road So They Don't Recoil (Or Retch) At The Prospect Of Farm-To-Table Dining.]

(Carson, In Legal Rejoinders, Said His Kids Didn't Witness The Slaughter Itself, Only The Carcass, And Tells *Vanity Fair*: "In Most Places, It's Neither Unusual Nor Offensive To Turn A Farm Animal Raised For Food Into Food" And That His Divorce From Treem Was "Painful.")

In May, Carson Produced A Half Hour Campaign Movie For Kennedy's Super PAC, Featuring Actor Woody Harrelson, Which Sought To Defuse The Perception Of Kennedy As A Crackpot By Asking "What If He's Not Crazy?" Carson Was Reportedly Paid \$500,000 For The Film And Kennedy Praised Him In The Press As Having "His Finger On The Public Pulse." [Ed.

Note: Is It Possible To Take A *Pulse* In A Vaginal Cavity?]

THE KENNEDY FAMILY Crest Is Inscribed With The French Phrase "avise la fin," Meaning "Consider The End." It Is A Call To Purpose Turned Dire Warning. The Kennedy Legacy Was Built On The Idealism Of John F Kennedy And His Brother Bobby, Whose Assassinations Made Them Martyrs For The Dream Of Liberal Progress. In The Ensuing Decades, That Dream Became Freightened With Gossip, Scandal, Tragedy, And Infamy, The So-Called "Kennedy Curse," But Has Remained Deeply Resonant Nonetheless, Especially Among Democrats.

Fifty-Six Years After The Death Of Robert F Kennedy, The Stage Belongs To Bobby Jr., Even As He Has Morphed Into Something Closer To **Donald Trump** Than Anything Related To His Father Or Uncle, Cultivating Power Like **Trump** Has, By Sowing Distrust And Peddling Misinformation. Kennedy's Personal History Is Not Dissimilar To **Trump's** A Bottomless Well Of Scandal That, Over Time, Has Immunized People Against People Against Its Real-World Consequences. The Kennedy Name, The Fantasy And Celebrity Of It, Is Its Own Shield, Blinding People To The Fine Details Of Kennedy's Actual Beliefs And Thereby Making Him An Appealing And Easy Vessel For Discontent With Biden And **Trump**. As One Family Member Told Me, The Kennedy Name "Just Swims Around In People's Heads, Associated With Sailboats And Preppy Clothes."

Kennedy Finds Himself In A Role That Is Tailor-Made For The Pathologies That His Family And Friends Describe: The White Knight, The Antihero, The Spoiler, Threatening Not Only What's Left Of The Family Legacy But Of The Democratic Enterprise Itself. Whereas His Ex-Wife Or His Friends Were Once Collateral Damage To His Pathologies, Now It's The Entire Nation. "All Of Bobby's Oldest Friends, Nearly His Entire Family, And Even The Living Aides To RFK Sr. Have Said That His Candidacy Is Dangerous And Unwise And Likely To Elect **Donald Trump**," Says Cousin Stephen Kennedy Smith. "But He Won't Or Can't Stop. It's Sad. I Guess That Bobby Just Has To Go Where The Followers Are."

The Battle Is Not Over. Another Kennedy Relative Told Me He Has Warned RFK Jr. That He Would Become The Target Of A Democratic Machine That Would Have No Choice But To Destroy Him. [Ed. Note: No Shit.]

“They’ve Already Destroyed Me,” Kennedy Replied.

“No, They Haven’t,” The Relative Said. “They Haven’t Come Close.”

That Much Is True — For Now.

The Question Is Whether The Kennedy Family Have The Fortitude To Break The Family Oath And Level With The Public About The Brother And Cousin They Have Known For Decades. The Likelihood, Says A Person With Decades-Long Personal And Professional Ties To The Kennedys, Is Low: “Because You Pull The Bobby Thread, The Whole Tapestry Unravels. It’s Not Just Bobby, *It’s All Of Them*,” This Person Says. “You Pull The Bobby Thread, The Kennedy Myth All Comes Apart.”

Behind The Scenes, Some Hope Bobby’s Own Children Might Come To The Rescue. According To A Family Source, Bobby’s Son Aidan, 22, Son Of Mary Richardson, Grandson Of Robert F Kennedy Sr., Signaled That He Might Try To Persuade His Father To Get Out Of The Race Later This Year.

“Would You Encourage Bobby To Get Out?” The Friend Says He Asked Aidan.

“Definitely,” Was The Reply.

Reached For Comment, Aidan Kennedy Said, “I Never Said That.”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOE HAGAN Is A Special Correspondent For *Vanity Fair*. He Has Written For *New York*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Wall Street Journal*, And Many Other Publications. His Work Includes Long-Form Profiles And Investigative Exposés Of Some Of The Most Significant Figures And Subjects Of Our Time, Including Beto O'Rourke, Stephen Colbert, Hillary Clinton (Her First Post-Secretary Of State Interview), Karl Rove, The Bush Family, Henry Kissinger, Dan Rather, Goldman Sachs, And The States Of Florida And California. In 2010, He Discovered The Diaries Of Singer Nina Simone And Wrote About Them For *The Believer* Magazine. He Lives With His Family In Tivoli, New York.

STATEMENT ON ROBERT F KENNEDY JR.'S ANNOUNCEMENT TODAY

We Want An America Filled With Hope And Bound Together By A Shared Vision Of A Brighter Future, A Future Defined By Individual Freedom, Economic Promise, And National Pride. We Believe In Harris And Walz. Our Brother Bobby's Decision Today To Endorse **Trump** Is A Betrayal Of The Values That Our Father And Our Family Hold Most Dear. It's A Sad Ending To A Sad Story.