

Doing What Comes Naturally

Era: Election 1993

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"You're not really running in the election are you?"

"I am. Why are you so surprised, Lois?" Leil stood in front of me with her black hair tossed back, her tiny body confident, her manner authoritative.

"Well, it's just... I don't know. I thought you were big on ... I... Aren't you trying to make it in the entertainment world? Last week it was card tricks – and hypnotism. I thought you were practicing to become a magician."

"I am. But part of magic is charisma and I can't think of a better way to learn charisma than to run in an election." She emphasized the point by wafting the cape she was wearing.

Unfortunately, the effect was lost because we were standing in the hall adjacent to the drafting office at Pressure Plus. "I had two hundred people at my last magic show - even one or two adults."

Leil ignored Hector, something most people find impossible, as he squeezed past us in the 750 mm hallway and stepped on my toes. I morphed my face a bit and stretched my feet, hoping my toes were still alive. No feeling. What the heck, I consoled myself. If the nerves were dead, I could apply for a grant. A search for life, even locally, might entitle me to a few research perks - especially if I knew a member of parliament.

"It's all part of my program for self-development," Leil continued.

"Does Hayden know about this?"

"Sure, I told him. He thinks it's a good idea. He says if I win there'll be one less woman around Pressure-Plus. Mind you, he did add I wasn't to take any time off work."

"Sounds like Hayden. I'm surprised he didn't give you an extra drawing to do while you were at it. Are you running as an independent or for one of the parties?"

"It's a toss-up. I considered the National Elvis Party for a while." She winked at me, "but in the end I settled on Natural Law. I haven't got their approval yet but it's just a matter of time."

"Natural Law? Is that a new party?"

"Sort of. First time in politics in Canada. Actually, I'm kicking off my campaign tonight - with free coffee and doughnuts. If you want to come out I'll tell you all about our platform."

"Sure. Whereabouts?"

"Calgary Southwest. I have my heart set on Calgary Southwest."

"That's Manning's riding isn't it?"

"Yep. Think of all the attention I should get. Here." She handed me a slip of paper. "I borrowed the copy machine to make a bunch of business cards to hand out during the campaign. This is the address of my campaign headquarters. You got to come see me. Oh this is so exciting."

With that, she stomped her feet two or three times as if she was running on the spot, then turned to leave - swung her head so that her hair swept out like a fan. There was a little hip to each step she took - like she was so excited she couldn't keep from skipping.

I watched as she bounced down the hall, then retired to my comparatively boring office.

At about 7:30 that evening I parked my car two doors down from the address that Leil had given me as her campaign headquarters. A myriad of vehicles were parked on the street and I thought to myself that Leil's campaign was off to a good start. I did find it odd however that the address was in a residential area of the city. No shopping mall anywhere near.

Needless to say you can imagine my surprise when I saw Leil sitting in a glass-encased bus shelter on the boulevard in front of the house at the address she had given me. A huge banner proclaiming 'Natural Law' draped the front of the shelter. Leil sat behind a wooden plank that stretched across half the shelter and she had her legs crossed. She appeared to be floating in mid-air. I did a double-take over the floating bit.

All around her she had stacks of neatly folded papers, Styrofoam cups and trays of doughnuts. A bunch of kids were sitting on the grass just outside the shelter eating doughnuts and a lot of curious adult gawkers were inspecting her from across the street.

"Lois," she hollered as soon as she saw me. "Boy, am I ever glad to see you."

She immediately poured a cup of coffee out of the electric pot that bubbled beside her. My eye followed a cord that streamed across the sidewalk, apparently plugged into something inside her car.

"This is great," I enthused, "but I wasn't expecting to find you set up in a bus shelter."

Leil handed me the coffee and pointed to the doughnuts, indicating I should take one. "I think this is just the thing. It keeps the rain off my papers. Makes a good distribution center during the day when I'm at work. And - most important - I can't ask for a better return on my tax dollar."

"I can see your point. Are you getting a lot of people out?"

"You can see," she swept the landscape with an open palm "that a lot of people are looking but not too many are coming over to find out what's going on."

"They will," I told her, "sooner or later they're going to come over, even if it's only to ask you how you do the floating bit. Is that what they call yogic flying?"

"Well, I hope they're calling it that. But actually it's just a magic trick. I can't 'fly' for anywhere near this long. I don't think anybody except maybe the Maharishi himself can do that."

I nodded, not really surprised there was a little bit of magic involved. "So what's this campaign you're so sold on?"

"Oh, it's unbelievable, Lois and the best part is it actually works. This yogic flying enlivens the Unified Field of Natural Law and it creates positiveness and results in feelings of harmony right through the national consciousness. Boy, if Natural Law forms the next government, it'll just blow you away."

"I'm still not sure how it'll work?"

"We're going to establish a whole group of yogic flyers - 10,000 of them, A Group for government and they're going to put out so many positive vibes, Canada will never be the same again."

A woman with steel grey hair was watching the street from her window behind Leil's bus shelter. Her eyes were glued to Leil.

"I can believe that," I responded, "but isn't that going to get a little expensive. I mean how can the government afford to pay 10000 Yogic Flyers when we already have huge deficit problems."

The woman with the steel grey hair disappeared from the window.

"Yeh, but you're not seeing the big picture yet. Just think of all the money we're going to save because of all the positive vibes, \$7 billion on decreased crime, \$35 billion on reduced disease, \$20 billion on lower unemployment and welfare, \$11 billion on higher government efficiency, \$8 billion on lower absenteeism, \$40 billion on increased revenues. It all adds up to a total of \$121 billion a year. We could afford to pay for 10000 Yogic Flyers over and over with this kind of savings."

The woman with steel grey hair was striding purposefully across the lawn. She wore a paisley house dress, heavy oxfords and bobby sox.

Leil continued. "Some of our campaign literature explains how violent crime dropped by 25 per cent in Washington D.C. last June and July. That was because 4000 of our flyers showed up and did their thing to prove how much difference they could make."

"Flyers? Sorry Leil, I'm kind of distracted. You don't mean the paper kind."

The woman's bobby sox had pulled down so the heel of her shoe was rubbing on bare skin. A storm cloud had settled on her forehead as if she was a mountain. "What's going on here young lady?" she asked.

Leil turned her attention toward her visitor and extended her hand in an enthusiastic welcome. "Madam, you are about to hear the answer to all your problems. Your children and grand-children will live in a better world because of the Natural Law Party and I have the privilege of telling you all about it." A puff of smoke and a flash burst from Leil's fingers as she waved her arm in a gesture of emphasis. The woman frowned.

"I'm not really happy about you parking yourself in my bus shelter. You ruin my view of the poster."

Leil looked over at the advertisement that covered one wall of the shelter. "That thing?"

"Well, I like it," she stated. "My son manages that store. On top of that, I put nuts in here every day for the squirrels and they're not going to come and get them if you're hogging the whole place."

"Well, ma'am could I offer to pay for your nuts or get you a special feeder to use for the next while?"

"Nonsense. Everyone knows that little animals need consistency. Either I'm feeding the squirrels in the bus shelter or I'm not, one or the other."

One of the gentlemen who had been watching Leil from his car across the street decided he wanted to get involved. I heard the door slam. At the same moment I noticed a pedestrian - who just happened to be walking by - approach the shelter.

Leil knew she was being surrounded. "Here Lois," she said as she passed me a pile of pamphlets, "would you pass one of these out to everybody. I'm going to have to get flying and calm things down here."

She uncrossed her legs and stepped down from a saddle shaped support that had been holding her up and still appeared to be suspended in mid-air. Once she was on the grass, she crossed her legs in a yoga-like fashion again, and proceeded to bounce across the grass. Immediately, the kids around her began to laugh and point.

"Are you interested in one of Leil's pamphlets?" I asked the steel-haired woman. "Leil will be back with you in a minute. Right now she's enlivening the Unified Field of Natural Law."

"I never vote."

"You'll want to vote this time, though," I suggested. "Look how happy she makes the kids."

The woman reached out and took the pamphlet reluctantly.

The man who had been sitting in the car across the street stormed past the shelter. "I really resent people who abuse public property," he announced. Leil bounced toward us, paying no attention to the hostility in the man's voice. I could feel a wave of calm pervade the air around us.

"Won't you have a pamphlet, sir?"

He reached for it. "But can't you guys find some better place for your campaign headquarters?"

"Oh, but this is good. Look how much of their personal money Leil is saving the Canadian taxpayers by sticking with facilities that are under-utilized."

The man took a deep breath. "Well the deficit is our biggest problem all right. What's she going to do about that?"

"She's going to save you billions. See. She's doing it right now... creating positive vibes and a sense of harmony right through the whole country. As long as Leil is around, hardly any body will get sick. Think of the millions we'll save on health care."

The pedestrian who had been standing by watching all this started to laugh like the kids. "Boy are you guys ever a joke. This is yogic flying is it?" And off he tramped down the street. But not before I'd managed to give him a pamphlet.

The next morning Leil's picture was in the paper. She was suspended in the bus shelter along with her coffee and doughnuts just as she had been when I first saw her the night before. The reporter stated in an accompanying article that he had had a very informative talk with Leil regarding the Natural Law Platform and was pleased to point out that the party was fielding 231 candidates. This was more than even the Reform Party - fourth only to the PCs the Liberals and the New Democrats.

In an adjacent article an astrologer who attended the 1993 annual psychic ESP Fair stated that Neptune and Uranus were in sync for the first time in 500 years. What more could Leil have asked for?

Two days later, I sauntered out to Leil's drafting board because I was wondering how her campaign was going. Aside from that I had sort of enjoyed handing out pamphlets and was thinking I might go for another evening's entertainment at the bus shelter.

"So how's it going Leil?" I asked her.

The phone rang.

"Great. Except Calgary Transit's on my back. This is probably them now."

She picked up the phone and I leaned against her desk fully prepared to wait the couple of minutes I thought the call would take.

"Leil's desk," she chimed.

I examined my finger nails.

"I see."

And the white-out all over my hand.

"But have you stopped to consider the whole story. Judging from the people who've been getting off the bus at my shelter, your ridership has increased about 300% since I set up my headquarters. Look at all the money you're making."

I was losing interest in my fingernails.

"It IS unfortunate that she can't see the poster and of course I make sure the squirrels are fed. But shouldn't you be considering your own economics. I've probably paid for your shelter two times over with the number of extra tickets you've sold in the last three days alone. Heck, you could put up another shelter right beside mine and be money ahead. I think you should consider that."

Talk about chutzpah. Leil had all my attention, now.

"They just stream out of the bus - everyone that comes by. Afterward the bus is practically empty. Talk to some of your drivers. They're good guys. The whole works of them wave to me when they pass. But usually I'm too busy campaigning to notice."

Well, Leil was definitely catching on to the game.

"Okay, get back to me later, then."

She hung up the phone.

"So what did they say?" I asked.

"Said he wasn't aware that I was having such a massive effect on the ridership. Said he'd talk to his boss and get back to me later. I don't think they'll give me any more problems. They can't afford to."

"Looks like that article in the paper really helped."

"That? No it's not the article. It's the positive vibes."

"Yeh. I guess it must be."

"I can't seem to get through to Hayden though. He's complaining that I'm spending too much time on the phone."

"Yeh. Don't let him catch you on the phone."

"Actually, it's pretty hard not to. It's his wife that keeps phoning. He made the mistake of telling her I was running. I think he's mostly upset because his wife thinks this is wonderful. She's

all enthusiastic and called me three times yesterday with suggestions. You know - to improve my campaign."

"Speaking about your campaign. I was wondering if you're going to be out tonight. I thought I'd drop by and help pass out pamphlets again."

"That'd be great, Lois. I'd really appreciate it."

"Yeh you should. This is the night I ordinarily go shopping."

That night when I arrived there was a mess of cars along the route and two transit busses parked beside the shelter. People were milling all along the boulevard. There weren't as many kids and the doughnuts were all gone but Leil still had the coffee pot plugged in.

When I arrived at the shelter she was standing just outside talking to a very young man, probably 21 or 22 and a middle aged woman. I ignored Leil and stepped into the shelter to pick up a hand-full of pamphlets but she pulled me over when I was on my way back to the boulevard.

"This is my assistant Lois Pitt," she introduced me. "Lois, guess what," she directed all her attention to me. "Transit has put on an extra three buses just to bring people out for my campaign. I'm really happy that you're here because I promised everybody I'd do my yogic flying. With you here, I don't need to lose any time. You can pass out pamphlets and talk to people about my platform."

A black and white fuzz mobile pulled to the curb across the street from the bus shelter. Two policemen in working blue sauntered across the road toward us, fingers hooked in their belt loops. Leil ignored them

"You don't need a platform, Leil," stated the young man she was talking to. "Who needs anything to stand on when they can fly? Forget the speeches. We want to see the real thing."

"Nah. I don't want to do that. I don't like candidates that can't bother to take a position. Tonight Lois, I'm hitting the idea that Natural Law will create an invincible national defense policy by generating coherence and harmony in collective consciousness - you know - there'll be so much coherence and so much harmony that we won't have any enemies."

"Yeh," the young man stated, "that could save billions in helicopters alone."

One of the policemen was now standing just behind Leil. "Maybe she has a bulletproof vest on, Hank."

Leil swirled around. "Oh hi," she said. "I didn't realize you were right behind me. What d'you mean? Think I need a bullet proof vest?"

"We were wondering. I mean don't you find a lot of people throw things at you? Being set up in their bus shelter and all?"

"No way. That's the whole idea behind Natural Law. I make everybody feel good. You know, we go with the Coca Cola theme? And sing in perfect harmony?"

I shook my head vehemently. Leil obviously needed help. "Natural Law is the perfect defense," I assured the policemen. "We don't need armored tanks or helicopters. Right?" I turned to the young man who was going to save billions on helicopters. Unfortunately, he was gone but another young fellow was standing there.

"Are you guys a joke or what?" he asked.

"Of course we're a joke," I explained. "Haven't you ever heard of a deadly serious joke?"

"All we need is the Constitution of the Universe," Leil explained to the policemen, transcendental meditation and yogic flying. Lois you look after our friends. I'm going to get things calmed down here." She immediately crossed her legs and squatted in a yogic position. Her face settled into an image that must have been analogous to the Unified Field and she began bouncing across the grass.

"Tell me," one of the policemen asked, turning to the other. "If an election is a game of chance, how do politicians get away without answering a skill-testing question?"

The other shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "They just have a different kind of skill than we think they should have."

"Skill. We have wonderful defensive skills," I told them. "Pretty soon we won't need any armed forces. Doug Henning says that several countries are all set to adopt yogic flying as a means of governing," and I handed each of them one of Leil's pamphlets. "You just wait until we provide full employment, abolish the GST, eliminate the federal deficit and pay off the national debt. This place'll never be the same again."

"You know Hank," one of the policemen blew a big lump of air out of his lungs, "I'm beginning to like these guys. They're beginning to make a lot of sense."

"Yeh. A lot of sense... you mean sense of humour, don't you? There's not enough of it around these days."

"So what should we do about that old lady that wants her out of the bus shelter?"

Leil seemed to snap out of her trance but she was still hopping around. "You bet there's sense to this," she enthused. "The Natural Law Party is the only party that has scientifically established its ability to calm mankind and create a government that functions in harmony with Natural Law. You can go home and have a good sleep tonight. Your job will be easier tomorrow because of me. And easier still next year because of Natural Law. No more crime."

"I think we should do that Hank. Let's go home. Heck. Pretty soon we won't even need to go to work."

"I don't know if this is such a good idea," his companion reasoned. "We could be out of a job." They both sauntered across the road, more relaxed than when they arrived. "This is kind of fun, though. Maybe we should bring the rest of the guys out here for a beer on Friday night."

When they were across the road, I turned to Leil. "You didn't hypnotize them, did you? They left too easily."

"Don't worry, Lois. That's the way the Unified Field works."

The kids continued to hang around the shelter. Every once in a while a new bus load of curious on-lookers arrived and Leil went through her spiel again. Because the evening's theme was national defense, she taught some of the kids to hover over the grass like helicopters. The kids felt really good about it because they knew they were doing their part and contributing to the harmony of the universe. The adults weren't quite so easy to convince but most of them came enthusiastically, asked their questions intelligently and left feeling a sense of hope that I knew darn well they weren't getting from any of the other candidates.

"It's a matter of ethics," Leil explained to one woman. "We just make people WANT to live ethically and every other problem disappears."

About ten to nine a long low limousine appeared at the curb and two men dressed in power suits walked briskly and ominously over to Leil's bus shelter. She was engaged in the helicopter game with a couple of six year olds, so their attention very quickly settled on me since I was the one carrying pamphlets.

"What's going on here?" the one with runny eyes asked.

"This is campaign headquarters for Leil Bassary who is promoting the harmony of Natural Law and the ideal of perfect government. Just a minute and I'm sure she'll have time to talk to you and explain her platform."

"Where is she?" Runny Eyes asked. I pointed to Leil where she was sitting on the boulevard with her junior entourage.

"Get her," Runny Eyes directed Tire Bulge. Tire Bulge took his hands out of his pockets and headed with brusque determination toward Leil's spot on the grass.

"What's your problem?" I asked.

"We don't have a problem," he responded promptly. "You have a problem. Good old Leil Bassary here, is going to be in court very shortly."

I thought for a minute Tire Bulge was going to physically stand Leil on her legs but when it became apparent he wasn't above man handling her, Leil very sweetly rose to her feet and sauntered gracefully over to where Runny Eyes and I were standing, just outside the bus shelter.

Runny Eyes wasn't missing the fact that she was well-rounded, that her hair glowed with auburn highlights of reflected sun light, that she was small and needed protecting. He seemed to soften perceptibly with every step that Leil took toward us.

"What's going on here?" He was forcing himself to speak gruffly now.

"It's so nice of you to ask. I'm glad you came."

I could feel a sort of calm pervade the air with her voice, a hypnotizing influence that made me heave a sigh and let the muscles all along my limbs settle into a more comfortable position.

"This sign." Runny Eyes pointed to the banner that read Natural Law. "You aren't a Natural Law candidate. You can't fly that thing."

"Oh dear," Leil agreed. "Yes I guess it's about time I talked to the people in the Natural Law Party and made official arrangements."

"You're darn tootin' it is. You've got a lot of nerve just going ahead and using our name and our platform without our endorsement," Tire Bulge scolded.

"Oh," Leil sparkled happily, "then you're with the Natural Law Party. What luck! I can set things up with you now."

"What do you mean?" Tire Bulge stated. "We don't want you."

"Now, now," Runny Eyes interrupted, "Don't be so hasty. I think you'd better shut the place down for the night and come for a little talk with us. How about a coffee at that place down the street?"

"Just a minute," Leil held out her hand, palm toward Runny Eyes. "How do I know that you're really with the Natural Law Party?"

Runny Eyes pulled a business card out of his left breast pocket and handed a copy to Leil and one to me. Tire Bulge did the same.

"Well?" Runny Eyes prompted Leil who was busy reading the name.

"Oh." Leil seemed almost surprised, then handed him one of her own, carefully reproduced on the Pressure-Plus copy machine and hand trimmed to the correct size.

"Lois," she asked me, "would you pack things up for me here if I go have a coffee with these guys. Just put everything in the car except for a couple hundred of the pamphlets? And I'll see you at work tomorrow?"

"I can do that. Will you be alright? Are you sure you don't want me to come along?"

"No. You have a copy of their business cards. Just don't loose the cards. And remember what these guys look like." She looked individually at Runny Eyes and Tire Bulge and each of them smiled, almost guiltily. Slowly they were catching on. "After all, I'm the one doing them a favor." She was telling me but she knew they'd get the message.

The next morning Leil was already at her desk when I arrived, but I didn't get the chance to talk to her until later.

I was in Hayden's office about ten o'clock, trying to bash him around a bit when I discovered that Leil had already done the job - for the week at least.

"Leil says you've been out helping her run her campaign?" he asked/told me.

"Yeh, it's great fun," I enthused. "You should try it. Get involved."

"Yeh gads. I'm getting it up to my ears already. I told my wife that I wouldn't give Leil time off work to do any campaigning and my wife, MY WIFE felt sorry for her. So she volunteered her time AND the kids to man the bus shelter while Leil's at work. I've made supper every night this week."

"I don't know, Dick. Maybe you should take a few days off. See if you can't regain control of things."

"Oh be quiet, Lois. I should have known you wouldn't have any sympathy. I can't believe it. I feel absolutely betrayed. The worst part is, I was going fishing this weekend and now I can't have the van because my wife needs it to deliver pamphlets."

Hayden had a couple of extra drawings for me after that conversation. Both of them were supposed to be issued to the shop the next morning.

I didn't actually talk to Leil until around two o'clock in the afternoon.

She was hanging up the phone when I whizzed past her drafting board. Seeing she was available, I stopped to find out the latest in the world of Chutzpah.

"Hi Leil. How did you make out with Mutt and Jeff last night?"

"Oh great. I'm really happy. Well - it's not quite perfect. I can't stand as a candidate in Calgary Southwest because it's too late to get my name on the ballot. And besides, they already have a candidate. But they don't have any problem with me continuing to campaign. And they said I was welcome to any publicity I could drum up under the Natural Law banner."

"So, you're just supposed to support the candidate they already have?"

"Yeh. Great hey? I can try and get my picture in the newspaper as much as I want and everything. Mind you I'm going to have to pass out Ida's pamphlets from now on as well as my own."

"Ida?"

"Ida Bugmann. Yeh. She's the Natural Law candidate in Calgary Southwest."

"I'm not sure why you're so happy. After all, you guy's are running against Preston Manning."

"Oh, that doesn't bother me. Preston, he's a good guy. Look at this. She pulled a clipping out of her pocket. 'Manning Macho' it stated. 'Some psychic in Ottawa thinks he has a firm handshake. She says that makes him a real man.'"

I made a face and Leil laughed.

"So I don't have anything to worry about. He's the sort of guy that deals with the issues. And there's no doubt on my part at all that we can beat him on the issues."

"I don't know Leil."

"On top of that, the people in Calgary Southwest aren't very happy with Manning right at the moment. He got them all uptight during the vote on the constitution by referring to the package as the Mulroney Deal. Nah. Don't worry Lois. I've got this thing aced."

"What about the police? Have you heard any more from them?"

"Yeh, actually I have. That Hank guy phoned me this morning. asked if I'd come down and do some yogic flying. They're looking for some murderer and figure that maybe a little bit of universal harmony will prompt him to come in and confess. They said they'd have a reporter there. Actually, I was going to ask if you'd mind looking after the bus shelter between six and eight while I'm down there. Someone has to take over from Hayden's wife. She's a real dear you know."

"She'd have to be. She's married to Hayden."

Both Leil and I were pretty busy for the next three weeks. I fell in love with politics during that period. And I found out that Hayden was actually nice to his wife when no one was looking. That pleased me enormously, but I was very careful that I didn't mention the fact to any one at work. Hayden had a reputation to maintain.

Needless to say, on October 25, Leil and Ida lost the election to good old Preston - which didn't seem to bother Leil one iota.

"I got what I wanted out of the whole exercise," she told me one night when we went out to celebrate the end of all our hard work. The lights were low, the food was delicious and the mood was mellow.

"Yes, I suppose you did," I agreed. "I'm totally convinced that you are a super magician and a fantastic entertainer."

"Well, on top of that, I don't know if you realize Lois. But Natural Law really won the election in Calgary Southwest."

"Leil? What do you mean?"

"Well, I don't think most people realize, but if it wasn't for us, Preston wouldn't have stood a chance of winning that seat."

"Why? Were we secretly campaigning for Preston Manning?"

"Well, in a way, yes, although I have to admit I would never have done it if I'd realized what was going on."

"What WAS going on?"

"It was like this, Lois. We just created so much harmony and good will in Calgary Southwest with yogic flying that the voters decided they had to forgive Manning for referring to the constitutional package as the Mulroney Deal. And they elected him instead of Ida. We were hoisted on our own petard, so to speak. Just goes to show you the power of ideas."

"What's a petard?"

"It's a medieval war machine - used to blow things up."

"Oh."

Leil cut into her chicken with a marble-handled steak knife. "It came in the mail yesterday."

"What? A petard?"

"No. A thank-you letter... from Manning's election headquarters," she said, handing me a folded sheet of paper.



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