

**Stephen R. Soukup** Publisher  
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

**Mark L. Melcher** Editor  
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

## THEY SAID IT

Comedian Kathy Griffin wasn't so popular with the troops during her USO Diva's Salute stand-up act on Sunday, when she poked fun at Bristol Palin's weight. "[Bristol Palin] is the only contestant in the history of ["Dancing with the Stars"] to actually gain weight."

Following a chorus of boos, Griffin went on to say, "No, come on, come on. She gained, like, 30 pounds a week. I swear to God, it was fantastic. She's like the white 'Precious,'" referring to the obese African-American character in the eponymous 2009 film. When the booing continued, Griffin shouted, "You can boo louder than that! Come on, boo me! I love it! I love it! War is Hell, war is Hell!"

This isn't the first shot Griffin has taken at the Palin family. In 2009, Griffin made jokes about Sarah Palin's infant Trig, who was born with Down Syndrome. Kathy Griffin justified calling Trig Palin a "retard baby" via Twitter....

Laura Donovan, "Kathy Griffin Calls Bristol Palin 'Fat' at USO Event, And Soldiers Boo Her," *The Daily Caller*, December 6, 2010.

## SARAH PALIN AND THE ANCIEN RÉGIME.

You better sit down for this. And take a deep breath. We don't want you to faint, or to spit your coffee all over your energy-star monitor. But it seems that the denizens of the left in this great nation – mainstream media included – hate Sarah Palin. No, seriously. They can't stand her. Everything about her drives them crazy.

She drives them so batty, it seems, that there is nothing she – or even anyone to whom she is related – can do that won't drive them up the wall. Her daughter Bristol, for example, performed surprisingly well on the most recent season of "Dancing with the Stars." And that prompted liberal "faith" columnist Sally Quinn to shriek that Bristol's success was "unholy," and self-styled "feminist" comedienne Sandra Bernhard to call the eldest Palin girl "a hooker." How dare she dance well! She's a . . . a . . . a . . . REPUBLICAN!

But for real TV drama, nothing beats TLC network's "Sarah Palin's Alaska," and the left's reaction to it. For those of you who don't know, the Palin family shot an eight-part reality-series for the cable network that showed these rare and wonderful conservatives in their natural environment, so to speak. And the show

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Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842  
Phone 540.477.9762 Fax 540.477.3359 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

has left a great many on the political left terribly and disturbingly unhappy, both with TLC and with that “disgusting” Palin woman.

You see, the program shows Mrs. Palin fishing, hunting, camping, hanging with her kids and her husband. It shows her doing horrible, nasty, disgraceful things, like just being a mom and — egad!—talking like normal people do. And this is just unacceptable. Or as *The New Yorker’s* Nancy Franklin put it:

When it comes to Palin specifically, there is the fundamental problem that some of us don’t want to see or hear any more of her than we have to. And there are those whose objections have a physiological basis as well as an ideological one: the pitch and timbre of her voice, the rhythms of her speech, her syntax, and the way she coats acid and incoherence with cheery musical inflections join together in a sickening synergy that distresses the listener, triggering a fight-or-flight reaction. When Palin talks, my whole being wails, like Nancy Kerrigan after Tonya Harding’s ex-husband kneecapped her: “Why? Why? Why?”

They say that Palin is a fake. They say that her fishing and hunting appear staged, as does her description of Grizzly bears. They claim her interactions with her kids are phony and agitprop. And all of this makes them hate her. More than they did before.

And why do they hate her? Well, because her voice grates on them, because she rolls her eyes at teachers, and because she uses quirky, colloquial expressions that they believe are fabricated for effect. They hate her because they don’t think she is as smart as they are, that she couldn’t possibly be as smart as they are, that *no one* on the right could possibly be as smart as they are, and certainly not this anti-intellectual cretin who used to compete in beauty pageants and went to a — GASP! — state school -- more than one of them, in

fact. They hate her, in short, because she is so damn “common.” Robert Draper gives the game away in a recent Palin profile in *The New York Times*:

Palin became testy when I asked her about the books I heard she had been reading. “I’ve been reading since I was a little girl,” she snapped. “And my mom is standing 15 feet away from me, and I should put her on the phone with you right now so she can tell you. That’s what happens when you grow up in a house full of teachers — you read; and I always have. Just because — and,” she continued, though in a less blistering tone, “I don’t want to come across sounding caustic or annoyed by this issue: because of one roll-of-the-eye answer to a question I gave, I’m still dealing with this,” she said, referring to her interview with Katie Couric. “There’s nothing different today than there was in the last 43 years of my life since I first started reading. I continue to read all that I can get my hands on — and reading biographies of, yes, Thatcher for instance, and of course Reagan and the John Adams letters, and I’m just thinking of a couple that are on my bedside, I go back to C.S. Lewis for inspiration, there’s such a variety, because books have always been important in my life.” She went on: “I’m reading [the conservative radio host] Mark Levin’s book; I’ll get a hold of Glenn Beck’s new book — and now because I’m opening up,” she finished warily, “I’m afraid I’m going to get reporters saying, Oh, she only reads books by Glenn Beck.”

I explained to Palin that in my view, at least, this line of inquiry wasn’t gratuitous — that questions did in fact linger about her “gravitas gap.”

The “gravitas gap.” You get it? It’s a “nice” way of saying that Sarah is dumb, that she’s not an intellectual giant, like Barack Obama, for example. She just can’t hang with the big boys, you see. She should just go away and leave the job of running the country to her betters, you know, the people who went to Harvard and Yale and Columbia, who went to Harvard law school, not the University of Idaho, for crying out loud.

Now, none of this surprising, of course, even in the slightest. We know they hate her. We know they think she’s dumb. We know they think that anyone who isn’t them is dumb. And we know that they always think Republicans are anti-intellectuals who are intent on screwing up the country with their dumb, anti-intellectual ways. There is no new news here. Palin is dumb, just like Bush was dumb – in spite of his education. Just like Reagan was dumb. And, of course, just like Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas is dumb. They are (or were) all dunces, more or less amiable. There is, in other words, nothing at all novel in this dislike of Sarah Palin.

Except, perhaps, the fact that they are now so open about it and so completely and utterly unaware of the effect it has on them, on voters’ perception of them, and on their party’s political fortunes.

What is truly interesting, ironic, and, frankly, telling in this convulsion of Palin hatred is the way it reflects on the ruling class – and the political left in particular – and its vision of itself in reference to the country class, which is to say, the rest of America. What fascinates us is that the very same people who complain about Palin – and who complained about Bush, and who mocked Reagan – see no disconnect whatsoever between this disparagement and their ability to garner votes. They proceed without hesitation from ridiculing the “conventionality” of folks like Sarah Palin to complaining about how they can’t seem to attract enough voters in middle America to win elections. Perhaps the finest example of this took place during the 2004 presidential campaign, when the wind-surfing, French-boarding-school-educated, Ivy League-attending hundred millionaire

John Kerry openly wondered how stupid Americans could possibly be stupid enough even to consider voting for his stupid opponent, bawling, “I can’t believe I’m losing to this idiot.”

What never seems to have occurred to Kerry then or to Reagan’s critics or to those who love to hate Sarah Palin is that the things they hate so much about these “people” are, in many cases, characteristics shared by the overwhelming majority of Americans.

This may come as a surprise to them, but just slightly over one-quarter of American adults have a college degree, and only an infinitesimal percentage of those have that degree from one of the Ivies. Additionally, normal Americans work hard, many with their hands. They also play hard – and not by going wind-surfing up on Nantucket. Normal people fish. They hunt. They camp. They change the oil in their cars. They, not their nannies, deal with their kids and change dirty diapers. Normal people walk their dogs. They mow their yards. They run to the grocery store to pick up some mac-and-cheese and hot dogs to feed the kids after a long day at work. They go to community college at night or to “continuing education” classes on Saturday mornings. They behave, in short, like Sarah Palin.

Now, none of this is to say that anybody anywhere is going to vote for Mrs. Palin or identify with her political and policy predilections just because she is kinda, a little bit like them. But then, that’s not really the point. This isn’t so much about Palin’s similarity to average Americans as it is about the ruling class’s complete and utter disconnect from those things that constitute that similarity.

The fact of the matter is that today the American ruling class is simply incapable of understanding the habits, hobbies, plans, educational experiences, and lifestyles of average Americans. Indeed, when the ruling class gets its knickers in a twist about “lifestyles,” it is invariably about those lifestyles that are completely incomprehensible to average Americans. And all of this puts them at something of a disadvantage with the majority of voters.

No one – and we mean no one – is even capable of imagining Barack Obama mowing his own lawn. It's just so far removed from reality that any attempt to bridge the gap is absurd. The guy is so completely and utterly disconnected from the day-to-day lives of average Americans that any attempt to appear otherwise would be corny at best and agonizing at worst. When, for example, the guy shows up to pre-caucus Iowa complaining about the price of arugula, he looks almost as stupid and disconnected as John Kerry in his hunting "outfit" or Michael Dukakis in his tank.

But this isn't even the worst of it.

You see, the real problem the ruling class faces is not simply that it doesn't understand the "common" bonds of average American life, but that it openly and wantonly abhors those bonds. The ruling class – and the left in particular – uses this word, "common," exclusively as a pejorative. And it is this open and unabashed distaste for anything "common" that distinguishes today's left from its opponents and from its Democratic predecessors and, indeed, gives it more of the patina of the pre-revolutionary Ancien Régime than of "the party of the people" it once was. Suddenly, the elitism of the ruling class left is no longer just about being the best and brightest subset of the American people, but about being different from "those people" altogether. It's all about actively and openly disliking the rest of the country and the way it lives.

We don't know that we have ever admitted this before, but we love Sarah Palin. We really do. And it's not because we agree with her or think she's particularly insightful or because we'd like her to be president. We wouldn't mind her being president, of course, but even among conservatives, there are a handful of others we'd prefer.

No, what we love about Sarah is that she drives the members of the ruling class nuts. And she drives them nuts in a way that forces them to expose their distaste for average Americans. They can't help themselves. They hate her and everything about her. And for some reason, they just can't stop attacking her.

We're not sure why that's the case, but we suspect it has something to do with the following, penned by the leftist feminist Camille Paglia back in 2008, when Palin first made waves as John McCain's running mate:

The hysterical emotionalism and eruptions of amoral malice at the arrival of Sarah Palin exposed the weaknesses and limitations of current feminism. But I am convinced that Palin's bracing mix of male and female voices, as well as her grounding in frontier grit and audacity, will prove to be a galvanizing influence on aspiring Democratic women politicians too, from the municipal level on up. Palin has shown a brand-new way of defining female ambition – without losing femininity, spontaneity or humor. She's no pre-programmed wonk of the backstage Hillary Clinton school; she's pugnacious and self-created, the product of no educational or political elite – which is why her outsider style has been so hard for media lemmings to comprehend.

About the only thing we'd amend in Paglia's observation is that Palin, in fact, exposes the limitations not just in feminism, but in the current state of American governance *in toto*. It is no coincidence, we think, that among those on the right who have vented their annoyance with Palin for her reality show and the things she says and does on it are people like Karl Rove, Peggy Noonan, and even Barbara Bush. Now, we like Barbara Bush an awful lot, but she, and especially the other two, represent the establishment wing of the Republican Party, the people who hate the Tea Party, or who thought Obama would bring "thoughtfulness" to Washington, or who thought Nancy Reagan acted more like "the help" than a proper First Lady.

As we've noted before, the Republican Party is in the midst of its own internal struggle, with an establishment wing that values power, fighting desperately to hold off the insurgent/Tea Party wing

that values liberty. Sarah Palin is, in many ways, an excellent proxy for this insurgent wing. And like the liberal establishment brethren, the establishment Republicans just can't help themselves when she's around. They hate her and everything she represents – the most important of which is the threat to them. And they just can't keep from saying things about her that they would never dare to say about any other politician or about the American public as a whole.

And we suspect that said “American public as a whole” is paying attention.

As it turns out, “Sarah Palin's Alaska,” Bristol Palin's “Dancing with the Stars,” and indeed the entire Palin phenomenon is not really about the Palins at all. It is, rather, about the ruling class in America, a class of men and women that hates fishing, that detests hunting, that would never be caught dead sleeping in a tent; a class of professional policy activists who couldn't cut their grass if they had to, who couldn't change a light bulb, and who couldn't find their own way from their Georgetown townhouse to the Old Executive Office Building, despite having lived in Washington for 20 years, because they've never driven it themselves.

Sarah Palin is a threat to these people, and they know it. What's so great about her is that they can't help themselves when she's involved, which simply makes her even more of a threat. God bless her, she's one of us. And that's what drives them nuts.

## WIKICHINA? NO CHANCE.

Once upon a time, when we were big shot analysts at a big shot financial services firm, we had a friend in the business who used to tell us all the time about another analyst we knew, whose work was really terribly important to him. This analyst's work was invaluable, he used to say, but not because it was particularly insightful, but because it wasn't insightful at all. “Whatever he says to do,” our friend used to tell us, “I do the opposite. And I never fail to come out ahead.”

We knew what he meant, of course, because we had (and have) a similar figure in our professional lives, an analyst, of sorts, who is exceptionally helpful because whatever he thinks, writes, or says, we know that precisely the opposite is true. For us, that “analyst” is Tom Friedman, the *New York Times* political columnist and perpetual purveyor of conventional wisdom. We know, almost instinctively, that if Friedman thinks it, writes it, believes it, then it is all but certainly wrong. If Friedman told us that the sky is blue, we'd feel pretty confident saying that it's red. If Friedman told us that the grass is green, we'd feel sure that it's orange. If Friedman tells us that Oregon will win the NCAA football national championship game, we will immediately call Vegas and put everything we have on Auburn. As an analyst of political trends and developments, Tom Friedman is as invaluable to us as that other analyst was to our old pal. By paying attention to him, we never fail to come out ahead.

We were reminded of this last week when Friedman wrote a column purporting to analyze the treasure trove of information released on the internet and in his, Friedman's, own paper by Wikileaks and its founder/provocateur Julian Assange. Friedman, who is well connected in liberal circles and who is well liked by the Democratic big shots for whom he cheerleads, could have used his contacts to discover something unusual in the leaks or to learn what was considered most damaging about them and therefore what is least likely to be immediately repaired. In other words, he could have, for a change, done something useful.

But he didn't. Instead, he just used the Wikileaks debacle as the lead for the story he really wanted to write, which, as always, describes how screwed up the United States is and how super-awesome China is. We'd call the guy a hopeless Sino-phile, but that wouldn't even begin to do justice to his obsession. Everything bad in the world is in the good ol' U.S. of A. And everything good is the exclusive purview of the Chinese tiger. Yada, yada, yada. Anyway, here's what he had to say last week:

*While secrets from WikiLeaks were splashed all over the American newspapers, I couldn't help but wonder: What if China had a WikiLeaksLeaker and we could see what its embassy in Washington was reporting about America? I suspect the cable would read like this: . . .*

Things are going well here for China. America remains a deeply politically polarized country, which is certainly helpful for our goal of overtaking the U.S. as the world's most powerful economy and nation. But we're particularly optimistic because the Americans are polarized over all the wrong things. There is a willful self-destructiveness in the air here as if America has all the time and money in the world for petty politics. They fight over things like — we are not making this up — how and where an airport security officer can touch them . . . .

Americans just had what they call an “election.” Best we could tell it involved one congressman trying to raise more money than the other (all from businesses they are supposed to be regulating) so he could tell bigger lies on TV more often about the other guy before the other guy could do it to him. This leaves us relieved. It means America will do nothing serious to fix its structural problems: a ballooning deficit, declining educational performance, crumbling infrastructure and diminished immigration of new talent.

The ambassador recently took what the Americans call a fast train — the Acela — from Washington to New York City. Our bullet train from Beijing to Tianjin would have made the trip in 90 minutes. His took three hours — and it was on time! Along the way the ambassador used his cellphone to call his embassy

office, and in one hour he experienced 12 dropped calls — again, we are not making this up. We have a joke in the embassy: “When someone calls you from China today it sounds like they are next door. And when someone calls you from next door in America, it sounds like they are calling from China!” Those of us who worked in China's embassy in Zambia often note that Africa's cellphone service was better than America's . . . .

Most of the Republicans just elected to Congress do not believe what their scientists tell them about man-made climate change. America's politicians are mostly lawyers — not engineers or scientists like ours — so they'll just say crazy things about science and nobody calls them on it. It's good. It means they will not support any bill to spur clean energy innovation, which is central to our next five-year plan. And this ensures that our efforts to dominate the wind, solar, nuclear and electric car industries will not be challenged by America.

Finally, record numbers of U.S. high school students are now studying Chinese, which should guarantee us a steady supply of cheap labor that speaks our language here, as we use our \$2.3 trillion in reserves to quietly buy up U.S. factories. In sum, things are going well for China in America.

Good stuff, eh? America bad. China good. Republicans stupid. Politics stupid. American people stupid. China to take over the world. *Etc., etc., ad nauseam.*

Now, there are several problems with all of this. First of all, there's Friedman's little dig at the Republicans, whom he accuses of not much caring for science and, moreover, of not being scientists, which he sees as an

affront to all that is good and holy. This knock on the Republicans is, of course, gratuitous and serves simply as a springboard to make a larger point, namely that scientists are awesome, while lawyers are not.

In China, politicians are engineers, scientists, and the like, which means that they are super smart and super likely to be super awesome. We wonder, of course whether Friedman recalls that the last American president who was also an engineer was a guy named Herbert Hoover. And he was so successful that they actually named a bunch of little welfare communities after him, didn't they?

In any case, Friedman's implication here is that the Chinese are better off because their guys are scientists and that means that they are brilliant and honest and soft and fuzzy and really huggable.

Don't get us wrong. We love science and scientists. And, in fact, one of us is rather closely related to an engineer. But we wonder if Friedman knows much about the state of science in his beloved China. We're curious, for example, if he is aware that science, academia, and academic science in China are notoriously corrupt. We're curious if he knows that plagiarism in the Chinese academic community is rampant. We're curious if he knows that fraud and fabrication are quite common and, frankly, epidemic in Chinese academic circles. We're curious if he knows that blowing the whistle on this corruption can get a guy killed – or almost killed at the very least. As the journal *Foreign Policy* recently reported:

On the evening of June 24, Fang Xuanchang, a 37-year-old science and technology editor at China's *Caijing* magazine, finished work around 10 p.m. and began his walk home. Half an hour later he was nearing his apartment by Beijing's third ring road when he felt a sudden blow to his back. Fang turned to see two large men behind him brandishing steel bars.

Fang tried to run away and then shield himself as the men, ignoring his attempts to communicate with them, struck him repeatedly across his back and head. Brawny and adept in martial arts, Fang not only remained conscious, but also managed to fight back. Finally, as Fang stumbled toward a taxi, his clothes soaked in blood, the attackers left the scene.

Later that night at Beijing's Navy General Hospital, doctors sutured a 2-inch gash on the back of his head. His assailants behaved like professionals, carrying out the brutal ambush in about four minutes and showing little concern about passersby witnessing the attack. "Their goal was clear," Fang told me in a June 30 email. "It was to kill me on the spot, or stop me from reaching the hospital in time so that I would bleed to death."

Fang is one of the leading figures among China's scientific muckrakers – a scourge of academic and government-sponsored pseudoscience and a critic of public and private quackery. For more than 10 years as a journalist, editor, and blogger on the influential (although frequently blocked) Chinese watchdog website New Threads, Fang has taken on academics listing faked awards and publishing plagiarized papers; hawkers of herbal cancer "cures," such as Wang Zhenguo, peddler of the Tian Xian herbal cancer treatment; and Chinese scientists who claim to predict earthquakes, among other targets. But paranoia and anger, even violence, mark some recent responses to Fang's work . . . .

Scientific ideas have a complex life in China. Today an important government slogan is the "scientific view of

development,” yet academic fraud is widespread. In January, the scientific journal *Acta Crystallographica Section E*, a peer-reviewed international journal based in Britain, announced the wholesale retraction of more than 70 papers by Chinese scientists who had falsified data. Three months later, the same publication announced the removal of another 39 articles “as a result of problems with the data sets or incorrect atom assignments.” According to New Threads, 37 of these were entirely produced at Chinese universities. One Chinese-government study cited by *Nature* found that about one-third of more than 6,000 scientists surveyed at six top Chinese institutions said they had practiced “plagiarism, falsification or fabrication.”

Critics have blamed the pressure to produce fraudulent papers on unrealistic publication targets set by bureaucrats.

Oh . . . well . . . ummm . . . never mind, we guess.

Of course, Friedman also thinks that the Chinese economy is humming right along and that all is well and everyone is either happy or will be soon. We can only guess that this means he didn’t actually read cables in the Wikileaks dump. Critics (ourselves included!) have long concluded that the Chinese economy is an interesting, if completely fabricated, phenomenon. China is growing, of course, but no one knows how much or at what cost or, well, much of anything.

In a system like China’s the government can and will say whatever it wants – with regard to growth, bad debts, bank insolvencies, and just about everything else – irrespective of what the situation really is. Reliable Chinese business statistics are about as common these days as rainbow-colored unicorns. And, much to Friedman’s chagrin even the Chi-Comms concede as much. As *Reuters* reported yesterday:

Li Keqiang, head of the Communist Party in northeastern Liaoning province at the time [and the presumed successor to Wen Jibao as Chinese Premier], was unusually candid in his assessment of local economic data at a dinner with then-U.S. Ambassador to China Clark Randt, according to a confidential memo sent after the meeting and published on the WikiLeaks website.

The U.S. cable reported that Li, who is now a vice premier, focused on just three data points to evaluate Liaoning’s economy: electricity consumption, rail cargo volume and bank lending.

“By looking at these three figures, Li said he can measure with relative accuracy the speed of economic growth. All other figures, especially GDP statistics, are ‘for reference only,’ he said smiling,” the cable added.

As for Friedman’s expectation that China’s system is superior to and more stable, over the long run, than that of the United States, our old friend Ambrose Evans Pritchard reported yesterday in the *Telegraph* of London that only a handful of delusional goofballs (e.g. Friedman) likely believe that anymore. To wit:

The Royal Bank of Scotland has advised clients to take out protection against the risk of a sovereign default by China as one of its top trade trades for 2011. This is a new twist . . .

The froth is going into property. Experts argue heatedly over whether or not China has managed to outdo America’s subprime bubble, or even match the Tokyo frenzy of late 1980s. The IMF straddles the two.

It concluded in a report last week that there was no nationwide bubble but

that home prices in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, and Nanjing seem “increasingly disconnected from fundamentals”.

Prices are 22 times disposable income in Beijing, and 18 times in Shenzhen, compared to eight in Tokyo. The US bubble peaked at 6.4 and has since dropped 4.7. The price-to-rent ratio in China’s eastern cities has risen by over 200pc since 2004.

The IMF said land sales make up 30pc of local government revenue in Beijing. This has echoes of Ireland where “fair weather” property taxes disguised the erosion of state finances.

Oy.

What all of this suggests, in short, is that guys like Tom Friedman, who think that China is going to be the global hegemon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are out of their minds. It’s far more likely, we think, that China will be the next “bubble” to burst. The Chinese people may, in fact, be hard working, industrious, ambitious, and exceptionally intelligent. But they are, unfortunately, saddled with a government that is, by contrast, corrupt, destructive, dishonest, and murderous.

The Chinese government is, like all centrally planned governments, short on foresight and long on the abuse of power. In such a system, capital flows not to the most productive ends but to the most politically

connected ends. The inefficiency in such a system is unimaginable and, eventually, impossible to surmount. China may, in fact, be destined for great things. But not today. Not tomorrow. Not as long as the Communists rule. All of which is to say that China is all but certainly headed for a fall before it is headed for greatness.

The irony is that the entire premise for Friedman’s column, the little gimmick that he used to let him turn a discussion about Wikileaks into an attack on his home country, should have been a dead give away that everything that followed was pure fantasy.

As we noted, Friedman started his column wondering, “What if China had a Wikileaker?” That may be the easiest question in the world to answer. What if? Well . . . nothing. The guy would be dead.

We’re talking here about a country that still routinely imprisons and tortures people for practicing Falun Gong or for posting their opinions on blogs. Does anyone – outside of the delusional Tom Friedman, that is – think that a Wikileaker in China would live to see the weekend?

The Chinese government is bad for human rights. It’s bad for human lives. And eventually, it will prove bad for investors who simply threw their money at the place, believing, like Tom Friedman, that somehow despots could be tamed. They can’t.

And if Tom Friedman tells you otherwise, you’ll know it for sure.

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