

# From The Files Of Mitt Romney, Bounty Hunter: Genesis

*by* Eli Hopkins

"Please tell me I'm still your number one man? *78, 79, 80...*" Former vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan begged his roommate and lover Mitt Romney, enunciating his words in the clipped, mid-western twang Mitt had grown to hate. Paul was doing bicep curls in front of the mirror, wearing nothing but high-tops and a backwards Milwaukie Brewers cap—*94, 95, 96*—his favorite funk-rock mixtape blasting full volume on a boombox whose batteries were on the verge of dying. The boombox was the only thing they'd taken with them when fleeing the Salt Lake City Ramada—just moments before Mitt was supposed to appear on the banquet hall stage and deliver his concession speech—climbing out the window of a first-floor bathroom and stealing a Buick LaSabre from the parking lot. *Just keep driving*, Paul had said as Mitt steered the Buick out of the parking lot and onto Route 190, heading south into the forest with nothing but a portable stereo, a half a tank of gas, and a tuna sandwich they'd found in the car. Casting their families and careers to the wind in pursuit of something *real*.

Now Mitt was sweating into their room's single bed, watching his lover and only friend run through the excruciating 10-hour a day workout routine he'd been maniacally observing since they'd settled in at the *Mucho Motel* in Key West a month and a half ago. "Just say my name over and over while I do pushups. Forever." Paul implored, rubbing his entire body down with prodigious amounts of lavender baby-oil and other exotically scented petroleum distillates. "Listening to the brutal rasp of your voice is like having my scrotum massaged with a wood-file, and I fucking love it. I don't care who knows."

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They'd lost the 2012 presidential election by such a dramatic landslide that, in order to maintain already tenuous grasps on sanity, they'd both been obliged to embrace increasingly Buddhist worldviews. Which meant they were now totally unencumbered by the feelings of self-consciousness and shame from which all normal people would suffer if the entire population of the *Mucho Motel* and surrounding environs were acutely aware of your most intimate bedroom secrets. Which is why they didn't even bother hiding now, lifting weights and audibly making love for hours with the door and window wide open, funk-rock going like crazy.

"You know you're my guy, buddy." Mitt Romney mumbled, flipping through the channels and guzzling his thirteenth *Shasta* of the day.

"I hear the words coming out of your mouth," Paul said, pausing mid squat-thrust to get an eye-full of his lover's new soda-weight, which hung in dense, sinuous folds under Mitt's unbuttoned *Tommy Bahama* shirt. "But for some reason I just don't believe anything you say. Sometimes it's almost like you don't believe yourself. 51,52,53..."

"I don't know what to tell you, amigo," Mitt sighed, running bloated fingers through his increasingly thin pompadour and viciously clicking the remote.

"The only way I'll believe that you truly love me and only me," Paul said, glancing over his shoulder, flashing the same blue eyes that had gotten Mitt into trouble in the first place, "is if you can pin me thirty consecutive times in traditional Greco-Roman wrestling."

Mitt looked at his one-time running mate and took a deep breath. He was beginning to think that throwing all of his money and belongings into the ocean and eloping to Key West with Paul Ryan was a bad idea. Paul had turned out to be more needy than a dancing horse, and Mitt was just realizing that he didn't even know the dude very well.

Less than two months ago the erstwhile republican hopeful had been enjoying a life whose absurd opulence could only be compared

to the more extravagant Bond villains (he'd always put himself somewhere between Dr. No and Max Zorin, Chrispher Walken's Silicon-Valley madman) and now he was cooped up in a dingy motel with the greasiest lunatic he'd ever met, lugging around an extra forty-five pounds of misery weight, and down to his last few dollars. *What the hell happened*, he thought, staring at the ceiling, tears coming to his eyes.

"Baby?" Paul grunted, lifting a barbell over his head and throwing it to the floor with a thunderous crash that would likely result in an angry phone call from the front desk. The local police had already visited the room a number of times for various incidents—and would probably have gone straight from the *Mucho* to the good people at TMZ if it weren't for the fact that the responding officers simply didn't believe their eyes. "I'm still waiting for an answer on the wrestling question," Paul insisted, staring at Mitt's reflection in the strategically placed mirror. Mitt was wheezing uncomfortably and avoiding eye contact. "If this relationship is going to work out for the long haul, we're going to have to be completely honest with each other. So I'm just being honest when I say that I both want and need you to shove me to the ground and forcibly hold me there for at least ten seconds. And I want you to do it thirty times."

Stopping on an infomercial for industrial cleaning solvents, Mitt looked at his lover's glistening, perfectly sculpted body and imagined crushing it with super-strong robotic Dr. No hands. He imagined the sound of Paul's bones succumbing to 3,000 pounds per-square-inch as they fell under the insane grip of Mitt's shiny black mechanical digits.

It wasn't working and there was nothing else he could do. This wasn't where he wanted to be. Not anymore.

"Where are you going?" Paul protested as Mitt climbed off the bed and slipped into a pair of jean shorts, pulled on his cowboy boots, and grabbed his motorcycle keys off the dresser.

"I'm going out," Mitt said without looking back, closing the door behind him; closing the door to endless hours of cable

television and funk-rock, to all night talks and moonlight skinny-dipping, and to all forms of Greco-Roman wrestling. Closing the door to love.

The sun was blazing as Mitt Romney tapped his boots across the parking lot to his neon-green Kawasaki dirt bike, the salty coastal air heavy with southern tang and whistling with some distant siren's call. It was the ghostly howl of the freelance bounty hunter, and he was ready to howl back. The bike's engine turned over on the first shot, barking to life like a kicked dog, and as Mitt pushed a pair of drugstore aviators over his bloodshot eyes, he knew that this was it. This was for all the chips.

