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The wizard of Murdoch mugged



By Kitty Kelley

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I felt like Dorothy in the Emerald City as I waited for **Rupert Murdoch** to testify last week, and I expected the select committee members of Parliament to be like her companions — the tin man, the scarecrow, and the cowardly lion—all crouching in exaltation. After all, they were to be meeting a wizard who had created prime ministers, crushed politicians, cashiered Scotland Yard, and mugged the monarchy.

Surely such a phantasmagoric figure would enter the chamber with lightning bolts, crashing cymbals and a drum roll of thunder, befitting a behemoth who seemed so powerful he could reach through the television screen 4,000 miles away and crush me, clicker in hand. Instead a stammering 80 year-old man doddered in and started mewing about how humbled he felt. Humbled... humbled... humbled. The Wizard of Oz had morphed into Uriah Heap.

What an ignoble end for a man whose life dream was so grandiose. After clawing his way up the ladder, bloodying enemies and blackening adversaries on every rung, he finally reached the top, only to implode in a free-fall that has been accompanied by cries of contempt, derision and outrage, all at once delicious and disgusting to watch.

Only a god of vengeance could conjure a crueler punishment than prison for Rupert Murdoch, who might be happier in stripes and behind bars, where he would not have to read newspapers and watch television every day. Thus, he would be spared from seeing his humbled elf, his jumped-up scion and his warrior wife vulture-pecked by the press. With his reputation shredded beyond repair, his craven minions reduced to road kill and his victims lining up with ravenous lawyers seeking just compensation for his dastardly deeds, the **News Corp.** wizard faces a dark future of lawsuits and countersuits, rulings by Parliament, a criminal investigation by the **U.S. Justice Department** and worst of all — global opprobrium.

His estimated fortune of \$9 billion will be reduced but, rest assured, he'll never have to fly commercial. His heirs will not be forced on the county and his pie-thwarting spouse can hold on to her \$5 million necklace of diamonds and emeralds. But all have been deprived of whatever status they once derived from the name of Murdoch. An appropriate end for this media mogul, you might say, especially if you believe that those who live by the sword will

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die by the sword. After all, it was a crusading British journalist (Nick Davies) and his white knight newspaper (the Guardian) who exposed the putrid swamp and all its monsters.

Watching Rupert Murdoch talk about his 102 year-old mother, who had advised him in 1999 not to buy the **News of the World** tabloid, reminded me a bit of **Richard Nixon**, bidding farewell to his **White House** staff. He, too, was busted for illegal tapes and telephone taps, and he also bleated about his mother. "She was a saint," said the Watergate-soaked president, forced to resign the highest office in the land.

Perhaps in the end all men who scale the summit only to find a noose awaits them will cry for mama. Even the most amoral among us who no longer steer true north will scramble to find refuge in a mother's unconditional love.

Now the former News of the World wizard will have to pay his \$2,000-an-hour lawyers for the kind of solid advice his mother once offered for free. But will they be able to help him find what Dorothy was looking for: a tin man's heart, a scarecrow's brain and courage for a cowardly lion?

Kitty Kelley is a journalist and author, who has written several unauthorized biographies of celebrities and politicians.

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