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Georgie Bush, Shape-Shifter

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1:29 a.m., Wednesday

Bush tossed his rumpled camel jacket onto the table and shook another smoke from the pack. Still mad as sour spit at Powell, he lit up, then fished a waxy quarter from his pocket.

“Heads he lives, tails he’s Alpo.”

“Georgie, is that you?” It was she, and she was awake.

“Mmmmm.”

“Hey, what’s that about? I know that voice.”

“Go back to sleep.”

“You’ve wakened me now, dear, and you know I can’t sleep once I’ve been bothered. Anyway, I don’t want to sleep, I want to know what’s wrong. Did that Teddy—”

“Powell’s what’s wrong,” he said, cutting her off and puffing out his cheeks. “Turns out he knew all along the old Project Blue Book was a fraud. If what the Firm says is true, he gave the order to fry an honest-to-God alien. Hell, an actual nuts and bolts Man-in-the-moon! Personally gave the order!”

He ground the cigarette into dirty flakes on the table and launched the butt at the wall. “What I don’t know is why he was ever involved in the first place. But I will in the morning.”

“Project what? I never remembe—”

“Blue Book!”

“I thought that new immigration, free trade thing was supposed to—”

“Not Mexican aliens...for heaven’s sake, Barbara, read the paper!”

“You’re shouting at me, dear—”

“You’re the First Lady. Broad One! Put some damn gas in the old cerebral furnace—”

“Georgie! A woman’s hemispheres are all she has in this world, and I won’t have you or anyone else making light of them. I just won’t hear of it. Now drop that cigarette--yes, I smell it--in the toilet and come on in here and tell me why my big Prez—wezy’s all angry and everything.”

He stomped through the bedroom door and flipped the light out, sucking in to focus energy. She’d had it coming for days. His clothes were starting to tear. He grinned with pain and anticipation.

“What’s that noise, Georgie? If it’s what I think it is, you can march yourself right back out of here. I’m not at all in the mood for snakes or hippos or condors or anything else.”

He stifled a giggle and slid toward the bed.

“Georgie...answer me! This is not funny.”

Getting up onto the bed posed a problem, momentarily, but he found that by stopping every few seconds his slime could adhere to the satin, allowing him leverage.

“Why don’t you answer? Turn on the light or I’ll call for Jenny! George!”

Though the true shape called for vibration sensors instead of ears, he had sneaked some in anyway. Forget "purity of form." This would be too good to miss. If he’d only thought to turn on the recorder.

“Oh...what is that? What is that—oh! It’s not funny, not at all! Jenny! Ugghh! Awful man! Awful, horrid...what is that? Slimy...A Slug! You’re a slug, oh, no, no, not a sticky slug! Vulgar...oh, don’t touch...no! Is that my heating pad stuck on your face—”

He rolled off the bed, laughing. A Kleenex and an aspirin bottle came with him, glued tightly to his
side. He squealed and howled like a moose in season.

"Stop it! Change back right now! Damn, damn, damn, damn! I just won't have it! You...you've ruined the Reagans' lovely satin quilt! It's ruined!"

11:17 a.m., Wednesday

"Mr. President?"
"Huh?"
"You were drifting, sir. And smiling."
"I was? Oh...sorry Jim. Remembered something humorous from last night. Where were we?"
"In the minutes from last week's staff advisory meeting?"
"And why was that again?"
"You wanted a listing of everything General Powell said. Why don't I do this alone, sir, and bring you the finished report later?"
"No. No, I want it now. Before lunch. That 'I'm in command' crap has gone far enough. I don't suppose you saw the Anderson column this morning?"
"No, not this morning, sir."
"More Blue Book garbage. And if he only knew what I know--I tell you Jim, we'd be finished. Credibility wise."
"Mr. President--George--that was so far in the past that--"
"Makes no damn difference, Jimmy. The public will demand an accounting and blame us for not unloading the instant we found out."

Bush stared out the window, brooding, and creased his tie with his fingernails. "There's some unpleasant business happening tonight. What is that?"

"You have a private dinner with the Iranian Ambassador, at seven-thirty, to discuss--"

7:49 p.m., Wednesday

"So good to see you, Mr. Ambassador. And you're looking well."
"Yes! And you, my friend."
"Your Tehran trip agreed with you, then."
"Always, Mr. President. The nation of Allah is heaven on Earth, after all."
"After all," Bush laughed, "I imagined heaven to be a Judeo-Christian concept--"
"A concept borrowed from the true faith, I am afraid."

Bush smiled and nodded. "I believe I'm aware of Muslim thought along these lines--"
"Ah. So. Then you also--"
"Excuse me, Mr. Ambassador. I'd like to shut out the lights for a moment. I have something important to show you."

The ambassador glanced around the room. No need to worry. The Executive mansion was possibly the safest place in America. "An unusual request, my friend, but since you are the source...I say yes. Okay."

"Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, that's awful nice. You've gotta promise not to tell, now."

He flipped the light out and sucked in to focus energy. The ambassador'd had it coming all year. Bush's clothes were starting to tear. He grinned with pain and anticipation.

"What's that noise, Mr. President?"