

BUSH

An Original Story and Screenplay

By

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EXT. TEXAS RANGERS STADIUM- ARLINGTON, TEXAS- DAY

GEORGE W. BUSH, early forties, polo shirt, slacks, stands in center field, looking up at the empty stands, waiting for the fans to arrive, the game to begin. There is a look of supreme contentment on his face. This is his stadium, the place in the world where he feels most comfortable.

The ROAR OF THE FANS COMES UP as a EMBODIED VOICE intones:

VOICE

And now the 43rd President of the
United States, George W. Bush.

Slowly, George W raises his arms, as if to conjure the crowd.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE- OVAL OFFICE- DAY- JAN: 2002

ON CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH WRITER, boyish, 40's, talking to
2ND SPEECHWRITER.

CHIEF SPEECH WRITER

"Axis of hatred?" I don't know.
Something about it... just misses.

Seated around the table, Bush and his inner circle: VICE
PRESIDENT CHENEY, KARL ROVE, fifties, pudgy; CONDI RICE, her
assistant, STEPHEN HADLEY, bespectacled, late 40's.

ROVE

(pipes up) Well, then what about
"Axis of the unbearably odious?"

Bush, intent. Scowls at him.

BUSH

Don't get cute, Turdblossom.
(nickname for Rove) This is
serious.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

What about... "Axis of Evil?"

Bush thinks for a moment.

BUSH

"Axis of Evil." I like the ring of
that. That's it.

RICE

But Mr. President, how are we going to tie them all together? It's not like they're Germany, Italy and Japan--who were on the same side.

HADLEY

Yeah, they're not aligned with each other.

ROVE

Who gives a shit? It plays.

BUSH

They may not be aligned. But they're threats to our security. Iran and Iraq is trouble next door to trouble. And they have to know that this President is telling them that they've got a problem. With us.

RICE

Still, I think the Iranian people could take offense in being lumped together with the Iraqis and North Koreans. After all, they have a president who was democratically elected.

HADLEY

(nods agreement)

Could send the wrong message to the democracy movement, sir.

BUSH

No, Hads, you don't get it. Khatami along with the students, the reformers, they'll understand. They want Freedom. It'll give legitimacy to their struggle against the hardliners, the deadenders, the Ayatollah Cockamamies. Iran stays in.

Rove opens a bottle of non-alcoholic beer for the President. Cheney finally chimes in.

CHENEY

Anyone can go to Baghdad. Real men go to Tehran.

Bush smirks, clinks beer bottle with Cheney's coffee mug.

BUSH
Real men.

CUT TO:

A GIANT BOTTLE OF VODKA

INT. DKE FRAT HOUSE- BASEMENT- NIGHT- 1966

YOUNG GEORGE W BUSH pours the cheap vodka into a large garbage can while fellow PLEDGE, CLAY JOHNSON, mixes in orange juice. W leans over, takes a snoot-full. Then belts out a chorus of the Yale Whiffenpoof song.

GEORGE JR. (SINGS)
We're poor little lambs who have
lost our way. Baa! Baa! Baa!

A nerdy PLEDGE, BRIAN PRINGLE, stirs the screwdriver mix with a ladle, also singing.

ALL
Little black sheep who've gone
astray, Ba-aa-aa! Gentlemen
songsters off on the spree, damned
from here to eternity. God have
mercy on such as we-- Baa Yah!
Baa!

The door opens. In walk 40 FRAT BROTHERS. DEKE PRESIDENT, WALTER BENNINGTON, smooth, uber-patrician, steps up to W, other pledges.

BENNINGTON
Good evening, young fellow
Dekesters in waiting. This is
pledge week. If you make the grade,
you will become a brother. and Deke
brothers are men of honor. decency
and God-given character. (wryly)
That, along with our family
fortunes, is why we rule the world.

His LIEUTENANT, TOM FRANCIS, a hulking athlete, barks at W and his roommates.

FRANCIS
You are all pieces of garbage. You
don't care about each other, you
don't deserve each other.

(MORE)

FRANCIS (cont'd)
 You, Johnson, you worthless piece
 of horseshit. Quick, how many of
 these brothers do you know? Name
 all the pledges in the room

JOHNSON
 Bush, Dieter Hotchkiss. Austin.
 Hill.

Johnson, ashen, flummoxed, can't go on. W smirks, nervously.

BENNINGTON
 That's it. Four out of forty.

FRANCIS
 (to Johnson) Dickhead, you're going
 to have to suck up big-time to get
 into this House. That's for sure.

ON BUSH keenly scanning the faces, mumbling to himself.

BENNINGTON (O.S.)
 Pringle, your turn.

Pringle rattles off a few names, then is stumped.

FRANCIS
 This guy's brain is in protective
 custody. Up his own ass.

Haughtily, Bennington and Francis step up to Bush.

FRANCIS
 Can you do any better, Mister
 Pussy?

BUSH
 (braces himself)
 Yeah, I think so.

Perverse laughter all around. Bush takes a deep breath. Then
 goes down the line, rattling them off one-two-three.

BUSH
 Hill, Calvin "Lightning" Hill.
 Billy "Bongo" Thompson. "Tequila"
 Timothy Norton. Brian "QB" Dowling.
 Roland "Bowlie" Betts. Eddie
 "Jawsmith" Sawyer. J.D. "Dangerous"
 Dave Wyles.

FACES as Bush names every last person in the line.

BUSH

Frank "the Fire" Fiore, and last
but not least, Jerome "The Butt"
Butler.

Bennington, incredulous, turns to his fellow DEKES, then back
to W. Francis gives Bush a thunderous clap on the back.

FRANCIS

We've got a *working brain* here!
He may be from Texas, but he's
going to be one great Deka.

ON BUSH- pleased as punch.

BUSH

I'm plannin' on that, sir.

BENNINGTON

You legacy?

BUSH

Father, Grandfather; all the way
back to great-great grandfather.

BENNINGTON

For any ignoramuses who don't know,
his Grandfather Prescott was our
esteemed Senator from Connecticut.

BUSH

And my father's running for
Congress in Texas.

FRANCIS

Your father the baseball hero. Hey,
plannin' to follow in their
footsteps, Bushie?

Emboldened, Bush scoops up the homemade screwdriver, drinks.

BUSH

Hell, no, that's the last thing in
the world I'd want to do.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE- WASHINGTON D.C.- NIGHT- AUTUMN
1967-

GEORGE BUSH SR., at his desk, phone crooked to his neck,
speaks.

BUSH SR.
Congressman George Bush. May I
please speak with my son.

INT. PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, JAIL-- NIGHT-- AUTUMN 1967

George Jr., in muddied, grass stained Yale sweater, is led
out of jail cell by an OFFICER to a phone by the desk.

GEORGE JR.
Hello, Poppy, that you?

INTERCUT BETWEEN FATHER AND SON

GEORGE SR.
What's this about? What kind of
trouble are you in now?

GEORGE JR.
Penny-ante, I swear it, Poppy. We
beat Princeton! Won the darn
championship! We were tearing down
the goalposts and I was hangin' on
the crossbar. They arrested me,
'cause I'm the head cheerleader.

GEORGE SR.
(reflects, then)
So... What was the final score?

GEORGE JR.
29-7. Hill and Dowling had great
games. We kicked their butts.

GEORGE SR.
(smiles to himself)
Ah, the only thing better than
beating Princeton... beating
Harvard.

GEORGE JR.
Well, you beat both of 'em when you
won the Ivy league Championship,
right? And went on to the first
College World Series.

GEORGE SR.
The first two college national
championships. '47 and '43. Right
after you were born.

GEORGE JR.

There are still photos of you and that team up on the walls of DEKE.

GEORGE SR.

(rueful)

There are things in this life you wish you could go back and do over. I went 0 for 3 against Cal in the finals. And we lost 8-7. That last at bat, I took my eye off the ball. If I hadn't, we could have been the champions. But that's how history goes.

GEORGE JR.

Still, you played on the greatest Yale baseball team of all-time.

GEORGE SR.

(mood shifting)

My father, "the Senator", would have kicked the living crap out of me, if I ended up where you are now.

GEORGE JR.

(blithely)

They're going to let me go, as long as I get out of New Jersey and promise never to come back. Which is okey-doke with me.

GEORGE SR.

(hard) It doesn't work that way... not to me, or this family. Now, I don't want to get any more phone calls like this again. Ever. Do you hear me?

The wind knocked out of George Jr's sails.

GEORGE JR.

Yes, sir.

CLICK. As his father hangs up on him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE- OVAL OFFICE- DAY- JANUARY 2002

Bush, sitting in his usual spot, the wing chair near the fireplace, Cheney in the one next to him, sipping coffee, as an aide brings in the President's favorite lunch on a silver tray: baloney and cheese on white bread and a Dr Pepper.

BUSH

My running times are better than ever since the Afghanistar invasion. I've gone from 7 minute miles to 6:45's. In all due modesty, I'm the fastest President in history.

CHENEY

(feigning interest)

Your father was a good runner, too.

BUSH

Second fastest, maybe. He had endurance, but not my kind of speed.

CHENEY

What about Clinton?

BUSH

(heartily biting into sandwich)

Hell, my mother waddles faster than he can run.

Cheney leans forward intently. Points at the Bush's sandwich

CHENEY

Mr. President, suppose there was a recent e-coli outbreak at a produce farm in Maryland. Would you take a chance on eating the lettuce on that sandwich?

BUSH

I have tasters in the kitchen. What's on your mind, Vice"

CHENEY

Low probability-high impact events like 9/11. Like that Pakistani scientist selling his secrets to Al Qaeda. Like Saddam and his WMD's.

(MORE)

CHENEY (cont'd)

Even if there's a one-percent chance of the unimaginable coming due, we have to act. It's not about our analysis. It's about our response, and we have to act as if it's a certainty.

BUSH

(smirks) So you walk into a bar, guy looks at you the wrong way. He could be achin' for a fight. Before he gets the chance, you deck him.

CHENEY

I'm not talking about individual situations like that. Vaccines are routinely given for diseases where the risk is much less than one percent.

BUSH

What percent do you think it is that Saddam has the nuclear weapons.

CHENEY

Personally, I think it's close to a hundred percent. But even if was just one percent, that's it. That's enough to act.

BUSH

You don't have to sell me. We have to sell Congress, the American people.

CHENEY

If Powell, Baker, myself and your father had taken care of Saddam at the end of the Gulf War, we wouldn't be facing this problem today.

BUSH

Told my father the same thing back then. Take the sucker out.

CHENEY

Well, now's your chance to correct those mistakes.

(MORE)

CHENEY (cont'd)

With Saddam in league with Al Qaeda-- instead of losing thousands of lives, we might lose tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of lives in a single day of horror. Devastation on a scale our country has never experienced. That's a reality.

On Bush-- growing somber. Absently, he opens his sandwich, removing the remaining lettuce.

BUSH

I hear you... Don't think I haven't thought about this.

Cheney, nods, rises to leave.

CHENEY

I'll let you finish your lunch.

As he heads for the door, Bush calls out.

BUSH

Vice.

Cheney turns.

BUSH (CONT'D)

When we're in meetings, I want you to keep a lid on it.

CHENEY

What are you talking about?

BUSH

Just keep your ego in check. I'm the President. I'm the decider.

CHENEY

I understand, Mr. President.

EXT.- CRAWFORD RANCH- TEXAS- DAY- JANUARY 2002

OVER EARSPLITTING SOUND OF BUZZSAW. Bush in jeans, cowboy boots, sweltering heat, cutting down a cedar. The tree topples to the ground. Tall, lanky GENERAL TOMMY FRANKS (50's) combat boots, beret, steps into view. SECRET SERVICE AGENTS to side.

FRANKS

Took that one down like Paul Bunyon, Mr. President.

BUSH

Press calls me an anti-environmentalist. Hell, I'm getting rid of this cedar, so my live oaks have room enough to grow. Out with the bad, in with the good

INT. SECURITY INTELLIGENCE COMPOUND- DAY-- JANUARY 2002

Secure conference room, Bush and Franks joined by Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, Powell, and Tenet. Franks makes power-point presentation of Iraq with charts, simulated force deployments. Bush's black Scottish terrier, BARNEY, traipsing about.

FRANKS

These are the latest revisions to 'Polo Step.' Under the plan, we project war with Iraq should last approximately 225 days. 90-45-90 is our scenario. That includes 90 days of prep; moving approximately 150,000 troops into Kuwait at first. Building airfields there, getting in equipment, weapons, supplies, fuel. Then, in phase two, we'll conduct air strikes for 45 days before we move into ground combat--

BUSH

--Wait a second, Tommy. You said a hundred fifty thousand -- There were 400 in the OP 1003 plans, and that's still smaller than what we had during Desert Storm.

FRANKS

Oh, no, the plan is to build it out to 300,000.

RUMSFELD

We're still grinding on the numbers, Mr. President.

BUSH

Well, remember, we're not looking to play *small ball*.

FRANKS

As a a fellow Midland, Texan, sir, we never play small ball.

FRANKS

So once we complete the "45 bombing phase," forces will take charge of the Southern oil fields so that Saddam can't set fire to the fields like he did back in '91.

BUSH

When do we go? I can run in a hundred degree heat. But our troops, can they withstand it, day in day out?

FRANKS

Ideally, that's why we want to kick it off in winter; at the latest, early spring.

RUMSFELD

Sir, Tommy and I have given considerable thought to the downside contingencies and worked out an alternative plan. To finish this off quicker and circumvent any unforeseen, nettlesome situations that could arise-- we blitz the bejesus out of them-- from the air, hard, heavy, non-stop and unrelenting-- until they think that hell is raining down on their heads. No "small ball" here, Mr. President. Just total Shock and Awe.

BUSH

(chuckles) "Shock and Awe." I like that, Rummy. Like it a lot. So, how long do you think it'll take?

RUMSFELD

Six days? Six weeks? Six months at the most. As long as we don't run into heavy camel traffic.

BUSH

(Pleased) Well, you ride herd and keep the traffic light. (given pause) Still... we need that 52nd card; you know-- the WMD's.

CHENEY

You mean 53rd card, sir--the joker?

BUSH

(cold look) Nah, that'd be you, Vice.... Also important-- gotta protect our friends in the Middle East from missile attacks.

FRANKS

We have plans to parachute special Ops into Western Iraq to take out any Scud launching sites.

POWELL

Sir, after expected regime change, what kind of government are we talking about putting in place?

Barney jumps onto Bush's lap.

BUSH

Hey, Barn-Barn. (muses, scratching the dog's ears) Any form of government they like. But it damn sure better be a good-old fashioned democracy.

EXT. OFFSHORE OIL RIG- LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA- 1967

A small off-shore oil rig/drilling platform. Bush, 21, face and clothes caked in mud and oil, climbs down the drilling derrick tower to the deck. Migrant MEXICANS toiling in the sweltering heat.

BUSH

Donde esta cerveza?

They laugh.

MIGRANT WORKER 1

Solamente agua. (points to a cooler)

BUSH

Gracias. Muy caliente. Muy.

MIGRANT WORKER 2

Ha. Es frio comparare proximo mes. (It's freezing compared to next month.)

Bush mops sweat and oil off his face. From the cooler, he finds a coke. Pops it open, chugs it, sits down on the cooler, fanning himself.

He looks out wistfully at a couple water-skiing past the rig.

A weathered, grizzled FOREMAN crosses over. The Mexicans immediately get back to work, while Bush keeps sitting, wipes the cold can across his brow.

FOREMAN

Bush, what you doin' off the tower?

BUSH

Only havin' a drink, sir.

FOREMAN

Git on back up there. Shift's not over until 0 six hundred.

BUSH

I know, but I'm about parched. Just give me a couple minutes here.

FOREMAN

Y'all already had your break. This ain't some fancy-ass Ivy League school. Now haul that butt o' yours up top, git back to work.

Bush stands up, drains the rest of the soda. Tosses it in receptacle bin.

BUSH

Sir, this butt of mine's just quit.

FOREMAN

That's the way you want it. Fine with me.

BUSH

(wiping hands on a rag)
I'll be on the next boat out.

INT.- TEXAS BAR- NIGHT- 1967

Bush, chain smoking Marlboros, chugging Lone Stars, sits with his girl, JUDY, a blonde, curvaceous Texas cowgirl.

BUSH

How many times do I have to tell you, you're my gal. I'm as happy as a rabbit in a carrot patch with you.

JUDY

But you never say the words.

BUSH

What words?

JUDY

The "L" word.

BUSH

Lesbian? You're no lesbiar.

She slaps him on the arm.

JUDY

What kind of future are we gonna have if you're always joking?

BUSH

Judy, I'm crazy about you. We're gonna go back to Houston. Have a big church wedding. All the trimmings.

JUDY

What kind of church?

BUSH

I grew up Presbyterian, but now I'm Episcopalian.

JUDY

I'm a Baptist.

BUSH

Hell, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, what does it matter? You're going to be one of us, a Bush. How does that sound, sweetheart?

JUDY

You mean it? Swear it?

BUSH

(crosses his heart)
Then we'll move to New York. Ever been there? (she shakes her head)
Bright lights, big city. Even bigger than Dallas. I'm going to work on Wall Street.

(MORE)

BUSH (cont'd)
 Gotta an uncle who's ready to set
 me up, told me "just say the word."
 Picture a boatload of money.

JUDY
 (eyes sparkling)
 New York? Well, I never even dreamt
 of that. George, are you proposing
 to me?

BUSH
 Honey, if I had a rock big enough,
 I'd give it to you right now.

Thrilled, she leans over and kisses him. The country classic
 "White Lightning" blares from the juke box. He pulls her up
 to dance.

BUSH
 This is gonna be our song. "White
 Lightning"

As Bush sings along, he gets up on a stool, climbs to the
 bar, pulls her up, too. People all around CHEER as they
 drunkenly dance across the top of the bar.

INT. GEORGE BUSH SR.--CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE- HOUSTON- DAY-
 1967

Family photos line the wall. Sr., at his desk, looking out at
 the skyline. George Jr. enters. Sr. motions for him to sit.

GEORGE SR.
 (ticking off charges) Let me see
 now-- you didn't like the sporting
 goods job. Clerking at the
 investment firm wasn't to your
 liking either. You didn't exactly
 serve your time in the National
 Guard. And the ranch hand thing, in
 Arizona that sure didn't last long.
 Now you're walking out on the oil
 rig. For this girl, Julie
 something?

GEORGE JR.
 Judy. That's over, it was just a
 fling. How'd you know?

GEORGE SR.
 Word gets around. What is it that
 you want to do?

W shakes his head, miserably.

GEORGE JR.
I'm havin' a devil of a time trying
to figure it out.

GEORGE SR.
Well, figure it out soon, son,
before you drink and party your
life away.

GEORGE JR.
What'd I love to do...what I'd
really love... is find something in
baseball.

GEORGE SR.
What! You can't play. Coach? Your
fishing for the moon in the water.
Something real. I started out in
the oilfields, and I was hoping
that...(sighs, frustrated) Look,
you only get one bite at the apple.

GEORGE JR.
I know that, Poppy.

GEORGE SR.
Do you? Do you really? You agreed
to work for a certain period of
time and you didn't keep your word.
In our family, the Bush family, we
honor our commitments.

Sr. shoots him a hard, stern look.

GEORGE SR.
I want you to know that you've
disappointed me. Deeply
disappointed me.

George Jr. looks crushed. He silently gets to his feet and
walks toward the door. Sr. staring as he goes.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE-WHITE HOUSE- DAY- 2002

Bush seated by the fireplace with SAUDI AMBASSADOR, PRINCE BANDAR, portly, animated, eyes and hands in constant motion. Cheney looking on.

BANDAR

This time, I hope you're serious.

BUSH

Serious as dick cancer, my friend. We're going in and we're going to take him out.

CHENEY BUSH

This operation has to remain under wraps, of course, to avoid riling up Congress.

BANDAR

I understand. I am a blind man with no tongue... But as far as removing forces from my country?

BUSH

As soon as we get the bases up and running in Kuwait, we'll begin the withdrawal. And we've just transferred the funds, 700 million from our Afghan war budget, to start building bases and pipelines.

BANDAR

(nods, grateful)

A balm to the Crown Prince considering that he is still a bit piqued by your support of Sharon and the settlers. All we ask for is an even hand.

BUSH

I understand, but we're not here to talk about Israel. Right now, we're here to deal with Saddam.

BANDAR

He is not a man to be taken lightly. Saddam requires each of his bodyguards to kill somebody from their own tribe and then kill somebody from another tribe. That way, it's a double-vendetta.

(MORE)

BANDAR (cont'd)

Then the only protector they have is Saddam. He claims he can tell if a man is a traitor by looking in his eyes. If he blinks, he kills him.

BUSH

Well, he's gonna be doing the blinking this time. I guarantee ya.

BANDAR

(sweetly)

George, I've been a friend to you and your family for what, almost twenty years, now, haven't I?

BUSH

(check his watch) You and my father are the only two people my mother will let smoke in her house. You've got charm up the wazoo, that's for sure, Bandar Bush.

They laugh. Bandar grows serious.

BANDAR

The Crown Prince and our people have to be absolutely certain there will be no stopping this time.

BUSH

Tell him that he has my word-- It's not a matter of if it's a matter of when. This President is going to war.

Bandar, satisfied, sips from his cup of tea. Bush checks watch again.

BANDAR

Ah, I nearly forgot-- we have a belated Christmas gift for you. A slight increase in oil production, say toward the end of Summer, if that would any assistance to you.

BUSH

'Preciate that my friend.
Appreciate it very much.

He gets up, shakes Bandar's hand.

BUSH (CONT'D)
 Sorry, but I've got to jump to
 another meeting.

He walks off with Card.

BUSH
 Didn't I tell you to schedule this
 for earlier? Now I've probably
 missed the first quarter.

(STOCK) 2002 MIAMI DOLPHINS-BALTIMORE RAVENS PLAYOFF GAME

INT. WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE DEN- DAY- MOMENTS LATER

George W on couch, watching second quarter action on TV.
 Portrait of James Madison hanging on wall. Bush, caught up in
 the game, chomping on a pretzel.

ANNOUNCER
 Grbac drops back...throws deep down-
 field.

As he watches the pass juggled and caught, the pretzel
 suddenly gets stuck in his throat.

He begins CHOKING. Panicked, he staggers to his feet, pounds
 his chest with his fist. The pretzel won't dislodge. Alarmed
 at his distress, his dogs stir. Bush rams his chest into the
 couch, desperately trying to expel the pretzel. But it's
 stuck in his windpipe.

Wobbling, gasping for breath, he faints, falling to the
 floor, hitting his head. The pretzel finally spews out. The
 dogs appear at his side, whimpering, licking his face. After
 a moment, he comes to.

Dazed, he looks around, feeling a welt where he hit his head.

He takes a long, deep breath, feeling lucky to have survived.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C.- NIGHT- 1972

A car speeds erratically down the street. It plows into a row
 of garbage cans, dragging one under the fender. Then careens
 on, the metal can banging noisily along the pavement.

INT. CAR- NIGHT- 1972

George Bush Jr., 26, behind the wheel, drunk, radio BLARING.
He steers over the curb, onto the lawn of a Colonial home,
lurching to a stop by the shrubbery.

HOUSE/CAR

A LIGHT comes on from upstairs. With a hostile, faraway look,
JR. drains the pint of Wild Turkey.

SR. opens the bedroom window, hollering down.

SR.

What the hell do you think you're
doing? Get in this house
immediately!

W turns off the ignition. Staggers out, looks up at his
father.

BUSH JR.

No, you come on down here.

SR.

Did you hear what I said?

BUSH JR.

I've heard enough of you for a
lifetime. And then some.

Sr. slams down the window. Another light turns on next door.

BUSH JR.

And a Merry Christmas to you too,
Mr. and Mrs. Endicott.

The door flings open. Sr., seething, starts toward his son.

BUSH JR.

What does the Big Noise have to say
now?

SR.

I've had just about enough of your
crap.

JR.

You've had enough? Well, I'm glad
to hear that.

Sr. continues forward, as BARBARA BUSH and YOUNGER BROTHER JEB, 21, appear in the doorway.

SR.

My advice to you--go to an AA meeting. Get help.

JR.

Thank you, Mr. Perfect. Mr. War Hero. Mr. Fucking-God-Almighty.

SR.

You can talk like that there. Not to me, not to your father

JR.

I'll talk however I want.

SR.

When are you going to get out of your own way? How many more chances do you expect us to give you?

Jr. strikes a boxer's pose.

BUSH JR.

Let's go mano a mano! Right here. Right now!

SR.

You want an ass-whipping, I'll give it to you.

He steps up in JR.'s Face. Barbara and Jeb rush over, separating them before they can come to blows.

JEB

Poppy, give him a break. He was out celebrating-- he just got accepted to Harvard Business.

BARBARA

Jr, that's great. But why didn't you tell us?

GEORGE JR.

(eyeing Sr.)

I got in. But I'm not going. I just wanted to show you all that I could do it.

He sneers, reels past his father into the house. Jeb following.

BARBARA

Honestly, you scared me half to death. The two of you. Look, he got into Harvard...maybe you can cut him a little bit of slack.

SR.

He got in all right. But who do you think helped pull the strings?

EXT. WHITE HOUSE- SOUTH LAWN- 2002

Bush, tan and relaxed, throwing tennis balls to his TWO DOGS, SPOTTIE AND BARNEY, while Chief of Staff, ANDREW CARD, preps him for a press interview.

BUSH

So how long is this History Channel thing going to take?

CARD

Have it scheduled for 45 minutes, including make-up and prep. As I told you, they want it as part of a tribute special when he dies.

BUSH

A great man. Too bad he's no longer himself.

Barney retrieves the tennis ball. The half-blind Spaniel, Spottie limps over.

BUSH (CONT'D)

Good dog, Barney. Come on Spottie, this one's for you. Barney, stay.

He hits a soft lob for Spottie who totters haplessly after it, going this way, then that, in aimless circles. Barney scoots over, nabbing it from him.

BUSH

Spottie's gettin' old. Needs a seeing eye dog for himself.
(nostalgic) Once he was a great athlete. Shoulda seen him back then-- the DiMaggio of dogs.

CARD

What are you going to lead with, sir?

BUSH

(as Card tape records)
The most important point: Ronald Reagan believed that everything happened for a reason, and that we should strive to know and do the will of God--

Barney drops the muddy ball at W's feet. He picks it up, throws. PRESS SECRETARY, ARI FLEISCHER, balding, knitted brow, walks over.

BUSH

Looks like your balls have been put through the wringer, Ari. What's up?

FLEISCHER

Helen Thomas.

BUSH

-- Stay back, Barney! How many times I have to tell you. (back to Card) He believed in the golden rule and power of prayer. He believed that America was not just a place in the world, but the hope of the world. He was a great man, and a greater President.

CARD

I like that, sir.

BUSH

What else did I write down?

CARD

(reading W's notes)
Berlin Wall.

BUSH

Right. Cold War. Reagan didn't say, "Well, Mr. Gorbachev, would you please take down the top three bricks off the Berlin Wall?" He said, "Tear it down. Tear it all down." And so they did.

Motions for Card to stop recording.

BUSH (CONT'D)

You know I'm a lot like him. When he spoke about the Evil Empire, he did it for a reason. When I speak about the "Axis of Evil," it's the same with me. Same message. World has to know clearly where America stands. (turns to Fleischer)
Helen Thomas. So what's the old battle-axe ragging on me about now?

FLEISCHER

She was asking about secret plans for military actions in Iraq. I told her that "regime change" there has been the official U.S. policy since Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act in '98.

BUSH

(waiting for more) And?

FLEISCHER

She kept pestering me; her usual liberal bull--"What makes Saddam any different from other dictators? "What right do we have to go to war with Iraq?"

Barney drops the ball at the President's feet, barks. Oblivious, Bush's jaw tightens--his mood darkening.

BUSH

Did you tell her I don't like motherfuckers who gas their own people?! Did you tell her I don't like assholes who try to kill my father?!

Furious, he throws the ball. Barney streaks after it. Spottie heads the wrong way.

BUSH (CONT'D)

Did you tell her I'm going to kick his SORRY MOTHERFUCKING ASS ALL OVER THE MIDEAST?!

Card and Fleischer, stunned by the outburst. Fleischer takes off his glasses, wipes them on his tie.

CARD

Well, I told her about... *half* of that.

Bush glares at him.

BUSH

Only half?

Fleischer shrugs meekly. Bush erupts with LAUGHTER. Barney reappears with the ball, drops it on Fleischer's polished shoe, muddying it. Fleischer looks down; it's been a tough day all around.

CUT TO:

A LONG SCROLL UNFURLED ACROSS A DESK

INT. WHITE HOUSE- SITUATION ROOM- DAY- AUGUST 2002

CIA DIRECTOR, GEORGE TENET, flattens out the scroll in front of the President-- a grainy photograph of a factory. Cheney, Rice, Powell, Wolfowitz gathered around. Rumsfeld doodling on a piece of paper.

BUSH

I'm not a textbook player. I'm a gut player. And I can tell you, the gut's really churnin' on this one. (turns) Wolfmeister, got any Maalox?

WOLFOWITZ

Just Tums, sir.

BUSH

Any word on Bin Laden?

WOLFOWITZ

We're trying to get the Pakistanis to go into Waziristan in force.

As Wolfowitz passes them down the table.

RUMSFELD

It's like looking for him on the dark side of the moon. And Musharraf isn't doing us any favors.

BUSH

Well, you tell the Generalissimo if he expects to keep gettin' the big bucks, he'd better use the big stick. Flush the fucker from his cave.

As Bush pops Tums, Tenet tries to get the President's attention.

TENET

What do you think, Mr. President?

BUSH

(squints at scroll) What the hell am I supposed to be seein' here?

TENET

Latest recon from our surveillance drones. Our analysts believe that this building might be a plant producing either chemical or biological materials for weapons manufacture.

CHENEY

It could be the water cooler for a reactor.

POWELL

I saw a lot of factories in Iraq during Desert Storm. And I can't see anything here that would lead us to say that this one is producing biological or chemical weapons.

BUSH

'Balloon Foot' thinks you're over-reaching here, George.

ON POWELL-- not thrilled at the nickname Bush has bestowed upon him.

TENET

Well, we don't have any HUMINT on the ground, so there's no way of knowing with one hundred percent certainty.

BUSH

Where do you think those nu-cu-lar weapons are at, Rummy?

RUMSFELD

(looks up from his drawing)
Somewhere in the area around Tikrit
and Baghdad and east, west, south
and north somewhat.

BUSH

Well, let's find them, for
Godsakes.

POWELL

(pressing his case) We have to
consider what kind of
destabilization an attack against
Iraq would bring about in the Arab
world, Mr. President. We're having
problems getting allies on board.
We've got Britain, Italy, Spain--

AIDE TO CHENEY

Poland--

POWELL (CONT'D)

Not going to cut it. We need to
build an International Coalition
like your father did.

Bush scowls, not what he wants to hear.

BUSH

Yeah, let me guess-- all roads lead
back to our friends in that
toothless debating society: the UN.
Only eleven years now of being
dicked around by Saddam.

POWELL

Well, we have to at least make the
motion, the pretense of going
there.

CHENEY

--Saddam will just move the weapons
around, like he's always done.

POWELL

-- It will legitimize our efforts--

BUSH

--Little late if the smoking gun
turns out to be a mushroom cloud.

POWELL

Even if he had them, he likely wouldn't use them unless attacked. Sir, he's contained now.

CHENEY

(heated)

Respectfully, bullshit Colin! And so is going to the U.N. You know damn well Saddam is going to pull some stunt. He's not going let some other Arab in a cave in Afghanistan upstage him.

BUSH

Calm down, Vice. Don't want you to have another heart attack. By the way, take your pills today?

Cheney sighs, brandishes pill box. Trying to lighten it up, W turns to Condi.

BUSH

Guru, what do you think about all of this?

RICE

I think Colin has a point. Also something to be considered....

As she talks, Rumsfeld slides his drawing for Cheney to peek at. A caricature of Condi standing on a piano with a globe spinning on her finger. Cheney crookedly smirks.

POWELL

Mr. President, if we go to war alone, you will own 25 million people. You'll own it all. There's something called the Pottery Barn rule: "You break it, You own it."

Bush heaves a sigh, the words hanging in the air. After a long beat.

BUSH

Okay, we'll go to the U.N. But irrespective of what happens with them, the final decision is *mine*.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A HAND RAKING IN MONEY ON A CARD TABLE.

GEORGE JR. (O.S.)

My hand. Sorry boys, I'm on a roll here.

INT. APARTMENT OVER GARAGE- MIDLAND, TEXAS- 1977

A messy, cluttered, apt., the bed lashed together by ratty old neckties. George Jr. chewing on a wad of tobacco, smiles rakishly at his Midland friends; JIMMY ALLISON, DON EVANS, JIM SALE, seated on soft drink crates. Jack Daniels, Lone star bottles litter counter top.

JIM SALE

The bombastic Bushkin is sure fleecin' us tonight.

DON EVANS

Good thing you're a lot better at poker than findin' oil.

BUSH JR.

(spits tobacco into cup)
Is it my fault that the Good Lord didn't see fit to put any oil where I've been diggin'?

ALLISON

Just don't ask me to invest in anymore of your dry wells.

BUSH JR.

My belief is that you don't borrow for anything that flies, floats or fornicates. Don't worry, in one way or another, you invest in me, you'll get your money back.

SALES

Better start shakin' that money tree somehow.

BUSH JR.

The great peanut farmer, rabbit hunter, Jimmy Carter sure isn't helping out any in the oil patch. (scoffs) Putting solar panels on the roof of the White House... gettin' big government to try and control gas and oil prices.

ALLISON

Amen, brother. We got to hope and pray that your father can take him out in '80.

SALE

First, he's got to get past Reagan. Think he'll do it, George?

Bush doesn't answer, counts his winnings.

BUSH

My income for the week.

ALLISON

Your dad's a true statesman. He can handle that Hollywood actor, right W?

Bush nods. Something else on his mind. He picks up the cards, does a fancy sleight-of-hand.

BUSH JR.

Jimmy, what you've been talking to me about the last weeks...?

ALLISON

The family business?

BUSH JR.

Yup. I'm ready to take the shot. A "sign" has come unto me.

SALE

What? Slippery when wet?

BUSH JR.

(smirks at him, turns to Allison)

This July 6th, what notable event happened right here in West Texas?

ALLISON

It was your birthday. We already celebrated.

BUSH JR.

(pointedly)

Yes. And George Mahon announced his retirement from Congress after 44 years. What a coincidence *this...* and right on my birthday.

(MORE)

BUSH JR. (cont'd)
(pauses) Now that he's gone, boys,
the 19th District is finally in
play for a Republican.

ALLISON
(excited)
And that Republican is going to be?

BUSH JR.
(brightly) You got it, buddy. Yours
truly.

Allison, thrilled at the news, hoists a lone star.

ALLISON
I sure hope you'll remember us
little people when you get to the
Capitol.

BUSH JR.
Hell, you guys aren't gonna be
sitting around twiddlin' your
dicks; you're gonna be runnin' my
campaign.

ALLISON
Well, let's saddle up our horses,
boys, and send George to
Washington.

SALES
Both of 'em. It'll be Bush City.

George Jr. clinks bottles with his friends.

EXT. BACKYARD BARBECUE- MIDLAND TEXAS- NIGHT- JULY 1977

Friends from his poker game and their wives, Evans, and other
locals in the oil business gathered in backyard. JAN O'NEIL,
the hostess, leads Bush over to an attractive, self-assured
brunette, LAURA WELCH, early 30's.

JAN O'NEIL
Laura, I'd like you to meet George
Bush Jr.

She extends her hand.

LAURA
Laura Welch.

BUSH
Call me anything but Junior.

She smiles warmly.

LAURA

I remember seeing you in school. We were in seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High.

BUSH

San Jacinto, yeah. The next year I moved to Houston. Still, don't know how I could have missed seeing someone as pretty as you?

LAURA

(blushes) Probably because I wasn't a cheerleader.

JAN O'NEIL

I've only been trying to get you two to meet for years. (calls to her husband) Joe, put some more burgers on the barbecue. Gotta go give him a hand, honey.

She exits. Laura demurely finishes her hamburger, takes out a Winston. W gallantly lights it with his Zippo.

BUSH

What do you do, Laura?

LAURA

I read, I smoke, I admire.

BUSH

(taken aback) Admire? Admire what?

LAURA

People who write, who read. I'm a librarian.

BUSH

(winces) Uh-oh. (a beat) Actually I'm reading something right now, a very engaging book.

LAURA

What is it?

BUSH

Barry Goldwater's "Conscience of a Conservative."

Now Laura makes a face.

LAURA

Uh-oh.

BUSH

Don't tell me.

LAURA

I worked on Gene McCarthy's campaign. And voted for L.B.J.

BUSH

Well, we're hittin' it off like grease hits the skillet, I can see.

He takes a huge bite of his hamburger, scarfing it down. Laura amused by his voracious eating.

LAURA

I don't think politics should define a human being. There's a lot more to people than just how they vote.

This is music to Bush's ears.

BUSH

I like that. You're open-minded. I have to say, much more so than me.

LAURA

Well, I think it's important to see all sides of a situation. (he nods, impressed) I read in the paper that you're running for Congress.

BUSH

That's right. I don't believe on forcing myself on people... So I'm only going to ask for your phone number, not your vote.

LAURA

(blushes)

I can't vote for you, anyway. I live in Austin. Not that I wouldn't consider it.

They look in each other's eyes. Something sparks.

LAURA

But if you win, please do something for education. I was a teacher.

(MORE)

LAURA (cont'd)
That's the thing that can really
make a difference in people's
lives.

BUSH
Tell you what. If I win, you'll be
my education advisor.

LAURA
Yeah, right.

BUSH
No, I'm serious. I like the way you
think....And look.

INT. RADIO STATION- ODESSA, TEXAS- DAY- OCTOBER 1978

Bush Jr. in a congressional radio debate against conservative
DEMOCRAT KENT HANCE, 35. Behind the glass, Laura sits next to
Bush's campaign manager, Don Evans.

KENT HANCE
(deep drawl) My daddy and grand-
daddy were farmers. They didn't
have anything to do with the mess
we're in now. Bush's Daddy and
Grand-daddy have been in politics
his whole privileged life. They
don't know what people's sufferin'
is about.

W stewing, tries to get a word in, but Hance rambles on.

HANCE
George Bush here, hasn't earned the
living he enjoys. I'm on my own two
feet, make my own living.

BUSH
(flares) Hold on here-- when it
comes to the integrity of my
father. What mess are you talking
about, Mr. Hance?

HANCE
Washington is the way it is because
of all those Yale and Harvard
fellas running the place. I went to
Texas Tech, you went to Yale. I
went to UT Law, you went to
Harvard.

BUSH
I've spent half my life in Midland.
I know the problems of the people
here--

HANCE
--Maybe at the country club. But
you're an outsider as far as
understanding our problems.

BUSH
(talking over him) My opponent, Mr.
Hance, will be nothing more than a
tax and spend errand boy --

HANCE
--He's really a carpetbagger from
Connecticut.

MODERATOR
Gentlemen, Gentlemen, one at time.

Bush jabs his finger angrily in Hance's face.

BUSH
Carpetbagger! This is my home. Been
here in Midland since I was two
years old.

HANCE
You're still a tool of the Eastern
Kingmakers.

HANCE
My fellow Christians! My fellow
Christians, everywhere from Odessa
to Lubbock. Last week, Mr. Bush
used some of his vast sums of money
to throw a beer bash for underage
students at Texas Tech. "A Bush
Bash."

Bush looks like he wants to take a slug at Hance. He catches
Laura's eye; she motions for him to calm down.

BUSH
That's below the belt, even for
you, Mr. Hance.

HANCE

It's the God's truth. He's trying to get those young college students to come out and vote for him by offering free alcohol to them-- bribing 'em with booze.

Bush flummoxed, speechless, mouths 'asshole."

HANCE (CONT'D)

Maybe that's a cool thing to do at Harvard or Yale. But not here, in good, Christian country.

INT. OLDS CUTLASS- HEADING BACK TO MIDLAND- NIGHT- OCT. '78

Bush, driving, chewing a wad of Copenhagen, still steamed over the debate. Laura beside him, smoking.

BUSH

Just kept hammering away, the same lame stuff, tarring and feathering me about my father, my father. What am I supposed to do? Run as Sam Smith?

LAURA

Well, your family name, it has its advantages and disadvantages... I'd still be with you if you were Sam Smith.

He shoots her a weak smile.

BUSH

I wanted to get into education. But he didn't give me any opening.

LAURA

Next time, lead with it.

BUSH

The guy didn't have one real point to make about economic policy, let alone education. There have got to be intelligent people who can see through him. Right, Laura?

LAURA

Well, they should, but he was so busy attacking you.

BUSH

Still, I got in some licks before he pulled out the dirty tricks there at the end. Right? (she doesn't answer) What, you don't agree?

LAURA

Your mother told me to never criticize a politician's speech.

He slows, approaching his townhouse.

BUSH

Honey, I've got a thick hide. You can tell me the truth. Come on.

LAURA

Well...

BUSH

What, it was all bad?

Laura sighs, then nods. W pulls into the driveway, brakes. He glares at Laura in mute anger. Then stomps on the accelerator.

EXT. GARAGE TOWNHOUSE- NIGHT- OCT. 1978

As he angrily plows the car into the garage door. Denting it, paint chips cascading down on the car. Laura opens the door, climbs out in shock. W gets out and checks the dents and scrapes on his bumper.

W, now calm as a cucumber, crosses to Laura. Sees how upset she looks.

LAURA

Why did you that? That was crazy!

BUSH

I told you I can take criticism. See, I'm already over it.

LAURA

The car isn't. Please don't ask for my opinion on your speeches again.

BUSH

Aww, come on, honey. I'm going to be askin' for a long time.

LAURA
Not while we're driving, please.

BUSH
(throws an arm around,
her)
Laura I've dated a lot of women but
none like you. I think you're the
gal for me. You're one of the great
listeners I've ever met. And since
I'm one of the biggest talkers...
well, it seems like a genuine fit.

She looks at him, amused. Smitten.

BUSH
Don't you think?

LAURA
It kind of does.

BUSH
Only kind of?

LAURA
Well...More than kind of.

ICE RATTLING IN A GLASS

INT. BUSH TOWNHOUSE- MIDLAND- NIGHT- NOV. 1978

W paces darkly, swilling Jack Daniels. Laura, deflated, on
the couch. Evans listening to election returns on radio.

EVANS
Look at it this way. You came
closer than any other Republican
ever has in this district.

BUSH
First is first and second is
nothin'.

LAURA
At least we won here in Midland.
The people who know you best voted
for you.

BUSH

Damn, Don, you were right. Shoulda come right back at that self-righteous hypocrite!

EVANS

Well, you wanted to play the nice guy.

BUSH

Hance, that sonofabitch-- if bullshit was music, he'd be a brass band. He rents his property out to a damn bar in Lubbock, and I let him paint me out as the East Coast saloon keeper. (downs his drink) I shoulda stuck it right back up his butt.

LAURA

You wanted to play fair, Geo. You wanted to win on the issues. You didn't want to get down in the gutter with him. And even though you lost, you can hold your head up.

He turns to her, slurring his words.

BUSH

Laura, politics is not a library; it's a kick-ass, skull-crushin' contact sport.

Laura blanches. Notices the bottle empty, doesn't say anything.

BUSH (CONT'D)

A crummy six thousand votes; shoulda went the other way.

EVANS

You'll get him next time.

BUSH

(scoffs) If there ever is a next time, I'll tell you one thing-- No way will I ever be out-Texaned or out Christianed again.

He looks at them, then goes to the door, opens it. He stares off into the West Texas night, a faraway look in his eyes.

EXT. TEXAS RANGER STADIUM- DAY

(IN HIS MIND) Bush stands in center field, alone, in the empty stadium, his stadium. A look of supreme contentment on his face. Though there is no one around, we hear the CRACK of a BAT. A towering blast from home plate. A ball in slow motion spirals through the air, his way. He pivots, then backtracks chasing it toward the center field wall. At the warning track, he reaches up and snares the fly ball with his bare hand.

Gripping the ball, he triumphantly raises his arm as THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE rings through the stadium.

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA -DAY- SEPT. 2002

W's 2 speechwriters are putting the final touches on a speech, as the door opens. Bush sticks his head in.

BUSH

How's it goin', word guys? Gotta get cracking, the UN speech is tomorrow and I need the final draft by tonight.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

You'll get it, sir. We just have to get our guy at the NSC to sign off on it.

BUSH

You get your guy, you get Tenet, then I decide. I'm going to bed right after Sportscenter, so I want it in my room by 8PM, latest. No excuses.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

Yes, Mr. President.

Bush closes the door behind.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER 1

You think we can get this stuff in?

SPEECHWRITER 2

Well, if we can't, we can always leak it to the Times.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

All right. Let me get our guy on the horn.

As he dials, we CUT TO:

INT. NSC OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- SIMULTANEOUS- (SEPT. 2002)

A NATIONAL SECURITY OFFICIAL on the phone to Chief Speechwriter.

NSC OFFICIAL

(taking notes) Wait a sec, just to be safe, I wouldn't say 500 hundred, I'd say up to 500 metric tons. Continue.

As he finishes jotting notes.

NSC OFFICIAL

We've got to get this approved by the Agency. Let me fax it to Langley. Then I'll patch us through to Tenet.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS- DIRECTOR'S OFFICE- LANGLEY VA.- DAY--
SEPT. 2002-- THREE WAY CONFERENCE CALL

INTERCUT GEORGE TENET on with Speechwriter/WALDORF and NSC OFFICIAL/WHITE HOUSE, as he reads the document.

NSC OFFICIAL

It only takes about ten tons of yellow cake to produce enough enriched Uranium for a single nuclear weapon.

TENET

I've already gone over this with the Vice President's office and the DOD. This information is from a single foreign source. It has not been confirmed, and furthermore, it's not solid enough for the President to be out front with. Take it out.

NSC OFFICIAL

You're sure?

TENET

I just can't go with it.

Tenet hangs up on them.

NSC OFFICIAL

(to speechwriters) Sorry, boys.
Take out the red meat, but leave as
much spice as you can.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

(sighs) We'll just have to keep it
in our hip pocket. For now.

He hangs up, turns to writer 2, throws up his hands.

CHIEF SPEECHWRITER

Slight change of plans. (goes back
to the computer) We've got a lot of
work to do before SportsCenter.

INT. OVAL OFFICE- DAY- NOV. 2002

Bush glances at his watch, then pops a chocolate mint in his
mouth. Cheney, Rice, Rove, Rumsfeld. Card, Wolfowitz gathered
around table. One chair empty. Mints set before each of them.
Tenet and McLaughlin in b.g. setting up a flip-chart
presentation.

BUSH

The French and the Russians-- I
tell you, it was easier pickings to
get the Democrats to pass the war
resolution than get these yo-yos
to sign off on 1441.

We hear the door handle turn, but it's locked.

BUSH

Don't open it.

Around the table, everybody snickers.

CHENEY

Maybe now Blair can stop wetting
his bed at night.

There's a loud KNOCK on the door, which shakes.

RUMSFELD

Who's that knock, knock, knocking
at my door?

ROVE

The big bad wolf. But look we've got the Senate and 70 percent of the public behind us. Blair, he's got a tougher sell.

CHENEY

I'll send him flowers and a mash note.

BUSH

Hey, knock it off. Don't want you makin' fun of my friend, Tones.
(steals Cheney's mint, pops it)
Maybe I'll go across the pond, give him a boost.

More KNOCKING HEARD.

BUSH

Condi, would you be so kind as to get it?

She gets up, opens the door. Powell chagrined, peeved enters. Laughter abounds.

BUSH

Balloon Foot, for an old military man, you oughta know, gotta be on time, else the ship sails without ya.

POWELL

Sorry, Mr. President.

CHENEY

Colin, you should be happy; you got the resolution.

POWELL

Who said I'm not happy?

BUSH

What was it the Russkies and Frogs made us change? Oh yeah, the word "and" to "or" and the word "secure" to "restore" to go along with it.
(smirks, dry heaving chest)

RUMSFELD

Pedantic pricks.

BUSH

It's an international fuckin' mosh-pit. Brother George, y'all ready with the presentation?

TENET

One more minute, sir.

He purloins Andy Card's mint, eats it.

BUSH

Andy, stay and catch the Cowboys game tonight. Wolfmeister, what's the matter with you?

WOLFOWITZ

The matter? I feel fine.

BUSH

(studying him)

Your body language... you look tense. Try and relax. You're makin' me nervous. (eyeing closer) And while you're at it, think about trimmin' those ear hairs.

Wolfowitz self-consciously touches his ear. Bush swipes Condi's mint, pops it. Playfully, she slaps his hand.

RICE

Hey, you may be President, but that's my mint.

BUSH

(smiles) Not anymore.

TENET

Ready.

LIGHTS GO DOWN-- TIME CUT AS WE FLIP THROUGH A SERIES OF IMAGES: SATELLITE PHOTO OF ROCKET ENGINE ON STAND

MCLAUGHLIN (V.C.)

The stand on this rocket is for long range missiles far beyond the permissible 150 Kilometer range...

SATELLITE PHOTOS OF UNMANNED IRAQI DRONES IN FLIGHT

MCLAUGHLIN (V.C.)

... Now these drones are flying at a range of 500 Kilometers, well beyond the UN sanctioned distance.

PHOTO OF FACTORY, CHARRED EARTH SURROUNDING IT.

MCLAUGHLIN (V.C.)

...Here we have a factory that doubles as a chemical weapons plant. The ground has been scorched by spilled chemicals.

LIGHTS UP as MCLAUGHLIN finishes his FLIP-CHART presentation.

W leans back, clasping hands behind his head, disappointed. Tenet steps up beside McLaughlin.

TENET

The verdict, as far as our intelligence has determined, is that Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons. And that key elements of Saddam's offensive BW program are currently active.

BUSH

(scowls)

Nice try. But I don't think Joe Q. Public is gonna buy it.

The expressions from around the room confirm his reaction.

BUSH

I've been told across the board about all this intelligence on Saddam and the nu-cu-lar weapons .. and you come back at me with the same kind of Charlie Chan bullshit.

TENET

We certainly could de-classify more information in an NIE. But I think it's a slam-dunk case.

BUSH

Slam dunk? You've gotta be kiddin' me. Whatta you been drinkin? I think what you need to do is bring in some lawyers who are used to arguing cases before juries to help you out here, dig up evidence, sharpen your presentation.

TENET

(deflated) Mr. President, this is just a rough draft.

BUSH

Way rough. Come back to me and next time I want the real deal. This stuff is complete Mickey-Mouse.

RUMSFELD

After the inspectors get in there and Saddam runs them around, we all know what's going to happen, they're going to want more time, another resolution.

BUSH

Tell ya, those bozos couldn't find water if they fell in the ocean. And I am just bone tired of this. Don't want our soldiers invading in that god-awful desert heat. We have got to get this war going before Summer. Got to get mobilized.

RUMSFELD

Say the word, and we're ready to move. I just spoke to Tommy at CENTCOM and he told me he can move at least 300,000 troops into the Gulf by early January. It'll be the "Mother of deployments!"

(laughter all around)

BUSH

(pleased, his great moment to decide) Great! Well, I think it's time we stopped standing around with our dicks in our hands, and raised the stakes on ol' 'Husseney.'

POWELL

(protests) But sir, to do something like this would be really against the spirit of the resolution. We've agreed with our allies that the inspectors need to do their job.

RUMSFELD

And how long do you think that'll take, another two, three months, or half-past a monkey's ass?

BUSH

(laughs)

Colin, you know what a burn card is? (Powell shakes head) Someday I'm gonna teach you to play some Texas hold'em. (to Rumsfeld) Rummy, you tell Tommy-- start movin' 'em overseas. (nods all around, Bush at his happiest)... but keep a lid on it. Normal lookin' deployments. Meanwhile you get the hardware there.

They all chuckle. Powell is concerned, says nothing.

INT. CESSNA ON RUNWAY OF MIDLAND AIRPORT- DAY- 1985

Bush, slightly snookered, puzzled, stares at the control panel. Pal, Don Evans, in passenger seat, anxiously watching.

EVANS

What is it, W?

BUSH

(shrugs) Nothin' really. Panel's a tad different than what I'm used to.

EVANS

Sure, you know what you're doing?

BUSH

Take it is easy, Evvie. This is a pipsqueak compared to the jets I flew back in the Guard. Hell, I ran night maneuvers out of Ellington AFB over the Gulf of Mexico.

He passes Evans a flask to steady his nerves.

BUSH (CONT'D)

I'm the pilot. You're my esteemed passenger. Just sit back and enjoy the ride.

Bush punches the starter button, pulls back on the throttle.

EXT. MIDLAND AIRPORT- DAY- 1985

The plane lurches down the runway.

INT. CESSNA- DAY- 1985

Bush intently working the controls.

EVANS

Give it some gas, or we'll never
get off the ground.

As Bush pulls back the control wheel, the plane gathers speed. Suddenly, the warning LIGHTS start FLASHING.

EVANS

What the hell was that, W? Look,
the lights!

BUSH

I see it. Don't worry, it's under
control.

He hits a blue button, knifes down the throttle. The Cessna noses up into the air. Levels off. Then begins to shake and wobble, nearly going into a stall.

EVANS

Wooh! God! Oh, man, why did I ever
let you talk me into this? Why?

BUSH

You wanted a bird's eye view of
Midland. And good buddy, you're
gonna get it.

He steadies the control wheel. Throttles back.

EXT. AIRFIELD

The plane rights itself. Rattling at low-altitude over
Midland.

INT. CESSNA

Cruising, they look down at the petrochemical complexes,
aluminum and steel, smokestacks jutting out of the Permian
Basin.

BUSH

Evvie, relax, enjoy yourself. Don't be a piss-ant worry-wort.

EVANS

Tell the truth-- this is the first time you've ever flown a Cessna, isn't it?

BUSH

This is how you learn. By doing. No need to ask a million questions. Told you already, I've logged hundreds of hours in the air. Check it out, see if you can spot your plant down there in the basin.

Evans dutifully looks down. The plane bumps through air pockets. He begins to turn green at the gills.

EVANS

W...W get me down. Just get me down.

BUSH

What? We just got up. Don't go pussy on me.

EVANS

I feel like I'm gonna heave any minute. Please! Take us back.

BUSH

All right, Evvie. Don't worry. I hear you.

He turns the wheel, banking the plane around.

EXT. MIDLAND AIRPORT- DAY- 1985

As the Cessna descends toward the landing strip. He brings it down abruptly, the wings wobble and the plane comes in for a rocky, cockeyed landing.

INT. CESSNA

It careens and bumps down the runway. Fear and panic in both Bush's and Evan's eyes. Bush jams on the brakes too hard.

EXT. RUNWAY/ DESERT- DAY- 1985

The plane spins wildly out of control. It swerves off the runway and onto the desert, trailing a cloud of dust as it shears a cactus and finally limps to a halt in the sage brush.

Bush and a shaken Evans climb out of the cabin.

EVANS

Never again. I swear it. This is the last time I ever, ever fly with you.

Bush brushes off his clothing. Looks at the plane, then at the sky.

BUSH

Still a beautiful day. Sure you don't want to go up for another spin?

Evans turns and walks away from him and the plane.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN- MIDLAND, TEXAS- DAY- APRIL, 1984

A tall, wiry, bearded MAN, dragging a heavy 12 foot-long wooden cross on wheels over the hot asphalt parking lot. A family waves to him as he passes.

INT. HOLIDAY INN- RESTAURANT- DAY- APRIL 1984

George Bush Jr. (37), old friends Jim Sale and Don Evans in a booth by the window, watching as ARTHUR BLESSIT, EVANGELIST MINISTER, lugs the cross to the entrance, leans it against the wall. Country music from jukebox. Bush covers his eyes.

BUSH

What have I gotten myself into?

SALE

You said you wanted to meet him.

Blessit enters, immediately spots them, comes over to the table.

BLESSIT
(brassy, bayou drawl) Nice to see
you, Jim. Mr. Bush... (greetings
exchanged)

BUSH
What would you like to have,
Arthur?

BLESSITT
A glass of water would be fine. I
fast during the day, (wipes his
brow) and it's been a long one.
What happened in this town is an
economic and spiritual catastrophe,
with the Midland bank failing, so
many people in such pain and
despair.

Evans gets up, goes to fetch water for Blessitt.

SALE
Terrible. I know many who've lost
everything.

BLESSITT
That's why I'm here. To bring hope
and salvation to the good folks of
Midland.

SALE
I told George you've already
carried the cross half way around
the world.

BLESSITT
Sixty countries on six continents.
(rubs a bone spur on his shoulder)
I've got an extra inch of bone
where I carry the crucifix. It's
reshaped my body, as well as my
soul.

Bush shifts uneasily, leans closer.

BUSH
Arthur, I didn't feel comfortable
attending the revival at the
convention center. But I heard you
on the radio. And I want to talk to
you about how to know the Lord
Jesus.

BLESSITT

What is your relationship with
Jesus?

BUSH

(furrows his brow)

I'm not sure.

BLESSITT

If you died this moment, do you
feel the assurance that you would
go to heaven?

BUSH

No. No, I don't.

BLESSITT

(a beat)

What is it that's troubling you?

Bush fidgets with his fork.

BUSH

Well, I've been kind of floundering
lately. Haven't been as successful
in the oil business as I had
expected...

His voice trails off. Blessitt stares at him.

BUSH

And I've got a problem with the
bottle. A long time now. It's
affecting my life, the relationship
with my wife, my two daughters.

BLESSITT

The call of Jesus is for us to
repent and believe. Jesus tries to
change us from the inside out. The
world tries to change us from the
outside in.

BUSH

I understand that.

BLESSITT

Do you really?

A group of ranchers enter. Bush turns his head to avoid eye
contact.

BLESSITT

You love your wife and family?

BUSH

Yes, I do.

BLESSITT

And do you love your parents?

BUSH

Well, most of the time. My father and I have a tough go of it, now and then.

BLESSITT

Are you able to forgive those who have hurt you?

BUSH

Well, as my mother's said, I'm as good as her at holding a grudge.

BLESSITT

Mr. Bush, I would like to pray with you.

He reaches out his hand. Bush hesitantly takes hold of it.

BLESSITT

Jesus is not condemning you. He wants to save you and cleanse your heart and change your desires. Please repeat after me... Dear God, I believe in you and need you in my life. Have mercy on me, a sinner.

BUSH

Dear God, I believe in You and need You in my life. Have mercy on me, a sinner.

BLESSITT (CONT'D)

I love you, Lord, take control of my life. I believe you hear my prayer.

As Bush repeats his words, an incantatory fervor takes holds of Blessitt.

BLESSITT

I forgive everyone and ask you to fill me with Your Holy Spirit and give me love for all people.

(MORE)

BLESSITT (cont'd)
 (Bush echoes his words) I believe
 You lived without sin, died on the
 cross for my sins, and rose again
 on the third day and have now
 ascended unto the Father. Make my
 home in Heaven and write my name in
 your Book. I accept the Lord Jesus
 Christ as my Savior and desire to
 be a true believer in and a
 follower of Jesus. Amen.

The waiter places a glass of water before Blessitt. Bush has
 a look of quiet beatitude. Blessitt sprinkles some water on
 Bush's hand.

BLESSITT
 You are saved. There is a rejoicing
 in heaven.

As he raises his arms skyward, continuing, Bush looks at him,
 hoping that the blessing will take.

EXT. BROADMOOR HOTEL- COLORADO SPRINGS- NIGHT- JULY, 1986

Fabled resort nestled in the mountains near Pikes Peak.

INT. RESTAURANT- W'S 40TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION- JULY, 1986

Glasses raised in toast. W and Laura, joined by Midland
 friends, Joe and Jan O'Neil, who introduced them, and Don and
 Susie Evans.

EVANS
 To turning 40, W. You're aging
 wonderfully. Nothing about you is
 old, except a few of your jokes.

JAN O'NEIL
 To the best thing that ever came
 out of a Texas backyard barbecue.

LAURA
 Here's to the world's best
 matchmakers, Joe and Jan.

JOE O'NEIL
 W, may you live to be a hundred...
 with one extra year to repent.

BUSH
 Thanks, Spider. Think I'll need at
 least twenty, right, honey?

He puts an arm around Laura. She smiles.

LAURA
Maybe just 15.

BUSH
Here's drinkin' to you, kid.

He swills down the glass. She gives him a look, "go easy," which he ignores.

SUSIE EVANS
(gushes)
May all of yours and Laura's dreams come true. Each and every single one of them. And I mean that from the bottom of my heart, you two wonderful lovebirds.

DON EVANS
Just hope George's dream has nothing to do with piloting the space shuttle.

LAURA
No, he says he wants to be like the boy flying around the Astrodome in that movie, you've all seen it? Brewster McCloud.

Laughter around the table. A WAITER appears with a telephone.

JAN O'NEIL
All the times I've gone with Joe, just can never get into it.

LAURA
It's slow, you can daydream. It's a very relaxing game.

BUSH
You know who I grew up dreamin' to be, Spider?

JOE O'NEIL
Who?

BUSH
Willie "the Say Hey Kid" Mays.
(imitates famous basket catch)

JOE O'NEIL

Problem is you couldn't hit the curve ball. And you're white.

WAITER

Call for you, Mr. Bush.

BUSH

Who is it?

WAITER

(hushed)

The Vice President.

Bush takes the phone. The table quiets. As a waiter refills his glass we INTERCUT BETWEEN the Bush' strained small talk.

GEORGE BUSH SR., VICE PRESIDENT-- NAVAL OBSERVATORY- NIGHT-JULY, 1986

BUSH

Hello, Poppy.

BUSH SR.

Just wanted to wish you a Happy Birthday, son. Hope that you're enjoying yourself.

BUSH

Ohhhh, yeah. Laura and I are with our friends, the O'Neils and Evans; a gala celebration.'

BUSH SR.

... I hear your brother Neil's coming up from Denver tomorrow.

BUSH

Yeah, we're thinkin' about taking a tour of the Air-Force Academy.

BUSH SR.

How's Laura?

BUSH

(looks over at her)

Sweet as ever.

BUSH SR.

And the girls?

BUSH

Back home in Midland. We're trying to have a little time alone.

BUSH SR.

A good thing. Your mother and I, we rarely get that.

A long pause.

BUSH SR.

You know, I'm gearing up to run in '88.

BUSH

Yeah, sir. I think that's great.

BUSH SR.

Jeb can't get away from Florida. How'd you like to lend a hand?

BUSH

(thrown)

Uh, in what way?

BUSH SR.

Would you be up to coming to Washington? And help Lee Atwater run my campaign?

TIGHT ON BUSH- frozen.

BUSH SR.

Yes, or no?

BUSH

Yes!

BUSH SR.

Good. I'll have Lee call you during the week and he'll talk to you more about it. Look, I've got a dinner with the Japanese Ambassador and his wife. My stomach's real upset, so again, Happy Birthday to you, son.

BUSH

Well, don't eat that raw fish, Poppy. Thank you. (hangs up)

LAURA

What did he have to say?

Bush downs half his glass of wine. 3miles.

BUSH
Looks like we're movin' to D.C.

INT. BROADMOOR HOTEL- NEXT MORNING- JULY 1986

Bush, terrible hangover, climbs out of bed, shuffles into the bathroom. Laura, in tennis shorts, applying make-up.

BUSH
(groans) Really tied one on last night. Where ya goin?

LAURA
Jan's waiting for me on the courts. You?

BUSH
Gonna suck it up, go for a run.

LAURA
Why don't you take today off? Go back to bed.

BUSH
Gotta do my miles, my three miles. You know that.

She stares at his haggard face, red eyes, in the mirror.

LAURA
Washington will be a hard change for the girls. I'm so happy for you, Geo. You couldn't ask for a better birthday present from your father... I mean to show such confidence in you.

She pecks him lovingly on the cheek

BUSH
(darkly)
Confidence? Heck, he's calling on me only 'cause Jeb wasn't available.

LAURA
The point is, he asked you. He wants you. Needs you. Why do you do this to yourself? Why?

He turns the water on, splashing his face.

EXT. MOUNTAINS- LATER-- JULY, 1986

Huffing and puffing, Bush jogs along a mountain trail. He begins to gasp for air, slows, but pushes himself on.

Pine trees blurring past. Heart POUNDING in his chest. Woozy, he staggers over to a tree, grasping hold of it. Then leans over, retching.

He sinks to his knees, sick of himself.

BUSH

God. Oh, God. Please help me.

He looks up at the SHADOWY pines. The wind GUSTS. A cloud passes over, blocking out the sun.

HIS POV- THE FOREST TURNING INTO A SWIRLING BLACK VORTEX, DROWNING HIM IN DARKNESS. SILENCE..

INT. HOTEL ROOM- LATER AFTERNOON

DARKNESS. Laura turns on the lights. Sees the shades drawn. Her husband in bed, unshaven, opens his eyes.

LAURA

(worried) What's the matter? Are you all right, George?

BUSH

I just can't go on like this anymore. I'm through.

LAURA

Through what?

BUSH

Drinking. It's killing me. It's killing you. Can't do this to my father any longer. He's running for President.

Laura comes over, sits next to him, stroking his head.

BUSH

I'm just going to do it. Cold turkey.

LAURA

What about AA?

BUSH

Don't want that. Remember on the golf course, how I quit smokin'? (snaps finger) Just like that. Gonna do it the same.

LAURA

I'm by your side, George. Whatever you need. I love you.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE- SITUATION ROOM- DAY- JAN. 27, 2003

Rice, Hadley, the NSC guy, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Tenet getting up from their chairs. The meeting breaking up.

TENET

You've got the speech?

HADLEY

(to Tenet)

The last draft, promise.

TENET

I've read how many of these...?

Tenet wearily takes the document.

TENET

I'll have my guy check it.

Tenet wearily takes document, stuffs it in his briefcase, heads for the door. The NSC guy looks on as Hadley hands another copy to AIDE.

INT. CHENEY'S OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- LATER- JAN. 27, 2003

Cheney in his office, poring over a document. The President's speech. An AIDE knocks, enters. Cheney doesn't look up, underlining a passage.

AIDE

We finally got it in.

CHENEY

Took long enough.

INT. U.S. SENATE- JAN. 28, 2003- STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

CLOSE ON BUSH- PRESIDENTIAL SEAL BEHIND HIM

BUSH

The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium in Africa.

Cheney seated behind him, poker-faced, a fractional nod.

RAPID CUTS: WHITE HOUSE- SIMULTANEOUS

Speechwriter 1 watching on television. Turns to fellow speechwriter 2, gives a thumbs up.

BUSH (V.O.)

Our intelligence sources tells us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.

INT. NSC OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- (SIMULTANEOUS)

The NSC official and Stephen Hadley, riveted as they watch the President deliver the intelligence they've helped slip into his speech.

BUSH (V.O.)

Evidence from intelligence sources, and secret communications from people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al Qaeda.

INT. GEORGE BUSH SR. HOME--KENNENBUNKPORT- NIGHT

SR. and Barbara on couch, listening to their son's speech.

INT. GEORGE TENET'S BEDROOM-- (SIMULTANEOUS)

The lights off. The CIA Director's face-- resting on a pillow. He's sound asleep, snoring.

BACK TO BUSH AT THE PODIUM

BUSH

Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans-- this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one cannister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that day never comes.

We HEAR APPLAUSE well up from the Senate Floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSH HOME- MAINE- NIGHT- SUMMER 2002

Darkness. SOUND OF SURF. Former President, GEORGE BUSH SR. (68) worn, tired, sits on porch in bathrobe, staring out at the ocean. A light goes on in room behind him. Former First Lady, Barbara Bush, appears in a nightgown.

BARBARA

Why don't you just take a sleeping pill?

GEORGE SR.

Clouds are coming in. Looks like it's gonna rain.

BARBARA

Come on, you're not out here at 3 A.M thinking about the weather.

GEORGE SR.

Remind me to call the electrician tomorrow. Lights are out on the path below.

BARBARA

Why don't you call your son and tell him what's on your mind? Why you're not sleeping?

GEORGE SR.

I'm worried about him. Really worried. (shakes head) But I can't talk to him.

BARBARA

Well, he's not going to listen to me. You know he takes criticism worse than I do.

GEORGE SR.

He's the President now. It's his decision to make.

BARBARA

It's eating away at you. I hate to see you like this. You've got to do something.

Sr. sighs. Nods heavily.

GEORGE SR.

I'll do something.

INT. OVAL OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- AUGUST 15, 2002

Condi Rice reading from the Wall Street Journal.

RICE

"There is scant evidence to tie Saddam to terrorist organizations and even less to the Sept. 11 attacks. An attack on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize the global counterterrorist campaign we have undertaken.

George W rises from his chair, angry. Seizes the paper from her hand, reads more.

BUSH

Fucking Brent Scowcroft!

He hurls it across room, pages flying.

BUSH (CONT'D)

You know he wouldn't be doing this unless my father approved it. Poppy's good friend. And mouthpiece. Just when we're trying to get the Democrats to go along.

RICE

(inflamed) I'm going to call Brent right now.

BUSH
Can't ever talk to me directly.
Always with the letters. Now this
op-ed dipped in poison.

RICE
We'll let him know that from here
on out, he's persona non-grata. No
briefings, no nothing.

BUSH
It's not my father's war. This is
mine.

RICE
(clears throat)
Has he... well, ever personally
offered you advice on Iraq?

BUSH
(stares off) No I haven't asked.
Don't need to. He's the wrong
father to appeal to in terms of
strength. There's a higher Father I
appeal to.

A huge WAVE crashing against a rocky promontory.

BUSH (V.O.)
There's this darkness that follows
me...

EXT.- MAINE- OCEAN- NEAR BUSH FAMILY COMPOUND- SEPT. 1985-
DAY

He walks with the REVEREND BILLY GRAHAM, 70, along the rocky,
shoreline. Fog drifting in.

BUSH (CONT'D)
And no matter how many times I go
to church and pray; no matter how
hard I try to reach out to the
Lord, that darkness still has me
hooked.

REVEREND GRAHAM
George, the Christian life is not a
constant high. I have my own
moments of deep discouragement. I
have to go to God, just like you,
and say, "Oh, God, please help me."

Bush, surprised, takes that in.

REVEREND GRAHAM (CONT'D)
Comfort, wealth and fame have never
enriched anyone as much as
adversity has.

BUSH
All I am is *name*, Reverend Graham.
People say I was born with a silver
spoon, but they don't know... the
burden that carries.

REVEREND GRAHAM
That's okay. That's alright. Only
those who experience the depths of
pain can reach the shores of true
salvation.

He stops, turns to face Bush.

REVEREND GRAHAM (CONT'D)
You have to live each day as if it
were your last. The saddest words
you can ever utter are, "If only I
had my life to live over again."
Take the baton, now. Run with it!
Beginning today, treat everyone you
meet, friend or foe, loved one or
stranger, as if they were going to
be dead at midnight. Extend to each
person, no matter how trivial the
contact, all the care and kindness
and understanding and love that you
can muster, and do it with no
thought of any reward. If you do
that, your life will never be the
same again.

TIGHT ON BUSH- struck to his depths by Graham's words.

INT. BUSH SR. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS.. WASHINGTON D.C.- 1986

Bush Sr. behind a desk listening to TWO NOTED TELEVANGELIS.
BUSH JR. seated next to Karl Rove.

TELEVANGELIST 1

The religious community is a real important part of the electorate, sir. All we want to do is position you better this time.

BUSH JR.

Poppy, remember when they asked you during the '80 campaign, if you were "born again" and you said, 'No'? That undoubtedly cost you votes.

BUSH SR.

(remembers)

That was a set-up job. Look, I'm a devout Christian. Been one all my life. There's no need for me to say "I've been re-born."

ROVE

Mr. Vice President, with all due respect, their community-- which represents 36 percent of the American public-- doesn't like to hear denial. You can say anything else, but you can't say no.

BUSH JR.

What would it hurt to say you're a true believer and leave it at that.

BUSH SR.

(testy) Of course I'm a believer. No one has to tell me that.

ROVE

It's just a matter of a subtle "coding;" rephrasing things so that you connect with their base.

BUSH SR.

Fellas, I appreciate your time and support. And I obviously do need it, but I'd be more comfortable having you working directly with my son. I'm trying to learn the lingo, but I'm still an old-school Episcopalian. George here is the real "born again."

The Evangelists and Rove get up to leave. Sr. motions for W to stay.

BUSH SR.

These guys aren't like Falwell and Robinson-- "temple burner:"?

BUSH JR.

Not at all. They're proteges of Billy Graham. Plus, they're from Texas.

BUSH SR.

I don't want any over-the-top fire and brimstone going in. I'm trusting you to vett everything.

BUSH JR.

You've got it, Poppy. I was thinking that maybe we can get Billy Graham to do a video spot, backing you.

BUSH SR.

I know he "planted a mustard seed" in your heart-- and he's a good family friend, but it would be inauthentic for me to use him. Nixon did stuff like that.

W turns on the TV and VCR.

BUSH JR.

I'm just looking for every edge...Got another video spot for you to check out.

THE INFAMOUS WILLIE HORTON AD pops up onscreen. As Bush Sr. watches, he purses his lips in distaste.

BUSH JR.

Karl and Lee predict that by the time the election is over, this guy Horton, will be a household name.

BUSH SR.

Well, uh, just remind Lee that we can't run this directly through the campaign. Find another pipeline.

BUSH JR.

Don't worry. It's being funded through an independent group-- The National Security Political Action Committee. Ya know, Roger Ailes' people.

BUSH SR.

Good work, son. You're earning your spurs.

ON JR. Pleased, at last, by his father's praise.

INT. HOUSTON HOTEL ROOM-- NIGHT- NOV. 1988

Bush Jr. along with Rove, Lee Atwater, watching a bank of tv's. CORRESPONDENTS announcing the projected election victory of George Herbert Walker Bush. (STOCK)

ROVE

Game over. They called it.

BUSH

It's like a Super-Bowl rout.

ATWATER

What'd I predict? 53 percent.

ROVE

Yeah, but how many electoral votes?

ATWATER

(catbird smile)

I'm gonna say... 420 to 117.

ROVE

We should send Willie Horton a fruit basket.

ATWATER

Your father is now the President of the United States. How does that feel?

BUSH JR.

(flat)

Great. Fantastic. What we've all been working for.

ATWATER

(slaps Rove on shoulder) Rove, you treacherous dawg, your bite's as bad as your bark. Proud to have you in my kennel.

Rove barks jovially, as Atwater leaves. Bush gets up opens a non-alcoholic beer.

ROVE

You look down, what is it?

BUSH JR.

Just tired. (after a beat) I'm wondering what's going to happen to me now.

ROVE

What do you mean?

BUSH JR.

My father's not going to give me a position. He's afraid of nepotism. And I'm not gonna hang around, become a lobbyist. That's for sure.

ROVE

George, I've been a life-long student of political horseflesh and from what I see, you've got natural talent; got the "people touch". But you need to go out in the world and do something. I don't know how else to say it-- but you haven't done jack shit yet.

ON BUSH- shaken, knows it's true.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT- NOVEMBER 1988

Laura in bed. Stirs. Look at the alarm clock. Sees Bush staring out the window.

LAURA

George, it's 3 o'clock. Come on to bed; we've got to fly back to Washington with your family in a few hours.

Bush climbs into bed, pensive.

BUSH

Rove hit me with 2 by 4 of truth,
tonight.

LAURA

Which is...?

BUSH

I'll never get out of Poppy's
shadow. They'll all keep sayin'
what's the boy ever done... I mean
who ever remembers the sor of a
President?

LAURA

You forgot John Quincy Adams.

BUSH

(snorts) Yeah, that was what, two-
hundred years ago.

LAURA

Still, he followed in his father's
footsteps.

BUSH

Ya know what. I wish he'd lost.

LAURA

(rears up, stunned) What! How can
you say that?

BUSH

Got crazy, mixed feelings about it--

LAURA

-- What are you talking about?

BUSH

-- If Poppy lost, he'd be out of
politics now, be a private citizen.

LAURA

That's ridiculous. You helped him
win the Presidency. You've gained
his respect.

BUSH

Nah. No matter what I do, it's
never going to be good enough.
Never.

CUT TO:

A GIANT PUPPET OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH HOLDING BUCKETS OF BLOOD AND OIL

Held up by PROTESTORS in front of the UNITED NATIONS

EXT. NEW YORK/ROME/PARIS/LONDON/TOKYO-- FEB.15, 2003

(STOCK) Across the globe, millions, marching in the streets in protest to the upcoming war against Iraq. A million in London. Three million in Rome. THE LARGEST ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS IN HISTORY.

INT. WHITE HOUSE- HALLWAY-DAY- FEB. 2003

George W walking down hall with BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, TONY BLAIR.

BLAIR

You know George, I've been giving quite a bit of thought lately to the bigger questions, the imponderables...I've even considered the possibility of converting.

BUSH

Really? To what?

BLAIR

Uh, Sherry's always been a devout Catholic, I think I told you George... (Bush nods, Blair mumble)... Uh, I might go there myself you know.

BUSH

Too much Popery. All that incense and Latin. But I'm glad that you're thinkin' about these things, Tones. I'd be proud to call you my born-again brother. Really proud.

BLAIR

You've made a similar impression on me George.

INT. OVAL OFFICE-WHITE HOUSE- TIME CUT: TEN MINUTES LATER.

George W and Blair, talking. Joined by Rice, Cheney, a forlorn Powell, and Wolfowitz.

BUSH

I want you know that we're going to put our full weight behind that Second Resolution. We'll twist as many arms as necessary, to get these other fellows on board.

BLAIR

I'm afraid the resistance I'm getting from Parliament is quite heavy.

BUSH

Tony, if we don't get the votes, the last thing I want is your government to fail. If you gotta drop out of the 'coalition of the willing,' I understand.

BLAIR

I said I'm with you. And I mean it.

BUSH

'Jolly good', Tony. Thanks. But I've got to tell you this-- regardless of what happens at the UN or the inspections, we've penciled in a start date for war-- March 10th.

BLAIR

(surprised) March 10th? Well, I'm sure the inspectors are going to turn something up, but... they still haven't... uh, found anything, you know? How will you justify a preemptive attack?

BUSH

No, no WMD's yet, but we know they got 'em. So, be what it is, uh, what it may be... be it what it be--

BLAIR

(helping out) 'Be that as it may.'

BUSH

--Right, being so, it might just come down to us having to provoke the sonofabitch.

BLAIR

Ah, what do you have in mind,
George?

BUSH

Well, we're thinkin' about painting
one of our U2 recon planes in UN
colors. Then fly it over Iraq. See
if Saddam takes the bait, which,
knowing him, he will. When he fires
on it, he'll be in breach of 1441.
That'd sure justify retaliation.

On Blair, incredulous.

BLAIR

Uh. Well, uh....that's a novel
idea, George, but a bit risky. But
let's hope it doesn't come to that.

BUSH

Plan B is, assassinate the
sonofabitch.

BLAIR

That's a long shot, considering how
we've both tried, this war's got
more charmed lives than Castro.
George, I must say, I'm a bit more
troubled about our post-war plans
for Iraq.

BUSH

(bored)

We've done our homework on this.
Humanitarian aid, oil for food, all
that stuff. Wolfy here...

BLAIR

(interjects) To my mind, the
greater concern is sectarian
violence in the aftermath.

BUSH

Well we ran that scenario, Tones,
and it's just not in the cards.
These people've been through hell.
They'll be grateful for freedom,
the last thing they'll want's
'nother war.

(MORE)

BUSH (cont'd)
 Sunnis, Shias, Kurds, you know, in
 the end they'll stick together,
 they're all Muslims, anyway,
 (chuckling) and they gotta pray
 five times a day.

Blair's jaw drops. Rice starts to say something, holds her
 tongue. Then after a long beat.

BLAIR
 Yes, um, so getting back to this
 second resolution. What do you
 think the chances are of getting
 France and Russia onboard?

CLOSE ON THE PRESIDENT'S PHONE RINGING-- DAY- MARCH, 2003

BUSH at his desk. TEN DAYS LATER.

SECRETARY (V.O.)
 President Putin on the line for
 you, sir.

BUSH
 (puts it on speaker)
 Good evening, Vladimir.

ON THE OTHER END we HEAR PRESIDENT PUTIN'S VOICE.

PUTIN
 Good morning, George.

BUSH
 Well, I thank you for not
 personally attacking us, even
 though you disagree with our
 position. And for not raising anti-
 American sentiment against us in
 your country.

PUTIN
 You're welcome. I have to say that
 this is going to be terribly hard.
 And for you, I feel bad. I really
 do.

BUSH
 (thrown) Bad, what are you talking
 about Vladimir?

PUTIN

If you proceed, there will be a lot of hardship and suffering that you will face.

BUSH

I don't think so. We're liberating an oppressed people. They will be glad to get rid of a tyrant. Remember Stalin?

PUTIN

That's another matter. An even now, many Russians still yearn for the order he brought to our Motherland.

BUSH

I know that you don't believe that in your soul, Vlad. But we're talkin' apples and oranges here.

PUTIN

Apples? I do not understand.

BUSH

Different countries. Different situations.

PUTIN

I'm sorry, George, that we cannot join in with you. Nothing's changed. What I wish for you, is the best in a bad situation.

BUSH

(grimaces)

Naturally I'm disappointed. Still it was awfully nice of you to call. (a long beat) well, Dosvidaniya, Vladimir.

He hangs up. Really pissed.

WIDEN-- WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM- MARCH, 2003

Powell, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, all listening. Bush turns to them.

BUSH

You believe that? Comrade Pooty-poot. With all the problems he's got in Chechnya, he's got the balls to feel bad for me.

He gets up, paces, trying to calm down.

BUSH

At least we've got Italy,
Australia, the Czechs, Poles,
Slovenia... Who else?

RICE

Romania, Micronesia, Iceland.

BUSH

(irritated)

Micronesia! C'mon, Guru, what about
New Zealand, and the Japs, we got
one of the two Koreas on this deal!
There's at least 10 other countries
here.

POWELL

(a little cynical)

...We got the Mongolians-- damn
good fighters.

BUSH

(ignoring him) Fucking Schroeder,
the Germans, he used me as a pinata
to get re-elected. Won't forget
that.

RICE

I'm afraid Chirac's let us down.
He's definitely doing the 60
Minutes piece, calling for weapon
inspectors to be given another 30
days.

BUSH

(fumes) Thirty days! I'd like to
stuff a plate of freedom fries down
that slick piece of shit's throat.
Givin' me lectures? Next chance
comes up, I'll be glad to veto
something French. Damned glad!

RUMSFELD

Tommy's standing by in Kuwait.

BUSH

Bring him up.

Tommy Franks appears on a large SCREEN by the front of the
table.

FRANKS

How are you, sir?

BUSH

Great. Other than being stabbed in the back by the French and Russians. Dr. Kissinger came by the other day, told me, "you can't cock the gun, and not pull the trigger." You ready, Tommy?

FRANKS

We've got a total force level of 208,000 on the ground. And have identified over 20 high-collateral damage targets--

BUSH

I'm no target picker, but I sure as hell don't want to fire a 2-million dollar missile at a \$10 empty tent and hit a damn camel in the ass.

FRANKS

Not going to happen.

BUSH

And for goddsakes be sure not to hit any schools or hospitals.

FRANKS

I read you on the hospitals. Any schools in the vicinity of targets will be hit at night when no one's there.

BUSH

Good. (glances at Cheney) Vice, here, keeps telling me we're going to be greeted as Liberators. Had some Iraqis over last week, said that their children are gonna be handin' out roses and candy to the troops. What do you think?

FRANKS

I don't know about that, sir. We've got to prepared for anything and everything.

BUSH

What about projected casualties?

FRANKS

(shrugs) Thousand? I'd say more likely in the neighborhood of several hundred.

BUSH

Be it a thousand, a hundred, or five...

Stares at Rumsfeld and Rice.

BUSH (CONT'D)

... Americans don't like to see dead people on their television sets.

RUMSFELD

We'll issue a blackout on media coverage of any American soldiers in caskets.

CHENEY

I think the same policy should apply for military funerals.

BUSH

(scowls, eyes narrowing)

This has gone on way too long.

Tell ya-- it's enough to make a preacher lay down his Bible!

(abruptly rises)

If we don't have the votes in the UN, we pull down the Second Resolution. Monday morning. Ten A.M.

Bush looks up at screen to Franks.

BUSH

I'm gonna go on TV and give Saddam and his sons a final ultimatum. They've got 48 hours to get out of Dodge... if they want to stay on the right side of the dirt.

CLOSE ON SHOES SCUFFING DIRT.

EXT. TEXAS RANGER STADIUM- DAY- SUMMER 1989

George Jr. walking from the outfield track onto the manicured center field grass, looking up at the empty stands. His father appears, leaving SECRET SERVICE AGENTS behind.

BUSH JR.

We're not ready for the playoffs yet, but we're four games over .500. Looks like we'll have the first winning season since I took over as owner.

BUSH SR.

You've done a heckuva job, George.

BUSH JR.

Even though I traded Sammy Sosa?

BUSH SR.

We all make mistakes.

BUSH JR.

(a glint in his eye)

This is my favorite spot in the world, Poppy. Center Field. Whenever things get rough, need to clear my head, I come out here. Makes me feel at peace.

BUSH SR.

Right now, wish I had a spot like this. Not the White House lawn.

BUSH JR.

...I'd love for you throw out the first pitch next season.

BUSH SR.

(nods) Want me to play a little first base too, on Old Timers' Day?

BUSH JR.

I'm sure you could still handle the glove. (sighs, contented) I love being down behind home plate with the fans. Eatin' popcorn, hot-dogs. Hangin' out with Laura and the kids. Peein' in the same urinals with the regular Joes.

BUSH SR.

Well, son, I've got to say I was wrong about you not being good at baseball.

As they walk off the field.

BUSH JR.

This is strictly on the QT. Bud Selig has talked to me about taking over for our old friend, Fay Vincent, as baseball commissioner.

BUSH SR.

(impressed, yet skeptical)
That's terrific. What's the time frame?

BUSH JR.

He's talkin' about next year, after he gets the votes lined up.

BUSH SR.

Good luck.

BUSH JR.

(hands sweep the field)
If people say, what's the boy ever done. Well, here it is. Put "baseball commissioner"-- that'd be the dream of a lifetime.

INT. SITUATION ROOM-- WHITE HOUSE- AUGUST, 1990

A Twilight Zone sense of dejavu. George Bush Sr. sits in the wing back chair near the fireplace where Bush Jr. sat. He's flanked by Secretary of Defense, DIK CHENEY, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF, COLIN POWELL, and PRINCE BANDAR Ambassador from Saudi Arabia. All 12 years younger. ON TV, b.g., images of Saddam, Iraqi flag planted in Kuwait.

BUSH SR.

This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait. Consider me provoked. I've had it with SADDam. He has to be stopped.

Bandar seems pleased. He nods sagely.

BANDAR

It is good to see your anger for once Mr. President.

BUSH SR.

Prince, we're as troubled as you are about this invasion, and the threat he poses against your oil fields.

CHENEY

Repelling him from Kuwait is one thing. But I think it'd be a mistake to invade Iraq. There could be tremendous casualties.

POWELL

I'm in agreement on this, Mr. President.

BUSH SR.

You're in agreement with Cheney?

Cheney, a luke-warm grin.

POWELL

We can't go in there and sort out two thousand years of Mesopotamian history in a month or a year.

CHENEY

We've got to kick his butt out of Kuwait, and then use every economic sanction to break him.

BANDAR

(dismissively)

Mr. President, sanctions to Saddam are like fleas on a dog. His teeth are still as sharp... How far will America go this time?

BUSH SR.

Bandar-- we'll go as far as we have to go.

CHENEY

Sir, that means Baghdad. We take out that government, we got to think about what'll be left in its place. Excuse me Prince, we're not talking about royalty here, we're talking about desert Arabs, tribes-people goat-fucking each other for the next oil hole. We'd be right in the middle of a complete and utter quagmire...

(MORE)

CHENEY (cont'd)
 (pause, off Bush's perplexed face)
 ...quicksand. (Bush nods)

Bandar smiles condescendingly, not too happy at this description. Bush mulls this over. It's a heavy decision. Turns to Bandar.

BUSH SR.
 One way or another, Saddam will be removed from Kuwait. And Saudi Arabia will be protected. That much I promise you, Prince Bardar.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OUTER OFFICE-- MOMENTS LATER-- AUG. 1990

George Jr. waiting, nervously tapping his foot. Cheney, Powell and Bandar emerge, walk past, as he rises.

BUSH JR.
 Hello, Mr. Cheney, sir.

CHENEY
 Nice to see you, Junior.

BUSH JR.
 Hi, General Powell.

POWELL
 How you doing Shrub?

Bandar stops, gives Jr. a hug.

BUSH JR.
 Bandar Bush. How are ya?

BANDAR
 Fine. And you, George? You're looking very fit.

BUSH JR.
 Preparin' to run a marathon next month.

SECRETARY
 The President will see you now.

INT. OVAL OFFICE- DAY- AUG. 1990

Jr. stiffly sits. Sr. flips through documents, preoccupied.

BUSH SR.
 How's everyone back home?

BUSH JR.
Okay, Poppy. Okay.

BUSH SR.
This situation in Kuwait, I tell
you--

BUSH JR.
--Really puttin' a burr under your
saddle, I know.

BUSH SR.
The Rangers, I've lost track--

BUSH JR.
(waves hand)
Three games out of second.

BUSH SR.
You know, I've always believed in
leaving personal feelings out of
international politics, but this,
this is different--

BUSH JR.
Saddam?

BUSH SR.
(correcting him)
SAD-dam... what I call him since I
found out that if you emphasize the
first syllable, rather than the
second, you change the Arabic
meaning, from "one who confronts,"
to "the little boy who cleans old
men's shoes."

Sr. chuckles. Jr. relaxes.

BUSH JR.
Well, he's one shoe-shining piece
o' crap, all right.

BUSH SR.
(serious again)
Got a feeling about this though--
how I handle it-- one way or
another it's going to determine my
legacy as President. It's critical
I make the right call. For myself.
For the world.

BUSH JR.

Well, you will, I'm sure.

BUSH SR.

(nods) Lot of complexities at work here, though. Awful lot.

BUSH JR.

I've been reading about it every day on TV. He gassed his own people, the Kurds. The only way to back this jackass, thug down-- is *kill* 'im.

Sr. looks at his son, reflectively. Then:

BUSH SR.

Sorry to hear that Selig screwed you.

BUSH JR.

(sighs, bitterly)

I was a fool to believe that he'd make me commissioner. He was just jerkin' my chain, keepin' the job warm for himself.

BUSH SR.

(suddenly tired)

You own a baseball team. Spare yourself the headache. Maybe it's better you stay out of the barrel.

BUSH JR.

What do you mean?

BUSH SR.

It's just better.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM- FEB. 26TH, 1991

Bush Sr. with Cheney, Powell, looking up at the MONITOR.
INTELLIGENCE PICTURES OF WAR SCENES beamed back to them.

POWELL

Mr. President, it's only been a hundred hours, but Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army defeated. We've met our military objectives.

BUSH SR.

Amazing. Who could have imagined it would go this fast? (to himself)
By God, I think we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome. (to Cheney) Hate to leave that S.O.B. in power though...

CHENEY

You have to ask yourself-- how many dead Americans is Saddam worth?

On the monitor, Bush sees graphic images of DEAD AND DYING IRAQI SOLDIERS by their burned out trucks and tanks. He nods to Cheney.

BUSH SR. (CONT'D)

We don't gain the size of our victory by how many innocents kids running away we can slaughter-- even though they're the bad guys. That's not an honorable way of doing business. I think it's gone far enough.

POWELL

I'll get Schwarzkopf on the horn, tell him mission accomplished.

BUSH SR.

Do that.

INT. HOUSTONIAN HOTEL- SUITE- HOUSTON, TEXAS-- NOVEMBER 1992

TV NEWS ANCHOR

Ladies and Gentlemen, we've just projected that William Jefferson Clinton has defeated George Herbert Walker Bush and is the new President of the United States.

George Bush Sr., pallid, eyes hollowed, sits on the couch in bathrobe, stunned. As the anchor drones on, cut to Barbara, George Jr., Laura, all looking on in dismay.

TV NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)

What had been a neck-and-neck race changed with Ross Perot running as an independent... hurtling the incumbent president... stagnant economy... along with Iran-Contra...

George Jr. turns off the TV. Sr. begins weeping. W looks at his father, jarred, never seen him so emotional, so broken.

BARBARA

The best person didn't win, George.
The best man did not win tonight.

BUSH SR.

(through tears) It hurts. Hurts so bad. My pride... I don't like to see those who wrote me off be right. But I was wrong and they were right... That hurts more than anything.

BARBARA

He is so beneath you. He doesn't deserve to be President. And wouldn't be if it wasn't for the liberal media, the New York Times, blaming you for Reagan's mess.

George Jr. puts a hand on his father's shoulder.

BUSH JR.

Poppy, you were a great President. Great President. (Sr. nods, wipes eyes)

BUSH SR.

Gave it all I could. Thought the war would have carried us....Guess I reached my level, son.

BUSH JR.

Nah. Maybe, if you had just clobbered the sonofabitch...

BUSH SR.

Huh?

BUSH JR.

Gone all the way. To Baghdad. Cleaned his clock.

BARBARA

(sharply to Laura) Did he imbibe in something I don't know about?
(Laura shakes head)

BUSH JR.

Don't start that. I was talking about *decisiveness. Finishing.* What I've always been told.

BARBARA

You'd better stop this. Zip it up, right now, you hear me.

Jr. backs away, turns.

BUSH SR.

(sharply to Jr.) I won that war.

BUSH JR.

'Course you did, Poppy.

Barbara gives Sr. a handkerchief. Calms him. W and Laura retreat to:

BEDROOM- MOMENTS LATER

LAURA

What was that all about?

BUSH JR.

Be damned I know. Never seen him like this before. It's strange. Really...

LAURA

It's hard. He knows that this is the end.

BUSH JR.

(hushed)

If Atwater hadn't died. If he had listened to me and attacked, attacked, attacked-- might have turned out different.

LAURA

(whispers back) No. That's not what this is about. His health, all the medications he's been taking. He doesn't have the strength, the fire that he had before. He knows.

Jr. sadly peers at the hunched figure of his father.

BUSH JR.

Can't bear to see him like this. Hurts too damn much to lose.

Then resolute:

BUSH JR.
I'll never let this happen to me.
Never.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE- NIGHT- MARCH 19, 2003

An armored SUV roars past the gates of the White House, up to the front. Tenet and John McLaughlin get out, hurrying toward the entrance.

INT. SITUATION ROOM- CONTINUOUS- MARCH 19, 2003

Bush, Cheney, Powell, Rice, Card, waiting expectantly. Tommy Franks appears on a video link from Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi, Arabia. Tenet and McLaughlin burst into the room.

TENET
This is as good as it gets, Mr.
President!

BUSH
Sure you've got him in your sights?

TENET
This is the best intel we've ever
had. John, bring up the Baghdad
communications grid.

McLaughlin flips a switch on a SECOND video MONITOR.

TENET
We're beaming this on a secure line
from Langley.

We see a GRID OF LIGHTS on a circuit board.

TENET
Our HUMINT has accessed the
communications grid at Iraqi
Intelligence headquarters in
Baghdad. The green lights show
where there's still communication.
The red lights show where it's been
cut-off. Since Saddam is paranoid,
he cuts off communications to where
he goes, or is about to go. This
area, Dora Farms, where Saddam's
wife lives, has been in the red for
the second night in a row.

He points to small circles of red lights. Electricity shoots through the room.

BUSH

Tommy, if we go in now, if we start the war right now, will this disrupt your plan?

FRANKS

No, all logistics are in place. The force is ready to go, Mr. President.

BUSH

By God, we can win it all with one knockout punch. Cold-cock the sucker!

POWELL

I think we ought to go for it.

CHENEY

Definitely. It's worth the effort.

BUSH

Everybody in agreement then? (all nod) Okay. I hereby give the order to execute Operation Iraqi Freedom. May God Bless the Troops.

He raises his hand in salute to Tommy Franks on the screen. Tears welling in his eyes.

BUSH

And May God Bless America.

INT. CENTCOM HEADQUARTERS/ SAUDI ARABIA

Plasma screens, "BLUE FORCE TRACKER", pinpoint positions of launched U.S. missiles and bombers.

EXT. BAGHDAD SUBURB- DORA FARMS- EARLY A.M- MARCH 20, 2003

(STOCK) Forty cruise missiles and bunker-busting B-2 bombs smash into the compound, turning the buildings into rubble.

INT. WHITE HOUSE- KITCHEN- MORNING--- MARCH, 20, 2003

Bush, in bathrobe emblazoned with Commander-in-Chief insignia kneels down, pouring dog food into a bowl.

As Spottie wanders in circles, looking for food, Barney scarfs it up. Bush nudges him away. Picks up Spottie, placing him by bowl.

BUSH

Move, Barney. You greedy little, pig.

A dour looking Rumsfeld enters with Wolfowitz.

BUSH

(expectantly) Did we get him?

RUMSFELD

Looks like he's still alive.

BUSH

(snaps)

What do you mean looks-- is he dead or alive?

RUMSFELD

He got away, or was never there. Most unhelpful.

Bush wipes his hands on a dish rag, hurls it into the sink.

BUSH

Another Tenet "slam-dunk". I'd like to dribble his head down the court like a basketball, see if we can knock some real information out of his noggin'. Something we can actually act on.

RUMSFELD

We'll get him, sir. This was just an opening salvo. The Third Division is already sixty miles into Iraq. I'd say we have 30 percent of the country and 60 percent of the oil fields. Pretty damn good for one day.

BUSH

Yeah. That's good... Still, we gotta get that sumbitch. Got to fuckin' nail him.

RUMSFELD

Why him, why him so much?

BUSH

Huh?

RUMSFELD

What's the big deal about Saddam?
Chasing him around a chicken yard.
Bin Laden's the trained ape that
wrought this hell on us.

BUSH

Hey, I want both their heads on
sticks. Both. But this other guy
went after my father, tried to bomb
his car back in '93, in Kuwait. You
don't go after the Bushes and get
to talk about it. Ya got me?

RUMSFELD

(nods) I was a wrestler, George. An
Iowa champion. I know what victory
feels like.

BUSH

Okay, then. (flashes UT victory
sign) Hook 'em horns, Rummy.

INT. BUSH SR. FAMILY HOME- LIVING ROOM- HOUSTON- DAY- 1993

THUD of a tea cup placed down on coffee table. Widen to
Barbara Bush, seated on couch, frowns, wipes her mouth with a
napkin.

BARBARA BUSH

You must be joking?

To include Bush Sr., next to her, older, more fragile. Jr.
stands before them, an intent look.

BUSH JR.

I'm dead serious. I'm going to run
for governor.

BARBARA BUSH

That's ridiculous. How do you
expect to beat Ann Richards? She's
way too popular.

BUSH JR.

Last time, she got less than 50
percent of the vote. She's too
liberal for Texas. Karl's done the
polls, says I can beat her. I'm
going to make Ms. Big Hair pay for
the nasty things she said about
you, Poppy.

GEORGE SR.

Ahh, leave it alone; besides, I won that campaign. What's at issue-- this isn't fair to Jeb. He's already running for Governor of Florida. One Bush at a time, son.

BUSH JR.

Look, I'm not looking to steal his heat--

BARBARA

-- No. Well, how do you expect us to go back and forth campaigning for both of you?

BUSH JR.

I'm not asking you to.

Barbara looks over to Laura, silent in an armchair.

BARBARA

Laura, what do you feel about all this? Truthfully.

LAURA

(shrugs) Geo knows.

BUSH JR.

She's already thrown cold water on it. Wants me to stay at home with her and the girls, run the team. (smirks at Laura) Right, honey? (then to parents) Look, you don't understand, I've made up my mind.

BARBARA

(bristles) You're not asking us, you're telling us. The fact is you can't win.

BUSH JR.

Why do you say that?

BARBARA

Because you're too much like me. You're loud and you have a short fuse. Jeb is like your father. He thinks before he speaks. He has his feet on the ground.

ON BUSH JR.-- stung. Looks like he doesn't know whether to laugh, cry, or scream.

BUSH SR.
Bar, don't be so hard on him.

BARBARA
He knows it's the truth.

BUSH JR.
(stewing)
I'm not gonna say something I'm
liable to regret.

BUSH SR.
Son, just consider holding off,
until '98. You won't have Richards
to contend with and we'll be able
to give you our undivided support.

BUSH JR.
I get it. You want Jeb to be
elected before me.

BUSH SR.
(peevied)
Come off it. It's a matter of
practicality. Of timing. I want
both of you to have what you want,
what you deserve.

BUSH JR.
(firmly)
Well, I'm running this time, Poppy.
I'm running now. I'm runnin'.

EXT. Menger Hotel Courtyard- San Antonio, TX.- Day- Nov. 1993

Bush exits hotel lobby, breezy confidence, as he shakes well-
wishers hands. Rove, subdued at his side. Trailed by Laura.

WELL WISHER
Nice speech, Mr. Bush.

BUSH JR.
So I can count on your vote?

WELL WISHER
Yes, sir. Voted for your father
twice, am sure gonna vote for you.

BUSH
Appreciate that, good buddy.

As Bush, Laura, Rove walk on, a small group of REPORTERS lie in wait.

ROVE

All right, here they come. They'll be bringing the heat.

BUSH

I know. Don't swing at anything I can't hit.

ROVE

Just keep the focus.

The Reporters begin pelting him with questions.

AUSTIN CHRONICLE REPORTER

Mr. Bush, you spent a lot of time today on crime and tort reform. You didn't talk much about education. What are your plans for reform?

BUSH

I'm going to de-regulate school districts so that teachers and administrators can develop programs that best fit their kids.

AUSTIN REPORTER

And just how are you proposing to measure students' progress?

BUSH

Well... there needs to be a wholesale effort against racial profiling... which is illiterate children. I mean you need to teach a child to read and then...he or her... will be able to pass a literacy test.

The Reporter looks perplexed. Laura takes a deep breath.

ROVE

Uh, we're in the very early stages of developing our programs.

SAN ANTONIO REPORTER

(to Bush) On matters of substance-- how do you plan to change the school finance formula?

BUSH

Well, uh, gosh.. I, for one, will not stand for the *subsidation* of failure. How do you know if you don't measure up if you have a system that simply *suckles* them through?

SAN ANTONIO REPORTER

Suckles?

ROVE

I think he's talking about social promotion.

DALLAS REPORTER

What about our failed schools? Do you think the state needs to take them over?

CLOSE ON BUSH- stumped, sweat trickles on his forehead.

BUSH

More government is not the answer. We must have the attitude-- that every child in America, regardless of where they're raised, can learn. I mean, rarely is the question asked-- *is our children learning?*

Laura winces, turns away. The reporters can't believe their ears. Rove jumps in, like a referee calling off a fight.

ROVE

Okay, fellas that's it. See you at the next campaign stop.

STREET-- SAN ANTONIO, TX.- MOMENTS LATER- NOV. 1993

Rove, his face a slab of anger, walks with Bush, head down, deflated.

ROVE

Suckles!... Look, you're the son of a President, grandson of a Senator, you graduated from Yale, got an MBA from Harvard. If you can't stand in front of these guys for two minutes and take their questions and come up with one plausible answer, then tell me, what the hell are we doing here, running for governor?

ON BUSH-- Ashamed at the truth. Then his fierce competitive nature rises up.

BUSH

You tell me what to do. Whatever it takes, if I have to read the whole damn Constitution, I'll learn it. I'll get there.

Rove nods at his conviction.

INT. ROVE'S OFFICE- AUSTIN- DAY- 1994

Rove putting Bush through his paces. Tutoring him.

ROVE

Okay, message discipline is the mantra. Again, the four food groups.

BUSH

Crime, education, tort reform, welfare.

ROVE

Always move back to those four issues. Always. And if you're asked what time it is, what do you say?

BUSH

We must teach our children to read.

ROVE

(nods) What about welfare?

BUSH

We must hold the fathers of the unwed mother accountable...because we love the babies. (Rove smiles) But we need time limits on benefits... Child care centers for welfare mothers. Faith-based groups to provide for the needy... Able-bodied recipients get a job. If you disagree, I'm not your candidate.

ROVE

Tort reform. Not sexy, but the mother's milk of our campaign.

BUSH

Reduce frivolous law suits against businesses, keep 'em solvent, here in Texas... trial lawyers want to bilk us... all facts are created equally. And if you buy that, vote for Ann Richards.

ROVE

Okay. Crime?

BUSH

End early release of criminals. End parole all together, rapists and child molesters. Every citizen the right carry hand-gun self protection. My opponent disagrees 'bout that. Texas highest rate of murders; but she doesn't believe citizens right protect themselves. If you think crime is down, vote for my opponent, not me.

Rove steps up to him, close, sneers.

ROVE

What do you say to-- "George W. Bush is a rich, spoiled jerk. His wealth was produced through stock swaps and bailouts helped by his father.

BUSH

(calm) Ann Richards call me whatever she wants. I've created successful small businesses, run a major league baseball team. Results what matter. In touch with people Texas. Worked with them every day-- ballpark. Talk the fans, hotdog vendors. Get to know what they think, believe in. I represent them... best o' my ability, 'cause truly deep down inside-- I'm just like every single one of you!

ROVE

Real good! What a memory!

He pours himself a cup of coffee.

ROVE

Stay on point like that. Don't let her rattle you. Anything about the issues, before you speak, come to me first. Tell you what to say.

Bush snatches Rove's coffee cup from out of his hand.

BUSH

No, you're not going to tell me what to say. I'm going to tell you what I want. You're the wordsmith. You can smith it out. But this campaign starts and ends with me. With what I think.

Bush sips Rove's coffee. Rove, put in place, nods.

ROVE

Okay. Okay, I hear you.

BUSH

Good.

ROVE

You're going to win, W. Take my word. She's working the weasel angle and people are going to see it for what it is. They're also going to see you for what you are-- a flat natural born, good ol' boy.

He takes a sip of his coffee from Bush.

ROVE (CONT'D)

It's pretty elemental. You've got half the public out there that don't know shit from shinola. Just as long as you don't raise their taxes. They don't have a clue what in the world they're for, only what they're against. Out of them ya got 10 percent that are against everything. That leaves 40 percent; the marrow. The so-called electorate. At the end of the day, after hearing the same tired rhetoric, from all the rabble-rousers, stuff-shirts, lummoxes and bull-shitters...it all boils down to one thing:...

BUSH

Yeah?

ROVE

Who would Joe Lunchbox rather go
and have a beer with?

He cocks a finger like a gun, clicking it at Bush.

BUSH

(smirks, pleased)

Just remember to make mine non-
alcoholic.

ROVE

(chuckles)

You've got it.

Starts for the door.

ROVE

I've got to go out, sprinkle some
of my magic dust around.

BUSH

What kinda dust?

ROVE

The 'secret fairy kind.' (arches
eyebrow) We can't attack *Big Hair*
personally. But others can.

Bush nods, getting it. Rove goes.

INT. HOUSTON TV STATION- DAY- 1994

A 30's FEMALE ANCHOR interviewing a gray-haired OLD-TIME
TEXAS SENATOR.

TV ANCHOR

We're talking to Texas State
Senator Buzz Collins who has been
making waves with his outspoken
allegations against Governor Ann
Richards and her staff.

INSERT CLIP OF GOVERNOR ANN RICHARDS:

TEXAS SENATOR

Excuse me, these are not
allegations at all.

(MORE)

TEXAS SENATOR (cont'd)
 Governor Richards has appointed
 gays and lesbians to our state
 boards, our commissions and even to
 her own campaign staff.

TV ANCHOR
 Senator, this is a highly partisan
 accusation--

SENATOR
 --It may be part of her culture.
 Their culture. But in East Texas,
 it is not something we acknowledge
 as acceptable. Not at all.

CLOSE ON DESK

Various Texas newspapers placed down one by one. All
 headlining Governor Ann Richard's gay/lesbian allegations.

INT. ROVE'S OFFICE- AUSTIN- DAY- 1994

Rove's assistant places the last one down. Rove swivels his
 chair over for a closer look. Pleased at what he sees.

ROVE
 Get W on the phone. He needs to
 know that we've just gone up by two
 points.

As the Assitant begins dialing:

INT. HOTEL SUITE- AUSTIN, TEXAS- JAN. 1995

DON EVANS (V.C.)
 Your father to see you, Governor.

Bush Jr., dress shirt, knotting his tie. Half-eaten peanut
 butter and jelly sandwich on table. Turns to Evans.

BUSH
 Send him in, Evie.

Smugly, he looks at himself in the mirror. Sr. enters.

BUSH SR.
 You got your speech ready?

BUSH JR.
 I was just goin' over it again.

BUSH SR.

This is a moment you'll never forget. Being inaugurated the first time. Try and take a photograph in your mind. So you can savor it, when the times get tough...as they always do.

BUSH JR.

I'll try to do that. I'm really glad Jeb could make it. Gonna acknowledge him in my speech.

The old man's eyes mist over.

BUSH SR.

It's been hard for him. The loss. Wish I could have been at his inauguration, too. Would have been something.

BUSH JR.

He'll do it the next time out. You watch.

From his jacket pocket, Sr., takes out a pair of gold cufflinks. Gives them to his son.

BUSH SR.

These are for you.

BUSH JR.

They're beautiful. Thanks.

BUSH SR.

Wear them well. They were my father's.

Sr. shakily hands an envelope to Jr.

BUSH SR.

See you at the inauguration, son.

He turns and walks out of the room. Mystified, Jr. opens the envelope. As he reads the note inside, tears well in his eyes. Laura enters room.

LAURA

What's the matter? What'd he say?

BUSH JR.

This.

He hands the letter for her to read.

LAURA

(reads) "These cuff links are my most treasured possessor. My father, Prescott, gave them to me just before he went off to war. They were his wings and mine. Now they are yours. I'm sure you will make a fine governor."

(a beat)

I don't get it. Why he can't express his true feelings directly to you? Only through notes.

BUSH JR.

(choked) Only way he knows how.

As he puts on the cufflinks.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE- AUSTIN, TEXAS- DAY FEB. 1999

On the wall hangs a portrait of Texas pioneer, Sam Houston, dressed in a toga as a Roman Emperor. Karl Rove ushers in Televangelist JAMES ROBISON. Bush rises to greet him.

ROBISON

Nice of you to invite me down, Governor.

BUSH

Well, thanks for coming, James. How's your show doing?

ROBISON

Very good. "Life Today" is being seen in over 100 million households in North American.

BUSH

(changing subject)

I asked you here today to discuss something of great importance.

Bush swivels his chair, directly facing Robison.

BUSH

I've heard the "Call."

ROBISON

I know. I've witnessed you grow in your faith.

BUSH

That's not what I mean. I've heard the "Call"-- and I believe God wants me to run for President.

Robison sits stunned. Then after a long beat.

ROBISON

Truly?

BUSH

Yes. I can't explain it, Jim, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen, and at that time, my country, is going to need me. I know it won't be easy on me or my family, but God wants me to do it.

ROBISON

I have to say, I'm flabbergasted. But whatever Betty and I can do, you have our support and prayers.

BUSH

The truth is, I really don't want to run. My father was President. My whole family has been affected by it. I know the price, what it will mean. I'd be perfectly happy just buying my fishing lures at Wal-Mart and going about my business. And if I run for President, that kind of life will be over. My life will never be the same.

He glances up at the portrait of his hero, Sam Houston, then back at the Reverend.

BUSH

But I feel that God wants me to do this, and I must do it. *I must.*

Robison reaches over and clasps hands with Bush then Rove. He begins to pray.

ROBISON

May the Good Lord shine his light on His humble servant, George W Bush.

EXT. IRAQ BORDER- APRIL, 2003 (STOCK)

US APACHE HELICOPTERS strafing Iraqi air defense sites near Kuwait border. SMART BOMBS and F-117 STEALTH BOMBERS striking targets in Baghdad.

Thousands of allied troops pour across the border from Saudi Arabia, commencing the ground attack. Continuous air sorties pound columns of Iraqi soldiers and tanks from Kuwait City to Basra.

EXT. BAGHDAD- FIRDOS SQUARE- DAY- APRIL 9, 2003

(STOCK) Iraqis dancing, waving flags in the square. A small group of men climbing atop the HUGE STATUE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN throw a noose around its neck. A Marine drapes an American flag over the head of Saddam, while another loops a heavy chain around its neck. They attach the other end of the chain to an armored vehicle that backs up, yanking the statue.

INT. ROOM ADJACENT TO OVAL OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- SIMULTANEOUS

Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, Wolfowitz, Powell, all raptly watching TV as Saddam's statue comes toppling down in a thunderous cloud of smoke. CHEERS erupt throughout the room, as Iraqis (on TV) dance jubilantly around the fallen statue.

BUSH

All riight! Way to go! This is like the fall of the Berlin Wall!

CHENEY

The collapse of the Iron Curtain.

RUMSFELD

Talk about seminal moments in a nation's history. What we're seeing now, people will never forget.

RICE

I've got goose bumps, like I've never had before.

POWELL

We did it, sir. Congratulations.

CHENEY

What do you mean we, Kemo Sabe?

POWELL

Funny, I remember you saying something about it being a mistake to go all the way to Baghdad.

CHENEY

(aside, low) You made a made a mistake too, Colin. You could have been President.

Back on W, elated.

BUSH

This is for all those who doubted I won the election! And who doubted my judgement.

He turns, giving high-fives to everyone.

INT. BUSH SR.- KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE- (SIMULTANEOUS)

Bush Sr. and Barbara watching the same events on TV.

BARBARA

(clapping) How about that. We got the son-of-a-gun.

BUSH SR.

(musing) Maybe he called it right after all, Bar... (then) Well, we got the statue, but we've still got to catch the man.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE SWIMMING POOL- SPRING, 2003

George W, HOPPING on the end of a diving board, dressed in NAVY AVIATOR'S FLIGHT SUIT, FULL HARNESS, OPEN PARACHUTE. Gives a thumbs up, then launches himself into the water with a big SPLASH.

Andy Card and TWO NAVY SEALS hover nervously by the edge of the pool, watching as Bush sinks toward the bottom, parachute floating above him. Floundering, W surfaces back up, struggling to remove the harness fastened around him.

NAVY SEAL 1

Pull the tongue buckle on your leg, Mr. President.

Bush does that and the parachute immediately floats free. He paddles toward the edge of the pool

NAVY SEAL 2

Very good, Mr. President. You're getting the hang of it.

BUSH

I want to do it again. Make sure I get it right.

NAVY SEAL 2

You're doing fine. It's one in a million the plane would ever go down.

Bush waves to Card.

BUSH

Help me up, Andy. Gotta do this sucker one more time.

EXT. USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN AIRCRAFT CARRIER (STOCK)-- DAY- MAY I, 2003

Anchored off the coast of San Diego.

CONNING TOWER-- an ex-ABC producer now WHITE HOUSE MEDIA DIRECTOR in conversation with the SHIP ADMIRAL.

ADMIRAL

Let me get this straight. You're asking me to turn the ship around?

WHITE HOUSE MEDIA DIRECTOR

That's correct, Admiral. When our cameras capture Navy One with the President landing on deck here, we don't want to see the skyline of San Diego in the background.

ADMIRAL

Okay, we can do that. What kind of angle are you looking for, straight out to sea?

WHITE HOUSE MEDIA DIRECTOR

Right. What we want to give the public is the picture of him landing out here in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

ON NAVY ONE, A VIKING JET- MAY 1, 2003

Swooping in for landing on the Carrier's deck. It screeches to a halt after 400 feet, perfect tailhook landing. Bush emerges from the cockpit in full jet pilot regalia. Open expanse of water behind him. Raises his arms victoriously. He begins to shake hands, hug cheering ship crew members.

CUT AWAY TO: MSNBC STUDIO (STOCK) ON-AIR CLIPS OF CHRIS MATTHEWS, PAT CADELL, ANN COULTER, commenting on the moment.

MATTHEWS

The President, look at this guy! We're watching him. He looks like he flew the plane. Even though he only flew it as a passenger.

CADELL

He looks just like a jet fighter pilot.

ANN COULTER

It's stunning. I mean he's landing on a boat at 150 miles per hour. It's hard to imagine any Democrat doing that.

MATTHEWS

Imagine Lieberman or Kerry in this costume. George Bush looks for real, all right. He didn't fight in the war, but he looks like he did. Americans love having a guy as President who has a little swagger, who's physical and not complicated like Clinton, (watching Bush pose under banner) We're not like the Brits. We don't want an indoor Prime Minister type. We want a real guy as President. Women like President Bush for that reason. And the women like this war. It's simple. I think we like having a hero as our President.

USS LINCOLN- LATER- MAY 1, 2003

Bush speaking from a podium. Huge "Mission Accomplished" banner draped on the tower behind him.

BUSH

My fellow Americans, major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.

Cut away to applauding pilots and sailors.

BUSH

In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have seen the ageless appeal of human freedom. Decades of lies and intimidation could not make the Iraqi people love their oppressors or desire their own enslavement. Men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air. Everywhere that freedom arrives, humanity rejoices and everywhere that freedom stirs, let tyrants fear. That is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world.

(STOCK) Navy crew members applauding. Then CLOSE on BUSH.

BUSH (CONT'D)

Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and will leave behind a free Iraq. We are changing the world.

CUT TO:

THE SMOLDERING SHELL OF U.N. HEADQUARTERS- BAGHDAD- DAY- 2003

(STOCK) Flames and smoke rising from the wreckage. Dead and wounded carried out. TV REPORTER ANNOUNCING:

REPORTER

The truck bomb killed at least 17 and wounded over a 100 here at the U.N. Headquarters in Baghdad. The blast also killed U.N. Ambassador, Sergio de Mello, who appears to have been the main target. The bombing continues a recent pattern of the civilian and foreign population in Iraq.

INT. CRAWFORD RANCH- LIVING ROOM- DAY- SPRING, 2003

Bush and Bandar lounging in the den.

BUSH

We're making progress, but these remnants of Saddam's regime - they're causing more trouble than we thought.

BANDAR

I know, but you can't disband the entire Baath party and military. Nobody will be left in control.

Laura enters with a tray, dessert and tea.

LAURA

Special for you, Prince Bandar. Our own Prairie Chapel Ranch pecan pie. Grown right here.

BANDAR

Ah, you remember I have a sweet tooth, Laura. Thank you so much.

She places a slice down before Bandar, but none for her husband. Leaves.

BANDAR

You're not joining me?

BUSH

I've given up sweets since the start of the war. This is my personal sacrifice to show support for our troops.

BANDAR

(shrugs, takes a bite) Hmmm. Delicious. (sips tea) What I think you should do, my advice...is remove your enemies, take the top echelon off, the generals, intelligence officers.

BUSH

Kill them?

BANDAR

Or arrest them. Keep the Colonels on down.

(MORE)

BANDAR (cont'd)
Somebody has to be left to run the country. You send them after the bad guys, because bad guys know how to get bad guys.

BUSH
That's too Michievellian.

BANDAR
You mean Machiavellian.

BUSH
(laughs)
Whatever, yeah-- how do we know we can trust these people anyway?

BANDAR
(shrugs)
Well, afterwards we get rid of them.

BUSH
(bristles) Bandar, it's not as simple as clearing brush.

BANDAR
Your oaks need water to grow. Iraqis need hope and money to live. If you were to appropriate a couple hundred million dollars to the army-

BUSH
(impatient, his mind made up)
Bandar, it's getting late. You know it's tough bein' in the barrel... (stands to exit) But a promise is a promise, you tell my good friend King Faud we will continue remove every last American soldier from your beautiful country.

BANDAR
The King is supremely grateful for that, George. But you take these troops and put them into a civil war right next door to us, George-- that's not really in our interest.

BUSH
Who said it's a civil war, Bandar? What the hell are you talking about!

(MORE)

BUSH (cont'd)
(irritated) Listen, talk to Dick
and Rummy about this. I don't want
to worry right now.

BANDAR
(smiles)
Of course. I am sorry to have
imposed my views so strongly, Mr.
President.

EXT.- COALITION AUTHORITY HEADQUARTERS- BAGHDAD- ANOTHER DAY-
SPRING 2003

(STOCK) OVER A THOUSAND EX-IRAQI SOLDIERS, angry and
disgruntled, milling outside the building.

BBC REPORTER
Former members of the Iraqi army
are protesting the dissolution of
the armed forces. They have guns
but no food to feed their families.
Some have threatened that they will
resort to suicide attacks if their
grievances are not addressed.

EXT. U.S CENTRAL COMMAND HEADQUARTERS- DOHA, QATAR- DAY- 2003

(STOCK) The Presidential motorcade arriving at the desert
army compound.

INT. CENTCOM HEADQUARTERS- QATAR- DAY- 2003

Bush staring coldly across the table at IRAQI CONSUL, PAUL
BREMER. Franks, Tenet, Rice, looking on.

BUSH
The Pentagon told me that we'd be
down to 25 to 30 thousand troops by
August. Is that anywhere near
possible now?

FRANKS
I'm afraid, Mr. President, that
we're in for a longer haul than we
thought.

He gets to his feet, fuming.

BUSH
I want to know where the hell the
WMD's are?

Sheepish looks around the table.

BUSH

Whose job is it to find the damn nuclear weapons? Doesn't anybody around here know what the hell's going on?

Nobody answers. Bush stalks over to Bremer.

BUSH

You. You're running the show here, Bremer. Well?

BREMER

That's not within my purview, sir. (points) I thought that General Franks was--

BUSH

(turns to Franks))
--Tommy, you're Commander of the whole shebang-- well?

FRANKS

That area is not part of my command responsibility, sir.

BUSH

(slams fist on table)
Then who? I can't believe, I'm surrounded by a bunch of finger-pointing ninnies. WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Rice meekly pipes-up.

RICE

I believe that it's Stephen Cambone, sir.

BUSH

Cambone? Who the fuck's that?!

RICE

Undersecretary of defense for intelligence, Mr. President.

CLOSE ON BUSH- shakes his head, livid.

BUSH

Great. That's just great! Why the heck didn't anyone tell me this before?!

Nobody speaks.

EXT. BUSH SUMMER HOME- KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE- 2004

Bush Sr. standing by the dock. A REPORTER interviewing him.

BUSH SR.

(testily) I don't understand these critics. Do they want to bring back Saddam Hussein? Do they think life would be better in the Middle East if this brutal tyrant was still in power?

REPORTER

But there are reports the two of you differ on this war...?

BUSH SR.

Let me make this clear, since I have some experience dealing with these matters. My son's got the toughest position in the world. He's the one who gets the intelligence briefings. And as Americans it's our duty to fully support his efforts to bring freedom and democracy to the Middle East, and as a father I'll be damned if I'm going to listen to people, who are always trying to tear the boy down.

LONDON- ENGLAND- DAY

The downtown streets are deserted, desolate. A Motorcade glides down Bond Street. (STOCK)

TV ANNOUNCER (hushed voice)

...President Bush arrived in London today to meet with the Prime Minister. But I have to say, ladies and gentlemen, that this is the first time I recall the central city being evacuated since the Blitz. War protestors have been denied access and moved behind police barricades kilometers away. It's truly a stark and startling sight. Unlike anything witnessed here in the past 50 years.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE

Bush and Laura in the backseat.

LAURA

It would be nice to buy some cashmere. They're famous for their sweaters. And maybe we could pick you up a suit.

BUSH

Nah, already got too many.

He looks out, completely oblivious to the landscape, empty, barren of people.

BUSH

Tell ya, London's such a beautiful city.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS FIGHTING ON THE STREETS OF BAGHDAD--(STOCK)
2004

1ST NEWSCASTER

Roadside bombs killed two U.S. soldiers in separate attacks today in central Baghdad.

MARINES ENGAGED IN HOUSE TO HOUSE COMBAT-- (STOCK)

2ND NEWSCASTER

Three soldiers died and four others were wounded when a bomb exploded in the center of Baqouba about fifty miles north-east of Baghdad. To date, 853 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq.

INT. DINING ROOM OFF OVAL OFFICE- WHITE HOUSE- DAY- 2004

A grim President George Bush looks at his lunch, low-fat hot dogs, but has no appetite. He listens to David Kay, CHIEF U.S. WEAPONS INSPECTOR. Cheney, Rice, Card, also at table.

KAY

Frankly, we missed it, sir--
because Saddam pretended he had the weapons.

BUSH

That doesn't make sense. Why would he risk his life and government by going against the rest of the world?

KAY

Because I think he didn't want his own people to know he didn't have the weapons. Part of his Superman image. They would've cut his throat if they found out.

BUSH

You're saying this guy was running a fullhouse off a pair? That's nuts!

KAY

He really thought you were bluffing. Right up to the end.

BUSH

(reeling at this news)
Me bluff? How the hell could he think that? (to the room) How could the CIA, all our intel people muff this?

KAY

If I may speak frankly, Sir--
(everyone's head swivels)

BUSH

Go on.

KAY

One problem is Mr. Tenet comes here everyday to the briefing. And that puts pressure on my analysts to give... uh, you, Mr. President, what you wanted to hear.

Bush falls silent. Cheney interjects:.

CHENEY

My office sent you those spy satellite photos where the WMD's could have been hidden in caves. You didn't get back to us on that.

KAY

Mr. Vice President, we analyzed those photos, and they're actually trenches, watering holes for cattle. Not caves.

CHENEY

That's not what my people tell me.

BUSH

(snaps)

Vice, you grew up in Wyoming. You should damn well know cattle.

Cheney scowls at Kay.

KAY

I'm sorry, Mr. President. Under the circumstances, I feel I've let my country down. I really thought he had WMD's. I feel I have no other option, but offer my resignation.

Icily, Bush gets up to leave.

INT. HALLWAY- MOMENTS LATER

Bush, silent, fuming, as he walks with Card and Cheney.

BUSH

Some shit sandwich he served us for lunch.

CHENEY

We'll keep working it. Find someone else who can deliver.

BUSH

Yeah, on what cloud?

CHENEY

We shift the ground. Keep the focus on freedom and democracy. Above all, don't lose sight of everything we've accomplished.

INT. WHITE HOUSE- PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM- NIGHT- 2004

Bush blankly watching Sportscenter wrap-up on ESPN. Laura reading. He turns off TV. She notices, takes out ear-plugs.

Bush walks over to the mirror. Hair grayer, creases more noticeable. Touches forehead.

BUSH

This line here, seems like it just dug in overnight.

LAURA

You're as handsome as ever, Geo. Only makes you look more distinguished.

He grits his teeth, pained.

LAURA

Your favorite play is coming to town. Why don't we get tickets?

BUSH

Huh?

LAURA

"Cats"-- The Broadway company is going to be here. Want to go?

BUSH

(interest piqued) "Cats"? (she nods) Wow, that's something I'd stay up late for. Definitely.

He paces across the room, mood shifting. Slowly turns back. Emotionally.

BUSH

I don't get it. All I wanted to do is make this a better and safer world for everyone. There's good and there's evil. And you and I, and most the rest of the people in America and the world know the difference. That good ultimately wins out. But you have to fight for it.

LAURA

People have no idea how hard it is on us.

BUSH

(nods grateful) The sacrifices you've made, I knew when I married you what you were made of.

LAURA

(takes his hand) The same lightning
hit both of us. For better or
worse. Mostly better.

He nods, squeezes her hand. Reflects.

BUSH

Since the start of the war, though,
....I barely have time to run my
three miles anymore. Knees hurt;
I'm off my pace. Been hard on me,
Laura; on top of everything else.

LAURA

Someday the war will be over. And
we can have our lives back. I'll
get those tickets for next week.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE- EAST ROOM- APRIL 13, 2004

President addressing the nation. Press corps on hand.

BUSH

This has been tough weeks in Iraq.
But our central commitment of the
mission is the transfer of
sovereignty back to the Iraqi
people. We have set a deadline of
this June 30th, 2004 for this to
take place. (pauses for emphasis)
It's important that we meet that
deadline..

CHENEY, OFF TO THE SIDE, tightens his lip. Whatever emotion
he's feeling, we'll never know.

BUSH

As proud and independent people,
Iraqis do not support an indefinite
occupation-- and neither does
America...The only way we can win
is to leave before the job is done.

Reporters look at each other puzzled by what's he just said.
Cheney, too, bats an eye.

BUSH

I will now take questions.

TIME REPORTER, JOHN DICKERSON, raises his hand.

BUSH (V.O.)

John.

DICKERSON

Mr. President, after 9/11, what would say your biggest mistakes would be, and what lessons have you learned from them?

BUSH

(flummoxed)

Hmmm. I wish you would have given me this written question ahead of time, so I could plan for it.

There's polite laughter from the press corp.

Bush scowls, shakes his head, pissed that he's been put on the spot.

BUSH

Ahhhhh.

CLOSER ON BUSH-- stumped, growing more nervous as the seconds tick by.

REPORTERS looking on, waiting for the President's answer. Cheney, too, darts a glance.

BUSH

John, I'm sure historians will look back and say, gosh, he could have done it better, this way or that way...Uhh...

AGAIN, CLOSER ON BUSH-- falls silent. SIX FULL SECONDS as CAMERAS CLICK AWAY. He looks at the lectern. His mind spinning, blank.

BUSH

(stammering)

You know, I just um, uh...

Total brain-lock now. Some reporters, noticing, wondering.

BUSH

I'm sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of the press conference, with all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, but it hasn't yet.

STILL CLOSER-- as he again falls silent.

HIS POV-- media faces, staring at him, disbelief.

Beads of sweat on his lip. He wills his mouth to move.

BUSH

I hope--I don't want to sound like
I've made no mistakes. I'm
confident I have. (he blinks) I
just haven't-- you've just put me
on the spot here, and maybe I'm not
as quick on my feet as I should be
in coming up with one.

Dazed, he looks around at the room, trying to stop the free-fall.

His hand slowly moves. Finger pointing at another reporter.
Voice hollow.

BUSH

Ann.

INT. WHITE HOUSE RESIDENCE- LATER

Bush coming down the hall, patented walk, shoulders flexed, elbows splayed to the sides. Andy Card appears.

ANDY CARD

Mr. President.

BUSH

(brusquely)

Not now, Andy. Not now. I'm busy.

He walks past him, to the end of the hall.

INT. DEN- NIGHT- APRIL 2004

He slips in, locks the door behind.

He sinks down in an easy chair. Bowl of MINIATURE PRETZELS and bottle of non-alcoholic beer set on side table. Heaves a deep sigh, glad to be alone at last

He picks up the remote, FLICKS it on. The large screen TV beaming up a TEXAS RANGERS BASEBALL GAME. He pops open the beer.

RANGERS ANNOUNCER
We're tied, 1-1, bottom of the
second, with Young on 3rd and
Teixeira at bat. The count two and
two.

Bush takes a pretzel. Slowly, very slowly, chewing it.

RANGERS ANNOUNCER
Capuano winds up...the pitch. Hit
to right field... drops inside the
foul line. Young comes into score.
Teixeira slides under the tag into
second. Safe!

Bush, excited, pumps his fist, as the crowd ROARS.

RANGERS ANNOUNCER
And the Rangers go up on the
Brewers two to one!

CLOSE BUSH-- as he watches, his cares and woes fade. Now, for
him, there's only the Texas Rangers batting in the bottom of
the second, nothing else in the world.

The announcer's voice begins to fade. There's a faraway gaze
in Bush's eyes. His mind drifting elsewhere.

EXT. TEXAS RANGERS STADIUM- DAY (IN BUSH'S MIND)

Bush stands in center field, alone, in the empty stadium, his
stadium. Where we've seen him transported before.

Though there is nobody around, we hear the CRACK OF A BAT. A
towering blast from home plate.

A ball, in slow motion, spirals upward through the air. He
turns, raising his hands, searching for the ball, ready to
catch it.

But can't spot it.

He looks this way, then that. Waiting. Bewildered, confused.

But the ball never comes down.

THE END