

The Presidential Scroll

BACKGROUND

George Bush, now usually referred to as George Bush Senior, became President of the United States in January 1989. For the previous eight years, he had been Vice-President to Ronald Reagan. Bush chose Dan Quayle as his VP running-mate and most people agreed that Quayle was not very bright. The sketch refers to one of the procedures of the presidential inauguration, where the out-going Vice-President presents the incoming President with the Presidential Scroll.

Characters: George Bush (BUSH)
Dan Quayle (QUAYLE)

BUSH Dan! Dan! Where the hell are you?

ENTER QUAYLE MARCHING, SHOUTING LEFT! RIGHT!

QUAYLE Here I am Mr President-Elect Bush, SIR!

BUSH Hi, Dan. Now we have a problem...

QUAYLE What's that, Mr President-Elect Bush, SIR!

BUSH Cut the military crap, Dan. You're not in the National Guard any more. We can dispense with the Rambo play-acting.

QUAYLE The National Guard is not play-acting, sir! I am proud to declare that during my term of enlistment, not one inch of Indiana fell to the Vietcong!

BUSH Dan... that was then, this is now. And now... we have a problem. So just loosen up and listen.

QUAYLE TRIES TO LOOSEN UP BUT IT DOESN'T SUIT HIM

QUAYLE Tell me about the problem, sir.

BUSH OK. What is happening on January fourth?

QUAYLE (CONSULTING DIARY) Er...apart from having to wake up, I seem to be pretty free that day, sir.

BUSH Inauguration.

QUAYLE Pardon me?

BUSH Inauguration.

QUAYLE No, sir. I usually wake up in bed.

BUSH Dan...I become president on January fourth.

QUAYLE May I be the first to congratulate you, sir!

BUSH Do you know what happens at inauguration?

QUAYLE Yes, sir, we did that to all the new guardsmen. You wait until they fall asleep, then you dip their hands in cold water, and see how long it takes them to —

BUSH This is a different kind of inauguration, Dan. First of all, the outgoing President makes a speech.

QUAYLE Check. I'll remember to tell him.

BUSH Then the out-going Vice-President makes a speech.

QUAYLE Check. I'll tell him, too.

BUSH Then the out-going Vice-President declares the winner of the November presidential election. Then the out-going Vice-President congratulates the incoming President and presents him with his scroll of office.

QUAYLE I can't wait to see it, sir.

BUSH But don't you see? It cannot happen.

QUAYLE Cannot happen? Why not?

BUSH Because I am both the out-going Vice-President and the incoming President.

QUAYLE It must be a great honour, sir.

BUSH Dan...read my lips...I cannot do both of those things. If, as Vice-President, I hold out the scroll of office, nobody will be there to take it. If, as President-elect, I wait to accept the scroll of office, nobody will be there holding it out to me.

DAN I got it! Why don't we just leave the scroll of office lying around before the whole show starts, and then you can pick it up and present it to yourself!

BUSH Too dangerous, Dan.

QUAYLE Why's that, sir?

BUSH Someone could steal it. And anyone in possession of that scroll is President of the USA. It says so in the constitution. Imagine the consequences. Joe Schmo could be walking by, see the scroll, pick it up — and be the new President! And Joe Schmo could be a half-wit.

- QUAYLE Well, like they say — if you have half a mind to be president, it's enough.
- BUSH Then Joe Schmo could find another half-wit — and make the second half-wit Vice-President.
- QUAYLE It's a scenario too terrible to contemplate, sir.
- BUSH The people wouldn't stand for it.
- QUAYLE You mean they'd take it lying down?
- BUSH No. They'd switch channels and watch a movie until we'd sorted it all out. And that is the real problem.
- QUAYLE Tell me about it, sir.
- BUSH Before we could stop him, the half-wit President could sign documents pledging the USA to destroy all its nuclear weapons, introduce a new welfare programme and stay out of Latin America.
- QUAYLE It doesn't bear thinking about, sir.
- BUSH It sure doesn't. Politics is a serious game, Dan, not to be played by half-wit amateurs. (BUSH TAKES A LONG LOOK AT QUAYLE) So don't give up your day-time job any time soon.
- QUAYLE No, Mr President-Elect Bush, SIR!