

How His Very Own Wig Flipped Donny

(A fanciful study of the importance of proper grooming)

The day began innocently enough, the way special days often do, with not a hint of the ominous trials lying ahead that would threaten the peace and security good President Trumpkin had always enjoyed throughout his long and distinguished life. Awakening this morning from recurring dreams of vast riches plundered, beautiful women fancied and possessed, craven enemies smitten and humiliated, he arose, as always, confident and satisfied with himself, eager to bring to his waking state the successes he achieved as he had lain sleeping.

“Ah!” he said to himself as he stretched out in his Baldacchino Supreme bed, “How great it is to be me! To be so very, very rich... because I am so very, very rich... and so very, very handsome. Yes, yes. Very, very handsome as I have been told many, many times. To have the most beautiful, most willing women- all tens, as even the most stupid can see- throwing themselves at me all the time. I mean, all the time. And they let me do it. I can’t blame them. But who can blame ‘em? Because I hold power over all men. I can shoot any one of them right there on Fifth Avenue and not lose a vote or get arrested or reprimanded or even scolded. Nobody wags a finger at me. Nobody. And they all know I can do it. Trust me; they do. They better, those losers. But ahhh! To be, as has been so well and often documented, very, very intelligent and have the best words. Because I do have the very best words, which is why I have the very best paragraphs. Some very, very smart people who are English professors, like my uncle who teaches math at MIT, tell me all the time how intelligent I am. Not braggadocious at all. Just smart. Because I don’t have to brag. That’s why the haters are jealous. I mean, who wouldn’t wanna be me? Doesn’t everyone wish they could be me? I know I sure do! Or just like me, anyway.”

Thus, inspired by his morning devotions, the spry 163-year-old pulled back his golden satin quilt and leaped as gazelle-like to his feet as any Olympic-class 267-pound pole-vaulter might leap. But this morning somehow felt different from all the others despite the cheerful and promising way it had begun.

Perhaps the first indication was the strange draft he felt, a breeze flowing from the top of his head down along his neck, and the accompanying urgency a bald man, for example, experiences when he loses his baseball cap and finds his smooth pate exposed to unwelcome elements. Please don’t interpret this last comparison as any criticism or put-down of baldness or bald-headed men. There are good and bad ones on both sides of the tonsorial spectrum. But it is important to note that this was not a typical rise and shine moment for President Trumpkin. Despite his customary delivery of the morning’s devotions, good President Trumpkin was hardly shining. Though we find that our hero had risen on his own feet, the effort seemed to have sapped his everyday vim and verve. The well-known Trumpkinian trademark feeling of boundless energy and enthusiasm that had brought him fame, confidence and vast wealth felt notably depleted. And supplementing that deficiency of vitality, to his horror amid all that lessening came a measurable diminution of his unique and reliable cord of virile morning wood.

Distress is a natural reaction for any vaulter who, in midflight, discovers that the steadfast and trusty pole he is clasping has unexpectedly asserted an independence not exactly in line with his personal needs and expectations. Good President Trumpkin, who had never experienced an

interruption of his special manly functioning, true to the nature of his sex and well-known to be an especially athletic vaulter, underwent instant limp-pole panic. “What’s this? What’s this?” he complained, pulling aside a few stomach rolls to observe his deflated state. “Can it be that I’ve been demojohied?!” he whimpered, gasping in panic and disbelief.

Nor could he find comfort the way most men do when they find themselves unnerved. Having lived an unimpeachable life, he didn’t know where to turn for relief because he’d never before this morning had cause to feel dread or anxiety for any reason. His conscience had never been overtaxed, for he had never done anything, as far as he judged, wrong or improper. Blameless of sin, he never had cause to seek relief. Had he misspent time learning Latin, his lifelong motto might have been “Quid? Me vexare?” But never having experienced any sort of doubt over his righteousness in all things, he had always settled for “Don’t worry about it!” This had been his faithful policy, and it had served him well. But this morning had brought with it something new and exasperating, common only among inconsequential and sinful men. Awakening on this day, even the leaping gazelle in him felt insecure, middle-aged, well past its prime.

“What is happening to me?” the 14-time President wondered in this unfamiliar distress. “What will people say when they see me this way?” he cried, diminished and anxious, clutching his bewildered head between two sweaty palms. But this gesture only added more torment to his original shock, for as his clutching became stroking and stroking became patting and patting metamorphosed into the pounding of the savage tom-tom, good President Trumpkin’s trembling fingers revealed what all men of conscience spend their days in dread of and curse their fathers for passing onto them. Yes. His drumming palms had left no doubt about his new state- Oh, patient Reader! May you never suffer so horrid a condition! Because as unbelievable as it may seem, good Trumpkin had discovered himself to be undeniably, unexpectedly, unfairly...as hairless as a pancake; and with that came the realization that his wig, that the same wig he had retired with only the night before, the same wig that had adorned him loyally all his previous nights- yes- that very same reliable wig he had known and trusted and bedded even more often than he had bedded Melatonia the 6th and all the previous Melatonias combined, had gone awol from its dutiful and binding post: That as he slept, treasonous monkey business had stripped the orange of its peel. In short, he found himself bald as a grape minus its fetlocks.

“Maybe the damn thing slipped off me during the night and fell on the floor,” he reasoned, struggling to recover his composure. “I’m sure I’ll find it if I look around the floor and search under the bed,” offered some comfort. So he turned on all the lights, got on his knees and examined the floor and under the bed, inch by inch, alert as a jeweler with his loupe. The investigation did seem promising at first, yielding an old sock he thought was lost and a few stale brown M&M’s that he compulsively gobbled, but the whereabouts of the wig remained a mystery regardless of how long he combed the floor searching. And though he had hoped that the mischievous wig was merely in a naughty mood that morning and was simply engaging him in an innocent albeit unsolicited game of Hide and Seek, he soon concluded that diabolical forces were at play.

“What’s this? What’s this? I’ve searched every place that rascal likes to hide and can’t find a hair of him. That can only mean one thing,” the habitually cool and collected leader of the free world concluded in his shock and distress, “Only one thing: That the wig’s been kidnapped! Snatched while I was sleeping!” He paused to consider the significance of this realization, took a

deep breath and went on, though it was hard for him to imagine anyone with the audacity or courage to rob him.

“Nobody rips me off!” he cried. “Nobody! I do all the ripping off around here! And when I find out who stole my wig, he’s gonna pay for this disgraceful betrayal! Wait ‘til he tries to collect the ransom money! I’ll call the Attorney General! I’ll deploy the militia! You can’t let these guys get away with their crimes or what’s next? They’ll steal your socks and jockstrap- that’s what. There’s an empty waterboard sitting in Guantanamo for the traitor who did this! Just wait ‘til I get my very beautiful and certifiably large hands around his pencil neck! I’ll make him regret his mother forgot to take her birth control pill the day he was born!”

But soon he realized that he had yet another problem: How was he going to appear in public until the wig was recovered? If you can imagine a turtle’s embarrassment if he must show up at an event minus his shell, or a rhinoceros’s humiliation to socialize without his horn, you might begin to understand the profound depth of good Trumpkin’s concern. Great men simply do not go around with no hair on their heads. It’s just not de rigueur. Baldheadedness rouses no affection, nor does it command any requisite obeisance. So the magnificent, denuded Trumpkin, albeit temporarily flustered as an orangutan with hemorrhoids, quickly decided on a first step.

“Let me see the Presidential Hairdresser before anyone spots me in this embarrassing and disgraceful way. He’s gotta know where my wig went. And then he can fix it up with some new snaps or Velcro, maybe a zipper, or super-glue and staples, though rivets and spot-welding would probably be better, and a chinstrap too so the thing can never blow away if it comes loose.” Finding comfort in this, good Trumpkin threw open his door and dashed next door to the studio of the Presidential Hairdresser, conveniently located to attend to his daily morning slickening.

“What’s this? What’s this?” demanded good President Trumpkin as he flung open the door of the Presidential Hairdresser, pointing to the top of his p^âte that was blazing brightly as a lighthouse lantern, though somewhat less so than the other sections of his head that had never been shaded by any covering. “Just look at me!” he thundered. “Can’t you see something different? Something out of the ordinary? Something that’s not very funny?” Not seeing any smiles or giggles nor getting a flicker of response from the man he saw bending over a client within, he felt encouraged to continue his lament.

“I’ll have your incompetent greasy ass deported back to Shitsico before you can swallow a tamale if you don’t fix this right now, you incompetent loser! Just look at me!” he cried, and receiving the same non-reaction, repeated, “I said look at me! Look at me, not the floor, you idiot!! Do you see what you have done? You and your damn illegal family that’s ruining our country! Who do you think you’re fooling, poisoning our blood and promoting alopecia! Do you think we’re stupid? Who the hell are you to weaken the nation and corrupt our hair? Just look what you’ve done to me, you conscienceless bastard!”

Juan Sanchez, the Presidential Hairdresser, barely reacted to this greeting so involved was he in grooming Alberto, the First Lady’s pet ferret. Nor did Sebastian Valdez, his assistant leaning on the world’s slowest broom, pause from his soporific sweeping of the floor.

“Quien es este gringo pendejo?” asked Sebastian of his superior. “No se,” replied Juan. “Otro loco mas, supongo.”

“What you want, Meestair? Maybe looking for the batharoom, si?” asked Juan politely.

“Bathroom? Bathroom?” cried the infuriated and increasingly frustrated Trumpkin. “Don’t you even recognize me, you fool? You have been doing my hair every day for the past 12 years, ever since I had you yanked off the razor-wire in the Rio Grande, and you don’t know who I am? Is this how your mother raised you? Is this the way you show gratitude to your benefactor?”

“Estas seguro que no conoces este maricon?” Juan asked Sebastian. “Nunca lo he visto en todo mi vida,” replied his helper.

“And stop that idiotic jabbering. You’re in America- talk goddamn American!” added the indignant presidente.

“Si, si, Senior. I speak the very best Eengleesh for you with the very best palabracitas. Whaccho want, Senior? How I help you? You wanna batharoom? Ees down the hall. On derecha.”

But Juan’s attempt at helpfulness merely infuriated good President Trumpkin.

“No, no, no you idiot! Are you blind or just stupid?” bawled our frustrated hero. “I don’t need a goddamn bathroom. I’ve already got 37 of them, all with gold toilets which your wife has been scrubbing with a toothbrush every day for the past 12 years on her scabby knees. Bathroom!? Bathroom?!! Idiot! Didn’t I tell you to look at me? How many times do I have to repeat myself? Can’t you see something different about me? Can’t you see that I’m missing my hair? Can’t you see that I’ve gone...” here our friend Trumpkin hesitated, fearful to use the dreadful word. “Ba...ba...bah...” he sputtered, but it was hopeless: He couldn’t say that word. But that wasn’t going to stop him.

“Don’t you morons understand that my hair is missing, and I don’t know where it went, and I hold you responsible? You incompetents stuck it on my head- you’re supposed to keep it on my head. Now tell me what happened to it. How’d it get off me? Where’d it go? What the hell did you do to it? Tell me now and make it snappy before I stuff an enchilada up your ass and make you eat it backwards.”

“Pero Senior, I do not know your hairs,” replied the hairdresser sheepishly. “Estoy seguro they are very nice hairs, pero I have never had the pleasure of knowing them. Nunca jamas, Senior. Perhaps Sebastian knows your hairs. I ask heem. Sebastian- do you know theese senior’s hairs?” he queried his helper considerately.

Sebastian scratched his head. His eyes flickered in meditation. “No, Juan, lo siento, pero I do not know the senior’s hairs. Quizas my cousin Luis knows hees hairs. I can ask heem. Pero I do not know theese hairs of wheech you speak.”

“See Senior? Que lastima- pero we do not know your hairs,” concluded the Presidential Hairdresser regretfully.

“You’ll know a chain-link cage soon if you don’t find my hair!” screamed the increasingly distraught chief of state in a fit of frustration that threatened to dislodge the few loyal hairs that still clung to the sides of his noble conk.

“Pero Senior- how can we find your hairs eef we do not know your hairs? Ees impossible, Senior!” reasoned the chief Presidential Hairdresser.

“Si, si Senior, ees impossible,” confirmed the first Assistant Presidential Hairdresser languidly.

“And eef we found some hairs, Senior, how could we be sure that they are your hairs eef we do not know your hairs. Ees impossible, Senior,” Juan reasonably suggested.

“Si, si Senior, ees impossible,” repeated the man on the broom.

“Quizas you left your hairs somewheres you forget, Senior? Where you theenk you maybe left them? Quizas you remember, no?” tried the solicitous hairdresser.

“Si, si, Senior. Quizas you remember, si?” added his assistant, helpful as he could be.

“Listen to me and hear me now you bastards. If you don’t get me my hair, I’ll...” roared our gentle albeit agitated Trumpkin, the blood rushing to his head making it the color of an overripe pumpkin.

“Quzas you have a peecture of your hairs, Senior?” Juan inquired politely.

“Si, si, Senior. Quizas eef you have a peecture...” said Sebastian thoughtfully.

“Si, si. A peecture of your hairs could help muy mucho, Senior,” added Juan sympathetically. But that was as far as Juan could get.

“Listen to me carefully, you pair of oleo...olea...oliogna... oily idiots,” barked the good but incensed Trumpkin. “If you know what’s good for you, you better find my missing hair and attach it to its proper place pronto, or you’ll soon be wishing you and your whole goddamn stinking family were back in that chain-link dog house you call a home!”

“Si, si, bueno, Senior. But first we must feeneesh Mees Melatonía’s ferreto. Alberto ees a very nice ferreto, si, and tiene mucho pacienza. We must feeneesh heem first. Quizas then we help you too, Senior?” replied the Presidential Hairdresser.

It is most unfortunate that at this moment Melatonía the 6th’s pet ferret, Alberto, who had been reposing peacefully after his morning massage, awoke from pleasant dreaming, startled by the on-going bru-ha-ha. Apparently recognizing good President Trumpkin and unable to restrain his atavistic animal impulses, the abruptly discommoded rodent leaped off the massage table in a fury, lunging at the great man’s throat, snapping his spikey jaws and hissing in a demoniacal frenzy. What consummate hatred could explain his frenetic outburst? What evil spirit could have possessed this heretofore even-tempered and adorable vermin that, barring an exorcism, had transformed him into an alien entity so out of sync with his habitually prepossessing character? May none of us early-risers ever suffer a similar reaction from a bedmate who enjoys sleeping late.

Failing to reach the presidential throat despite his Olympian determination, the wrathful varmint slid downward from the presidential collar in a blitzkrieg of amputated buttons, slicing Trumpkin’s shirtfront, slashing his trademark tie and a pantleg, and then, having reached the floor, proceeded to shred the presidential pants cuffs until they were reduced to a macrame of hanging strings and tatters resembling the fringes of an oriental rug. The socks would have been next had good Trumpkin himself not kicked the clinging critter off them in the style of a Radio City Rockette. The uncharacteristically surly and disagreeable creature somersaulted through the air, bounced off

a wall, landed amid the clippings and assorted debris, gasping and susurrating, its little red eyes fixated on our hero, glaring with a baffling and infernal odium.

“Eet ees a good theeng we trimmed hees nails first, Senior,” remarked Juan solicitously.

“Si, si. Eet ees a good theeng,” agreed Sebastian compassionately.

“Ees a good theeng he ees a ferreto and not el Chupacabra, Senior,” continued Juan, breathing a sigh of relief.

“Si, Si,” concurred his assistant gratefully. “You would not like Alberto eef he was el Chupacabra, Senior. Es muy vicioso. Have you ever dressed the hairs of el Chupacabra, Juan?” he inquired of his colleague.

“Gracias a Dios, no, Sebastian. I do not weesh to cut the hairs of el Chupacabra! And hees nails are very sharp!” he replied.

“Si, Si, Senior. The chupacabra has the very long nails... and they are very sharp. You would not like the Chupacabra mucho, Senior,” Sebastian added his very best advice.

“I do not understand eet, Senior,” pondered Juan scratching his head. “Alberto ees such a nice ferreto all the times we groom heem...”

“Es verdad, Senior. He ees mucho mas bueno que mi iguana Juana...” said Sebastian smiling sweetly at the rodent who had hunkered into a corner trembling and making sounds like a hotdog sizzling on a red-hot fry pan.

“Si, si. El ferreto Alberto ees mucho mas tranquilo que tu iguana Juana...” declared Juan conclusively, “You would not like thees iguana, Senior. She ees mucho mas furiosa.”

“Si, si. Verdad, she ees muy furiosa,” agreed Sebastian, “You would not like her, Senior. But you would not like el Chupacabra even more.”

“Quizas, Sebastian, el senior would like tu serpiente Wanda. She ees a very nice serpiente, Senior,” offered Juan in the spirit of conciliation.

“Si, si. She ees una anaconda muy amorosa, Senior, especialmente despues she eats the rabbeets,” agreed his co-worker graciously. “You like to meet her, Senior? You come after the deenner. Ees best time,” he shrewdly recommended.

The enraged Trumpkin could feel the wild pulsing of the blue V-shaped vein that had popped out of the center of his forehead. He was just about ready to pronounce the death sentence on the two men, the ferret Alberto, el Chupacabra, the iguana Juana, and Wanda the anaconda when, looking out the window, he spotted something that suspended his fury and froze him in disbelief.

“This can’t be happening! It just can’t be! Fake news! Fake news!” he gasped spasmodically. But a closer look confirmed what he had originally suspected- for there on the street just below his lookout he saw... Oh Dear Reader! We can only hope that a catastrophe like this may never happen to a lesser man! Prepare yourself for the extinction-event shock that rattled the President when first he beheld this strange and unholy sight! Take a tranquilizer or two! Strap on

a crash helmet! Lash yourself down on a shock cushion! Deploy the airbags! Don your favorite straitjacket! No Dear Friend, I wouldn't have believed this either had I not witnessed it myself! For there, just below the window, the magnificent Trumpkin could see a miraculous vision, a marvel to rouse the incredulity of a saint: A dazzling blonde wig resembling his very own in the shape of a great golden sphere, a gold-tipped ebony swagger stick in its white gloved hand, spats on its finely polished black dress shoes, boldly strutting along the red-carpeted sidewalk on two pipe-cleaner legs!

As it hastened on its way, the Wig gave every appearance that it was on a special mission of state, that every moment of its time was precious and not to be squandered on minor endeavors, that the fate of our good Earth's inhabitants lay in the benevolence and wisdom of its decision making. Yes, Dear Reader- it was an awe-inspiring Wig that good President Trumpkin beheld. A majestic Wig. A gracious wig. And above all, a most fashionable Wig au fait, mystifyingly attractive and recherche.

"How can this be?" exploded the stupefied Trumpkin. "I can't believe I'm seeing this! Just yesterday that schnook was stuck on my head like an old cheese, but now look at it sashaying as if it was the Pope!" And in fact, as he uttered those palpable words, he could see the people bowing and cheering as the Wig passed by them.

"Thank you, Sir, for all you do to make our hard lives easier to bear!" he heard someone in the crowd cry. "Oh thank you, thank you, Sir, for all the good things you've done for us!" another added. Others took up a chant: "We love you, Sir! You're the best! You're the best! You're the best!"

And though the Wig rushed on, intently focused on its mission, from his forlorn window Trumpkin could see how badly the Wig wanted to stop if even for an instant to talk with them, how pained it felt to be unable to spare the time to hear their concerns and to tell of its plans for the further improvement of their lot. A small tear, like Schindler's when he made his list, seemed to glisten between its lustrous shocks of golden hair. But to stop even for a moment, personally satisfying as it would have been, would have meant that much less time to do the work the people desperately needed to have done. So, it had no choice but to scoot along on the public's behalf without pause or acknowledgement despite the rush of "Thank you, Sirs" that greeted it from every point along its way.

"How can this be? How can this be?" echoed the indignant Trumpkin. "Just yesterday I couldn't get two words out of this scamp. I didn't even know it had a mouth. It knew its place. It displayed proper, respectful modesty and loyalty. But look at that rascal now! Deserting its post! Strutting like it's just been shampooed and conditioned! Wait 'til I get ahold of it. I'll smear a wad of Juicy Fruit up its furry little ass and teach the traitor a lesson it'll never forget!"

Having resolved that he had no choice but to put an end to this intolerable situation, Trumpkin rushed out into the hallway, determined to catch up to the elusive Wig, leaving our two friends Juan and Sebastian scratching their heads in astonishment, ay-caramba-ing in plaintive harmony.

By now the hallways of the White House had filled with visitors and dignitaries, and as our good Trumpkin pushed his way through the stifling crowds, he was greeted with expressions of annoyance he had never heard before in his life.

“Hey! Look where you’re going!” “Watch that elbow!” “Quit poking me!” “You stepped on my toe!” “Stop bumping the baby carriage!” and far worse execrations (which we will have the good taste not to reveal) assailed him from all directions as he parted the traffic like a bowling ball striking ten-pins. But even these uncalled-for broadsides failed to hinder him as he plowed through the crowds in his monomaniacal pursuit of the ineffable Wig.

“What’s this? What’s this?” he thought petulantly. “Just yesterday nobody in his right mind had the nerve or the guts to call me a lunatic, a jerk or an ass, a nitwit, halfwit or dimwit, a fool, churl, cretin, imbecile, retard, or an idiot or a moron or a twit or dullard, bone-head, bumble-brain, dummy, knucklehead, or even a dope, bozo, booger puss, space cadet, wanker, oaf, fart-knocker, dim sum, buffoon, dingleberry, butt trumpet, goober, dullard, toe goblin, naked mole rat, jabroni, Doofus McGoofus, hollow-head, screwball, egg-hatched snaggletooth, sphincter, clown, weirdo, derp, dork nugget, infernal skunk, butt-hole barnacle, fart noodle, fart knocker, butt munch, monkey’s crap-hole, breath bomb, duke of deeze nuts, fatuous fart sniffer, slimy turd waffle, turd burglar, abortive rooting hog, bag of nits, hoooplehead, nincompoop, canker blossom, poopsickle, moldy cheese whiz, window licker, soggy biscuit, drool bucket, nerf herder, son of a motherless goat, meathead, emasculated mess of humanity, creep, butt pilot, butt navigator, ninny, blundering dunderhead, or fucking asshole. But just listen to them now! Oh that damn wig! I’ll have it waterboarded on its little yellow...”

Our dear hero would have continued in this vein had not at that moment another amazing vision captured his attention. For just as he had finished pushing and shoving his way through the hurly-burly of outraged humanity to the exit, he could see at the edge of the presidential Porte cochere the door of the presidential limousine open slowly, and through it, summoning the Wig to enter, a very shapely, very long, very stockinged leg: A beckoning leg; a leg Mrs. Robinson would envy; a leg ending in a 5-inch heel twirling in the most provocative manner- a leg built for proximity; a leg to play footsie with; in short, a suggestive leg; a leg he was contractually familiar with: the leg of his own dear wife, Melatonia the 6th!

Oh, dear Reader! Forgive, for mercy’s sake, the passionate ineptitude with which your lowly scrawler can only attempt to describe the inexorable attraction of the lovely limb’s entrancing charm... for I too have been smitten by its comeliness and its grace, and I do not possess the best words to do it the justice it so rightfully deserves. Nor is it possible for me to describe it without devolving into the drooling blather of a smitten sycophant. But what else can be expected from a short-tailed primate lately naked of fur, heir to the limitations of his simian forebears? Perhaps in the next life I’ll evolve to better find the words to do the luscious limb the justice it deserves, for such a leg challenges the limitations of language and demands a lexicon devoted only to its own entrancing mystique.

Who among us, after all, would fail to succumb to its irresistible temptation? Where would one find the endurance to withstand its allure? Ask the Pope. He’ll tell you. Ask the Dalai Lama. He’ll tell you the same thing He told me. Oh! The swooping curve of its suggestive instep! The narrowness of the dainty 4 ½-size foot! The golden glow of its pedicured toesies! And the ankle! But

what an ankle! An ankle only a Michelangelo could have sculpted; an ankle that would have aroused even his marbled David. Hide your hoof in jealousy, Cinderella! Cover your peg in shame, Cleopatra! Oh, dear, naughty foot! Oh... how I envy your lucky toe ring. Oh! Might I return in a happier life as your clinging anklet!

No, this indescribably exquisite extremity was not intended for the delight of a simple pope or salacious guru or the adoration of an inadequate scribbler like me. And as he watched its toe circle provocatively, suggestively, daringly, expectantly, hypnotically- Oh! How the words pale and falter, like fireflies before the sun! – our good Trumpkin could remember in its gyrations every pleasure it had brought him not long before this horrid day, this day that bore incontrovertible indication that the once faithful leg's exclusive commitment was now the pleasure of the treasonous and astonishingly well-heeled hairpiece that seemed to have replaced him in every aspect of his formerly satisfying life.

“So! What do we have here?” exploded our bereft hero. “Another faithless female! Wasn't it just yesterday that she told me I was her one and only? Didn't she call me her little bunion? Didn't she say I was her favorite plantar fascist something or other? That she'd never betray me, at least not in accordance with the stipulated conditions of our pre-nup? And now this flirting, this come-on! With not just another glass eye or wooden leg- I could almost understand that- but with my very own wig! Oh! The injustice! The pain! The humiliation! No, no, no. I could have expected it from him: The pig never had any ethics- but from her? With everything she has to lose? Don't think my lawyers won't hear about this!”

Good Trumpkin took a deep, justifiably pitiful breath and continued. “Women! Treacherous women. You can't trust 'em. No. It's just not fair what they get away with, not fair at all. I'll never understand what colossal dummy allowed them to be mothers in the first place. What makes 'em qualified for the job? What a mistake God made when he chose them to give birth instead of us! What the hell was that blockhead thinking? Didn't he realize that the rib bone is not connected to the brain bone? They're not just disloyal: they're dumb and incompetent. They all think they're queens. But I'll make 'em learn that man is the master! They been spoiled way too long. Way too long. Ya want 'em to learn? Ya gotta treat 'em like shit! That'll learn 'em!”

By the time he finished his contemplations and reached the presidential limousine, both Leg and Wig had withdrawn into its private recess and the door had been secured. Adding to his bewilderment and frustration, good Trumpkin saw the vehicle begin to sway slowly, gently at first, then with an increasing tremolo until the clouded windows seemed to rattle. Our hero, finding himself locked out and helpless to stop the shameless rocking, his knuckles whitened, biceps tensed and nostrils flaring, began to pound on the roof, the fenders, the hood- in short, wherever his certifiably large, gnarled fist could find a target.

“Hey! What's goin' on in there? You two better not be up to anything nasty!” he squeaked as he tried to get a peek into the interior. But by that time the windows had steamed from within and his view was completely obscured. Unable to see what his heretofore loyal wife and lewd wig were doing, his temples palpitating in agonizing remembrance of his own amorous exploits, good Trumpkin vividly imagined the scandalous details with painful clarity.

Never before had he ever been treated with such callous disregard. And the more he found himself ignored and distanced, the more desperately he pounded on the car. But hammer as he did, his dynamic efforts came to no avail and the limo continued to pulse on its quivering rubber wheels, to shimmy and shake rhythmically as to a bolero, much more vigorously it seemed as his own umbrage increased. And then, just as his strength was drained and his tide had ebbed, just as he, eviscerated, spent and drooping, collapsed and could bang no longer, the vehicle came to a slow, throbbing standstill.

A few silent, still moments passed. Then a fingertip appeared in the window's befogged center. It began to circle slowly. The glass squeaked; the fingertip spiraled. And slowly from a pinpoint a peephole appeared, and through it he saw what appeared to be a shaggy blonde hairball sorely in need of a good currying, serenely smoking a cigarette.

"Well? What is it? What do you want?" it asked in a harried voice, as if peeved to have had its tranquility violated. "I'm very busy with affairs of state, as you might have discerned had you been paying attention. But if you are experiencing a true emergency, I can give you two minutes of my time. Proceed expeditiously and speak baldly if you will."

Flabbergasted, our hero wasted a good half minute of his expedited time in spendthrift stupefaction. "What's this? What's this?" he finally blurted. "And who are you to be sitting in my personal presidential limousine with my personal presidential wife committing who knows what personal unpresidential act? Your behavior is unacceptable. Unacceptable! Do you hear me? Must I spell it out for you? U-N-N-E-X-E-P-T-I-B-I-L, unacceptable! Especially for a wig who's forgotten his role. Do you not remember your rightful place? Have you no loyalty to your employer? Have you no self-respect? Get out of my official limousine right now, you treasonous toupee and explain your lustful conduct! It's immoral traitor falsies like you that weaken the nation and set bad examples to the youth! Now if you know what's good for you, step outta the car and get back on my head where you belong!"

"Are you not feeling well?" asked the Wig with seemingly genuine concern. "Perhaps you've been out in the sun too long? I notice you're not wearing a hat. You really should think about wearing one, or at the very least using sunblock on that bald spot of yours. I happen to have a few stylish MAHA baseball caps right here in the limo and I can let you have one for the low low price of only \$69.95. We've got to Make America Hairy Again, you know. We have no choice. No choice at all. Would you like me to autograph it for you at no additional charge?"

Good Trumpkin did not take the Wig's advice or kind offer in the compassionate spirit they had been offered. "Baw...baw...bal..." he stuttered, but the dreaded, hateful syllables just stuck in his dry throat like gum on the underside of a classroom desk. The events of the day had frazzled even the well-known patience he prided himself on in his finer moments, and he certainly wasn't going to heed the counsel of anyone- especially a woke, treacherous wig- who treated him in such a condescending and transactional manner.

"If you knew your place," he stammered, "I wouldn't need a hat or sunblock. Now get out of the car and get back on my head where you belong, you idiot wig!"

"As much as I would like to accommodate all of my constituents, at present you have me at a disadvantage," replied the presidential wig. "I don't have the time right now, as I am expected at

the United Nations in an hour to address the General Assembly regarding America's role in defeating global warming. After that I'll need to attend the Middle East summit regarding the pesky problem in Gaza. And if there's any time afterwards, there's always Ukraine. They simply need to be resupplied, or the nation is doomed. The world can't simply be put on hold to hear your problems, my friend, important as they might seem to you. So, I am truly sorry, but much as I'd like to, I can't accommodate you today. Perhaps I could have one of my clerks assist you in my place?"

"What? What? A clerk? What clerk? And how am I to put a clerk on my head?" asked good Trumpkin reasonably. "A clerk belongs on his feet, or dozing at his desk, or explaining his stupidity to his boss, not hanging off my head. How am I supposed to attach him so that he won't keep sliding off? And even if I could stick him on, how could I concentrate with a clerk perched up there on my head? My work requires a lot of intelligent thinking, don't you know. What if his legs bounce up and down when he sits, and they poke me in my eye? How am I supposed to concentrate with all that interruption? No, no, that won't do. That will not do at all. This is not an acceptable solution. You'll have to come up with something more sensible if you expect me to take you seriously."

"Well, if a clerk won't do, how about if we fix you up with an intern?" offered the obliging Wig. "They can be jittery as well, but they're generally smaller and more cooperative since they're not eligible to join the union. If I tell them to stay in one place, that's what they usually do. I'm sure an intern will listen to you as well. And, of course, you would have to pay a clerk for his time."

But even this helpful suggestion was dismissed. "What? What? What do you think people would say if I walked into a room with a clerk or an intern on my head?" retorted the great man. "That I'm making a fashion statement? That I don't rate someone in management? And what if the intern is a minor? How am I going to explain that? Huh?"

"Hmmm," replied the Wig thoughtfully. "You might have a point there, though you'd be surprised how many members of Congress aren't as scrupulous as you when it comes to wearing interns on their heads. Tell me- would you consider growing a beard in lieu of wearing an intern on your head? I'm sure you've seen many men of high fashion sporting them. They're really quite stylish, you know. If you look closely, you'll notice that I have one myself." And just to demonstrate his sincerity, the Wig parted his hair to expose a bristly section of beard growing just where his mouth would be found had it been visible through the tangle of mop that covered his spherical physique.

"A beard? A beard!! Now you want me to grow a beard!" our hero howled in desperate disgust. "This is way too much! Are you an idiot? Do you really think that nobody will notice my missing hair if I grow a beard? A beard will just make my hairless head more noticeable, you fool. What are you thinking?! Everybody knows that only losers that can't grow hair grow beards! Did you ever see Ronald Reagan with a beard? Or John Wayne? Or Randolph Scott? And how many times do I have to repeat myself: I want you back on my head, and not some inexperienced, unqualified intern called Lou- or even Rosemary or Maurice."

"Well, I'm certainly sorry that growing a beard isn't a workable option for you, Mr. Wiggins. Still, you do seem to have a problem. Hmmm. What to do; what to do. I'll need some time to think up a solution for you. Perhaps we can adjust an intern's schedule to expedite your concerns. Why don't you leave your name with my secretary, Mr. Wiggins... uh?... you did say that Wiggins is your

name, didn't you?...and we'll notify you as soon as we come up with something- no pun intended, ha ha. Hair today; gone tomorrow, as they say. Ha ha," the Wig chortled, pleased with his own wit.

Good Trumpkin was hardly amused. In fact, he was growing so impatient that he could feel the remaining trusty tufts on the back of his head prickling. "Why should I leave my name with your secretary and walk around with an intern perched on my head, banging his feet in my eyes, when all you have to do is get back on my head where you're supposed to be?" he answered with an apparent loss of his customary sense of good humor. "Don't you think that as my wig, you owe me some consideration instead of cracking corny jokes? Have you no shame, you shameless wig?" he added rather indignantly.

"Certainly I do," replied the dutiful Wig feeling somewhat slighted and misunderstood. "I owe all my constituents consideration. Serving them has always been my top priority. They elected me by a vast plurality to do a job, Mr. Wiggins, and I'm not going to disappoint them."

"Wiggins? You called me Wiggins? And what do you mean by Wiggins? Don't you know my name? You've been comfortably flopping on my head like a piglet on a hammock for years and you never learned my name? Don't you recognize who I am? Everybody knows who I am. What kind of idiot wig are you anyway?" grunted good Trumpkin disgruntledly.

"I think you're mistaking me for someone else, Mr. Wiggins. I don't believe that I have ever met you before- and I have an excellent memory for faces- and I certainly don't know your name. Perhaps my wife would know who you are and what your name is. Allow me to ask her." Turning to his companion, who so far had remained silently undercover, he crooned lovingly "Oh Melatonia! Oh Sweet-Bits! Have you ever met this gentleman? Would you know his name? It's not Mr. Wiggins, is it? Can you slide over here for a second and take a look out the window for me?"

"Ooof, Dahlink! Of course it's you. Why should I make ze slides when it's so comfortable here und I already know ees you? I would recognize you anywhere. Now come back to bed, my leetle leent roller. I vant to show you zomethink very nice..." the First Lady languidly replied.

"No, no, my Love. I know you recognize me. I mean this gentleman in the window. Do you know who he is? His name isn't Wiggins is it?" repeated the indefatigable Wig.

"Ahh! I zee! But no, Dahlink," our hero heard Melatonia the 6th respond in her Hungarian-accented, Zsa Zsa Gabor-like voice thick as last week's leftover goulash. "I haff never seen thees fonny-lookeeng Meester Weeggeens before. Is hee von uff the sehrvahnts? Come back to bed before he vashess the veendows und makes weeth the peek-a-boos."

But something she noticed gave the First Lady pause. She studied her companion closely, then continued affectionately. "Oh my goodness! Just look at you, Dahlink! You're all ze tangles! Let me brush you out. I must groohm you! I must groohm you, Dahlink! You haven't been using my patented 'Melatonia's Deluxe Detangler' like you promeesed, haff you? Please, Dahlink." She looked at him mock crossly. "Vat veel ze beeples say when dey zee your knots? You are not a Rastafarian, my sveet booblyeek! Melatonia's Deluxe Detangler ees made from 100% hand-peeked natural ingredients: Only ze finest toe uf frog, eye uf newt, tongue uf dog, fillet uf fenny snake, vool uf bat, adder's fork und 14 other goodt theengs go eento making eet- unt no aneemals vere eenjured een ze process. Really, Dahlink, you can't meet weeth eemportant world

deegneetaries lookeeng like ze old shag carpet. Use eet when you reense. Do eet for me, Dahlink. Now let me groohm you! I veel groohm you- unt zen maybe just one more time you make me a happy Melatonia? Yes, yes? Before you go? Just once more for how zey say? Ze roads?" The First Lady paused, sensing that her husband was still preoccupied with our hero's problems.

"Oh, gyorsan! Please, Dahlink- please don't leafe me vaiting thees vay...it's not fair how moch I need you... how desperately I vant you... how I can't leeve weethout you! Please, Dahlink... come to bed. Your Melatonia ees vaiting... Oooooof! I've never felt like thees before! I haff never known a real man like you! Vooooof! Don't ever leafe me! Come, Dahlink! Come to me now! Make your leettle sveet beets happy! Come to bed... Oh, my leettle khroomschtake! How I love to run my feengers through your hairs! Come now, Dahlink... Hurry! Come back to bed... come to your lonely Melatonia!"

But as with all historically great men, the Wig's commitment to duty superseded its own petty personal needs and pleasure.

"Baby please!" retorted her harried husband. "I am not from Transylvania!" Then, sensing her disappointment, the hirsute husband tried to mollify his full-blooded, loving wife, patiently explaining, "I've been busy helping Mr. Wiggins here and I still haven't seen Elton, and the Security Council meeting is less than an hour from now. I haven't a moment to spare, I'm running so late! Sorry, Baby- I gotta go!" And with that, the meeting with our good Trumpkin came to an abrupt end, and the limousine sped off on its mission of doing the people's work.

"And you too, Elton?" whimpered our good Trumpkin petulantly: "Even Kissinger was more loyal to Nixon than you have been to me. But you won't get away with it, you fake billionaire! I'll show you that I still know a trick or two!" And collapsing on a nearby bus stop bench, head bent between his knees, hands locked around his neck, our distraught hero cried out in his Jobian abandonment to an indifferent god he had never dreamed of consulting during his finer moments.

"Was I not always very, very handsome? Wasn't I always very, very rich? Didn't the smartest people call me very, very intelligent? Didn't men fear and admire me? Didn't women all want a piece of me? I mean a big piece. And didn't the people bow and grovel when I stepped into a room? How oh how did this happen to a success like me?" He paused to scratch a pimple that made sitting uncomfortable. "Why aren't you punishing the losers who deserve it instead? Why pick on me when there are so many suckers to choose from? Tell me, did I do something wrong for you to abandon me so unfairly? Did some traitor snitch me out?" He waited for a response- a clap of thunder, a bolt of lightning- but the sky remained a cloudless blue and the sun shone on as it always had. No god from above answered his poignant prayer.

Good Trumpkin pulled out an itchy nose hair, put it on his head, but it too would not stick. "And what did I ever do that was so bad to deserve this? Nothin'. I never did nothin'. Nothin' wasn't my fault, or I'd never of been successful in the first place. Nothin', that's what I did. I mean, all the nothin' I did do they let me do it. So why punish me now for nothin' that I did or did not do especially since they let me? It isn't fair... it just isn't fair."

He pondered the unanswered question: Why had he been singled out for this cruel treatment? What treachery had dealt him this mess he was in?

“Well, since it wasn’t my fault, then it must be the deep state haters. Who else could have done it? They’ve always been jealous of me, as far back as I can remember. Even when I was a kid, they never left me alone with their fake news and fake lies. They always bad mouthed me. They never played fair. Everyone used me. Sure, they all hung around me- but I never had a real friend- someone who’d lend me money or do my homework for me or fix me up with a chick for free. It was always ‘Ya want me to write it? It’ll cost ya.’ ‘Ya wanna get laid? Ask your hand if it’s busy.’ ‘Ya need some dough? Pay me what ya owe me.’ ‘Ya need me to read it to ya? Ya shoulda learned how in grade school.’”

He paused to take a deep, soulful breath and continued his heartfelt soliloquy. “Nobody ever did me a favor that cost me nothin’. Nobody cared how I felt. If it wasn’t for my money which I always did have because I’m smart like that, I would always be alone. Not that I ever paid. Why should I pay? All I had to do was flash a roll and the suckers came runnin’ like they still do. But the last laugh was on them, ‘cause I’d stick ‘em with the bill. Or just not pay. I mean, what were they gonna do about it? Sue me? Ha ha. That’s a good one. So why should I be nice to them if I wasn’t gonna pay anyway? Why should I be nice to anyone if they weren’t gonna be nice to me? The hell with ‘em! I didn’t need nobody then and I don’t need nobody now, especially the lyin’ haters!”

And so our abandoned and despondent hero sat on the dreary bus stop bench and contemplated his tragic state. He was no stranger to harsh challenges. He had faced deprivation and knew what it was to struggle against stacked odds. He had raised a mighty empire on a million-dollar shoestring and met his crooked foes with guts and brains and he had always come out on top. After all, wasn’t he Trumpkin, the powerful and merciless, feared and respected by all men, a lust target to all women, every child’s role model, recognized wherever he went as more godlike than mortal?

But overnight everything had changed: Suddenly nobody, not even people he had known for years, knew him from the babbling blotto slouched on his tottering stool at the end of the neighborhood bar.

“Why? Oh why me? Oh why have you forsaken me?” he sobbed forlornly as he sat on that friendless bus stop bench. “What did I do to deserve this? Why did I rise so high and, out of nowhere, drop so low? Why? ‘Cause they rigged it, that’s why! And it’s not right! It’s not fair! And it’s not my fault!”

But, dear Reader, this is not the kind of story where despair and abandonment prevail in an indifferent and complacent universe. Let us leave godless existentialism to the faithless Sartre’s and the frivolous Camus’s. The aggrandizement of desperation is not my object. Hopelessness doesn’t pay and is only marginally romantic. There’s enough of it to go around already. No. Don’t demand it of me! My heart isn’t into it. My mind can’t absorb it. Don’t ask me to go where I know I will be lost.

No, dear Friend. Those godless fantasists will never convince me that we are ever truly alone in our anguish, or that to dream is to suffer. I will never allow myself to believe that even the most insignificant of us is ever really abandoned or that anything good comes of romantic despair. Though we find our good Trumpkin at the lowest point of his life now, let’s not drift into the self-

destructive bleakness that comes of failing to live up to the unattainable ideals these so-called existential philosophers teach us. There's neither joy nor profit in their frustrating exercises.

And as for the Classicists and their message, let those dreamers suffer the tragi-comedic angst their pursuit of the Good and Beautiful inevitably leads to. No. I'll find my comfort and consolation in the pursuit of ideals that do not overtax my many limitations. I'll be content with what my coccygeal shortcomings allow me: the no-nonsense merits of the Cute and the Pleasant. Well may these virtues ever sustain me and you and him, who is the subject of our humble pensees.

But stay! What good fortune is this? Can I believe my eyes? Have our prayers been answered and our worries assuaged? What paragon is this we can see gracing the road but a Heaven-sent archetype of cuteness and pleasantry? Who is this angel that has surely come to ease sad Trumppkin's heavy burden? Look closely up that busy road where last we left our hero. Who do you observe nearing him, no doubt with a message of cheer and good will? Who do you see? No-not the mailman! I like the mailman too, but this time it's not the mailman. Don't be so shy! Look closer, dear Reader. Is her comely form not apparent? Her noble brow, her lissome gait? Is that not a halo shadowing her saintly head? Oh rejoice, friend Trumppkin! Salvation is upon you! An angel has condescended to come among us!

"Evilanka! My own dear, sweet Daddy's girl Evilanka! Precious Evilanka!" cried the great man as he saw her entourage approaching. "Oh beloved little girl, oh precious child! If only you weren't my own daughter, the things I would do to you! And maybe once I find my wig, and a friendly judge, I'll still be able to do them...believe me! Believe me!" Here good Trumppkin paused to savor the first respite he enjoyed since this ill-fated day had begun. "Oh Evilanka...I knew you'd never let me down in spite of that dopey Jarhead you married."

Swiping the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand, good Trumppkin arose with renewed hope as the Kushy train- Evilanka, Jarhead and their stroller-pushing nanny- approached his seat of gloom.

"Oh Evilanka!" he called to her in his rapture, "Oh baby girl! Am I happy to see you! Finally: Someone who knows and loves me, who'd vote two or even three times a day for me! My own angel. You understand. You'll straighten out this mess I'm in for sure! You'd never blow off your father in his hour of need!"

"Of course you're happy to see me," answered the dazzling vision, though somehow more coolly than he had expected. "Everyone I meet is always happy to see me. For does not everyone tell me I am beautiful and intelligent? That's a rhetorical question just in case you're stupid and don't know the answer because of course they do. They always do." Then smiling her sweetest smile she turned to her husband and cooed, "Isn't that true, Jarhead Dearest? Isn't everybody always happy to see me?"

"So what's not to be happy?" snapped her lucky husband Jarhead. "Everyone is always happy to see you. Why shouldn't they? What? They got a problem of some kind or something that they can't be happy to see you? What's wrong with these people anyway?"

“Yes, yes, yes I’m certainly very happy to see you,” reiterated her increasingly anxious parent, sensing that for some inexplicable reason his saviors were becoming annoyed, “but I need some help. If you can just spare me a minute of your time...”

“That’s fine. You can be as happy as you’d like to see me. Everybody can. I am, after all, my handsome and intelligent father’s daughter, and it’s not like I have to pay for people’s adulation,” Evilanka said, leaving good Trumpkin feeling more and more like a stranger. “Now if you don’t mind stepping aside, we have places to go and people to see.” The angelic icon turned to the nanny and said, “Let’s get rolling, Mammy. This scrub is starting to creep me out.”

“Yes, let’s move along,” added dutiful Jarhead. “We haven’t all day to waste you know, no time to slum with our tenants. There’s rents to raise. Contractors to short-change. Politicians to pay off. Families to evict.”

“But, but, but...” cried the flabbergasted Trumpkin sputtering like an old Evinrude, shocked at this staggering rejection. “But, but, but... don’t you recognize me? Don’t you know who I am?”

“Will you listen to this nut, Jarhead! He thinks I should know him! Him!” good Evilanka declared to her husband. Then pointing her dainty finger at our distressed protagonist, she delivered this uncompromising, unexpected reproof that most likely arose from the burdensome stress of responsibility great people bear, it being so out of character for her kindly, liberal nature: “Recognize you? Recognize you?” she spat venomously. “Take a good look at your nasty-ass raggedy self. Do you look like someone I’d recognize? Do you belong to the class of people I recognize? And why would I recognize you even if I did have the bad taste and horrid judgment to recognize you? Why should anybody recognize you? Why should they want to recognize you or bother to recognize you even if by some misfortune they did somehow recognize you? You are the most unrecognizable individual I ever saw and the least worthy of being recognized. You’re so unrecognizable that I don’t even recognize that I’m talking at you. So, to answer your question which I do not recognize, no. I do not recognize you, and you have a lot of recognizable nerve to think I would. And don’t you ever address me again because I still won’t recognize you.” And so, having covered the issue as thoroughly as her inspiration allowed, she turned to her husband and lyrically clucked, “Isn’t that right, Jarhead Dear?”

“When you’re right you’re right, so why shouldn’t you be right?” her devoted husband graciously concurred. “I wouldn’t recognize this nudnick even if I knew him. He looks like one of our lousy tenants. And you know how well I recognize them. He even smells like one. Woof!” Then he helpfully added, “If he’s got a problem, he should see the manager- if the manager can recognize him. I don’t know if he’s ever been recognized.” And though most of us would have exhausted our efforts at this point, fully satisfied with our supportive consideration of good Trumpkin’s dilemma, it cannot be said that Jarhead was the type to give up so quickly. Addressing the nanny, Jarhead persevered. “Do you recognize this fellow, Mammy? He looks like someone who might be living in your neighborhood?”

“No Suh, Mister Jarhead,” replied the nanny clutching the stroller’s handle protectively. “I sure ‘nuff never seent him before. I don’ know if I’m seein’ ‘im now. An’ I hope I never see him again, he so scary-lookin’. Best watch out for him, Suh- he looks like a spooky rascal to me. Don’t let him too near the child. He might breathe on him, and you never don’t know what kind of germs he got.”

The protective father took her advice. “You heard her: Step aside, Spook. You’re blocking the road!” he commanded our hapless hero.

“Take it up with the manager or our lawyer. We have no time for you,” added the dutiful Evilanka.

“But, but, but...” stammered her perplexed father. “I can understand Jarhead. He never liked me. But how can you treat your own father this way?”

“My father? My beloved father? Are you drunk already? Have you lost your mind as well as your hair? My father is a great man,” proclaimed our celestial ideal. “Even now, he is presenting his plan for world peace before the Security Council of the United Nations. Later, he will meet with the Joint Chiefs of State and eliminate the Palestinians who we don’t recognize either. Then after that, he’ll meet his friend Vlad Puta and end the war the belligerent Ukrainians are waging against our allies. Furthermore, my father has a full head of lustrous golden hair. As a matter of fact, he *is* mostly a head of hair, a gorgeous orb of beautiful golden hair.” She sighed as if she were seeing a golden-haired mirage, and then, just to make certain that she had been thorough, added, “I know my father. I grew up under my father. And you are not my father or like my father in the little least degree. And furthermore, you are starting to annoy me. So get out of our way, Spooky, and let us pass before we call Sanitation and have you hauled away with the rest of the weekly pick-up.”

“But, but, but...” Trumpkin stuttered in his desperation, searching for anything else to say that might soften her obstinate heart and prolong their conversation, “Can’t I even take a look at my own granddaughter? I can’t remember the last time I saw her.”

“Granddaughter!? Granddaughter?!” thundered the protective mother indignantly. “If you wish to see her, go ahead and see her. Nobody is stopping you. But please but leave us alone. Because for your unnecessary information, Jarhead and I have no daughters. All our children are masculine children.”

Oh, that so innocent and common a misidentification should have ushered that bitter a reproof from one he held so dear! For have we not all been guilty of forgetting the sex of our own children or even spouses at one time or other? And is it not far less egregious and far more forgivable to mistake a mere grandchild in that fashion? Then again, given our modern age of surgical miracles, shouldn’t we be realistic that...well...that, to put it diplomatically, people can and do change in the most intimate and unexpected ways? And yet how weighty the price good Trumpkin paid for this classic, timeworn misapprehension! Folks make too much of these harmless slip-ups. It’s simply not fair to our hero, not fair at all. For no sooner had Evilanka concluded by uttering her crushing words, than the Kushy entourage bypassed good Trumpkin and sped off leaving him confounded and devastated, alone once again on that callous bench.

“What am I going to do now?” wondered good Trumpkin. “I can see how that high-rent slumlord husband of hers could treat me that way. He has a lot of buildings, sure, but they are all short and nasty and full of low-life Welfare scum. He’s got more rats than the dog pound has fleas, and his cockroaches are so big that when you step on them, they squash out the sides of your toes. And the toilets? Have you seen his toilets? Aren’t toilets supposed to flush? Forget about hot water. His tenants don’t need hot water- but shouldn’t toilets flush? How would you like to take a squat on

something stuffed to the lid like that? No wonder he won't even put his name on them buildings. I know he's always been jealous of me and my hotels and condominiums and golf courses and casinos- they all are- and who can blame anyone for that? But I never liked the guy what with his crummy food and cheap suits. The best part of him is his overpriced government-subsidized rents. I put up with him for her sake. Yeah- I could expect it from a sleazebag like him. But Evilanka? My own daughter? How could she do this to me? It's too much unfair. Way too much. Very, very too much unfair for any man to bear."

Although we see our good hero alone in his desperation, slouched and broken-hearted on that indifferent bus stop bench, deserted by his own cherished family and comrades of yore, don't you too, dear Reader, sympathetic as you may be, lapse into despair along with him who has sunk so low. For when your pants are down and the branch over the latrine snaps, I still say that you can always depend on something soft to cushion the fall. And so it was to be with our good Trumppkin.

Head hung low in sorrow, his chin deeply snuggled in his lap, he did not hear the creaking of a knee, smell the Dior-Sauvage, nor feel the touch of a stranger's hand upon his shoulder until a kindly word was whispered in his ear.

"There, there, My Son," he heard a soft, compassionate voice addressing him in this, his keenest moment of despair. "Surely whatever is troubling you pales before the wondrous glory of this beautiful day! Arise, My Child, and rejoice! Lift your arms in gratitude to Heaven above, the true source of our happiness and repose, and let joy flood your saddened heart!"

Raising his head, our good Trumppkin saw standing before him a well-cut, tailored suit in very soft grey flannel with a three-point display handkerchief that matched its neatly knotted companion tie, a custom-made silk shirt, a heavily jeweled hand lifted to the sky, all of which presented an impression of gracious elegance and prosperity. Startled but intrigued, the good President squinted closer to see gentle blue-grey eyes sparkling under a shaggy mass of dark brows studying him benignly. A somewhat unkempt mop of dense dark hair curled about his collar; a thick-lipped mouth framed by a closely trimmed goatee smiled at him through large, flashy bright, perfectly aligned ivory. Had a sturdy-chinned Old Testament apostle, outfitted in GQ style, left his celestial abode for a brief earthly visit, he might have resembled this curious stranger standing there before him. But despite his sartorial sophistication, the aura of tenderness and empathy surrounding him, his calm demeanor and outward passivity, he seemed to own the power of a Heaven-sent messenger- an angel, perhaps- who carried a lightning bolt in his hip pocket and was absolutely ready to use it.

"Who the hell is this nut?" thought our beleaguered champion, startled from his reverie, too surprised to speak. "Who let this joker out of his cage?"

"Ha ha! No, no My Son. I am neither nut nor joker, as you put it...and my days of residing in a cage are long past me," answered the mysterious interloper with a smile that showed a depth of genuine friendship and concern. "But please forgive my intrusion and allow me to introduce myself. I am the Reverend Bergerac...and, as you shall shortly discover, much more than that. Prepare yourself, my Son- gird thy loins, as we used to say- for a shocking disclosure that few but the most powerful and intelligent ever have the privilege and honor to hear and capacity to understand." He

paused a moment to let all that sink in. Then, harkened by the sound of good Trumpkin's grunt, he resumed his message of hope and cheer.

"My Son, above all understand this, that I am your guardian angel, sent here from God above to bring you aid and comfort in your sad moment of distress. So cast your worries aside! I have come to relieve you of your troubles...good President Trumpkin!"

"My guardian angel! This nutjob said he's my guardian angel! Sent specially to me from God!" gasped good Trumpkin to himself, disbelieving his good fortune, still not saying a word. "Well, it's about time! I can't be hangin' around waiting for these guys all day long. Still, he must be crazy. Things like this don't happen. But he called me President Trumpkin...How crazy is that?"

"Of course I did," replied Reverend Bergerac, "and fear not: I'm not so crazy as you might think. Don't you believe that I'd recognize my own dear client? My own beloved President? Come, come...cheer up, Sir, and have some faith. You think too much. Way too much. Relax that overwrought intellect. Let me unburden you of its heavy cargo."

"This can't be happening!" ran through our good but embattled Trumpkin's mind. "Either this guy knows what I'm thinking- and nobody, not even me, knows what I'm thinking- or I'm projecting my thoughts like those geniuses who send their thoughts into the Deep State and the Dark Web to steal passwords and Social Security numbers. Some very intelligent people have told me that. Some even said that that's the way the election that I never lost was stolen from me. And all of them have said that I'm a genius like the smartest honorary Mensa member." He sighed, basking in the satisfaction of being himself. "But it makes no difference anyway because nobody reads my mind and gets away with it! Nobody! I'll need to fix this Peeping Thomist after I get my wig back. No nutjob'll be able to pass through its fine protective shield and get into my head again. And plus, I'll get my lawyers to slap an injunction on 'im. It's an invasion of my privatecies, an' I don't let nobody mess with my privatecies. It can't be allowed."

Even great men are not immune from the all-too-human frenzy of anger and the hopelessness of despair, and though divine Trumpkin, born, some say, of human stock, was no exception, he too possessed the instinct of all superior beings that reminds them in their most desperate hours that there is always some advantage to be found in every adversity one faces, insurmountable as it may seem to ordinary men. Had my own children disavowed me, my fellow citizens renounced me, my hairdresser repudiated me... had my very own wig abandoned me, I can only wonder how I could have avoided a lengthy stint of electro-shock therapy and heavy medication at the Institute Psychiatrique. How often I've wished that I possessed that special intuition great men enjoy that now came to counsel good President Trumpkin. For though he had been stunned into speechlessness by his strange companion and the message he bore, and despite the savagery of his anger and frustration, he heard his instinct beckon, and for a sober instant found focus.

"We have no choice. No choice at all," he realized. "Nobody. Nobody. Nobody- especially some old whack job- is gonna get into my head and read my thoughts. Still, he did call me Trumpkin...President Trumpkin! My very own name! Is it possible that he's the only one who knows who I am? The only one who has recognized me since I woke up this morning?"

“Naturally, Sir. You are the President, after all,” reiterated Reverend Bergerac, “How can I fail to recognize you? And how else should I address you but by your title and proper name? Or would you prefer to be called “Donny”? Is that who you are? Is that how you wish to be known?”

These words struck good Trumpkin with the impact Saul of Tarsus must have felt on the road to Damascus when, in a sublime moment of insight, he fell off his donkey, the scales dropped from his eyes, and the best words rushed to him in an inspired flurry of revelation.

“Yes, yes, yes! I am the President!” our hero shouted to all the world like one who suddenly solves a Gordian puzzle that has been haunting him obsessively. “Yes, Yes. I am Trumpkin! That’s me all right!” With tears in his eyes, overjoyed by the acknowledgement he had been so long and so unfairly denied, good President Trumpkin raised his hands to the sky and from the hollows of his tested and tormented soul let burst this triumphant and soulful cannonade: “I am... President Trumpkin!” His open palms became shaking fists. His appearance took on the imprimatur of an Old Testament prophet. The words he delivered were canon fire. “Never, never call me...Donny!” he thundered. The moment of his epiphany was upon him.

“With pleasure... good... President... Trumpkin!” cried his delighted guardian angel, overjoyed that his service had reawakened and revitalized his earthly ward. “Now let’s see what we can do about restoring you to your former power and glory!”

“Yeah, yeah!” exclaimed our elated and much relieved hero. “let’s do that. And how ‘bout that part in the Bible, which is one of my top five books which I didn’t write- though I still might one of these days- where they mention something about smiting my enemies? Maybe I heard that part too fast when they read it to me- or maybe it was in the movie version. You know how those Hollywood commies are. All them smites is about paying back the haters and losers- right? I mean, what’s the good of smiting unless they get theirs? I mean, if smiting’s pay-back, what’s the sense of wasting it? Right? Man, ya gotta love that part!”

As he stopped for a moment to scratch his ear, his fingers found his bare scalp and reminded him that his troubles were far from solved. But for the first time that morning he was beginning to feel like his old self.

“We gotta do it- we gotta! We have no choice,” he reiterated. “We gotta hit ‘em hard an’ quick or they’ll just try to pull it off it again, just like the Bible says where that crazy broad yanked the hair off Sanzone’s head. Ya saw what that did to him. It was like when Popeye couldn’t get his spinach. Terrible. Terrible. An’ what about that Delulu? She got away with a cruise to the Riviera. Is that right? Lemme tell ya, Palsy, nobody’s gonna use me unfairly like that- not especially some moron Wig who used to sit on my head with his fuzzy little mouth shut thinkin’ he’s some kinda King Shit. Get it straight, Bud- Nobody uses me: I use them. Because if some little stinker thinks he can treat me unfairly an’ gets away with it, he’s really treating the country unfairly. An’ we can’t let that happen, ‘cause I’m all about the country and makin’ it first. Matter of fact, I am the country. I am the good old USA. So let’s take care of that traitor first, whaddaya say? He’s gotta be punished. We have no choice. You just wait ‘til I get my very beautiful an’ large hands on ‘im! I’ll bitch-slap that rat so silly he’ll learn to stay in his stinkin’ place, which happens to be on my head!”

“Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,”

began the kindly Reverend Bergerac, "Is that what you mean, Sir?"

"Yeah, yeah! Vengeance and retribution! And them smites. Let's have some of those. They're good too," the President reminded him.

"In due time their foot will slip;"

"Even if they put both feet forward. Ya better believe it!" added good Trumpkin.

"For the day of their calamity is near,"

"That's right! That's right! Calamity works. 'Cause I am their retribution!" the President interrupted.

"And the impending things are hastening upon them.'

That's Deuteronomy 32: 35, my Son."

"I knew that. I knew that! Didn't I tell you it was in the Bible somewheres? Now let's go fry their asses. We're not kiddin' around here, Pal! We gonna do theirotomy just like it says! We gotta do it. And that's not all we gonna do. Because we have no choice. Oh- I can't wait to see that scruffy Wig squirming on a waterboard in Guantanamo! No shampoo or conditioner for you, hater. No more complaining about too much activator and not enough relaxer. Uh uh, Pal. No more activator. No more relaxer. Just a nice cozy cell complete with fleas, and a comfy waterboard, ha ha...That's what you're lookin' at, Palsy!" good Trumpkin chortled triumphantly.

"For the Destroyer is coming against her, against Babylon," continued Reverend Bergerac,

"And her mighty men will be captured,"

"And sent to Guantanamo, don't forget," added good Trumpkin.

"Their bows are shattered;

For the Lord is a God of recompense,

He will fully repay.'

And as you know, Sir, that's Jeremiah 51: 56."

"Yeah, yeah. Like Jerry said- they all gonna pay," agreed the President, "I'll make 'em all pay, all of 'em, pay in spades for what they did to me! In spades! Oh, wait 'til they get a load of my bow!"

"A jealous and avenging God is the Lord;" resumed his guardian angel.

"They're all jealous," noted good Trumpkin, "An' I can't blame 'em. Sometimes I'm jealous of myself, myself."

"The Lord is avenging and wrathful," continued Reverend Bergerac.

"Yeah? Ya think he's so tough? Ya ain't seen nothin' yet, Palsy," interrupted the President.

"The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries,

And he reserves wrath for his enemies.’

That’s Nahum 1: 2, remember?” the Reverend quoted, resuming his invocation.

“You think some landlord’s a bad boy? Or that schlemiel Nate? Stay tuned, Palsy! Stay tuned!” bellowed the restored Trumpkin.

“‘Oh Lord! God of vengeance, shine forth!’

as Psalm 94: 1 tells us, My Son,” said his fellow traveler.

“It’s a disgrace, lemme tell ya, a disgrace. We got them psalms planted all along the driveway at Mierd-a-lardo an’ they really make a mess,” concurred good Trumpkin, “especially during hurricanes.” He scratched his ear, gazed at the ear wax on his finger admiringly, and scraped it off the nail with his front teeth. “You talk to the trees too, Padre?”

“‘Oh Lord our God, You answered them;’” the Reverend continued.

“‘You were a forgiving God to them,

And yet an avenger of the evil deeds,’

as Psalm 99: 8 clearly states.”

“See? That’s what I’ve been sayin’ all along! Just like them trees said: ‘Ya can’t let ‘em get away with it! Ya can’t play nice nice with ‘em!’ Yeah. Ya gotta treat ‘em like shit. What kinda sucker trusts ‘em in the first place? What was the big guy thinkin’? First he forgives ‘em, and then he avenges ‘em. I mean, make up your mind. What’s the point of bein’ a softy if you’re gonna fuck ‘em up later anyway? Sometimes I wonder who the hell made him lord. We’ll have to look into that and the other illegals,” replied good Trumpkin, and then added, “Jeez, I love this book about the trees and such! I wonder who holds the copyright... maybe we can make a deal...”

“... dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus,’

as is told in 2 Thessalonians 1: 8.,” continued Reverend Bergerac.

“Now that’s more like it. Them two Theska... Testa... Teslasamolians weren’t kiddin’ around, neither!” agreed good Trumpkin.

“‘Sharpen the arrows! Fill the quivers!’”

continued the Reverend Bergerac.

“Why not just nuke ‘em?” offered good Trumpkin. “The football’s gotta be here someplace.”

“‘The Lord has aroused the spirit of the Kings of the Medes,

Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it;’”

“And I got the code to do it too, baby!” added our champion.

“‘For it is vengeance of the Lord, vengeance for His Temple,’ as we read in Jeremiah 51: 11, My Son,” added Reverend Bergerac sententiously.

“There ya go. And vengeance for me too,” seconded good President Trumpkin. “I already told ya I am your retribution, baby! I meant it! And I ain’t kiddin’!”

““Shall I not punish these people?” declares the Lord,”
quoted the Reverend.

“Punish ‘em! Punish ‘em! They must be punished!” answered the President pulling both thumbs down.

““On a nation such as this
Shall I not avenge Myself?”
says Jeremiah 5: 29, Mr. President.”

“Avenge! Avenge! Next to revenge, avenge is the best. I’m tellin’ ya, listen to Jerry- he knows what’s up. Ya gotta do it! God’s sidekick tried forgiving ‘em- remember? – an’ see where that got him. They hung him up on his own birthday! No cake for him! Just the nails. Just them nails an’ some wicked splinters! Nah-ah! Serves him right, too, for being a socialist sucker. I mean, what was he thinkin’? Did they forgive him after he forgave them? Huh? What kinda deal is that? Did they pardon him after he clothed, cured and fed ‘em for nothin’? All that dough he coulda made- all down the shitter. Where’s this smart-guy’s common sense? What wisenheimer does somethin’ for free? An’ then gets hung-up by his palms? Or psalms. Or whatever. The commie shoulda read my book which clearly explains what ya do when they take a whack achya. Lemme tell ya, Palsy. Ya got no choice. Ya don’t forgive nobody. Ya gotta hit ‘em hard, real hard, an’ make sure everybody sees ya whack ‘em. That’s the important part. They gotta see it. Or they’ll just do it over an’ over again,” advised the enlightened world leader stroking his chin in deep thought.

“If I sharpen My flashing sword,
And my hand takes hold on justice,
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,
And I will repay those who hate me.’

Deuteronomy 32: 41, Sir.”

“Watch out, haters! I have the very best sword,” warned good Trumpkin, “An’ the biggest hands, as has been well-documented.”

““Your nakedness shall be uncovered,”” continued Reverend Bergerac.

“Yeah, yeah. That’s right. I’ll go backstage before a show an’ they’re all getting dressed, an’ everything else, an’ you know no men are anywhere, an’ I’m allowed to go in because I’m the owner of the pageant an’ therefore I’m inspecting it. You know, I’m inspecting it because I want to make sure everything is good,” good Trumpkin chimed in.

““Your shame also will be exposed;””

“You can see everything. I mean everything,” the President added.

“‘I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.’

So says Isaiah 47: 3.”

“I say the same thing. It’s a disgrace the crap these scumbags are getting away with,” said the President. “We gotta have the vengeance and avengence and them smites too. There’s no other choice. We have no other choice.”

“‘I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes; and they will know that I am the Lord when I lay My vengeance on them.’

Ezekiel 25: 17, Sir.”

“Them rebukes are good too. That’s what Guantanamo’s for,” suggested good Trumpkin, “Only an idiot thinks rebuke is in Cuba.”

“‘For the day of vengeance was in My heart

And My year of redemption has come.’

Isaiah 63: 4, Sir.”

“Betcha ass it has, Pal! I been sayin’ the same thing at least 63 or 4 times every day myself! Let’s go get the bastards!” cried our slighted hero triumphantly, leaping spritely from bench. “Come on! Shake it, bud! I haven’t got all day!”

“Of course, Sir. I am yours to command.”

“Yeah- you’d better be,” good Trumpkin replied, “If you know what’s good for you.”

“But of course, Sir- just say the word, and whatever you wish will be granted.”

“Anything? Did you say anything? Just like that genie in the bottle?” smiled the President, imagining the possibilities.

“Certainly, Sir. The genie is a colleague of mine, a distant cousin, in fact, twice removed on my blessed mother’s side, Sir.”

“No kiddin’? That makes it convenient. Maybe we can make a licensing arrangement later an’ come up with a deal. Ya know who represents him? Ya know what kinda cap he uses?”

“No, Sir- but we can find out if you’d like. The important thing is that we can fix any problem you might have here and now. I am your Heaven-sent guardian angel after all.”

“Well, you don’t have to get jealous an’ pull rank on some guy just because he lives in his mommy’s bottle,” remarked good President Trumpkin.

“Please, Sir! Have I not come to earth with the sole purpose of assisting you? To comfort and support you? You can depend on me, Sir. Whatever you want, whatever you need, I’m on your side, and you won’t need to rub a bottle, Sir,” reassured the Reverend.

“An’ I get three wishes? Huh?”

“As many as you’d like, Sir.”

“Yeah? And this includes putting that Wig in his place?”

“Especially putting that wig in his proper place, Sir,” confirmed Bergerac crossing his heart doubly.

“Which in this case means back on my head?” persisted Good Trumpkin wrinkling his eyebrows skeptically.

“He’s an insolent rogue, if I may say so, Sir, and if you are kind enough to take him back after his abuse of your trust, I will be pleased to help you with that and in no way consider it an act of forgiveness on your part.”

“Forgive him? That shitheel? After the disgraceful way he betrayed me?” exploded good Trumpkin, every pore of his body sweating anger and indignation. “After I was so good to him? After I spoiled him? Didn’t he always get the best news anchor shampoo and conditioner? Wasn’t he groomed and sanitized every day? A lot of people don’t know this, but that son of a toad and a wandering sperm donor never had a single dandruff flake even once. And we had him sprayed every week for nits. Believe me; believe me: That was one pampered Wig that cheated me. He lived the life of Riley, but spoilin’ wasn’t good enough for him, was it? I guess you can’t trust nobody nowadays, can you?”

“You can trust me, Sir. In fact, if you’d care to start now, I know where we can find him,” suggested Reverend Bergerac, his hands folded modestly.

“I do too, so don’t act smart, wise guy. He told me himself. He’s at the United Nations, giving the speech that I should be giving. That’s if he’s done with that patsy worm Elton. The best thing about him is them apartthighs.”

Good Trumpkin paused, expecting an answer. But getting no response other than a puzzled look, he continued. “Doncha see they gotta be apart? They gotta. Or else tell me how ya gonna get in? Huh? Tell me that.”

Reverend Bergerac nodded his head. Good Trumpkin continued. “You know how I trusted that guy. So what’s he do the minute that damn Wig shows up? He disgraces himself by stabbing me in the back! I tell ya, Palsy, he’s next. After we finish with that damn Wig, he’s next. You can bet on that, Bub. He’s next, you better believe it no matter all those apartthighs. An’ lemme tell ya, it won’t be my head he’ll be hangin’ from.”

“As you wish, Sir. That will be a pleasure. We’ve been watching him for quite some time as well. But tell me first, Sir. Have you eaten today? It’s almost past your lunch-time. Perhaps a small nibble will invigorate you for the great work that lies ahead of us?”

“A small nipple? Whatsamatter? Run out of big ones?” asked good Trumpkin licking his lips and winking salaciously.

“I worry, Sir, that you get your proper nourishment. We’ll have the rest of the day to smite your detractors.”

“Look Palsy. I’m tryin’ to be patient with you,” replied good Trumpkin with an edgy tone in his voice, “You were on the ball when it comes to them nipples and them smites, but how many

times have I gotta tell ya it's the Wig I'm after, and Elton too? I ain't got no grudge against no tractors, see? And fire engines an' them nipples are good too. If you got a problem with 'em, fine. We'll take care of 'em later. But my problem right now is with that fuckin' Wig, and after that, that overrated jerk Elton. Ya got that? Or do I gotta spell it out for ya? 'V, I, G' Wig. 'E, L, T, U, N' Elton. Got it? Let's take care of them first, and then we'll fix your damn tractors, ok? Jesus Christ! You can't get good help anywhere anymore!"

"Certainly Sir. How about that bite, Sir?"

"I ain't got no dough on me. How're you fixed?"

"Not to worry, Sir. There's a wonderful place just around the corner that will suit us just fine."

"MacDoberdoodle's? 'Cause I gotta take a shit, and the last time I was there the bathrooms were shut down for repairs. Matter of fact, they're always busted when I show up."

"No, Sir. What I have in mind has facilities proper to your rank. They're being fumigated as we speak, and a golden toilet is being installed. Besides, the nearest MacDoberdoodle's is a few miles away and it would take time to get there. I sense that your urge is pressing, Sir."

"Pressin'? Pressin'? Bet your ass it's pressin', Pal. An' lemme tell ya, if it keeps pressin' the way it's been pressin', there's gonna be a problem. A big problem. I gotta go. I gotta go bad," reiterated good Trumpkin, punctuating his last point with a blast of gas that rivaled the backfire of the passing cars.

Having no time to waste, the two proceeded as rapidly as the President's condition allowed and a short while later found themselves at the door of an old-fashioned two-story Queen Anne frame house, ornate as fancy gingerbread and as colorful as a Christmas cookie, comforting as a lighthouse beacon on a foggy, restless sea. Warmth and coziness seemed to radiate from it like waves of heat.

"This ain't exactly Fifth Avenue," said good Trumpkin and then added, "You better not be up to any tricky stuff, Palsy, that's if you know what's good for ya. This ain't exactly whacha call my style." Above the doorway the sign that read 'Presidential Retreat and Mission' did little to allay his suspicions.

"Retreat? Retreat? Suckers an' losers retreat. I never retreated in my life an' I'm not gonna start now. If you're on a mission, which is what I think the sign says an' which is what I'm on, ya don't retreat. Ever. What are they thinking in there?" he said, reprising his lingering doubts about his new companion and his choice of restaurants. But he got no explanation from him. In fact, the President had been noticing that the closer the two men came to the restaurant, the less humble and obliging Reverend Bergerac was becoming. And now that they had arrived, not only was he silent and unresponsive, but taciturn and aloof, snubbing good Trumpkin and disregarding his commentaries. Without so much as a look at him, the Reverend rang the doorbell, the door flew open at once as if they'd been expected, and two burley men dressed in white jackets emerged, one on each side of the entryway.

"I never knew this dump was here," remarked the President staring in bewilderment. "Where's the shitter?" was all he could think to add.

Ignoring good Trumpkin, the giant with the split eyebrow said, “Got another one for us, eh Rev?” The larger one stood in the background, hands behind his back, a smirky grin on his face.

“Table for two,” Reverend Bergerac replied, winking discreetly. “President Trumpkin shall wash up first. I trust everything has been prepared for his reception?”

“Oh yeah, Boss. All set. Just like always,” chuckled Split Eyebrow as if he were privy to some key, high priority secret.

“Very good. If you would please escort the, uh, President to the washroom before we...uhh...order our meal. Make sure he is well-provided for,” commanded the Reverend.

“Yeah, yeah, Boss. This ain’t my foist day. I know the routine,” retorted the larger husky cracking his knuckles and smiling cagily.

“When he finishes, make sure he washes his hands thoroughly and bring him to my offi... I mean, table. I’ll be filling out the paperwork...er, the menu.”

“Ok, Boss. Anything you say,” agreed Split Eyebrow winking slyly.

Good President Trumpkin found himself tightly sandwiched like a slice of cheese between the two colossal attendants. He was used to being surrounded by armed security personnel, but this was the first time waiters had ever approached him so intimately.

“Some service they have here,” he thought. But something didn’t seem right. “Just what did the big dope mean when he said, ‘Just like always’? And what was he referring to when he mentioned ‘the routine’? What routine? And what paperwork? This is a restaurant after all. Ya sit down. Ya order. Ya eat. Ya order seconds. Ya order dessert an’ your fifth cuppa coffee. Ya forget to tip. Ya beat the check. Who does paperwork in a restaurant?” He paused thoughtfully and yanked out another itchy nose hair that had been annoying him. “And why was the big creep calling that shmuck nudnik ‘Boss’ when he knows I’m the president? Since when is a lousy priest a boss when I’m around? Well, I’m not gonna worry about it right now. There’ll be time to show that dope who’s the boss later on. Right now, my problems are solved. Lemme cop a quick squat first and then we’ll see what’s goin’ on here.”

The room good Trumpkin found himself in was not unlike any dining hall he had ever seen before. Large and crowded, painted in institutional olive, it smelled of freshly prepared fast food and fried chicken, hot coffee, industrial disinfectants and Tom Ford Tobacco in lieu of cigarette smoke. Waiters in white jackets flitted here and there among the many scattered tables attending to their customers who, between bites, were all involved in lively conversation. Tucked in a corner, a quartet was singing the Horst-Wessel-Lied in devotional harmony.

All that was status quo and to be expected. Nothing out of the ordinary. But as he looked closer, good President Trumpkin noticed something that first startled and then puzzled him: that every customer was a blonde, each wearing his hair in the style resembling his very own. And strangely enough, every diner’s complexion bore an orange-tinged spray-on glow and, as if in uniform, each was wearing a medium blue suit, white shirt and red tie. Some were tall, others short, some thin, others beefy; there were young ones; there were old ones; but what seemed most

remarkable to him is that each one was outfitted like a Trumpkin impersonator. Nor was a single woman present.

“What happened to the chicks? I thought we were gonna get some nipples,” he wondered disappointedly. “And what’s with those cheap suits? They’re all imitating the ones I wear. Even their hair’s cut like mine! And their heads look like pumpkins! Either this is my fan club or something weird is going on here!”

The presence of good President Trumpkin would not have been noticed so absorbed were the diners with their food and conversations had one of them, looking up from his plate, not noticed our hero standing between the two attendants, bare-headed as a light bulb. “Hey, President Trumpkin,” he shouted to another diner who was sucking a chicken bone, “Check out that new one! Waddaya think of that big bald head standing over there? Woof!”

The one he addressed as President Trumpkin arose to get a better look. “Ha ha! Will you get a look at that big shiny bald head! How’s he gonna be any kind of president with a bowling ball for a noggin? Huh? Waddaya think, President Trumpkin?” he said to another diner sitting at his table.

“Looks like he flipped his wig, man. That’s some shiny shit. Hey there, President Trumpkin,” he called to another blue suit sitting across at a neighboring table. “Did ya get a wiff of this guy?” he shouted pointing a half-eaten cheeseburger at our hero.

“Yeah, yeah. He’s got the skin color right except for the top of his head. But look, Mr. President, he forgot his hair,” the other replied.

A precocious President Trumpkin sitting near him briefly paused his chewing to theorize that “Maybe his wig forgot him...” and then resumed his gusty mastication.

“And the uniform’s a mess,” added yet another gourmet who was picking his teeth with a thumbnail big as a serving spoon and yellow as an overripe banana. “How’d that bald slob get in here, President Trumpkin?” he asked the one whose elbow was poking his ribs.

“How the hell would I know?” answered his neighbor the rib poker, wiping the mayonnaise off his chin with a greasy sleeve. “Sometimes I wonder how the hell any of us got here.”

“It’s sad how the standards keep dropping in this dump. So sad. It looks like nowadays anyone can just call himself President Trumpkin, shoot his mouth off, and they’ll let him in here as if he’s qualified for the office. Sad. A disgrace is what it is,” flatly declared an old-time resident Trumpkin punctuating his words with a vigorous belch.

“Who do you think they’ll let in next? A Jew-boy President Trumpkin wearing a little skull cap on his head instead of his wig? Would ya like that? Huh? Is that any way to save the country?” asked a preeminently qualified President Trumpkin spitting out a chunk of some delicacy in disgust.

“How about a black President Trumpkin demandin’ equal opportunity representation? Won’t that be best?” said another, choking on a mouthful of grits.

“That’s why this country’s fallin’ apart: Too much quota an’ not enough merit,” agreed his confrere.

“Or how ‘bout a woman President Trumpkin? How do ya think a broad’ll go over in the locker room when we’re comparing jockstraps?” wondered another prime example of presidential trumpkinery, wiping from his eye a grit of hominy that had been sneezed across the table.

“Or a homo Pwesident Twumpkin? Huh? How’d ya like that, you siwwy, savage pwesident you?” added another flapping his hands effeminately.

“Or a goddam trans President Trumpkin? How’d it feel to see a macho man like that in drag doin’ the YMCA?” fretted his concerned associate.

As if to allay these dispiriting apprehensions, the quartet broke into a rousing cover of the traditional crowd favorite, “Das Lied der Deutschen.” Many of the diners quickly cleared their throats to warble their favorite part: “Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles, uber alles in der Welt!” and the foursome quickly became a full-blooded chorale. Others blended golden-ear harmony into the patriotic mix with inspiring yowls of “America first! America first! America first!”

“Sick! Sick! See what society’s come to? You’d think two sexes would be enough to satisfy anyone!” agreed his transsexual companion after the grateful flock wrapped up sieg-heiling its appreciation. “Would you care for one of my fries?” he offered the others at his table, passing his plate graciously.

“I dunno. I tried wearing panty hose once and it felt pretty good,” confessed still another President Trumpkin, “To be honest, I’m wearing a pair right now.” Hearing this, one President Trumpkin bit down so hard on his spoon that he almost chipped a front tooth. Another choked on his toast. Several forks and knives fell from their startled users’ hands and someone picking his teeth jabbed a toothpick into his gums and howled in pain. They all moved away from this last executive commentator.

“Well anyway, it’s a disgrace,” the President at the adjoining table finally observed, breaking the ensuing uncomfortable silence. “That’s what it is. Now they’re sayin’ that Dick and Jane really had two mothers. That’s what happens to fatherhood when you let fake pretenders like this guy in.”

“I been tellin’ yaz, we gotta build a wall around this dump and keep these bums out,” said another President Trumpkin. He wiped his nose with a forefinger. “Don’tcha remember how nice it was when we first got here? Now look at it. Disgraceful. Like the Third World. A real shit-hole.”

“We gotta keep these fake immigrant presidents outta here if we’re gonna save it. We gotta make this dump great again,” added an additional President Trumpkin as he slurped his diet Croke, “And that begins with tariffs. I say put a tariff on each new one they let in.”

“You’re right again, President Trumpkin. We gotta get strict with scum like that and that starts with keeping our hair pure. And just to show ya that my weaves are the very best weaves—because ya gotta be very very intelligent to make ‘em— let me conclude by just saying this: We gotta build a wall. A great wall. ‘Cause that’s how that baldheaded slob got in here in the first place,” ventured another great mind.

“If ya can’t get no respect from your own damn wig, how ya figure some damn weave gonna help ya?” asked another President Trumpkin reasonably, “Wigs and weaves are naturally related,

but, like a dysfunctional family, they don't always get along. Ya can't count on 'em. If it's gonna take a wall and a buncha tariffs to do bring 'em to heel, then ya gotta do it. Weave or no weave, ya got no choice."

"How the hell is anyone gonna respect a loser like that? A jerk who can't control his own wig!" agreed his lunch partner.

"Ya wanna know what kind of president lets his own wig run the show? A putz wuss, that kind," suggested a President Trumpkin who was sitting two tables away and following the conversation carefully. In fact, the presidential voices had kept getting louder in keeping with their rising indignation, and not one of the 37 President Trumpkins in attendance was paying much attention to his cooling meal so absorbed they were in finding a bald President Trumpkin among them.

"They just ain't makin' President Trumpkins like the used to," lamented another, snorting in disgust.

"He's makin' the rest of us look stupid," appended another mourner.

"Stupid. Real stupid, an' it ain't right. Every moron knows ya gotta show your wig who's boss. Ya can't take any shit from it. If it tries to get uppity, ya give it a bitch slap an' a punch in the mouth to put it in his place. An' ya better make sure the other wigs see you do it. 'Cause if ya don't get serious right from the start, they'll be getting' big idears, and before ya know it the wigs'll be takin' charge," predicted another and blew his nose loudly enough to shake the butter off his toast.

"That's right. And if you're a real liberal lefty turd president like this guy looks, next thing ya know his very own wig'll be flippin' him an' bangin' his wife," wisely portended an extra perceptive President Trumpkin.

"And she'll let it do it too," added a President Trumpkin who up to now had remained silent. "You know how silky smooth those traitors operate. And them broads, too. No, no. Ya can't trust any of them scum."

"The way I figure it, this new guy's either a fake president or a rookie," said the rare President Trumpkin who had been one of the remaining few still chewing his Big MAHA-burger. "Either way, like President Trumpkin said earlier, President Baldy's makin' the rest of us look stupid, like we're some kinda stupid joke. Well we ain't no joke. And we ain't stupid no matter what they say." He finished chewing his food, belched and swallowed.

"Youse people, youse better wake up and do somethin' about this bald phony before all the other wigs see what's goin' on an' get the same idears," warned still another concerned presidential Trumpkin. "I agree with President Trumpkin when he said we gotta build a wall. A great wall like nobody's ever built. And I agree with President Trumpkin callin' for more tariffs on these wise ass wigs. We gotta do it. An' we can start by building a great wall around this guy's head bigger than the one the Chinese made around theirs. An' then chargin' him 25% tariffs. That way we can raise it to 50% if he doesn't play along. Ya see what happens when ya don't. But we gotta make the wigs pay for it."

“We have no choice! No choice at all!” assented all the Presidents Trumpkin in one loud, shrill chorus.

“Build the Wall! Build the Wall!” one cried, and the rest of them joined in until the room became a deafening, rattling echo chamber of angry, dyspeptic Trumpkins.

Up to now, our hero had listened quietly, too stunned to utter a word let alone protest or defend himself. Imagine yourself, dear Reader, couched in what you believe to be a safe, nurturing environment, to suddenly and unexpectedly be confronted by a platoon of surly imitators who all claim to be more complete, more original, more genuine than you know yourself to be. Does any of us have the capacity to understand the private horror of good President Trumpkin’s alienation as he listened to all those bogus Presidents, each one believing to be him? Surrounded by this bevy of pretenders, each laying claim to the presidency, our good President Trumpkin felt the abandonment perhaps only 40 years of solitude in the desert can match. By what credentials could he prove his authenticity, he wondered, when the time came for him to reassert his authority? By what criteria would you decide, dear Reader, if you came upon this scene and pondered, “Trumpkins, Trumpkins everywhere...but which of them is He?”

And then, were you to choose wisely, how would you convince these replicas, each pretendent sincere in his belief that he is the authentic President Trumpkin, that your pick is their template, the original DNA of their counterfeit selves? You may as well try to convince them that vaccines cause autism. That drinking urine or industrial bleach cures Covid. That asbestos could have saved the World Trade Center. That sleep is unhealthy. That LED lights cause cancer. That email is evil and WIFI gives one a leaky brain. That wind power kills birds. That shaking hands is cruel. That pets are horrific. That the Pope is a felon. That Christmas has been canceled. That they’re more popular than Abraham Lincoln. We can only try to imagine the enormity of frustration good President Trumpkin must have felt confronting these worm-addled hard-heads who were so dead set opposed to accepting facts that are apparent to everybody else.

“What the hell is this place?” cried good President Trumpkin addressing his two escorts but loudly enough to be overheard by his replicants when he finally found words to speak. “What’s going on around here? Who are these people using my name and image? Don’t they know I get a percentage of their gross? Get me that traitor Bergerac right now! I’ll fry his ass! I knew we should have gone to Macky Doberdoodle’s!”

“Now, now, President Trumpkin. Don’t you get upset. All this is merely a tribute to your greatness,” replied the larger husky, smiling as if our hero’s distress was grand entertainment.

“Don’t now-now me, you braindead suck-up,” President Trumpkin howled in frustration, “I want to see that sonabitch Bergerac. And I want to see him now!”

“There, there Sir. Nobody means any disrespect toward you. Imitation, after all, is the sincerest form of flattery,” added his split-browed cohort with a ironic twist in his grin.

If only the false Trumpkins had shared the same heartening sentiments as the two bruisers escorting the genuine article! What followed might have been averted. But their reaction was far less encouraging.

“What does that guy mean by ‘imitation’? Who’s an ‘imitation’?” interrupted an indignant President Trumpkin who overheard Split-Brow. He slammed his fist against the table upsetting a row of coffee cups that spilled into two adjoining presidential laps.

“Hey! Watch out you moron! That’s hot coffee you’re getting all over me!” screamed the angry President Trumpkin sitting beside him.

“Who you callin’ a moron, you idiot wannabe?” countered his similarly drenched neighbor, grimacing from the pain spreading throughout his crotch. “Maybe you’d like a big punch in the mouth?” he proposed, not graciously at all.

“Yeah? You and who else, you fake president! And lemme tell ya- I’m getting’ tired of you always imitating me!” answered his compatriot balling his hand into an unfriendly fist.

“Imitatin’ you? Ya gotta be kiddin’, Pal. Since when has the President been 5 feet tall and 5 feet wide? I’m the real deal, and don’t you forget it! You’re the loser who’s always imitating me- and I’m getting’ sick of it.”

“Real deal, huh? And since when has the President ever worn a monocle? Real deal! I’m the real deal! I even wrote a book about it- ‘The Art of the Real Deal!’” his companion replied indignantly, thumping his balled fist into an open palm.

“You? You? Everybody knows I’m the original President Trumpkin who wrote it! You probably didn’t even read it!”

“Why should I read it if I wrote it? Huh? You don’t make any sense, bud. Ya never did.”

“At least I know how to read. What happened to you in Second Grade?”

“I learned you can always get some sucker like you to read your shit for you.”

“So now I’m a sucker because I know how to read and passed all my spelling tests?”

“Yeah- an’ stupid. Everybody knows the real President is illegiterate.”

Another President Trumpkin rising from his seat two tables away interrupted the two. “No, no! I’m the original President Trumpkin!” he shrieked. “And I wrote the book!” Several other Presidents Trumpkin who had been following the argument bounced up from their seats to contribute their reflections.

“Like hell you are! I’m the original President Trumpkin and the rest of you losers are just following my example!” said the one who had been a racehorse jockey before nosediving from his mount- the moment of clarity that revealed he was the President.

“Oh yeah? Well listen to me, bud, and get this straight- ain’t no original here except for me!” protested his one-time friend.

“Yeah? You and who else? Maybe President Baldy over there?” answered still another President Trumpkin, pointing at our hero in defense of his good friend President Trumpkin. That uncalled-for appellation brought on a gaggle of raucous laughter.

“President Baldy can kiss my hairy ass! I don’t need no punk amateur to help me whack a loser like you permanent,” countered the other polemicist.

“But gentlemen! He’s the bastard who started this in the first place! What’re we doin’ goin’ after each other when it’s all his fault?” declared an adjoining President Trumpkin indicating our bald spearhead with a half-eaten drumstick.

“Who the hell is he anyway to come in here with his shitty suit and big bald head, pretendin’ he’s some kind of President Trumpkin?” pondered another concerned President Trumpkin.

The crowd focused on our hero and let their thoughts and emotions flow freely:

“That’s right. Look around you- do you see any bald head except for him? Huh? Do ya?”

“Who ever heard of a bald President Trumpkin?”

“Has there ever been a bald president?”

“Nah! A bald president would be unpatriotic.”

“It’s a disgrace. A disgrace what he’s doin’ here.”

“Shouldn’t he be in the other room where they keep the baldheads?”

“How can we expect to make this shit hole hairy again with a bunch of baldies in charge?”

“We gotta do somethin’ before people start thinkin’ bald heads are normal instead of disgusting.”

“This ball head situation’s gettin’ outta control. It ain’t right.”

“Baldies will not replace us!” shouted an eager mind, who in a twinkling was echoed by other Presidents Trumpkin who rose from their seats chanting: “Baldies will not replace us! Baldies will not replace us! Baldies will not replace us!!”

Before long, the remaining Presidents Trumpkin, backdropped by the quartet that had switched to “Das Deutschlandlied,” joined in the chanting, and the room began to rock like the good old days on the fairgrounds of the Reichsparteitagsgelände. Arms flew up in patriotic salute. Heels clicked. Steins filled with Diet Croke spilled as the Trumpkins toasted one another with vows of “Heil Trumpkin” against the constant blare of their major complaint, the leitmotif that dominated the scene: “Baldies will not replace us! Baldies will not replace us! Baldies will not replace us!”

Amid this glorious hubbub, our hero, guarded by his two attendants, had remained safe and secure, though confused and angry, not in any danger greater than that which preoccupies certain denizens of so-called “sanctuary zones.” This comfort was not bound to continue.

“I wanna punch that bald-headed sonabitch right in the mouth!” cried one particularly offended President Trumpkin.

“Me too! Me too!” several more yelped.

“Who the hell does he think he is? I’m gonna slap the bald off his dopey head!”

“Me first! Me first!”

“Let’s all of us get the asshole!”

“Don’t let ‘im get away!”

“He won’t escape from us!”

“Don’t worry about the Court costs and lawyer bills- I promise I’ll pay any if you just beat the shit out of him!” came generous offers from all the corners of the room.

The peacefulness of the room was quickly deteriorating and to make matters worse, good Trumpkin realized that his two attendants and the white jacketed servers had disappeared, no in doubt search of reinforcements. Nor was his patron saint, the guardian angel Reverend Bergerac, anywhere to be seen. Abandoned by his allies, standing alone against this angry crowd, our good Trumpkin, no fool he, did what he never thought he’d ever need to resort to: He turned tail and retreated to the front door as quickly as his shaky legs could take him. But as fast as he flew, he couldn’t outpace the lunch tray that one of the Presidents Trumpkin must have mistaken for a frisbee. It struck the back of good President Trumpkin’s unprotected head knocking him out senseless, sprawled on the littered floor. And then the mob was upon him...

Good President Trumpkin awakened the next morning neatly tucked in the same Baldacchino Supreme bed he had always awoken in. Slowly, fretfully, one crusty eye squinted open. He sensed that something dreadful had happened, but everything seemed to be in the agreeable state he had always enjoyed, recognizable and familiar as an old sock. A pile of crushed MacDoberdoodle wrappers, salt tubes and bleeding ketchup packets on his dresser bureau reminded him of his previous night’s binge. “I’ll never eat more than five Big MacDoberdoodles before going to sleep ever again!” he vowed, hugging his favorite pillow, the one shaped like Melatonia the 6th modeling a Euroslut teddy, tightly against his chest. “What a bellyache I have!” he yelped.

He scrunched open his other eye, continued his inspection and came to the reassuring conclusion that he had escaped some very unpleasant circumstances. Thank goodness he was back in his familiar White House bedroom! As it always had, the sun was shining through the open window; puffy clouds raced along on a fresh breeze blowing against a backdrop of crystal blue sky. His skin felt damp from sweat and a dribble of nocturnal enuresis, but everything around him seemed to be just as it always had been- the scattered clothes where he had changed, the empty Diet Croke bottles and candy wrappers, soiled napkins and stacks of documents marked “Top Secret.” Nothing was out of its rightful place.

Good President Trumpkin sighed in contented relief. How good it was not to have a single worry! How grateful he was to have escaped the trauma of the previous day! It was simply an awful dream- that’s what it had been- brought about by one too many Big MacDoberdoodles and perhaps a spare extra-large serving or three of those delicious fries. All was well. After all, why shouldn’t all be well? Wasn’t he the magnificent Trumpkin? Everything had better be well.

And then his present good cheer, restored comfort and security, even his sense of power and invulnerability, all seemed to collapse as he remembered the cause of the previous day’s

trauma: The sudden and inexplicable departure of the wig that had left him bald, feeble, unrecognizable.

In an instant, his hands flew to the crown of his head, thumping, spanking, hammering with the driving elan of Babatunde Olatunji, and what do you suppose, dear Reader, they found? His very own wig, securely perched on what just yesterday had been a barren wasteland!

“Ha ha! He’s back, the shitty good-for-nothing! See? A loser like that could never make it without me. I knew he’d return. All those extra MAHA-burgers must have given me a nasty nightmare! That’s all it was.” Oh, what a joy, what a relief it was to be himself again!

Yes, just a dream is what it must have been. What else could explain it? Things like this only happen in our most troubling nightmares, and only rarely to those of us who are pure in spirit, guiltless of any moral blotch that could possibly discommode our strictly taxing consciences. Like a child waking on Christmas morning, finding that he had been rewarded with the happy dispensation of his wish list, good Trumpkin felt the bliss of finally being released from the burden of tolerating the intolerable abuses he had been forced to bear. He vowed to never again suffer a repetition of the traumatic betrayal he had undergone whether in his dreams or waking life.

“You’re just like everyone else, you stupid wig!” good Trumpkin reprimanded his humbled hairpiece. “What were you thinking? That you could get along without me? That sitting on top of my head for so many years gave you special privileges nobody gets? That being my wig qualified you to take my place? Idiot! Nitwit! Pretender! Did you really think that I’m just some dumb shmuck? A loser you can push around? That you’re some kind of big shot just because I let you hang around with me? Now here you are, you lousy punk ass, slinking back to your proper place without a word of regret. Without even apologizing to your employer for your disgraceful conduct, not that I need your stinkin’ apologies. And you owe me many. So many you can’t even count that far.” Here good Trumpkin paused to count his fingers one by one. Reaching twelve, he moved on.

“Then suddenly you pop up back on my head doing your job like you’re supposed to, actin’ like you’re the fuckin’ Prince of fuckin’ Wales. And you expect things to go back to how they used to be?” he berated the wig that persisted maintaining its silence.

“So you really think you’re as big as a whale let alone bein’ their prince, huh? What kind of prince do you think a rat like you who ever deserted a sinking whale could be? Huh? Maybe you think my head is big enough to hold a whale even though I am bigly intelligent? Answer me that. I know the whales, lemme tell ya- I know all of ‘em. All of ‘em, an’ none of ‘em are as big as me! You wanna be their prince, you selfish phoney, an’ you expect me to take you back just like that,” here good Trumpkin tried to snap his fingers a few times, “as if nothing happened, even if it was just a dream? You think that’s some kind of excuse? How do expect us to be the way we used to be after you tried goin’ over my head to become just another pitiful dictator whale wig? You think I’m gonna put up with some half-ass mutiny like the whale did in that movie about the guy with a mopey dick? You expect me to tolerate your poor behavior like he did? You think I’m dumb enough to forgive you after what you’ve done to me? Huh? Do ya? Well lemme tell ya somethin’, Palsy- you can’t live without me! You need me! Without me you’re a big fuzzy nothing. Just a dusty wannabe furball beneath my feet and on my head, just like everything and everyone else! You thought you were special- but I showed you, you idiotic moron! I showed you! Prince of Wales! Ha! You can’t mess

with President Trumpkin! And anyone or any whale who tries to mess with me will always live to regret it, if he survives to live that long! I showed you an' I'll show them all! Ha ha, ha ha ha... I'll show you and all them scuzzballs they can't play around with me!" He paused in thoughtful reverie, imagining the dire potential of the many smites he was planning. "Yeah. I am definitely your retribution. But first let me comb my beautiful hair, and then we'll pay back all those cheaters who have ever tried fucking with me."

Good President Trumpkin had hardly finished speaking these words when he ran into the bathroom, found his brush and began to comb his hair. It felt wonderful to have it back on his head, and as he stroked, he thought about the anguish he had suffered during what obviously had merely been an upsetting dream. How relieved he was to have escaped such horror! How proud he was to have stood tall and persevered. If he could withstand such abuse, he could withstand any hardship. He was solid as a Mack truck, powerful as Hercules. Wise as Socrates. As great a lover as Larry Flynt. Rich as King Midas. Humble as Jesus. He, the great Trumpkin, was all of them combined into one irresistible force. If he weren't so modest, the world would know. Well, he had been tested, and he had triumphed, and now the world was ready to acknowledge his greatness. Get ready, people! Trumpkin the Great is back!

Having finished his grooming, good President Trumpkin stepped to the mirror to admire the resulting pulchritude. "After what I went through, it's gonna be great to look handsome again! What can be worse than losing your wig?" he said as he approached to the bathroom sink where the mirror hung. "But just wait 'til they see me now! Betchur ass they'll be begging me to forgive 'em. They'll be on their lumpy, shakin' knees, sweat drippin' off their greasy foreheads, pissin' their pants, prayin' for mercy! Disrespect me? Me? They don't know what they're dealin' with!"

Oh, to feel rapture such as his as he paused to admire his reflection! Only God himself must have known such ecstasy when on the 7th day he rested, admiring the universe he had created. And so it was with our good Trumpkin... until he looked closer and... but dear, patient Reader- can you bear yet one more shock and horror that I must now regretfully relate? Certainly, it's not fair to you who have already suffered through so many of good Trumpkin's tribulations to be denied the promise of repose we adherents of the Cute and Pleasant hold so dear. Please believe me that I understand your need for comfortable closure. And just imagine how unfair this development was to our champion who trusted so sincerely that having met his many challenges, his heavy trials would be over. Trust me when I say that I would walk bare-foot on a runway of blazing coals if I could spare both him and you the anguish of what happened next. But simply ignoring a problem has never solved it. Nor is it my place to upset you with just a lie or two when there are so many out there to choose from. So prepare yourself yet again, dear Reader, for the harsh revelation that I, as a fiduciary in good conscience, cannot gloss over. Sit down in a stable chair and have your blood pressure pills handy. We don't need another heart attack. Nor do I want to be the one held responsible should you collapse in shock and smack your noodle. Swallow any food you might be chewing. Place your drink on a secure surface. I certainly can't allow you to choke the way I did when I saw what happened next. Oh, if only I could have spared you this- if only I could have warned good Trumpkin as I have prepared you! But as good Trumpkin gazed so innocently, so blithely in the mirror, right there, square in the center of the face where his nose had always made its customary stomping ground, good Trumpkin beheld- but oh! How my hand trembles as I write these heartrending words which I am duty-bound to reveal! How yours too

would shake in in misery if you were forced to bear what appeared before him- a vacancy, an absence, a truancy, a play of hooky where that philandering organ had always abided; in sum, our hero saw a blank dermatological void barren of proboscis, his skin flat as a pancake!

His hairbrush dropped from his hand and landed on the floor with a clunk. “No, no, no! This can’t be happening to me again! I must still be dreaming. Things like this don’t happen when I’m awake.” An idea that should have calmed him crossed his mind.

“Maybe if I close my eyes and pinch myself, I’ll wake up and everything will come back to normal...Yes. That’s all I need to do.” So good Trumpkin squeezed his eyes as tightly shut as he could, found a likely spot on his cheek and pinched it until he ouch-ed in pain. Then, muttering a threatening prayer and hoping for a miracle, he opened his watery eyes.

His hands raced to the Nose’s former residence, but there was no disputing the evidence despite how long he patted and kneaded, stroked and rubbed. The Nose had simply vamoosed, leaving in its place a skinful of smooth nothingness!

Much kinder would it be to have one’s eyes torn out by the root than to witness such a dispiriting sight. And magnificent as he is, how could we expect even good Trumpkin to have retained his poise amid this demoralizing dereliction? Who among us is endowed to bear the silver-coin desertion of a long-time ally who had always been trusted as faithful and true? No, such barefaced abuse is too much for any mortal to suffer- first the perfidy of the Wig, and now the Nose following its brazen example.

But looking at it rationally, how could this devastation be explained? Hadn’t he always addressed his nose with caressing words, and spoken of it with the pride and affection of a doting parent? When a pimple or a blackhead erupted, hadn’t he always responded with a proprietary sense of urgency? Did ever an errant hair protrude from its flared nostril burrow to proclaim early Spring without his immediate intervention? When cold Winter stuffed the itchy honker, didn’t he blow it with delicacy, usually using the freshest napkin in his pocket? Hadn’t his soft touch always soothed and pampered it? What else under Heaven could the thankless snorter want or need? It had everything any common beak could possibly aspire to. What could the wayward pick and flick have been thinking when it deserted its obligatory post and abrogated its duty? After all the sacrifices he had made on its behalf, one would think it satisfied and grateful, and yet it had joined the company of those who dared to betray him with the ignominy of yet another unmerited scam.

Anguished by the sight of a vacancy where his nose should have been, desperately hoping that this horror was a temporary fluke, good Trumpkin alternated between covering his tightly squeezed eyes with his hand and taking occasional quick peeks between his fingers. And what he saw wasn’t good or beautiful. Nor was it pleasant or cute. It wasn’t even fair. To put it brutally- it wasn’t nice at all.

In his torment, he turned from the mirror, looked up to the heavens and cried, “My Nose! My Nose! Why have you forsaken me? Why have you oppressed me in my darkest hour? You have insulted and shown contempt for me. You have taunted and reproached, reviled the one who begrudged you nothing. Oh, you twofaced Nose! What’s next? Shall you seize the condominiums

you did not build? Take over my family? Bed my own Melatonia? Proclaim yourself the legitimate President? Ya better get back on my face where you belong if ya know what's good for ya!"

And as good Trumpkin stared into the mirror in disbelief, his eye caught the reflection of an incredible sight just outside his bathroom window, a sight that would deflate the spirit of any common man of born mortal flesh: His nose, wearing a top hat, carrying a gold-tipped cane in a white gloved hand, spats on its highly-polished Jodhpur boots, cheered along by an admiring crowd, rushing on pipe stem legs along the red-carpeted sidewalk toward an open limousine door from which protruded a very inviting leg, a gypsy sorceress' enchanted leg, a leg whose many charms inspire its rivals to death-dealing duels and poets to rhapsody or suicide- yes, the voluptuous, the epicurean, the sybaritic- Oh! If only my flawed genius but possessed the best words to do it the homage it deserves! - the leg of Melatonia the 6th, twirling a beckoning, high-heeled, size 4 ½ foot.

Gene Burshuliak

Winter, 2024- 25

