

Executive Powers: Revolutionary War



By Samuel Spirits

Preface

This is a work in progress. Please let me know if you have comments on the current draft, especially regarding critiques and/or places where the writing is not particularly smooth.

If I sent you this, I emphasize you are under **no obligation to read any of this**. For those that do choose to read, I hope you enjoy!

Preamble

Dropping the Bomb

Huntress Thompson stared outside her office window with a sense of fear and loathing.

Once again, her idiotic editors had rejected her newest piece, saying it was too raw, too edgy, too 'self-centered.'

Well, of course it was!

The people were sick and tired of reading the same drab stories day after day. They wanted something new. Something spicy. Something to keep them at the edge of their seats!

One of these days, Thompson was going to find a story so powerful, even her eggheaded editors would be blown away! And when she did, she wasn't going to just sit back and watch from the sidelines. No; she was going to be right there, smack dab in the middle of the action!

Thompson's phone rang, shattering her concentration. She snarled and picked up her device.

"What the hell do you want?!" she screamed.

"Oh my," Curtis Vonnegut replied with a chuckle, "sounds like somebody got another rejection."

Thompson clenched her fists.

"I'm hanging up!"

"Wait, wait, wait," Vonnegut pleaded. "I wanted your opinion on my newest idea for a novel."

Thompson crossed her arms, saying nothing.

"The story," Vonnegut went on, "centers on a universe that parallels our own. For example, its characters are inspired by historical figures from our world, but with different names, backstories, and even genders."

Thompson rolled her eyes.

"If I wanted to read about history," she said with a snort, "I'd open a damn history book!"

"But that's not all!" Vonnegut continued. "Unlike in our world, no one in this parallel universe has any Powers, nor Executive Powers! They're just ordinary folks, living ordinary lives."

Thompson scratched her chin.

"A world without Powers...without Executive Powers?"

"Exactly!" Vonnegut replied, then fiddled with his thumbs. "So, what do you think?"

Thompson looked out to the horizon.

"I think," she spoke, "I think, that a world...like...that..."

Thompson slowed her speech as she noticed a strange, mushroom shaped cloud blossoming in the distance.

"What...the...?"

A titanic shockwave slammed into the building, shattering its windows and tossing Thompson to the ground.

"Hello?" Vonnegut asked. "Are you there? Thompson! What just happened?!"

Thompson rubbed her head, then looked back at what remained of the mysterious cloud. Without listening to Vonnegut's words, Thompson grabbed her phone and placed it to her ear.

"I think..." she said, wiping a streak of blood from her face before giving a toothy grin. "I think, that a world without Powers wouldn't be half as fun as ours!"

Thompson hung up and sprinted down the hall, raising her arms and shouting at the top of her lungs.

"Power: Gonzo Journalism!"

Instantly, a tall, lanky figure with a camera for a head materialized by her side.

"What's up, boss?" The cameraman asked as it ran besides her.

"I don't know, Gonzo," she said with a smile, "but it's definitely a scoop!"

The duo made it to the roof and jumped into the news helicopter, flying off in the direction of the strange cloud. After setting course, Thompson activated her Power again, summoning a second Gonzo to take control of the wheel.

A few minutes later, Thompson nodded to the first Gonzo while adjusting her bucket hat and yellow-tinted glasses. Gonzo raised three fingers...then two...one...

"Hello Baltimore!" Thompson screamed into her mic. "This is Huntress Thompson, reporting live from the air! Moments ago, our city was hit by a massive shockwave! Was this a natural disaster? A new Artifact? Or perhaps the bloody aftermath of a battle between two Presidents? Well, we're here to find out."

Thompson shifted to the side, revealing a massive crater behind her.

"Below," she continued, "we've discovered what seems to be where the shockwave originated from. Preliminary estimates suggest the crater to be about 300 feet deep with a radius of 1200 feet. Moreover—"

"Woah, woah, woah!" Gonzo shouted, pointing past her, "there's something down there!"

Thompson turned, spotting a blazing light flickering at the edge of the crater. She gave a sly smile.

"Take us down, Gonzo!"

"I'd rather not," Gonzo spoke nervously. "I think I'm getting the fear."

"Nonsense!" she shouted back. "We came here to figure out what the hell happened! And you must realize," she said, pointing to the light, "that we've found the main nerve!"

"I know," Gonzo said with a shake of his head, "that's what gives me the fear..."

Reluctantly, Gonzo lowered down the copter. Before he could land, Thompson jumped out of the vehicle and sprinted to the crater's edge.

As she approached, Thompson mentally prepared herself for every possible mystery that might await her within the strange light. However, she was entirely unprepared as a large, ordinary man with short gray hair and circular glasses stepped out of its glow.

"Greetings!" the man shouted as the light faded around him. "Are you with local or national news?"

Thompson blinked, opened her mouth, then closed it back up again.

"Uhh..." she finally spoke, "local?"

The man maintained his smile, but was clearly disappointed.

"That's alright," he said with a shrug, "it'll get there soon enough. Are you rolling now?"

Thompson gave a weak nod.

"Excellent!" The man cleared his throat. "My fellow Americans..."

The man raised the back of his hand, causing Thompson to take a step back.

"A Presidential Seal?!" she whispered to herself as she looked over the symbol of a bald eagle inscribed within a circle of stars on his hand.

"...my name is Henry S. Truman," the man continued, "a President of our great nation. And the destruction you see here," he gestured to the crater behind him, "is a result of my Executive Power: The Manhattan Project."

Thompson paused, taking in the weight of his words.

"And what do you want?" she asked.

"As thing stands," he replied, "our nation is being torn apart by the constant battles waged between the Presidents and their Parties. Heck, we're practically on the brink of a second Civil War!" He gave a shake of his head. "As a President, I know this is bad, and I've come here today with the hope of putting an end to these pointless feuds."

He looked to the distance.

"But of course," he continued, "it is not enough to yearn for peace. We must work for it, and if necessary," he said with a small grin, "fight for it!"

Thompson furrowed her brow.

"What the hell are you talking about?" she asked.

Truman raised his arms, transforming his friendly grin into a vicious smile.

"In order to form a more perfect union, insure domestic tranquility, and to secure the blessings of liberty!" he exclaimed, "I am declaring the establishment of a grand tournament that will decide once and for all: which President stands as the greatest of all time?!"

Truman stared expectingly at Thompson.

“...uhh,” she spoke up, “please...tell us more?”

Truman raised three fingers.

“This experiment,” he continued, “shall be organized by a trinity of Presidents consisting of myself, Bill Taft, and Ruth Hayes.” He raised a fourth finger. “It will take place at this very spot, four months from today, on Tuesday, November 4th. I’m also very pleased to announce,” he said with a grin, “that we’ve already secured four prominent Presidents to take part in our event.”

Truman lowered his fingers one at a time, his voice lingering on each name as he spoke.

“Theo Roosevelt...Gabe Lincoln...Tanya Jefferson...and Jordan Washington...”

Thompson widened her eyes.

“Every member of Rushmore!” she exclaimed.

“Exactly!” Truman said, his gaze centering on Gonzo’s camera. “So, my fellow Presidents, I sincerely hope you’ll join me for what is sure to be...a Revolutionary War!”

Thompson stood dumbstruck momentarily, then waved out her arms.

“C-Cut!” she shouted.

Gonzo’s light flicked off, ending the broadcast. Truman breathed out and wiped a hand across his forehead.

“Well,” he spoke with a thicker Missouri accent than before, “the die is cast!”

He turned to Thompson.

“Say, do you mind giving me a ride back?” he said with a chuckle. “It seems my car didn’t quite survive the blast!”

“...uh, sure...” she replied without thinking, her brain still stuck in a daze.

Thompson continued staring for a moment, then shook out her head.

Jesus, what the hell was she doing?!

The golden opportunity that she had always yearned for was standing right in front of her! Was she really going to just stand around and gawk like an idiot while this once in a lifetime chance passed her by?

Thompson gritted her teeth, then slapped herself across the face.

“You can come with us!” Thompson shouted, regaining her composure, “on one condition!” She pointed to herself. “I get to be the MC of the tournament!”

Truman gave an icy stare to Thompson.

“Are you honestly trying to make demands of me,” he asked as he gestured to the crater behind him, “after witnessing the terrible destruction I can bear upon you?”

He continued staring down Thompson, then broke into a hearty laugh.

“Man alive!” he said with a snort, “you’ve sure got gumption, I’ll give you that!”

Truman gave Thompson a friendly pat, the force of his slap nearly toppling her over.

“I’ll have to run it by Taft and Hayes first,” he said with a grin, “but as far I’m concerned, you’ve got the job!” Truman looked out, then pointed to the helicopter. “Now then, what sort of model do you have there?”

With that, Truman jaunted to the vehicle, leaving Thompson and Gonzo trailing behind.

“Gonzo,” Thompson spoke up.

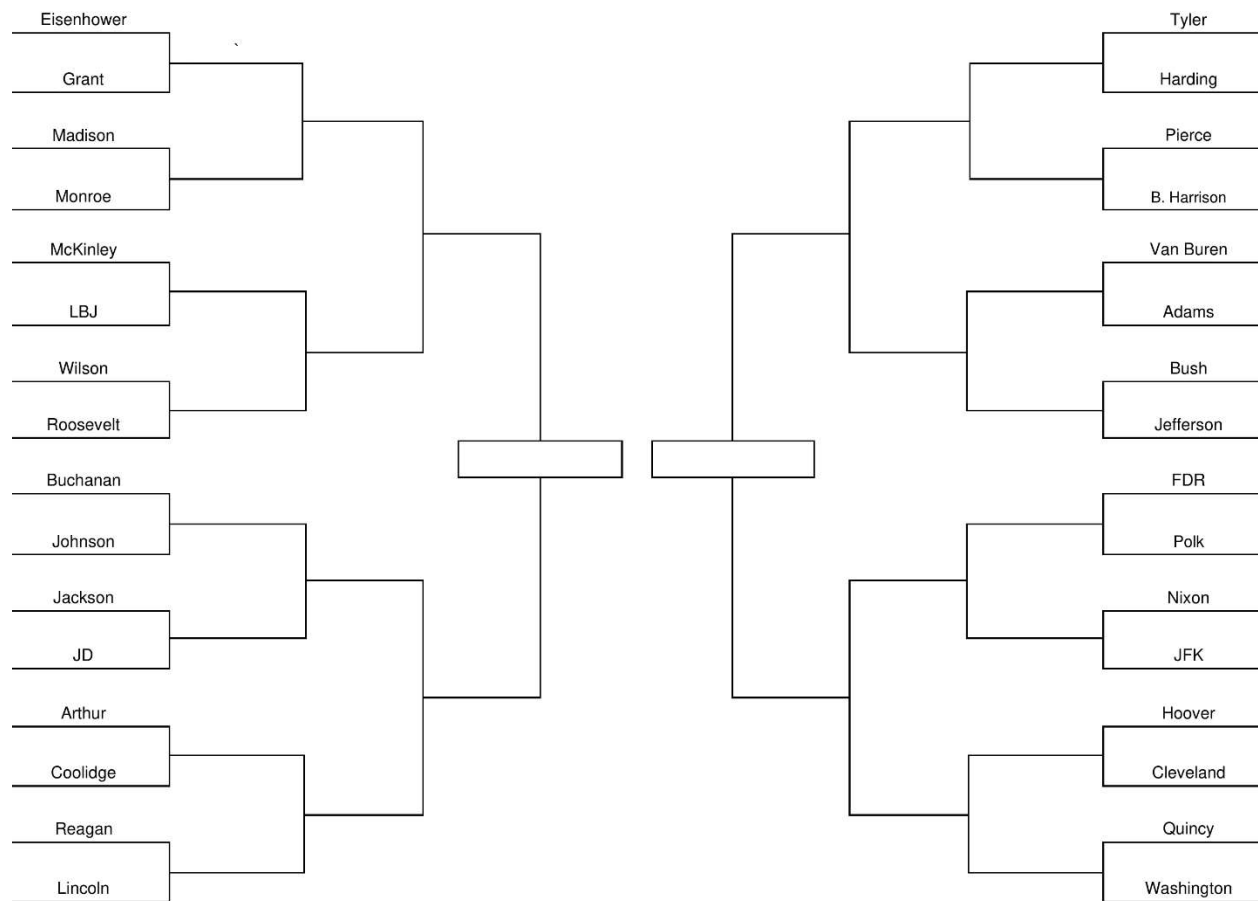
“Yeah boss?”

“I have a lot of questions,” she said, looking out at the strange man geeking out over their news helicopter. “The first of which,” she said scratching her head, “is who the hell is Henry Truman?”

* * * * *

Over the next few months, dozens of Presidents would reach out to join Truman’s Revolutionary War. Then, on the eve of November 3rd, the fateful bracket was released for the world to see...

The Bracket



Block R:

[The Supreme Commander] Deedee Eisenhower vs [The Hero of Appomattox] Odysseus S. Grant
 [The Sage of Montpelier] Jamie Madison vs [The Heir of Good Feelings] Jane Monroe
 [The Napoleon of Protection] Will McKinley vs [Landslide Landon] Landon B. Johnson
 [The Professor] Willow Wilson vs [The Man in the Arena] Theo Roosevelt

Block L:

[10-Cent Jimmy] Jim Buchanan vs [The Tennessee Tailor] Andre Johnson
 [Old Hickory] Andrea Jackson vs [The Masked Fighter] JD
 [The Gentleman Boss] Charles Arthur vs [Silent Cal] Callie Coolidge
 [The Platinum Star] Ronda Reagan vs [The Rail Splitter] Gabe Lincoln

Block J:

[The Presidential Killer] Johnny Tyler vs [The Harmonizer] Wanda Harding
 [Handsome Hank] Hank Pierce vs [The Human Iceberg] Benny Harrison
 [The Little Magician] Martina Van Buren vs [The Colossus of Independence] Johan Adams
 [The Timberwolf] Jorge Bush vs [The Apostle of Democracy] Tanya Jefferson

Block W:

[The Sphinx] Frances D. Roosevelt vs [Young Hickory] Jade Polk

[The King of Camelot] Jay F. Kennedy vs [Tricky Dick] Dixie Nixon

[The Great Humanitarian] Hera Hoover vs [The Beast of Buffalo] Gregory Cleveland

[The Madman from Massachusetts] Quincy Adams vs [The American Cincinnatus] Jordan Washington

Fact and Fiction: Preamble

Hello Reader! As you may have noticed, there are many historical references made throughout this novel. To help make the references more accessible, I have included **entirely optional chapters** labelled “Fact and Fiction” in red ink throughout the book in order to elaborate on some of these references, as well as to clarify some points where the book strays from historical accuracy. A few things of note:

- To distinguish between characters in the book and their historical counterparts, I will often specify people by their first names (e.g. Henry Truman refers to the book character, while Harry Truman refers to the real-life person he is inspired from).
- Some of the historical inaccuracies are setups for scenes that happen much later in the book. In such cases, I will omit discussing these historical inaccuracies until their payoffs are revealed.
- I will use the abbreviation EP:RW to refer to this book, Executive Powers: Revolutionary War.

With that established, let's begin with some notes about the Preamble.

Thompson. The character Huntress Thompson is based off the journalist Hunter S. Thompson, who is perhaps most well-known for writing the book “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas”, as well as for his unique style of writing known as “Gonzo Journalism” which includes the writer (i.e. himself) as a central character in the stories he writes.

The Manhattan Project. This refers to the real-life project of the same name which developed the atomic bomb during World War II. While it was initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt, it was ultimately used by Harry Truman.

Epitaphs. In most cases, the epitaphs given to the Presidents are either nicknames they had in real life, or slight deviations of this due to changes in their first name (e.g. [Handsome Hank] for Hank Pierce is based off the real-life nickname “Handsome Frank” for Franklin Pierce). Epitaphs which are not a straightforward modification of a real life nickname will be discussed in later installments of Fact and Fiction.

Day 1: The First Branch

Two Star Generals

Huntress Thompson weaved her motorcycle through the crowded lines of traffic. It was hard to believe that just four months ago, these streets had been nothing but dirt.

But now?

Families ate burgers next to thugs with cigars, saxophonists jammed in front of workers putting up walls, and arms dealers peddled their wares alongside fanatics screaming about religion.

The city was pure chaos, and Thompson loved every second of it.

She continued her ride, then came to a halt as she reached the towering marble coliseum at the center of town.

"Damn," she remarked, as she got off her motorcycle.

"Hey you!" an agent in black screamed at her. "You're not allowed to park here!"

Thompson gave a cocky grin.

"Listen up, chump," she said, raising her ID badge to his face, "I'm Huntress Thompson, VIP!"

The Secret Service agent scanned her ID, then gave a sour look.

"You were supposed to be here half an hour ago."

"Oh yeah?" Thompson asked sarcastically. "Bite me!"

The agent rolled his eyes, then grabbed a walkie-talkie.

"Huntress Thompson is at gate 7; requesting teleportation."

Thompson tilted her head.

"Requesting wha—?"

She blinked, finding herself in a spacious room with a long desk and a clear glass panel at its front.

"Hot dog," she muttered, stepping forward and looking out the window. Below, Thompson saw thousands of people seated in the stands around a giant circle of earth at the stadium's center.

"So that's the arena, eh?" she spoke to herself.

"Ehem," someone coughed from behind.

Thompson turned around, noticing a pianist seated behind her.

"You ready?" the man asked.

Thompson shot a thumbs up. The pianist nodded, then started to play.

The rambunctious crowd below started quieting down as they took notice of the sound playing across the stadium speakers. At the same time, the cameras throughout the arena turned to face the commentary box.

“Good morning everybody!” Thompson shouted into her mic, “and welcome, to the Revolutionary War!!!”

The crowd let loose a torrent of screams.

“For those that don’t know,” she continued, “I’m Huntress Thompson, your master of ceremonies!” She threw out her arm. “Helping me out with the technical analysis of our fights, we have the man who made this whole event possible...”

The music crescendoed, then ended with the pianist slamming his hands across the keys. The man rose up, revealing his face to the crowd.

“Hello!” Truman spoke out. “Today, the entire world—”

“Just a minute, Henry,” Thompson spoke up while holding the mic away from her face, “let me introduce you first.”

Despite holding it at a distance, Thompson’s mic accidentally broadcasted her message across the stadium, inciting a wave of laughs from the crowd. Thompson gave an embarrassed cough.

“Anyways,” she continued, “joining me today is [The Man from Independence], Henry Shipp Truman!”

The crowd erupted in cheers.

“Henry S. Truman,” he corrected, then turned to the crowd. “Today, the entire world shall be looking to America for enlightened leadership towards peace and progress. It is my duty to find this leadership, and I shall not shirk from it!”

He placed a small sign on top of his desk.

“That’s right!” he shouted as he read his sign aloud, “the buck stops here!”

“Beautiful stuff, Truman,” Thompson spoke up, “now, let’s get to brass tacks!”

The stadium screens shifted to a timeline for the rest of the week.

“Our schedule,” Thompson continued, “will consist of eight fights during each of the first three days, followed by the quarterfinals on Friday, with both the semifinals and finals taking place on Saturday. Our closing ceremony will be on Sunday, whereupon our fighters shall pledge allegiance to the ultimate winner of the tournament!”

She gestured to the arena.

“To help referee our fights, we’ve got the only man in the world who’d rather be judge than President! Give it up for [The Big Chief], Bill Taft!”

At that, the giant Taft walked into the arena with a jolly grin, his hands gripping a massive war hammer as if it were a gavel.

“And as you probably all noticed,” Thompson continued, “Secret Service agents have been stationed throughout the coliseum to make sure nothing here goes awry! Leading these soldiers is a master when

it comes to quelling riots and removing uninvited guests! Let's hear it for [Ruth the Forgotten], Ruth Hayes!"

In the stands, Hayes waved her right arm and what remained of her left; a set of heavy scars covering her body.

"And we ought to emphasize," Truman continued, "that while we've taken every precaution to protect our spectators, we can't guarantee your complete safety. Those who are concerned can watch the matches from any of the televisions stationed throughout the stadium, as well as those spread throughout the town. And for those who do choose to stay with us," he said with a grin, "get ready for the ride of your lives!"

"Alright, alright; enough with the foreplay!" Thompson shouted, "let's move to the action!"

The crowd roared with approval.

"We're starting things off with a bang!" she continued. "A match featuring two of the greatest commanders the world has ever seen! History may never know who's the better general, but we're all about to find out who's the better fighter!"

She gestured to the arena.

"Coming from the Western entrance, we have a warrior who's fought around the world as the leader of the Hidden Hard Party! She's trained legions soldiers during her military career, as well as generations of students as head of Columbia! If you ask anyone what they think about her, the answer is always the same: I, like, her! Now let's hear it, for [The Supreme Commander], Deedee Eisenhower!"

A tank rolled into the arena. The crowd paused for a moment, then erupted as Eisenhower popped out the tank's hatch wearing her signature wool field jacket and peaked visor cap. Her clothes were covered in stripes and medals; a circle of five stars placed squarely atop her shoulders.

She waved to the crowd, then stepped out of the tank and grabbed the barrel of its gun. She lifted up, tearing the head clean off the tank's body. The vehicle rolled back as Eisenhower walked forward, carrying the tank head with her to the center of the arena.

"Jesus Christ!" Thompson exclaimed. "It looks like Eisenhower is using that tank head as her freaking weapon! We haven't even started and I'm already getting goosebumps!"

"Don't get too excited," Truman said, rolling his eyes. "Eisenhower's an alright general, but she doesn't know any more about fighting than a pig knows about Sunday."

"Ouch!" Thompson said, pretending to flinch, "I take it you two aren't on the best of terms, then?"

Truman gave a small smile.

"No comment."

"Anyways," Thompson continued, "coming from the Eastern entrance, we have the second in command of the National Union Party! He carries the reputation as a butcher, but in reality, he's a gentle soul who can't stand the slight of blood! But don't think for a second he's a pushover! No, this man won't

ever stop fighting; not until he obtains complete and unconditional surrender! He's [The Hero of Appomattox], Odysseus S. Grant!"

Grant shook his head as he walked out.

"There's no S..." he mumbled to himself.

He walked in wearing a plain blue army uniform together with a well-worn silk hat and a pair of muddy boots. Behind him, Grant dragged a large, lumpy bag into the arena.

Grant reached the center of the arena and opened up his bag, releasing a stockpile of weapons onto the ground.

"This was Calvin's pistol," he spoke softly as he picked up a gun from the pile. "He died in our battle against Lee before he could fire a single shot."

Grant placed the pistol down and grabbed a sword.

"This was Benjamin's," he continued. "He was a valiant soldier, slain on that terrible night of Johnson's betrayal." Grant shook his head and placed the weapon down. "I've lost a lot of soldiers on my watch," he said, looking at Eisenhower, "and I will not let a single one of their deaths be in vain."

He thrust his arms to the side. The weapons surrounding Grant vibrated, then rose into the air. A gun slammed into Grant's arm, followed by a sword, then another weapon, and another. Before long, each of Grant's arms were covered by a mass of weapons taking the form of two, giant, weaponized arms.

"Executive Power," Grant spoke quietly but decisively, "Union Army; To Arms."

Taft glanced at the fighters while maintaining his jolly smile.

"Are both of you about ready to start?"

The fighters gave a pair of silent nods.

"Excellent!"

Taft replaced his joyful smile with a stern glare.

"Oh man!" Thompson shouted, "looks like Taft is getting serious now!"

"He's an easy-going guy," Truman grinned, "but not when it comes to judging."

Taft breathed out and raised his gavel into the air.

"Let the first match!" he shouted, slamming his hammer down, "begin!!"

Tanks

Grant pointed his arms at Eisenhower.

“Union Army,” he shouted, “21 Gun Salute!”

Dozens of rifles extended out of Grant’s weaponized hands and fired in quick succession. Eisenhower lowered her tank head, blocking the shots, then charged forward, crashing into Grant with the force of a moving train.

Grant took a step back from the blow, but no further. He pushed forward, shoving Eisenhower off before thrusting his hands towards her. Eisenhower stepped back, barely dodging the attack.

She smirked for half a second, then dropped her smile as a sea of swords shot out of Grant’s palms.

Frantically, Eisenhower flung her body back, dodging the blades at the cost of losing her balance. Grant stepped forward, slamming Eisenhower and flinging her across the arena. In the air, Eisenhower twisted her body around, landing on her feet with poise.

“You know,” Eisenhower shouted, readying her stance. “In spite of the many criticisms I’ve read about you, my respect for you has always been high! I’m certain you’re one of the greatest generals America has ever had, if not its greatest.”

Eisenhower tightened her grip and widened her smile.

“That being said,” she continued, “I’ve got people counting on me; and I’m not going to let them down!”

* * * * *

Years ago, a bugle blared across Camp Meade, rousing its soldiers awake. The troops shot out of bed, eager to greet the day with their beloved commander.

“Good morning soldiers!” a young Eisenhower shouted.

“Good morning ma’am!” The soldiers shouted back.

Eisenhower smiled as she looked across the line, then gave a light frown.

“Where’s Fitzgerald?”

Someone pointed to a solitary figure sitting beneath a green light by the docks.

“He’s working on his novel again.”

Eisenhower shook her head with a smile.

“I’ll allow it this time,” she said playfully, “but only because we’ve gotten some very good news from headquarters.” She gave a toothy grin. “Pack your bags boys, we’re taking a trip to Europe!”

“Wait a minute,” a soldier responded with glee, “does that mean we’re finally going off to war?”

“You’re damn right!” she replied.

The soldiers gave whoops of cheers as they exchanged high fives, a few of them even breaking into tears.

"Don't start crying on me yet!" Eisenhower said with a grin. "I still have one more piece of news to tell you!"

"I knew it," a soldier said with a groan, "there's always bad with the good!"

"It does seem that way, don't it?" Eisenhower replied with a chuckle. "Heck, you all joined this Tank Corp hoping to take control of the army's greatest weapon, only to find we didn't have any tanks!"

"That's alright!" a soldier exclaimed. "You helped us build those makeshift ones!"

"That I did," Eisenhower said, looking fondly across the row of trucks with machine guns strapped to their backs. "Sadly," she continued, "we'll be discontinuing our makeshift models starting today."

The soldiers gave a collective moan.

"Because," Eisenhower went on, "we've got ourselves a real one!"

At that, a tank rolled onto the field. The soldiers gave screams of joy and rushed to their newest toy; none of them waiting long enough for Eisenhower to officially dismiss them. Eisenhower raised a warm smile, then looked back to her deployment orders.

"November 18th..." she spoke to herself.

That was that the day she'd head to Europe; the day Eisenhower would finally achieve her dream of fighting in a real war.

Then, on the morning of November 11th, the war, along with all of Eisenhower's dreams, came to an abrupt halt.

A few days later, Eisenhower found herself at the army's victory celebration.

"I tell you," she lamented to a friend, "we're going to spend the rest of our lives explaining why we didn't get into this damn war!"

She downed her drink, then got up to grab another. As she rose, she bumped into a large man carrying a pitcher of beer.

"Oye!" the man shouted as he spilled the drink over himself, "watch where you're going!"

"You could do the same..." Eisenhower spoke under her breath.

"Excuse me?!" the man said stepping forward and grabbing his stained shirt. "I'll have you know this uniform costs over \$250!"

"Good to know," she said rolling her eyes, "go ahead and send me the bill."

"I don't think you understand!" the man snarled. "Willingly destroying army property is a crime worthy of a court martial!"

Eisenhower stared blankly.

"You're not serious, right?"

The man gave an evil grin.

"I hope you enjoyed whatever fights you had during the war," he continued, "because they're going to be the last fights you ever have in this army!"

The man let out a cackle as Eisenhower tried keeping her anger in check.

"Well," she muttered, taking a step forward, "if I'm going to get court martialed anyways..."

"Just a moment," a voice called out from the crowd.

Eisenhower and the man turned to see an older officer approaching them.

"I apologize for butting in," the officer spoke to the man, "but I think it would be best for all of us if you dropped this little affair."

"Little affair?!" the man snarled and pointed to himself. "I'll have you know that I'm Inspector General Elliot Helmick! An insult against me is akin to an insult against the entire US Army! So why don't you—"

Helmick turned his finger, stopping as the officer grabbed his wrist.

"And I'll have you know," the officer replied softly, "that I'm General Dox Conner." Conner lowered Helmick's hand, bringing him to his knees. "And this woman you just threatened is one of my most valued subordinates."

"Conner..." Helmick's eyes widened. "*The* Dox Conner?!"

Helmick glanced at Eisenhower, then back to Conner

"Uhh, well," Helmick said clearing his throat, "seeing as you're a proper authority, I'll uh, leave the punishment for these offenses in your capable hands!"

Helmick gave a light bow, then scurried into the crowd as fast as he could.

"Thanks Conner," Eisenhower said with a sigh, "you really saved my hide this time!"

"Saved you?" he said with a knowing smile, "why, I've just been told that I'm supposed to punish you."

Eisenhower gave a nervous chuckle.

"But it'll be a light punishment...right?"

"Oh no," Conner said, shaking his head with a grin, "I expect it will be quite severe."

Conner pointed a finger dramatically at Eisenhower.

"As your commanding officer," he declared, "I order you to train with me down in Panama."

Eisenhower blinked.

"Are you serious?" she asked, barely able to contain her joy.

"Don't get too excited," Conner said wagging his finger. "After your hell week with me, I'm sending you to learn martial arts from Pershing, diplomacy from MacArthur, and leadership from Marshall."

"Th-thank you sir," Eisenhower stammered as she processed the names of these world class mentors.

"But...but why do all this for me?"

“Because you’ve got talent,” he spoke frankly, “and by God, it’d be a loss for the nation if you never got a chance to show your stuff!”

He placed a hand on her shoulder and gave a warm smile.

“I’m counting on you to do great things,” he continued, “and I order you not to disappoint me.”

Eisenhower gave a sharp salute.

“I won’t let you down sir!”

On the ride home, Eisenhower daydreamed about her upcoming training marathon, only to come back to reality when her car dipped into a muddy ditch and stalled.

Eisenhower shook out her head.

“I swear,” she remarked as she got out and started pushing her car, “if there’s one danger this country faces, it’s the lack of quality roads!”

* * * * *

In the present, Eisenhower raised her arm into the air

“Executive Power,” she shouted, “Interstate Highway System!”

As she spoke, a grid of miniature roads spread over the grounds of the arena.

Grant raised an eyebrow.

“Interesting,” he remarked, kicking the road beside his feet.

“Now get ready...”

Grant looked up to see Eisenhower suddenly in front of him.

“For my massive retaliation!”

Interstate Highway System

Eisenhower slammed her tank head, throwing Grant back. Grant regained his balance, only for Eisenhower to again appear with her tank head raised.

Without hesitation, Grant thrust his fist forward. The attacks landed against each other, flinging both fighters back.

Eisenhower hopped back, rubbing her wounded head.

“Hot dang!” she shouted. “Anyone else in a situation like that would have retreated for sure! But you?” She let out a roaring laugh. “You went for a damn counter!”

Grant shrugged his shoulders.

“Retreating was never my style,” he replied.

“Agreed,” Eisenhower said, calming herself. “I say, if you’re going to use force,” she crouched down, “use overwhelming force!”

Eisenhower shot forward, sprinting along her road with insane levels of acceleration.

“That speed...!” Grant exclaimed as he raised his arms, narrowly blocking Eisenhower’s high velocity strike, “that’s how you appeared so quickly!”

“Roger that,” Eisenhower said, pushing off Grant. “I gain a speed boost whenever I run along my EP’s roads,” she explained. “And I’m sorry to tell you, but my roads won’t do a thing for you!”

Grant snorted.

“Fine by me,” he spoke readying his stance, his left foot placed squarely on Eisenhower’s road.

In the stands, a towering figure in a stovepipe hat nodded his head.

“Yes,” Gabe Lincoln mused, “that’s quite alright. Now that Grant knows the roads don’t affect him, he has no need to worry about where he places his feet.”

Something rustled behind Lincoln. He turned, seeing nothing but a wall covered in shadows.

“I swear,” a voice called from the wall, “you and Grant put far too much faith in the words of your opponents.”

A dark figure emerged from the wall’s shadows.

“And that weakness,” Dixie Nixon continued, “shall be Grant’s undoing.”

Back in the arena, Grant charged with his fist raised. Eisenhower grinned, remaining perfectly still while Grant threw his punch.

Suddenly, the left side of Grant’s body jerked back, causing his attack to whiff. At the same time, Eisenhower raised her weapon.

“Fore!” she shouted as she slammed her tank head into her defenseless opponent.

Grant gritted his teeth at the heavy blow, then threw a counter. Eisenhower smirked.

"I'm not falling for that again!"

Eisenhower's body shifted unnaturally to the side, causing the attack to miss. She swung her weapon a second time, landing another critical hit.

Lincoln clicked his tongue.

"Now I get it!" he remarked, "her EP doesn't center around speed; it centers on movement!"

Nixon nodded.

"Interstate Highway System," Nixon spoke up, "is an EP that grants Eisenhower the ability to move objects along her roads. Not only does it give her a speed boost by moving herself forward along them, but she can also use her roads to shift herself out of danger or to throw her opponents off-balance."

"Which is what she did to Grant," Lincoln added, "after tricking him to think the roads didn't affect him." He shook his head. "I'll admit, I'm surprised. I never thought Eisenhower was the trickster type."

"No one ever does," Nixon said with a smirk. "But she's far more devious than most give her credit for."

In the arena, Grant rose from the ground.

"You're strong," he spoke sternly. "If I hadn't opened the fight with my most defensive form, I'd surely have lost by now."

He scanned the roads around the arena.

"But now that I have a rough understanding of your EP," he continued, "I think it's time I take the offensive."

Eisenhower gave a grin.

"You're saying you've been playing defense up to now?" she asked with a mix of fear and excitement.

Without replying, Grant's weapons peeled off his arms and dropped to the ground, then swarmed around his legs and lifted him into the air. The mound of weapons shaped itself beneath Grant's feet, settling into the form of a large horse with legs made of swords and a cannon as its nose.

"Executive Power," Grant spoke atop his steed while grabbing its reins made of chains, "Union Army; Cavalry."

Cavalry

Eisenhower readied her weapon.

Grant's newest form looked more agile than before. However, he wouldn't be able to use its agility to its fullest. Indeed, if he stepped on her roads, even if for just a second, she'd throw him off-balance and hit him with a heavy strike; one he wouldn't be able to block with his beefy arms.

Yes, Grant would have to tread slowly and carefully, that much she was certain of.

As Eisenhower thought this, Grant made his move.

At first, his horse stepped with a light trot, carefully avoiding Eisenhower's roads. The trot rose into a gallop, then transformed into a full-blown sprint.

Eisenhower glanced downwards, waiting for the horse to touch her roads. But, to her surprise, the horse avoided them with each step.

"What?!"

Eisenhower shook her head and raised her guard as Grant drew closer. Just before colliding, Grant's horse leapt forward, front flipping over Eisenhower's head.

As the horse nimbly passed over her, it tilted its neck back, aiming its cannon nose directly at her. The gun fired, detonating its shell on impact.

"Gahhh!!!" Eisenhower screamed in pain, but she did not fall. Instead, Eisenhower gritted her teeth and turned around, readying herself for the moment Grant made his impromptu landing.

But, to her shock, the horse hit the ground with its feet once again avoiding her roads.

"That's...that's impossible!" Eisenhower exclaimed.

Before she could recover, the horse raised its sword legs, ramming them at her.

Eisenhower activated Interstate Highway System, moving away just before being skewered, then shifted further to avoid another follow-up attack.

Grant raised an eyebrow as Eisenhower fell back.

"Retreating?" he asked.

Eisenhower gave an annoyed smile.

"Oh, don't worry about me," she said, cracking her neck, "I have not taken, and shall not take, a single backwards step!"

Eisenhower stuck her hand into the head of her tank.

"Take this!"

She pulled something inside her weapon, causing a shell to fire from its gun. Grant's horse leapt away and fired a blast from its cannon in return.

Eisenhower shifted using Interstate Highway System and fired another shot. Grant deftly dodged the attack while launching counters of his own and simultaneously avoiding stepping on Eisenhower's sprawling set of roads.

In the stands, Nixon placed a hand to her chin.

"I've misjudged Grant," she remarked, "his fighting abilities are far greater than the rumors suggested."

Lincoln gave a proud smile.

"He's the best fighter I've ever commanded!" he replied. "He's strong on the battlefield, and near invincible on a horse!"

* * * * *

Years ago, Seargent Herschberger stood in front of his graduating class of West Point cadets.

"Before we begin our ceremonies," Herschberger began, "I thought we could have ourselves a little fun."

Herschberger strode over to the jumping bar, lifted it higher than his head, then turned to the class.

"Cadet Grant!" he barked.

A small cadet seated atop a towering steed stepped forward. The cadet was a young Odysseus Grant. The horse was York, a ferocious creature known for his terrifying temper. Only two cadets could ride him, and only Grant could ride him well.

Grant placed his hand on the beast's back. The animal gave a snort, then charged straight for the bar. The horse leapt forward, clearing the bar with room to spare.

The room erupted in cheers. With ease, Grant had just set a new record for the high jump; one that would stand for another 25 years.

"Well," Herschberger said with a smirk. "I can't follow that! Well done sir; class dismissed!"

Grant got off his mount, then noticed Herschberger calling him over.

"That was quite the spectacle, soldier!" Herschberger remarked.

"York deserves all the credit," he replied, gently stroking the horse's mane.

"In any case," Herschberger said handing Grant a letter, "I wanted to give you this." He gave a grin, then patted Grant on the back. "Congratulations son! You've been invited to the Mexican front by [Old Rough and Ready] herself!"

At the Mexican border, future President Jacqueline Taylor strode through camp wearing a plain military uniform.

"Have the recruits arrived?" she asked an aide.

"Yes ma'am," they replied.

"Good," she looked to her clipboard, "send Lieutenant Grant to meet me posthaste."

"I'm here, ma'am."

Taylor stopped, then turned around to see a short man following from behind.

"How long have you been back there, soldier?"

Grant shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyways," Taylor continued, "the reason I wanted to speak with you," she said, handing over her clipboard, "was to officially appoint you quartermaster of our camp."

Grant looked at the forms, then back to Taylor.

"I'm not sure that's the right position for me, ma'am."

Taylor crossed her arms.

"You complaining, soldier?"

"No ma'am," Grant replied, "I'm merely expressing my opinion. I had expected to serve on the front lines. But, if this is the task you assign me, then I shall perform it to the best of my abilities."

Taylor gave a nod.

"I understand the hesitation," Taylor remarked, "but I assure you, the position of quartermaster is vital to our operations." She pointed to a storage area across camp. "After all, it doesn't matter how brave our soldiers are; they can't fight without weapons, and they can't march on without food."

"Of course," Grant agreed, "I recognize the role's significance, I'm simply confused as to why I was selected for it."

Taylor gave a grin.

"I love my soldiers," she said, "but most of them can't count past ten. Needless to say, none of them are capable of keeping accurate counts of our supplies." She looked to Grant. "So, when I heard of a young soldier hoping to become a math professor after his term of service," she placed a hand on Grant's shoulder, "well, I just knew I had to grab you before anyone else did."

Grant nodded his head.

"In that case, I—"

A bullet whizzed past Grant's face, cutting him off

Calmly, Grant and Taylor turned to see a group of Mexican soldiers charging through camp.

"Take cover!" Taylor shouted as she and Grant jumped behind a neighboring building.

"What's the situation?" a soldier asked.

Taylor took a peek around.

"We've got them outnumbered," Taylor remarked, "but we don't have enough ammo in camp to take them out."

"Is there more back at the storage unit?" Grant asked.

"There's a whole stockpile just outside its doors," she replied, "but there's no way to get there without taking enemy fire."

"In that case," Grant said mounting a nearby horse, "there's nothing left to decide: I'm the one in charge of supplying our troops, after all."

Taylor furrowed her brow.

"Don't be a fool," she shouted, "you'll be shot down the moment you're spotted!"

"It's fine," Grant said grabbing his reigns, "I won't be spotted."

Before Taylor could continue her protest, Grant ran his horse out of cover and towards the Mexican soldiers.

"Idiot," Taylor murmured as she closed her eyes, waiting for the sound of gunfire.

But, to her surprise, nothing happened.

Curious, Taylor peeked around and widened her eyes. Grant's horse was continuing its sprint, but Grant was nowhere to be seen!

"It's just a mount," a Mexican soldier remarked as the horse ran past. "Must have gotten spooked by the gunfire."

The Mexican soldiers continued while ignoring the beast. Meanwhile, Taylor kept watch on the horse with rapt attention. The horse stopped itself in front of the storage shed, at which point Taylor gave a silent grin.

"My God!" Taylor said as Grant appeared behind the horse and grabbed a box of ammunition. "That daredevil just rode through while clinging to the side of his horse!"

After picking up the supplies, Grant turned around, rotating his body to the horse's other side before sprinting back to Taylor.

"Hey..." a Mexican soldier remarked as the steed ran by, "isn't that the same horse we just saw?"

Another soldier took a closer look, noticing flaps of an army uniform rustling underneath the horse's stomach.

"It's the enemy!" he shouted with rage. "Fire, fire!"

Grant rotated back atop the horse.

"It's alright girl," he spoke, stroking the horse's mane, "I'll get you through this."

He turned around, looking at the Mexican soldiers just before they fired.

Grant pulled the reigns, shifting his horse away from the shots, then rounded the corner back to Taylor's side.

"Excellent work, soldier!" Taylor exclaimed as she distributed the ammo to her troops.

"She did all the work," Grant said, scratching the horse's ears.

Taylor loaded her rifle, then looked back to Grant.

"I know you're not planning to stick with the army long term," Taylor remarked, "but you should reconsider. I'd hate to lose a man of your talents."

Grant scratched his chin.

"Me...an army man?"

Grant looked out as the battle raged on in earnest. His horse trembled at the gunfire, but Grant stroked its back, calming her down.

"I suppose," Grant spoke up, "that doesn't sound half bad."

"That's what I like to hear!"

Taylor looked back to the battlefield, then waved her hand at a passing soldier.

"Hey!" she shouted, "come over here for a second."

The older soldier walked to Taylor's side, unconcerned by the battle raging around him.

"Grant," Taylor spoke up, "this man right here is the rising star of our engineering corps! If you're ever in need of fortifications, he's the guy to call."

"Oh madam," the man said with a light bow, "you're far too kind."

Grant dismounted his horse and extended his hand.

"I'm Grant."

The man grasped Grant's outstretched hand.

"Lee," he replied.

You Too

Eisenhower swung out her weapon. Grant stepped his horse to the side, dodging the attack. As he moved, firearms sprung from the horse's side and open fired. Eisenhower slid along her road, dodging the shots.

"These fighters are way too nimble!" Thompson shouted, "between Grant's horse and Eisenhower's roads, it seems like this fight is turning into a complete gridlock!"

"It is for now," Truman added on, "but this high intensity fighting can't continue forever. Sooner or later, one of them is going to break."

And then, as if on cue, a series of small cracks spread across Eisenhower's network of roads, followed by whole sections of her roads dissolving into air.

Eisenhower wiped a streak of sweat across her forehead, then slid back as Grant charged at her.

"You really never stop, do you?" Eisenhower spoke through a forced smile. "Then again, I guess I need to wrap things up myself."

Eisenhower snapped her fingers, causing the road behind her to extend up into the air.

"Executive Power!" Eisenhower shouted as she turned around and ran straight up her vertical road, "Interstate Highway System; Space Race!"

She reached the peak of her track and kicked off the road, shooting her body at Grant with the velocity of a comet.

"Now get ready!" she screamed, "for a lesson in three-dimensional warfare!"

Grant took half a step a back, anticipating Eisenhower's final attack. But, as his horse's foot landed, Grant felt a strange sensation beneath him. He glanced down, then widened his eyes in shock.

Despite his careful calculations with each of his steps, the back feet of Grant's horse had somehow landed themselves on the edge of Eisenhower's roads.

Before he could think further, his horse's legs shot back along the road.

Grant clicked his tongue as he took a closer look at the road beneath him.

"I see," Grant grumbled as his steed toppled over. "You pretended like your roads were breaking up because you were running out of steam, but in reality, you were using the extra energy to widen the road directly behind me."

"Correct!" Eisenhower screamed. "And despite your gullibility," she continued while raising her weapon back, "know that you were, without a doubt, one of the strongest opponents I've ever had the privilege to face!"

Grant gave a solemn nod.

"You too."

Grant pulled at his reigns, sending the back of his horse sliding farther across Eisenhower's road. The horse kicked off its hind legs; the combined momentum of Eisenhower's EP together with Grant's pull throwing its legs up and around in a tight circle.

The legs reached out, intercepting and wrapping its legs around Eisenhower's airborne body, then continued spinning with the added force of Eisenhower's fall before slamming its legs together with Eisenhower into the ground.

Eisenhower coughed violently as she hit the floor, then struggled to free herself from the horse's iron grip. She started pushing herself away, then looked to see the horse turn to her, its cannon nose pointed inches from her face.

"Fire," Grant declared.

Eisenhower swung out her weapon as the cannon released its blast, the smoke from its shot covering the fighters in a cloud of dust.

"Time out!" Taft screamed while jogging over to the arena's center. He reached the fighters, gave each of them a brief inspection, then nodded his head.

"The match is over!" Taft shouted, slamming his gavel to the ground.

As he spoke, Grant got up, brushed the dirt off his jacket, then lit a cigar next to his unconscious opponent.

"The winner of the match," Taft continued, "is [The Hero of Appomattox], Odysseus S. Grant!"

Fact and Fiction: Eisenhower vs Grant

Hayes. To be clear, **Rutherford Hayes did not lose an arm.** Ruth Hayes' battle-scarred appearance is just a nod to the fact that during the Civil War, Rutherford Hayes took a lot of serious damage (including some heavy damage to his left arm).

In addition to this, Rutherford Hayes had essentially nothing to do with the Secret Service. Ruth being put in charge in EP:RW is a reference to Rutherford being skilled at "quelling riots and removing uninvited guests" in the sense that he quelled riots during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and removed federal troops from the south.

Middle Initials. The S in "Harry S. Truman" does not stand for anything, though it's a common misconception that it stands for "Shipp." In particular, the judge reading the oath of office for Harry mistakenly called him "Harry Shipp Truman", though Harry was quick to correct him.

Ulysses Grant was born with the name "Hiram Ulysses Grant" and ended up going by his middle name. In particular, the "S." in "Ulysses S. Grant" stands for nothing and shouldn't even be there in the first place. This phantom letter was created by a typographical error at West Point, and from there the S stuck around despite Ulysses's protests.

Eisenhower's Flashback. Many of these events really happened: Dwight Eisenhower really did command a tank unit without any tanks, he really did train F. Scott Fitzgerald, he really did struggle to get into combat with the war ending just a week before his deployment, and Fox Conner really did step in and save Dwight from being court-martialed by Eli Helmick over an essentially bogus fine of \$250.

The scene with Deede Eisenhower's car getting stuck in the mud is a reference to Dwight taking part in the army's Transcontinental Motor Convoy, which demonstrated to Dwight how poorly maintained the nation's roads were. This event would later serve as inspiration for him pushing for building the Interstate Highway System during his Presidency.

Grant's Flashback. The scenes at West Point, including Grant setting a 25 year horse jumping record, are almost word for word true. However, there were some changes made around Grant's involvement in the Mexican-American war.

First, while it is true that Ulysses Grant was reluctantly appointed to be quartermaster, it is not true that he was personally recruited by Zachary Taylor himself. He also put up a bit more of a resistance to the position than is displayed in the story because he really wanted to go and fight on the front lines.

Ulysses Grant honestly did ride a horse sideways to grab ammo for his troops, but some changes were made to simplify the details of the story. In particular: he didn't do this because he was quartermaster (in fact, the quartermaster wasn't even in charge of ammunition), this event didn't happen on his very first day, Zachary Taylor was not present when it happened, and he did not meet Robert E Lee right after (though the two would meet during the war).

Another fun fact: Ulysses Grant really was planning to become a mathematics professor after his term of service, but he ended up finding his calling in the army after the Mexican-American war.

Democratic Republicans

Eisenhower opened her eyes and gave a soft groan. Bright lights shone overhead, and she seemed to be lying on top of some sort of hospital bed.

"Have you returned to the land of the living?" a voice called out.

Eisenhower looked to see a woman wearing an orange dress shirt and a pair of black suspenders.

"Wilson?" Eisenhower asked, rubbing her head, "Where...?" she squinted her eyes, the memories coming back. "That's right," she spoke quietly, "I lost."

"Indeed," Willow Willson spoke frankly, "and in a very pitiful way too. But of course," Wilson said with a cruel smile, "such a lackluster performance is to be expected from of a second-rate school like *Columbia*."

Eisenhower gave a light snort.

"I appreciate you trying to raise my spirits by turning my grief into anger," she said with a smile, "but there's nothing to worry about, I'm more than accustomed to the harsh realities of battle."

"Are you sure?" Wilson asked with feigned disappointment, "I was really hoping to discuss your failures in further detail."

Eisenhower chuckled.

"There's not much to say," Eisenhower remarked. "I had concentrated my last few attacks towards ending the fight; I felt that I was making big progress," she shook her head, "but then that stupid Space Race mess ruined all my efforts."

She gave a sigh, then put on a somber smile.

"But the decision to attack was based upon the best information I had," she continued, "any blame or fault is mine alone to bare."

Wilson gave a roll of her eyes.

"Righttttt," she spoke sarcastically, "that certainly sounds like someone who didn't need any cheering up would say."

"Shut up!" Eisenhower retorted, regaining some warmth.

Sounds started played in the room, and Eisenhower turned to look at a nearby television, its screen announcing the start of the next match.

"Don't you want to go and watch this from the stands?" Eisenhower asked.

"Please," Wilson said waving her hands, "there's nothing to be gained by watching this farce of a match."

"Fair enough," Eisenhower said looking back to the screen. "It's going to be a fixed fight after all..."

In the stands, Thompson grabbed her mic.

"Hello everybody!" she shouted. "We're ready to get back to the action with a fight featuring two Presidents from the legendary Democratic Republican Party!"

She gestured to the arena.

"First, we have the calm, no-nonsense, second in command of the Democratic Republicans! She might seem frail on the outside, but she boasts one of the strongest constitutions the world has ever seen! Give it up for [The Sage of Montpelier], Jamie Madison!"

Madison walked into the arena with a black pinstripe blazar, a trident in her hands, and a sharp gaze across her face.

"Her opponent," Thompson continued, "is a tall sharpshooter known for her friendly disposition! A diligent patriot; she's willing to take on any role and travel any distance for the sake of her country! She's [The Heir of Good Feelings], Jane Monroe!"

Monroe swaggered into the arena wearing a tie dye shirt, baggy pants, and a tri-pointed hat. She shot a peace sign with one hand and carried a rifle in the other.

"So, Truman," Thompson spoke up, "what do you think about this upcoming match?"

"Given that Monroe specializes in long-range combat," Truman remarked, "it's pretty clear Madison holds the advantage in our enclosed arena," he shook his head, "or at least, that would be the case, if the fight actually happened."

"But it might not!" Thompson added on, "because Madison and Monroe come from the same Party!"

"Exactly," Truman replied with a shrug. "It's rather boring, but one of them will probably just give up as soon as the match begins. The only question left," he said looking to the fighters, "is which one is backing down?"

* * * * *

Just before entering the stadium, Madison and Monroe stood in front of a tall, slender woman.

"I had the most tremendous idea!" Tanya Jefferson spoke with jubilation. "We shall decide the outcome of your fight through a vote by the people!"

Madison and Monroe exchanged worried glances.

"...are you saying," Monroe asked, "that you want us to poll the audience as to who they want to win?"

"Exactly!" Jefferson replied. "After all it is only fitting that we, the Party of the people, leave the choice in the knowing hands of the masses."

Madison bit her lip.

"This is certainly an...admirable idea," she spoke up. "But I believe there are some practical considerations that we must account for. For example, how should we conduct such a vote? Orally? Surely this method won't work if the voting is close. Paper ballots? Why, such a process could take hours, if not days for us to go through."

Jefferson brought a hand to her chin.

"Yes," she spoke solemnly, "I suppose the plan is too grand to be implemented on such short notice." She silently nodded her head. "Well then, perhaps you two should just decide who shall be going forward amongst yourselves."

"We can't," Monroe replied. "We're both convinced that we ought to be the one winning the match. You're the only one who can make the decision here."

Jefferson gave a heavy sigh.

"I was afraid it might come to this."

Jefferson looked over her two best friends.

"...given Grant's EP," she finally spoke up, "I would say that Monroe is better suited to fight him in the second round."

Monroe gave a small grin, while Madison remained unmoved.

"That being said," Jefferson continued, "I have decided that Madison shall be the one going forward."

Monroe blinked.

"But...but ma'am!" she stammered, "you just said I was more suitable fighter!"

"For going against Grant," Jefferson corrected. "But Grant is not our primary concern here." She tapped her fingers nervously across her leg. "It is Roosevelt and Lincoln for whom we must plan for." She looked to Madison. "And for opponents of that caliber, only Madison stands a chance."

Monroe dropped her head.

"So, when you told us you'd be making your decision after watching the first match..." she said, clenching her fists in anger. "That was just a boldfaced lie! You were always going to pick Madison, regardless of the outcome!"

"No!" Jefferson insisted with a wave of her hands, "that's not true at all! The first winner could have possessed an EP for which Madison stood no chance fighting against. In such circumstances, I would have gladly declared you to be our champion!"

"But outside of that one in a million chance," Monroe grumbled, "it was always going to be her!"

"I'm sorry, old friend," Jefferson said shaking her head. "It pains me to do this, it really does...but it's for the best of the Party."

Monroe huffed and puffed, then slowly took back her composure.

"Don't worry," Monroe said with a modest smile. "I completely understand. Now, if you'll both excuse me," she said, turning and walking off before the others could reply, "I've got a defeat to prepare for."

Jefferson watched Monroe leave, then gave a shallow moan.

"You know," Jefferson spoke to Madison, "I was originally elated when you secured a match between two of our members." She shook her head. "But as things stand, I would gladly face all of Rushmore on my own if it meant restoring our Party's former sense of unity."

"It's okay," Madison said patting her back. "Monroe is no fool. She'll come around eventually."

"Eventually, yes," she said, tapping at her arm, "but there's no telling when that time shall come."

Jefferson looked Madison in the eye.

"I have complete faith in Monroe's loyalty," Jefferson declared, "but she can be impulsive at times, especially if she thinks she's been slighted." Jefferson rested a hand on Madison's arm. "Please, be careful out there."

* * * * *

In the arena, Taft eyed the two combatants. There was real tension between them; far more than he expected from two members of the same Party. Taft shook out his head, then raised his gavel above him.

"Let the match...begin!"

The gavel hit the ground, but neither fighter moved. Madison waited a moment, then furrowed her brow.

"Well?" she asked. "Isn't there something you'd like to say?"

"Hmmm?" Monroe asked. "Oh, yes, right."

Monroe nonchalantly raised her arms into the air.

"I, Jane Monroe of the Democratic Republicans, have decided that I shall yield..."

Monroe lowered her arms, aiming her rifle at Madison's head.

"...to no one!" Monroe declared.

Monroe's Doctrine

During the War of Independence, a young Jordan Washington looked over the enemy encampment across the river.

"They have two large cannons aimed right for us," he remarked. "We'll have to bring a small crew across the Delaware and seize their artillery before our forces can move in."

He turned to his soldiers as they exchanged worried glances.

"Sir," someone spoke up, "you're asking us to paddle in the dead of night through a raging snowstorm for over eight hours straight."

"Yes," Washington replied. "Now, who's coming with me?"

No one moved. Then, a small hand rose from the back.

The troops turned as Washington made his way to the volunteer.

"Name and age?" he asked.

"Jane Monroe," the soldier replied, "18 years young, baby!"

Washington nodded his head, then turned to his army.

"So," he spoke out, "will anyone else be joining me? Or is this young'un the only one here with some backbone?"

A few of the older soldiers raised their hands, followed by a couple dozen more.

"Good," Washington spoke. "Ready your boats; we leave in five."

Monroe headed to shore, but Washington blocked her path.

"You're coming with me," he said, lifting a nearby flag, "and you'll be carrying our banner."

On the boat, Monroe watched with agitation as her crewmates rowed through the frigid waves.

"Sir," she spoke up, "I really feel I ought to do some of the rowing too."

"Hold the flag," he replied without breaking his gaze.

"Why are we even bringing this thing?" she asked, "it's just going to slow us down!"

Washington turned to Monroe, then looked at the flag.

"This flag," he spoke, running his hand along its stripes, "is a symbol of freedom. A symbol, which possesses far greater strength than any mere weapon."

He pointed to the boats.

"As these men row through the night; as they put their very lives on the line," he pointed back to the flag, "they can look to this banner and remember exactly what it is they're fighting for."

Monroe nodded her head. She didn't fully comprehend his words, but she could tell she wouldn't be changing his mind.

After some time, the boats arrived at the bank of the river.

"A few of us will head back for the second wave," Washington shouted as his soldiers disembarked, "In the meantime, you're to guard these roads with your lives. Do not leave your posts for an instant; understood?"

"Yes sir!" the troops shouted in reply.

With that, Monroe found herself standing on an empty road, waiting in silence as the raging weather shifted from snow, to rain, to hail.

Monroe gave a heavy yawn and stretched out her arms, only for her to snap back at the sound of footsteps beside her. She turned, raising her rifle.

"Who's there?!" she shouted.

Through the fog, Monroe could make out a pistol aimed at her.

"Get outta here!" a voice screamed through the mist.

"Not happening, baby," Monroe replied, tightening her grip, "I'm under direct orders from General Washington to stay put."

"...did you say Washington?"

The man stepped forward, then looked at the American flag behind Monroe.

"Ah, shucks!" the man said with a chuckle, lowering his gun, "I didn't realize you were American!" he pointed to a house just off the road. "Please, come inside for some food and warmth. It's the least I can do after startling you."

Monroe looked to the house and licked her frozen lips.

"I can't," she said, "I was given strict orders not to leave this post."

The man scratched his chin.

"I see."

The man thought for a moment, then put on a smile.

"Give me a second."

The man ran into his house. A minute later, he came out carrying a large bag and a toasty sandwich.

"I'm guessing your 'strict orders' didn't say anything about eating on the job?" he asked with a grin.

"They did not!" she exclaimed before devouring the sandwich.

As she finished her meal, Monroe took a closer look at the man's bag.

"What's that?" she asked.

"A medical bag," the man said with a salute. "I'm a doctor, you see, and I thought I may be able to help some poor fellow in your troupe." The man dropped his salute and scratched his head. "Assuming General Washington wants me, of course."

Monroe gave a tip of her hat.

"I'm sure he'll be more than happy to have a patriot like yourself amongst our ranks."

"Indeed, I would."

The two looked to see Washington marching through the storm, the rest of the battalion trailing shortly behind. Monroe gave a salute, then joined Washington's side as he brought the doctor up to speed.

"The Hessians are an elite band of warriors," Washington explained. "We'd stand no chance against them in a direct fight. Fortunately, most of their troops are knocked out after a night of heavy drinking, and they won't be expecting an attack from behind like this. Overall, things should go quite smoothly for us, unless of course..."

Washington froze as his eyes locked on a Hessian scout coming from the woods.

"We're spotted!"

Washington lunged forward, striking the scout with the blade, but not before the soldier lifted his arm, launching a flare into the sky.

"Oh God!" a soldier exclaimed as the Hessian camp started to stir. "Should we turn back?"

"No!" Washington shouted. "We press on!"

Washington ran into the enemy camp, cutting down twenty Hessians before they even had the chance to draw their weapons.

"Fire!"

A cannonball exploded in front of Washington, knocking him to the ground. The Americans stood, watching as their General started to rise, only to fall to the ground.

"What do we do?" a soldier mumbled, "What do we do?!"

"Isn't it obvious, baby?"

Monroe charged past the line of soldiers, planting her flag besides Washington.

"We press on!"

Monroe drew her rifle, firing at half a dozen soldiers as they ran to Washington.

"The kid's right!" an American shouted behind her, "let's show these Hessians what we're made of!"

The Americans gave a valiant yell and charged into the enemy camp.

"Go for the general!" a Hessian screamed, "they'll lose their morale once we cut off his head!"

"Go ahead and try!" Monroe shouted as she shot down another wave of soldiers.

Washington twitched his body on the ground.

"Be..." he mumbled.

"Sir?" Monroe asked.

"Behind you!"

Monroe turned, only to be met with a bullet piercing straight through her chest and into her left shoulder.

"That's what you get," a Hessian marksman snickered as Monroe fell back, "for waving around such a gaudy piece of cloth!"

Monroe clenched her teeth.

"This piece of cloth..."

She said grabbing the flagpole, stopping her fall.

"...is a symbol of freedom!"

She fired, striking the Hessian down. She smirked, then collapsed, the snow around her turning a scarlet red.

"Hang in there, kid!" the doctor exclaimed as he rushed to her side. "You're going to be alright!"

He took a closer look at the wound, then gave a small gulp.

"But just barely..."

"...Washington..." Monroe spoke wearily, "...save...him..."

"I'm fine," Washington spoke besides her, "just got the wind knocked out of me, that's all." He grabbed her hand. "You just focus on getting better, alright? Do that, and I promise, the next time you step onto the battlefield, you'll be a captain!"

"...a...captain...huh?"

A smile drew over Monroe's face as she drifted to sleep, her head filled with thoughts of the brave warriors she'd command in battle some day.

But that day would never come, at least, not in this war. Time after time, Monroe would try to get onto the battlefield, only to be turned away each time. Monroe did her best maintaining a cheerful disposition on the outside, but on the inside, she raged.

As fight after fight took part without her, Monroe swore to herself she would never again let someone take her out of combat without putting up a fight.

This, above all else, would be her sacred doctrine.

* * * * *

Monroe fired her rifle, its bullet grazing Madison's face.

“Holy cow!” Thompson exclaimed, “Against all odds, Monroe has launched an actual attack against her fellow Party member! It looks like we may have a real fight on our hands after all!”

Madison rubbed a finger along her cheek, feeling a thin streak of blood trickle down her face.

“So that’s how it’s going to be?” Madison said with a sigh.

She paused, shifting her gaze between Monroe, Jefferson, and Grant. She nodded her head, then raised her trident, pointing it directly towards Monroe. As she did, the trident’s tips ungulated back and forth.

“Executive Power,” Madison spoke, “Ratification; Three Branches!”

The prongs of her trident suddenly lengthened and shot out towards Monroe.

“Don’t play with fire, baby!” Monroe said twisting her body and narrowly dodging the elongated prongs, “cause you’re going to get burned!!”

The crowd drew a collective gasp as blood splattered to the ground.

Madison looked down, noticing three fresh cuts along her arm.

Monroe smiled and shot a peace sign at Madison.

“Executive Power: Monroe Doctrine, baby!”

Madison's Constitution

Madison retracted her prongs with a solemn expression.

"Ratification; Three Branches."

Again, her trident extended, the prongs thrashing about across the battlefield.

Monroe jumped over an attack from below, then leaned back, dodging a followup strike to the head. She landed on her hand, pushing off and leaping away from another attack. With each of Monroe's dodges, a new wound appeared across Madison's body.

"The heck?!" Thompson shouted, "Madison is the one attacking, so why is she the one taking damage?!"

"It's obviously a result of Monroe's EP," Truman remarked, "though honestly, I've got no clue how it works."

From the stands, Jefferson gave a deep sigh.

"Things not going as planned?"

She turned to see a young man with a swimmer's body standing beside her.

"No, Quincy," she shook her head, "they are most certainly not."

"I'm surprised you were so optimistic to start," Quincy said with a chuckle, "you know how free and independent Monroe can be."

"Perhaps she'd be more docile," she said with a somber smile, "if you hadn't helped her gain such a tremendous EP."

Quincy gave a nod.

"Monroe Doctrine," he remarked, "the ability to instantly counter any hostile action taken against her. It's a devastating EP, especially when combined with her dodges."

"It would be a difficult hurdle for Madison to overcome," Jefferson added, "if she weren't already so used to fighting against Monroe."

* * * * *

After the War of Independence, a group of Virginians gathered around a dominating figure.

"Well?" Pat Henry asked, "we doing this or what?"

"We shall," Eddy Randolph said, glancing at his watch. "Just as soon as our representative arrives."

"I already did," a weak voice called from behind.

The group turned to see a haggard Madison standing just outside the circle.

"Jesus, Madison!" Randolph exclaimed, "you look like crap!"

"I've caught a small cold," Madison mumbled between coughs.

"I don't care what you've got!" Randolph insisted. "You can't go out there like this! You'll get destroyed!"

"I have to," Madison replied, "no one here can take Henry in my place."

Randolph started to speak, then looked to the ground, unable to reply.

"It's fine," Madison assured, making her way to the center, "I will not let this land fall to ruin."

"You won't," Henry agreed, raising his arms, "because I'm going to stop your plans here and now!"

Henry charged ahead, not waiting for the referee to start the match. He stopped in front of Madison, then threw a masterful punch.

"You're too focused on perfection," Madison remarked while dodging his overly prepared attack, "you need to be practical!"

Henry raised his guard as Madison unleashed a string of thrusts, absorbing the blows while blocking off his vision. Madison swung her leg out below, striking Henry's unguarded shins and knocking him to the ground. Henry started to rise, but stopped as Madison's trident pricked at his neck.

"I surrender..." Henry spoke with a click of his tongue.

The Federalists released a chorus of cheers, only to be drowned out by the howls of the Anti-Federalists.

"Screw this!" Joe Mason shouted, stepping forward, "I don't care what we agreed to! I'm going to stop this ridiculous ploy myself!"

The Anti-Federalists rallied behind Mason, raising their weapons into the air.

"Stand down!" Henry barked, silencing his allies. He turned to Madison. "I swear on my honor," he spoke, "Virginia shall not oppose your plan to unite the States into a single nation."

Henry gave a snort, then left the arena.

"What the heck!?" Mason hissed behind him, "you're giving in too easily!"

Henry turned around, then gave an evil grin.

"Who said I'm giving in?"

The next day, Randolph barged into Madison's office and slammed a stack of papers on her desk.

"We've been had!" he exclaimed. "While we were focusing on Virginia's approval, Henry's been sneaking clause after clause into our deal!"

Madison skimmed the papers before her.

"And by the looks of things," she spoke out, "these amendments are all centered on blocking me from attending the convention."

Randolph nodded her head.

"And without you there," he continued, "this entire project is doomed to fail!"

Madison crossed her arms.

"Troublesome."

"You know what I say!" Randolph exclaimed, grabbing the papers. "I say we take this piece of garbage back to Henry and tell him right where he can shove it!"

"We can't," Madison replied, lifting the papers from Randolph's hands. "He played us fair and square; challenging him against these amendments would only serve to undermine our own movement." She shook her head. "No, our only choice is to fight on his terms."

Madison flipped through the papers, then pointed to a line of text.

"...I don't like our odds," Randolph spoke as she read the line over.

"Neither do I," Madison replied, "but it's our only option."

The next week, Henry greeted Madison and Randolph with a warm smile.

"Greetings, friends!"

"Shut it," Randolph replied.

"Anyways," Henry continued, "I'm sure you're both dying to learn about the details for our match deciding Virginia's final delegate." He gestured behind them. "Well, the battlefield is before you."

Madison and Randolph looked out to see an abandoned city with towering buildings separated by wide open spaces.

"Seriously?" Randolph asked. "I'm surprised someone of your stature would want to fight in a dump like this."

Henry gave a feigned look of surprise.

"Oh my, I think there's been a slight misunderstanding." He gave a sly grin. "I never said I would be fighting, only that I would be choosing Madison's opponent."

Randolph and Madison looked to each other.

"But if you're not representing the Anti-Federalists..." Randolph began.

"...then who is?" Madison asked.

"I am," a voice called from behind.

Madison turned in shock.

"Monroe?!" she exclaimed.

"That's right, baby!" she said with a grin.

"Why..." Madison blinked, "what are you doing!"

"You see," Monroe said with an innocent smile. "I was rather miffed after you stole my seat at the Virginia conference," she twirled her rifle around and pointed it to Madison, "so, I thought it would only be fair if I took your seat at the convention in return."

"Stole your position?" Madison asked, furrowing her brow. "I did no such thing!"

Madison grabbed Monroe's shoulder.

"Listen," she whispered into her ear, "Henry is obviously just using you to get what he wants!"

"Please, baby," Monroe said, shrugging her off, "I'm the one using him."

Randolph clicked his tongue.

"This is bad," he mumbled to Madison, "this battlefield is a sniper's paradise! It'd be tricky to beat Monroe here if you were in peak condition, but with your illness..."

"It'll be alright," Madison said, gathering her composure, "I will not fail."

Randolph and Henry stayed back, listening from afar as the fight raged below.

"Oh my," Henry spoke as the gunfire came to a close, "it sounds like your fruitless little struggle is finally over."

Randolph slumped down, then quickly raised himself back up.

"It is!" Randolph exclaimed with triumph, "cause we're finally done dealing with you!"

"What do you...?"

Henry stopped talking as he spotted Madison walking towards them. Her body was covered in injuries and the tip of her nose was partially shot off, but she strode onwards with a cold look of determination.

"I win," she declared.

Henry continued staring at Madison with a blank expression, then tightened his fists.

"You're making a mistake," Henry spoke softly, "uniting the country, giving greater powers to our Executives...it will bring disaster to our land!"

Madison paused for a moment.

"It's entirely possible that our experiment ends in failure," she admitted, staring Henry in the eyes. "But if we do nothing, we are certain to perish."

Henry let out a snort.

"I swear," he spoke with a snarl, "I'll never stop fighting you; not until you give me liberty...or give me death!!"

"And I swear," Madison responded, raising her hand adorned with a freshly formed Presidential Seal, "I'll stop anyone who tries to destroy my country."

* * * * *

Madison retracted her prongs and charged towards Monroe. Monroe smirked in response.

“Trying to get closer to me?” she said readying her rifle, “how sweet!”

She fired, but Madison deflected the bullets.

“No funnnn,” Monroe bemoaned. “But even if you don’t take any hits,” she said, drawing back her rifle and readying her stance, “I can still finish you off with Monroe Doctrine!”

Madison raised her trident and thrust it at Monroe’s feet. Monroe stepped back, dodging her weapon as she waited for her EP to activate.

“The thing about your EP,” Madison spoke as her body received no new wounds, “is that it only works if I’m actually aiming to hurt you!”

Monroe’s eyes widened as Madison vaulted herself off the trident, then wrapped her legs around Monroe’s torso; her body unharmed by Monroe’s EP.

Under the Surface

"Wowzer!" Thompson exclaimed, "Madison's managed to capture the agile Monroe between her legs!"

"Did you really think," Madison remarked as she tightened her hold, "that I wouldn't exploit your EP's biggest weakness of only responding to direct attacks?"

Monroe gave a grin.

"And did you really think," she replied, "that you could trap me with such stubby legs?"

Monroe twisted her body and ducked down, slipping out of Madison's hold.

Madison landed on the floor and lunged forward, leaving her trident in the ground as she reached out for Monroe. Monroe stepped back, her long strides easily outpacing Madison's short reach.

In the stands, Quincy placed a hand to his chin.

"So," he spoke up, "who do you think's going to win in the end?"

Jefferson gazed across the arena.

"Naively," Jefferson remarked, "it would appear Madison holds the better position. After all, she's forced Monroe into a close-ranged fight while neutralizing her EP." Jefferson shook her head. "But in terms of experience, Monroe actually holds a significant advantage."

"True," Quincy said nodding his head. "Monroe is plenty used to fighting opponents in close-range. On the other hand, Madison almost never goes into battle without her trident in hand."

"If this were the whole story," Jefferson continued, "I would have to pick Monroe as the likely winner. However," she said, crossing her arms, "there's something more lurking under the surface of this match..."

On the ground, Monroe gave a smirk as she dodged yet another grab from Madison.

"Stay put!" Madison grumbled as she lunged at Monroe once more.

"Sorry, baby!" Monroe replied, "but you're never going to catch me..."

Monroe suddenly stepped forward, sweeping Madison's legs off the floor.

"Especially not with your face planted in the ground!"

Monroe extended her arms, aiming her rifle point-blank at Madison's falling body.

Madison remained non-plussed.

"Executive Power," she spoke, "Ratification; Three Branches!"

"What?!"

Three prongs shot out of the ground, tearing through Monroe's legs.

"Gahhh!!"

Monroe stumbled back, tripping over herself and dropping her rifle. As she fell, Monroe looked at Madison's trident planted in the ground.

"I see," Monroe hissed, "You left your weapon behind on purpose, all so you could extend its tips beneath my feet!"

Monroe hit the ground, then reached for her rifle. Madison leapt onto her arm, stopping it in place, then brought back her fist.

"I've been waiting to do this," Madison said as she readied her punch, "for a very, very long time."

"Wait, wait, wait!" Monroe spoke frantically while waving her hands, "I surrender! I surrender! For real this time!"

Taft slammed his gavel to the ground.

"The match is over!" he exclaimed. "The winner, is [The Sage of Montepelier], Jamie Madison!"

Madison gave a disappointed shake of her head, then dismounted off Monroe.

Monroe started to rise, but fell back on her injured legs. Madison reached out, grabbing Monroe's arm before she hit the ground.

"...thanks," Monroe replied weakly.

Madison gave a slight nod, then lifted Monroe to her side. The crowd erupted with cheers as the two walked out of the arena, arm in arm.

"Well," Eisenhower remarked from her bed, "what did you think about the match in the end?"

"It was truly dreadful," Wilson said with a snide. "There was no point in Madison attacking Monroe at the start if she knew what her EP could do, nor was there any reason for Monroe to fall for such an obvious trap at the end!"

"Agreed," Eisenhower said with a nod. "There really is no benefit to watching a fixed fight..."

On the ground, Monroe slipped Madison a subtle glance.

"When did you work it all out?"

"I suspected it after your first shot," Madison said, rubbing the scratch along her cheek, "it was a weak attack," she pointed to her chipped nose, "and I'm well aware you can shoot better than that." She looked to the cuts along her arm. "But I was only certain of it when you activated Monroe Doctrine. Each of your slashes were designed to look painful, while inflicting almost no real damage."

"And I appreciate you doing the same," Monroe said, wiggling her supposedly injured leg. "Though of course," she said with a smirk, "I let you hit me."

"Anyways," Madison continued, "why in the world did you make us go through such a ridiculous farce?"

"Can't you hear it?" Monroe said, gesturing to the crowd around them, "you put up a valiant fight against a disrespectful ally, then accepted her back with open arms! The audience is completely on your side now!"

"I hardly see the relevance," Madison replied.

Monroe shook her head.

"If you won with a bye," she explained, "then the people would never have accepted the Democratic Republican winning the tournament. Sure, the Presidents would still swear their allegiances, but their soldiers would abandon us in droves."

"...fair," Madison reluctantly agreed, "but why not tell me all this beforehand?"

"Because you're a terrible actor!" Monroe said with a grin, then lowered her smile. "That and, just maybe...I thought you might blunder badly enough to give me the win."

Madison stepped on Monroe's injured foot, inciting a quiet yelp.

"I swear," Madison said, shaking her head and giving the faintest of smiles, "you never cease to amaze me."

Monroe grinned back.

"You too pal!"

Fact and Fiction: Madison vs Monroe

Eisenhower and Wilson. The fictional rivalry between Deedee Eisenhower and Willow Wilson is based loosely on the fact that Dwight Eisenhower and Woodrow Wilson were both heads of universities (Columbia and Princeton, respectively) and both played an excessive amount of golf.

Monroe's Epitaph. Jane Monroe's epitaph, [The Heir of Good Feelings], is the first epitaph for a fighter we've seen which is not literally a nickname the President had in real life. This name is a slight mutation of James Monroe's most common nickname "The Era of Good Feelings President" due to him being President when there was (at least on the surface) little political disagreement due to a temporary one party system. It is also because of this epitaph that Jane Monroe was given her **hippie aesthetic (which is historically inaccurate to say the least!)**.

Monroe Doctrine. This EP is based off of the doctrine introduced by James Monroe, which essentially declares that the United States will fight back against any interference from the Old World in the New World.

Monroe's Flashback. While James Monroe did volunteer to cross the Delaware, it's not true that he was the first to do so, nor is it true that George Washington gave him any particular praise for this. It also isn't true that he rode in the same boat as George Washington, nor did he carry the flag (and in particular, he didn't have a gallant last stand where he clung to the flag before going down). These last two points were done solely to reference the famous painting "Washington Crossing the Delaware" where James Monroe is depicted (ahistorically) doing both of these things.

Somewhat miraculously, Monroe's interaction with the doctor is almost entirely true! While he didn't have a gun pointed at him, James Monroe was indeed harassed by a passing doctor who mistook him to be British, after which James Monroe denied the doctor's offer to go into his house. The doctor then joined Washington's march, and during the battle this doctor narrowly saved James Monroe's life after receiving a near fatal wound.

The incident with Washington going down in the fight is half true: it really is the case that during this battle, James Monroe's commander took an injury and went down, after which James Monroe heroically stepped in to lead the troops before chaos erupted, only to go down himself shortly afterwards. However, **this commander was not George Washington** (as depicted in EP:RW), but rather William Washington (a distant cousin of George). Narratively it was far simpler (and cooler) to use Jordan Washington in EP:RW rather than introduce another character also named Washington.

Madison's Flashback. Few of the events in this flashback literally happened in real life (e.g. there were no physical fights, only political ones), though most of the events are based on James Madison's very real struggle to ratify the Constitution despite the many roadblocks Patrick Henry put in front of him.

Notably, while it is not true that Patrick Henry literally added secret clauses to their agreements, he did genuinely do a lot of maneuvering to make it so that James Madison didn't appear at the national convention for ratifying the constitution. In particular, he forced James Madison to take part in an election in a heavily gerrymandered district against James Monroe (with this gerrymandering represented in EP:RW through the abandoned city which is highly favorable to Jamie Madison). Nevertheless, James Madison narrowly defeated his old friend James Monroe and succeeded in ratifying the constitution.

Also, James Madison really did have his nose damaged when fighting James Monroe, namely by getting frostbite while campaigning out in the cold.

Cross of Gold

"Hello everybody!" Thompson shouted, "it's time for the next match to begin!"

She gestured to the arena.

"First up," she continued, "we have a major Major from the Civil War! He's a warrior known for training the Rushmore, Theo Roosevelt, as well as for defeating the Free Silver Gang not just once, but twice over! He's a man of rare capacity, whose kindly nature and lovable traits knows no bounds! Let's hear it, for [The Napoleon of Protection], Will McKinley!"

McKinley walked into the arena wearing a suit of tin armor and carrying a pair of hatchets in his hands: one made of silver, the other gold. Upon seeing him enter, a group of spectators waved their tin banners around and beat their hands atop tin buckets and cans.

"For his opponent!" Thompson continued, "We have the big cowboy of the New Dealers! He's crude, he's crass, he's a real-life son of a gun! But whatever else may be said about him, one thing remains certain: this man understands power! He knows where to find it and he knows how to use it, and Lord; this man means to use it! Give it up, for [Landslide Landon], Landon B. Johnson!"

A helicopter flew over the stadium and LBJ popped out its doorway, giving a big wave to the crowd below. He sneered at McKinley, then walked to him as the copter landed on the ground.

"I gotta say," LBJ remarked, "I'm surprised that the man known for never wanting to see another war entered this tournament with such gusto! But if I had to guess," he said with a snark, "I'd say your decision probably went...something like this!"

LBJ snatched McKinley's helmet off of his head, placing it atop his own noggin and lowering his frame.

"Heavens me!" LBJ exclaimed in a perfect imitation of McKinley's voice. "What shall I do about this forthcoming Revolutionary War?! I swore I'd never get into another battle unless God approved, but he does not answer my prayers!"

LBJ rubbed his chin, then clapped his hands together.

"I know!" he exclaimed, "I'll put my ear to the ground and blindly follow the will of the people!"

With that, LBJ plopped his ear directly onto the floor, inciting a wave of laughs from the crowd. LBJ then removed his helmet and stood in a second position.

"Bully!" he exclaimed in Roosevelt's high-pitched voice, "What a fool I was for having a straddlebug like McKinley take command of a star like me! Why, McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate éclair!" he pointed to his ear covered in dirt, "and his ear's so close to the ground, it's filled with grasshoppers!"

The audience gave a torrent of applause at LBJ's sudden performance. He returned their cheers with a series of exaggerated bows, then looked to McKinley for his response.

McKinley stood for a moment, then gave a light snort.

"Oh, heck!" he said with a chuckle. "How am I not supposed to laugh at something as funny as that?" He gave a light bow. "It's truly an honor to have been made the subject of a mimic as talented as yourself!"

LBJ forced a smile across his face.

"Of course," he mumbled as he tossed the helmet back to him.

Taft eyed the two fighters as McKinley put his helmet on, covering the last of his body in shining tin armor.

"Let the match," Taft exclaimed, "begin!"

LBJ pulled a hand out of his pocket, bringing out a handkerchief covering his hand.

"If character assassination won't work!" he shouted as he pulled back the cloth, revealing a nickel-plated revolver, "then let's try a real assassination!"

LBJ fired two shots in quick succession at point blank range. The bullets struck McKinley's armor, then plopped harmlessly to the ground. LBJ looked to McKinley, down to his undented bullets, then back to McKinley.

"Damn," LBJ remarked as he tossed his weapon to the side, "my cousin Iver swore his gun could take you down..."

LBJ studied McKinley carefully. Not only did the bullets fail to dent his armor, they didn't leave so much as a single smudge!

"Finished?" McKinley asked as he readied his hatchets. "If so, I'd like to have my turn now."

LBJ jumped back as McKinley swung his axe, scratching LBJ's arm.

"OUCH!!!!" LBJ screamed as he shook his lightly injured arm. He stepped back, tripping over his own legs and falling to the ground. McKinley jerked himself to a stop and took half a step back.

"Are you alright?" McKinley asked. "Do you want me to give you some time to get yourself back up?"

"No I don't!" LBJ snarled as he threw out his hand, tossing a pile of dirt into McKinley's face. "I wanted you to get closer!"

McKinley stepped back as clumps of dirt passed into his helmet. At the same time, LBJ leapt forward, smashing his fist into McKinley's unguarded head. However, McKinley did not flinch, nor his armor so much as bend from the weight of LBJ's titanic punch.

"That wasn't nice," McKinley remarked as he swung out his axe, landing a light cut to LBJ's chest.

"YEOWCH!!!" LBJ screamed, jumping back and blowing on his wound.

"Come now!" McKinley said with a cheer, "stop whining each time you get yourself a little scratch!"

"Easy for you to say!" LBJ snarled. "I'm putting my life on the line here! But you?" he spoke with disdain. "Your EP makes it so anything hitting your tacky suit of armor loses all its momentum!"

"Oh?" McKinley remarked with a disgruntled grin. "And what makes you say that?"

"At first," LBJ explained, "I thought your EP just boosted your defenses like crazy."

He pointed to the bullets on the ground.

"But, if that were the case," he continued, "my bullets would have ricocheted off your ugly suit of armor instead of just plopping to the ground. Similarly, my punch didn't feel like I hit something hard, but like it stopped itself after I hit you."

He pointed to McKinley.

"Finally," he said with a sneer. "Your EP's gotta work only for that specific suit of armor! Otherwise, there'd no be reason for you to prance around in such a hideous outfit made from a worthless metal!"

McKinley tightened his smile and gave a cold chuckle.

"Close," he remarked, "but incorrect."

He raised his Presidential Seal.

"My Executive Power: Protective Tariff," he continued, "severely weakens the force of any incoming attack directed at me or anything I'm wearing."

He placed a hand on his chest.

"In particular," he exclaimed, "my choice of armor has no bearing on my EP! No, I wear this masterpiece of Ohio craftsmanship purely out of the love and pride I feel for my glorious State!"

McKinley's supporters gave a roaring applause in the stands with a variety of tin instruments.

"Oh yeah?" LBJ sneered, "well If you're so in love with tin, then why are you wearing that thing on top of your head?"

"My head?" McKinley asked as he placed a hand on his helmet, feeling something wrapped along its edges.

Curious, McKinley removed his helmet and noticed something digging into its rim.

"I say," McKinley remarked as he examined the object, "is this...a golden crown of thorns?"

He continued studying the object, the stopped as LBJ charged towards him. McKinley hastily put his helmet back on and swung his axe, only for LBJ to dodge the impromptu attack.

"Executive Power!" LBJ bellowed as he readied his fist, "War on Poverty!"

LBJ punched McKinley's neck with everything he could muster. But once again, McKinley remained unmoved. LBJ jumped back, dodging McKinley's counter, and as he did, a shining, golden cross materialized around McKinley's neck.

"Really now," McKinley remarked as he ran a hand along the strange object, "what is going on here?"

LBJ let out a snicker from afar.

“Hope you like that necklace there...” LBJ quipped as he slammed his fists together. He pulled his hands apart, and as he did, a pair of diamond brass knuckles engraved with the letters “LBJ” formed around his fingers.

“...’cause before you know it,” LBJ barked, “you’re going to be crucified upon that cross of gold!”

Mr. Texas

McKinley studied the cross on his neck with care.

"I see," he remarked, "so your Executive Powers lets you create these little trinkets whenever you hit something, eh?" He gave a shrug of his shoulders. "Well, I suppose an ability like that probably has a use or two."

"Don't patronize me!" LBJ screamed as he charged at McKinley, throwing a fist.

McKinley thrust his axe, meeting and stopping LBJ's knuckleduster midswing. LBJ drew back his head and spat a wad of spit through the gaps of McKinley's helmet.

"Jesus!!" McKinley exclaimed as he stepped back, shaking his head. "Why must you keep throwing disgusting things down my helmet?!"

"You think that's bad?" LBJ snarked as he punched McKinley's right arm, creating a golden bracelet. "Wait 'till I stick Jumbo down there!"

"I'd rather not..." McKinley spoke as he swung his axes. LBJ stepped away and struck McKinley's outstretched arm, forming a golden watch on his wrist.

In the stands, a young man gave a whistle.

"Color me surprised," JFK remarked with a smirk. "LBJ's actually landing some hits!"

"It is impressive," Hayes admitted with a small grin, "but it doesn't matter. LBJ can't hurt McKinley as long as Protective Tariff is activated. As such, it's only a matter of time before LBJ falls prey to the damage he's accumulating from McKinley's attacks."

A woman in a wheelchair gave a light snort.

"What's so funny?" Hayes asked with a snarl.

"Just your choice of words," FDR replied. "While it's true that LBJ is accumulating damage," she explained, "it's equally true that McKinley is accumulating a debt of his own; one who's magnitude he seems entirely unaware of..."

On the ground, LBJ juke to McKinley's right. McKinley started raising his arm in response, but found his body difficult to move. LBJ stepped back, dodging the slowed strike, then struck McKinley's arm, creating a second golden bracelet. McKinley retracted his arm, finding it even harder to move back.

"Could it be?!" McKinley shouted as he stared at the golden ornaments decorating his arms. "These accessories! They're...they're weighing me down!"

"You're right on the money!" LBJ quipped as he stepped into McKinley's space, smashing McKinley's side and creating a golden shoulder pad. "And money," he continued, stepping back and dodging McKinley's lethargic swing, "is always right!"

* * * * *

Years ago, FDR looked over her reports in awe.

"I knew you'd be getting some gains in our campaign," she spoke to LBJ, "but I never imagined the numbers would be this strong!"

"Thanks boss," LBJ said with a stern look. "Now, regarding my reward..."

"Of course!" FDR responded cheerfully. "I can get you anything you want!"

"Good," he replied. "Because I want another shot at joining your inner circle."

FDR instantly cooled her friendly expression.

"You know what that entails," she spoke softly, "you have to defeat your state's champion in a one-on-one match, no exceptions." She bit her lip. "You've already failed this once...if you fail a second time..."

"I can do it!" LBJ insisted. "I know I lost against Patty O'Daniel last time, but I would have won if I hadn't been so cocky at the end!"

"I agree," FDR replied with a nod. "And if O'Daniel were your opponent, I would gladly give you my blessing."

"Wait, what?!" LBJ asked, scratching his head. "Are you saying O'Daniel ain't the champion no more?"

FDR shook her head.

"I'm guessing you were too busy with the campaign to notice," she said, handing LBJ a newspaper clipping, "but *that man* has come out of retirement."

LBJ stared in shock at the image of a slim man with a characteristic pipe in his mouth.

"[Mr. Texas]," LBJ grumbled, "Cole Stevenson."

"The greatest fighter your state has ever known," FDR remarked with a sigh. "Needless to say, he defeated O'Daniel with ease. And with a man like that as your opponent," FDR shook her head. "Well, your best shot now is to wait a few years until he goes back into retirement."

LBJ continued staring at Stevenson's image.

"I might not have a few more years," he muttered, scrunching the picture and holding it to his heart.

He looked at FDR, a fire burning in his eyes.

"I don't care how low my odds are," he exclaimed, "I'm taking that match!"

FDR tightened her gaze.

"You say this," she confirmed, "knowing that failure means losing your one and only shot at advancing in our Party?"

"That's right!" LBJ shouted, giving a shallow gulp. "And if I can't move forward in the Party, then I swear; I'll retire from fighting altogether!"

"...that's some resolve," FDR admitted as she leaned back in her chair.

She looked to the ceiling, closed her eyes, then gave a slight nod.

"Very well," she spoke. "It shall be done."

And so, a match was put together by the New Dealers. LBJ entered the arena alongside a band playing behind him and a fireworks show shooting out across the night sky. Stevenson walked in with no fanfare whatsoever, a look of total disinterest spread over his face.

The referee examined the fighters, then raised his arm into the air.

"Begin!" he exclaimed.

LBJ charged at Stevenson, throwing out a quick punch.

"Take this!" he shouted.

Stevenson shifted aside, dodging the attack. LBJ followed with another strike, only for Stevenson to dodge once more. Stevenson shook his head as he dodged yet another strike.

"This is a waste of time," he remarked.

With that, Stevenson turned and walked out of the arena. LBJ stood stunned.

"You..." LBJ spoke up, then curled his lips with rage. "You cowardly old man!!" he snarled, stomping the ground. "You come back here and face me right now!" he squealed, "or is dodging the only thing you know how to do?!"

Stevenson stopped in his tracks.

"Such baseless remarks," Stevenson muttered, "don't deserve the dignity of a response."

LBJ slowly twisted his scowl into an evil smile.

"So, you won't answer, eh?" LBJ asked. "That certainly sounds like something a dodger would say!"

"I said," Stevenson replied, deepening his frown, "I refuse to answer your question out of principle!"

"Dodger, dodger!" LBJ chanted to the crowd, "Stevenson's a dodge—"

Stevenson slammed his fist into LBJ's chest, striking his kidneys with greater force than LBJ had ever experienced, forcing his knees to buckle. LBJ panted, then forced a smile across his face and rose back up.

"Dodger, dodger!" he shouted while readying a strike.

Stevenson dodged the attack and retaliated with a nasty sidewinder. LBJ took the blow and swung his arm, only for Stevenson to duck underneath.

"Dodger, dodger!" the crowd started chanting with glee, "Stevenson's a dodger!"

Stevenson stopped his attack, turning to the crowd with an expression of bewilderment.

"Dodger, dodger; Stevenson's a dodger!"

Stevenson gritted his teeth.

"To hell with this!" he snapped, turning to LBJ with open arms. "Do your goddamn worse!" he declared, begging LBJ to strike him down.

LBJ tightened his weary smile.

"Now we're talking," he said pulling back his fists. "TAKE, THIS!"

LBJ's attack landed against the rugged shoulders of Cole Stevenson. But in the end, [Mr. Texas] remained unaffected.

"There!" Stevenson shouted with a malevolent grin. "Are you happy now—?"

Stevenson stopped as LBJ wrapped his hands around Stevenson's shoulders and thrust to the side, tossing Stevenson back. He landed on his feet, his expression unchanged.

"Still got some fight left?" Stevenson asked bitterly.

He stepped forward, then looked down at the sight of a strange metallic box buried just below his feet.

"What in tarnation...?"

The earth below Stevenson burst open in a sudden explosion of shrapnel and flames, slamming Stevenson to the ground.

The crowd stood still, stunned by the unexpected eruption. Even the referee found himself unable to move, then came to his senses as someone coughed loudly besides him.

"Ehem," LBJ said while twirling a finger around in the air. The referee cleared his throat, then raised his hand.

"We find Stevenson unable to continue!" he shouted to the crowd, "the winner, is Landon B. Johnson!"

"What?!" Stevenson exclaimed, raising his burning body off the ground. "You can't be serious!!"

Stevenson pointed to the remains of the bomb on the floor.

"I don't know what just happened," he explained, "but it's obviously foul play on LBJ part! More than that," he said staring down his opponent, "I'm plenty ready to keep on fighting!"

"No can do," the referee said with a frantic wave of his arms, "the official results have already been sent along! I couldn't change the outcome now even if I wanted to."

As the man explained himself, a sleeve fell down his arm, revealing a golden watch with the letters "LBJ" etched into its side.

"...well now," Stevenson growled as the referee pulled back his sleeve, "so that's how it is, huh?"

He looked to LBJ.

"I'd ask how you could sleep at night, knowing the crimes you've committed to obtain this 'landslide' victory of yours," he spoke with frustration. "But the answer's clear, ain't it?"

"Yes sir," LBJ said with his biggest grin yet. "I'm going to sleep," he continued while waving a detonator in his hands for everyone to see, "like a goddamn baby!"

* * * * *

McKinley clicked his tongue as LBJ dodged his slow attacks and added another golden item to his glistening right arm.

"If you keep targeting my right!" McKinley shouted while spinning himself around, "then I'll just meet you with my left!"

LBJ gave a sinister grin.

"Wrong move!"

Before McKinley could finish the spin, LBJ slammed into the left side of McKinley's body, forcing the unstable McKinley back.

"Got ya!" LBJ shouted, slamming his fists into McKinley's chest, enlarging the golden cross further.

McKinley tightened his grip, then swung his weighted right arm.

"Come on!" LBJ chuckled as he dodged the strike. "At this point it's like you're not even trying to hit—"

"Rather than listen to you blab for a second longer," McKinley declared as he raised his golden axe above him, "I would happily suffer the loss of my good right arm!"

At that, McKinley swung his axe down, slicing straight through his own outstretched arm.

LBJ stood motionless, watching McKinley's arm drop lifelessly to the ground.

"Jesus—" LBJ started to speak, but stopped as McKinley cut into LBJ's exposed chest with his remaining golden axe.

Protection

"GAHHHH!!" LBJ screamed as McKinley cut his chest.

LBJ pushed off McKinley's shoulder, separating the two before LBJ jumped back even further. LBJ steadied his breathing, then looked back at McKinley's severed arm on the ground.

"No blood?" he murmured as he eyed the situation, "...it's...an artificial limb?!"

"That's correct," McKinley remarked as he tore the remains of his prosthetic out of his armor. "I lost my real one ages ago..."

* * * * *

"They're starving out there!" a young McKinley shouted to his superior officer. "We need to get them some food right away!"

"It's too risky," the officer said with a shake of their head. "Sorry kid, but no means no."

McKinley lowered his shoulders and slumped back to his camp.

"They didn't bite," McKinley lamented to a large, hairy man standing beside him. "I asked two officers for permission, but both of them shut me down."

Marcus Hanna nodded his head.

"So, you're giving up then?"

McKinley looked to his friend with a grim expression, then gave a sly smile.

"Not a chance."

"Good," Hanna said with a smirk, "because we've already put together a wagon to deliver."

McKinley raised an eyebrow.

"Who's, 'we'?"

Hanna pointed ahead.

"Iris?!" McKinley exclaimed at seeing his wife loading a wagon with food. "Surely...surely you're not planning to come with us, right?! We're heading into enemy fire, and—"

"And what?" she replied. "If you can handle it honey, then so can I!"

"More than that," Hanna said, butting in, "I requested Iris join in case we need to use her Artifact." He gestured to the ruby red slippers on her feet. "After all, she's the only one here who can get us back home if we find ourselves in a pinch."

McKinley gave his motley crew a look over, then gave a shake of his head.

"Alright you knuckleheads," he said with a grin, "let's do this!"

McKinley's group bolted out of camp before anyone could notice. They rode on with daring; traveling at breakneck speeds through the terrific fire of musketry and artillery around them. And after a few close calls, the group made it through the enemy's bombardment and onto a quiet, yellow brick road.

"Phew," Iris spoke from inside the wagon, "looks like we made it through the worst of things!"

"And we're doing great on time too," Hanna remarked from up front. "At this rate, we should—"

McKinley shoved Hanna to the side. As he did, a silver spike shot out of the forest, piercing the carriage where Hanna had been seated. McKinley looked into the surrounding trees, then gave a heavy groan.

"You've got to be kidding me..." McKinley lamented as a familiar figure stepped out with a ball of silver floating behind them.

"Well, well!" Will Bryan said with a smirk, "if it isn't my archnemeses, Will McKinley! Now really, what are the odds of us running into each other in the middle of nowhere like this, hmm?"

"We aren't archnemeses," McKinley grumbled, "and we don't have time for your antics right now!"

"Too bad!" Bryan retorted as he brought a silver whistle to his lips. Upon hearing its signal, dozens of soldiers emerged from the forest's depths carrying a variety of weapons. McKinley gave a quick scan of their surroundings.

"We're outnumbered 16 to 1," he remarked as he readied his axes.

Hanna paused, then shook his head.

"It's too risky to continue," he said with dismay. "Iris!" he shouted to the carriage, "get us out of here, now!"

Hanna waited a moment, but the only response was a peculiar hissing sound from inside the carriage.

"Seriously?!" Hanna shouted, "is she really having an episode right now?!"

"I'll handle this," McKinley insisted, dashing into the carriage, "just keep them busy for me!"

"Easier said than done," Hanna muttered as he readied his claws.

Inside the carriage, McKinley found Iris in the middle of a severe epileptic fit.

"There, there," he said, covering his wife's face with a white handkerchief, "everything's going to be alright now."

McKinley started stroking Iris' hand, and as he did, a figure leapt out behind him.

"If you won't come out to fight me," Bryan screamed, "then I'll just bring the fight to you!" He raised his hand into the air. "Power: Free Silver!"

A silver spike shot out of Bryan's orb. Without taking his eyes off his wife, McKinley raised his right arm, causing the spike to pass through his elbow and stop just before meeting his head.

"It's okay," McKinley continued speaking to his wife despite the wound in his arm, "that was just the sound of leaves rustling in the wind."

Bryan furrowed his brow, digging his nails into his fists.

"If there's one thing I hate more than losing," he muttered as he split his orb into several smaller spheres, "it's being ignored!"

Bryan's orbs transformed themselves into a sea of silver spikes aimed for McKinley and his wife. McKinley glanced at the spikes, then extended his remaining arm around the body of his defenseless wife.

"Don't worry, darling," he spoke softly, "no matter what the world throws at us...I'll always protect you!"

"Cheap words!" Bryan screamed as the spikes hurtled forward.

A ray of light suddenly burst out McKinley's injured body. The silver spikes struck his shining armor, then plopped to the ground.

"Wh...what?!"

Bryan, for once in his life, stood speechless; his eyes fixed on the light from McKinley's unexpected Election. However, it didn't take long for Bryan to come to his senses.

"Seriously?!" he squealed in rage. "You've been Elected?!? ELECTED?!?! BEFORE MEEEEEEEE?!?!?!?"

"Bryan."

Bryan stopped talking as McKinley turned around, his left hand shining with the glow of a Presidential Seal.

"If you can't lower your voice around my wife," he continued, "then I'm afraid I'll have to shut you up myself..."

An hour later, Hayes greeted the incoming wagon with cheer.

"God bless you all!" she shouted, slapping Hanna on his back.

Hayes turned to McKinley, carefully eyeing his severed arm and Presidential Seal.

"I can't thank you enough for what you've done," she spoke to him. "You're one of the bravest and finest officers I've ever seen."

"Thank you," McKinley said, looking to his right shoulder. "It's just a shame that I'll have to be dropping out of the War now."

"What?!" Hayes exclaimed. "Over one missing arm?"

She waved her stubbed arm with a toothy grin.

"Lad," she continued, "you'll be moving faster than ever with all that extra weight off your shoulders! And once I teach you a few one-armed techniques I've been developing, why, you'll see that you've still got plenty of fighting left in you!"

McKinley smiled, then gave a proud salute with his remaining arm.

"Yes ma'am!"

* * * * *

LBJ clicked his tongue as he continued staring at McKinley's severed arm

"I thought you were a passive fool," he snarled, "but cutting off your fake arm in order to shake up your opponent?" he shook his head. "That's some high-level manipulation if I've ever seen it!"

"Thank you," McKinley replied with a smile. "It was a difficult balancing act to maintain, what with me needing to slow my left arm down to match the speed of my sluggish right." He kicked one of the ornaments on his severed arm. "I'm guessing my inability to close this gap was why you unconsciously targeted my slower right side with your attacks."

"Close the gap?" LBJ muttered with widened eyes. "You don't mean...?!"

McKinley nodded his head.

"Now that I've shown my hand," he said crouching down, "I'm done slowing myself down!"

The McKinley Grip

McKinley swung his axe like a crack of lightning. LBJ stepped back, taking a cut to his arm. McKinley twirled his hatchet around and swung upwards, landing another hit.

LBJ gritted his teeth, grabbing McKinley's outstretched arm and holding it in place.

"Have a taste," he exclaimed, "of my boxer rebellion!"

LBJ pummeled McKinley's chest with his free arm, causing the golden cross to grow ever larger.

"Even if you restrict one limb," McKinley remarked as he jumped into the air, "I've still got two more!"

McKinley thrust his legs, striking LBJ's gut and forcing him to release his grip. Before McKinley could land, LBJ shoved his airborne body down, pushing him to the ground. McKinley rolled away and stood up before LBJ could follow with another barrage.

"Not bad!" McKinley said with a smirk. "Now try this!"

McKinley took his axe and placed it where his arm had been, locking his weapon in place just past his shoulder. As he did, LBJ stepped to McKinley's unarmed left side, throwing a punch.

With miraculous speed, McKinley grabbed LBJ's right hand, pulling it and causing his attack to miss. McKinley then rotated around, cutting sharply into LBJ's shoulder with his axe.

"SHITTT!!" LBJ screamed as he readied a punch with his left.

McKinley shifted his hand up LBJ's arm, grabbing his elbow and yanking to the side, pulling LBJ and causing his strike to miss once more. McKinley rotated himself around, landing a cut to LBJ's defenseless side.

Hayes gave a grin from the stands.

"There it is!" she remarked, "The McKinley Grip! McKinley's signature fighting style allowing him to land continuous attacks while destroying his opponent's mobility!"

"So then," FDR inquired, "do you think LBJ is done for?"

"Definitely," Hayes replied with a nod. "Sure, LBJ might land another hit or two if he pushes for it, but he'll take some serious damage in return. And like I said, LBJ just doesn't have any way of dealing damage to McKinley."

"Perhaps," FDR said pressing her fingers together, "but then again, perhaps not..."

On the ground, LBJ continued spinning while McKinley cut into him with his golden axe. Finally, LBJ gritted his teeth.

"Screw this!" he exclaimed, pounding his chest and planting his feet on the ground. "Stop this turning around and face me head on already!"

"I don't know what your plotting," McKinley remarked as he raised his axe, "but it's not going to work!"

McKinley slashed with heightened speed, cutting deep into LBJ chest.

Without losing his cool, LBJ thrust his fist at the cross flying about McKinley's rotating body. He struck the ornament, losing the momentum in his hand, then continued onwards with his punch, smashing the cross into McKinley's chest.

For a moment, neither fighter moved.

Then, McKinley coughed blood.

"What?" he asked between coughs. "How did...?"

Before he could finish, LBJ yanked the cross back and punched it again.

As before, the attack stopped upon hitting the cross, then continued forward and crashed into McKinley's armor, denting it.

McKinley coughed, then kned LBJ in the stomach, stunning him long enough to back away.

"This cross!" McKinley exclaimed as he took the necklace in hand, "could it be...?!"

"You said it yourself," LBJ said with a smirk. "Protective Tarriff stops the momentum of any 'incoming' attack which hits something you're wearing. On the other hand," he said putting his fists together, "if I continue an attack while touching something you're wearing, it no longer counts as an 'incoming' attack, does it?"

McKinley took a step back.

"That's..." McKinley started to speak.

"That's ridiculous!" LBJ exclaimed in an imitation of McKinley's voice. "You had no way of knowing my EP would work that way!"

LBJ pushed his hands out in front of him.

"That's why I shoved you earlier," he continued in his normal voice, "and why I slammed into you; I was confirming that pushes maintained their force as long as I made them touching your armor."

McKinley stood still, his mouth agape.

"Does that mean..."

"Does that mean?!" LBJ continued in McKinley's voice, "you started plotting all of this after I carelessly told you the details of my EP?!"

LBJ shook his head.

"My plan started," he explained in his normal voice, "the moment I saw your fans waving those gaudy tin banners. That's when I decided to throw some cheap insults at your beloved metal when I told you my theory about your EP." He gave an evil grin. "I figured after that you'd be more than eager to correct the errors in my explanation!"

McKinley tried to speak, but no words came out of his mouth.

"You thought you were invincible!" LBJ shouted as he stepped forward, "causing you to drop your guard! I, on the other hand," LBJ spoke as he pulled back his shirt, revealing a golden plate with a deep cut across its center, "I always come prepared for a fight!"

LBJ stood in front of McKinley, his towering frame covering his opponent in shadow.

"Now I reckon," LBJ said as he snatched the cross from McKinley's hands, "my two attacks just now were the first real hits you've felt since getting your EP. Which means," LBJ grinned as he tossed the cross into the air, "your body's in too much shock right now to even move!"

With a terrifying grin, LBJ raised his arms overhead, slamming his fists onto the floating cross. They stopped upon impact, then plummeted down, smashing the cross directly into the crown of thorns around McKinley's head.

McKinley fell to the ground, his helmet rolling to the side. Taft rushed to McKinley's side and examined his body, then raised his arm.

"The fight is over!" he exclaimed. "The winner, is [Landslide Landon], Landon B. Johnson!"

In the stands, Hayes stared in disbelief.

"Dear God," she mumbled, "to set up so many traps so far in advance...LBJ is truly a monster!"

"McKinley was the all-around better fighter," FDR remarked. "Even at the very end he could have turned things around if he was in control of his senses." She gave a slight smirk. "But then he fell for LBJ's final trick."

Hayes clicked her tongue.

"LBJ purposefully pointed out every place McKinley went wrong," Hayes mumbled, "allowing LBJ to dominate his psyche. Those psychological wounds, together with his unexpected physical ones, left his mind unable to contemplate going against LBJ's actions."

"Way to go big guy," JFK said with a smirk, then ran off to congratulate his ally.

After a quick search, JFK found LBJ trekking alone through the halls of the arena.

"There you are!" JFK shouted as he walked over. "Congrats on the win!" JFK gave a handsome smile. "Though of course, I knew my partner was going to pull through!"

JFK continued his smile, then dropped it as he noticed an expression of rage spread over LBJ's face.

"I saw it," LBJ mumbled angrily, "I saw it!!"

JFK squinted his eyes.

"What...what did you see?"

LBJ clenched his fists.

"One of those cruddy McKinley signs was waving around in the stands after I won!" he exclaimed, "and on my side of the arena no less!"

LBJ looked expectantly to JFK.

“Okay?” JFK replied with confusion. “But really, who cares about one measly sign anyhow?” he said, giving LBJ a pat on the back. “Practically everyone out there was cheering for you after that awesome final hit!”

“*Practically* everyone,” LBJ said with a snarl, “but not *everyone*!” He kept walking, barely acknowledging JFK’s presence.

“I swear,” he continued with a hiss, “I’m not going to stop until every damn man, woman, and child is screaming my name!!”

Fact and Fiction: McKinley vs LBJ

William McKinley did not Lose an Arm. This is mostly just a metaphor for him ultimately choosing the gold standard after straddling against Bryan, and it is also very loosely inspired by a quote of his saying "Rather than [be nominated], I would suffer the loss of [my] good right arm." It's also a bit of an excuse for Ruth Hayes to take on a mentorship role for Will McKinley, mirroring the real-life mentorship of Rutherford Hayes for William McKinley.

LBJ Imitating McKinley. Lyndon Johnson was very good at imitating people in real-life, and Landon Johnson uses this talent in EP:RW to make a number of common insults made against William McKinley. These insults include the claims that William McKinley blindly followed the orders of his benefactor Marcus Hanna, and that he caved in easily to public opinion. This latter insult led people to say William McKinley "kept his ear so close to the ground that it was full of grasshoppers," and Theodore Roosevelt in particular to say "McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate éclair."

Assassination. Landon Johnson shooting Will McKinley at the start of the fight is a rough approximation of what happened with the real assassination of William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz (though in real-life the shots landed successfully). The weapon Szolgosz used was an Iver Johnson revolver, hence Landon's comment about his "cousin Iver".

Crown of Thorns and Cross of Gold. These items that are placed on Will McKinley are a reference to William Jennings Bryan's famous "Cross of Gold" speech, which concludes with the lines "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

LBJ Flashback. This flashback is centered on Lyndon Johnson's battle for a senate seat against Coke Stevenson. Coke was one of the most popular figures in Texas and had won every previous contest he had entered by huge margins while doing virtually zero campaigning on his part. Moreover, Lyndon entered this race with the conviction that if he lost he would leave politics for good.

Despite having every odd stacked against him, Lyndon would go on to win this competition after pouring unprecedented amounts of money into the campaign and by using a host of dirty tactics (such as pressing Coke to take a stand on the Taft-Hartley Act, knowing that Coke would refuse to answer his attacks out of pride, making him look like he was dodging the question). Most damning of all, Lyndon would very blatantly buy the election by having 200 new votes (written in alphabetical order no less) suddenly appear after the votes had previously been announced, conveniently giving Lyndon a very narrow win. This corruption would later become the source of his nickname "Landslide Lyndon," a name which Lyndon himself would go out of his way to openly brag about.

There are many, many more details to this crazy story, and I strongly recommend looking at Robert Caro's amazing book "Means of Ascent" which tells this story in far greater detail.

McKinley Flashback. The main reference underlying this flashback is William McKinley's daring supply run during the Civil War, which really did happen after two of his superior officers told him not to go. However, Hanna, his wife, and Bryan were not present during this time, nor do any of their appearances or personalities in EP:RW have any real connection to reality (though William McKinley's wife really did have frequent seizures). The extra characters listed above were inserted to make this flashback better

parallel the book “The Wizard of Oz”, which is an allegory for the gold standard crisis that William McKinley found himself at the center of during his battle with William Bryan.

The McKinley Grip. This was a special handshake technique that William McKinley developed to shake many hands without tiring himself out or injuring his hand. Roughly speaking, he would pull someone’s hand to him, give a quick shake, then grab their elbow and yank them aside to greet the next person.