

Executive Powers: Revolutionary War



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Disclaimer

This is a work in progress. Most of the text still needs to be written, and what's currently written needs some more editing. Please let me know if you have any comments on the current draft, especially with regards to critiques/places where the writing is not as smooth.

If I sent you this, I'll emphasize that 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. The editors had once again 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 the same drab stories day after day. They wanted something new. Something spicy. Something to keep them at the edge of their seats.

She clenched her fists. One of these days, she'd find a story so powerful that even her eggheaded editors would be blown away. And when she did, she wasn't going to be some passive bystander watching from afar. No, she was going to be right there, smack dab in the middle of the action.

As she thought this, Thompson noticed a strange, mushroom shaped cloud in the horizon. Before she could react, a massive shockwave slammed into her building, shattering windows and throwing her to the ground. The floor erupted with screams as everyone pushed past each other in a mad dash for the exits. Everyone, with the sole exception of Huntress Thompson.

Thompson carefully rose from the ground, wiped a streak of blood from her forehead, then ran to the helipad with a skip in her step. She raised her arm and shouted 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 next to her.

"I don't know Gonzo...but whatever it is..." she grabbed a cigarette without breaking her stride, "...it's definitely a scoop!"

The duo made it to the roof, and Gonzo quickly took control of the helicopter, flying off in the direction of the cloud Thompson had spotted. In the air, Thompson activated her Power again, summoning a second Gonzo. She tilted her bucket hat, adjusted her yellow-tinted sunglasses, then nodded to the new Gonzo. He raised three fingers...two...one...

"Hello Baltimore!" Thompson shouted into her mic. "This is Huntress Thompson, reporting live from the air. Moments ago, our city was hit by a titanic shockwave. Was this a natural disaster? A new weapon? Or perhaps the aftermath of an epic battle between two Parties? Well, we're about to find out." Thompson shifted to the side, giving Gonzo's lens a full view of the massive crater behind her.

"Below us," Thompson continued, "you can see where the shockwave likely originated. Preliminary calculations suggest that the crater is about 300 feet deep with a radius of 1200 feet. Moreover—"

"Woah, woah," Gonzo pointed his head to the edge of the crater, "there's something down there."

Thompson turned and spotted the bright light shining at the edge of the crater. She grinned. "...take us down Gonzo."

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

"Nonsense!" she shouted back. "We came out here to figure out what the hell happened, and that right there," she pointed to the light, "is the main nerve!"

Gonzo nodded. "...that's what gives me the fear..." Reluctantly, Gonzo lowered the copter. Before he could finish landing, Thompson was on the ground, dashing straight for the light. The glow faded as she

approached, and from within the light, a large man with short gray hair and circular glasses stepped forward.

"Greetings!" the man spoke in a cheery tone, "Are you local or national news?"

Thompson blinked, looked over to Gonzo, then back to the man. "L-local..."

The man maintained his smile, but he was clearly disappointed. "Well...it will get there soon enough. Are you rolling now?"

Thompson slowly nodded her head.

"Excellent." The man cleared his throat. "My fellow Americans..." he raised his right hand, and Thompson instinctively stepped back. His hand bore the all too familiar symbol of a bald eagle inscribed within a circle of stars. A Presidential Seal. "...my name is Henry S. Truman," he continued "I am a President, and the destruction behind me..." he turned to the massive crater, "...is the result of my Executive Power: The Manhattan Project."

Thompson paused for a moment, taking in the full weight of his statements. "...and what do you want?"

Truman drew a slight grin. "You're quick on the uptake." He regained his neutral expression. "As I speak, our nation is being torn apart by a constant stream of violent clashes between Presidents and their Parties...I'd go so far as to say we're on the brink of a second Civil War." He bit his lip. "As a President, I know this is bad, and I've come here today with the hope of putting an end to evils like this. But of course..." he looked out to the distance, "it is not enough to yearn for peace. We must work, and if necessary..." Truman grinned, "...fight for it."

"Fight?" Thompson asked.

"Exactly!" Truman threw out his arms, his grin morphed into a viscous smile. "In order to form a more perfect union, insure domestic tranquility, and to secure the blessings of liberty, 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. "Please...tell us more?" she spoke hesitantly.

He raised three fingers. "This experiment will be organized by a trinity of Presidents: myself, Bill Taft, and Ruth Hayes..." he raised another finger, "it will take place at this very spot four months from today, on Tuesday, November 4th. Each fighter and organizer shall pledge their allegiance to the ultimate winner of the tournament." Truman intensified his smile. "I'm also very excited to announce that four Presidents have already agreed to take part ..." he slowly lowered his fingers one at a time, his voice lingering on each syllable as he spoke, "Theo Roosevelt...Gabe Lincoln...Tanya Jefferson...and Jordan Washington..."

Thompson's eyes widened. "The entirety of Rushmore..."

"Exactly..." Truman turned to Gonzo's camera. "So, to all my fellow Presidents, I sincerely hope you'll join me for what is sure to be...a Revolutionary War!"

He stared unmoving at the camera for half a minute. "C-cut," Thompson stammered. Gonzo's red light flicked off, and Truman let out a deep sigh.

“Well, the die is cast,” he said with a significantly thicker Missouri accent. “Say,” he turned to their helicopter, “what model do you have there?” he jaunted to the vehicle while Thompson and Gonzo stayed behind, their bodies frozen in place.

“...Gonzo...”

“...Yeah boss?”

“I have a lot of questions...” she looked to the large man geeking out over their news helicopter. “...in particular...who the hell is Henry Truman?”

Corrupt Bargain

Two women marched across the Florida desert. The first stood tall in a tank top, her finely toned muscles on full display, while the second was shorter and dressed in a full magician's outfit. The short woman wiped a band of sweat from her forehead.

"I'm dying Jackson..." Martina Van Buren complained. She suddenly gasped for air and dramatically fell to the ground. "Alas! You must go on without me."

"Suck it up, Van Buren." Andrea Jackson replied curtly. "Or would you prefer I use my EP?"

"No, no!" Van Buren frantically got back up. "It was a joke...just a joke..." She looked up to see one of her doves circling above them. "...in any case..." the bird landed on her top hat, "we're almost there..."

The two continued onward, and before long, they spotted the oasis. Van Buren attempted a slow and cautious approach, but Jackson stormed past her at full speed.

"Quincy!" Jackson bellowed.

The young man swimming in the oasis stopped and turned to the duo. "Well, would you look at that," Quincy Adams bemused, "[Old Hickory] and [The Little Magician]...to what do I owe the displeasure?"

"We're here on Pierce's behalf," Jackson snapped back.

Quincy raised an eyebrow. "You ventured all this way for that little quarrel?"

"It was a one-sided massacre!" Jackson shouted, "You knew Pierce wouldn't be able to fight back on the sabbath!"

"I'm aware of that now, yes." He shrugged his shoulders and walked ashore, making no attempt at covering his naked body. "Oh well, no harm done."

"No harm?" Jackson asked. "Pierce is so injured; we don't know whether he'll be able to fight in the tournament!"

"Is that so?" Quincy smirked. "What an unfortunate situation."

Veins bulged from Jackson's forehead. "It was Hayes, wasn't it?" She pointed her finger at Quincy. "She told you when the tournament was going to be announced, letting you attack Pierce before everyone put up their guards!"

"What utter nonsense," Quincy nonchalantly dressed himself by the shore. "Surely you're not accusing me of some sort of...corrupt bargain, are you?"

Jackson stared Quincy down. "Grab your weapon."

Quincy blinked, sighed, then took off the coat he just put on. He kicked up his gilded shovel, caught it, then pointed the spade upward. "Exalt thy vision to the heavens..." As he spoke, a massive tower materialized in the air. "Executive Power..." he pointed his shovel at Jackson. "Lighthouses of the Skies."

Jackson jumped back just before the tower crashed to the ground in front of her. "Pathetic..." she flicked rubble off her shoulders. "...I refuse to believe Pierce fell to such a weak attack..." Jackson raised

her arm. "Show us what you can really do..." her Presidential Seal glowed. "Executive Power: Trail of Tears!"

Quincy coughed and clenched his chest. His whole body shook, sweat dripped down his face, and his heart felt like it was about to burst from his chest. In his entire life, Quincy had never felt quite so...so...powerful! He clenched his fists, his Presidential Seal glowing brighter than it ever had. He screamed at the top of his lungs. "Lighthouses of the Skies!" Instantly, upwards of 130 towers materialized above them. "Die!"

Van Buren placed her hand on Jackson's shoulder. "Executive Power..." she threw a smoke bomb at the ground just before the first tower smashed down. One by one, tower after tower crashed down, whipping up a storm of dust covering the oasis.

Quincy cackled and continued summoning more and more towers. For a brief moment, he contemplated pausing to check on his opponents, but the thought was quickly overrun by a new wave of adrenaline flowing through his veins. He maintained his bombardment for another minute before his legs gave out. He gasped for air. His vision blurred. And then...he heard the sound of footsteps.

"Is that all you've got?" Quincy lifted his head to see Jackson and Van Buren standing behind him. They smiled, without a single scratch or speck of dust on them. Jackson raised her fist once more. "Let me give you another push."

Jackson's Presidential Sealed shined, and again Quincy felt a surge of adrenaline. He got up and lunged at Jackson, only to trip over himself. "S...stop..." he mumbled under his breath. He crawled forward, his bloodshot eyes fixed on Jackson. "Let me stop..."

"Oh, don't worry, boy." Jackson cracked her neck, "You won't be able to move a muscle after I'm done with you."

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Ruth Hayes stood alone in the board room and examined herself in the mirror. No matter how many years went by, she never got used to seeing the battle scars covering her body, let alone the stub where her left arm used to be.

Truman walked into the room and looked at his watch. "Right on time." Bill Taft tried following behind, but his titanic body struggled to squeeze through the doorway. Hayes raised her Presidential Seal, and Taft teleported into the room.

"Thanks Hayes," Taft said as he stretched out his body.

"We just got word from Quincy," Truman spoke up. "It doesn't look like his injuries will heal in time."

"Shucks," Hayes clicked her tongue. "Well, at least Pierce is making a speedy recovery...did you already call our backup fighter?"

"No..." Truman grumbled and took out his phone. "I was hoping to delay the inevitable..." he dialed and put his phone to his ear. "Buchanan? This is Truman. It turns out we can accept your last-minute entry after all."

"Oh...really?" a nervous voice stammered from the other end. "Well...I was just thinking...maybe, maybe I shouldn't enter? It's just that...this tournament...it might just be a little too scary...right? But...but I also don't want to feel left out if...if everyone else is going. But...but then again..."

Truman's face twitched. "Now listen Buchanan. We've done a lot of work on our end to get your name on our roster. You're entering the tournament, and that's final!" He hung up and shook his head.

"It's a shame we have to use him," Taft remarked, "but it's better than one of us entering."

"And really," Hayes added, "it's a miracle we got as many entrants as we did. Who would have thought Arthur, let alone Cleveland, would want to take part in a spectacle like this?"

Truman nodded. "Outside of Quincy and us three, every living President is in the running..." he bit his thumb, "...which makes *that* person all the more bewildering..."

"You're talking about that masked fellow?" Hayes asked, "JD, was it?"

"Exactly..." Truman tilted his glass of bourbon. "...all of the Elections since Washington's are already accounted for...it just doesn't make sense..."

Taft shrugged his shoulders. "They had a Presidential Seal, and my EP verified they weren't signed up twice...we can't do anything but let them in."

Truman reluctantly nodded his head.

"Oh," Hayes spoke up. "I forgot to ask. Are we hiring another MC? Or do you want to just do it on your own, Truman?"

"Let's hire someone." Truman finished his drink. "I'll be too stressed to give good commentary."

"Who do you want to get?" Taft asked. "Twain? Hemmingway?"

"I have someone else in mind..." he smirked, "...someone with a lot of gumption..."

Rules of Engagement

Huntress Thompson weaved her motorcycle through the cars stuck in traffic. She couldn't believe that, just four months ago, this whole place had been nothing but dirt. But now? Families ate burgers in front of thugs with cigars. Saxophonists jammed over the sound of workers building walls. Arms dealers peddled their wares next to fanatics screaming something about religion. It was pure chaos, and Thompson loved every second of it.

She skidded to a halt and gazed at the giant marble coliseum in front of her. Today, tourists swarmed its perimeter. Tomorrow, they'd fill every seat in the house. As she marveled at the sights, two agents dressed in black approached her. She held out her badge. "Huntress Thompson, VIP."

The Secret Service agents examined her ID. "You're fifteen minutes late."

"Sue me."

The agent rolled his eyes and grabbed his walkie-talkie. "Huntress Thompson is at the gate. Requesting teleportation."

Thompson raised an eyebrow. "Requesting wha—" she shook, then found herself at the front of a large room.

"Ah, you're here," Truman turned to the group. "Everyone, this is our master of ceremonies: [The Outlaw Journalist], Huntress Thompson."

Polite claps echoed around the room, but Thompson was too starstruck to notice. The most powerful figures throughout the nation were staring right at her. She didn't recognize every single one of them, but they all bore a Presidential Seal on their hands...all of them, except for one person.

She pointed to a kid in a baseball uniform. "Who's the brat?"

The kid grabbed his bat and stepped forward, but a man wearing a blindfold put his hand out in front of him. "Calm yourself," Jorge Bush spoke to the child. He turned to Thompson. "This is my son, Walker," he explained, "he didn't want to be left behind."

"Jesus," Thompson lit a cigarette, "are we organizing a tournament or a freaking daycare?"

"Getting back on topic..." Taft lifted a packet of papers. "Hopefully you've all had a chance to skim over the contracts we handed to you..." he glared at Thompson, "...back when we started the meeting." He coughed. "Again, the main point is that these contracts, created by my Executive Power: Chief Justice, are binding. By signing, you officially commit to participating in the tournament. This means you will be able to fight during your matches, but outside of this, you will not be able to attack anyone within the city, nor to use your Executive Powers on anyone other than yourself."

"And as a reminder," Hayes added, "while basic medical treatment will be available throughout the tournament, our staff will not be able to use defensive or healing Powers on you until you're eliminated from the tournament. The only exception is if you mark 'yes' on page 19. This will allow me to teleport you out of the coliseum if I think your life is in danger, provided you aren't currently in a match, of course."

“Yes, yes, that safety stuff is all well and good...” Truman clapped his hands together, “but let’s get to the fun stuff...the bracket!” The Presidents took their eyes off their contracts and focused in on Truman. “Now, this part was tricky,” he continued. “No matter what method we used, folks fighting a Rushmore in round 1 would inevitably complain and accuse us of foul play. To counter this, we’ve come up with the following system...” He nodded, and a Secret Service agent rolled a strange contraption into the room. “After turning in your contracts, you will be given a random ballot labelled 1 to 16, which will correspond to the match you’re initially assigned to...however,” he smiled. “If you don’t like your ballot, you can trade for someone else’s.”

The Presidents erupted with murmurs and whispers. Taft slammed his war hammer, silencing the crowd.

“Now, now,” Truman continued, “I know you’re all plotting about how to use this format to get as far from the Rushmores as possible. Fortunately, we’ve simplified this for you...”

Truman clicked his remote, and the screen behind him displayed a giant bracket. The positions were broken into four blocks labelled R, L, J, and W, with a single name written at the end of each block: Roosevelt, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Washington.

“As you can see,” Truman went on, “we’ve preassigned the position of each member of Rushmore. With this, your goal is simple: avoid ending the day with a multiple of four at all cost.” He looked at his watch. “Anyways, starting now, you all have 2 hours until the bracket is locked in. Until then, you may freely trade ballots as you see fit, though you are strictly forbidden from using EP’s or any other method to obscure the true numbers of your ballots. So, without further ado...” he smirked, “let the games begin.”

Before anyone else could move, a large man in a cowboy outfit sprinted to the front of the room. He handed his contract to Taft and pulled a ballot from the machine. He grinned widely. “Suck it, JFK!” Landon B. Johnson held his ballot high in the air for everyone to see. “I’m number 1! Number 1!”

Jim Buchanan bit his nails. “That’s one good position gone...” he scrambled to the front of the room. “Me too! I want one too!” In an instant, a mob of Presidents rushed forward, each desperate to turn in their contracts and pick up their ballots.

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Francine D. Roosevelt checked that no one was around. “Fantastic work, LBJ,” she smirked, “that stampede made sure no one could read their contracts in full...” she looked to JFK, “...except of course, for those Presidents that can read 1,200 words per minute.” Jay F. Kennedy gave an innocent grin.

“We can search for loopholes later,” LBJ interjected, “I wanna know our numbers.”

JFK dropped his grin. “About that...” he held out his ballot, an 8. “...I didn’t do so great.”

FDR sighed and held hers out, a 4. “...fate is trying to draw my cousin and I together...” she shook her head, “...I just wish they would wait until a later round...”

JFK bit his lip. “This is a bad hand...” he looked to FDR. “What do we want to shoot for?”

"In a perfect world?" FDR looked down. "I would like as many 13's and 14's as we can get. Beyond that, as far from the Rushmores as we can manage."

JFK snorted. "That's a pipe dream."

"Not necessarily..." FDR weaved her fingers together. "Everyone knows LBJ has a ballot in a highly favorable position. This will attract a large number of bidders, and with it, knowledge of who has which positions..." she turned to LBJ, "...of course, that was your goal all along."

"You know it," LBJ grinned. "I figured if I knew what everyone had, I could get us whatever numbers we needed."

"It was a good plan...but with these?" JFK looked back to the ballots. "You won't be able to do anything..." he playfully slapped LBJ's back, "...which I guess is business as usual for you!" JFK broke into a laugh, and LBJ clenched his fists.

"Just you wait!" He snatched the ballots and stormed off. "I'll show you why they call me The Master of the Senate." JFK chuckled behind him, fully aware of the fire he just ignited.

As LBJ continued down the hallway, he failed to notice the dark figure silently stepping out of his shadow.

"So," Dixie Nixon spoke to herself, "The New Dealers are aiming for Block W..." She looked to FDR sitting in her wheelchair, her frail body covered in bandages. "...perhaps I'll join them..."

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"Cheers!" The organizers clinked their glasses.

"That's a load off my back," Truman gulped down his bourbon, "I thought for sure someone would back down at the last second."

"And by someone..." Hayes sipped her lemonade, "you mean Buchanan?" Truman reluctantly nodded his head.

"Let's not get too comfortable," Taft swirled his cup of water, "things are going to get a lot more hectic starting tomorrow."

"Bring it on!" Thompson chugged her whiskey, "I love hectic!"

Truman looked at his watch. "It's time!" He grabbed the remote and turned on the monitor. In front of them, the complete bracket for the tournament stood on full display.

"Oh my," Hayes smirked, "we have some exciting matches right off the bat."

"Hell yeah we do," Thompson remarked, "I just feel bad for...for..." she stared at the bracket, her eyes darting back and forth between the two sides. "Wait...that can't be right...right?"

Truman looked at her funny. "What are you..." he looked back at the bracket, "wait...what?" He shot up, grabbed his phone, and dialed, his foot violently tapping on the ground as it rang. "Hello, Reagan? I think there was an error recording the positions for you and Bush."

"Oh, don't worry," Ronda Reagan spoke calmly, "the fact that you're calling confirms that our ballots were recorded exactly as planned."

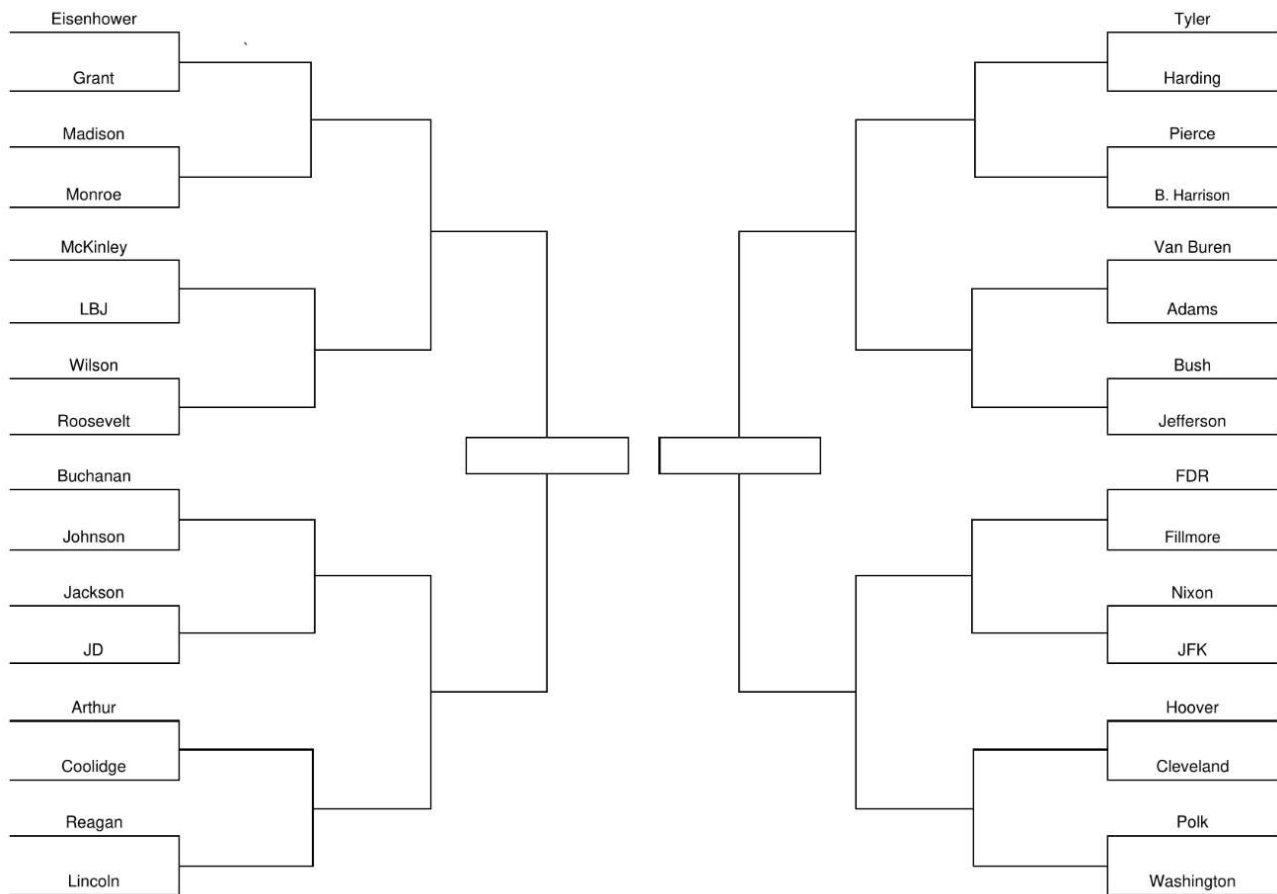
"You...wanted those positions...?" Truman stared at his phone. "What the hell are you scheming, Reagan?"

"I wonder..." she spoke coyly. "I guess you'll find out tomorrow." She hung up.

"What'd she say?" Taft asked.

"She said it's fine..." Truman looked back to the bracket and shook his head. "Anyways..." he turned to the organizers. "Let's send this thing out!"

The Bracket



Block R:

[The Supreme Commander] Deedee Eisenhower vs [The Hero of Appomattox] Odysseus Grant.
 [The Sage of Montpelier] Jamie Madison vs [The Heir of Good Feelings] Jane Monroe.
 [The Napoleon of Protection] Will McKinley vs [Landslide Landon] LBJ.
 [The Professor] Whitney 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 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] FDR vs [The Last of the Whigs] Milly Fillmore

[The King of Camelot] JFK vs [Tricky Dick] Dixie Nixon

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

[Young Hickory] Jade Polk vs [The King of Presidents] Jordan Washington

Day 1: The First Branch

Two Star Generals

The Reaganites walked towards the stadium.

"You sure you don't want to know my predictions?" Reagan asked. "Not even for your fight?"

Bush rolled his eyes underneath his blindfold. "You know I don't care for your voodoo fortune telling..." Suddenly, Bush stopped. "It sounds like your opponent is behind us."

Reagan looked over and spotted Gabe Lincoln's towering frame, as well as Odysseus Grant's stout figure by his side. Reagan waved. "Good morning!" She held out her hand, "I hope you all had a good night's rest."

Lincoln looked at Reagan's extended hand. "...that almost sounded sincere..." he looked her straight in the eyes. "...you're quite the actor, aren't you?"

Reagan smirked. "I dabble."

"That's too bad for you..." he walked off, "...because there's no way in hell I'm going down to some actor."

Lincoln and Grant continued onward until The Reaganites were far behind them. "That wasn't like you," Grant spoke up.

Lincoln sighed. "Those two have me on edge..."

"Because they purposefully sought matches with Rushmores?" Grant asked.

"Exactly..." he bit his lip. "I fear a conspiracy is in the making."

Grant shrugged his shoulders. "Who knows, it might just be youthful arrogance."

"Let's hope so, old friend." He turned to Grant. "But enough of that. How are you feeling?"

"About Eisenhower?" Grant puffed his cigar. "I'd give myself about a 60% chance of winning."

Lincoln shook his head and grinned. "What I would give to possess a mere fraction of your serenity..." He stopped walking and put his hand on Grant's shoulders. "Listen, I don't care how you fight today, so long as you do it right...remember..." he raised his hand, "...you're my man..."

Grant grabbed his hand. "...and I'm yours...for the rest of the war..."

"And beyond!" they spoke in unison, then broke from each other; Lincoln heading for the stands, and Grant for the arena.

* * * * *

A figure in a gray suit and gray mask strolled along the top of the stands. JD ignored the Secret Service agents trailing behind them, and instead focused in on the energy of the crowd. The air was electric, with everyone eagerly watching their clocks and waiting for the action to begin. Then, quietly at first, the sound of a piano rang from the speakers. The crowd gradually settled down as the cameramen around the stadium turned and zoomed in on the commentator's box. A woman with a microphone stood in front while a man played piano behind her.

"Welcome," Thompson shouted, "to the Revolutionary War!" The crowd greeted her with screams and applause. "For those that don't know, I'm Huntress Thompson, your master of ceremonies." She threw out her arm. "Helping me with the technical analysis for our fights, we have the legendary man who made all of this possible..." The piano music suddenly intensified, and the pianist slammed his hands on the keys before standing up to a roar of cheers.

"Hello everyone!" Truman spoke up, "Today, the entire world..."

"Just a minute, Henry," Thompson held the mic away from her, "let me introduce you." Despite the distance, Thompson's mic broadcasted her message across the stadium, inciting a wave of laughter. She coughed. "Anyways, joining me is [The Man from Independence], Henry Shipp Truman!" The crowd erupted.

"Henry S. Truman," he corrected. He turned back to the crowd. "Today, the entire world is looking to America for enlightened leadership to peace and progress. Such leadership requires vision, courage, and unyielding strength. Finding this leadership is my duty, and I shall not shirk from it." The crowd erupted in applause.

"Beautiful stuff, Truman," Thompson spoke up, "now let's get down to brass tacks." The stadium screens changed to a timeline for the rest of the week. "There will be eight fights per day for the first three days," Thompson continued, "followed by four quarterfinal fights on Friday, with the semifinals and finals on Saturday. The refereeing for all of our fights will be done by the only man in the country who would rather be judge than President. Give it up for [The Big Chief], Bill Taft!" Taft walked into the arena carrying his massive war hammer gavel. "And to make sure nothing goes awry," Thompson continued, "we have Secret Service agents scattered throughout the arena. Leading this group is a true veteran when it comes to quelling riots and getting rid of uninvited guests. Let's hear it for [Scarface], Ruth Hayes!" Hayes waved politely with her good arm from the stands.

"Now, we must emphasize," Truman continued, "while we have taken every reasonable precaution to protect our spectators, we cannot guarantee your complete safety. Those who don't wish to take the risk can safely watch live footage of the matches from their hotel. As for those who choose to stay..." he grinned, "...get ready for the ride of your lives."

"Enough with the foreplay," Thompson shouted, "let's get to the action!" The crowd roared. "We're starting things with a bang," she continued. "It's a match between two of the greatest commanders the world has ever seen. We may never know who's the better general, but we're about to find out who's the better fighter! Coming from the Western entrance, she's a warrior who's fought around the world. She's trained legions of soldiers during her military career, and generations of students as the head of Columbia University. Let's hear it for [The Supreme Commander], Deedee Eisenhower!"

A tank rolled into the arena. Eisenhower popped her head out of the commander's hatch, wearing her signature wool field jacket and peaked visor cap. She waved to the crowd, then pulled herself out of the tank and grabbed the barrel of its gun. With some effort, she lifted upward, tearing the head of the tank clean off its body. The tank rolled back and Eisenhower walked forward, carrying the barrel of the tank with her to the center of the arena.

"Jesus Christ!" Thompson shouted, "Eisenhower is using the head of the tank as her freaking weapon! We haven't even started and I'm getting goosebumps."

"Eisenhower has an impressive arsenal..." Truman spoke with a sly smile, "...but she might end up being outgunned this time..."

"Let's find out!" Thompson exclaimed. "Coming from the Eastern entrance, we have the second in command of the National Union Party. Despite his reputation as a butcher, he's a gentle soul who can't stand the slight of blood. But don't think he's a pushover! He won't stop fighting until he achieves unconditional surrender. He's [The Hero of Appomattox], Odysseus S. Grant!"

"It's just Odysseus Grant..." he mumbled as he walked into the arena, dragging a giant, lumpy bag behind him. He reached the center of the arena and opened the bag, releasing a stockpile of guns and swords onto the ground. He adjusted his silk hat before crouching down and carefully picking up a weapon.

"This was Calvin's pistol," he spoke softly. "He died in the final fight against Davis without getting the chance to fire a single shot..." Grant placed the pistol down and grabbed a sword, "This one was Benjamin's," he continued. "He was a valiant soldier, slain on that terrible night of Johnson's betrayal." Grant sighed and placed the weapon back on the ground. "So many young soldiers lost on my watch..." He looked up to 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 shook violently and shot into the air. Suddenly, a gun slammed into Grant's arm, followed by another, and another. Before long, both of Grant's arms were completely covered by a mass of weapons, each in the form of a giant, metallic, weaponized arm.

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

Taft looked to Eisenhower, who's smile only deepened. Taft raised his gavel. "Let the first match..." he slammed it down, "begin!"

???Insert Fights 1-4

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The Worst of the Worst

Thompson looked to Truman. “Nothing?” Truman shook his head. Thompson growled and grabbed her mic. “Hello everyone,” she spoke through gritted teeth, “our technical difficulties should be resolved any minute now. Please bear with us until then.” She turned off her mic and bit angrily into her cigarette.

“Oh, wait,” Truman grabbed his earpiece with excitement, “it looks like they found Johnson...” his smile faded, “...but his fighting condition seems...questionable...”

“I don’t care if I have to drag him onto the field myself,” Thompson snapped back, “tell him he’s going on in five minutes. And while you’re at it,” she slammed her fist, “tell Buchanan that I’m going to do him a favor and introduce Johnson first; but if he still hasn’t gotten me that bio before Johnson’s on the field, then I’m just going to make something up for him.”

Truman nodded and relayed the messages. The two sat in silence as Truman carefully watched the seconds tick on his watch. After what felt like ages, he nodded to Thompson and she grabbed her mic.

“Alrighty,” Thompson shouted, “we’re finally ready to begin the first match of Block L!” The crowd gave a wave of disgruntled cheers. “This fight features two of the most hated Presidents of all time! Our first fighter, coming from the *Eastern* entrance,” she spoke with just a hint of disdain, “was once the second in command for the National Union Party. However, he betrayed his Party and fled north to escape Lincoln’s wrath. Rumor has it he’s been hiding in the Alaskan wilderness ever since, waiting to strike back at his enemies. Let’s hear it for [The Tennessee Tailor], Andre Jackson!”

The crowd booed as Johnson staggered into the arena. His large body was covered with stitches, and his right hand carried a rapier-sized sewing needle. However, everyone’s focus centered on the bottle of whiskey in his left hand as he stumbled towards the center of the arena.

“Oh god...” Thompson mumbled, “I didn’t realize he was *that* drunk...”

Johnson motioned Taft to him, and reluctantly, Taft made his way over. As he approached, Johnson violently snatched his microphone. “I AM NOT FIT TO BE HERE!” he shouted into the mic, startling the audience. “I ought not to have left my home,” he continued, “as...as I was recovering from an attack of typhoid fever...” He pointed his finger at no one in particular. “But Mr. Truman phoned me...as did other friends!” he spoke emphatically, “saying I must be here! And so, I came!”

Johnson burst into laughter, and Taft angrily took back his microphone. Johnson smiled back and grabbed his bottle.

“Now, if you don’t mind,” Johnson raised the glass to his lips, “I will take some more whiskey, as I need all the strength for the occasion that I can have.” He gulped the last of his drink and threw his empty bottle across the arena, shattering it on the ground.

“Well...uh...” Thompson spoke hesitantly, “that was something...” she turned to see a Secret Service agent holding a notecard behind her. “Finally...” Thompson muttered as she grabbed the card. She cleared her throat. “Johnson’s opponent is a last-minute entry to our tournament...” She looked down and squinted to read the scribbles on the card. “He is very strong...and very smart...and to all the ladies out there...he’s a very, very eligible bachelor...” she blinked, then turned the card over, looking for

any extra information. But no, that was it. He had wasted all of their time, on *that*. She crumpled the card and tossed it to the ground. “Anyways,” she continued, “he’s [10-cent Jimmy], Jim Buchanan.”

A frail man with a dough face shuffled onto the stage. Heavy bags hung under his eyes which darted all over the arena. He bit the nails of his right hand, while his left held onto a metal slingshot.

“Well folks,” Thompson continued, “I don’t think anyone is going to be happy with the winner of the match. But on the bright side, we can all enjoy watching as the loser gets the crap beaten out of them.” She flipped off her mic. “And I for one, hope it’s Buchanan...”

Taft slammed his gavel. “Begin!”

Johnson let loose a monstrous howl, then charged in at Buchanan, stumbling over himself as he ran.

“W-wait a minute,” Buchanan stepped back. “I’m-I’m-I’m not ready!” He let out a shrill shriek as Johnson closed in. “E-Executive Power!” Buchanan stammered, “Dred Scott!”

A metal chain shot from the ground and wrapped itself tightly around Johnson’s right wrist. “What the...” Johnson pulled at the chain with his free hand, but the shackles refused to unravel.

Buchanan let out a deep breath. “Okay...” he paced to the left. “Okay, okay, okay.” He bit his thumbnail. “So now...should I attack?” Buchanan pivoted and paced to the right. “But what if he can still counterattack?” He turned back around. “So...should I restrain him further?” He turned around. “But what if that tires me out?”

The crowd booed as neither fighter did anything. Johnson grabbed his giant sewing needle and sloppily jabbed at the chain to no avail. He continued jabbing at the chains with increasing ferocity. Then, his hand suddenly slipped, causing his needle to pierce straight through his forearm.

The crowd gasped in horror, but Johnson remained non-plussed. “You know, I’d rather...” he burped “...I’d rather sever my right arm...” he spoke as he slowly pried his hand off his body with his needle, “...than be tied down by a lawyer!”

He tore his hand off his body, freeing both his arm and his severed hand from the chains. Before his hand hit the floor, Johnson grabbed it with his left, then hurled it at Buchanan.

“W-What?” Before Buchanan could dodge, the severed hand stuck his chest, knocking him down. As he fell, the hand swiftly crawled up his body, then wrapped its cold fingers around his neck. Buchanan dropped his slingshot and grabbed at the hand as it tightened its grip.

Johnson calmly jaunted over to Buchanan, then pressed his wrist against his severed hand. “Executive Power: Reconstruction.” Stitches appeared across Johnson’s wrist, reconnecting his hand to his forearm. “Now then...” Johnson cracked his wrist as his hand wrapped itself tighter around Buchanan’s neck. “Let’s have some fun!”

Reconstruction

"Oh Jimmy..." Johnson waved his needle in front of the helpless Buchanan. "Neither of us seem to be very popular these days." He burped. "I guess we both need to work...on our branding!" Buchanan wailed as Johnson jabbed his needle into his chest and carved his name into Buchanan's skin.

Buchanan started to speak. "I surren—" Johnson tightened his grip, cutting him off.

"You damn aristocrats!" Johnson spat at him. "Stopping whenever you feel like it." He pierced deeper as his voice rose. "You see, us plebians can't just quit whenever we want. No sirree. We gotta work...alllll the time," he spoke while driving his needle slowly across Buchanan's body. "Am I right people!"

Johnson turned to the audience, but they met him with utter silence. Every eye was fixated on Buchanan, watching his tears run down his face as he helplessly struggled against Johnson's hold.

"I can't believe I'm saying this," Thompson commented, "but I think Johnson's being too harsh on Buchanan. Hell, this might be the first death of the tournament!"

Truman shook his head. "Johnson might be a degenerate, but even he wouldn't break the Law of the Land when it comes to killing fellow Executives." He watched on as Johnson continued to carve into Buchanan. "Still...one has to wonder; where did all that hatred come from...?"

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Many years ago, a young Andre Johnson looked at his father. "Daddy, can we skip stones?"

"Sorry kiddo..." his dad looked at his dented pocket watch, "I have to go to work in a bit..." he looked down at his son's innocent expression. He grinned, then ruffled Johnson's hair. "So we'll have to be quick about it!"

The two ran out of the house with screams of joy as they frantically grabbed piles of stones from the nearby river. They laughed themselves silly as they both failed to bounce even a single rock against the raging current.

"I guess the water's too rough today for skipping," Johnson's dad remarked. He looked back at his pocket watch. "Anyways, I need to..."

"Daddy!"

Johnson's dad looked out in horror. A kayak surged down the river, a trio of riders dangling onto its side. Without a moment's hesitation, he jumped into the river, swam at them with full speed, then dragged them against the current back to shore.

The first survivor coughed, then looked down at his clothes. "Shit!" he wringed out his shirt, "these were all designer brands!"

"You're telling me," the second padded his body "I lost my favorite ring out there."

"Didn't you have it a second ago?" The third survivor looked around the ground, then up at Johnson and his father, taking a good look at their second-hand clothing and dirty faces. "Oh...now I get it," he said

with a disgusted tone. "That's why you were so eager to 'save' us..." he spat on the ground. "You damn plebians...just a bunch of cowards and thieves."

"Nuh uh!" Johnson shouted, jumping between the survivors and his dad "my Daddy's not a thief!"

The survivor stared at Johnson's dad with a mixture of fury and disgust. "...whatever," a boy pulled out his golden pocket watch and nodded to the others. "We've wasted enough time in this hick town...let's get out of here..." The boys got up and marched onwards, without giving the Johnson's a second glance.

"Daddy," Johnson looked up, "what's a plebian?"

"...its nothing to be ashamed off," he muttered as he watched the rich boys stroll away, "...especially when compared to the alternative..." He let out a violent cough, then looked down at his pocket watch. "Shoot, I'm late!" He ran off, his soggy clothes slowing him down. "Head back home, Andre," he shouted, "we can play after I get back!"

"Promise?"

"Promise!"

Johnson smiled and trekked back home. He spent the rest of the day planning out all of the fun activities he'd get to do when his dad got back home. But, he never did.

After he showed up late to work, the boss gave Johnson's dad the grueling assignment of ringing the massive town bell on his own. This, combined with the running and the swimming, was too much for his worn-out body to bear. He collapsed just moments after clocking out for the day.

The Johnson's couldn't afford a funeral. Hell, they could barely afford to eat. Johnson's mom tried her best to support the rest of the family, but the burden was too much. With tears in her eyes, she sent Johnson and his older brother to work at a tailor shop.

In theory, the two of them were supposed to work as apprentices. In practice, they were slaves, working 12 hour shifts every day under harsh conditions. The job would have been completely unbearable, if it weren't for the kindness of a single customer.

"Hello Andre," Willie Hill said as walked into the store. "How are you?"

"Fine," Johnson replied curtly. "Did you bring it?"

Hill gave a wink. "Of course." He pulled out a book of oratory from his satchel.

As usual, Hill read out speeches from the book while Johnson tended to his clothing. Hill was perfectly aware that Johnson slowed down his sewing in order to prolong his visit, but the old man was more than happy to play along.

These meetings continued onward until Hill's death four years later. As his family mourned his death, they couldn't help but be perplexed by the last item of his will: that his old book of oratory be given be given to the young apprentice in the tailor shop.

The night of Hill's funeral, Johnson stared aimlessly at the ceiling over his bed. "...we should run away," he spoke softly.

“What...?” his brother asked through a yawn.

“Think about it!” Johnson went over to his bed with excitement in his eyes. “We’ve learned everything we can here. We should start over in a new town where we actually get paid for our work.”

“We’re bound to this shop,” his brother spoke sadly, “we still have another 7 years in our contracts.”

“Who cares!” Johnson shouted, then quickly lowered his voice. “I’m sick and tired of these snobby aristocrats profiting off our skilled labor. We can do better. We deserve better.”

His brother bit his lip. “They’re gonna come after us...”

Johnson grinned. “Let ‘em try.”

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Buchanan tried to talk, but only spats of air came from his throat as Johnson continued squeezing his neck.

“What’s that?” Johnson asked, drawing his ear closer to Buchanan’s mouth, “You want me to cut deeper? Well, since you’re the fancy lawyer, I guess you know better than a plebian like myself!” Johnson drew his needle back, but something suddenly wrapped around his ankles. Before he knew it, a sharp pull flung his body back, forcing him to drop Buchanan and his needle.

Johnson looked down to see his ankle trapped in a pair of steel shackles attached to a metal chain. The chain reeled backwards with tremendous speed, putting Johnson on a collision course with the wall of the arena.

Johnson gritted his teeth and thrust his hands into his legs. “Executive Power: Reconstruction!” He tore his feet off, freeing himself from the receding shackles. He briefly caught his breath, then crawled towards his severed feet. Before he could reach them, an iron wall appeared in front of him. He changed course, but two more walls rose beside him, followed by another behind him. He looked up as an iron ceiling extended across the walls, sealing him inside a pitch-black prison cell.

“I said...” Buchanan coughed and rubbed his neck. “I said,” he spoke in a raspy voice, “Executive Power: Dred Scott.”

Dred Scott

"Wow oh wow!" Thompson shouted, "Buchanan has completely turned the tables by capturing Johnson inside an iron prison!"

Taft carefully examined the solid prison walls, then raised his arm. "Johnson has three minutes to escape this prison," he spoke into his mic. "If he is unable to do so, he will be deemed unable to fight, and Buchanan will be declared the winner."

"Dammit!" Johnson slammed into the walls, but they would not budge. He angrily dug his fingers into his shoulder. "This isn't over..."

"Well..." Polk spoke from the stands, "it looks like this is over."

Jackson nodded. "Johnson's tough, but he isn't strong enough to break those walls."

Pierce smirked. "And it doesn't look like his EP can help him escape either."

"Such a shame," Van Buren clicked her tongue, "this could have been the first win for the Jacksonians." She turned to the rest of them. "If only you all hadn't kicked Buchanan out of our Party when he tried to join." She smiled. "I bet you're all really regretting that decision right about now, aren't you?"

Polk, Pierce, and Jackson reflected on Van Buren's words as they thought back to their interactions with Buchanan.

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"Buchanan?" Polk got up as a nervous man with a Presidential Seal walked into her office, "it's a pleasure to meet you."

"Y-you too..." Buchanan stammered.

"I'm sure Jackson already told you," Polk continued, "but I'll be overseeing your duties as you adjust to the Party." She examined her clipboard. "Since you used to be a lawyer, I thought we should start you off with a diplomatic mission." She walked to a map and pointed at Oregon. "We're finishing up territorial negotiations with some Canadians, and I want you to represent us."

"Oh, I, uh," he spoke weakly, "I don't know if I should..."

"I know it's scary," Polk placed her hand on his back, "but I believe in you."

The next week, Polk flew out to check on Buchanan's progress, only to find that the situation hadn't changed in the slightest.

"Well," Buchanan spoke meekly, "I came out here...at least that deed is done..."

"Sure..." Polk maintained her smile. "Well, how about this," she handed Buchanan a sealed envelope. "Just tell the Canadians that this is our new stance, take it or leave it. We'll go from there."

Buchanan nodded and headed to the next round of negotiations.

Polk waited patiently for Buchanan's return with a smile on her face, but her smile dropped when she saw him coming back with her unopened letter still in his hands. "...why do you still have that?"

"Oh, well," he stammered, "I didn't want to abandon all of the ground I've gained, so I decided to just leave the letter be."

"What...?" she mumbled under her breath. She shook her head and regained her smile. "Okay, I think that's enough diplomatic experience ...let's try combat next."

"C-combat?" he spoke meekly.

She nodded. "Some skirmishes have popped up near Mexico. I want you to lead a battalion down there and conquer as much land as you can."

The next week, Polk once again flew to Buchanan's side, only to find that no progress had been made. "What are you still doing at the Rio Grande?" She asked angrily, "you should have made it past here days ago!"

"Oh, well," he spoke up, "I just didn't think it would be a good idea to press so deeply into enemy territory."

Polk tightened her fists, then calmly released them. "Okay...how about this..." a sword materialized in her hand. "I'll lead the troops; you watch how things are done."

Polk marched her troops south, fighting valiantly against the masses of Mexican soldiers in their way. Before long, Polk managed to force the other side to cough up a peace agreement with highly favorable terms for the Jacksonians.

"Good," Polk wiped a band of sweat from her face, "now we can stop fighting."

"Well, um," Buchanan spoke up, "what if...what if instead of signing the treaty...we just...conquered all of Mexico...?"

Polk stared at him, her mouth agape. "Were you not the one who said to not press into enemy territory?!" She grabbed her brow and breathed deeply. "Sorry...I shouldn't have shouted. Let's...let's just head back."

A few days later, Greg Woodward walked into Polk's office. "Sorry to bother you, ma'am," he spoke quietly, "but it's about my promotion..."

"Ah yes," she looked up, "how are you enjoying the new position?"

"About that," he shuffled his feet, "it seems Buchanan retracted my offer."

"He...what?" she said, her voice seething with rage. She stormed out of her office. "Buchanan!" she shouted as she spotted him across the hallway. "What's the meaning of this business with Woodward?"

"Oh, well," he stuttered, "I just thought Read would make a better fit, so I..."

"Listen!" The normally reserved Polk grabbed him by the collar. "I am responsible for my appointments, and I will not surrender that power to anyone else!" She dropped him to the ground and stormed off.

Polk sat alone in the bar, staring into space.

"Having a rough time?" Pierce took the seat next to her. "I heard about your little spat with Buchanan..." he coughed, "...everyone has."

"I just want him gone..." she stared into her drink. "I even tried offering him that desk job he wanted so badly, but you know what he told me?" She glared at Pierce. "That he'd think about it. Seriously, I just don't get it!" She downed her drink. "Buchanan's an able man, but he is completely without judgement!"

"Calm down," he patted her back, "I can see this is getting to you. Why don't you let me take care of him for a bit?"

"...are you sure?"

Pierce gave a handsome grin. "I know how much pressure comes with joining a Party as renowned as the Jacksonians... I'm sure a lot of Buchanan's mistakes are just a result of nerves and excitement." He walked out of the bar. "Don't worry, I'll have him calmed down by the end of the week."

The next week, Polk spotted Pierce sitting in the common room. "How's Buchanan?" she asked cautiously.

"It was wrong for you to try sending him to a desk job..." he turned to her with dark bags under his eyes. "We need to send him much farther than that."

"...what are you saying?" Polk asked nervously.

"We should send him to Britain," he spoke with dead seriousness.

"Now, now..." the two of them turned to see Jackson walking into the room. "I thought you all were better than this." She grabbed them by the shoulders. "Buchanan might be a handful, but he's strong ..." she spun a nearby globe, "with him, we'll have five Presidents under our Party...we'll be unstoppable..." She turned to Polk and Pierce. "But more important than that...Buchanan is a part of our family now. And the Jacksonians never abandon family. Am I understood?"

"Yes ma'am..." the two spoke quietly.

Jackson gave them pats on their backs, nearly toppling them over. "Let me show you two how it's done." Jackson cracked her wrists. "I'll have Buchanan in top shape before you know it."

The next day, Polk and Pierce ran into Jackson. "So...about Buchanan..." Polk asked nervously.

Jackson shook her head. "Britain's too close..." she let out a heavy sigh. "...let's send him to Russia..."

* * * * *

Polk, Pierce, and Jackson vigorously shook their heads. "We made the right decision," they spoke emphatically in unison.

Taft looked at his watch. Only thirty seconds remained, and there was no sign of Johnson making any moves. He raised his gavel, but stopped as he heard a faint ring of metal from within prison. Another ring echoed across the stadium, then another. With each ring, the iron wall bent outward. At first the

change was gradual, but by the fifth ring, the wall looked ready to fall over. With a final ring, the wall burst off its hinges, crashing to the ground.

The crowd stared silently as a figure emerged from the prison. Its head was undoubtedly Johnson's, but that was about all they could recognize. Besides his head, the rest of the figure's 'body' consisted of a single, beefy arm attached to Johnson's neck. "Executive Power," the creature spoke, "Reconstruction; One Armed Bandit."

"W-w-what the hell!" Thompson shouted. "Did Buchanan's prison transform Johnson into some sort of monster?"

"No, it's the opposite," Truman spoke with as much calmness as he could muster. "Johnson turned himself into a monster."

"What?"

"Well," Truman continued, "I can only conjecture...but I think while he was imprisoned, Johnson severed his own body and stuffed it into one of his arms...allowing him to quite literally put all of his weight into his punches."

"You're spot on..." Grant mumbled from the stands. "The true terror of Johnson's Executive Power: Reconstruction, is in Johnson's ability to put his body back together in terrible, twisted ways."

On the ground, Johnson cracked his neck, or at least, what remained of it, and then bent his massive elbow. "Get ready twerp," he said, "I'm armed to the teeth!" He pushed off the ground with his hand, launching his body forward.

Buchanan grabbed his hair and frantically looked around as Johnson hopped towards him. Should he surrender? Or try talking things out? Maybe run away? After all, running away was his specialty. Every indecision, every second guess he made, was just his way of running from the consequences of his actions. After all, as long as he didn't make a decision, he couldn't be the one at fault; he couldn't be the one to take the blame.

Buchanan bit his lip. But wasn't he sick and tired of telling himself these excuses over and over again? After all, hadn't he finally decided to enter this tournament in order to change himself? He could change. He would change. He had to change. He would not run away, not this time. Buchanan looked up with a fire in his eyes that he had never known before. He saw Johnson rapidly approaching, his hideous figure become more horrifying with each leap towards him.

Buchanan instantly lost all of his resolve and ran as fast as he could away from Johnson's terrible form. As he ran, a shadow appeared over him. Before he could look, Johnson's palm slammed onto Buchanan, smashing him to the ground.

"I surrender," Buchanan shouted frantically, "I surrender, I surrender, I surrender!"

Johnson clicked his tongue. "Darn...just when we were about to get interesting."

"Taft is calling it folks," Thompson shouted as Taft slammed his gavel, "the winner of the first fight of Block L is the monstrous [Tennessee Tailor], Andre Johnson!"