

Executive Powers: Revolutionary War



By Sam Spiro

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 boring 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 definitely 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?”

Political Parties and Entangling Alliances

Heads turned as a large man in a cowboy outfit sprinted through the Hot Springs rehabilitation center. He opened the doors to the springs, catching the attention of the young man relaxing at the edge of the pool.

"Did...did you see?" Landon B. Johnson asked, his voice hoarse. "Did you see the news?"

"You mean Truman's show?" Jay F. Kennedy sipped his coconut bowl and turned back to his copy of War and Peace. "I was just studying up for it."

LBJ angrily yanked the book from his hands. "This is no time for reading!"

JFK calmly raised an eyebrow. "Didn't your backwater school teach you to respect good literature?"

LBJ's face twitched. "You wanna go Harvard boy?" He tightened his grip, and a thin layer of gold spread over the book in his hands.

"Well old man..." JFK slurped the rest of his coconut drink, "...there's only one question left..." he threw the shell into the pool and levitated his body out of the water. "When do we start?"

"Gentleman." The two turned to see a frail woman in a wheelchair rolling towards them. "This is no time for infighting."

"Yes boss," the two spoke in unison and dropped their stances.

"Now then," Francine D. Roosevelt placed her hands together, "what are your thoughts regarding the tournament?"

The two looked at each other, then back at FDR.

"We're definitely entering."

"And we're definitely going to win."

FDR smirked. "I'm glad to see that you two can at least agree on something..."

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Hera Hoover downed her second martini of the afternoon. "I know FDR is going to be there," she slammed the table of the speakeasy, "which means we have to be there!"

The female monk next to Hoover silently rolled her eyes.

"Shut up Coolidge!" Hoover snapped, "No one asked your opinion!"

"Hoover..." Wanda Harding spoke calmly.

Hoover stared angrily at Harding, and her breathing gradually slowed. "...I'm sorry..." she adjusted her top hat and vest. "It's just that...when I think about her...about what she's done to me...I just...I just..."

Harding embraced Hoover in her arms. "I know darling, I know." She let go. "And don't fret; The Ohio Gang will enter the tournament."

"We...we will?" Hoover asked, and even Callie Coolidge raised a suspicious eyebrow.

Harding gave a sad smirk. "After gaining control of America, the winner of the tournament might go on to try and conquer the rest of the world." She flipped over the 'closed' sign for the Roaring 20 bar. "We can't allow such misguided plans to be carried out." She planted her morning star and stood tall in her templar uniform. "America's present need is not internationality, but triumphant nationality!" Customers swarmed past her to the bar. "We shall safeguard America first, stabilize America first, live for and revere...America first!"

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A woman in a kimono wandered through the graveyard. She stopped and looked down to see the gravestone for Jacqueline Taylor.

"Hey master," Milly Fillmore knelt down. "Sorry I haven't visited for a while...has the news about Truman's tournament reached the underworld already?" She grinned. "You wouldn't believe it, but your know-nothing student has foolishly decided to take part..." She dropped her smile. "Of course, there's no way I'll win..." she clenched her fist, "...but I'm at least going to show the world everything you taught me. And with any luck..."

"So that's Taylor's grave?" Fillmore looked up. A giant man stood next to her, with every inch of his body covered in heavy winter clothing despite the blistering summer heat. "I didn't...snow that!" The man threw out his arms, and specs of snow sprinkled from his mittens. He looked at Fillmore, who remained nonplussed. "Do you get it?" Benny Harrison continued, "Because snow sounds like know, and because..."

"I got the joke Harrison." Fillmore spoke with an unamused tone.

"Are you sure?" He asked, "because you didn't laugh, and my social coach told me..."

"Let's make this clear, Harrison." Fillmore stood up. "We're not friends. We're not even in the same Party. I'm teaming up with you for this tournament for one reason, and one reason only."

Harrison nodded. "Of course."

The two spoke in unison. "To kill Johnny Tyler."

Harrison paused, put his hand to his chin, then looked back at Fillmore. "To put him on ice!"

Fillmore let out a sigh. She turned to Taylor's grave. "Master, give me strength...I'll need it..."

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A tall man entered the fortune teller's shop. Despite being Hispanic, he wore a Chinese martial arts outfit together with a blindfold bearing a yin-yang symbol at its center.

"Welcome," the fortune teller tightened her celestial turban, "would you like your palm read?"

Jorge Bush snorted. "You know I can't stand your voodoo fortune telling."

Ronda Reagan smirked. "And you know that it's usually correct." She shuffled a deck of tarot cards. "In any case, I'm predicting rousing success for The Reaganites this November."

"Do you have any rationale for that?" Bush asked, "or is this just 'fate' talking?"

"A bit of both," she placed two cards down, The Star and The Moon. "One factor is that we're the two newest Presidents, which means no one has any idea what we're capable of. But the real advantage lies in our secret weapon..." she placed another card, The Sun. "Or should I say..." she looked up to Bush, "...*your* secret weapon..."

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"Well, Captain," Odysseus Grant puffed a cigar while whittling a piece of wood, "it's a hell of a deal you've struck with Truman."

"Think about it, Grant." Lincoln chopped a log in half with his hatchet, then placed another in front of him. "Over a dozen Presidents, all commanded by a single Executive... greater numbers than even our Party had at its peak." He chopped the wood, then stared out as the sun sank behind his log cabin. "This is the greatest chance for unity our nation has ever known...we can't let this go by."

"But that's not all...is it?"

Melancholy spread over Lincoln's face. "You're right, of course..." he sighed. "As much as I hate to admit it, I'm hoping this conflict draws Johnson out of hiding. While I try to have malice towards none..." Lincoln tightened the grip on his axe. "...that traitor will always be an exception."

Grant nodded. "In any case, we got lucky the competition is in the form of a tournament...with your Executive Power, no one, not even the other members of Rushmore, stands a chance against you."

"That's why I accepted...but then again..." Lincoln smirked, "the others must have thought the same thing..."

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Tanya Jefferson dabbed her mouth with a silk handkerchief. "That escargot was to die for," she held out her credit card to the waiter, "please give my regards to the chef."

"Yes madam," he carefully took the card and walked off.

"Now then," Jefferson turned back to her dinner guests; a short woman in a pinstripe suit, and a taller woman in a tie-dye crop top, "where were we?"

"The tournament," Jamie Madison spoke, "and what we should do to prepare."

"That's easy baby," Jane Monroe tilted her cocked hat over her blue-gray eyes, "all we need..." she snapped her fingers and pointed to Madison, "...are good feelings."

"I would prefer a plan with a bit more substance," Madison replied dryly.

"Okay, okay," Monroe raised her fist. "Good feelings..." she opened her hand, dropping a pile of bullets to the table, "...and lead."

The waiter coughed next to Jefferson. "Excuse me madam, but it appears your card was declined."

"That's quite alright," she took back the card and handed him another, "this one should work." Jefferson turned back. "As always my friends, I am deeply humbled by your inputs." She looked to

Madison. "But please, rest assured; I have already taken several precautions to guarantee our rousing success."

"Could you indulge us as to the nature of these precautions?" Madison asked.

"Alas, I cannot," she sipped her red wine, "I have sworn to keep silent concerning the tournament until the details are formally announced. All you need to know is that I would not have agreed to this brawl if I did not think the situation were highly in our favor."

Jefferson felt a tap on her shoulder, and turned to see the waiter hovering next to her. "I apologize madam, but this card was also rejected."

"Is that so..." she calmly sipped the last of her wine. "Well...why don't you put it on my tab?"

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The animals of Niagara Falls howled and ran for cover. Their instincts screamed of a giant storm approaching, but in reality, it was the tremendous force of a single man.

Theo Roosevelt pushed through the forest, brushing leaves off his perfectly toned body. He entered a clearing, then stopped. "...you're there, aren't you?" He paused, but the forest remained silent. "It's about Truman's tournament."

"Not interested." A voice echoed around Roosevelt.

"I know..." Roosevelt clenched his fist. "But I need your help..." The forest remained silent. "I'm confident I can beat any opponent..." Roosevelt continued, "...except for Washington..." he spoke softly. Leaves rustled, and Roosevelt looked into the forest. "...and the only one who stands a chance against him..." he continued, "is the one President who's experienced Election twice...my only hope, is you! Gregory Cleveland!"

In a flash, a massive black bear leapt from the bushes and tackled Roosevelt to the ground. It let out a thunderous roar and lunged its open mouth at Roosevelt's head.

"Teddy!" Roosevelt shouted with glee as the bear thoroughly licked his face, "you've gotten so big!"

"He keeps getting into my stash." Roosevelt looked to see a shirtless fat man walking towards them. He scratched his hairy chest with one hand and held a half-eaten candy bar with the other; his Presidential Seal on each hand clearly visible. "I sympathize with your situation," Cleveland continued, "but this doesn't concern me."

"Yes, it does!" Roosevelt rose up. "No one's developed this land because you're here protecting it, but even you wouldn't stand a chance against an army of Presidents led by Washington." Roosevelt leaned closer. "And I'm sure I don't need to remind you about Washington's reputation for chopping down trees..." Cleveland angrily bit into his candy bar, but remained silent. "Come on old pal!" Roosevelt gave his shoulder a friendly squeeze. "It'll be just like old times. The Big One and The Dude, fighting together once again!"

Cleveland brushed away Roosevelt's hand and looked around the forest. "Can you understand me," Cleveland spoke softly "when I say that, if I were to indulge my personal impulse, I would stay in my forest, hide where no man could reach, and where this awful burden might never find me?"

"Awful burden...?" Roosevelt's eyes widened. "You mean...!"

"Yes..." Cleveland turned to Roosevelt with a stern look, "I'll take down Washington...but that's as far as I'll go." He walked back into the forest. "And I warn you...if someone who's against nature somehow manages to win this thing..." he looked back to Roosevelt with an icy glare. "I'll eliminate them, and anyone else who stands in my way."

Teddy the bear whimpered, and Roosevelt calmly stroked his fur. "Your pappy sure is a scary guy..." he looked at Cleveland with a nervous smile, "...because that's definitely not an empty threat..."

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Jade Polk peeked into the gym and spotted a buff woman drenched in sweat. "There you are."

Andrea Jackson ignored her and continued working the pull-up bar. "1,829...1,830..."

"Easy Jackson," Polk reassured her. "We'll find them. We just need to wait for Van Buren to work her magic."

Suddenly, a puff of smoke materialized in the gym's doorway. "Did somebody say..." Martina Van Buren jumped through the smoke, "Magic?"

Polk stared blankly at her. "Please don't tell me you've just been waiting around for someone to say that..."

"Okay," Van Buren put her hat back on top of her fiery red curls, "I won't tell you that." She looked to Jackson. "I've got a present for you, boss." She reached her hand into the smoke and threw a gagged and tied man onto the floor.

"1,837..." Jackson dropped to the ground and turned around. "Harold Clay..." the man struggled desperately to free himself as she slowly walked towards him. "Did you really think you'd get away with attacking Pierce?" She looked him dead in the eyes. "...with attacking my family?!"

Clay rubbed his face against the floor, loosening the gag on his mouth. "Compromise!" he blurted out as Jackson lifted his head with the pinch of her fingers. Jackson paused. Clay coughed and spat the gag away from his mouth. "...let's...compromise...I can make it worth your while."

Jackson dropped Clay to the floor. "Talk." She squatted down to his level. "Where...is Quincy?"

Corrupt Bargain

Jackson and Van Buren walked through the desert, the Florida sun beating down on their backs. Van Buren fanned herself and tugged at her collar. "I'm dying, Jackson..." She gasped and dramatically fell to the ground. "Alas! You must go on without me. Tell Polk I loathed her."

"Suck it up, Van Buren." Jackson replied coldly. "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 Seal 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 dented golden bat and stepped forward, but Bush put a hand in front of him.

"Easy." Bush looked to Thompson. "This is my son, Walker. 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 could move, LBJ 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!" He turned around and held his ballot high in the air for everyone to see. "I'm number 1! Number 1!"

Buchanan bit his nails. "That's one good position gone..." he ran to the front. "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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FDR 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." JFK 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..."

* * * * *

"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," Reagan spoke calmly, "the fact that you're calling confirms that our ballots were recorded exactly as planned."

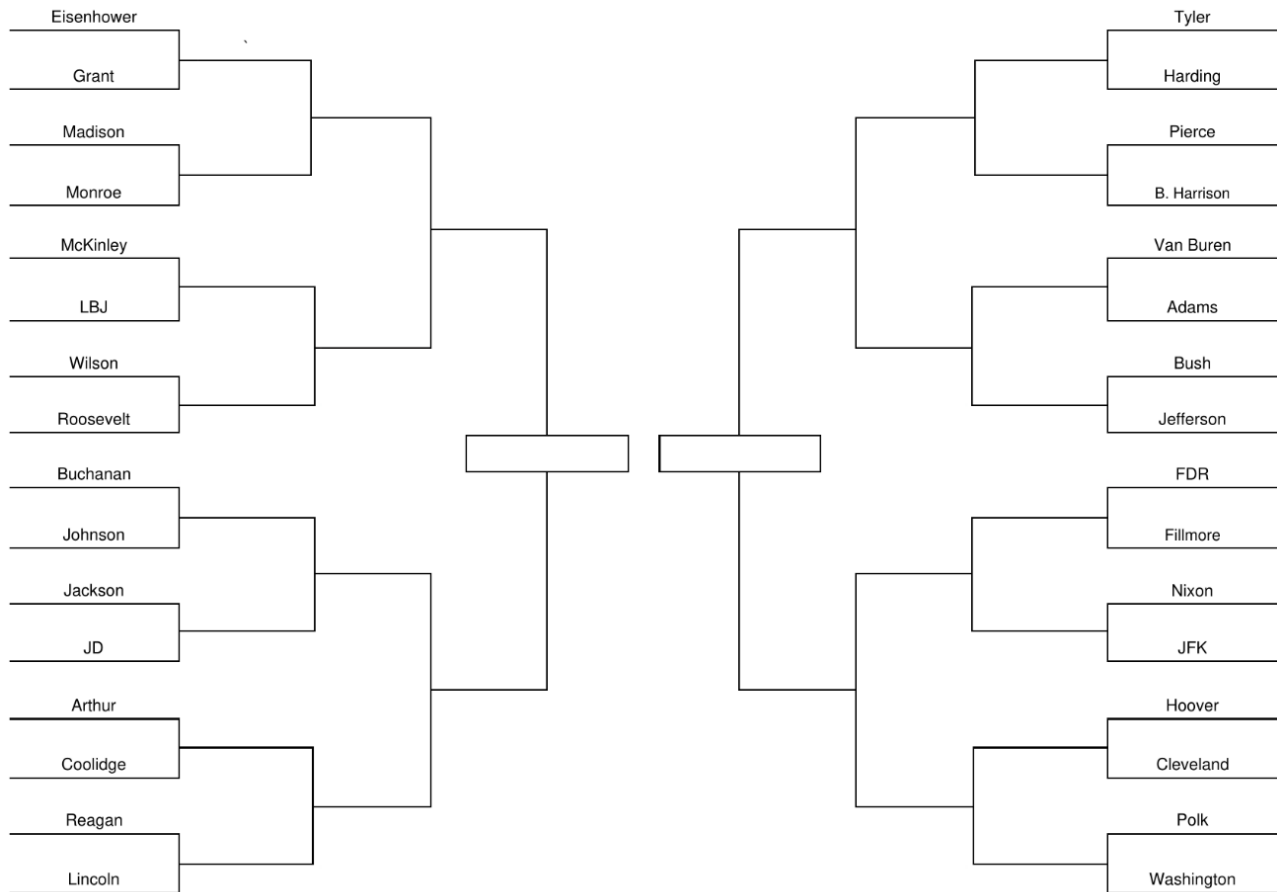
"You...wanted those positions...?" Truman stared at his phone. "What the hell are you scheming, Reagan?"

"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:

1. [The Supreme Commander] Deedee Eisenhower vs [The Hero of Appomattox] Odysseus Grant.
2. [The Sage of Montpelier] Jamie Madison vs [The Heir of Good Feelings] Jane Monroe.
3. [The Napoleon of Protection] Will McKinley vs [Landslide Landon] LBJ.
4. [The Professor] Whitney Wilson vs [The Man in the Arena] Theo Roosevelt.

Block L:

5. [10-Cent Jimmy] Jim Buchanan vs [The Tennessee Tailor] Andre Johnson
6. [Old Hickory] Andrea Jackson vs [The Masked Fighter] JD
7. [The Gentleman Boss] Charles Arthur vs [Silent Cal] Callie Coolidge
8. [The Star] Ronda Reagan vs [The Rail Splitter] Gabe Lincoln

Block J:

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

Block W:

13. [The Sphinx] FDR vs [The Last of the Whigs] Milly Fillmore
14. [The King of Camelot] JFK vs [Tricky Dick] Dixie Nixon
15. [The Great Humanitarian] Hera Hoover vs [The Beast of Buffalo] Gregory Cleveland
16. [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. "I'm quite alright..." Suddenly, Bush stopped. "Well, it sounds like your opponent is behind us."

Reagan looked over and spotted Lincoln's towering frame, as well as Grant's stout figure walking 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!"