



Executive Powers

Willow Wilson VS Theo Roosevelt

Jamie Madison VS Jane Monroe

Ronda Reagan VS Gabe Lincoln

Hera Hoover VS Greg Cleveland

Jay F. Kennedy VS Dixie Nixon



★ Samuel S. Spirits ★

Preface

This is a work in progress. Let me know if you have comments, critiques and/or places where the writing is not particularly smooth.

If I sent you this, 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 at her news helicopter with a sense of fear and loathing, sighing to herself as she raised a cigarette to her lips.

“Power: Gonzo Journalism.”

Instantly, a pair of tall, lanky figures with cameras for heads materialized inside the copter.

“What’s up, boss?” one of the Gonzos asked as Thompson took her seat.

“A bunch of Presidents are wreaking havoc downtown, and we’ve been given the ‘high privilege’ of reporting on the story.”

“Ahh geez!” the other Gonzo groaned. “Why do we keep getting the short end of the stick?”

“It’s because I’m the only reporter in this city with enough balls to do the job!” Thompson hissed.

“Heck, I’d volunteer for the post if our eggheaded editors would just let me do things my way! But no, they keep insisting I ‘do thing by the book’; and that I ‘stop doing hard drugs before getting on the air’, like I’m a freakin’ girl scout here or something.”

Thompson glanced outside her window, watching the violence unfold as the helicopter flew overhead. She turned to the closest Gonzo, giving a slight nod as she adjusted her white bucket hat and yellow-tinted glasses. Gonzo aimed his camera head towards her, raising three fingers...two...one...

“Hello Baltimore!” Thompson screamed. “This is Huntress Thompson, reporting live from the air! Once again, our city finds itself in the center of a turf war waged between the Jacksonians and the New Dealers; and this time we’ve got a whopping four Presidents in the fray! This is bad news for anybody owning property in the area, but great news for anyone like me hoping to watch some real-life Executive Powers in action! Now, let’s see what we’ve got!”

Gonzo tilted his head, zooming in on a plain looking woman facing off against a big cowboy down below. The woman stepped forward, raising up her hands.

“Executive Power,” Jade Polk screamed, “Manifest Destiny!”

A pair of ornamental blades materialized inside her hands as she swung her weapons down at the cowboy’s protruding stomach.

“Woah nelly!” Landon B. Johnson hollered, moving himself away. “Hurry up, JFK! I could really use some backup over here!”

Across the street, a young man silently shook his head as a block of concrete hurtled towards him.

“Ask not what your Party can do for you...” Jay F. Kennedy grumbled, “but what you can do for your Party!”

JFK crouched down, the Seal on his hand glowing red, white, and blue.

“Executive Power: Man on the Moon!”

JFK leapt into the air, his body floating effortlessly through the sky as the concrete slab passed just below his feet. He looked down, watching as a handsome man lifted a car up with his bare hands.

"Just give up already!" Hank Pierce quipped before hurling the vehicle towards JFK, "I've got you beat in terms of both looks and power!"

In the air, Thompson grinned to herself as the chaos unfolded all around.

"Incredible; absolutely incredible! I tell you folks, I never do get tired of seeing a bunch of Presidents...fight...ing...it..."

Thompson slowed her speech, drawing her attention out to something over the horizon.

"Hey..." she mumbled, pointing to a mushroom shaped cloud blossoming in the distance. "Am I on too many shrooms right now, or is that a—"

Thompson stopped talking as a giant shockwave slammed into the city, flinging their helicopter across the sky. The piloting Gonzo yanked hard on the controls, fighting to keep the copter afloat in the air. Meanwhile, Thompson continued staring at the mystery cloud before putting on her widest smile yet.

"...change of plans, boys," she exclaimed. "We're heading to whatever the hell that thing is this instant!"

"We'll need to get permission from the higher ups first," one of the Gonzos remarked, "otherwise—"

"Screw the higher ups!" she snapped. "I'm sick and tired of letting scoops pass us by just because those dumbnut fatcats wanted to stay home and scratch their own asses! No, we're going out there, and that's final!"

The Gonzos nodded, directing their copter along at her command. The trio flew out for some time, the mysterious cloud dissipating long before they could reach its location. However, what remained in its place seemed just as shocking.

"Jesus Christ; are you seeing this folks?" Thompson exclaimed, looking over the titanic crater carved into the earth below. "This must be where our bizzarro shockwave came from! Offhand, the crater looks to be around 300 feet deep with a radius of 1200 feet. Moreover—"

"Woah, woah, woah!" the closest Gonzo screamed, aiming his camera just past Thompson, "There's something going on down there!"

Thompson looked out, spotting a bright light flickering over by the crater's edge.

"Well, would you look at that..." Thompson muttered, a sly smile creeping over her lips. "Take us down, Gonzo!"

"Uhhhh," the piloting Gonzo replied, "I'd rather not...I think I'm starting to get the fear..."

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

"I know..." he gulped, "...that's what gives me the fear..."

Reluctantly, Gonzo lowered down the chopper, with Thompson jumping out and sprinting on ahead before he could finish his landing.

Thompson readied herself as she ran, anticipating every possibility as to what might lie within the mysterious light. However, she was entirely unprepared as a large, ordinary man with short gray hair and wide, circular glasses stepped out from its glow.

"Greetings!" the man exclaimed as the light faded around him.

Thompson skidded herself to a halt, staring blankly at the man as the second Gonzo ran up just behind her.

"So, you're all journalist then?" the man asked, examining Gonzo's camera head. "Well that's just perfect! Tell me, are you all local or national news?"

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

"Local...news?"

The man maintained his smile, but was clearly disappointed.

"Well, it'll get there soon enough I suppose. Are you rolling now by chance?"

Thompson gave a silent nod.

"Excellent!" The man stepped back, clearing out his throat. "My fellow Americans..."

He raised up his hand, causing Thompson to step back in shock.

"A Presidential Seal?" she hissed, looking over the familiar symbol of an eagle inscribed within a circle of 13 stars burned into the man's hand.

"...my name is Henry S. Truman," he continued, "a humble President of this great nation. And the destruction you see behind me," he spoke, gesturing to the massive crater, "is the aftermath of my Executive Power: The Manhattan Project."

Thompson paused a second, taking in the weight of his words.

"...and what all do you want?"

Truman gave a sigh.

"As things stand," he went on, "our country finds itself torn apart by the senseless battles waged between the Presidents and their Parties. Heck, we're practically at the brink of a second Civil War! As a President, I know this is bad, and I've come here today with the hope of putting an end to these pointless feuds." He lowered down his head. "But of course, it is not enough to yearn for peace. We must work for it, and if necessary," he spoke, raising a small smile across his solemn face, "fight for it!"

Thompson glanced to Gonzo, then back over to Truman, furrowing her brow.

"The hell are you talking about, old timer?"

Truman transformed his smile into a vicious grin as he threw out his arms to the side.

"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 is the greatest of all time?"

Truman stopped talking, looking expectingly over to Thompson.

"...uhh," she spoke, "please...tell us more?"

Truman raised three fingers.

"This experiment will be organized by a trinity of Presidents including myself, Bill Taft, and Ruth Hayes." He raised up a fourth finger. "It will take place at this very spot, four months from today, on Tuesday, November 4th. I'm also very excited to announce that we've already secured the participation of four prominent Presidents to take part in our humble event."

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

"Theo Roosevelt...Gabe Lincoln...Tanya Jefferson...and Jordan Washington."

Thompson widened her eyes.

"That's...that's every member of Rushmore!"

"Indeed it is!" Truman chuckled. "And so, my fellow Presidents, I hope you'll join us for what is sure to be...a Revolutionary War!"

Thompson stood frozen for a moment before frantically signaled over to Gonzo.

"C-Cut!" she stammered as Gonzo's light died down, shutting off the broadcast.

"Welp," Truman said, wiping a hand across his forehead, "the die is cast now! Say, would you all mind giving me a ride back into town with you? It seems like the car I drove over didn't quite survive the blast!"

"...uhh...sure..." Thompson replied thoughtlessly, her brain still in a daze. She continued staring at Truman, then shook out her head.

What the hell am I doing? she thought to herself. *The opportunity I've always waited for is literally standing right in front of me, and all I can do is stand around gawking like an idiot?*

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

"You can come with us," she shouted, regaining her sense of composure, "on one condition!" She pointed to herself. "I get to be the emcee for the tournament!"

Truman instantly cooled his friendly smile into an icy glare.

"...are you honestly making demands of me..." he asked, gesturing across to the crater behind him, "...after witnessing the kind of destruction I can bear against you?"

Thompson maintained her gaze at Truman, her spirit unyielding. Truman stared a second longer, then broke into a hearty laugh.

“Man alive!” he exclaimed, “You’ve got gumption, I’ll give you that! Why don’t we talk the details out on the way back?”

Truman chuckled to himself, jaunting over to the copter as Thompson and Gonzo trailed shortly behind.

“...something’s off,” Thompson muttered under her breath.

“How so?” Gonzo asked.

“The Rushmores have never all agreed on anything; let alone something as big as this! No...there’s something else going on here, that much I’m sure of.”

“Well, what are we going to do about it?”

“Get some answers to start. And the biggest question that needs answering right now...” she said, staring at the strange man geeking out over their news helicopter, “...is who the hell is Henry Truman?”

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Over the next four months, dozens of Presidents would go on to register themselves for Truman’s Revolutionary War. Then, on the night of November 3rd, the fateful bracket was released for the world to see...

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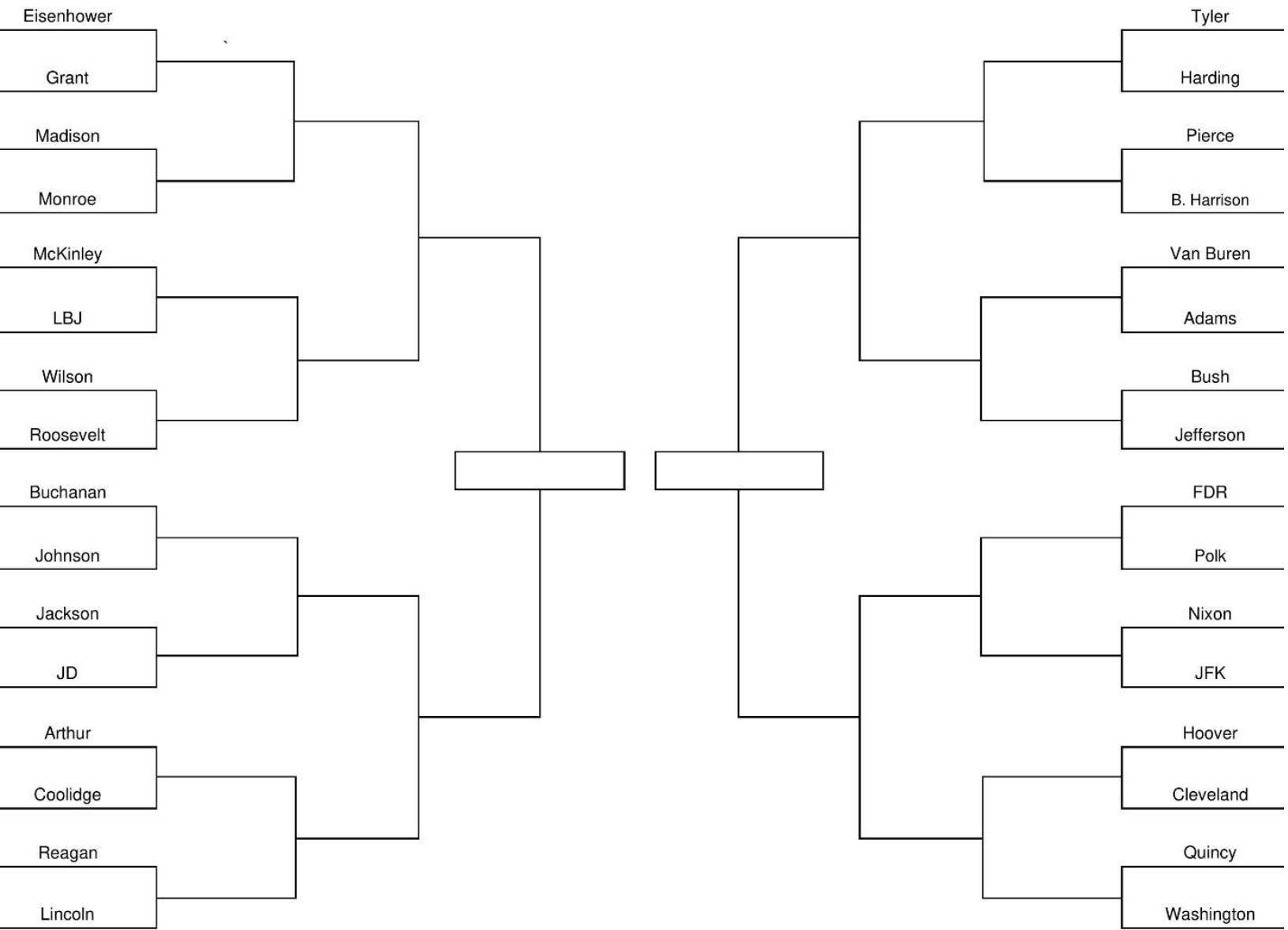
Hello Reader! As some of you may have noticed, there are many historical references made throughout this novel. To help make these more accessible, I have included **optional** historical notes at the end of each chapter to clarify some of these references as well as points where the book strays from historical accuracy.

Thompson. The character Huntress Thompson is based off the journalist Hunter S. Thompson who is best known for writing the book “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas,” as well as for his unique style of “Gonzo Journalism;” a style largely defined by including the writer (i.e. himself) as a central character in the stories he wrote.

“Who the hell is Harry Truman?” This is a quote said by William Leahry after learning that Harry Truman was named as the VP for the 1944 Democratic ticket with Franklin D. Roosevelt, emphasizing that Harry was basically a political non-entity up to this point.

This, to be clear, is a super obscure reference which I don’t expect anybody to have noticed. There are a number of other references of this level of obscurity throughout the book, but I’ll refrain from commenting on these unless they stand out in the text like this one does.

The Bracket



Day I: The First Branch

[The Supreme Commander] Deedee Eisenhower

vs

[The Hero of Appomattox] Odysseus S. Grant

[The Sage of Montpelier] Jamie Madison

vs

[The Heir of Good Feelings] Jane Monroe

[The Napoleon of Protection] Will McKinley

vs

[Landslide Landon] Landon B. Johnson

[The Professor] Willow Wilson

vs

[The Man in the Arena] Theo Roosevelt

[10-Cent Jimmy] Jim Buchanan

vs

[The Tennessee Tailor] Andre Johnson

[Old Hickory] Andrea Jackson

vs

[The Masked Fighter] JD

[The Gentleman Boss] Charles Arthur

vs

[Silent Cal] Callie Coolidge

[The Platinum Star] Ronda Reagan

Vs

[The Rail Splitter] Gabe Lincoln

Two Star Generals

“Out of the way!” Huntress Thompson screamed, weaving her motorcycle through the crowded lines of traffic.

It was hard to believe that, just four months ago, this entire area had been nothing more than dirt. Now Thompson couldn’t go two feet without seeing something wild, whether it be construction workers putting up walls next to fanatics screaming about religion, or groups of saxophonists playing in front of armed thugs with cigars. The city was complete and total chaos, and Thompson loved every second of it.

Huntress Thompson continued on with her ride, skidding to a halt as she reached the towering coliseum located at the town’s center.

“Hot damn,” she muttered, getting off and rubbing her hand along the glistening marble walls. “Now this is something else...”

“Madam!” a secret service agent shouted, marching to her with a sharp glare. “It is against city rules and regulations to park so close to the stadium walls! Please remove yourself this instant.”

“Didn’t anybody ever teach you how to read?” Thompson sneered, shoving her badge directly into his face. “You see this? It says V, I, P; i.e. I don’t give a crap about your stinking rules!”

“...Huntress Thompson...?” the agent frowned as he read the name out aloud. “You said you would be arriving over an hour ago.”

“And I told my grandma I’d never cuss again in my life,” Thompson quipped, “but this world ain’t so damn simple, now is it, punk? So why don’t you go ahead and pull that stick out of your ass before leaving me the hell alone!”

The agent rolled his eyes as he flipped his walkie-talkie on.

“I’ve located Huntress Thompson by gate 7; requesting immediate teleportation from Hayes, over.”

Thompson raised an eyebrow.

“Wait, what do—?”

Thompson blinked, instantly finding herself standing in front of a wide Mahogany desk overlooking a stadium filled to the brim with a staggering number of people.

“Woah...” she muttered, looking down at the dirt floor covering the coliseum’s center. “So that’s the arena, huh?”

“Ehem,” a voice coughed sharply from behind. Thompson spun around, noticing a piano player seated just beside her. “You ready for this, Thompson?”

Thompson smirked, shooting off a big thumbs up. The pianist nodded, pressing their fingers to the keys as their music played across the stadium speakers, quieting the rowdy crowd below. The screens throughout the coliseum flickered to life, giving a direct view into the commentary box with Thompson seated in center frame.

“Gooooood morning!” She shouted to a storm of cheers, “And welcome, to the Revolutionary War! For those that don’t already know, I’m Huntress Thompson, your master of ceremonies! Joining me this week to help out with the technical analysis of our fights, we have the man who made this entire event possible!”

The piano music crescendoed as the pianist slammed down onto the keys and rose out of their seat, revealing a big, smiling face to the crowd below.

“Greetings!” Henry Truman shouted into his mic. “Today—”

“Just a minute, Henry,” Thompson interrupted, holding her microphone away from her face, “let me go ahead and introduce you first.”

As she spoke, Thompson’s mic accidentally picked up her words, broadcasting them across the stands to a wave of friendly laughs from the audience.

“Well, anyways,” she went on, “joining me today is [The Man from Independence], Henry Shipp Truman!”

“Henry S. Truman,” he corrected before turning back to the crowd. “Today, the entire world shall be looking to us for enlightened leadership aimed towards peace and progress. It is my duty to find this leadership, and I shall not shirk from it! That is to say,” he said, pointing to the wooden sign lying atop his desk. “The buck, stops, here!”

“Beautiful stuff, Truman,” Thompson remarked, “Now, let’s get down to brass tacks!”

The stadium screens shifted to a timeline for the upcoming week.

“Our schedule this week will consist of eight fights each of the first three days of the tournament, followed by the four quarterfinals on Friday, with both the semifinals and finals taking place on Saturday. We’ll end things with our closing ceremony on Sunday, where all our fighters will gather up to pledge their allegiance to the ultimate winner of the tournament!”

She gestured over to the arena.

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

The giant Taft walked into the arena with a warm and friendly grin. He wore a set of judge’s robes, his hand gripping tightly onto a massive war hammer as though it were a gavel.

“And as you’ve probably all noticed,” Thompson went on, “we’ve got a load of Secret Service agents scattered around to make sure nothing goes awry! Leading these agents is a real master at quelling riots and removing uninvited guests! Let’s hear it for [Ruth the Forgotten], Ruth Hayes!”

In the stands, Hayes gave a small wave with what remained of her severed left arm, a set of heavy scars covering the rest of her body.

“And to be perfectly clear,” Truman interjected, “although we’ve taken every possible precaution to safeguard you here, we can’t guarantee your complete and total protection during these fights. As such, anyone concerned about their safety should go ahead and watch the matches from any of the

televisions stationed throughout the town. And for those that do choose to stay with us...well, all I can say is: buckle up for the ride of your lives!"

"Alright, alright," Thompson shouted over Truman, "enough with the foreplay already! Let's move onto the action!"

The crowd roared its approval. ??[feels like this should go "as..."]

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

She gestured to the arena.

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

The audience cheered as a tank rolled onto the arena carrying Eisenhower atop its head. She wore a peaked visor along with a wool field jacket covered in medals and stripes, a circle of five stars placed squarely on her shoulders.

Eisenhower finished her friendly wave, then reached down and grabbed onto the barrel of the tank's gun with both of her hands. She lifted up, tightening her grin as she pried the tank's head clean off its body. The vehicle rolled out of the arena as Eisenhower moved ahead, carrying the tank head with her as she walked.

"Jesus Christ!" Thompson exclaimed. "It looks like Eisenhower is planning to use that tank head as a giant sledgehammer! We haven't even started and I'm already getting goosebumps!"

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

"Yeowch!" Thompson replied with a feigned flinch. "I take it that you and Eisenhower aren't on the best of terms, Truman?"

"No comment..." Truman muttered.

"Alrighty!" Thompson continued with an overexaggerated laugh. "Let's keep things going with our next fighter. Coming from the Eastern entrance, we have the second in command of the National Union Party! He carries the reputation of a terrifying butcher, but in reality, he's a gentle soul who can't stand the slight of blood! But don't be mistaken: this man ain't no pushover. He won't ever stop fighting; not until he obtains complete and unconditional surrender! He's [The Hero of Appomattox], Odysseus S. Grant!"

??Pacing below a little bit

"There's no S..." Grant grumbled to himself as he strolled in wearing a plain army uniform, a well-worn silk hat, and a pair of muddy boots. Behind him, Grant dragged a large, lumpy bag into the arena. He

reached the ring's center and opened up the bag, spilling a stockpile of weapons onto the ground. He crouched down, carefully picking up a gun from the top of the pile.

"This was Calvin's pistol," he spoke softly. "He died in our final battle against Lee before he could fire off a single shot." Grant placed the gun down and picked up a neighboring sword. "This one was Benjamin's. He was a valiant soldier, slain on that terrible night of Johnson's betrayal." Grant put the weapon back, giving a shake of his head. "I've lost a lot of soldiers on my watch..." he spoke out, staring directly into Eisenhower's smiling face. "...and I will not let a single one of their deaths be in vain..."

Grant thrust his arms to the side.

"Executive Power..."

As he spoke, the weapons behind Grant vibrated suddenly before rising up into the air. A gun slammed into Grant's arm, followed by a sword, then another, and another. Soon, every inch of Grant's arms was covered in weapons, their combined shape taking the form of two, giant, weaponized arms.

"...Union Army; To Arms."

Eisenhower gave a soft whistle.

"That's a scary look you've got there," she said with a chuckle, bringing her own weapon back behind her, "looks like you're going to make me go all out from the very start!"

Taft looked over the two fighters with a jolly smile.

"Are both of you about ready to start then?"

The fighters gave a pair of silent nods.

"Excellent!"

Taft instantly morphed his warm smile into a stern glare.

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

"He's typically a pretty easy-going guy," Truman smirked, "but not when it comes to judging!"

Taft breathed in, lifting his gavel high into the air.

"Let the match..." he shouted, slamming his hammer to the ground with a thunderous crash, "...BEGIN!"

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Epitaphs. In most cases, the epitaphs used in the book are nicknames the Presidents had in real life (possibly altered slightly due to changing their first names). However, there are exceptions to this rule which I will point out as they come up. For example, the epitaph [Ruth the Forgotten] is unrelated to anything about the real-life Rutherford Hayes: I made this epitaph up largely because there aren't any good nicknames for Rutherford to use. Speaking of lies involving Hayes...

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

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

Taft. William H. Taft genuinely wanted to be a Supreme Court justice more than he wanted to be President, but his wife had the opposite opinion, and so a President he became. He would eventually achieve his dream, however, after being named chief justice of the Supreme Court during Harding's administration.

Truman. This chapter features many small references for Henry S. Truman: he was an avid piano player, had a "the bucks stops here" sign on his desk, and he once started talking before someone interrupted saying "let me introduce you first," which accidentally got broadcasted to the crowd. His real-life nickname [The Man from Independence] refers to his hometown of Independence, Missouri.

Middle Initials. The S in "Harry S. Truman" does not stand for anything, though it's a common misconception that it stands for "Shipp." This was such a common misconception that the judge who read the oath of office for Harry S. Truman mistakenly referred to him as "Harry Shipp Truman," though Harry was quick to correct him.

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

Tanks

"Executive Power!" Grant shouted, "Union Army; 21 Gun Salute!"

Dozens of rifles extended out Grant's weaponized hands before firing off in quick succession.

??Pacing below slightly off with the second sentence

"Starting things with a bang?" Eisenhower quipped, moving her tank head in front of her, blocking off the shots. She extended her smile as she charged straight ahead, crashing into Grant with the force of a moving train.

Grant skidded back, then thrust his arm back to his opponent. Eisenhower stepped aside, dodging the attack. She grinned briefly, but promptly dropped her smile as a set of blades shot out of Grant's open palm. Eisenhower flung herself back, narrowly evading the swords just as Grant stepped forward, slamming into Eisenhower and flinging her across the floor. She twisted herself midair, landing down with a graceful flourish.

"You really don't pull any punches, do ya?" Eisenhower chuckled to herself as she rolled out her bruised shoulder.

Eisenhower looked to her opponent, but he refused to offer any sense of reply.

"...you know," she went on, "in spite of the many criticisms I've read about your abilities, my respect for you has always been high. I'm certain you're one of the greatest generals America has ever had, if not its greatest."

Eisenhower tightened the grip around her weapon.

"...but I've got a lot of people counting on me here...and I'm not going to let them down for anyone!"

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Years ago, a morning bugle blared out across camp Meade, rallying up its warriors from sleep.

"Good morning soldiers!" a young Eisenhower shouted as her troops lined up in front.

"Good morning ma'am!" the group replied with cheer.

Eisenhower looked across her line, then gave a small frown.

"Where's Cadet Fitzgerald?"

Somebody pointed over to a solitary figure seated by the docks.

"He's out working on that darn novel again."

Eisenhower shook her head.

"I'll allow it this time," she replied with a grin, "but only because we've gotten some very exciting news from headquarters." She looked over her troops. "Start packing your bags now, boys; we're taking a little trip to Europe!"

"Seriously?" a soldier asked with glee, "Are we finally going to war?"

"You're darn right we are!"

"Woohoo!" the soldiers exclaimed with hollers and cheers; a few of them even breaking down into tears.

"Now, don't start crying on me yet!" Eisenhower said with a grin. "I still have one more piece of news to share."

"I knew it..." a voice moaned, "we always got bad news coming with the good!"

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

"That's alright, ma'am!" a soldier exclaimed. "You helped us build all those makeshift ones instead!"

"That I did," she said, looking over their row of trucks with machine guns strapped onto their backs.

"Sadly, we're going to be discontinuing our makeshift models starting today..."

The soldiers gave a collective groan.

"...because..." Eisenhower continued as a shiny, new tank rolled onto the field "...we've finally gotten ourselves a real one!"

The soldiers screamed, rushing to their newest toy without waiting to be officially dismissed.

Eisenhower lifted a smile, looking down and reading her deployment orders one last time.

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

That was that the day they'd leave for Europe; the day she'd finally get the chance to fight in a real war.

Then, on November 11th, the war, along with Eisenhower's ambitions, came to a total stop.

Two weeks later, Eisenhower found herself sulking in the middle of the army's victory celebration party.

"I tell you," she lamented to a neighboring friend, "we're going to spend the rest of our lives explaining why we never fought in this damn war..."

She gulped down her drink and rose up to go get another. As she did, a large man passed just behind her, causing the two to bump into each other.

"Oye!" the man shouted, spilling his drink all over his shirt, "Watch where you're going!"

"You could do the same..." Eisenhower muttered.

"What's that now?" the man shouted. "I'll have you know, this uniform you just ruined costs over \$250!"

"Is that so?" Eisenhower replied, rolling out her eyes, "Feel free to send me the bill."

"I don't think you understand!" he growled, "Willingly destroying army property like this is a crime worthy of a court martial!"

Eisenhower stared blankly at the man.

"You can't be serious...right?"

The man gave a vicious grin.

"I hope you enjoyed whatever fights you had during this war, because they're the last one you're ever gonna see as a part of this army! Hyeh, hyeh, hyeh!"

The man continued cackling as Eisenhower clenched up her fists.

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

"Excuse me..."

Eisenhower froze still as an older officer stepped out in front of her.

"I apologize for butting in like this," the officer continued, "but I think it would be best if this little affair were dropped entirely."

"Little affair?" the furious man spat as he pointed triumphantly to himself. "I'll have you know, I'm *the* Inspector General Elliot Helmick; and an insult made against me is an insult against the entire US Army! So why don't you—"

Helmick started turning his finger, but stopped as the officer grabbed onto his wrist.

"And I'll have you know," the older man replied, lowering his hand and bringing Helmick to his knees, "that I'm General Dox Conner; and this woman you just screamed at is one of my most trusted subordinates."

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

Helmick looked over Eisenhower, then back to Conner.

"Uhh, well," Helmick mumbled, clearing out his throat, "seeing as you're a proper authority and all, I'll uh...I'll go ahead and leave her appropriate punishment in your capable hands!"

Helmick gave a light bow before scurrying himself back into the crowd as fast as he could.

"Thanks for the assist there, Conner," Eisenhower sighed, "you really saved my hide this time around!"

"Saved you?" Conner asked with a sly grin, "Why, I've just been told that I'm to be in charge of punishing you."

"That's...true..." Eisenhower replied with nervous laughter, "but it'll be a light punishment...won't it?"

??Pacing slightly off below

"Oh, far from it, I'm afraid," Conner said, shaking his head. He deepened his smile, pointing over to Eisenhower. "As your commanding officer, I hereby order you to take part in a hellish training camp with me down in Panama."

Eisenhower blinked.

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

“Oh, don’t get too excited,” Conner said, wagging his finger. “As soon as we’re done there, I’ll be shipping you off to learn martial arts from Pershing, diplomacy from MacArthur, and leadership from Marshall!”

“Th-thank you, sir...” Eisenhower stammered, taking in the names of these world class generals.

“But...but why do all this for me?”

“Because you’ve got talent, kid! And by God, it’d be a real waste if you never got a chance to show your stuff.” He placed a hand on her shoulder, giving a warm and friendly grin. “I’m counting on you to do great things for this country, and I order you not to disappoint me.”

Eisenhower gave a toothy smile as she shot up into a salute.

“I won’t let you down, sir!”

On her drive back home, Eisenhower daydreamed to herself about her upcoming sessions with Conner and the rest of the all star generals. She continued looking to the future, crashing back to reality as her car dipped into a ditch.

“Sheesh,” she grumbled as she got out to help push the vehicle along, “I swear, if there’s one danger this country faces...it’s the lack of good, quality roads!”

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??Pacing in this last bit is maybe a little too abrupt

In the present, Eisenhower lifted her hand high into the air.

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

As she spoke, a grid of miniature roads spread across the arena floor. Grant raised an eyebrow, gently kicking one of the roads besides his feet.

“Curious,” he remarked.

“Now get ready...”

Grant looked up to see Eisenhower standing directly in front of him.

“...for my massive retaliation!”

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Eisenhower’s Flashback. Many of the events in Deedee Eisenhower’s flashback really happened. In particular: Dwight Eisenhower commanded a tank unit without any tanks, he trained the author F. Scott Fitzgerald during WWI, he struggled desperately to get into combat only for WWI to end just a week before his deployment, and Fox Conner really did step in and save Dwight from being court martialled over an essentially bogus fine of \$250 (though the real-life fine had nothing to do with the events depicted in the novel).

The scene with Deedee Eisenhower's car getting stuck is a reference to Dwight taking part in the army's Transcontinental Motor Convoy, which demonstrated to Dwight how bad the nation's roads were. This event would later inspire him to push for construction of the Interstate Highway System during his Presidency.

Backward Step

Eisenhower slammed into Grant, forcing him away. He steadied himself up, only for Eisenhower to appear before him once more. Grant quickly threw out a punch as she swung her tank head, the two attacks colliding against each other and flinging the fighters back.

"Hot dang!" Eisenhower shouted as she brushed a streak of blood off her forehead. "I thought for sure you'd retreat in a situation as dangerous as that! But heck, you went for a damn counter instead!"

Grant gave a small shrug.

"Retreating was never really my style."

"Same for me! I say, if you have to use force..." she crouched down, lowering her stance, "...use overwhelming force!"

Eisenhower sprung ahead, sprinting across her roads with insane levels of acceleration.

"That speed...!" Grant exclaimed as he hastily raised up his arms, blocking Eisenhower's high velocity attack, "So that's how you kept appearing so quickly!"

"Roger that," Eisenhower replied, pushing off Grant. "You see, I get a speed boost whenever I run down the roads created from my EP. And I'm sorry to tell you friend," she remarked with a grin, "but my roads won't be doing a thing for you no matter how hard you run across them!"

Grant gave a snort.

"Fine by me," he replied, readying his stance.

In the stands, a towering figure wearing a stovepipe hat nodded to himself.

"Yes, that's quite alright," Gabe Lincoln mused to himself. "After all, if those roads don't affect him, then Grant has no need to worry where he puts his feet."

"...how utterly foolish," a voice snickered from behind.

Lincoln turned around, but saw nothing but a wall covered in shadow.

"You and Grant put far too much faith in the words of your opponents..." the voice continued as Dixie Nixon stepped out from the shadows. "...and that gullibility will be Grant's undoing."

Back on the ground, Grant charged to Eisenhower, swinging out his heavy, weaponized fist.

"Too slow!" Eisenhower cackled, dashing down her road and dodging his sluggish strike. She turned at an intersection, leaping over to Grant from behind. He hastily raised his arms, blocking Eisenhower's blow before pushing her aside.

"Union Army; 21 Gun Salute!"

Grant fired at Eisenhower as she hit the floor, only for her to dash along another one of her roads. Grant silently clenched his fists.

"Quit moving so much..." he grumbled.

"Oh please," Eisenhower cooed, sprinting down her roads as she continued dodging his attacks, "you couldn't beat me with my feet stapled to the floor! In fact..." Eisenhower skidded to a halt, turning to Grant with a grin. "...I bet you couldn't hit me if I stayed right here!"

Grant furrowed up his brow.

"I don't know what all you're plotting..." he remarked before charging up ahead, "...but I'm not about to look a gift horse in the mouth!"

Grant reached Eisenhower's side, placing his left foot squarely on the road below him before throwing out a punch.

"That's the plan..." Eisenhower smirked as his fist flew towards her.

Suddenly, Grant's body jerked itself back, veering his attack off course. Before he could move again, Eisenhower raised her tank head up and tightened her smile.

"FORE!" she shouted, smashing Grant hard across the face.

Grant gritted his teeth as he took the attack, then immediately followed with a counter.

"Oh please!" Eisenhower chuckled, "I'm not falling for that one again!"

Suddenly, Eisenhower's body started shifting unnaturally to the side, avoiding his attack before swinging her weapon once again, landing another critical hit and knocking him to the ground.

Lincoln clicked his tongue from the stands. "Now I get it!" he exclaimed, "Eisenhower's EP doesn't have anything to do with speed...it really deals with movement!"

"Took you long enough," Dixie Nixon confirmed with a smile. "Executive Power: Interstate Highway System gives Eisenhower the ability to move objects efficiently down her roads. She mostly uses it to move herself along the roads as she runs, giving her a significant speed boost; but she can also use it to shift herself out of danger, or to throw her opponents off-balance whenever they touch her roads."

"And that's exactly what she did to Grant," Lincoln muttered, "after making him think her roads didn't affect him!" He shook his head. "Honestly, I'm surprised: I never took Eisenhower to be much of the trickster type."

"No one ever does," Nixon smirked, "but she's far more devious than most people realize."

"That may be," Lincoln agreed, regaining his former smile, "but she's not the only President who's chronically overlooked..."

In the arena, Grant got off the ground.

"You're strong," he spoke matter-of-factly. "If I hadn't opened this fight with my most defensive form, I'm certain I'd have lost by now." He scanned the roads around him, nodding to himself. "But now that I've gotten a handle on your EP...I think it's high time I take the offensive."

"You're kidding...right?" Eisenhower asked with a nervous laughter. "You've been on the offensive since the match began!"

Grant threw out his arms, not bothering to reply.

“Executive Power...”

The weapons covering Grant’s arms dropped to the floor, piling up around his feet and lifting him into the air. The weapons shifted about, settling down into the shape of a large horse with legs made of swords and a cannon for a nose.

“...Union Army...” Grant spoke, holding the horse’s iron reigns, “...Cavalry!”

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Hidden Hand. Early historians largely viewed Dwight Eisenhower as a simpleton politically and mostly agreed with Harry Truman’s statement that “Eisenhower doesn’t know any more about politics than a pig knows about Sunday.” However, there’s been a change of perspective on Dwight, and now modern day historians are more likely to agree with Richard Nixon who said, “he was a far more complex and devious man than most people realized.” This revised view of Dwight was largely popularized by the biography “Hidden Hand Presidency,” which is the basis for the Hidden Hand Party that Deedee Eisenhower leads in the novel.

Cavalry

Eisenhower bit her lip as she eyed her opponent seated atop his weaponized horse.

This new form of his looks pretty agile, she thought to herself, but he won't be able to use its speed to the fullest! If he steps onto any of my roads, even if for just a second, I'll throw him off and hit him with my biggest attack yet! Yes, he'll need to move slowly and cautiously...that much I'm certain of.

As she thought this, Grant started making his move. His horse stepped into a light trot, carefully avoiding the roads with each of its steps. The trot gradually rose to a gallop before transforming itself into a full-blown sprint! Eisenhower glanced to the ground, waiting for the horse to touch one of her roads. But, to her surprise, it completely avoided them with every step it took.

"What!" Eisenhower shouted before quickly shaking out her head and raising up her weapon. "I'll figure it out later..." she muttered as Grant drew closer, "for now...I'll settle for knocking you off that high horse of yours!"

She swung with her tank head, but, just before colliding, Grant's horse leapt upwards, jumping straight over Eisenhower's attack. The horse tilted its head as it flew overhead, aiming its cannon nose directly at Eisenhower. It fired, detonating its shell on impact.

"Gahhh!" Eisenhower screamed, clenching up her fists as she turned back around, readying her EP for Grant's impromptu landing. But once again, the horse landed itself down without touching any of her roads. "That's..." Eisenhower stammered, "that's impossible!"

Before she could recover her senses, the horse raised its bladed legs and rammed them towards her. Eisenhower hastily activated her EP, moving away from the swords before shifting herself even further to avoid a follow-up strike.

"Oh?" Grant remarked coolly as he sat back in his saddle, "How strange...I thought you said you weren't one to run away? Or was that just another one of your lies?"

Eisenhower gave a ticked off smile.

"Oh, I assure you," she said, cracking her neck to the side, "I have not taken, and shall not take, a single backward step!"

Eisenhower stuck a hand into the center of her tank head.

"Take this!" she shouted, pulling a lever inside and firing a shell out of its barrel.

Grant's horse jumped out of the way and launched a cannonball of its own. Eisenhower shifted herself along her roads, dodging the fire while shooting off a second round. Grant leapt over the shot, carefully avoiding Eisenhower's roads as he landed.

"Hmph," Nixon snarled, "It seems I misjudged Grant...his fighting abilities aren't half bad."

"That they are!" Lincoln spoke with pride. "He's the best fighter I've ever had: strong on the battlefield, and invincible on a horse!"

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

"Before we begin," he announced, "I thought we could have ourselves a little fun..." Herschberger strode over to the jumping bar, lifted it higher than his head, then turned back to his class. "Cadet Grant!" he bellowed to the crowd.

All eyes turned as a tiny soldier seated atop a towering steed stepped out of the line. The cadet was a young Odysseus Grant. The horse was York, a fearsome beast known for its terrifying temper. Only two cadets at West Point could ride him, and only Grant could ride him well.

Grant rubbed his hand along the creature's back. The animal gave a quick snort, then charged up ahead, leaping forward, clearing over the bar as the crowd erupted into cheers. With ease, Grant had just set a new record for the high jump; one which would stand for another 25 years.

"Well," Herschberger said with a bashful grin. "I don't think I can follow that now! Class dismissed!"

Grant quietly dismounted off York as his classmates filed out of the room.

"That was quite the show there, Grant!" Herschberger exclaimed as he made his way over.

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

"Be that what it may," Herschberger remarked, handing a letter to Grant, "I wanted to be the first to tell you about your new post." He gave a wide grin. "Congratulations, soldier! You've been invited to the Mexican front by [Old Rough and Ready] herself!"

The next week, future President [Old Rough and Ready] Jacqueline Taylor looked across her fresh batch of recruits.

"Which one of you here is Lieutenant Grant?" she asked sharply. The group turned as Grant silently raised up his hand. "Good," Taylor replied, passing him a clipboard, "you're our new quartermaster effective immediately."

Grant looked to the set of forms, then back up to Taylor.

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

"Are you complaining, soldier?" Taylor asked with a frown.

"No ma'am; merely expressing my opinion. I had expected to serve on the front lines, but if this is what you assign me, I shall perform it to the best of my abilities."

Taylor gave a nod.

"I understand your hesitation," she remarked, "but I assure you, the quartermaster is a vital part for our operations." She pointed to a storage shed over at the back of the camp. "After all, it doesn't matter how brave our soldiers are: they can't fight without weapons, and they can't march without food."

"I of course recognize the job's significance," Grant replied, "I'm merely confused as to why I'm the one being selected specifically for it."

Taylor gave a grin.

"I love my soldiers here; but most of them can't count past ten. Needless to say, none of them are capable of keeping accurate tabs on our supplies. So, when I heard about a promising soldier hoping to become a math professor at the end of his service..." she rested a hand on his shoulder, "well, I just knew I had to grab you before anyone else did."

Grant nodded his head.

"I see. In that case then I—"

A bullet whizzed past him, cutting him off. Grant and Taylor calmly looked over to the side, spotting the squadron of Mexican soldiers charging through their camp with guns blazing.

"Take cover!" Taylor shouted as their group jumped behind a neighboring building.

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

"We've got our invaders outnumbered two to one," Taylor replied, peeking around the corner, "but we don't have enough ammo on hand to take them down!"

"Is there any more ammunition at the storage shed?" Grant asked.

Taylor nodded.

"There's a whole stockpile just outside its doors; but there's no way to get over there without taking on enemy fire."

"I see," Grant remarked, "in that case, the solution to our problem here is rather simple."

Taylor started to reply, but not before Grant leapt onto a nearby horse.

"As our quartermaster," he continued, "it's my job to make sure we stayed supplied."

"Don't be a fool!" Taylor hissed, "You'll be shot at the moment you're spotted."

"Then I won't be spotted," he replied curtly.

Before Taylor could object any further, Grant instantly rushed his horse out from behind the cover, leaving Taylor silently shaking her head behind.

"Idiot..." she murmured, closing her eyes and waiting for the inevitable sound of gunfire. But, to her complete surprise, nothing happened. Curious, Taylor peeked around the corner, widening her eyes at the sight before her.

Grant's horse was continuing to sprint to the Mexican troops...but Grant himself was nowhere to be seen...

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Backward Step. After Dwight Eisenhower was told that he shouldn't desegregate the Navy, Dwight replied "We have not taken and we shall not take a single backward step. There must be no second class citizens in this country."

Grant's Flashback I. The scenes at West Point, including Grant's 25 year horse jumping record, are almost word for word true.

While it is true that Ulysses Grant was reluctantly appointed to be quartermaster during the Mexican-American War, it is not true that he was personally recruited by Zachary Taylor himself. He also put up more of a resistance to the position than is displayed in the story since he really wanted to go out and fight on the front lines.

You Too

"It's just a horse," a Mexican soldier muttered as Grant's steed ran past. "Must have gotten scared by all the gunfire going on."

The group continued marching, ignoring the sprinting beast. Across the camp, Taylor went on watching the animal as it stopped itself just in front of the storage shed's iron doors.

"My God!" Taylor exclaimed as she spotted Grant appearing just behind the horse, picking up a spare box of ammunition off the ground.

"What happened out there?" a nearby soldier asked.

"I can't say for sure," Taylor said with a smirk, "but if I had to guess...I'd say that daredevil Grant just rode through the battlefield clinging onto his horse's side for cover!"

Grant tucked the extra ammunition underneath his arm, rotating himself to his horse's side before sprinting back towards Taylor's position.

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

Another soldier stared at the horse, noticing the flaps of a blue army uniform dangling just beneath its chest.

"It's the enemy!" he snarled, "Fire; fire!"

Grant rotated back atop his horse, ducking down as a stray bullet shot by.

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

Grant turned around, locking eyes with the Mexican soldiers as they fired from their rifles. Grant yanked hard on his horse's reigns, shifting away from the bullets before turning sharply around a corner back over to Taylor's side.

"Excellent work there, soldier!" Taylor exclaimed as she handed out Grant's ammunition to her troops.

"She's the one that did all the work," Grant replied, scratching his horse's ears.

Taylor loaded up her rifle, looking back over to Grant.

"I know you're not planning to stay with the army long term...but you really ought to reconsider. I'd hate to be losing a man of your abilities."

Grant scratched his chin.

"Me...an army man?"

Grant looked over as the fighting raged around him in earnest. His horse trembled at the shots of gunfire, but Grant put a hand onto its back, calming down her nerves.

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

“That’s what I was hoping you would say.” Taylor replied. “And if you’re going to be staying with us...” she continued, pointing over to a well-dressed soldier standing just beside them, “...you’d do well to go ahead and get on this man’s good side. He’s the rising star of our engineering corps, and the first person you should turn to if you ever need any fortifications getting done.”

“Oh madam,” the officer chuckled, giving a light bow, “you are far too generous with your words of praise directed towards one as humble as myself.”

Grant got off his horse, extending his hand to the older man.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir,” Grant, the future commander of the Union Army, said with genuine sincerity, “I’m Odysseus Grant.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” the future commander of the Confederate Army replied in turn. “My name...is Robbie Lee...”

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In the present, Eisenhower swung her tank head as Grant’s weaponized horse stepped over to the side. A dozen rifles fired from the horse’s chest, only for Eisenhower to slide across her roads, dodging the entirety of the attack.

“These two are just way too agile!” Thompson screamed. “Between Grant’s horse and Eisenhower’s roads, it looks like this fight’s in a total gridlock!”

“It is for now,” Truman agreed, “but such high energy fighting can’t go on forever. Sooner or later, one of them has to fall...”

As Truman spoke these words, streams of cracks suddenly spread across Eisenhower’s roads as chunks of her highway broke off, dissolving into the air. Eisenhower panted heavily to herself as she slid herself back, avoiding yet another charge from Grant’s metal steed.

“You really never stop, do you?” Eisenhower chuckled, forcing on a smile. “Then again,” she continued, wiping a band of sweat from her brow, “it looks like I’ll need to wrap things up soon myself.”

Eisenhower shifted herself back even further, raising her hand high into the air.

“Executive Power: Interstate Highway System; Space Race!”

Grant furrowed up his brow as the road directly behind Eisenhower instantly extended itself straight into the sky.

“What in blazes...?” Grant muttered as Eisenhower gave a wicked grin.

“Now get ready...” she shouted as she turned herself around, running up her vertical road and shifting herself into the air, “...for a modern day lesson...” Eisenhower stepped to the peak of her highway before kicking off of it, shooting herself down towards Grant with the force of a burning comet, “...in three dimensional warfare!”

“Now get ready!” she screamed, “For a lesson in three-dimensional warfare!”

Grant instinctively took half a step a back at Eisenhower's rapid approach, bracing himself for what seemed to be her final desperate attack. Then, as his horse's hoof landed down behind him, Grant turned around with complete and utter shock.

Despite his careful calculations, the back feet of his horse had somehow landed themselves on the very edge of Eisenhower's road. Before Grant could move himself away, his horse's legs immediately slid out across the road at a torrential speed.

"I see," Grant grumbled as his horse toppled over. "You pretended like your roads were breaking up because you were running out of steam...but in reality, you were simply saving up enough energy to widen up your road behind me!"

"Correct!" Eisenhower screamed. "And despite your extreme gullibility, know that you were, without a doubt, one of the strongest opponents I've ever had the privilege to face!"

Grant gave a solemn nod.

"You too."

Grant suddenly yanked at his reigns, sending the horse sliding even faster down Eisenhower's road. Before Eisenhower could process what was happening, the horse kicked off the ground with its hind legs, the combined momentum from Eisenhower's EP and Grant's sudden pull throwing its legs up and around in a tight circle. The legs reached out, wrapping around Eisenhower's falling body before slamming her hard into the ground.

"Gah!" Eisenhower screamed as she struggled to pry her injured body free from the horse's iron legs wrapped around her chest, "I'm definitely going to be feeling that one in the morning..."

"Aim..."

Eisenhower looked up, locking eyes with Grant as his horse's cannon nose turned directly in front of her.

"Fire!" Grant declared.

Eisenhower instantly swung out her weapon as the cannonball fired out of its nose, the explosion covering the fighters in a thick cloud of dust.

"Time out!" Taft screamed, jogging over to the arena's center. He reached the fighters, giving each a brief inspection before solemnly nodding his head to himself.

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

As he spoke, Grant got off the ground, brushing the dirt from his jacket before lighting up a cigar next to his unconscious opponent.

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

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Eisenhower gave a light groan as she slowly opened her eyes. Bright lights shone directly overhead, and she found herself lying on top of some sort of hospital bed.

"Have you finally come back to the land of the living now?" a voice cooed besides her.

Eisenhower looked over to see a slender woman wearing an orange dress shirt and black suspenders standing besides her.

"...Wilson...?" Eisenhower asked. "Why are you...? Where..." she squinted sharply as the memories gradually started coming back into her head. "That's right...I lost...and in the very first round, no less..."

"You most certainly did," Willow Willson spoke matter-of-factly. "But don't worry darling; such a lackluster performance is to be expected from the leader of a second-rate school like *Columbia*."

Eisenhower gave a light smile.

"I appreciate that you're trying to transform my grief into anger here, Wilson, but there's really nothing to worry about. I'm more than accustomed to the harsh realities of battle, after all."

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

"There's not too much more to say, I'm afraid." Eisenhower remarked, forcing up a smile. "I had concentrated my last few attacks towards ending the fight...I felt that I was making big progress..." she shook out her head, "...but then that stupid Space Race mess ruined all my efforts." She gave a sigh, then put back on her solemn grin. "But in the end, my decision to attack was based upon the best information I had at the time...any blame or fault in the matter is mine alone to bare."

"Righttttt," Wilson said, rolling out her eyes, "that deffffinitely sounds like what a person who doesn't need any cheering up would say right about now."

"Oh shut up!" Eisenhower snarked, regaining some of the warmth back into her expression.

A wave of music started to play from the television stationed across the room, and Eisenhower turned over to see Thompson starting up her announcements for the forthcoming match.

"Shouldn't you be up there watching this from the stands?"

"Oh please," Wilson remarked with a wave of her hands, "there's absolutely nothing to be gained from watching that deplorable farce of a match."

"Fair enough," Eisenhower replied, turning her attention back over to the screen. "It's going to be a fixed fight after all..."

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

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

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