

# Executive Powers: Revolutionary War

Eisenhower

Grant

Madison

Monroe

McKinley

LBJ

Wilson

Roosevelt

Buchanan

Johnson

Jackson

Samuel S. Spirits

## Preface

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

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

# Preamble

## Dropping the Bomb

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

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

Well, of course it was!

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

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

Thompson's phone rang out, shattering her concentration.

"What the hell do you want?!" she barked into her device.

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

Thompson clenched her jaw.

"I'm hanging up!"

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

Thompson crossed her arms but said nothing.

"The story," Vonnegut continued, "centers around a universe that parallels our own. For example, its characters are based off of historical figures from our world, but with different names, backstories, and even genders."

Thompson rolled her eyes.

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

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

Thompson scratched her chin.

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

"Exactly!" Vonnegut replied. "So, what do you think?"

Thompson looked to the horizon.

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

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

"What...the...?"

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

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

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

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

Thompson hung up her phone and sprinted down the hall, raising her arms and shouting to the sky.

"Power: Gonzo Journalism!"

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

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

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

The duo made it to the station's news helicopter and flew off in the direction of the mysterious cloud. After setting course, Thompson activated her Power again, summoning a second Gonzo to take hold of the wheel. A few minutes later, Thompson nodded to the first Gonzo as she adjusted her bucket hat and yellow-tinted glasses. Gonzo raised three fingers...then two...one...

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

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

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

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

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

"Take us down, Gonzo!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man maintained his smile, but he was clearly disappointed.

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

Thompson gave a weak nod.

"Excellent!" The man said, clearing his throat. "My fellow Americans..."

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

"A Presidential Seal?!" she hissed as she looked over the symbol of a bald eagle inscribed within a circle of stars burned into his hand.

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

Thompson paused, taking in these words.

"And what exactly do you want?" she asked.

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

He looked to the distance.

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

Thompson furrowed her brow.

"The hell are you talking about?" she asked.

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

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

Truman stared expectingly at Thompson.

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

Truman raised three fingers.

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

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

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

Thompson widened her eyes.

"Every member of Rushmore!" she exclaimed.

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

Thompson stood still, then waved out her arms.

"C-Cut!" she shouted.

Gonzo's recording light switched off, ending the broadcast. Truman breathed out, wiping a hand across his forehead.

"Welp," he spoke with a thicker Missouri accent than before, "the die is cast!"

He turned to Thompson.

"Say, would you mind giving me a ride back?" he asked with a chuckle. "It seems my car didn't quite survive the blast!"

"...uh, sure..." she replied without thinking, her brain still in a daze.

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

Jesus, what the hell was she doing?!

The golden opportunity she had yearned for was standing right before her! Was she seriously just going to gawk around like an idiot while this chance passed her by?

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

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

Truman gave Thompson an icy stare.

"Are you honestly making demands," he asked while gesturing to the crater behind him, "after witnessing the destruction I can bear against you?"

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

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

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

“Gonzo,” Thompson spoke up.

“Yeah boss?”

“I have a lot of questions,” she said, looking at the strange man geeking over their news helicopter.

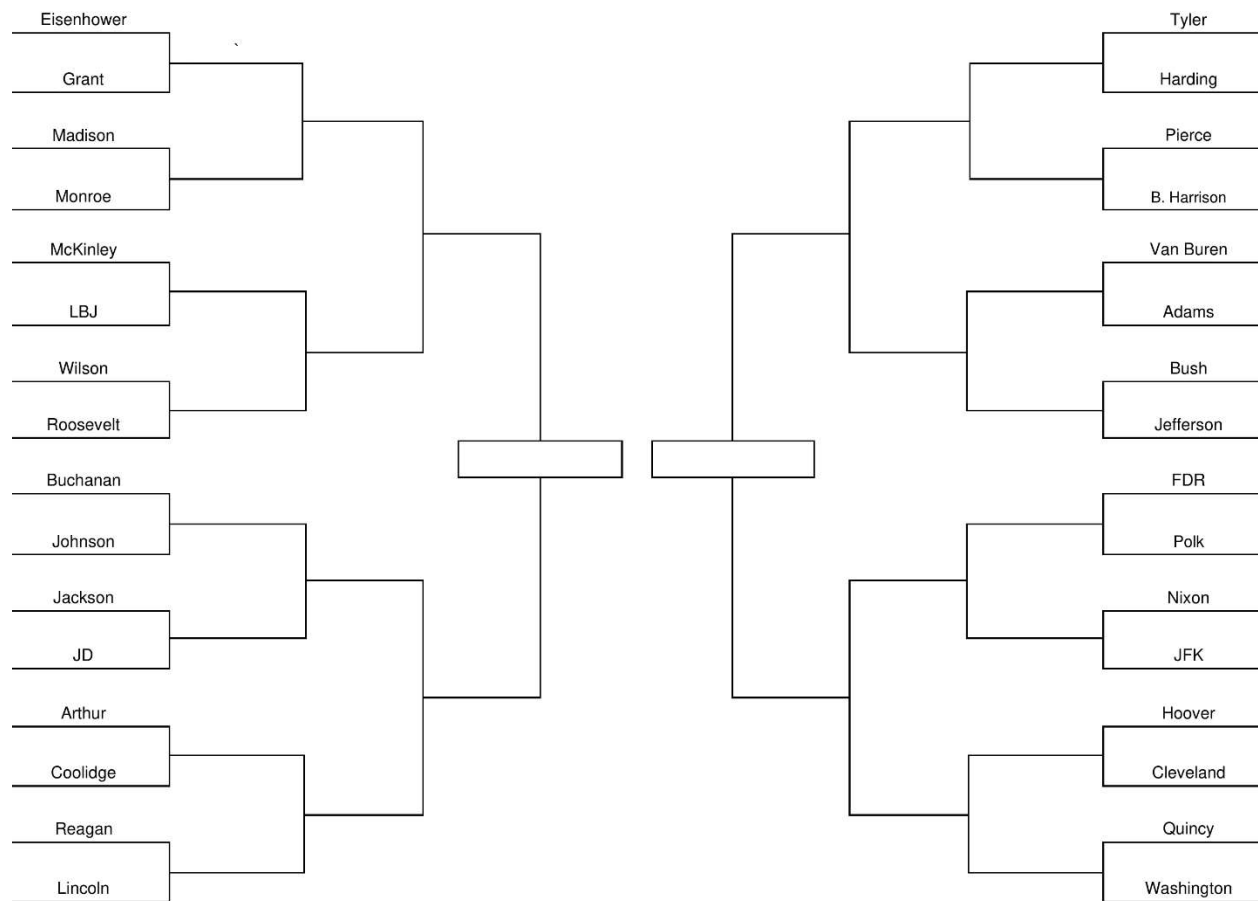
“The first of which,” she said scratching her head, “is who the hell is Henry Truman?”

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



## The Bracket



### Block R:

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

### Block L:

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

### Block J:

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

Block W:

[The Sphinx] Frances D. Roosevelt vs [Young Hickory] Jade Polk  
[The King of Camelot] Jay F. Kennedy vs [Tricky Dick] Dixie Nixon  
[The Great Humanitarian] Hera Hoover vs [The Beast of Buffalo] Gregory Cleveland  
[The Madman from Massachusetts] Quincy Adams vs [The American Cincinnatus] Jordan  
Washington

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

Note that some of the references/inaccuracies that I make will be setups for scenes that happen much later in the book. In such cases, I will omit discussing these historical inaccuracies until their payoffs are revealed. I will also sometimes use the abbreviation EP:RW to refer to this book, Executive Powers: Revolutionary War.

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

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

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

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

# Day 1: The First Branch

## Two Star Generals

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

But now?

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

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

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

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

"Hey you!" an agent in black screamed at her. "You can't park here!"

Thompson gave a cocky grin.

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

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

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

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

The agent rolled his eyes and grabbed a walkie-talkie.

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

Thompson tilted her head.

"Requesting wha—?"

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

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

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

"Ehem," someone coughed from behind.

Thompson turned around, noticing a pianist seated behind her.

"You ready?" the man asked.

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

The rambunctious crowd below quieted down as they took notice of music playing across the stadium speakers. At the same time, the cameras throughout the arena turned to point into the commentary box.

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

The crowd let loose a torrent of screams.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The crowd erupted in cheers.

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

He placed a small sign on top of his desk.

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

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

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

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

She gestured to the arena.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The crowd roared with approval.

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

She gestured to the arena.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Truman gave a small smile.

"No comment."

"Anyways," Thompson continued, "coming from the Eastern entrance, we have the second in command of the National Union Party! He carries the reputation as a butcher, but in reality, he's a gentle soul who can't stand the slight of blood! Nevertheless, this man won't ever stop fighting; not until he obtains complete and unconditional surrender! He's [The Hero of Appomattox], Odysseus S. Grant!"

Grant shook his head as he walked on out.

“There’s no S,” he mumbled to himself.

Grant strolled in wearing a plain blue army uniform together with a well-worn silk hat and a pair of muddy boots. Behind him, Grant dragged a large, lumpy bag into the arena. He reached the center of the arena, opening up the bag and releasing a stockpile of weapons onto the ground.

“This was Calvin’s pistol,” he spoke softly as he lifted a gun from the pile. “He died in our battle against Lee before he could fire a single shot.”

Grant placed the pistol down and picked up a sword.

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

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

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

Taft glanced at the fighters while maintaining his jolly smile.

“Are both of you just about ready to start?”

The fighters gave a pair of silent nods.

“Excellent!”

Taft replaced his joyful smile with a stern glare.

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

“He’s an easy-going guy,” Truman grinned, “but not when it comes to judging.”

Taft breathed out and raised his gavel into the air.

“Let the first match!” he shouted as he slammed his hammer down, “begin!!”

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

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

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

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



## Tanks

"Union Army!" Grant shouted, "21 Gun Salute!"

Dozens of rifles extended out of Grant's weaponized hands and fired in quick succession.

"Starting things off with a bang?" Eisenhower asked as she lowered her tank head, blocking the shots. She tightened her smile, then charged forward and crashed into Grant with the force of a moving train.

Grant took half a step back, then pushed forward, shoving Eisenhower off before thrusting his hands at her. Eisenhower stepped back, dodging the attack. She smirked for a moment, then dropped her smile as a sea of swords shot out of Grant's palms.

Eisenhower desperately flung her body back, dodging the blades while losing her balance. Grant stepped forward, slamming Eisenhower with his fist and flinging her across the arena. Eisenhower twisted herself midair, landing herself with grace and poise.

"You know," Eisenhower remarked as she readied her stance. "In spite of the many criticisms I've read, my respect for you has always been high! I'm certain you're one of the greatest American generals, if not its greatest."

Eisenhower tightened her grip.

"That being said," she continued with a smile, "I've got people counting on me; and I'm not going to let them down!"

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Years ago, a bugle blared out, waking the soldiers across Camp Meade. The troops shot out of bed, eager to start the day together with their beloved commander.

"Good morning soldiers!" a young Eisenhower shouted.

"Good morning ma'am!" The soldiers replied.

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

"Where's Fitzgerald?"

Someone pointed over to a solitary figure sitting by the docks.

"He's working on his darn novel again."

Eisenhower shook her head.

"I'll allow it this time," she replied playfully, "but only because we've gotten such good news from headquarters!" She gave a toothy grin. "Pack your bags boys, we're taking a trip to Europe!"

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

"You're damn right we are!" she replied.

The soldiers whooped and hollered as they exchanged high fives, a few of them even breaking down into tears.

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

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

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

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

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

The soldiers gave a collective moan.

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

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

"November 18<sup>th</sup>," she spoke to herself.

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

Then, on the morning of November 11<sup>th</sup>, the war, along with Eisenhower's dreams, came to a sudden halt.

A few days later, Eisenhower found herself sulking in the middle of the army's victory celebration.

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

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

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

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

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

"Good to know," she said rolling her eyes, "feel free to send me the bill."

"I don't think you understand!" the man snarled. "Willingly destroying army property is a heinous 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," he continued, "because they're going to be the last fights you ever see in this army!"

The man let out a cackle as Eisenhower tried her best to keep her anger in check.

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

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

Eisenhower turned to see an older officer approaching them.

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

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

Helmick started turning his finger around, only to be stopped as the officer grabbed hold of his wrist.

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

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

Helmick glanced at Eisenhower, then back to Conner

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

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

"Thanks Conner," Eisenhower spoke up, "you really saved my hide this time!"

"Saved you?" he replied with a knowing smile, "why, I've just been told that I've been put in charge of punishing you."

Eisenhower gave a nervous laugh.

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

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

Conner pointed a finger dramatically to Eisenhower.

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

Eisenhower blinked.

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

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

“Th-thank you,” Eisenhower stammered as she processed the names of these world class mentors.  
“But, why do all this for me?”

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

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

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

Eisenhower gave a sharp salute.

“I won’t let you down!”

On the ride home, Eisenhower daydreamed to herself about the forthcoming training sessions, her mind coming back to reality as her car dipped into a muddy ditch and stalled. Eisenhower shook her head.

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

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In the present, Eisenhower raised her arm into the air

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

As she spoke, a grid of miniature roads spread over the grounds of the arena. Grant raised an eyebrow as he gently kicked a road besides his feet.

“Interesting,” he remarked.

“Now get ready...”

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

“For my massive retaliation!”

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

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

## Interstate Highway System

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

Grant immediately thrust his fist forward at the same time Eisenhower swung out her weapon. The two attacks landed against each other, flinging both fighters back.

Eisenhower hopped back, rubbing her wounded head.

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

Grant shrugged his shoulders.

“Retreating was never my style,” he replied.

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

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

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

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

Grant snorted.

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

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

“Quite so,” Gabe Lincoln mused to himself. “After all, now that Grant knows the roads don’t affect him, he has no need to worry where he places his feet.”

Lincoln turned around at the sound of something rustling behind him, but he saw nothing but a wall covered in shadows.

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

A dark figure emerged from the wall’s shadows.

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

Back in the arena, Grant charged forward. Eisenhower grinned, remaining perfectly still while Grant threw his punch. Suddenly, the left side of Grant’s body jerked back, causing his attack to whiff. At the same time, Eisenhower raised her weapon.

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

Grant gritted his teeth at the heavy blow, then immediately threw out a counter.

"I'm not falling for that again!" Eisenhower shouted as her body shifted unnaturally to the side, causing the attack to miss. She swung her weapon a second time, landing another critical hit.

Lincoln clicked his tongue.

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

Nixon nodded.

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

"Which is exactly what she did to Grant," Lincoln added, "after tricking him to think the roads didn't affect him." He shook his head. "I'm rather surprised; I never took Eisenhower to be the trickster type."

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

In the arena, Grant rose up from the ground.

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

He scanned the roads around the arena.

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

Eisenhower gave a grin.

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

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

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

Eisenhower readied her weapon as she carefully eyed her opponent.

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

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

As Eisenhower thought this, Grant made his move. At first, his horse stepped with a light trot, carefully avoiding Eisenhower's roads. The trot then rose into a gallop before quickly transforming into a full-blown sprint.

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

“What?!”

Eisenhower shook out her head and raised her guard as Grant drew closer. Just before colliding, Grant’s horse leapt forward, front flipping over Eisenhower’s body. As the horse passed over her, it tilted its neck back, aiming its cannon nose directly at her. The gun fired, detonating its shell on impact.

“Gahhh!!!” Eisenhower screamed out in pain, but she did not fall. Instead, Eisenhower gritted her teeth and turned around, readying herself for Grant’s impromptu landing. But, to her shock, the horse hit the ground with its feet once again avoiding her roads. “That’s...that’s impossible!” Eisenhower exclaimed.

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

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

Grant raised an eyebrow as Eisenhower fell back.

“Retreating?” Grant asked.

Eisenhower gave an annoyed smile.

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

Eisenhower stuck her hand into the head of her tank.

“Take this!”

She pulled from inside her weapon, causing a shell to fire from its gun. Grant’s horse leapt away while firing a blast from its cannon in return. Eisenhower shifted herself using Interstate Highway System and fired another shot. Grant deftly dodged the attack while launching counters of his own and simultaneously avoiding managing to avoid stepping on Eisenhower’s sprawling set of roads.

Nixon placed a hand to her chin.

“I’ve misjudged Grant,” she remarked, “his fighting abilities are far greater than the rumors suggest.”

Lincoln gave a proud smile.

“He’s the best fighter I’ve ever had!” he replied. “He’s strong on the battlefield, and nearly invincible atop a horse!”

## Cavalry

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

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

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

"Cadet Grant!" he barked.

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

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

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

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

Grant dismounted his horse, then noticed Herschberger calling him over.

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes ma'am."

"Good," she replied, "send Lieutenant Grant to meet me posthaste."

"I'm already here, ma'am."

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

"How long have you been back there?"

Grant shrugged his shoulders.

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

Grant looked at the forms, then back to Taylor.



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

Taylor crossed her arms.

"You complaining, soldier?"

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

Taylor gave a nod.

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

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

Taylor gave a grin.

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

Grant nodded his head.

"In that case, I—"

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

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

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

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

Taylor took a peek around.

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

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

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

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

"Don't be a fool!" Taylor shouted while furrowing her brow, "you'll be shot down the moment you're spotted!"

"Then I won't be spotted," Grant replied.

Before Taylor could continue, Grant ran his horse out of cover and straight for the Mexican soldiers.

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

But, to her surprise, nothing happened.

Curious, Taylor peeked around, widening her eyes at the sight before her. Grant's horse was continuing with its sprint, but Grant was nowhere to be seen!

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

The Mexican soldiers marched forward while ignoring the beast. Meanwhile, Taylor continued watching as the horse stopped itself in front of the storage shed.

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

Grant grabbed the supplies, then rotated his body to the horse's other side before sprinting back to Taylor.

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

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

"It's the enemy!" he exclaimed. "Fire, fire!"

Grant rotated back atop the horse.

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

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

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

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

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

Taylor loaded a rifle, then looked back to Grant.

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

Grant scratched his chin.

"Me...an army man?"

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

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

“That’s what I like to hear!”

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

“Hey!” she shouted, “come over for a second!”

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

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

“Oh madam,” the man said with a light bow, “you’re far too kind.”

Grant dismounted his horse and extended out his hand.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Grant remarked, “I’m Odysseus Grant.”

The man grasped Grant’s outstretched hand.

“Robbie Lee,” he replied.

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

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

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

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

## You Too

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

"These fighters are being way too nimble!" Thompson shouted. "Between Grant's horse and Eisenhower's roads, it seems like this fight is completely gridlocked!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Executive Power!" Eisenhower shouted, "Interstate Highway System; Space Race!"

Eisenhower promptly turned around and ran straight up her vertical road. She reached the peak of its track and then kicked off the road, shooting her body at Grant with the velocity of a comet.

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

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

Despite his careful calculations with his steps, the back feet of Grant's horse had somehow landed on the edge of Eisenhower's roads. Before he could think further, his horse's legs shot back along the road.

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

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

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

Grant gave a solemn nod.

"You too."

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

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

Eisenhower coughed as she hit the floor, then struggled to free herself from the horse's iron grip. She started to push herself away, then looked up to see the horse turn to her, its cannon nose pointed right in front of her face.

"Fire," Grant declared.

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

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

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

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

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

## Democratic Republicans

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

"Have you finally come back to the land of the living?"

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

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

"Indeed," Willow Willson spoke frankly, "and in a very pitiful way, I might add. Then again, such a lackluster performance is to be expected from of a second-rate school like *Columbia*."

Eisenhower gave a light snort.

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

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

Eisenhower chuckled.

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

She gave a sigh, then raised a somber smile.

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

Wilson rolled her eyes.

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

"Shut up!" Eisenhower retorted, regaining some warmth in her smile.

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

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

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

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

In the stands, Thompson grabbed her mic.

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

She gestured to the arena.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Madison and Monroe exchanged worried glances.

"...do you mean to say," Monroe asked, "that you want us to poll the audience as to which of us they want to go forward?"

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

Madison bit her lip.

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

Jefferson brought a hand to her chin.

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

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

Jefferson gave a sigh.

"I was afraid it might come to this."

Jefferson looked over her two best friends.

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

Monroe gave a small grin while Madison remained unmoved.

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

Monroe blinked.

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

"Against Grant you are," Jefferson corrected. "But Grant is not our primary concern here. It is Roosevelt and Lincoln for whom we must plan for, and for opponents of that caliber, only Madison stands a chance."

Monroe dropped her head.

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

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

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

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

Monroe snarled, then slowly took back her composure.

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

Jefferson watched Monroe leave, then gave a shallow moan.



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

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

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

Jefferson looked Madison in the eye.

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

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

"Let the match...begin!"

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

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

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

Monroe nonchalantly raised her arms into the air.

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

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

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

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

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



## Monroe's Doctrine

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

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

His soldiers exchanged worried glances.

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

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

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

"Name and age?" Washington asked as he made his way to the volunteer.

"Jane Monroe," the soldier replied boldly, "18 years young."

Washington nodded his head, then turned to his army.

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

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

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

Monroe started heading towards shore, but Washington blocked her path.

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

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

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

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

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

Washington turned to Monroe, then back to the flag.

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

He pointed to the boats.

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

Monroe slowly nodded along. She didn't fully comprehend his words, but she could tell she wouldn't be changing his mind anytime soon.

After some more rowing, the boats finally arrived at the bank of the river.

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

"Yes sir!" the troops shouted in reply.

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

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

"Who goes there?!" she shouted.

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

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

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

"...did you say Washington?"

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

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

Monroe looked to the house and licked her frozen lips.

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

The man scratched his chin.

"I see."

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

"Give me a second."

The man ran into his house, then came out carrying a large bag and a toasty sandwich.

"I'm guessing your 'strict orders' didn't say you couldn't eat on the job?" he asked with a grin.

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

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

"What's that?" she asked.

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

Monroe gave a tip of her hat.

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

"Indeed, I would."

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

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

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

"We're spotted!"

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

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

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

Washington ran into the camp, cutting down twenty Hessians before they even had the chance to draw their weapons. He turned to face another wave of enemies, only for a cannonball to detonate in front of him, knocking him to the ground. The Americans stood still, watching as their General started to rise, then fell back down.

"What do we do?" a soldier mumbled as he bit into his nails, "What do we do?!"

"Isn't it obvious, baby?"

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

"We press on!"

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

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

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

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

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

Washington twitched on the ground.

"Be..." he mumbled.

"Sir?" Monroe asked.

"Behind you!"

Monroe turned, her body being met with a bullet piercing straight through her chest and into her left shoulder.

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

Monroe clenched her teeth.

"This piece of cloth..."

She said grabbing the flagpole, stopping her fall.

"...is a symbol of freedom!"

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

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

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

"But just barely..."

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

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

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

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

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

As fight after fight took part without her, Monroe swore to herself she would never again let someone take her out of combat without putting up a fight. This, above all else, would be her sacred doctrine.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

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

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

She paused, shifting her gaze between Monroe, Jefferson, and Grant. She nodded her head, then lifted her trident, pointing it towards Monroe. As she did, the trident’s tips ungulated back and forth as if they were rustling in the wind.

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

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

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

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

Madison looked down, noticing three fresh cuts along her own arm. Monroe smiled and shot a peace sign at Madison.

“Executive Power: Monroe Doctrine, baby!”

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

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

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

## Madison's Constitution

Madison retracted her prongs with a solemn expression.

"Ratification; Three Branches."

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

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

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

"It's clearly a result of Monroe's EP," Truman remarked with a rub of his chin, "though honestly, I've got no idea how it works."

Jefferson gave a deep sigh.

"Things not going as planned?"

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

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

"I'm surprised how optimistic you were in the first place," Quincy said with a chuckle, "you know how free and independent Monroe can be."

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

Quincy gave a nod.

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

"It would be quite the difficult hurdle for Madison to overcome," Jefferson added on, "if she weren't already well acquainted with fighting against Monroe."

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Randolph looked to the ground, unable to reply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Henry gave a quick snort, then left the arena.

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

Henry turned around and gave an evil grin.

"Who said I'm giving in?"

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

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

Madison skimmed the papers before her.

"And by the looks of things," she spoke up, "these amendments seem to all be centered around blocking me from attending the convention."

"Exactly," he agreed. "And without you there, the whole project is doomed to fail!"

Madison crossed her arms.

"Troublesome."

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

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

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

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

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

The next week, Henry greeted Madison and Randolph with warmth.

"Greetings, friends!"

"Shut it," Randolph replied.

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

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

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

Henry gave a feigned look of surprise.

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

Randolph and Madison looked to each other.

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

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

"I am," a voice called from behind.

Madison turned in shock.

"Monroe?!" she exclaimed.

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

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

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

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

Madison grabbed Monroe's shoulder.

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

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

Randolph clicked his tongue.

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

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

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

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

Randolph slumped down as he looked out into the horizon, then quickly raised himself back up.

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

"What do you...?"

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

"I win," she declared emphatically.

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

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

Madison paused for a moment in thought.

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

Henry gave a snort.

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

She fired, but Madison deflected the bullets.

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

Madison raised her trident and thrust it at Monroe’s feet. Monroe stepped back, dodging her weapon as she awaited her EP’s attack.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Under the Surface

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

Monroe gave a grin.

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

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

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

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

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

Jefferson gazed across the arena.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Madison remained non-plussed.

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

"What?!"

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

"Gahhh!!"

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

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

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

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

"Wait, wait, wait!" Monroe spoke frantically, "I surrender! I surrender! For real this time!"

Taft slammed his gavel to the ground.

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

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

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

"...thanks," Monroe replied weakly.

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

"Well," Eisenhower remarked from her bed, "what did you end up thinking about the?"

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

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

On the ground, Monroe slipped Madison a subtle glance.

"When did you work it out?"

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

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

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

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

"I hardly see the relevance," Madison replied.

Monroe shook her head.

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

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

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

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

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

Monroe grinned back.

"You too pal!"

## Cross of Gold

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

She gestured to the arena.

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

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

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

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

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

LBJ snatched McKinley's helmet off his head, placing it atop his own noggin while lowering his frame to McKinley's height.

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

LBJ rubbed his chin, then clapped his hands together.

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

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

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

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

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



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

LBJ forced a smile across his face.

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

Taft eyed the fighters as McKinley put his helmet on and covered the last of his body in shining tin armor.

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

LBJ pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"OUCH!!!!" LBJ screamed while shaking out his lightly injured arm. He stepped back, tripping over his legs and falling to the ground. McKinley jerked to a stop and took half a step back.

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

"Nope!" LBJ snarled as he threw out his hand, tossing a pile of dirt into McKinley's face. "I wanted you to get closer!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He pointed to the bullets on the ground.

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

He pointed to McKinley.

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

McKinley tightened his smile.

"Close," he remarked with a cold chuckle, "but ultimately incorrect."

He raised his Presidential Seal.

"My Executive Power: Protective Tariff," he continued, "severely weakens the force of any incoming attack directed at me or anything I'm wearing. In particular!" he exclaimed, "my choice of armor has no bearing on my EP! I wear this masterpiece of Ohio craftsmanship solely out of the love and pride I feel for my glorious State!"

McKinley's supporters gave a roar in the stands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LBJ punched McKinley's neck, but McKinley remained unmoved. LBJ jumped back, dodging McKinley's counter, and as he did, a shining, golden cross materialized around McKinley's neck.

"Now what in heaven's name is this?" McKinley asked as he ran a hand along the strange object. LBJ let out a snicker from afar.

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

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

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**LBJ Imitating McKinley.** Lyndon Johnson was very good at imitating people in real-life, and Landon Johnson uses this talent in EP:RW to make a series of insults made that were made against William McKinley. These insults include the claims that William McKinley blindly followed the orders of his benefactor Marcus Hanna, and that he caved in easily to public opinion. This latter insult led people to say William McKinley “kept his ear so close to the ground that it was full of grasshoppers,” and Theodore Roosevelt in particular to say “McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate éclair.”

**Assassination.** Landon Johnson shooting Will McKinley at the start is a rough approximation of what happened with the real assassination of William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz (though in real-life the shots landed successfully). The weapon Szolgosz used was an Iver Johnson revolver, hence Landon’s comment about his “cousin Iver”.

**Crown of Thorns and Cross of Gold.** The items that are placed on Will McKinley are a reference to William Jennings Bryan’s famous “Cross of Gold” speech, which concludes with the lines “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”

## Mr. Texas

McKinley continued to study the cross along his neck.

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

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

McKinley thrust his axe, meeting and stopping LBJ's knuckleduster. LBJ drew back his head, spitting a fat wad of spit between the gaps of McKinley's helmet.

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

"You think that's bad?" LBJ snarked as he punched McKinley's right arm, creating a golden bracelet.

"Wait 'till I stick Jumbo down there!"

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

In the stands, a young man gave a whistle.

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

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

A woman in a wheelchair gave a light snort.

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

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

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

Years ago, FDR looked over her reports with amazement.

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

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

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

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

FDR cooled her friendly expression.

"You know what that entails," she spoke softly, "you have to defeat your state's champion in a one-on-one match. You've already failed to do this once, and if you fail a second time..."

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

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

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

FDR shook her head.

"You were probably too busy with the campaign to notice," she said, handing LBJ a newspaper clipping, "but *that man* has come out of retirement."

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

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

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

LBJ continued staring at Stevenson's image.

"I might not have a few more years," he muttered, scrunching the picture and holding it to his heart. He looked at FDR, a fire burning in his eyes. "I don't care how low my odds are, I'm taking this match!"

FDR tightened her gaze.

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

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

"That's some resolve," FDR admitted as she leaned back in her chair. She looked to the ceiling, closed her eyes, then gave a slight nod. "Very well," she spoke. "It shall be done."

And so, a match was put together by the New Dealers. LBJ entered the arena alongside a band playing behind him and a fireworks show shooting out across the night sky. Stevenson walked in without an ounce of fanfare, a look of total disinterest spread over his face.

The referee raised his arm into the air.

"Begin!" he exclaimed.

LBJ charged at Stevenson and threw a quick punch.

"Take this!" he shouted.

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

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

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

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

Stevenson stopped in his tracks.

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

LBJ stared out for a second, then slowly twisted his scowl into a smile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stevenson stopped attacking as he faced to the crowd with an expression of utter bewilderment.

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

Stevenson gritted his teeth.

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

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

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

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

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

"Still got some fight left in you, eh?" Stevenson asked bitterly.

He stepped forward, then looked down to see a strange metallic box buried just below his feet.

"What in tarna—?"

The earth below Stevenson burst open in a sudden eruption of shrapnel and flames, slamming Stevenson to the ground. The crowd stood still, stunned by the unexpected eruption. Even the referee found himself unable to move, then came to as someone started coughing loudly beside him.

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

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

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

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

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

"Sorry," the referee said with a wave of his arms, "but the official results have already been sent in! I couldn't change the outcome now even if I wanted to."

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

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

He looked to LBJ.

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

McKinley gritted his teeth as LBJ dodged his slow attack and added another golden item to his glistening right arm.

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

LBJ gave a sinister grin.

"Wrong move!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**LBJ Flashback.** This flashback is centered on Lyndon Johnson's battle for a senate seat against Coke Stevenson. Coke was one of the most popular figures in Texas and had won every previous contest he had entered by huge margins while doing virtually zero campaigning on his part. Moreover, Lyndon entered this race with the conviction that if he lost he would leave politics for good.

Despite having every odd stacked against him, Lyndon would go on to win this competition after pouring unprecedented amounts of money into the campaign and by using a host of dirty tactics (such as pressing Coke to take a stand on the Taft-Hartley Act, knowing that Coke would refuse to answer his attacks out of pride, making him look like he was dodging the question). Most damning of all, Lyndon would very blatantly buy the election by having 200 new votes (written in alphabetical order no less) suddenly appear after the votes had previously been announced, conveniently giving Lyndon a very narrow win. This corruption would later become the source of his nickname "Landslide Lyndon," a name which Lyndon himself would go out of his way to openly brag about.

There are many, many more details to this crazy story, and I strongly recommend looking at Robert Caro's amazing book "Means of Ascent" which tells this story in far greater detail.



## Protection

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

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

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

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

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

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

McKinley gave a low nod and slumped back to camp.

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

Marcus Hanna nodded his head.

"So, you're going to give up then?"

McKinley looked up with a grim expression, then gave a sly smile.

"Not a chance."

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

McKinley raised an eyebrow.

"Who's, 'we'?"

Hanna pointed to a woman loading a wagon with food.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

McKinley shoved Hanna aside. As he did, a silver spike shot from the forest and pierced the carriage where Hanna had just been seated. McKinley stared into the nearby trees, then gave a heavy groan.

"You've got to be kidding me..." McKinley lamented as a familiar figure stepped out.

"Well, well!" Will Bryan said with a snicker as a silver orb floated behind him, "if it isn't my archnemesis, Will McKinley! Now really, what are the odds of two rivals like us running into each other in the middle of nowhere like this, hmm?"

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

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

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

Hanna paused, then shook out his head.

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

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

"Seriously?!" Hanna shouted, "is she really having one of her episodes right now?!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bryan furrowed his brow.

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

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

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

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

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

"Wh...what?!"

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

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

"Bryan."

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

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

An hour later, Hayes greeted McKinley's incoming wagon with cheer.

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

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

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

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

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

She waved her stub with a toothy grin.

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

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

“Yes ma’am!”

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LBJ clicked his tongue as he stared at McKinley’s severed arm

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

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

“Close the gap?” LBJ muttered with widened eyes. “You don’t mean...?!”

McKinley nodded his head.

“Now that I’ve shown my hand,” he said crouching down, “I’m done slowing myself down!”

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**William McKinley did not Lose an Arm.** This is mostly a metaphor for him ultimately choosing the gold standard after straddling against Bryan, and it’s also very loosely inspired by a quote of his saying “Rather than [be nominated], I would suffer the loss of [my] good right arm.” It’s also a bit of an excuse for Ruth Hayes to take on a mentorship role for Will McKinley, mirroring the real-life mentorship that existed between Rutherford Hayes for William McKinley.

**McKinley Flashback.** The main reference underlying this is William McKinley’s daring supply run during the Civil War, which really did happen after two of his superior officers told him not to go because it was too dangerous. However, Hanna, his wife, and Bryan were not present during this time, nor do any of their appearances or personalities have any real connection to reality (though William McKinley’s wife really did have frequent seizures). These extra characters were inserted to make this flashback better parallel the book “The Wizard of Oz”, which is an allegory for the gold standard crisis that William McKinley found himself at the center of during his battle with William Bryan.

## The McKinley Grip

McKinley swung his axe like a crack of thunder. LBJ stepped back, taking a slice to his arm. McKinley then twirled his hatchet around and swung upwards, landing another hit. LBJ gritted his teeth, grabbing McKinley's outstretched arm and holding it in place.

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

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

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

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

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

McKinley placed his axe into the hole where his arm had been, locking it in place just past his shoulder. As he did, LBJ stepped onto McKinley's unarmed left side, throwing a punch. McKinley quickly grabbed LBJ's right hand, pulling it aside and causing his attack to miss. McKinley then rotated around, cutting into LBJ's shoulder with his axe.

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

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

Hayes gave a grin from the stands.

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

"Do you think LBJ is done for then?" FDR asked.

"Definitely," Hayes replied. "Sure, LBJ might land another hit if he really pushes for it, but he'll take some serious damage in return. And besides, LBJ just doesn't have any way of dealing real damage to McKinley."

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

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

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

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

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

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

For a moment, neither fighter moved.

Then, McKinley coughed blood.

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

LBJ suddenly yanked the cross back and punched it again. As before, the attack stopped upon hitting the cross, then continued forward and crashed into McKinley's armor, denting it. McKinley coughed, then knelt LBJ in the stomach, stunning him long enough to back away.

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

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

McKinley took a step back.

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

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

LBJ pushed his hands in front of him.

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

McKinley stood still, his mouth agape.

"Does that mean..."

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

LBJ shook his head.

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

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

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

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

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

LBJ raised his arms overhead, slamming his fists onto the floating cross. They stopped upon impact, then plummeted down, smashing the cross into the crown of thorns around McKinley's head. McKinley fell to the ground, his helmet rolling to the side. Taft rushed to McKinley's side, quickly examining his body before raising his arm in the air.

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

In the stands, Hayes stared out in disbelief.

"Dear God," she mumbled, "to set up so many traps so far in advance...LBJ is truly a monster!"

"McKinley was the all-around better fighter," FDR remarked. "Even at the very end he could have turned things around if he was still in control of his senses." She gave a slight smirk. "But then he went and fell for LBJ's final trick."

Hayes clicked her tongue.

"LBJ purposefully pointed out every place McKinley went wrong," Hayes mumbled, "allowing LBJ to completely dominate his psyche. Those psychological wounds, together with his unexpected physical ones, left him unable to even contemplate going against LBJ's actions."

"Way to go big guy," JFK said with a smirk, then ran off to congratulate his ally.

After a quick search, JFK found LBJ trekking alone through the halls of the arena.

"There you are!" JFK shouted as he walked on over. "Congrats on winning the match!" JFK gave a handsome smile. "Though of course, I knew my partner was always going to pull through!"

JFK continued to smile, then dropped it as he noticed an expression of rage across LBJ's face.

"I saw it," LBJ mumbled angrily, "I saw it!!"

JFK squinted his eyes.

"What...what did you see?"

LBJ clenched his fists.

"Somebody was waving one of those cruddy McKinley signs after I won!" he exclaimed, "and on my side of the arena no less!"

LBJ looked expectantly to JFK.

“Okay?” JFK replied with confusion. “But hey, who cares about one measly sign anyhow? Practically everyone out there was cheering for you after that awesome final hit!”

“*Practically* everyone,” LBJ said with a snarl, “but not *everyone*!” He kept walking, barely acknowledging JFK’s presence.

“I swear,” he continued with a hiss, “I’m not going to stop until every man, woman, and child is screaming my name!!”

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**The McKinley Grip.** This was a special handshake technique developed by William McKinley to shake as many hands as possible without tiring himself out or injuring his hand. Roughly speaking, he would pull someone’s hand to him, give a quick shake, then grab their elbow and yank them away in order to greet the next person.