

The roar of the masses who had entrusted me with the highest office was still ringing in my ears as I adjusted my tie while I was escorted through the halls of my new office. The core frames which I had worn under my uniform from my first day of service to my country carried me swiftly and echoed rhythmically in time with my escort detail as though I was on the parade field. 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue drips with history rife with the exercise of power and force as much as it does corruption and scandal. I knew far long before going into the election that both sides of the scales came with the job—democracy can only carry a nation and even a people so far. To ensure success, one needs a few tools at his disposal as well as snakes in the grass who are willing to sometimes become vipers and even sharks. I hate it as much as my predecessor did, but using the less honorable means of exercising power is an unfortunate card I must play. I need to move and shake a system which has become rusted and broken by men who have manipulated their charges and abused the privileges of their offices to protect their own interests at the expense of the very people who propped them up on their pedestals. But I must do so in ways that prevent me from devolving into the very engorged complacent dictators in the neighboring houses who I'm fighting to reign in.

The balancing act I must play between acting as a just patriot encouraging my countrymen to work with our international partners and the madman willing to push the envelope behind closed doors is very much akin to walking a tightrope. Lean too heavily to one side, and a leader of the Western World can become no better than the very overseas dictators or corrupted homeland benefactors he is trying to curtail. I must keep my sights clean much like how I once maintained the scope of my rifle, lest I become blinded or infatuated with some insane dream of world domination or one-man national order. There's a reason that only fifty-some men throughout history have sat behind the desk over which I now hold the privilege of issuing orders and making demands.

Men in suits with weapons concealed beneath their finely-press fabrics and earpieces crackling authoritatively ushered me through the doors of the central hub of the building. I glanced down at the symbolic eagle on the carpet between the two couches facing inwardly towards it. Its head was always turned towards the olive branches, though given our country's recent activity-spanning several decades-it ought to face the arrows and never turn away. Everybody knows what caused us to chaotically train-wreck our way through the violent course of history that marooned us at where we are today—but few people truly know or even understand why. I need not rip open old wounds by reminiscing about the exact circumstances and conspiracies concerning the events of the day which altered the course of our country at the turn of the century. Although two decades later, it feels like less of a justification of our attitude and more of an excuse for prolonged military action, just as it was when it had been invoked against the state we held responsible.

A sweep of the bulletproof windows from the suited men confirmed my safety, though the brisk pace of their walk implied their concern for my protection would not be satisfied until I was actually seated behind my desk. Of course, I sympathized completely with their responsibilities—not everyone is willing to put their lives on the line for their boss without hesitation. It's a true hero who holds such unflinching loyalty to such an occupation. Without a doubt, I admire these men and their jobs.

And it's for that reason that I refuse to actually get to know any of them by name.

A nod from the head of security signaled his approval for me to finally be seated. For that moment, I couldn't help but chuckle to myself over the fact that an armed man had just given the most powerful leader in the free world permission to sit down. Given this man's skills and exemplary service record to earn his current position, it damn well better be the *only* time a man with a gun gives me an order! It took me only six steps to reach the desk and swing myself into place before the men and women whom I would soon address as my staff, and in that moment, for the first time, I no longer felt like a mere guest in my predecessor's house.

I was now headmaster. But I was headmaster with responsibility.

And it was further my responsibility to conduct myself as such. I only had four years to repair the engines of this country and clean up its act, mainly by addressing its international projections. But I could not refine our image overseas by deserting our concerns back home.

And given the opposition I was going to face, I knew I was going to need more than one full deck of playing cards.