

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

A Short Story

by

Samuel Grier

© 2010 by Samuel Grier

All rights reserved. This short story is released by the author for free unlimited distribution provided the text is not altered in any fashion and the author's name remains with the text. Any excerpts quoted from the story must be properly credited to the author.

Purchased from: **NITWonline.com**

Electoral College

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

Article II, U.S. Constitution

Bobbie Neuhouse was sick with the pressure being put on her by her African-American friends. "If the Republicans win the election, you have to vote for the president. You have an obligation to support people of color. It is a matter of conscience. How can you support the Republicans who have never done anything for us?" So it went for months on end since being assigned to a slate of electors for the Republican Party and it appearing that the Republican running for president might win the state. After the election, should the Republican candidate win, Neuhouse was expected to cast her vote for the Republican candidate as part of a private ceremony in the governor's office.

But there was nothing in the Constitution or New Hampshire law that required her to vote for the winner of the election. The Constitution allowed her to vote her conscience if she chose, and New Hampshire upheld that right.

Speaking to her pastor at the Jerusalem Methodist Church about the anxiety caused by her friends and her conflicted feelings, Neuhouse said, "I don't know how

after so many years of being a good Republican that I could betray the Party. They have placed their faith in me by making me an elector.”

“You know, Bobbie,” her pastor said, “you are free to vote your conscience. This is like Esther in the Bible. Sometimes God puts us into a particular place to make a difference. To change an outcome for the sake of the people. This may be one of those times.” He never said that he thought she should vote for the Democratic candidates for President and Vice President, but he did say that she would be viewed by the Black Community as a heroine if she did.

“But maybe God has put me in this place to speak on behalf of the voters. To uphold the Constitution, regardless of the color of the candidates.”

“There is nothing more honorable than justice. That is what you have to weigh. What is most just in this particular situation?”

“What about having a sacred responsibility to represent the will of New Hampshire voters?” Neuhouse asked.

“You have a sacred responsibility only to uphold what is right. No one can make you cast your vote in favor of our community. It is up to you to determine what your conscience is telling you and vote accordingly.”

A call from the president’s chief of staff encouraging her to vote her conscience made the weight of being an elector almost unbearable.

There was no resolution. Only guilt and stress and the realization that how she would be remembered for the rest of her life depended on her vote.

Fate

It was an accident, really, his gaining access to the senator's team and becoming a confidant to one of his advisors. If Jerry Robinowitz believed in miracles, he might even have called how he met the senator a miracle. In the end he decided it was serendipity.

Jerry had been walking across the Brooklyn Bridge to catch a bus on Long Island when an elderly gentleman collapsed. Jerry was the first to react, applying CPR, telling a young woman to call 911, and then riding along with the paramedics and the old man to the hospital to make sure he was all right. Without his help, the emergency technicians said, the gentleman would have died. Finally satisfied that he could do no more, Jerry proceeded to class without telling anyone why he arrived late or what had transpired.

The next day he received a call on his cell phone from his Ph.D. advisor.

"Jerry," his professor had said, "I got a call from our senior U.S. senator asking about you."

"Really?" was all Jerry could say.

"He told me what happened yesterday."

"Yesterday? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Apparently you saved the life of a man on the Brooklyn Bridge."

"Oh, that. I did. But how would the senator hear about it?"

"The man who had the heart attack was his father. They just finished lunch together in Chinatown, and his father was returning to his apartment in Brooklyn when he collapsed."

"The man was the senator's father?"

"The senator got your name from one of the paramedics. He said you mentioned you were a student at Stony Brook in our department, and the senator tracked you down."

"Yeah, they made me give my name in case they needed to get more information. They thought I was a relative." Jerry furrowed his brow. "So was the senator upset?"

"Of course not. He wants to meet you. You've been invited to his house for dinner tonight. Do you have plans?"

Jerry laughed. Like all serious graduate students anxious to graduate and get on with real life, he had little time for socializing. "No, no plans."

"Well, I gave the senator's office your address, and they're sending a car to pick you up at 6 o'clock. I told them I thought that would be fine."

"Yes, sir. That works great. Let's see, that still gives me a half hour to clean up." He paused. "What do I wear? I don't have a coat and tie."

"I think anything will do. If you have a pair of slacks, that's probably better than jeans."

"I do have a pair of nice pants my parents bought me when I was home for the break."

The professor laughed gently. "Congratulations, Jerry, for what you did. You obviously are a man of action." He was quiet. "You know, Jerry, sometimes amazing things can come out of chance meetings with important people. If the senator offers you something, take it."

"What would he offer? I'm a student."

"I'm just saying that if the senator should offer you some kind of opportunity to work in his office that you can still attend graduate school while you're working."

"I don't know," said Jerry. "I've got to graduate as planned by January."

"OK. But don't say 'no' without some thought."

"Yes, sir," Jerry said. "I'll be sure to consider an offer." *If it happens* he thought but did not say.

That night it went as his professor said it would. He and Senator Edmund hit it off. The senator's wife said that Jerry reminded her of their son. Both Jerry and the senator were avid Yankee fans, and Jerry was well-informed about the legendary Yankees and their current roster. Addicted to politics, Jerry confided in the senator that he was a member of the Young Democrats on the SUNY campus.

"You like politics?" the senator asked.

"Oh, yes sir. My research is in the field of international relations, and I plan to work for the Foreign Service after graduation. I already have a job pending getting my

Ph.D. I voted for the president and think he's doing a great job." His smile let the senator know that he was sincere. "I have always had a gift for reading people, and I know good people when I see them."

"I like the president, too, Jerry." The senator was sitting in a chair a few feet from Jerry, and he leaned in, motioning to Jerry with his hand that he should lean in, also. "The president has asked me to run his reelection campaign. How would you like to be part of my team? I could use someone like you. Someone who's good in a crisis. Keeps his cool. Knows his stuff. What do you think?"

Jerry took a deep breath. "Could I still go to school, even though I'm on your team?"

The senator laughed. "Of course."

"I'm anxious to graduate. I'm writing my dissertation with Professor Bettelheim, who's renowned for his work on the Constitution. My research is on the 12th Amendment."

"Which one is that?"

"It's the Amendment that changed how we choose the president and vice president. Article II required the electors in the Electoral College to vote for two candidates and gave the presidency to the candidate with the highest number of votes and the vice presidency to the candidate with the second highest. The 12th Amendment changed the process and identified one candidate for president and one for vice president."

"You don't say?" said the senator.

"I'm researching the rationale for the original Article II as it was written and why the politicians of the day decided it should be changed after only four elections. I mean we pretty much know why they decided to change it, but what were the arguments put forth at the time?"

"So what do you think?"

"I think that the position of Vice President and the attitude of the public toward that office were established at the turn of the 19th century and haven't changed much despite the 12th Amendment."

The senator laughed. "No, I mean are you on board? Are you going to jump on the president's campaign wagon?"

"Oh, that. I don't know." Jerry thought back to his conversation with his professor and smiled. "Yes, sir. I'm on board."

"Thattaboy!" said the senator. He stood up, and Jerry struggled to his feet. "I'll call the car to take you home. The driver will pick you up at eight o'clock sharp tomorrow morning and bring you to campaign headquarters. I'll introduce you to the team." He slapped Jerry on the back and held out his hand.

Jerry took it. "Thanks for your hospitality, Senator. It's been a real education."

"You ain't seen nothin' yet," promised the senator, slapping his back again.

Jerry stopped at the door to thank the senator's wife. She gave him a sad smile. "You seem like such a nice boy. Are you sure you want to get into politics?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do." He dropped his eyes to the floor and then looked up. "This was a very nice evening. Thank you for hosting me." The reason for the sad smile would reveal itself soon enough.

The Team

The next day Jerry was met at campaign headquarters by Senator Edmund, who introduced him to the initial team of fifteen. The team was like a family, and people the senator knew and trusted formed its core.

Leader in name only, the senator's task was mostly to nod his head if he liked a strategy proposed by the campaign's real lead, Jake Mosely, or to shake his head and wrinkle his nose if he thought the strategy proposal needed adjustment.

"Jake, take care of Jerry," the senator said.

"Sure, Senator," Jake replied, smiling and shaking Jerry's hand.

"Jerry," the senator said, "you have access to everything in my campaign. I think you have a great future, and there's no time like the present to learn how things are done in the big leagues."

After Senator Edmund left the room, Jake put his face close to Jerry's. "Look, kid, I'm happy that the old man likes you. But this is a campaign for a billion-dollar a year job, and this is no place for young screw-ups like you whose only contribution will be to get in the way. Now go tell the old man you have something else better to do than hang around here and pretend you're useful." Mosely turned and walked from the room.

An attractive, svelte young woman came over to Jerry, whose face by now was ashen. "He's testing you to see if you're a wimp."

"Testing me?"

"Yeah. Make yourself busy. Find something to do. If you don't have initiative, you don't belong in politics." Jerry hesitated. "Name's Morgan," the young woman said. "Friends call me Smash." She shook Jerry's hand.

"Smash?"

"I once smashed a smartass's face when he tried to put his hands on what wasn't his to touch. Name stuck."

"Right," said Jerry.

It would not take long for Jerry to suspect that Smash, who really did little for the team other than flit from group to group to kibitz, was Senator Edmund's traveling concubine. There were signs of interaction between her and the senator that the rest of the team appeared not to notice. He eventually decided it was a practiced lack of interest.

An hour later Mosely walked back into the room. "You still here?"

"Yes sir," Jerry stammered. "I'm staying, and I'm not a screw-up."

Mosely smiled. "We'll see. What do you know about writing?"

"I like to write," Jerry said.

"Then go help Jan over there put together some notes for the senator's talk to the Port Authority tomorrow. She doesn't know jack-squat about talking tough, and the senator's gotta sound tough when he talks to the union." He sized Jerry up, who looked more like the Pillsbury Doughboy than someone who might know what it means to be tough. He shook his head. "I don't know, kid. I think you should stick to saving old men on bridges."

Jerry found Jan. "Hi Jan, I'm Jerry. Mister Mosely asked me to come over and help you put together the senator's remarks for tomorrow."

In her forties, Jan wore no makeup, sported a deeply wrinkled face too long exposed to caffeine-laced cigarette smoke, and looked tough as nails. She sneered at Jerry. "Help? Do I look like I need help?"

Jerry was quiet for only a moment. "Mister Mosely said the senator needed to sound tough, so he sent me over to help you make the senator sound tough."

Jan laughed out loud. "First of all, he's not Mister Mosely, he's Jake. And Jake has more in common with the backside of a horse than the human race." Jan gave Jerry the onceover. "You look like a pin cushion."

By now Jerry was aware that the entire room was staring. "I know I'm a little pudgy," Jerry said loudly, "but I grew up with two older sisters who taught me to be tough."

The room laughed.

"So Jan, I'd like to do what Jake told me to do and work with you to write the senator's remarks. I think I could

learn a lot, and maybe I could even help you toughen the words up a little."

Jan stared. Jerry smiled.

"Sit down," she said. "This is what I have so far." She handed him a set of three by five cards. "I need a funny story. The senator likes to open with something that gets the crowd relaxed."

Jerry spoke. "My dad used to tell a story about how his watchband broke on the way to where he was going, and how he needed to find a store that could replace it fast."

Jan feigned interest. "Yeah?"

"So just before he gets to where he's supposed to be there's this store with watches displayed in the window, and he congratulates himself on his good luck. So he goes into the store and asks the man who's standing behind the counter to fix his watchband.

"We don't fix watches here,' the man behind the counter says. 'We castrate cats.'

"You castrate cats?' my dad asks. 'Then why do you have watches in your window?'

"What,' the man says, 'would you want me to put in the window?'"

The senator's remarks to the Port Authority were a hit.

"Best stuff you've written for me yet," Senator Edmund said to Jan upon his return.

With that comment, Jan took Jerry under her wing to give him full benefit of her many years of wisdom derived from the rough and tumble world of presidential politics.

The Campaign

Jerry decided that he would learn from the senator the “art of politics” as opposed to the theory he was learning in graduate school.

Senator Edmund was a chameleon who easily changed his look, demeanor and even the way he expressed himself depending on the audience. He could go from affable hick to polished speaker to educated aristocrat as if it were second nature. He dressed down in Brooklyn. Wore a suit when pressing the flesh with the politicians in the City. Even wore a bowtie when talking to the profs in the Poli-Sci department at Stony Brook, an appearance that earned Jerry big kudos with the faculty and more important his advisor.

After the senator’s departure, Professor Bettelheim remarked what a great read the first chapter of Jerry’s dissertation had been.

“Your introduction to the topic was fantastic, Jerry,” Professor Bettelheim effused. “Your dissertation reads more like a novel than a treatise on Article II and the 12th Amendment. It’s great stuff. Keep up the good work.” Jerry was learning to apply what he observed watching the senator, and he was impressed with how a small favor from a big name politician carried clout with almost everyone.

Long nights of strategizing, crafting cryptic, memorable messages for each group the president would be

speaking to, and Jerry's providing "the little guy's comments" to the policies offered up by the team, became the evening norm. Lots of coffee for some, Chai and green tea for others, and Coke and Mountain Dew for the rest carried them through the long hours.

The president himself had visited the New York headquarters a number of times, and the last time he recognized Jerry by name.

Throughout it all Jerry made notes and continued work on his dissertation.

The Approaching Election

As they entered the last months of the election, the president's huge lead that he held in electoral votes the last election was vanishing. Colorado, Ohio, Virginia and Florida had turned into double digit routs in favor of the Republicans. Meanwhile North Carolina, New Hampshire and Indiana were too close to call. The other Blue States won in the previous election remained in the president's column.

Jake tirelessly gave the "rah rah" to the team to keep them pressing on. "We've got it locked up, guys. Let's not get discouraged by the polls." And he would bring in their own pollster — Jimmy the Geek was his nickname — to tell them that the major polls were off the mark and that his "special formula" for polling was more accurate.

But of course it was not true. North Carolina was turning red, and if New Hampshire and Indiana continued their bleed the race was over.

Smash was eternally optimistic. Jerry attributed her optimism to her naïveté and an unrealistic faith in the improbable. Her morning purchase of lottery tickets was testimony to her wishful thinking. For one who did not believe in miracles, her constant reference to a “miracle waiting in the wings” grew tiresome.

“Smash,” Jerry finally said, “you really need to read the polls and be realistic about the president’s prospects and the public’s attitude. The Dems pushed too hard. That’s just the way it is. On election night it’s going to be close, but it’s probably not going to be too close to call.”

“Jerry,” she replied, “you gotta have faith. The Democrats are prepared for the worst. And you never know when a miracle might happen. The Republicans are smug, and they won’t know what hit them when this is all over.”

Jerry at first blew her comments off as blather, but both the senator and Jake sometimes echoed her remarks. Knowing her special relationship with the senator, he wondered if she knew something the rest of them did not or whether she just drank too much “kool aid” being around the senator all the time.

He mentioned in passing to Jan the optimistic comments of Smash and asked what she thought. Jan rolled her eyes. “Smash isn’t on the team because she’s the sharpest knife in the drawer.”

“Do you think we have a chance to win?” he asked, citing the sagging poll data.

“To win we only need one of the states currently in play. They have to win all of them. I think our chances are still pretty good.”

In late October, his dissertation complete, Jerry found himself sitting with Smash after one of their final late night strategy sessions ended. She had switched from her normal Chai to scotch, while he stuck to coffee. But the scotch brought out a side of Smash that Jerry had not seen before. He wondered if Smash’s nickname had an origin other than what she told him when they first met. She became flirtatious, and he started thinking she wanted to seduce him. *Maybe she’s tired of being with an old man.* But he knew that he was not Smash’s type — for that matter she was not his “type” either — and he was not about to come between the senator and his consort.

Smash was smashed, and Jerry hired a taxi to take them to her apartment. He paid the driver and helped her unlock the door after she dropped her keys for the third time. She grabbed his arm and fell backwards into the door. He caught her and gently dropped her to the floor. She pulled him to his knees. “C’mon, Jerry, stay with me. I promise you won’t regret it,” she cooed while tugging at his zipper. “Spend the night, and I’ll let you in on a little secret.” Jerry begged off and eventually pulled free. But not before the secret was revealed.

The next day Jerry visited his Rabbi.

Betrayal

Heaving the cover of his folder shut, twenty-seven year old graduate student Jerry Robinowitz gave a long sigh.

His dissertation for a Doctorate in International Relations at Stony Brook University Manhattan on the U.S. Constitution's 12th Amendment was finally finished. Much more than the finality of his research was his shattered faith in the political system.

Shades of truth, unfair accusations and character assassination were uncomfortable enough — but normal he realized for the candidate who wants to compete in a national election. Morality and decency and fairness long ago with Motherhood and Apple Pie had all but left politics, he knew. He was a realist, after all.

Except this. This was even for him a breach of something gone too far. Idealism gone mad.

He had first consulted with his Rabbi. Together they prayed, and it was clear to Jerry that he could not be quiet. He would have to go public with what he knew.

He then confided in his Ph.D. advisor.

"You haven't told anyone else, have you?" Professor Bettelheim asked.

"No," Jerry lied.

"Good, good." The professor shook his head. "This is explosive, Jerry." They decided that Jerry should rewrite the last chapter of his dissertation based on the new information. "I don't think you should discuss your findings with anyone until your dissertation is done. Then together we'll go to the New York Times and hand out copies of your paper. I know a couple reporters who will hear you out." He loaned Jerry a typewriter to keep his

rewritten conclusions off the computer. "This is much too serious to be vulnerable to some hacker on the Internet."

And now it was finally over. The research. The campaign.

The controversy was still to come, but he was confident he could handle it. His Rabbi promised to be at his side when he and Professor Bettelheim confronted the media.

Jerry made the obligatory five copies of his dissertation for Professor Bettelhiem using the old Xerox copier in the back of the library and had stacked them neatly in the folder under his arm. Accepted into the Foreign Service, he would soon be leaving New York to attend language school in Washington. He was ready.

As he walked out of the library and into the darkness to catch the bus back to his apartment, two men emerged from the bushes armed with lead pipes. Jerry reacted to the first swing by holding up his folder to blunt the blow. Papers flew everywhere. The second blow found its target, and a third blow to the head from behind sent Jerry Robinowitz to the ground. A third man stepped from the bushes and picked up the slew of scattered pages.

The first two men lifted Jerry up, put his arms around their necks, and helped him into the back seat of a waiting car. The third man slipped into the front seat, and the car drove quietly off the campus. "You got it all?" A nod was the only reply. "You checked his apartment?" Another nod finished the conversation.

Election Night

Mosely found Jan and sat next to her. "It's going to be a long night."

"Yeah," Jan replied. "Let's hope for a miracle."

Mosely gave her a smile. "Good idea."

"You seen Jerry? I can't believe he would miss this after spending the entire campaign with us."

Mosely shrugged. "Smash isn't here either. I heard they had drinks and went to her apartment the other night after the rest of us went home."

Jan wrinkled her nose. "I find that hard to believe."

Mosely shrugged his shoulders again. "The power of a woman. The senator can hardly keep his hands off her."

Jan shook her head. "I still don't believe it. And even if it's true, why would he miss tonight?"

"We could ask Jerry's academic advisor. He's sitting with the senator."

"Really?" Jan leaned over to look out at the crowd.

"He was just a kid. You taught him all you could, but now it's up to him to apply it. And if he can't keep his hands off the help, then he's not going anywhere."

"Tell that to the senator."

Mosely put his arm around Jan, but she pulled away.

"Once you're king," Mosely mused aloud, "you have the king's prerogatives. But until then you're just another pissant."

Thomas Lambert had waited his entire life for this evening. He and Gloria Parham ran the campaign of a

lifetime, and although their early huge lead eroded over time, the outcome of the election was never in doubt.

It was all over but the counting.

Lambert and his wife were sequestered in their hotel room with Bernie Stone, the Republican campaign chairman. Relaxed, Lambert sipped a glass of red wine while Stone paced the room. A photographer snapped pictures to record the scene for posterity and otherwise stood quietly off to the side.

"Bernie," said Lambert, "if you need to pace you should do it somewhere else." Fox News blared from one television set, CNN another, and ABC from still another. "I can't enjoy this with you being so nervous. It's a done deal. All the exit polls say we've got this in the bag."

"Until Indiana and New Hampshire turn red, I won't sit down," Bernie replied. "I'm going down to the Team Suite to wait this out."

"Tell Gloria and Ron to join Veronica and me down here. We should be watching this together."

Bernie left, and Gloria and Ron Parham joined Lambert and his wife a few moments later. A round of red wine was poured, and the four toasted their coming victory.

"Fox News is now calling the state of New Hampshire for Thomas Lambert. Thomas Lambert has won the state of New Hampshire." Cheers so loud broke out that it sounded as if the walls of the hotel were screaming.

The announcer spoke to the audience waiting for history once more to speak to the nation. "Thomas Lambert is only nine electoral votes away from winning the

presidency. If he takes Indiana, as it looks he might, he will be the next president of the United States.”

Gloria Parham beamed. “We’re going to be able to make a huge difference, Tom. I can’t wait to repeal the massive spending increases with the help of the new Congress and the Republican lead we’re expanding in the Senate.”

Bernie Stone came into the room and put his hand out to Thomas Lambert. “Just got a call from Fox News. They’re going to call Indiana for you in about two minutes. They wanted you to know first.”

Lambert’s wife and Gloria Parham clasped hands and let out a scream.

Just then, the announcer on Fox News adjusted his ear piece and broke into a broad smile. “We have been informed that Thomas Lambert has won the state of Indiana. Fox News is now calling the state of Indiana for Thomas Lambert.” The announcer looked across the studio. “It looks like we have a new president.”

The Transition

The transition from Democratic administration to Republican was going surprisingly smoothly. Pundits cited it as the smoothest they had ever seen, and the cooperation was referred to as unprecedented.

The Office of Transition on F Street bustled. Résumés submitted by wannabe Republican appointees flooded the staff chartered with selecting members of the new administration.

The only unexpected activity was the weird behavior in the House of Representatives. No one in the Democratic

Party, in particular those who were swept from office by the last of the sea change that voters were demanding, seemed to be leaving town. The Media attributed it to a final farewell being hosted by the president, who said he wanted to thank the House Democrats who served during his term and let them know how much he appreciated their support and that their work was still not done.

Lambert was getting an Intelligence briefing late one evening from the team designated to in-brief the president-elect when Bernie Stone walked in and interrupted. "I need to talk to Mister Lambert," he said to the briefer.

When they were alone, Bernie stared at Lambert but did not speak.

"What is it?" Lambert asked.

"It's treason," he said.

"Treason?"

"A coup d'état."

"I don't get it."

"I just got a call from New Hampshire governor Buddy Rupsall, and Bobbie Neuhouse has cast her vote for your opponent."

"I still don't know what you mean."

"I mean that when the Republican electors in New Hampshire who were appointed to the Electoral College met to cast their votes, instead of voting for you she voted for your opponent."

Lambert sputtered. "Can she do that?"

In walked Lambert's campaign legal advisor, Harry Chapman. "Hello, Tom. What's up, Bernie?"

"We just got a call from Buddy Rupsall that one of the New Hampshire electors has decided not to vote for Tom. She voted Democrat."

The lawyer's jaw went slack.

"Tom asked if she's allowed to do that," Stone said. "I don't know the answer."

"It is possible," Harry said, "but extremely rare. About half the states have no law that says an elector appointed to the Electoral College has to vote for a particular candidate. If my memory serves me correctly, New Hampshire is probably one of them."

"But I thought we appointed our own slate of electors to the Electoral College," protested Lambert.

"We did," said Stone.

"So how could this happen? Are we saying that this Neuhouse wasn't a Republican? Who the hell appointed her?"

Both men were silent.

"Did she vote for the Democratic vice presidential candidate, too?"

"No," Stone said. "That's the strange part. She did not. Which means if a Democrat wins he could have a Republican vice president."

Lambert looked at Chapman. "What exactly is the fallout of all this?"

"You only won by six electoral votes," the lawyer said. "If two more electors go rogue, the election for president gets thrown to the House of Representatives."

"The House?" asked Lambert. "The Democrats still have a majority."

Stone became angry. "You're saying the House membership will make the decision? The incumbent owns them."

"There's more to it than that," said Chapman. "The representatives from each state choose a winner, and each state casts a vote. The candidate with the most states wins. Because of that angle, we might still be OK. I'll have to do some checking, but you won more states than your opponent, and a third of the Democratic representatives in Congress are from California and New York — and they only get two votes."

Lambert's expression changed from concern to one of incredulity as he realized the implications of the Democratically controlled House of Representatives voting between him and the man who he thought was the former president. "You don't think they'd undermine the American people? That has to be unconstitutional." When no response came, he answered his own rhetorical comment. "Of course it is. Isn't it?"

"The House leadership hasn't exactly listened to the public up to this point. Why should we expect something different now?" asked Chapman. "I would expect them to vote along party lines."

A loud silence possessed the room.

"What do we do?" asked Lambert finally.

"No one will know this has happened until they open the ballots of the Electoral College in the coming weeks," said the lawyer. "I suggest you authorize me to share what's happening with the best legal minds I know so we can start taking action. In the meantime, you stay with the transition." He shook his head. "If the Democrats pull this off, it's going to cause a Constitutional crisis."

"Will the Supreme Court have the last word?"

"The Supreme Court has never insisted that the Electoral College appointees have to vote according to the results of the election. Remember, this is a Republic, not a Democracy." Harry shrugged. "If precedent holds, they won't intervene."

"The American people probably don't understand the difference between a Democracy and a Republic, and I'm not sure at this point that I do, either."

"This probably isn't the time to talk about the purpose of the Electoral College. But in short it was designed so that the electors had the power to do what is best for the country regardless of the passion of the masses."

"This explains the big brouhaha being hosted by the president," Stone sneered. "The megalomaniac knew this was in the works, and if it happens he plans to remain president. They're probably popping the champagne corks as we speak."

"So three electors can potentially overturn the will of the electorate? Is that what they think is best for the

country? There will be chaos and civil disobedience." Lambert struggled for words. "How could the party have appointed a rogue as elector?"

Stone was stuck in his thoughts and shook his head. "I can't believe the House may decide who wins this election."

"If there are four rogue electors, the House won't have to do anything," added Chapman. "Even though you won the election, you will lose the office. And they'll probably compare it to the 2000 election, which Democrats still insist George Bush stole. Gore got the popular vote, but Bush got the electoral votes."

"Well, I got both!" Lambert nearly shouted.

A member of the Secret Service knocked and stuck his head in the door. "I have an urgent call from the Indiana governor, and he insists on speaking to Mister Lambert." The look on the faces of the three men reflected what they all knew was happening.

"Is Indiana like New Hampshire? No law about who its electors have to support?"

Chapman nodded. "I have to check, but I would guess that's the case given this development."

"Who's the Indiana governor?" asked Lambert.

"I think it's Fedderley," said Stone, who began strategizing out loud. "I think Harry should contact the governors of the states we won with no law that restricts who the electors can support. We need to stop those electors from voting. We need to double check the slates so we aren't faced with a fait accompli."

“Right,” said Lambert. “OK, Bernie, take the call. Tell Fedderley and Rupskall and whoever else we need to get on a plane and get to Washington. We have got to figure out how this happened.” Lambert looked at Chapman. “Harry, start the ball rolling. Recruit whoever you think to get this done.”

The two men stepped quickly from the room, leaving Lambert alone. He collapsed onto the couch and dropped his head into his hands.

The Electors shall meet in their respective states, and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as President, and of all persons voted for as Vice-President and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate; The President of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the certificates and the votes shall then be counted;

The person having the greatest Number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such

Electoral College

majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice. And if the House of Representatives shall not choose a President whenever the right of choice shall devolve upon them, before the fourth day of March next following, then the Vice-President shall act as President, as in the case of the death or other constitutional disability of the President.

The person having the greatest number of votes as Vice-President, shall be the Vice-President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the Vice-President; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of Senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice. But no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States.

12th Amendment, U.S. Constitution