

Inauguration Day

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Theresa felt another tear well up. She reached up to her face and wiped it away quickly as she did not want to ruin her pristine make-up job.

Her make-up had been meticulously crafted by no less than three of the best make-up artists money could buy. The look they were going for was “regal, yet relatable.” The dress that was picked out for her was a purple sundress, with a black jacket, and the whole look came out surprising as-described. Theresa had been impressed, but her attention was elsewhere,

Of course, she was more focused on the impending event.

It had been a long and grueling election season. She and her husband, Steven, had spent almost two years on the campaign trail, going from one city to the next, giving the same boring, repetitive speeches over and over again. They were both exhausted still, even a couple of months after the election.

Steven won by a landslide. It was over before midnight. On the night of the election, after the results came out, Steven joked to Theresa that they could have campaigned less and still won.

The sound of two small children running interrupted Theresa's train of thought, and she looked up to see Emily and Kevin, aged 9 and 5 respectively, enter the room. Kevin's eyes were red and puffy, and it was clear he had been crying just moments earlier.

"Hello, my darlings". Theresa greeted them sweetly. "Are you ready for the ceremony?"

"Kevin doesn't want to do it." Emily said, accusatively.

Kevin's lip began to quiver and he sobbed, "What if I don't do good?"

"Oh darling, all you have to do it look handsome and strong for your daddy, you're going to be perfect." Theresa assured young

Kevin. She gave his tie a tug and made sure it was straight, then she pulled him close and hugged him.

“Give me a spin, Emily”, Theresa said, looking up and down at her daughter.

Emily grinned and turned all the way around. Each of her children’s and her own outfit had been selected by a team of political and PR analysts and they were really all picture perfect. Emily was wearing a purple dress to match Theresa’s and Kevin had plain navy blue suit and a striped tie, almost as if he was trying to run for election himself in about forty years.

There was a knock on the open door and a secret service agent stuck his head in. “Two minutes, madam.” He said.

You could faintly hear the chatter of other agents in his earpiece, all giving updates on everyone’s status. “First family ready to move,” He said into the radio.

Theresa, with Emily and Kevin each holding a hand, made her towards the entrance to the front door of the capital building, the sounds of the eager crowd already echoing into the room faintly.

Steven was talking to the Chief Justice, probably just discussing some last minute details. Even though most things that would happen were standard, each inauguration would end up unfolding slightly differently.

Steven finished the conversation with the chief justice and made his way over to Theresa and the children. He reached down and picked up Emily and Kevin at the same time, then leaned forward and wrapped his arms around Theresa, hugging everyone at the same time, as he had done hundreds of times before. “So I guess you won’t be seeing me as much anymore.” Steven joked.

Theresa wiped away another tear. He was right, but she knew she was supposed to be happy. It was literally the highest honor someone could receive in this country.

All holding hands, the family made their way outside onto the steps of the Capital. The crowd roared with excitement, then quickly transitioned into a “Four more years! Four more years!” chant.

Steven flashed his signature toothy grin, and waved. The crowd cheered again. Steven hugged his family one last time, first Emily, then young Kevin, and then finally back to Theresa.

Steven kissed and embraced his wife for what seemed like an eternity, then stepped back straightened his tie, turned towards the podium and confidently approached it.

“Here we go,” he thought to himself.

“Four more years! Four more years!” The crowd continued to chant.

When he got to the podium, Steven gazed out at the crowd through the bulletproof glass. The sea of people extended so far that he couldn’t even see the end of it.

He leaned forward and spoke into the microphone for the first time.

“My fellow citizens, today we make history!” Steven said excitedly, still grinning.

The crowd cheered again, then immediately reverted back to “Four more years! Four more years!”. This time even louder and enthusiastic than before. In between the words you could hear the echoing chants bouncing off all the surrounding buildings near the Capital.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

Steven spoke again.

“My fellow citizens, today we begin a new era!”
He declared.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

“The election was difficult and exhausting, but we made it through, and I want to thank my opponent for a race well ran!” Steven continued.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

“The people have decided that I’m the man for the job, and I do believe I am up to the task! I want to especially thank my family and friends for their continued support. And I want to especially thank my wife Theresa for sticking by my side every step of the way. Honey, I love you.” Steven turned and looked at his wife, still grinning.

His smile faded just a little when he saw Theresa wipe away another tear.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

“And to my two young children, I’m so proud of you and I know you’re going to grow into two great adults someday and I love you so much!” Steven started to get a little emotional himself, and he dabbed his eyes delicately with a handkerchief before returning to his normal, smiling demeanor.

“So without further hesitation, thank you all, and God bless this great nation of ours!” Steven looked back at crowd, then up at the sky.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

One of the secret service members stepped forward. He had been randomly chosen out of all the all the members of the team, and while he liked his job overall, no one liked to do this part. Even more so, after working with him for several months, he had come to consider Steven a close friend.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

The secret service member pulled out a handgun from his jacket holster, took aim at the back of Steven's head, gritted his teeth, and pulled the trigger.

The bulletproof glass was successful. The contents of Steven's head, along with the bullet, had been stopped short from hitting the crowd of people watching.

“Four more years! Four more years!”

It wasn't a pretty sight, but the job was done.

The band began to play “Hail to the Chief” as the official clean up crew was deployed. They carefully placed Steven's body on a stretcher and covered it with a flag, as was tradition.

Theresa, Emily, and Kevin were escorted back inside the capital as the ceremony came to a close.

It always felt shorter than the one four years before.

“Four more years! Four more years!” The chants were still going strong.

The sacrifice ritual was complete and the nation was safe, at least for the next four years.

“Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!”