

THE SENATE DECEPTION (SAMPLE CHAPTER)

A POLITICAL PROCEDURAL THRILLER

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For the Fedor Five.

With special thanks to Marty Brownstein and the 1998 Spring Semester section of Legislative Behaviors, where I first and last suggested aloud the absence of a quorum.

FOREWORD

Jackson Piper first appeared in my head in the winter of 2004, written as a response to the presidential election results of that same year.

Like all things worth savoring, Mr. Piper needed to marinate. In his case, it was 20 years, but I am excited finally to bring his genuine heart, his loyalty and trust, and his love of his country to the page. It is my hope that through this and other stories, together, we might escape to a world where government still works, politics is redeemable, and there remain a few public heroes capable of winning the battles worth fighting.

This novella is a prequel to my first published novel coming in 2024, *What It Takes to Kill a Bull Moose*. Within these pages, you will learn the reason why Jackson Piper of that coming series fell as a heralded hero to outsider so quickly. You will also learn why Piper is the perfect hero to attempt to stop President Russell Warner from driving a stake through the heart of American democracy.

If you love courtroom procedurals, mysteries, or political suspense, you're the reader I'm after. My writing comes with mighty scoops of suspense, sexual innuendo, profanity, mysteries to solve, and action. If you don't like reading those things, do yourself a favor and stop now. I don't want to suck you into reading something you'll

dislike. But if you can't wait to experience these and more, then the *Bull Moose series* is written for you.

One note about the divided nature of American politics in the 21st Century: many writing professionals have said it is impossible right now to write for both sides with one piece of writing. It is my hope through the way I craft the Bull Moose series, the left, center, and right all find a piece of Piper and his allies they can appreciate and cheer for. And ultimately, I believe that's Jackson Piper's core message: there need not be a two-dimensional spectrum to our politics. If I can have fans of this series from across the political spectrum, or help define a new one, it will be the greatest accomplishment of my still unfolding career.

What follows in these pages is a political procedural set in 2039 in the U.S. Senate. I have attempted to get the Senate procedures as close to accurate as possible to present a plausible American political fight in this story. In my writing, because Jackson Piper and his cohort live in the near future, I like to experiment with the inevitable presence and influence of technology. Like the political aspects, I attempt to keep the technological advancements in the story grounded in the factual projections of the possible. This means there are self-driving cars and lots of AI, but no flying cars and no aliens. I have my fingers crossed that neither of those shows up before 2039 in the real world, blowing my prognostications to smithereens.

I hope you love this novella. So much so, that you can't wait to crack open Bull Moose Book 1 to find out where Jackson Piper, a political hero and leader worthy of our fidelity, goes next in his fight to save the precious Union.

-Michael Fedor

Disclaimer

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PREFACE

“At first I intended to become a student of the Senate rules and I did learn much about them, but I soon found that the Senate had but one fixed rule, subject to exceptions of course, which was to the effect that the Senate would do anything it wanted to do whenever it wanted to do it.”

- Calvin Coolidge, Vice President of the United States

“It used to be in the Senate that if you were filibustering, you stood up, there was a physical dimension to it, that when you became exhausted, you'd have to leave the floor. That was the idea of the filibuster.”

- Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico

CHAPTER 2

SHINY THINGS

Based on the designer suits he wore along with the highly starched monogrammed French cuffs peaking from the ends of the jacket's sleeves, the waiter at *Delicioso* on Wisconsin Avenue assumed the thinly framed, clean-cut man with slick hair was either a hedge fund manager or one of the attorneys in the city who billed at \$900 an hour.

Of course, Senator Russell Warner was neither. He was a one-term governor turned three-term Senator from the Silver State, where his casino empire in Reno and Las Vegas had made him the mountainous fortune he used to buy the governor's mansion, then the Senate seat he now comfortably held.

Today, Russell Warner was sharpening his fangs for a new prize.

As Russell approached his 64th birthday, his tall and slender frame stood out in the crowd. He worked out rigorously on a stationary bike every morning and lifted weights religiously to stay in reasonable shape. His once black hair was peppered with grey, thinning, and styled back with a strong-hold paste. He stroked his short-stubbled goatee as he waited, growing increasingly impatient.

His small, piercing brown eyes sat above slender cheeks. He had a winning smile that looked brilliantly charming in photographs and

video. He wore a gold ring on his right hand with a garnet set in the center of 12 diamonds—a gift from his late mother.

The scent of his heavy cologne lingered in the air around him as he pulled out a lighter from his pocket, clicking it nervously even though he had quit smoking more than twenty years ago after a heart attack. His professional and personal habits kept his appearance sharp and stylish, buying new clothes monthly and rarely wearing the same shirt more than twice.

He checked his gold Rolex. Late. Oh, how he hated fucking late. Nothing was more selfish and slovenlier than the untimely arrival to a meeting, especially with a United States Senator.

His top-shelf gin arrived neat as he liked it. He rubbed his face with his hands, an uncharacteristic outward sign of fatigue. This had been a stressful return to Washington unlike any before. No longer married with no children to spoil during the holidays, he felt a little empty during the ringing in of the new year. It was the same old same old, filling the void with unlimited booze, designer drugs (for guests, not him), and more promiscuous revelers than his body could handle any longer.

The week between Christmas and New Year's Day was spent in a frenzy at his lavish Las Vegas penthouse. Huddled with his most trusted advisors, they plotted and planned for the upcoming 24 months - they could make or break him.

His mind drifted back to the countless strategy presentations he had endured, a majority focused on securing financial support from the powerful 60 billionaires who held the keys to the next level of the political realm. After hours of dissecting strategies to win votes in states he had never visited, he only half-jokingly posed the question - why not just use that money to buy the needed votes? His team nervously dismissed it as not only illegal but there were hundreds of thousands of precincts across the country, each one with eyes watching and waiting for any sign of corruption.

He agreed to put a pin in that strategy for now. Until a better idea came along, he had to do it the old-fashioned way - hard work, wise strategy, and perhaps a bit of luck. Senator Warner was among the

wealthiest men in Congress, known for his calculated moves and unbreakable will. Yet he knew from experience that having access to more resources also meant access to easier paths - shortcuts. Why work hard when you could work the system?

As he sipped his gin, a striking woman caught his eye near the entrance of the dimly lit restaurant. She removed her luxurious black coat to reveal a shimmering dinner dress that hugged her curves like a second skin. Warner's eyes tracked her like prey.

He thought that dress could not be any shorter, or they would not let her sit down in a place like this. Warner then realized the unknown woman was accompanying the man who was tardy for their dinner.

The host glided from the entrance as if skating on ice until he arrived at the corner booth that was exclusively Senator Warner's anytime he dined at the most exclusive Italian restaurant in the city.

Warner stood and shook the moist palms of the plump and poorly dressed Kent Dudley.

"Wonderful to see you again, Senator. My apologies for us being late," said Dudley nervously. He felt like he was walking on eggshells alone with the Senator, so he asked a favor of a particular woman he believed might disarm the Senator and soothe the savage beast within.

"It was entirely my fault," said the stunning woman. She was a celebrity, but how did he know her? Suddenly, the out-of-context face clicked in his mind. Senator Warner now recognized her.

"Olivia Clay, what a pleasure to meet you in person. Please do not apologize, my dear. Perfection takes time," said Russell, taking her soft hand in his, kissing it, and giving her an elegant bow. "Your network is the only one I allow my staff to turn on in the offices."

She noticed his hands were lithe, soft, and well-manicured.

With a sharp smile and a wink, she held her short, snug dress in the necessary places to allow her to slide into the booth. During her distracted seating, Warner stole a glance at every inch of her toned and tan legs. Before she caught his leering gaze, Warner inquired

with Kent Dudley as to what he owed the honor of this celebrity company.

"Your campaign will need a major league communications shop," Dudley said nervously. "I invited Ms. Clay to help make the conversation less theoretical tonight. I hope you don't mind," said Kent. "A more..."

"Well defined...conversation," said Russell, intending every ounce of the double meaning.

Warner asked the first question. "Is it true you landed an interview with Marco Alvarez?"

"Indeed," she said smiling, "And it wasn't an easy get. He's a bit enigmatic and reclusive. Guess you can afford to be when you are one of the wealthiest men ever?"

"Has he agreed to do the interview live on his show?" asked Warner.

"Oh my, you are a fan?" said Olivia, smiling coyly. "Yes, he has agreed to come on live. Says he has an announcement that will forever change the world."

Olivia decided to turn the tables and ask Warner the most crucial question of the evening. "So, Senator? Are you running?"

"Would you believe I have not made up my mind yet, my dear?" said Warner. It was perhaps the most honest answer he had given all day. "But before we talk business, let's get the two of you drinks."

Warner signaled to the waiter, who came and took the order for a second top-shelf neat gin, a glass of the very best chardonnay, and a Negroni.

"What should we toast to?" asked Kent as the cocktails were placed on the table.

Olivia raised her glass and looked into Russell Warner's dark brown eyes. She drew her glossy red lips into a smile of mischief and mystery. "Why, I think we should toast to the health of the next President of the United States," she said, raising her glass. Russell Warner returned the smile, and it was at that moment he was sure he could get used to the sound of that.

CHAPTER 3

THE STANTON PARK TRIO

Across town, Jackson Piper unlocked the front door of his townhome, finding Diesel Browning sprawled out on the couch of their clean but sparsely furnished townhouse. He was binging an incredibly violent spy thriller on Netflix.

“Happy New Year, Diesel,” said Jackson warmly. “How is the Senator from Ohio?”

Leaping quickly from the couch, Diesel shook the large, muscular hand of the burly Senator from Pennsylvania, which turned into a manly hug with back-slapping. Jackson was a few inches taller than Diesel, but the bushy-haired blonde from Youngstown was a year older than Jackson. Diesel and Jackson had been elected to the U.S. Senate at the same time four years prior. They had served two terms together in the House of Representatives and had become very close.

Given his outward appearance, Diesel Browning did not look like someone who had achieved the rank of Captain in the U.S. Army. He had served his country honorably and received several commendations for bravery and service. Most centered around his calm and professional operation of a particular Patriot Missile battery in South Korea that shot down two errant North Korean test missiles that had flown too close to Seoul for comfort.

Diesel was a bachelor Senator, and he had become known for giving impassioned speeches on the Senate floor about the need to decriminalize marijuana and tax it federally. As a stunt in his first term, he used a joint as a prop to draw attention to his cause on the Senate floor. When the FBI began an investigation into Browning for possessing a still federally recognized narcotic on the floor of the Senate, he threw at them Article I, Section 6, Clause 1, the Speech and Debate clause. When they did not relent, they had a forensic lab analyze the infamous “joint” that he had on display in his Senate office. The FBI said it was “inconclusive” if the oregano and thyme it contained (and zero marijuana) were the original contents of the wrapper. The FBI publicly backed off Diesel but did not issue an apology. He was still sore about that.

“You spend much time with your folks during the break?” asked Piper with sincerity.

Diesel frowned. “Both were sick, not really up for company. I went and visited some friends in Cleveland. On a whim, spent New Year’s in Nashville,” he said.

“You don’t seem hung over, so maybe it wasn’t as great a time as you hoped?” frowned Piper.

“I’m a pro, bro,” said Browning smiling, throwing a Yoda-shaped pillow at Piper and unpausing the spy thriller, which was blasting over the surround sound system he had installed in the apartment when he moved in four years ago.

Senator Browning was notorious for his screen addiction. He nearly missed hearings and floor votes regularly due to his inability to peel his eyes away from a screen once engaged. Since phones and tablets were not permitted on the floor of the Senate, he would be stuck in his office until the last possible minute before he had to rush to the floor.

It usually was Netflix, but it could just as easily be the latest video game he spent hours upon hours attempting to master in their apartment or even his Senate office.

When Diesel Browning was not provoking the FBI or feeding his streaming and gaming addiction, he loved smoking weed at any

number of pot dens around DC where recreational use had been legal for decades. His roommates forbade the use of pot or any other drugs in the apartment, especially Senator Sterling Powers. “We are still Senators after all,” he’d preach to Piper and Browning in his deep, authoritative voice. Because Piper wholeheartedly agreed, Diesel was outvoted.

None of the Senators wanted to give the FBI a reason to come poking around this apartment and spark a controversy that could put an end to these once-in-a-lifetime jobs.

And when Diesel was not gaming, advocating for legal weed, or consuming it, he was using his boyish good looks to bed the numerous women he met at pot dens and bars around the capital beltway, especially if they got off hooking up with a sitting Senator. Browning was a notorious fixture in the Senate. He was often invited to the most exclusive (fun) parties.

“Hey, Diesel. Catherine and I got you a little something. Merry Christmas!” said Piper with a smile.

“Jackson, we agreed no gifts, dude,” said Diesel, smiling, who still gladly accepted the brilliantly wrapped box. He shredded the paper like a teen, sliced open the box with a knife from the near-empty kitchen, and revealed a pair of thick socks, a bottle of tequila, and a framed photograph of Diesel, Jackson, and Sterling on snowboards on a glistening white slope in Colorado last February.

“This is beautiful, Jackson. How thoughtful. Thank you, man,” Diesel said, giving Jackson a second hug of appreciation. “Didn’t I hear Ron with you outside? Where is he?”

“Yes, you did,” said Jackson, beginning to unpack in his first-floor bedroom. “Ron and I have some work to do on my filibuster reform rule. He decided to drop his things at his apartment, allowing me time to make more whip calls before we meet up for dinner to huddle on next steps.”

“How’s the count?” asked Diesel, twisting open the bottle of tequila and offering to pour Jackson a nip.

Jackson waived him off. “I have a long way to go before I can cele-

brate. Save me some of that when I tell you I've reached 60 yes votes for cloture on the resolution to amend Rule 22."

Diesel downed the shot and poured another. "You didn't answer the question, so I take it you're still short."

Jackson clenched his jaw as he placed clean socks and underwear into his top drawer. He took a deep breath and returned to the living room. He waited for Diesel to pause the show.

"This is the largest freshman class of new senators since 1978. Ten in our Party, eight in the other, and one independent caucusing with our Party for now. That's 19 men and women from both Parties who will take their oaths administered by the Vice President tomorrow at noon on the Senate floor. I have spoken directly to twelve, and incredibly, all but two have pledged a vote to invoke cloture to proceed to a vote on the rule. A total of 17 of the 19 campaigned on filibuster reform..."

"You're a long-winded son-of-a-bitch, sometimes, Jackson," said Diesel, ribbing the man who was the closest thing to a brother he had ever had.

"So that puts us at 49 votes in favor of cloture and passage of the rule. We are just 11 votes away from the first substantial reform of the filibuster in nearly seventy years."

"Uh-huh," said Diesel, transfixed by the show. It appeared he was only half listening.

Jackson was annoyed that Diesel did not take his job as seriously as he and Sterling. "I can still count on you for cloture and passage, right, Diesel?"

"Absolutely, brother," assured Diesel. "Filibuster reform is the only way we will ever decriminalize the *ganja*. Tell me how I can help."

Jackson politely ignored the offer for help, for now. He was not yet ready to spoil the element of surprise and was suspect of Browning's ability to deliver votes on such a complex issue outside his wheelhouse. Piper had finished unpacking and had opened the refrigerator somewhat mindlessly. The interior was empty. Two brown limes from a month ago were decaying on the top shelf. Two takeout containers

from Diesel's favorite Korean place occupied the middle shelf. There were a few bottles of water, nothing with caffeine.

The house was rocked to attention with the sudden opening of the front door.

It was the junior Senator from Michigan, returning from a restful holiday with his family back in East Lansing after having just won his third term, though still in the minority. He was one of his caucus's most respected members for his calm, business-like manner. Slow to anger, deliberative, and fair.

Sterling was trim, every bit as tall as Piper, broad-shouldered, and highly attractive. He was gentle and deliberate in his movements, not lanky and clumsy like most tall men. He had deep mahogany skin that was wrinkleless despite being in his late fifties. He wore thick glasses and had on a bright green beanie (Piper insisted it was called a tossle cap). He was always impeccably dressed. At this moment, he wore a navy peacoat over a thin sweater. He had on dark blue jeans and a pair of limited-edition green sneakers.

Sterling burst into the kitchen, his backpack and two canvas bags practically weighing him down as he pulled a heavy suitcase behind him. With a loud thud, he dropped everything near the island and let out a dramatic exhale, his eyes locked onto Piper with an intense gaze. Usually composed and reserved, Sterling's velvety baritone took on a dangerous edge as he spoke. "So, Mr. Piper," he said in a low voice, "I hear you have plans to decimate the entire United States Senate tomorrow."

ALSO BY MICHAEL FEDOR

What It Takes to Kill a Bull Moose (Bull Moose Book 1)

Tree of Liberty (Bull Moose Book 2)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael Fedor, independent author.

Michael Fedor brings 20+ years of political organizing and storytelling experience to win a new audience – readers. His style makes his novels and short stories deliciously thrilling and his meticulous research ensures they are terrifyingly plausible. Readers will wonder where the lines of real life end and political fantasy begin.

Michael began his career as an English teacher, standing on desks (ala John Keating) declaring “*Carpe Diem!*” and urging adolescents and young adults to “make your lives extraordinary.”

Feeling drawn to an extraordinary quest of his own to bring justice and humanity to public policy, Michael left the classroom two decades ago to work in politics. Working for candidates from Dogcatcher to President, Michael gained an up-close view of the personal costs of pursuing power. A multi-year candidate himself, he won 3 of the 5 offices he sought before hanging up his “running shoes” for good in 2020.

Michael has built a reputation as a gifted strategist and a visionary leader. But inside there remains an itch to use the power of the pen to move people and the world with ideas.

Finally heeding his own advice to “seize the day,” Michael dusted off a novel he wrote but never published in 2004. Like a Jane Goodall of modern politics, he uses his observations and experiences in the wild, woolly worlds of Washington, DC and state capitols to tell captivating stories of power, politics, and the human condition. The first book in a new political thriller series, *What It Takes to Kill a Bull Moose (Book 1)*, is set for release in early 2024.

Earning both master’s and bachelor’s degrees from Penn State, Michael says the single greatest takeaway from his alma mater was meeting his best friend and love of his life, Serena, who is a fellow Penn State alumna. Michael and Serena will celebrate 20 years of marriage in 2024. They live in Pennsylvania, raising three boys to have imagination, healthy loves of ice cream, and generous souls.

Like the main character of *Bull Moose*, Michael is an avid outdoorsman, a voracious reader, and a student of history. Michael is, to this day, undefeated at Pub Trivia.

Learn where to purchase past and upcoming books, check out events with Michael, or join the author’s Insider email list at www.michaelfedorbooks.com

