Macefield - Chapter One

“Senator. Could I have a moment of your time please?”

“What? Oh, of course, Rodney. Anytime. Please come in. What’s on your mind?”

These two men were working partners in the most exclusive club of America: the US Senate. Rodney Macefield was a fairly tall man, about six feet one inch, weighing almost 200 pounds. At 29 years of age, he was already showing some signs of softness that indicated the effect of too many long hours of work, poor dietary habits, and a lack of exercise. But, Rodney was willing to pay this price for the privilege of being the principle staff assistant of a very powerful senator.

The senator was Mr. Henry Smith. In contrast to Rodney, he was slim, well tailored, and blessed with the flowing white hair and stentorian voice that marked a classic impression of a successful politician. Mr. Smith was, in fact, a successful politician. A member of many powerful committees, he was also chairman of the Rules Committee. As such, all questions of who does what, when, and to whom in this exclusive club had to receive the Senator’s blessings. More than one political agenda had fallen by the wayside for a lack of support by this man.

Rodney had worked for Senator Smith for a number of years. First, while in college studying political science, he was an intern. He had thought of going to law school at the time, but his exposure to high-stake politics whetted his thirst for more than hours of poring over laws, cases and precedents. He wanted action that a corporate law career just couldn’t provide. So, he took advantage of his summer’s employment to ensure a job upon graduation.

There wasn’t a job menial enough for him to undertake. Sleep became only a figment of his imagination. The sleeping habits of medical interns were luxurious to those of Rodney’s. All those waking hours were put to good use. He studied the seemingly arcane processes of the legislature. Courtly manners exhibited between mortal political enemies were mastered. Rules of procedure were memorized. Some back stairs gossip about bedmates was also filed away. In short, Rodney worked hard, very hard, to become the indispensable “gopher” in Senator Smith’s office. Whatever, wherever, Rodney would go for it.

By summer’s end, Rodney was assured a permanent position upon graduation. That had occurred six years ago, and immediately thereafter, he headed for Washington, DC. He had “Potomac Fever.”

Entering the senator’s office, he placed a copy of the Constitution on his desk.

“What’s this?” smiled the senator. “Oh yes, the Constitution, but first, your baby. How is she doing?”

“Very well, sir. Both the baby and my wife are doing well. As you know Melissa was our first child, and Beth was very anxious for everything to go right. We took birthing classes and Beth studied La Maze breastfeeding. She also went to the gym regularly in order to be fit for the labor process.”

Proudly, he continued, “Melissa is now a week old, and eating like a trencher woman. She’s regained all of her post-birth weight loss and taken on a pound extra to boot. Thank you for asking.”

“Wonderful news. I know Melissa will only make you proud parents for the rest of your life. My congratulations again.” Smiling, “But, the Constitution here, are you planning a change in Melissa’s behalf.”

“Not quite, but I do believe I see something of importance that will help our cause.”

Instantly attentive, the senator sat upright and listened closely.

“Sir, this is almost providential. I was in church on Sunday giving thanks for Melissa when I got to reviewing this sacred document in my mind. It’s a simple document, and I almost have it memorized from reading it so often. But, like many simple things, it has many meanings. Anyway, cutting to the chase, I was literally stopped in my mental tracks as these words leapt in front of me.”

Pointing carefully to a specific part of the Constitution, he led Senator Smith to read:

**Section 5 - Membership, Rules, Journals,** [**Adjournment**](http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html#ADJOURN)

Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a [Quorum](http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html#QUORUM) to do Business; but a smaller number may [adjourn](http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html#ADJOURN) from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behavior, and, with the [Concurrence](http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html#CONCUR) of two-thirds, expel a Member.

“Well, yes. This governs the convenance of every Congress.”

“Yes sir, that’s exactly what it does and therein lays the secret of our future power.”

“How so?”

“Well, as you know, the Constitution provides minimal qualifications for membership in the House and the Senate. Representatives need only to be twenty-five years old and a US citizen for seven years. Senators must be thirty years old and a citizen for nine years. Beyond that, the Constitution is mute on what constitutes qualifications for membership in these houses but it does require them to decide those qualifications. Furthermore, unlike expulsion which requires a two-thirds majority vote, a simple majority vote would presumably be sufficient to deem a person unqualified to sit even after having won an election.”

The good senator was a very astute man renowned for his intelligence. He had also read the Constitution many times, but frankly, had not thought of what Rodney was implying. The Section 5 was something that was entailed only at the beginning of each new Congress to ensure that new members met the most perfunctory of criteria such as age, citizenship, etc. But, this young staffer was suggesting something entirely different, and Senator Smith was not sure it was either right or constitutional.

“Are you leading me where I think you’re leading me? If so, you’d better know what you’re saying because this is an almost revolutionary interpretation of this document.”

“No sir, I really don’t believe so. It may seem bold, but the Constitution says only what it says, and we are merely applying its words in the most literal fashion.”