

Indecisive Decision

By Aniyah Veal

When I first became a Senator, it was exhilarating. To be able to help my country succeed. I held respect for everyone in the Senate. That was in 1913 when President Wilson had just been inaugurated. Then, World War 1 began. The country that I loved struggled to maintain neutrality. Eventually, after much debate, the United States entered World War 1. Currently the war is over, but our troubles are not.

President Wilson has returned from the Paris Peace Conference about two months ago. He plans on making the United States to be a part of the League of Nations, but the ratification has not been accepted. Not only do they stubbornly refuse to ratify the document, but the Senate has also split up within themselves. We all have different views and no one wants to compromise. There are the Irreconcilables, the Reservationists, and the loyal supporters of Wilson. I, myself, am a loyal supporter of Wilson and have been since he entered the Oval office. Many of my closer colleagues in the Senate are Irreconcilables and they assume that I am as well. I keep quiet when around them in fear that they will turn against me. I know eventually I will have to clearly state my opinion, but I try not to think about it. I know who I agree with, but I do not know how to express this.

Currently, I am sitting in a meeting with all of the senators discussing this very topic. Between Henry Lodge and Robert Follete, barely anyone can get a word in edgewise. I have never seen the two men so heated. I remember when we used to hold civilized meetings. Those

were more peaceful times. Now, all I get from these meetings are headaches. Honestly, I do not see how everyone can stand such shouting. The first thirty five years of my life are looking pretty nice now compared to the annoyance of my position now.

They have been repeating the same circular argument for the past hour now. I do not care for this at all. I am somewhat content with my silence.

“Mr. Follete, with all due respect, I have to say that you are not being reasonable. You say that this country can not enter the League of Nations in any circumstances, but that is just not true,” says Lodge in a rather dismissive tone.

“I am saying that for our President to tie us with such violent countries when he claims peace is his main goal is hypocritical. I am saying that the United States need not be bothered with the problems of others anymore,” Follete replies, a fire in his eyes.

“Alright, maybe we need to hear a fresh voice. Would anyone like to say anything? ” questions Hiram Johnson. The room becomes quiet as Follete and Lodge sit down to cool off. Everyone eyes each other, but no one makes a move to speak. Many have already worn their voices out today. Suddenly, no one feels like sharing and you could cut the tension in the room. Hiram Johnson meets my glance and holds eye contact for a couple of seconds. I sit up and begin to shift in my seat, doing anything to try to break our staring contest. Then, he looks away.

“Well, then I suppose we will not persuade each other today. We might as well go home,” says Johnson. Thank god.

Finally, I am home. I can get some rest. I open the door and see my wife in the living room.

“Clark, you’re home early” she says surprised.

“Yes, Johnson decided we might as well go home since we were getting nowhere.”

“Mr. Edwards, you seem stressed,” Jane says in a silly voice, but her eyes hold concern.

“I am definitely not relaxed. I was almost singled out today in the meeting and I felt myself start to panic,” I tell her without meeting her eyes. I am so ashamed.

“I am a grown man in the Senate who is afraid to take a stand. Is that not what I took the position for? I have never seen the Senate suffer such a split before.”

“This is the most troubled I have seen you since you have become a senator. Do you still believe you can make a difference,” she asks me sadly.

“I do not know. My one vote might not matter at all. I might as well be against Wilson. There are too many against him for us few to make a difference.”

“You must not dismiss or devalue your opinion ever honey. You have never done it before and you can not start now,” she says while walking over toward me.

“It’s no use. President Wilson does not stand a chance, with or without my help.”

“Honey, you just need to rest. Please go upstairs and I will wake you in a while.” I go upstairs to our room to sleep.

Dreamland:

“Clark Edwards, what is this I hear about you ignoring your opinions?” asks Benjamin Franklin.

“Um, Mr. Franklin, sir, how is this possible right now? You are speaking with me,” I say with amazement.

“Never mind that. Please focus, Clark. So why are you deciding to hide what you believe in?”

“As a senator right now, you tend to stand out if you believe in the president. We all believe he is too peaceful or weak.”

“Are you a part of the ‘we’ that you describe?” Franklin asks in a knowing way.

“I should be. Everyone assumes I am.”

“Forget what others assume,” Hamilton says and continues, “Alexander is correct. When we and all of the other framers of the constitution were making the constitution, do you think we bothered to care about others’ opinions? No, because we were doing something of great importance.”

“Mr. Franklin, Mr. Hamilton, I have always respected you both as great men who should forever be remembered in history. I do not know if I can be as great a man as the two of you. You both are courageous men. When the time to be courageous comes to me, I ignore the opportunity,” I say truly humiliated.

“Have you ever publicly announced that you are something that you are not?” asks Franklin.

“No, no I have not taken a position at all.”

“Do you know why you have not said it yet? It is because something inside you has stopped you for this long. You could have changed opinions, but you hold on to what you believe. You may not have shown courage in stating your position, but you have not broken to

pressure yet either. That is courageous in itself.” Hamilton smiles and I feel myself genuinely returning the smile.

“Has this been of help, Edwards?”

“Yes, sir Mr. Hamilton. I appreciate you helping me find my way again.”

“Do you know what you must do now?” asks Franklin.

“Yes, I must return to what I believe in and that is Wilson,” I exclaim.

“Who is this Wilson that you mention?” Hamilton and Franklin look at me in confusion.

“Never mind, thank you both. I hope to speak with you both again one day.” I shake their hands.

“Only time will tell,” Franklin says.

Reality:

I wake up to my wife bending beside my side of the bed.

“How are you feeling?,” she asks in hope.

“I feel a lot better Jane. Thank you for suggesting the nap. It was an interesting time.”

“What do you mean?”

“I had a great conversation with some wise people. It really opened up my eyes,” I say with a smirk.

“I have no idea what you are going on about, but have you solved your problem?”

“Yes, I will vote for the United States to enter the League of Nations. I should have been certain from the very beginning.”

“I will have to thank those wise people you spoke with. I was close to calling your parents to reason with you.”

“Well, I have decided now. No matter how anyone reacts.”

“Those are the words of a man with integrity and courage.”

“Yes, courage indeed. That is exactly what I was going for.”

We smile and embrace each other.

Months later:

Well, it turned out the way I figured all along. The Senate as a whole did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles. No matter how hard Wilson tries, he just can not get enough votes to ratify it. He even promoted it on tour, but fell terribly ill. He had to go home immediately. Although it was not ratified, I will always know that I voted for what I believed was the right choice.