



EMPTY SUITS: THE COSTUME OF POWER IN A THEATRE OF VACANCIES



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Act I – The Costume

Power, in our age, is less a possession than a garment. It is stitched in committee rooms, hemmed by consultants, pressed crisp by donors who expect the seams to hold under strain. Those who wear it are mannequins first, leaders second. They step forward in broadcloth confidence, the cut of their lapels suggesting strength, the gleam of their shoes polished in a mirror that reflects everything but the soul within.

The suit itself becomes the office. No character needs to reside in the chest, so long as the cloth fills the frame. “*All men are created equal*,” Jefferson wrote, but he had not yet seen the custom-made equality of modern office, measured in thread count, not moral weight.

Even Washington, in his farewell, warned against the consuming “*spirit of party*.” Yet today, the fabric itself has been saturated in partisan hues—red and blue garments cut from the same hollow bolt, presented as contrast in thread, though no thread can weave character where none resides.

Here, presentation is permanence. The photograph endures longer than the policy, the headline longer than the action. And in that alchemy, the empty suit triumphs: not through substance, but through silhouette.



Act II – The Stage

Politics, long called “*the art of the possible*,” has shed the art and kept only the staging. The chamber is arranged like a theatre, seats angled for spectacle, scripts rehearsed, cameras fixed to catch the calculated scowl. Speeches are delivered less to persuade than to perform, knowing the echo will carry further than the policy ever will.

Madison trusted ambition to counteract ambition, but here ambition has been capitalized. Consultants shape the monologue, lobbyists cue the entrances, donors underwrite the applause. The contest is no longer of principle but of posture, auditions for the role of righteous indignation.

Lincoln once called upon “*the better angels of our nature*.” On this stage, the demagogue earns the billing, for fury fills more seats than temperance. Ovations rise not for courage, but for volume.

Thus the theatre thrives: costumes pressed, lines recited, outrage delivered with practiced conviction. At curtain call, the house empties, leaving only the echo of performance where principle ought to have been.



Act III – The Masquerade

At last the costume falters, and what it conceals becomes plain. Admired for its cut and sheen, it collapses the moment it is asked to bear weight. Character, once assumed, proves absent. What remains is not a leader but a placeholder, standing in the light, incapable of casting a shadow.

The Republic was founded on the presumption that virtue would steady power. Adams wrote that “*public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private,*” yet the stage is now filled with private vice costumed as public service. The ceremonies persist—the oaths, the seals, the choreographed displays of gravity, but each is an echo of conviction rather than its proof.

This is governance as masquerade: ritual without belief, performance without anchor. Authority has become a mask passed from one face to another, indistinguishable beneath the paint. From a distance the pageant reassures, but close inspection reveals only gestures arranged to suggest substance.

And so the theatre endures, not through strength but through spectacle. Costumes are refreshed, lines rewritten, sets repainted—yet **the vacuum beneath grows deeper with every act.**



© **About The Mindlight Pen:** *Where power is not measured in lapels, and spectacle finds no favor in the footnotes. Here, we name the mannequins, press the seams of their rhetoric, and refuse the pageantry of hollow conviction. This is not a stage for policy cosplay. It's a quiet room where character must undress.*

No speechwriters were consulted in the making of this essay, though several were spotted muttering into empty suits. ✒

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