CHAPTER 10

Washington for a protest against apartheid. After a long bus ride from New York City, I had anchored outside the executive mansion's gates, marveling at its facade, the symbol of power it represented, and reflecting on how distant it seemed from the world I inhabited. Yet here I was, decades later, standing alone as its newest occupant, surrounded by the trappings of history, entrusted with the responsibility of leading the most powerful nation on Earth.

I thought about my journey—the improbable path that had led me to this place, from my unsettled youth, my time as a community organizer, my early days in politics, the hard-fought campaign trail, and all the individuals who had supported, challenged, and believed in me along the way. I considered the immense tasks that lay ahead, the decisions I would face that could alter lives and shape the world's fate. It was a moment of profound introspection, humbled by the office's weight, inspired by the trust bestowed upon me by the American people, and acutely aware of the challenges and difficult decisions that lay ahead.

As I moved through the quiet halls of the White House, readying myself for the first night in my new home, I felt a deep sense of obligation to not just the present but also the past and the future—to the countless people who had fought for justice and equal rights, those who paved the way for this very moment. The history that surrounded me was a stark reminder of the responsibilities that come with the presidency, a beacon guiding my resolve to lead with dignity, integrity, and a profound respect for the sacred trust that had been placed in my hands.

Finally, as I made my way to the private residence, I paused one last time, taking in a deep breath, bracing myself for the journey ahead. The challenges would be great, but in that moment, I felt prepared to face them with courage, guided by the wisdom of those who had walked this path before me, committed to serving my country with all the strength, empathy, and humility I could muster.