

Dread

In the chapter titled "Dread," the atmosphere in Washington is tense as the city prepares for the electoral count and certification of Lincoln's election scheduled for February 13. General Scott's troops and artillery are positioned throughout the city, symbolizing the Army's determination to safeguard the electoral process against any potential disruptions. Speculation swirls around Baltimore, where it is rumored that six thousand armed men might pose a significant threat to the peace of Washington. In response to these fears, one hundred police officers from New York and Philadelphia converge upon the city, solidifying efforts to ensure the successful conduction of the electoral count.

Washington, situated just below the Mason-Dixon Line, is close to Maryland and Virginia, both of which harbor sympathies towards the Southern cause. This situation is compounded by the daily defections from the government, which raises concerns among officials. Senator Seward expresses alarm at the situation, highlighting that nearly half of the 4,470 civil and military employees originate from states that openly support the revolutionary movement. This discontent is pervasive, affecting every department and bureau, as well as military and diplomatic missions across the globe.

Jeremiah Black, the secretary of state, communicates with President Buchanan, indicating that while no concrete evidence exists of a plot to seize Washington, the very control of the city is vital for the secessionists' objectives. Black underscores the critical importance of maintaining control over Washington, suggesting that any attempt to seize the city by secessionists would be a foolish oversight if they truly intended to achieve their goals. This sentiment encapsulates the broader atmosphere of distrust and unease pervading the capital, as politicians grapple with the reality of a nation on the brink of significant turmoil.