

EXCLUSIVE READER PREVIEW

DIVIDED HOUSES

Book One of The Union Trilogy

"I wanted eighteen holes and a gin and tonic.

The country had other ideas."

– Santiago DelTorro

TAMARA PREWITT

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EPIGRAPHS

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union...”

– Preamble, Constitution of the United States, 1787

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

– Thomas Jefferson, 1787

“I wanted eighteen holes and a gin and tonic. The country had other ideas.”

– Santiago DelTorro

PROLOGUE

Washington, D.C.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2024

Forty-four steps.

He counted them on his first visit, twenty-three years ago — a second-year law student from Midland who drove eleven hours to stand at the base of the United States Supreme Court and decide that whatever the law was going to ask of him, he would give.

This morning he was here to argue.

Jack Adams wore the charcoal suit. Most of his suits were serious. One he considered lucky. The charcoal was all three. He had bought it in 2014 at a tailor on K Street he could not afford at the time. It became the suit that won every significant argument of his career and probably needed to be replaced but instead it continued to be dry cleaned.

He stood at the base and looked up.

The marble caught the pale winter light and threw back cold and absolute, as if what came back at you was the truth itself. February in Washington was the kind of cold that did not announce itself but accumulated under your collar while you stood still.

He picked up his briefcase and started climbing.

The case was *Newdow v. United States*. The plaintiff wanted the words under God struck from the Pledge of Allegiance. The argument was clean, constitutional, and wrong — and Adams had spent fourteen months proving exactly why, in a brief that ran sixty-three pages and that he had read aloud, alone, forty times.

He was ready.

He was also, for the first time in twenty-two years of practice, aware that his hands could shake if he let them.

But he did not let them.

The chamber was smaller than people expected. He had been here twice — once as a clerk, once as junior counsel — and was still struck by how small. The red drape behind the bench and nine chairs. The room contained the resolve of nine people who were the final word on what the country's foundational document meant.

He stood at the lectern.

“Mr. Chief Justice. And may it please the Court.”

Jack only had thirty minutes and he had been interrupted twenty-two times. He had expected nineteen; the additional three came from the left side of the bench. They were questions he had prepared for. He had four minutes remaining when he sat down, which was not a coincidence.

He came out into the February afternoon to find cameras that had not been there when he went in. A case the press had underestimated had gained gravity during the argument.

A reporter from NBC stepped forward.

“Mr. Adams. How did it feel in there?”

He had thought about this going in. The professional version? The political version? The humble version?

“It felt like stepping into the Constitution,” he said.

She waited for more, but Jack was a man of few words. He picked up his briefcase and went down the steps to find his car.

The decision came down in June. *Newdow v. United States*, decided 6–3. The majority opinion cited his brief eleven times. The same reporter called him the church’s hero on live television from these same steps.

He did not watch the broadcast.

He was already working on what came next.

But he did not know yet that what came next would take four years to build and would bring him back to these steps in a charcoal suit and in the same December cold with a different briefcase and a single word being whispered through the crowd that was considerably darker than ‘hero.’

Four years later. Austin, Texas. September 16, 2028.

*She walked out onto the veranda in a yellow sundress and asked
if I wanted another iced tea, and the country was already on fire.
I had not noticed yet because I was watching her walk.*

Austin civil litigator Santiago DelTorro has a seven handicap, a Breitling, and a fiancée who calls him ‘darlin’ with enough sincerity that it doesn’t sound like an affectation. He is doing fine.

He is also three months away from becoming the public face of the most consequential constitutional crisis in modern American history.

The Texas Attorney General has spent two years building a legal architecture that fourteen state AGs and six governors will eventually sign. A data scientist in San Francisco has been sitting on a model that documents eight years of federal regulatory targeting. A federal marshal will die at a border checkpoint in November. Six states will sign a Declaration of Constitutional Sovereignty on December 18.

Santiago will lose his fiancée in the process. Her mother will keep the table set for him anyway.

She is not obligated to.

Three novels. One question.

What happens to a house – and to a country – when the people inside stop talking to each other?

BOOK ONE AVAILABLE NOW

Divided Houses

Austin, September–December 2028. Santiago DelTorro is pulled into the constitutional crisis the Texas Attorney General has spent two years building toward. Six states sign the Declaration of Constitutional Sovereignty. The country fractures.

BOOK TWO IN DEVELOPMENT

Silent Tables

January 2029–December 2030. The Alliance expands from six to sixteen states. The President suffers a stroke. The 25th Amendment is invoked. A constitutional convention is called. The country goes silent.

BOOK THREE COMING SOON

Open Doors

The negotiated resolution. The constitutional convention assembles. The path back to one country.

EARLY READERS

“Prewitt writes the family scenes the way Grisham writes a courtroom — every detail does work, nothing performs.”

– Early reader, ARC of Divided Houses

“I came for the constitutional crisis. I stayed for the woman in the yellow sundress.”

– Book club, Forsyth County

“The most honest novel I have read about the silence between people who used to talk.”

– Beta reader letter, October

FOR READERS OF

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The country was on fire.
I was doing fine.

Austin, September 2028. Civil litigator Santiago DelTorro is pulled into the constitutional crisis the Texas Attorney General has spent two years building toward. A data scientist in San Francisco has been sitting on a model that documents eight years of federal regulatory targeting. A federal marshal will die at the Texas-Oklahoma border. Six states will sign the Declaration of Constitutional Sovereignty on December 18. Santiago becomes the man the moment requires. He loses his fiancée in the process. Her mother keeps the table set for him anyway.

A house breaks the way a country does. One unfinished conversation at a time.

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THE UNION TRILOGY | BOOK ONE