



## Admit This to No One: Stories

**Leslie Pietrzyk**

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In the connected stories of Leslie Pietrzyk's *Admit This to No One*, a scandal-prone politician leaves a wake behind him as he cycles through relationships and families.

The charismatic Speaker of the House is expected to be the next president of the United States. His plans are threatened not by political opponents, but by his own behavior as he jumps from one relationship to another, tarnishing his reputation as a family man and leaving wives and daughters behind to create new families that inevitably suffer the same fates.

Lexie is the Speaker's eldest daughter and was the first to be abandoned; her memory-laden contemplation of her life choices, and of how they were affected by her father, is emotional. Madison is the Speaker's youngest daughter; she expresses the desperate need for attention and love. And Mary-Grace is the Speaker's loyal personal assistant; she sees him through his political career and missteps, and wrestles with the ethics of her position. Her relationship with her boss seems to be without boundaries.

As the book favors the women's perspectives, the misogyny involved in power and politics becomes clear. While some entries are less connected to the main story about the Speaker, all evoke tense expectations; each imbued with the anxiety placed by social roles and responsibilities. Themes of power inequities, performative racial allyship, and sexual harassment wind through these brief but detailed sketches of America's complicated and often unwritten rules of etiquette.

In the connected stories of *Admit This to No One*, those connected to a top politician struggle with their feelings about him and his mistakes, moving between love and hate in the cutthroat culture of Washington, D.C.

DELIA STANLEY (November / December 2021)

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