

# *Fifteen Men In A Smoke-Filled Room*

## **SYNOPSIS**

© Crowley 2010

It's June, 1920, in the Congress Hotel in Chicago. The Republican National Convention is in full swing. A distant fourth in line for the presidential nomination is Ohio senator Warren G. Harding.

A simple, good man, Harding, wearied of politics, would rather not seek the presidency, and instead dreams of the quiet life he might have led had he remained a newspaper editor in small-town Ohio.

However, Harding's ambitious campaign manager, Harry M. Daugherty, has other ideas and intends to plot Harding into the White House – because, asserts Daugherty, Harding was made to be president. Indeed, Daugherty has every possible trick up his sleeve and brags that a meeting with mysterious higher-ups at the Hotel Blackstone will “seal the deal” and manipulate Harding's nomination into reality.

Meanwhile, Harding's acerbic wife, Florence Harding, while initially supportive of her husband's candidacy, soon proclaims against it. A visit to a psychic some years back resulted in a prediction that Harding would die during his term, if he became president – but even Mrs. Harding, although fearful of the future, finds herself paralyzed to act against the dictates of the stars she so admires.

As for Harding, far from wanting the presidency, he actually desires to abscond with his young, childish mistress, Nan Britton, who manages to visit Harding during the convention. Nan, however, like Daugherty, can only envision Harding's face when it's on a campaign poster – a princess in search of a prince – and so, when Harding threatens to expose his relationship with Nan, as a way to derail his seemingly inevitable nomination, Nan rebels and flees from the challenge.

Harding, left alone, with a campaign manager who insists on charging forward, a wife frozen into place by her superstition, and his own sense of helpless doom, resigns himself to his fate and his eventual death, unable to foster the will to free himself from the inevitable.