

*In an alternate but eerily similar universe, a wealthy businessman with a yen for uniforms and an unquenchable thirst for power is championed by a ruthless cadre of zealots intent on replacing democracy with autocracy.*

## **The Emperor**

By M. Nariman

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M. NARIMAN



A Novel

# THE IMPERATOR

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## Samuel Augustus Sopra

Samuel Augustus Sopra, born Daniel Dietrich Drumph, stood in the middle of a room he had nicknamed “the mirror room.” Three full-length mirrors with thick gold bezels were mounted on three sides of the room. On the fourth wall, a window spanning the room’s length and rising from the floor to the ceiling gave him a breathtaking view of Park Avenue.

On paper, the room was on the 90<sup>th</sup> floor of the Sopra building, adjacent to Samuel’s main office on the corner. Physically, the building only had 65 floors, so he was on the 60<sup>th</sup> floor. The magic of numbers allowed raising the count from 65 to 95. And this was the number Samuel repeated everywhere. The floor above the main lobby was called the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Floors 5 to 15 were occupied by accounting firms. Then, there was another lobby. The floors above that started from 25. Fifteen floors were used by various law firms from 25 to 40. Then, there was another lobby. Floors 50 to 95, above the last lobby, were residential floors. All building occupants also preferred to ignore reality and stuck to the “official” floor count. Samuel liked to think that the Sopra building (Sopra Tower, as he called it) was the tallest mixed-use building in the city. His emblem, SAS, written in a manner that made it look like slanted Zs and a pointy A without the bar in the middle, appeared prominently in bold red letters at the entrance of this and all other buildings Samuel and his company owned: from strip malls to rental properties to golf courses.

He often pointed out his love of the insignia as the main reason he changed his name to what it was now. He claimed his new middle and last names were tributes to his love of ancient Rome and his ancestry. He further noted that he had picked Samuel as his first name to make the logo symmetrical.

But at this moment, there were other things on his mind. He held his head high and looked at himself from different angles in the mirrors surrounding him. He tilted his head back and rolled his eyes to catch a glimpse of his image. He grinned wide, shook his head slowly, and turned his head side to side in a mixture of arrogance and self-recognition. He was wearing the full-blown military uniform he had designed himself. The uniform was dark blue, complete with

gold epaulets and ornamental armbands. His famous SAS emblem was printed on the armband in bold red letters on a black background. A red tie completed his attire.



Nobody else, other than his trusted tailor, knew about the uniform. And now that he was looking at it more closely, he realized he wanted to add more details to the design. But then he decided to postpone thinking about the uniform to another time. He had a busy day ahead of him.

Samuel entered the private elevator that took him directly from his office to his penthouse apartment, his primary residence, which occupied two floors at the top of the Sopra Tower. It was estimated that the apartment was about 11,000 square feet, even though Samuel insisted that it occupied 30,000 square feet, and he repeated that figure not just on his asset statement forms but to all his friends and children.

Samuel's style of choice for furniture and decoration was mid to late 18<sup>th</sup>-century France. The gold accents and detailing gave it an air of authenticity.

Samuel thought about the introductory interview as the president-elect that was supposed to be aired live that night. The famous Elizabeth Huntington was supposed to conduct the interview. At first, he thought they could carry out the interview next to his favorite piece, an 18-chair Rococo-style dining table with heavy ornamental gold accents and giant chairs with gold armrests. He loved to sit at the table and have his favorite meal: two Big Macs with two orders of Animal Style French Fries (this was an invention of a rival chain on the West Coast), but the local McDaniel's outlet was happy to make him the imitation: a combination of melted cheese, thousand island dressing, and grilled onions spread over a generous portion of French fries.) and he would wash it down with two Coca-Colas, one diet and the other regular. It used to be two regulars, and he changed it to one diet and one regular a few months ago at his doctor's

request, reminding him that he needed to look his best and keep his weight from climbing more than it already had.

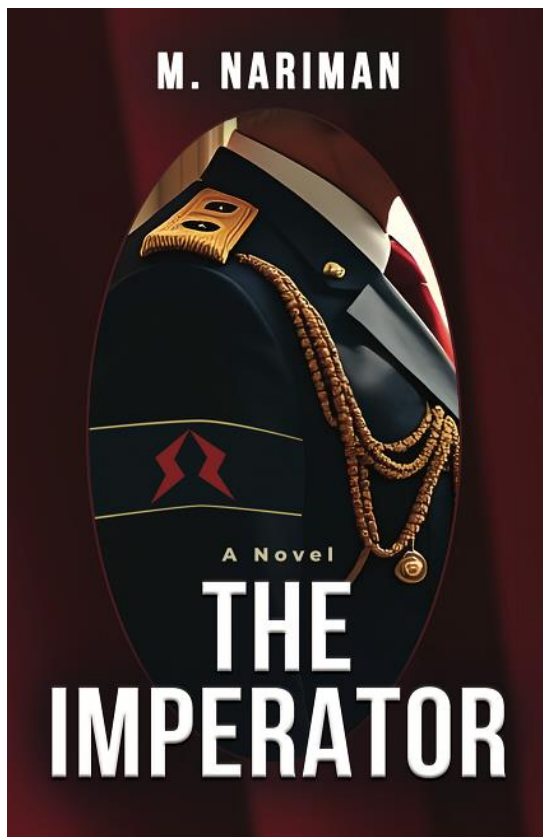
Then, it occurred to him that the prevalent style of modern interview required two chairs and two smaller stands for water next to them. So, he ordered the rearrangement of some furniture in preparation for the interview. They brought the two decorative chairs that had hardly ever been used, sitting along the hallway connecting the dining room to the family room at such a distance that would have made it impractical to carry on a conversation if you used them where they usually were. The chairs had gold-plated armrests and legs with yellow, blue, and red velvet upholstery.

They moved the dining table and chairs out of the dining room, a vast room with checkered black and white marble floors, tall marble pillars with eagle carvings on each corner, thick red velvet curtains, and large gilded mirrors on each wall. They set up the chairs and small stands in the middle of the room, awaiting the interview.



## **About the Author**

M. Nariman is an inventor and the founder of an engineering, automation, and robotics company. He has interests in philosophy, politics, physics, robotics, and anthropogeny, the study of the origins of humanity.



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