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**Anatomy of Presidential Scandal  
(Cleveland) - I**

**Lead: It is difficult to keep perspective at a time when passions are engaged and salacious revelations stir the body politic. Yet, such a time is the perfect occasion to examine the past to gain perspective by looking at the anatomy of a Presidential scandal.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Oh, to be a Democrat in the summer of 1884. Victory was in the air. For the first time since the nomination of James Buchanan in**

**1856 the Party had a real chance to take the White House. Every four years this ragtag collection of yellow dog dixiecrats and immigrant Yankees would drink and party their way to the nomination of a pair of political nonentities, who would then promptly go out and lose. Not this time. This time they had a winner.**

**Grover Cleveland was a Presbyterian preacher's kid. He was not a brilliant man, but he was a competent, well-respected lawyer, a lifelong bachelor, and had well-earned reputation for incorruptibility. Splits in the dominant Republican party had made possible a political success story of Cinderella proportions. Cleveland was elected Mayor of Buffalo and**

**Governor of New York and came to the convention having stood up to Jim Kelly's infamous Tammany Hall. He was nominated as a fighting reform Governor with a decent chance of beating the Republican, James G. Blaine, whose reputation for political corruption was widely acknowledged. Then, scandal.**

**A tabloid newspaper in Buffalo ran with a story that Cleveland had once maintained a "connection" with a Buffalo woman named Halpin whose illegitimate son was later placed in an orphanage. The Republican press was ecstatic. That squeaky clean Cleveland had at last been skewered and the prospect of the first national loss since the 1850s was diminished. Church**

**papers weighed in with condemnation. Preachers across the country insisted that Cleveland was a disgrace and should not be elected. "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa, gone to the White House, ha, ha, ha," began to heard at Republican rallies.**

**Yet, by October, the scandal was dead, its perpetrators largely ignored, its effect on the campaign negligible. How could that be? Next time: The survival of Grover Cleveland.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Nevins, Allan. *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage*. New York, NY: Dodd, Meade, and Company, 1932.**

**Welch, Richard E. *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*.  
Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988.**

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