

(Name of Project)

by  
(Name of First Writer)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by  
(Names of Subsequent Writers,  
in Order of Work Performed)

Current Revisions by  
(Current Writer, date)

Name (of company, if applicable)  
Address  
Phone Number

Copyright David Blackman

2011 All Rights Reserved

**WIZARDS OF ARMAGEDDON**

**1945 - 1988**

David Blackman

101 Clyde St

Box Hill North 3129

61 0438 201 731

[davidblackman8@bigpond.com](mailto:davidblackman8@bigpond.com)

“The men who possess real power in the country have no intention of ending the Cold War.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

## CAST:

The Presidents (Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan)

The Secretaries (McNamara, Dulles, Forrestal, Schultz)

The National Security Advisers (Acheson, Nitze, Kissinger)

The Generals (LeMay, Power, Wheeler)

The Russians (Gromyko, Khrushchev, Gorbachev)

Journalists, Photographers

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The three characters, MCNAMARA, DULLES and GROMYKO are on the periphery of the main action on stage, a chorus of sorts, commenting on, insinuating themselves into and propelling the narrative forward, unless of course they are directly part of the action as indicated.

Depending on cast availability, the roles of JOURNALISTS can be assumed by other characters on stage.

Other roles can be doubled up along the following guidelines:

One actor to play each of the Generals.

One actor to play Gromyko, Khrushchev and Gorbachev

One or two actors to play the Presidents

One actor to play Forrestal, Acheson, Schultz

One actor to play Nitze and Kissinger

There should be no need for more than 4-5 actors to perform the roles of presidents, defence secretaries and generals throughout the play.

David Blackman

September 2011

## ACT ONE

## ACT ONE SCENE ONE

SETTING: the place where dead presidents, secretaries of state and defence along with their national security advisers go to refight the Cold War; from the Oval Office of the president of the United States to the War Room of the Pentagon. A conference table is on stage that should not need removing for any scene, the same with the two lecterns on either side of the stage, representing East and West.

The stage is covered in a sea of mist. SOUND of a foghorn. LIGHTS on ROBERT S. MCNAMARA. He is elderly, a man in his twilight years looking slightly dishevelled. He wears a Brooks Brothers rain coat over his suit. Despite his years, he has stepped right out of the 1960's.

VOICE OVER

Mr McNamara...

MCNAMARA

Did you see that? Over there... a man, he's doused himself with gasoline...

VOICE OVER

It is Robert McNamara..?

MCNAMARA remains engrossed by what he is witnessing offstage.

MCNAMARA

Of course it is...how can I help you?

VOICE OVER

There's a phone call for you...

MCNAMARA

Somebody's tried to reach me out here..?

VOICE OVER

They were very clear...described you perfectly.

MCNAMARA

I'll be right out...

VOICE OVER

It sounded pretty urgent...

MCNAMARA is still looking offstage.

MCNAMARA

The man...he's set himself on fire...

A brilliant LIGHT. MCNAMARA turns away from the horror of what he has described. LIGHTS on JOHN FOSTER DULLES. He is smartly dressed in the conservative tradition of American politics as he would have been in the 1950's when he was at the peak of his power as secretary of state.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

For this you have brought us back? There's a phone call for you outside?

MCNAMARA is clearly shaken, seated or barely holding the side of the table.

MCNAMARA

It was the moment I truly began to question what we had done...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

What *you* had done.

MCNAMARA

A complete stranger approached me...I was simply minding my own business. The dream doesn't go away...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And the burning man always appears...

MCNAMARA shakes his head.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

In the land of dreams that's quite a feat.

MCNAMARA

We have to go back...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Maybe you do Robert but I have no regrets. Vietnam was a mere footnote of my legacy.

MCNAMARA

I was no longer secretary of defense...I had served my country honestly...but this stranger insisted I follow him...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Your mistakes are your own...

MCNAMARA

And yours? The great John Dulles never faltered as Secretary of State?

DULLES is clearly stung by this comment.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

They are all here.

MCNAMARA

Every one of them?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Except for Carter of course. He's still doing God's work. And Ford, none of the others can remember him.

Behind both men, images of the post World War Two presidents: TRUMAN, EISENHOWER, KENNEDY, JOHNSON, NIXON, REAGAN.

MCNAMARA

What about Kissinger...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

As long as nobody brings up Chile he will deign us with his presence at the appropriate time...

MCNAMARA

Good.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Why here Robert?

MCNAMARA

Potsdam is where it begins...everything we fought...

GROMYKO

...or fought for...

LIGHTS on ANDREI GROMYKO.



GROMYKO

The conscious stricken Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the unconscionable Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

What is Gromyko doing here?

GROMYKO

(To DULLES)

You didn't think that we were only going to tell your story?

MCNAMARA

He was at Potsdam and was still Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union when we were in power...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But we are all dead...

GROMYKO

That doesn't matter. It is as much our history...

MCNAMARA

The beginning...or end of East/West relations...

GROMYKO

The talk is of neutral countries, preserving peace..responsible governments, but the subtext is power...

MCNAMARA

I want to make sense of it all...

GROMYKO

This may be the perfect place...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

This is your journey Robert. I left this world my reputation intact. My legacy a Communist Bloc surrounded by US military might...

GROMYKO

(to DULLES)

And a world teetering on the brink of destruction thanks to your continued escalation in nuclear weapons...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Because Communism was unacceptable to the American public...

GROMYKO

(to MCNAMARA)

We watched you during your tenure as Secretary of Defense Robert...heard of your struggles with the Pentagon, while never publicly questioning the decisions of your government in Vietnam, the power of your generals...or all the decisions of your president, till...now.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Cecilienhof Palace in Potsdam Germany...

MCNAMARA

I have never stopped questioning...

GROMYKO

Then this time we shall do it together...

LIGHTS on TRUMAN. He is alone.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You are being unfair Robert. Truman had no choice. The decision was already made...

GROMYKO

To bomb or not to bomb...

MCNAMARA

But after...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

A new world had been created . One he was incapable of changing.

MCNAMARA

And we are about to enter it...

GROMYKO

7.40pm on the 24th of July 1945...

MCNAMARA

Harry S. Truman, the heir to Roosevelt and a political novice in foreign affairs prepares himself for the most important decision of his presidency ...possibly the 20th century...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Where is Stalin...

GROMYKO

Every where, especially in the minds of your leaders. They could think of nothing else.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I knew he wouldn't show...

GROMYKO

He is here in spirit. That will be more than enough.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Truman hasn't changed. Still rehearsing the line he thought would make the generalissimo shake in his boots.

MCNAMARA

After hours of gridlocked discussion over the fate of Europe, the US president casually saunters over to his erstwhile ally...

Behind TRUMAN a large image of STALIN appears.  
TRUMAN is aware of it.

TRUMAN

We have a new weapon of unusual destructive force.

Pause.

TRUMAN

Isn't he going to say anything? (To GROMYKO). Did you translate properly what I said?

GROMYKO

Of course.

TRUMAN

And?

GROMYKO

He says I am glad to hear of it and hope you make good use of it against the Japanese.

TRUMAN

(Suspicious)

What did he say?

GROMYKO

(Slowly)

He is very glad to hear it and hopes you make good use of it against the Japanese.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Stalin obviously didn't understand what Truman was saying...

GROMYKO

We already had spies working at Los Alamos. Immediately after this meeting, Stalin ordered us to make sure all was being done for Russia to have its own atomic weapons.

TRUMAN

He just smiled. I thought he wasn't going to say anything...thought he didn't understand what I said...

GROMYKO

Stalin understood exactly what you were saying.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Then your decision is clear Harry...

LIGHTS.

TRUMAN

“To General Carl Spaatz, Commanding General, United States Army Strategic Air Force. The 509th Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about August 3rd 1945 on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki...Additional bombs will be delivered on the above targets as soon as made ready by the project staff...”

GROMYKO

It is Stalin who was the target. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were merely signposts showing him the true face of US diplomacy towards the Soviet Union.

MCNAMARA

After telling the Russians all day we wouldn't recognise any of their governments in Eastern Europe, we then let him know we can wipe them off the face of the earth.

TRUMAN

People thought I was like a kid riding a toboggan when I heard about the atomic bomb..

MCNAMARA

The ride was now over. Casualties in excess of 250,000...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And so the Cold War had begun.

MCNAMARA

(to TRUMAN)

But Truman wasn't finished with the Russians...

TRUMAN

They refused to leave Iran. After they agreed to once the war had ended. The British honoured that agreement.

GROMYKO

Of course we refused to leave Iran! You had bases all around the world...already the Soviet Union was encircled by the Imperialists!

TRUMAN

They were prepared to start World War Three...

GROMYKO

We were prepared? We...the Soviet Union needed oil which Iran has and which would have put us on the road to recovery much sooner than expected.

TRUMAN

They were not living up to-

GROMYKO

They they they! I am standing right here! We were not the British! We defeated the might of the German Army! We paid the highest sacrifice...

MCNAMARA

March 1946, less than a year after Potsdam...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

This was your chance to show them Harry. They never took you seriously until Hiroshima...more so after Nagasaki.

MCNAMARA

Two atomic bombs in three days...before the Japanese even knew about the first one...

TRUMAN

We were at war with Japan. Provocation wasn't required.

MCNAMARA

What about now? In Iran? The war barely over...

TRUMAN

Potsdam resolving nothing. The Russians were illegally occupying northern Iran.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Stalin only understands force, none of this "Uncle Joe" stuff Roosevelt believed in.

MCNAMARA

With Jimmy Byrnes still by your side. The Secretary of State who persuaded you to offer no olive branch to the Japanese, no allowance to keep their Emperor, till of course you had used your shiny new weapon. And you...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I was already an established national figure in foreign affairs. Byrnes asked to speak with me...Claridge's Hotel, London, September 30th...

TRUMAN

Is there some basis upon which we could effect a compromise with the Soviets?

GROMYKO

(to DULLES)

The ball was in your court...a chance to defuse escalating tensions only a year after-

MCNAMARA

Well?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

There is...none.

Pause.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Iran has a third of all known oil supplies in the Middle East. The Russians must leave.

TRUMAN

What if they call my bluff?

GROMYKO

We will be at war.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But they won't Harry. The Communists can't be trusted. They're not like normal people.

GROMYKO

A revolution and two world wars in less than forty years. What could be normal after that?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Meeting with the Russians did not create difficulties. It has merely revealed difficulties of long standing which war has obscured.

MCNAMARA

Did you really believe that it was all their doing?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It is healthier that we now know the facts.

MCNAMARA

But we didn't know all the facts...we have never known all the facts!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

“Peaceful coexistence of the Soviet and Capitalist system over a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end, which makes a series of frightful collisions inevitable.”

MCNAMARA

Stalin’s “Problem’s of Leninism”...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I virtually memorised it. No book influenced me more...

MCNAMARA

And so the collisions would begin.

LIGHTS on GROMYKO and TRUMAN.

GROMYKO

All we demand are equal concessions to the British!

TRUMAN

By fomenting revolution in Azerbaijan. I can’t let the same thing happen as in Eastern Europe.

GROMYKO

Our economy is devastated. We lose twenty million of our own people, accounted for over six million German soldiers...yet you cancel lend lease to us immediately upon Germany’s surrender!

TRUMAN

You were victorious. There was no more need for our help.

GROMYKO

Russia was a wasteland while your own country lay untouched by war.

TRUMAN

You enforced communist governments in Eastern Europe directly controlled by Moscow...

GROMYKO

And you will ban the Communist Party in Western Europe from legitimately taking part in democratic elections. So much for your talk of freedom!

LIGHTS.

TRUMAN

You’d think what happened to the Japs would tell them in an indirect fashion our position on these matters.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Soviets are not in any position to develop a nuclear capability. We can dictate what we are willing or not willing to tolerate from them.

TRUMAN

How long did they say?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

At least another fifteen years. With their backward economy maybe longer.

TRUMAN

They're not going to get away with this!

MCNAMARA

You treat Stalin like a small town rival in Missouri politics...

TRUMAN

He's a megalomaniac.

MCNAMARA

He's the head of the Soviet State that you have to deal with...

TRUMAN

Only if we choose to.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Stalin is a brutal dictator...

MCNAMARA

Who broke the back of Nazism! No Western power could have sustained the losses the Russians did...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Which is why America has every right to be wary of them!

TRUMAN

And now we will give it to them with both barrels.

MCNAMARA

Truman meets with Ambassador Gromyko for diplomatic talks...

LIGHTS on TRUMAN and GROMYKO.

GROMYKO

...or so it looked to the outside world.



JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Let there be no mistaking our intent this time Harry.

LIGHTS on TRUMAN and GROMYKO. Handshakes, smiling. FLASH of cameras.

TRUMAN

Remove all Soviet troops from Northern Iran in forty eight hours or the United States will drop the atomic bomb.

GROMYKO

What did you say?

TRUMAN

We will use the atomic bomb.

GROMYKO

Forty eight hours? That is not possible.

TRUMAN

(to GROMYKO)

We're going to drop it on you.

LIGHTS. The smiles and handshakes cease. GROMYKO is alone.

GROMYKO

You think we are surprised or shocked by your ultimatum? After all, we Russians remember the same Harry Truman who once said while Russia was fighting for its very existence...

TRUMAN

If we see that Germany is winning the war, we should help Russia, but if Russia is winning we should help Germany, and let her kill as many Reds as possible.

GROMYKO

We also remember the British and French encouraging, hoping Hitler would crush Communism for the West...until of course he decided to crush the West...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We must show that our free land is not spiritual lowland, easily submerged, but highland, that, most of all, provides the spiritual, intellectual and economic conditions which all men want!

TRUMAN

Why couldn't the Chinese have been so obliging.

MCNAMARA

Maybe not all Communists were the same.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nonsense. It is a common virus of which there is no cure.

TRUMAN

(with GROMYKO)

Well? What is your answer?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Yes Andrei? What is your answer?

Pause.

GROMYKO

(defeated)

We will remove our troops from northern Iran within 24 hours.

TRUMAN

We've done it. The Russians have backed down...

MCNAMARA

They did not have the atomic bomb. They had to back down!

GROMYKO

You are right. We had no choice. And so our atomic bomb program was accelerated beyond all reasonable expectations...

TRUMAN

Not for another fifteen years or so, says the experts. And by that time...Communism may be long gone.

GROMYKO

You will never humiliate us like this again...

MCNAMARA

At least not until Cuba...

GROMYKO

Which convinced us we had to achieve superiority in terms of nuclear missiles and bombers...but for now...

MCNAMARA

A new policy has been put into effect that will alter the course of US Soviet relations...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nuclear diplomacy.

MCNAMARA

Nuclear diplomacy for the next forty years. Till Reykavik with the Soviets. Till now with Iraq and Iran as a new term enters the lexicon of military strategy...

LIGHTS on TRUMAN.

TRUMAN

Escalation Dominance.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I called for a proportional and controlled American military effort...I insisted that the real solution lay in reestablishing a vigorous and effective free society at home...

TRUMAN

We control the situation by threatening to escalate the conflict to a higher level of violence. With Communism, there can be no other way.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It is not merely a political or economic conflict. But a confrontation of faiths...Christianity versus Communism, spirituality versus atheism.

MCNAMARA

This is geopolitics! What does Christ have to do with it?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Don't blame us for your failings. You were supposedly "The Best and the Brightest"...

MCNAMARA

Yet across the span of time we would hear you Foster... a different president, in a far more dangerous world...

GROMYKO

The B grade actor who spied for the FBI against his own colleagues...

MCNAMARA

...when nuclear superiority had long vanished...brains had nothing to do with foreign policy...

TRUMAN

How far can we take this? If the American public knew...

MCNAMARA

Then tell them, put it on the table! America is threatening the Soviet Union with complete annihilation, if they so much as dare to challenge US global hegemony...

TRUMAN

...a Soviet Union that doesn't even have the bomb...

GROMYKO

(To TRUMAN)

The Japanese didn't have a hope but you firebombed their cities, not that I disapproved...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nuclear diplomacy is not for public consumption in case...

MCNAMARA

In case of what..?

GROMYKO

Diplomacy fails.

Pause.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

America faces a new enemy. This fact needs to be enshrined in a new more robust foreign policy. Greece and Turkey are threatened with communist takeover. America cannot allow this to happen...

MCNAMARA

March 12th 1947, the Truman Doctrine is born...

LIGHTS. JAMES FORRESTAL is hovered over the table.  
FORRESTAL points to spots marked on a map.

FORRESTAL

Moscow, Gorki, Kuibyshev, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Omsk...

LIGHTS. TRUMAN is behind the lectern. He addresses  
Congress.

TRUMAN

At the present moment in world history...

FORRESTAL

Saratov, Kazan, Leningrad, Baku, Taskent, Chelyabinsk...

TRUMAN

...nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life...

FORRESTAL

Nizhu, Tazil, Magnitogoryk, Molotov, Tbilisi, Stalinsk, Grozny, Irutsk, Yaroslavl...

## TRUMAN

I believe it must be a policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures...

This is a serious course upon which we embark. I would not recommend it except that the alternative is much more serious. The United States contributed \$341,000,000,000 toward winning World War II. This is an investment in world freedom and world peace. The assistance that I am recommending for Greece and Turkey amounts to little more than 1 tenth of 1 percent of this investment. It is only common sense that we should safeguard this investment and make sure that it was not in vain. The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died.

We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world. And we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation. Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events. I am confident that the Congress will face these responsibilities squarely.

SOUND of thunderous applause. TRUMAN allows himself a brief smile.

## MCNAMARA

And so the Pentagon becomes an integral part of American foreign policy...never to leave.

## ACT ONE SCENE TWO

LIGHTS on JAMES FORRESTAL and TRUMAN.

## FORRESTAL

Operation Pincher is complete Mr. President...

## MCNAMARA

The plan for a nuclear strike on the Soviet Union...fifty atomic bombs to demolish twenty Russian cities...

## FORRESTAL

The Soviet economic potential for war won't be developed for at least another ten to fifteen years.

## TRUMAN

So we should start World War Three because the Russians aren't ready?

FORRESTAL

It would be over after the first salvo. We can't have anything less than total war with the Soviets.

MCNAMARA

This requires the full utilisation of the entire US and Allied war potential.

FORRESTAL

It is inconceivable that even the gang who run Russia would be willing to take on war but one always has to remember that there seemed no reason in 1939 for Hitler to start war and yet he did...

MCNAMARA

The new Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The first ever Secretary of Defense...

GROMYKO

...argues for war not against other ships but against whole societies. Against the Soviet State.

TRUMAN

Even Byrnes was alarmed...

MCNAMARA

The Secretary of Defense should never have even presented this plan to the President. He's not supposed to be working for the Pentagon.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

That's how things were done till you came along Robert. Nobody had bothered to challenge it.

TRUMAN

Our foreign policy is heading us towards global conflict with the Russians. We have grave political differences and all this talk of Soviet threat is leading to ideologically driven bullying tactics.

MCNAMARA

Tactics which you perfected at Potsdam!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Forrestal attempts to bridge inter service rivalry as the Air Force and Navy vie for dominance over nuclear weapons.

MCNAMARA

And stifle any debate by insisting on loyalty tests from all Federal employees...including journalists.

FORRESTAL

Especially journalists.

MCNAMARA

This was the opposite of what I did. I sought differing opinions, challenged conventional thinking...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And was crucified for it.

MCNAMARA

But the Joint Chiefs could not be reined in could they? Then as now...and as Communism looms larger than life as the greatest threat America ever faced...the Pentagon looms larger in American life...

TRUMAN

Forrestal was riding a tiger of his own making, and taking me along with him...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But you weren't willing to go along for the ride were you Harry?

TRUMAN

The Joint Chiefs cannot be reined in. They hate each other as much as the Communists. Forrestal is only beginning to find out.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

So Communism takes advantage...

LIGHTS on FORRESTAL boxed into a corner.

FORRESTAL

Communists in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Romania, extending their influence...Chang Ki Shek defeated in China by the Communists. I feel as if the walls are crumbling as we stand impotently by. Every action I take undermined by one or all of the service chiefs...the Air Force in particular.

MCNAMARA

Always the Air Force...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It was a mistake you would make in your time Robert...

MCNAMARA

I had my supporters those whom I could trust. Anyway, we were in the middle of a shooting war...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But no one in real power above you Robert...

MCNAMARA

The President...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

If Truman had backed Forrestal, who knows...

MCNAMARA

(to TRUMAN)

Instead you abandoned him.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

As you Robert would be abandoned...

TRUMAN

Forrestal wanted to take on the whole goddammed military even as he showed favour to his beloved Navy. Ordering a super air craft carrier that atomic bombers could land on for heaven's sake! He was sunk before he even got started.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Forrestal called for monthly meetings with the Joint Chiefs and Eisenhower, as head of the Army, offered to send his aide...

MCNAMARA

I would never have allowed that...

FORRESTAL

It was a different time. The Pentagon could do no wrong...

MCNAMARA

By the sixties they had reached the apex of their power and I still took them on!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And lost.

MCNAMARA

All it needed was another showdown to push Forrestal over the edge...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And it came on June 24th 1948. ..

GROMYKO

The Allies are trying to destabilise and disrupt the Soviet zone in Germany. This cannot be tolerated!



MCNAMARA

Of course they were right. The Soviets agreed to separate currencies in each zone.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It was you who started a blockade!

GROMYKO

We started a blockade to hunt down unauthorised currency in our zone which you refused to submit to!

TRUMAN

I am despatching sixty atomic capable B29'S to Great Britain.

FORRESTAL

They need to be under military control...

TRUMAN

What if the Russians don't end the blockade?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Russians aren't going anywhere. If the blockade doesn't end...

FORRESTAL

We have Operation Broiler...

MCNAMARA

The latest war plans from the Pentagon...

LIGHTS on FORRESTAL and TRUMAN.

FORRESTAL

We drop eight plutonium bombs in Moscow and seven more on Leningrad...a total of about a hundred and thirty three atomic bombs against seventy of their cities.

TRUMAN

And if the war continues...?

Pause.

TRUMAN

Well?

GROMYKO

Yes. Well?

FORRESTAL

Within two years we drop another two hundred atomic bombs on the Soviet Union. This will destroy at least forty percent of Soviet industry.

TRUMAN

And casualties?

MCNAMARA

The inconvenient truth of nuclear warfare...

FORRESTAL

Around seven million. Give or take. The Joint Chiefs all agree on this one Mr. President.

TRUMAN

The Joint Chiefs all agree to the total destruction of another country...

FORRESTAL

Yes Mr. President. We've been spending ninety eight percent of all the money for atomic energy on weapons. Now if we aren't going to use them...

TRUMAN

They are a deterrent force! The idea is never to use them!

MCNAMARA

The hope of another generation. The military never disavows the first use of nuclear weapons...they just don't admit it.

FORRESTAL

I firmly believe we need to take control of atomic weapons away from the Atomic Energy Commission and place it firmly in the hands of the military commanders in the field.

MCNAMARA

They will still be asking twenty years later...

TRUMAN

If Forrestal couldn't realise that military control of nuclear weapons made him weaker, I couldn't possibly save him. Even as he advocated for the military, he dug a bigger hole to bury himself in.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And you too Harry...

MCNAMARA

The President of the United States feeds his Secretary of Defense to the Joint Chiefs...

TRUMAN

A small sacrifice against a possible revolt. No administration could stand against that kind of pressure.

LIGHTS on TRUMAN and FORRESTAL who is falling apart.

FORRESTAL

The Joint Chiefs need a clear resolution on whether or not we are to use the A bomb in war...

TRUMAN

But we are not at war!

FORRESTAL

But in all likelihood...if the Soviets don't accede to our demands...

TRUMAN

Do you agree with them Forrestal?

FORRESTAL

(with a sudden burst of resolution)

For reasons of national security, the Soviets should never be given the slightest reason to believe the US would even consider not using atomic weapons against them...if necessary.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And so the ethos of national security is born...

MCNAMARA

...by exaggerating the danger posed by the Soviet Union and underestimating American capabilities.

GROMYKO

Your Forrestal becomes obsessed with the possibility of nuclear war and America's so called "unpreparedness"...even though we still had no nuclear weapons and yours numbered in the hundreds.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We had to dissuade you of even thinking of developing nuclear weapons...

GROMYKO

Or completely destroy us.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

America could accept nothing less...

GROMYKO

And so your country is embraced by nuclear paranoia...

MCNAMARA

And with Forrestal, social and nuclear paranoia become one...

LIGHTS on FORRESTAL and JOURNALIST. FLASH of cameras.

FORRESTAL

We are presently ascertaining the capabilities of the big bombers to attack industrial targets.

JOURNALIST

What kind of industrial targets Mr. Secretary?

FORRESTAL

Moscow and Leningrad should be taken as early targets...both being industrial cities.

JOURNALIST

So we are talking about destroying the Soviet Union over an incident in Berlin?

LIGHTS.

MCNAMARA

America has entered a new phase...a doctrine of retaliation for any supposed attack on her allies.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

For the Russians to take us seriously it was the only way.

MCNAMARA

But there was no attack...only a blockade.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Which is in itself an act of war...as you only know too well.

FORRESTAL

I am surrounded by sharks that I have helped feed...a military geared up for total war at a moments notice!

MCNAMARA

Bases established all over Europe...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The beginning of a nuclear response on a hair trigger alert...

MCNAMARA

The founding of NATO and a permanent military stand off between East and West.

FORRESTAL

The Berlin blockade demonstrated the Soviets objective to dominate the world!

GROMYKO

Even as we eased transport restrictions...and only then did you decide to ease waving atomic bombs in our faces!

FORRESTAL

The atomic bomb is America's only hope yet I fear this threat itself will not be a deterrent to their making war!

MCNAMARA

After Berlin, Forrestal lost any semblance of control over a military he helped to empower.

TRUMAN

The end was near. Anyone in the State Department or high enough at the Pentagon knew it. He should have resigned, not let it come to this.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to TRUMAN)

But it did Harry...with no small helping hand from you.

MCNAMARA

Maybe he was loyal to his president...not just his country...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

March 1st 1949...

LIGHTS on a distraught FORRESTAL and TRUMAN.

TRUMAN

I willingly accept your resignation.

FORRESTAL

Are...are you sure?

TRUMAN places a copy of his resignation in front of him. FORRESTAL, in abject defeat, signs it. LIGHTS on FORRESTAL, a broken man.

FORRESTAL

You are a loyal fellow...you are a loyal fellow...you are a loyal fellow...

TRUMAN

I was told they found him in his office, repeating these words. I had awarded him the Distinguished Service Medal only hours earlier...

## MCNAMARA

America's first Secretary of Defence is admitted to Bethesda Naval Ward suffering from severe depression...

## TRUMAN

He had lost his marbles. Of course, we could never admit this publicly.

## MCNAMARA

So James Forrestal, in the grip of severe mental illness, is placed in a VIP suite with his own windows...

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

To keep up the facade.

FORRESTAL'S figure is criss-crossed with shadows. He gently steps through them.

## MCNAMARA

His body is found thirteen floors below on the roof of the corridor between two wings of the building.

LIGHTS on TRUMAN behind the podium. The FLASH of cameras.

## TRUMAN

Mr. James Forrestal took his own life at the US Naval Hospital at Bethesda Maryland at 2.00am on the 22nd of May 1949.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Before this leap of death he made the frenzied cry "Russian tanks!"

## GROMYKO

Forrestal had great admiration for the Soviet Union during the war. I spoke with him many times. Now Russia became a repository for all his fears.

LIGHTS. HANDEL'S Largo is playing. All on stage gather around FORRESTAL for his funeral. MCNAMARA and DULLES remain detached from this action.

## TRUMAN

The Navy Band played Handel's "Largo", the Air Force Band played "Lead Kindly Light", and as we slowly marched from the Amphitheatre to the high hillside where Jimmy would find peace at last, the big Army band played "Onward Christian Soldiers".

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA as he watches the proceedings.

## MCNAMARA

I never reached those depths. Forrestal allowed himself to embody the Cold War...all its paranoia...all its dangers.

## GROMYKO

Russia paid attention to what America's Secretary of Defence said and did...the virtual war footing at the end of the greatest of all wars, against a country that could barely feed its own people. We knew of Forrestal's paranoia, the warnings of Soviet deception, the Truman Doctrine, the wild exaggerations of Soviet military might. How else could it look? The United States was preparing to destroy us.

## LIGHTS.

## ACT ONE SCENE THREE

## LIGHTS on DULLES and TRUMAN.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

August 1949. The Russians successfully detonate its first atomic bomb.

## TRUMAN

It's unmistakable they said. They showed me the finger prints of fission products and other radio active debris associated with the detonation of the advanced plutonium bomb. Fifteen years....it took them four.

## GROMYKO

As Stalin said, if we had been late with the atomic bomb by a year and a half, then perhaps we would have had it tested on ourselves.

## TRUMAN

I can't believe it! All my advisors talked glowingly about our years of opportunity with US monopoly on the bomb.

## GROMYKO

You backed us into a corner. Since Potsdam, Iran, Berlin, you threatened us with nuclear destruction.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

With China now Communist, the Soviets with the bomb, they're on the march. Asian nationalism is anti foreign, anti white, and anti capitalist.

## MCNAMARA

Did you really believe that?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

No other belief was possible.

TRUMAN

Almost any number of Soviet bombers could cross our borders and fly to most of our targets in the US without a shot being fired at them and without being challenged in any way. Any plan must defeat the Soviets decisively.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

In nuclear thinking that means...

TRUMAN

...the destruction of the Soviet Union as a viable society. With their having the bomb, it is the only alternative.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And so the arms race gets off to an official start on the 23rd of January 1950.

MCNAMARA

They are following our lead every time! Becoming what we want them to be...implacable, untrustworthy, Godless Communists!

GROMYKO

Which is exactly what we thought of God fearing capitalists!

LIGHTS on DEAN ACHESON, PAUL NITZE with  
GENERAL CURTIS LE MAY with TRUMAN.

GROMYKO

The Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Where is the fourth?

GROMYKO turns away as if the answer is obvious.

LE MAY

Operation Trojan Mr. President...

MCNAMARA

General Curtis Le May, creator of SAC; Strategic Air Command, the Babe Ruth of Bombers, responsible for the incineration of over seventy Japanese cities...

TRUMAN

What does Trojan require General...



LE MAY

An initial air offensive consisting of one hundred and thirty three atomic bombs on seventy Soviet cities using a combination of B29'S, B50'S and the new B36, with more bombs ready to be dropped once they come off the assembly line.

MCNAMARA

Even as the Soviets lacked an inter continental bomber force and would not have the capability for another five years...

LE MAY

A perfect opportunity for a first strike...

GROMYKO

You are plotting genocide against a civilian population...

TRUMAN

I want a crash program to increase the US atomic arsenal from fifty to three hundred within twelve months.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Truman listened. He recognised the danger America faced.

MCNAMARA

Kennedy recognised many dangers. Some within his own military.

TRUMAN

What are the estimated casualties?

ACHESON

About 2.7 million killed outright from the initial blast...about four million injuries.

TRUMAN

That's all?

ACHESON

Life would be vastly complicated for about 2.8 million more.

MCNAMARA

Dean Acheson, the new breed of Cold Warrior...and Forrestal's replacement...

TRUMAN

How complicated?

ACHESON

There would be virtually no hope of survival.

TRUMAN

Yes, but would it deliver a knock out blow. That's why I commissioned two reports in the first place.

ACHESON

Well no Mr. President. They wouldn't.

TRUMAN

After destroying seventy cities? After an attack of this size?

ACHESON

We calculate the Communist leadership would still dominate. In addition, the capability of Soviet armed forces to advance rapidly through selected areas of Western Europe, the Middle East and the Far East would not be seriously impaired.

MCNAMARA

There would never be enough bombers, enough targets, the knock out blow would always be elusive.

LE MAY

If I had it my way, we'd attack the Soviets with everything we've got at the first available opportunity...every soldier thinks something of the moral aspects of what he is doing. But all war is immoral and if you let that bother you, you're not a good soldier.

MCNAMARA

Le May was the only man capable of ordering a first strike against the Soviets before the United States government even knew about it.

GROMYKO

But nobody in your government wanted to know about it.

LE MAY

SAC could do it. And if the Russians even thought about attacking us first, I was prepared to send all bombers with every weapon available to annihilate the bastards! There would be no time for Presidential approval.

TRUMAN

He wouldn't have dared.

MCNAMARA

Le May feared no one. Least of all the President of the United States. And anyhow, once the dice were rolled, who would hold him to account?

LIGHTS.

NITZE

We have a new weapon Mr. President. One that could guarantee the knock out blow.

MCNAMARA

Paul Nitze enters the fray, supreme Cold Warrior, more warlike than the generals in the Pentagon. He sat in the vast wasteland of Hiroshima as part of the Strategic Bombing Survey in 1946 and did not realise a threshold had been crossed.

NITZE

(pointedly to MCNAMARA)

I applied calipers to the dead and faced the truth of what had already been happening.

TRUMAN

What kind of weapon?

LIGHTS on TRUMAN and NITZE. NITZE lays out his plans on the war room table.

NITZE

It's a hydrogen bomb Mr. President. We call it a fusion weapon, combining hydrogen and helium. It's thermonuclear. The amount of energy created is unlimited.

TRUMAN

How does it compare to Hiroshima?

NITZE

A single hydrogen bomb...over one thousand times the yield of the weapon used on Hiroshima.

MCNAMARA

You couldn't see any difference between what we had done with conventional weapons against Tokyo and the devastation we inflicted upon Hiroshima.

NITZE

The numbers told the story. Firebombing killed just as many. We had already crossed the threshold. The science behind it was irrelevant.

MCNAMARA

You militarised the State Department, turning foreign policy into military policy...

NITZE

(rapturously)

Exactly! My name derives from Nike, the Greek goddess of victory...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Forrestal was derided for the same beliefs, but there was no emotional distress to keep you on the margins of power.

MCNAMARA

And for Nitze, victory had to be absolute and uncompromising.

NITZE

With NSC 68 I made the theology of nuclear war fighting central to the military establishment in Washington...

TRUMAN scans the document in his hands.

TRUMAN

It's talk of a last ditch military confrontation. It dooms everything I am trying to do as a President...

MCNAMARA

Nitze's brainchild is born April 7th 1950. It would haunt those of us who knew what it meant for decades to come...

LIGHTS on GROMYKO who quotes chapter and verse from NSC 68.

GROMYKO

"The Kremlin regards the United States as the only major threat to the achievement of its fundamental design. There is a basic conflict between the idea of freedom under a government of laws and the idea of slavery under the grim oligarchy of the Kremlin..."

TRUMAN

The political pressures this document would unleash threaten every budgetary necessity I have already outlined...

NITZE

NSC 68 calls for resistance every where and any where, with military force and the nuclear threat in the forefront. As soon as Moscow believes it can prevail in an armed conflict with the US it will attack...

GROMYKO

"The Soviet Union...unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world..."

TRUMAN

And if the Russians learned of it...

GROMYKO

We learned of it.

MCNAMARA

So as the Korean War rages on, Truman comes under increasing pressure to use nuclear weapons...

LIGHTS on TRUMAN, ACHESON, LE MAY and NITZE  
in the war room.

NITZE

Operation Shakedown. General Le May's private plan for the complete destruction of the Soviet Union.

LE MAY

Kill a nation. Six hundred atomic bombs against as many targets. So secret not even the President knows.

GROMYKO

But we have no interest in the Korean conflict.

LE MAY

The Joint Chiefs are utterly convinced the Russians are using Korea as a feint...we deploy most of our forces over there and then they hit us with a general war against the US through Europe.

ACHESON

A powerful blow could be delivered to the Soviet Union but our capabilities right now would not force the Kremlin to capitulate. General MacArthur's urging a complete mobilisation of troops to invade North Korea and China.

TRUMAN

I've seen his proposal...

NITZE

And..?

NITZE

We must meet force with maximum force as we had never failed to do in the past!

TRUMAN

I am trying to prevent World War Three and MacArthur is doing everything he can to start it!

NITZE

He is doing what is expected of him. This is what NSC 68 looks like in action...rollback of Communist forces wherever and whenever they are faced.

MCNAMARA

And bringing the world to the brink. Truman understood this. There was something else he said on November 30th...

NITZE

He endorsed my plans.

MCNAMARA

With one caveat...

TRUMAN

The hydrogen bomb is a terrible weapon and it should not be used on innocent men women and children who have nothing whatever to do with this military aggression. That happens when it is used.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

No matter what Truman said, how he appeared in public, he never forgot what he had ordered...

ACHESON

No decision has been made on its use. The atomic bomb remains under the president's sole authority.

NITZE

But it didn't. Never has.

MCNAMARA

Truman is presented with NSC 100, calling for a surprise nuclear attack on China.

NITZE

The US is now on a war of survival. The US is losing that war. The hour is late.

ACHESON throws down an order for TRUMAN to sign.

ACHESON

We send Le May's atomic bombers against China and warn the Soviets they will be attacked for any aggression.

MCNAMARA

If he signs, another trip wire is eliminated. You cannot destroy China without obliterating the Soviet Union. They will have to respond!

NITZE/GROMYKO

Exactly.

TRUMAN

I cannot bring myself to order the slaughter of twenty five million non combatants. I just cannot make the order for a Third World War.

MCNAMARA

But eventually a president would come who would see the possible destruction of nuclear war as irrelevant...

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

In a short time from now, the largest force ever known to man will be unleashed somewhere over the Pacific. The tiny island of Elugelab, part of the Marshall group of islands, will play host to the first hydrogen bomb test... On this day November 1st 1952 on the tiny Enitwotok atoll in the Pacific, Operation Ivy is about to commence...

LIGHTS. The countdown for the test begins.

MCNAMARA

Ten...

All on stage face the audience.

JOURNALIST

The mushroom cloud which was more like a fireball reached 57,000 feet in two and half minutes...

MCNAMARA

Nine...

JOURNALIST

When the shock hit the deck of our ship, the Estes, the cloud had reached 100,000 feet...

MCNAMARA

Eight...

JOURNALIST

After about five minutes, the cloud splashed against the stratosphere and spread out, cresting at twenty seven miles, eight miles at the stem, filling up the sky...

MCNAMARA

Seven...

JOURNALIST

At its furthest extent, Mike, billowed out from a thirty mile stem to form a canopy larger than one hundred miles wide. Radioactive mud started to fall out of the sky...

MCNAMARA

Six...

JOURNALIST

A B36 orbiting fifteen miles above ground zero at fourty thousand feet had its wings heated ninety three degrees almost instantly..

MCNAMARA

Five...

JOURNALIST

As one sailor wrote to his mother, "You would swear that the whole world was on fire."

MCNAMARA

Four...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

A new form of deterrence must come into place.

MCNAMARA

Three...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

One where we are prepared to use our nuclear force at a moments notice.

MCNAMARA

Two...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nuclear containment as an instrument of first, not last resort!

MCNAMARA

One...

SOUND of a huge explosion. All on stage attempt to withstand the force which threatens to blow them into eternity.

JOURNALIST

The tiny island of Elugelab had vanished.

End of Act One



## Act Two

## ACT TWO SCENE ONE

## VOICE OVER

(singing)

“Ike for president, Ike for president,  
 Ike for president, Ike for president.  
 You like Ike, I like Ike, Every body likes Ike—for president.  
 Bring out the banners, beat the drums,  
 We'll take Ike to Washington.  
 We don't want John or Dean or Harry.  
 Let's do that big job right.  
 Let's get in step with the guy that's hep.  
 Get in step with Ike!

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Eisenhower?

## MCNAMARA

“If war comes there wouldn't be enough bulldozers to scrape the bodies off the streets...”  
 Ike said that...

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

He was no warmonger. Leave him to his dream of endless rounds of golf...

## GROMYKO

(To DULLES)

With you by his side the world almost found out how many bulldozers it would need...

## MCNAMARA

November 1952. Eisenhower wins a landslide victory over Truman...

LIGHTS on EISENHOWER behind the podium.

## EISENHOWER

I pledge to the American public that I will do everything in my power as the President of the  
 United States to get us out of this mess in Korea...

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The press fall into raptures as the war hero becomes the war leader...

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST gazing at EISENHOWER in  
 admiration.

JOURNALIST

The timbre of his voice...the vigour of his gestures, the authority of his movements...that loose rolling, yet somehow assertive stride...the blue eyes of a force and intensity singularly deep, almost disturbing, above all commanding. His easy air of personal authority seemed, of all hopeful facts of 1952, the most promising for the future...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The American people wanted change. I knew Eisenhower could be elected and we shared similar views on America's role in the world...

MCNAMARA

But not similar enough...and still you become his Secretary of State...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

He was naive...trusting like the British that somehow things would work out with the Soviets, not realising the world was in acute crisis...but he was still the Republican Party's best hope...

MCNAMARA

You were the preacher politician and it scared people, particularly our allies.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

"We shall again make liberty into a beacon of light of hope that will penetrate the dark places..."

MCNAMARA

Liberation in the minds of Europeans means war and that we are going to be the aggressor...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

"It will mark the end of the negative futile and immoral policy of 'containment' which abandons countless human beings to a despotism and godless terrorism..."

MCNAMARA

The British almost begged Eisenhower not to make you Secretary of State.

GROMYKO

(incensed)

"A fire breathing war monger who would obliterate Europe with hydrogen bombs..."  
Churchill was finally right about something.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We must be prepared to confront other nations with the utmost levels of violence.

MCNAMARA

January 12th 1954. You deliver to the Council of Foreign Relations in New York...the speech...

GROMYKO

One that would simply become known as the “massive retaliation speech”...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Enough! I had little choice but to follow the path that was laid out in front of me..

MCNAMARA

Then follow it once more...the podium is there...

LIGHTS. DULLES, like a man knowing he is about to face his own execution, goes behind the lectern to address the Council of Foreign Relations.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

There is no local defense which alone will contain the mighty land power of the Communist world...rather the way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing. This means reinforcing local defenses with the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power, the power of America's strategic nuclear arsenal..

MCNAMARA

And so the aftershocks began as every capital in Europe wondered what in hell you were talking about.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The United States makes its intentions very clear so that a potential aggressor...

GROMYKO

The Soviet Union...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

...will not miscalculate the certainty and strength of the American response.

LIGHTS on JOURNALIST and DULLES.

JOURNALIST

Mr. Secretary, does this mean America is prepared to go to all out nuclear war over every conflict around the world?

GROMYKO

Tell your American public the truth...you have set a tripwire for nuclear showdown over any dispute that escalates into conflict!

MCNAMARA

(To DULLES)

Churchill never liked you...despite his fear of Communism, he often found you the bigger threat.

GROMYKO

(to DULLES)

Because he was the bigger threat!

MCNAMARA

Churchill was convinced it was a bluff.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It is no bluff. We are prepared to respond with massive retaliatory power!

MCNAMARA

Eisenhower could never have approved of this. He never liked nuclear weapons in the first place. You will be besieged by every country that you consider an ally in the fight against Communism. The protests will never end until you explain America's position.

LIGHTS on EISENHOWER and DULLES.

EISENHOWER

Nuclear weapons should always be a backdrop...their message in our foreign policy subtly communicated. I removed the phrase "retaliatory striking power from the GOP platform back in '52 for that reason.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Then why don't you remove it now?

EISENHOWER

You are my Secretary of State. I have to trust you know what you are doing...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We are preventing war by having a nuclear armed air force that no one would want to provoke.

MCNAMARA

But it became a weakness. Nobody took the threat seriously and if your allies did they were worried we might start a nuclear war without them. The rest didn't believe we would.

GROMYKO

You cannot leave it out there as it currently stands. Your words have made the world a more dangerous place, regardless of our response.

MCNAMARA

March 16th...the qualifications begin...

LIGHTS. DULLES is behind the podium.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Massive atomic and thermonuclear retaliation is not the kind of power which could most usefully be evoked under all circumstances...

MCNAMARA

But the damage has been done. Military planning, not to mention the make up of US forces are irrevocably changed, making the United States more dependent on nuclear capability.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We had no choice! We could never match the Soviets man for man, tank for tank. It would have bankrupted us without achieving security over a sustained period.

MCNAMARA

Security through the threat and intimidation of nuclear blackmail.

GROMYKO

Stalin has died only a week before! And with it an era of the Soviet Republic. We turned to the West...to the United States looking for better relations....

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Obviously you weren't looking hard enough...

GROMYKO

The new Premier, Malenkov knew that US preparedness for nuclear war meant you were considering a first strike...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Only if pushed by the Soviets.

GROMYKO

But he hoped for a better relationship, a new one with the US...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

How were we supposed to know?

GROMYKO

He made a speech outlining a new course for Soviet/US relations...

MCNAMARA

But no one was listening...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

March 15th 1954. President Eisenhower and Le May discuss US nuclear preparedness...

LIGHTS on EISENHOWER and LE MAY.

EISENHOWER

Alright General, I want to hear it from you. How do SAC'S war plans fit in with the stated policy that the United States will never strike a first blow.

LE MAY

Mr. President, I have heard that thought stated many times and it sounds very fine. However, it is not in keeping with United States history. Just look back and note who started the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Indian Wars, hell, the Spanish American War! It was us. Now I want to make it clear I am not advocating a preventive war, however I believe that if the US is pushed in the corner far enough, we would not hesitate to strike first.

EISENHOWER

And what would this first strike entail?

MCNAMARA

The SAC Basic War Plan 1954...

LE MAY

We could lay down an attack of six hundred to seven hundred and fifty bombs, the latest mass produced Mark IV over the DGZ'S...

EISENHOWER

The DG what...?

LE MAY

Designated Ground Zeros. And four hundred and nine airfields. We come from different directions simultaneously to overwhelm their early warning system. Russia would be nothing but a smoking radiating ruin inside of two hours.

EISENHOWER

Two hours to kill a nation...

GROMYKO

My nation.

LE MAY

World War Three would be over in less than thirty days. All that's required is a provocation Mr. President...a reason to put the plan into effect.

EISENHOWER

Is that a statement or a wish...

MCNAMARA

March 1954. The first real test of your policy would begin...

LIGHTS on DULLES and EISENHOWER.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Chiang Ki Shek has placed fifty eight thousand troops on the islands of Quemoy and Matsu...

EISENHOWER

Where?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Quemoy and Matsu Mr. President. Both islands lie less than a mile off the Chinese coast.

EISENHOWER

So, what has been the Chinese response?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

They're shelling the island.

EISENHOWER

What do the Joint Chiefs recommend?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Joint Chiefs recommend an immediate nuclear response on the Chinese mainland.

EISENHOWER

They're proposing I risk nuclear war over two tiny islands...?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

This would follow the massive retaliation doctrine Mr. President. The Chinese can't be allowed to get away with this. We need to attack select targets and dispatch US troops immediately.

EISENHOWER

What about the British?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Eden is worried. Churchill on the other hand...

LIGHTS on GROMYKO.

GROMYKO

World War Three over two tiny islands?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

These islands represent the battleground of the Cold War...

GROMYKO

Historically the islands have always belonged to China.

MCNAMARA

November 23rd. The situation deteriorates. ..

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Thirteen captured American flyers from the Korean conflict are sentenced by the Chinese government.

GROMYKO

Churchill doesn't believe in your domino theory.. He wants you to negotiate.

EISENHOWER

Maybe we should negotiate...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Out of the question Mr. President. It would be seen as a weakness in our resolve.

MCNAMARA

March 10th 1955...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Mr. President the Joint Chiefs are preparing an atomic war over Quemoy and Matsu.

GROMYKO

I am less than impressed by these turn of events.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The time has come to prepare the American people for a possible atomic attack on China...

GROMYKO

Which means Soviet annihilation.

EISENHOWER

Possible...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

In all likelihood, given Chinese intransigence on the matter.

GROMYKO

What about Chang Ki Shek's intransigence! He shouldn't have placed those troops on the islands in the first place!

EISENHOWER

We haven't even begun negotiations.



JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I'm afraid Mr. President it is my duty to have to prepare you for the worst...

GROMYKO

(to DULLES)

For whom? You've has been waiting for this moment since Dien Bien Phu...offering two atomic bombs to the French who were incapable of defeating a peasant army..

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We'll have to use atomic weapons. They alone will be effective against the mainland airfields.

EISENHOWER

I was firmly against the use of nuclear weapons on Japan...at that late stage of the war...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to EISENHOWER)

However, the use of nuclear weapons against China will have a repercussive effect. It could create adverse sentiment so world opinion must be prepared.

GROMYKO

It will be damned from every corner of the globe and rightly so!

EISENHOWER

According to our allies...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You mean Churchill...

EISENHOWER

(to DULLES)

There is no reason short of an imminent Soviet attack on the US mainland that we should consider the first use of nuclear weapons in a Cold War...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Our allies cannot be considered in this equation Mr. President. The decision is ours alone.

EISENHOWER

How do you prepare the world for a nuclear attack over two islands that have nothing to do with US sovereignty?

GROMYKO

You don't. The world isn't ready for its own annihilation.

MCNAMARA

March 15th 1955. Eisenhower and Dulles go to the public...

LIGHTS. DULLES and EISENHOWER are surrounded by JOURNALISTS.

JOURNALIST

Is the United States seriously considering using tactical nuclear weapons over Quemoy and Matsu?

GROMYKO

There! An incredulous question from the American press. Who said it couldn't be done... You must ask why Chang Ki Shek has not been asked to withdraw his forces from Quemoy and Matsu!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But what does Chiang get out of it.

GROMYKO

(imploring)

Get the Chinese to agree they never invade Formosa...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

That is appeasement! We could never acquiesce to such an arrangement.

MCNAMARA

In the face of nuclear war any arrangement should be made...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

That wasn't your position in '62! Anyhow this is not the Cuban Missile Crisis. America can still dictate terms!

GROMYKO

Which translates into forcing its will on weaker nations.

MCNAMARA

(to DULLES)

Ike is taking your lead. Believing the Secretary of State should not be contradicted even when he is hopelessly wrong!

LIGHTS on EISENHOWER and the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

Mr. President, could you clarify these statements made by the Secretary of State?

EISENHOWER

Which statement were you referring to?

JOURNALIST

Are we considering using nuclear weapons over Quemoy and Matsu?

GROMYKO

Pull back! Do not go to the brink!

Pause.

EISENHOWER

Yes. Of course nuclear weapons would be used. In any combat where these things can be used on strictly military targets and for strictly military purposes, I see no reason that they shouldn't be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else.

JOURNALIST

A bullet?

GROMYKO

My God. A President who talks of strictly military purposes in the only country that used nuclear weapons for strictly political gain...

EISENHOWER

You have to look the facts in the face, but have the stamina to do with without just going hysterical.

GROMYKO

He cannot be serious...

MCNAMARA

It gets worse. The attack dogs now have a scent...

MCNAMARA

April 1955. Admiral Carney of the Joint Chiefs of Staff makes a prediction...

LIGHTS on DULLES and EISENHOWER who is reading from a memo.

EISENHOWER

War will break out with China on April 15th.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

How does he know that?

EISENHOWER

Why in God's name is he saying it!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Chinese will take the islands before the conference of Third World nations slated to begin on April 17th in Bandung Indonesia.

JOURNALIST

Will the United States begin a nuclear war Mr. President?

GROMYKO

Madness. Your NATO will not survive an American attack on mainland China.

MCNAMARA

April 5th 1955. Eisenhower writes...

EISENHOWER

“If conflict in the region should spread to global proportions, we would be entering a life and death struggle under very great handicaps. We would be isolated in world opinion.”

MCNAMARA

He is questioning his Secretary of State...

GROMYKO

...at last.

MCNAMARA

April 15th 1955.

All on stage prepare for the worst, looking for any sight or sound of impending doom.

MCNAMARA

Nothing..

EISENHOWER

Nothing.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nothing..?

GROMYKO

It seems the Chinese do not want the islands as much as they want Chiang's forces to leave them...

MCNAMARA

And that Chiang is trying to instigate a war between the United States and China.

GROMYKO

And came extremely close to succeeding.

LIGHTS on EISENHOWER and DULLES.

EISENHOWER

I want Chiang muzzled. Tell him to cease his provocations or...

GROMYKO

Make an example of him. The tail must never wag the dog!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Yes Mr. President..?

EISENHOWER

He will face the consequences.

GROMYKO

He will face nothing.

MCNAMARA

Nuclear war is once again narrowly averted. Eisenhower privately confides to Dulles...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Eisenhower took it upon himself to confide to me his innermost thoughts on the matter...

EISENHOWER

(to DULLES)

As much as two thirds of the world, and fifty percent of American opinion, opposes the course which we have been following.

Pause.

EISENHOWER

(to DULLES)

Does this bother you at all?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The world knew our policy on Communist aggression...

EISENHOWER

(to DULLES)

Our credibility has been eroded. And consequently that of the United States. We were seen as a country that could...did act rashly on the world stage. Ready to risk war over...

LIGHTS on DULLES.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I was only a few years away from death. Cancer eating away from inside.

MCNAMARA

The Suez Crisis would be your last hurrah.

GROMYKO

You encouraged the President to use nuclear weapons to settle an issue between two countries in a region untouched by US sovereignty. Thousands of civilians would have been killed.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The consequences of war.

GROMYKO

Even nuclear war..?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

I do not make those distinctions.

MCNAMARA

There was nothing confined to the battlefield in your response to China. Tactical nuclear weapons would only have trip wired a much larger global conflict...

GROMYKO

Massive retaliation.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It's the language you Soviets understand. We cannot match you in conventional might. Our nuclear superiority is the answer.

GROMYKO

You were prepared to use nuclear warheads against China, to make a point to my government..?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Of course. It's been that way since Hiroshima. Russia had to be contained...

MCNAMARA

...or destroyed.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Truman understood.

MCNAMARA

As long as you still advocate Massive Retaliation as the cornerstone of US foreign policy towards the Russians, there can be no such thing as a "limited nuclear war". The size intent, or destination of the warhead will make no difference. A new world will have been entered, and there is no means of controlling it.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But you would try Robert...becoming the new warrior of the nuclear age.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

LIGHTS on DULLES and MCNAMARA.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It is now your turn Robert. No longer on the sidelines of history or working as the President of Ford Motor Company. You become Secretary of Defence in the Kennedy administration.

## MCNAMARA

At his behest...it was thrust upon me.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You could have refused but you wanted the position...

## MCNAMARA

The Kennedy's snatched me out of the Presidency of Ford...I was only forty four years old and earning \$500,000 a year in 1960. The Falcon...my baby was the fastest selling automobile on earth...

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Kennedy was out of his depth and knew it. He thought the presence of intellectual talent would make up for his own shortcomings.

## LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

## JOURNALIST

Robert Strange McNamara has blown into Washington like an exhilarating breath of fresh air. He is trained in the analytical techniques of modern management, has experience in managing large scale industrial enterprise, combined with a genuine affinity for the reasonable exercise of power. For the first time a Secretary of Defense has established credible civilian control over the innumerable military bureaucracies, an achievement unattainable by all seven previous Secretaries of Defense. The President himself refers to Secretary McNamara as that "executive operation at the Pentagon." It is no secret President Kennedy considers McNamara his ablest member of Cabinet, winning the awe and admiration of all concerned...

## LIGHTS on KENNEDY and MCNAMARA. Flash of LIGHTS.

## KENNEDY

I have asked that Robert McNamara assume the responsibilities of the secretary of defence and I am glad and happy to say that he has accepted this responsibility. Mr. McNamara leaves the presidency of the Ford company at great personal sacrifice but he is recognised as do we all, the great issue which lies before us a nation, which is the survival of our country as a shining example of what a free society can be.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The one true coward of the Cold War...when America needed a hawk he turned into a dove with you chirping by his side...

MCNAMARA

For the last week I have been confronted with what has been the most difficult decisions of my life. I have made that decision. I have accepted the invitation of the president elect Kennedy to join his cabinet as secretary of defence...

LIGHTS.

JOURNALIST ONE

WHO IS THIS GUY?

JOURNALIST TWO

WHAT DOES HE EAT?

JOURNALIST THREE

GET COLOUR...GET COLOUR!

JOURNALIST ONE

The newly appointed Secretary of Defense presides over a budget close to fifty billion, controls more than a 150 billion worth of missiles, planes, ships, tanks and real estate around the world...

JOURNALIST TWO

KENNEDY'S GREAT TASK! PICKING THE VERY BEST!

JOURNALIST THREE

FORD'S MCNAMARA...WANTED ON THE NEW FRONTIER!

LIGHTS. MCNAMARA is behind the podium.

MCNAMARA

I accept my full duties with the Defense Department with a tremendous sense of challenge, with full confidence in the ability of the President-elect Kennedy to lead this nation forward at a time and in circumstances that demand the best that every citizen has to offer...

JOURNALIST TWO

The Pentagon has 7748 windows, 685 drinking fountains, 280 restrooms, 4200 clocks...but the most important room is Suite 3E880, that of Robert McNamara...

LIGHTS.

MCNAMARA

The shape of the bumper bar for next year's Ford just doesn't seem very important to me now...



JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It wasn't your destiny Robert. My grandfather was once Secretary of State, not a shanty Irishman like your own. There were...expectations.

MCNAMARA

I am now the Whiz Kid Secretary of Defence in the Kennedy administration...the best...and the brightest.

MCNAMARA is lost in his reverie.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Enjoy it Robert...the tragedy of Vietnam will not tarnish this moment in time...

MCNAMARA

There was so much hope...we were ready to change the world...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

With Paul Nitze as your Assistant Secretary of Defence...you almost did...

LIGHTS on NITZE. GROMYKO points at him accusingly.

GROMYKO

Kennedy gave you carte blanche to choose who you wanted...and you pick the most dangerous advisor in Cold War history..!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Even I forced him out of the Eisenhower administration Robert...Ike thought he was too...combative...

MCNAMARA

He was the second generation of nuclear war fighters...every administration had to have one...anyhow...no one could keep him away...

NITZE

I waited patiently on the wings...with McNamara and Kennedy my time had come...and America was in mortal danger!

LIGHTS. GENERAL TOMMY POWER enters carrying a briefcase. He is tense, formal.

POWER

When it comes to the so called long term effects of nuclear weapons, it still hasn't been proven to me that two heads aren't better than one.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(with a flourish)

General Tommy Powers, head of Strategic Air Command, briefs McNamara on the Pentagon's general nuclear war plan...

MCNAMARA

Single Integrated Operational Plan. To go into effect fiscal year 1962. I'd never seen anything like it...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Joint Chiefs were testing your mettle early...changing nothing...prepared to give nothing..the Joint Chiefs in the full bloom of their power...

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA and POWER.

POWER

Mr. Secretary...

MCNAMARA

You may commence General.

POWER

SIOP 62, Mr. Secretary, calls for the launch of the entire US strategic nuclear force that is on alert, approximately 1459 nuclear bombs against 654 targets, mostly military and urban industrial against the USSR, Red China and Eastern Europe.

MCNAMARA

Why is Red China targeted?

POWER

They're part of the Sino Soviet Bloc.

MCNAMARA

And Eastern Europe?

Pause.

POWER

Eastern Europe hosts hundreds of Soviet air defense radar and missile sites. They have to be taken out, so SAC bombers can fly safely to the Russian heartland.

MCNAMARA

What are the expected casualties?

POWER

Approximately 175 million Russians, East Europeans, Chinese.

Pause. MCNAMARA flicks carefully through his copy.

MCNAMARA

According to your statistics General, SIOP 62 as a pre emptive first strike, would involve 3423 nuclear weapons totaling...let's see, 7847 megatons, killing 285 million Russians and Chinese, severely injuring 40 million more.

Pause.

POWER

That would seem about right.

MCNAMARA

And none of these figures have taken into account the radioactive fallout.

POWER

No.

MCNAMARA

In many cases here you have four weapons on a single designated ground zero.

POWER

To ensure at least one weapon would wreak the desired damage.

MCNAMARA

You realise the amount of fallout would be...fantastic.

POWER

At the end of the day if there are two Americans and one Russian...we win.

MCNAMARA

Well I certainly hope one of them is a woman.

POWER

The Russians need to believe we are capable of such a plan...to have a deterrence effect.

MCNAMARA

It's a pre emptive first strike plan for Christ's sake!

POWER

The whole idea is to kill the bastards.

MCNAMARA

So we kill hundreds of millions of people, in Eastern Europe and China, just because they live under Communist rule, without their government's having so much as laid a finger on the United States.

Pause.

POWER

Well...yes sir.

MCNAMARA

Do we have any options so that we don't have to hit China?

POWER

Well yeah...we could do that but it would really screw up the plan.

MCNAMARA

Albania is virtually obliterated in this plan, yet it has dramatically dissociated itself from the policies of the USSR?!

POWER

Within Albania's borders the Soviets have a huge air defense radar. It has to be taken out.

MCNAMARA

I've seen enough.

POWER prepares to leave.

MCNAMARA

You will receive official orders but I want the computers on all ICBM'S to allow for flexible response so they can be re programmed for different targets.

POWER

I don't know if that will-

MCNAMARA

I also want China removed from that plan. Do you understand?

POWER

Well Mr. Secretary, I really hope you don't have any friends in Albania, because we're just going to have to wipe it out.

LIGHTS.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And so your relationship to the warlords of the American military is damaged beyond repair on the first date...

MCNAMARA

They wanted me to believe their statistics on Soviet strength were unimpeachable..when the truth was we had a seventeen to one advantage in missiles.

GROMYKO

By 1962 we were still desperately behind the US in numbers of nuclear warheads.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

There is no way the Russian economy could sustain that level of productivity...

GROMYKO

We can't. But Russia too has new leaders, and Nikita Khrushchev wishes to redress the balance...

From this point, GROMYKO assumes the role of KHRUSCHEV. LIGHTS on ROBERT MCNAMARA, NITZE, and KENNEDY. MCNAMARA places some photos on the table in front of KENNEDY.

MCNAMARA

It's confirmed Mr. President. The U2 photos show the presence of Soviet medium range ballistic missiles in Cuba.

KENNEDY

The Russians have stated there are no offensive weapons in Cuba. I went on record and told Congress, the country, that they had nothing to worry about...

KHRUSCHEV

And they don't! As long as Cuban sovereignty is respected.

NITZE impatiently thrusts himself between KENNEDY and MCNAMARA.

NITZE

These are SS nuclear missiles Mr. President. We have a lot to worry about.

KENNEDY scans the photos.

KENNEDY

They look like footballs on a football field.

LIGHTS on LE MAY.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And Le May returns as the spiritual godfather to the new breed of Joint Chiefs, determined to be more militant than their predecessors...

LE MAY

These footballs have a range of eleven hundred miles, threatening major population centres in the United States...New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia.

MCNAMARA

We don't think they are operational, but it's only a matter of time.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to MCNAMARA)

Tuesday October 16th. 11.45am. You tread water between the military and your President, committing to nothing...

LIGHTS on KENNEDY, MCNAMARA and NITZE.

MCNAMARA

There are three possible courses of action for the US to take against Cuba and the Soviet Union. The first, engage Castro and Khrushchev openly on the diplomatic stage...

NITZE

Most of your inner circle disapprove of this option Mr. President.

MCNAMARA

Or declare an open blockade against offensive weapons entering Cuba.

KENNEDY

But this could be interpreted as an act of war by the Soviets...

NITZE

Precisely Mr. President.

KENNEDY

The third option...

MCNAMARA

Military action directed against Cuba starting with an air attack against the missiles then followed by an invasion.

KENNEDY is silent.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Kennedy's want to control the military, something no President has been able to manage since World War Two and the Joint Chiefs weren't going to allow to happen now...

MCNAMARA

(to KENNEDY)

There are no limited options with an invasion. If we attack, it has to be all out, or else there is a possibility we will not destroy all the missiles.

LE MAY

Mr. President, In Japan we killed more persons in a six hour period than at any time in the history of man. We killed off, what, twenty percent of the population of North Korea. Cuba offers no new frontier when it comes to military action.

KENNEDY

Can you guarantee me that an all out air attack will destroy the Soviet missile capability on the island?

MCNAMARA is silent.

LEMAY

We can afford to take aggressive action against Cuba Mr. President. The missile warheads are not likely to be in Cuba, or else we'd know about it and therefore they are not attached to the missiles.

NITZE

You cannot appear tough and avoid a confrontation that may lead to nuclear war Mr. President.

KENNEDY

This is one hell of a gamble.

LEMAY

I suggest we make our point by sending one hundred sorties over one hundred select targets.

KENNEDY

How many bombs do you want General and what exactly do you want to bomb?

LEMAY

The Air Force plan will effectively wipe Cuba off the face of the planet.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to MCNAMARA)

You increasingly favours the blockade option. 17th of October 1962...

MCNAMARA

U2 photos show the presence of IRBM'S...SS 5 nuclear missiles.

KENNEDY

IRBM'S..?

NITZE

Intermediate range nuclear missiles Mr. President. This is the greatest threat America has ever faced!

LEMAY

The Soviets will only be intimidated by the threat of maximum violence...

KENNEDY

I will not tolerate offensive missiles in Cuba!

KHRUSCHEV

It is too late for your president. The first shipment of nuclear warheads arrived on the Soviet freighter "Indigirka" over a week ago. 45,500 kilotons of TNT. There is nothing he can do to stop it.

LIGHTS.

LEMAY

(to KENNEDY)

The Joint Chiefs are unanimous. We must begin air strikes immediately.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

No longer head of JCS but still wielding power like an orchestra conductor.

MCNAMARA

(to KENNEDY)

All our forces are on full alert. Strategic Air Command has gone to Def Con Three.

KHRUSCHEV

As long as he does not give in to pressure from the right wing hawks, Kennedy will not attack.

KENNEDY

And what if they don't respond as we wish?

LEMAY

An air strike could destroy all the missiles...maybe ten to twenty thousand casualties.

KENNEDY

We go with the blockade.

NITZE

But this will be interpreted as a chink in our armour...a weakness in our resolve...

KENNEDY

At least a blockade allows us to start with minimal action and increase the pressure on the Soviets as is needed.

MCNAMARA

Quarantine Mr. President. We are initiating a quarantine. A blockade...as defined by international treaties, is an act of war.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Monday October 22nd 1962.



MCNAMARA

Three marine battalions have been brought in to reinforce the base at Guantanamo. Their nuclear forces are instructed to be ready to launch within minutes of your scheduled address to the American public...

LE MAY

We have twenty nuclear bombers in the air ready to strike the USSR.

NITZE

The Soviets will be preparing their own first strike...this is an opportunity Mr. President...send in the bombers...

LIGHTS on KENNEDY behind the lectern addressing the nation.

KENNEDY

This government as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military build up on the island of Cuba.

MCNAMARA

Monday October 22nd. 7.00pm...

KENNEDY

Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island.

LIGHTS.

KHRUSCHEV

Imagine Mr. President what if we were to present to you such an ultimatum as you have presented to us by your actions...

KENNEDY

I have directed that the following steps be taken...

KHRUSCHEV

How would you react to it? I think you would be outraged at such a move on our part. And this we would understand.

KENNEDY

First, to halt this offensive build up a strict quarantine of all military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being installed.

KHRUSCHEV

Having presented these conditions to us Mr. President, you have thrown down the gauntlet. Who asked you to do this?

KENNEDY

Second, I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance and its military build up.

KHRUSCHEV

All this is due not only to hatred for the Cuban people and their government but also for reasons having to do with the election campaign in the USA. What morals, what laws can justify such an approach by the American government to international affairs?

KENNEDY

Third, it shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring...a full retaliatory response.

KHRUSCHEV

When you lay conditions such as these before us, try to put yourself in our situation and consider how the USA would react to such conditions.

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA, NITZE and LE MAY.

MCNAMARA

Castro has mobilised all of Cuba's military Mr. President...

NITZE

He must be convinced a US attack is only days away...

KENNEDY

(reaching breaking point)

I am not going to start a nuclear war unless I am one hundred percent sure tactical missiles are on that island!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Tuesday October 23rd...

MCNAMARA

These just came in Mr. President.

MCNAMARA slams photos on the War Room table.

MCNAMARA

They were taken at three hundred and fifty feet. Nothing's going to get any closer.

LE MAY

(to KENNEDY)

When you can see the writing on the missiles, then you really know what you've got.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

10.00am. Wednesday October 24th. The quarantine begins...

MCNAMARA

The order has been given Mr. President to fist communicate with the Soviet vessels.

KENNEDY

And if they don't stop?

MCNAMARA

They have orders to fire across their bow.

KENNEDY

If that doesn't work..?

MCNAMARA

Our ships are instructed to blow off the shops rudder to stop any forward progress.

KENNEDY

I'm not sure the Russians will understand we had little choice.

LE MAY

Mr. President the likelihood is they have subs tracking their own vessels. We may have to...

KENNEDY

I don't want the Navy playing war games out there! Unless their subs make the first move.

MCNAMARA

We've raised the military alert to Def Con Two. The highest level in US history.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The doves have the stomach for war after all!

NITZE

Def Con One Mr. President will tell the Russians we really mean business!

LIGHTS.

KHRUSCHEV

You Mr. President are not declaring a quarantine but rather are advancing an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give in to your demands, you will use force.

LEMAY

Mr. President...some of the missiles deployed in Cuba are now operational.

KENNEDY

I don't believe the quarantine alone is going to force the Soviet government to remove its weapons from Cuba.

MCNAMARA

There has been no halt in their progress as far as development of missile sites.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to MCNAMARA)

Your pessimism guides the military's hopes along nicely.

KENNEDY

As my Secretary of Defence... what are you saying?

MCNAMARA

Maybe they are right...military action is the only way...

LEMAY

Hell the bastards are trying to camouflage them. The Russians aren't listening Mr. President. You have to escalate this further.

MCNAMARA

I don't think we are going to live to see another Saturday night.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

26th of October. 9.00pm...

KHRUSCHEV

You and I should not now pull the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war.

LIGHTS. KHRUSCHEV hands KENNEDY a letter.

KENNEDY

When did this arrive?

MCNAMARA

6.00pm. It has to be translated first.

KHRUSCHEV

Because the harder you and I pull, the tighter the knot will become.

LEMAY

The bastard's have blinked. Mr. President.

MCNAMARA

He's giving us a way out.

KENNEDY

Offer to introduce Turkish missiles into a potential settlement.

KHRUSCHEV

I propose we, for our part, will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba.

NITZE

There can be no deals! This will seem like appeasement Mr. President...

KENNEDY is stopped in his tracks by this comment. He faces KHRUSCHEV.

KENNEDY

Any deal regarding Turkey cannot be made public. You have to know this. It cannot look as if you forced us into making any concessions.

KHRUSCHEV

Then the necessity of the presence of our military specialists in Cuba will disappear.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Saturday October 27th. The worst day of the crisis...

MCNAMARA

A U2 has been shot down over Cuba...

LE MAY

(apoplectic)

How?!

MCNAMARA

It was hit by a surface to air missile. There is no sign of the pilot.

KENNEDY

U2 shot down?

MCNAMARA

Yes...it was found shot down.

KENNEDY

This is much of an escalation by them isn't it?

LE MAY

This is an act of war!

LIGHTS.

KHRUSCHEV

What is Castro doing? I gave no order to shoot down American planes!

MCNAMARA

We must be in a position to attack quickly! We've been fired on today. We're going to send surveillance aircraft in tomorrow. They are going to be fired upon without question.

KHRUSCHEV

I forbid further attacks on US surveillance aircraft. I do not care what Castro thinks!

LEMAY

I must insist Mr. President. We must strike Cuba no later than the 29th.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Castro orders his troops to continue to fire at US aircraft...

LIGHTS on KENNEDY and KHRUSCHEV.

KHRUSCHEV

You are disturbed over Cuba. You say this disturbs you because its ninety miles by sea from the coast of the United States of America. But you have placed destructive missile weapons which you call offensive in Turkey, literally next to us!

KENNEDY

You've got us in a pretty good spot here, because most people will regard this new letter as not an unreasonable proposal, I'll just tell you that.

KHRUSCHEV

I therefore make this proposal. We are willing to remove from Cuba the means which you regard as offensive. Your representatives will make a declaration to the effect that the US will remove its analagous means from Turkey.

Pause.

KENNEDY

The United States will quickly remove the Jupiters a few months after the crisis. This cannot be part of a public deal. And if you do not remove those bases we will.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Sunday. October 28th.

KHRUSCHEV

Esteemed Mr. President. I have received your message of October 27th 1962. I express my satisfaction and gratitude for the sense of proportion and understanding of the responsibility borne by you at present for the preservation of peace throughout the world.

LEMAY

It's just a ploy to buy more time. The Joint Chiefs are convinced an invasion is the only course of action.

KENNEDY

McNamara..?

MCNAMARA

Le May suggests we go in and make a strike on Monday. But...

KENNEDY

Yes?

MCNAMARA

...what if the missiles are armed and they use them..?

LEMAY

They wouldn't dare.

KENNEDY

I welcome Chairman Khrushchev's statesmanlike decision to stop building bases in Cuba, dismantling offensive weapons and returning them to the Soviet Union.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

November 21st, tensions begin to ease...

KENNEDY

I am formally ending the quarantine. And I want Strategic Air Command's Defense Condition lowered from Def Con Two to Def Con Four.

LEMAY

We should surround Cuba and fry it.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Of course you knew better Robert...even before you would grow older and wiser....

LIGHTS. MCNAMARA is alone.

MCNAMARA

We were one step away from nuclear war. That step was the invasion of Cuba. But what we, the military didn't know at the time was that we had grossly underestimated the Soviet and Cuban force strength. The Soviets had forty three thousand, not ten thousand combat troops on the island, and the Cubans...two hundred and seventy thousand.

LIGHTS on GROMYKO.

GROMYKO

Furthermore, you had no idea that tactical nuclear weapons were stationed along Cuba's shore. Khrushchev had given authority to General Pliyev to launch battlefield weapons in the event of a nuclear attack...

MCNAMARA

Surely he wouldn't have launched them...

GROMYKO

There is no question he would have launched them. Your Navy was also responsible for harassing our nuclear subs, forcing them to the surface. Thankfully the sub commanders chose to believe that you...your president knew nothing about this...

MCNAMARA is clearly shocked by this news.

MCNAMARA

But...I didn't...World War Three, possibly the end of the world, would have ensued.

GROMYKO

Khrushchev fought his hardliners and for the moment won this battle. They wanted no concessions, no deals, just like your generals.

MCNAMARA

An invasion of Cuba had been decided. Kennedy went along with the generals, and others...Acheson, Nitze...

GROMYKO

McNamara...

MCNAMARA

I did not believe in war...

GROMYKO

But did nothing to stop it. The only hope rested with Khrushchev...

MCNAMARA

Nine months after the crisis, Kennedy and Khrushchev sign a nuclear test banning treaty. Khrushchev counts on Kennedy remaining President until 1968...

GROMYKO

Will there be an invasion of Cuba? I am not a prophet and can give neither a prediction nor a promise. It's impossible to vouch for the imperialists; they never seek our advice. One thing that we do know is that for as long as Kennedy is in the White House it will not be easy to renounce the pledge not to invade Cuba. This commitment will bind Kennedy; it will bind the government of the United States. Two years remain before the next Presidential elections.

(MORE)



GROMYKO (cont'd)

Everyone is now saying that Kennedy will be re elected. This means that for the next six years the president will be bound by pledges not to invade Cuba.

MCNAMARA

November 22nd 1963. 2.00pm...

LIGHTS. KENNEDY is frozen in time. He stands next to a tombstone.

KENNEDY

I was here several weeks ago.

MCNAMARA

I chose the same spot for you just below the Cusks Lee Mansion. You can see across the Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial Mr. President. I remember you saying it was the best view in Washington.

KENNEDY kneels beside the tombstone.

KENNEDY

What does it say?

MCNAMARA

2.00pm. November 1963. Bobby Kennedy called me. The president had been shot in Dallas Texas. Forty five minutes later you were dead.

GROMYKO

You thought it was us...or the Cubans.

MCNAMARA

It crossed our mind.

GROMYKO

You put all your forces on full alert.

MCNAMARA

We had no idea what was to follow. Anyhow, after the humiliation you suffered over the Cuban Missile Crisis...

GROMYKO

Humiliation? We do not allow feelings such as these in our dealings over nuclear weapons. Kennedy proved he was someone we could deal with, who would not automatically be swayed by the right wing of your country. We too, were devastated by his death. He too felt the fear of a nuclear holocaust. Kennedy was a changed man and we respected him for that...

KENNEDY

No government or social system is so evil that it's people must be condemned as lacking in virtue. For our attitude is as essential as theirs.

The LIGHTS slowly fade on KENNEDY.

GROMYKO

No other president had the courage to admit such as thing...

MCNAMARA

And no future president would...

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS on image of PRESIDENT JOHNSON.

GROMYKO

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Bain Johnson is sworn in as the new president.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

This is where it all turns for you Robert...Johnson is an even worse prevaricator than Kennedy. You should have remained loyal to the dead president you truly loved...

MCNAMARA

And done what..?

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Resigned in '62, returned to what you were good at instead of trying to prove the Cold War was a game you could win single handed...

GROMYKO

Johnson is no Kennedy. He will do what is expedient as long as he can get consensus.

MCNAMARA

One of his first acts was to request a photo from each of the Joint Chiefs so he could put them on his wall and think fondly of them. The truth was he never wanted to deal with any of them.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(to MCNAMARA)

January 22nd 1964. The Joint Chiefs hand you NSAM 273.

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA and JOHNSON who holds a copy of the memo in his hand.

MCNAMARA

I'd already received an earlier memo from the Joint Chiefs, calling for deployment of US ground troops in Vietnam.

JOHNSON

That's something I want to avoid above all else. Without letting the Joint Chiefs know of course. What do you think of this.

MCNAMARA

I'm adamantly against it.

JOHNSON reads from the memo.

JOHNSON

"To ensure victory in South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs are of the opinion that the United States must be prepared to put aside as many of the self imposed restrictions which now limit our efforts and to undertake bolder actions which may embody greater risks..." They don't understand the politics involved. I don't want to a wider war. We simply show the North Vietnamese the futility of supporting the South.

MCNAMARA

All our studies show that whatever risks we take will not lead to victory over the North Vietnamese.

JOHNSON

We have to do something Bob. I never agreed with your comments about getting out of Vietnam. They didn't seem the right thing for a Secretary of Defence to say..

LIGHTS.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Johnson already had you under his spell didn't he? The praise was fulsome...describing you as...

MCNAMARA

(with a slight fervour)

...the very best of America. While he was awarding a Captain Dohlan the Congressional Medal of Honour...he interrupted the ceremony and said I was the very best of America...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Shanty Irishman's son ready to bask in the glow of an all powerful father figure...

GROMYKO

And who could be more powerful than the leader of the free world... rescuing one of Kennedy's orphan's from the wilderness of history...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

As long as you did his bidding.

GROMYKO

April 24th 1964...

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA and JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

Mr. Secretary, Senator Wayne Morris has been calling this “McNamara’s War.” What is your response to this?

MCNAMARA

This is a war of the United States Government. I am following the President’s policy and obviously acting in close cooperation with the Secretary of State. I must say, in that sense, I don’t object to its being called McNamara’s War and I am prepared to be identified with it and do whatever I can to win it.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

What were you thinking?

MCNAMARA

I have regretted those words ever since...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

An explanation for the inexplicable...

MCNAMARA

I was trying to say that I felt a responsibility to do everything...that I could to protect this country’s interest.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You made yourself a lightning rod for all the opposition this war would inevitably face...for every casualty or death. That’s why we have governments. Anyhow, proceed...

SOUND of thunderous jet engines screeching across the sky.

All on stage cover their ears. Deafening explosions.

MCNAMARA relives the moment, watching them in the sky like a farmer experiencing rain after a severe drought.

MCNAMARA

April 1965. Operation Rolling Thunder begins. Wave after wave of B52 bombers are sent to crush the peasant army of North Vietnam...!

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST who throws a question to MCNAMARA, still fixated on the display of military might in the skies above...

JOURNALIST

Mr. Secretary, do you think any of those bombs are hitting villagers...

MCNAMARA

(dismissive)

I learnt in World War Two bombs don't always fall where they're supposed to...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

We have now appealed to force in Vietnam and therefore we have got to win.

LIGHTS on JOHNSON and MCNAMARA.

JOHNSON

1500 tactical sorties over North Vietnam in April alone. Do you think this is enough to get the job done?

MCNAMARA

We've engaged Rand scientists to assist with the war effort...applying the principles of coercive bargaining and diplomacy through violence to the situation in Vietnam.

JOHNSON

This is already turning into a shooting war Bob. How on earth can they predict what the enemy is going to do?

MCNAMARA

We've developed... a computerised the theory of coercion through nuclear war fighting games and re applied it to conventional war...

JOHNSON

But all the experts are saying we're not fighting a conventional war...

MCNAMARA

Vietnam is the perfect opportunity. The theory of this plan is that we should strike to hurt but not to destroy, and strike for the purpose of changing the North Vietnamese decision on intervention in the South. Progressive squeeze and talk. Control the escalation... limited war.

JOHNSON

We've dropped the equivalent of three hundred Hiroshima sized bombs at twenty billion a year!

MCNAMARA

We've calculated the cost effectiveness of torture, defoliation, anti personnel weapons, carpet bombing, forced urbanisation and the systematic assassination of suspected VC sympathisers.

JOHNSON

And?

MCNAMARA

We should be winning this war...

JOHNSON

These are your theories. Any reason why they're not working in Vietnam?

LIGHTS.

GROMYKO

Maybe the North Vietnamese don't listen to or play along with Game Theory rules...

MCNAMARA

I've got six thousand marines surrounded at Khe Sanh.

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA and GENERAL WHEELER.

GROMYKO

Your new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Earle Wheeler, decides he too must press for tougher military action in Vietnam...

MCNAMARA

We chose him for his political skills...his ability to go along with the executive decisions of government...

LIGHTS.

WHEELER

We must hold onto Khe Sanh at any cost!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

A top secret cable is sent by Wheeler to the Commander of all Forces in South Vietnam, William Westmoreland...carefully bypassing you...

MCNAMARA

"If the situation in Khe Sanh should become more desperate, we should consider the use of nuclear weapons." I would never sanction this...

WHEELER

This is the perfect opportunity. Escalation dominance at its most perfect. Whatever you're trying to tell them they're not listening Mr. Secretary.

MCNAMARA

This could draw China, the Soviets into the conflict.

WHEELER

Then we go to the next rung in the ladder...

MCNAMARA

The use of tactical nuclear weapons should not be used in the present situation.

LIGHTS on JOURNALIST and MCNAMARA.  
FLASHES of light bulbs.

JOURNALIST

Are we about to use atomic weapons at or around Khe Sanh Mr. Secretary?

MCNAMARA

Nuclear weapons are part of our inventory in the field.

WHEELER

Then let the generals decide when they should be used in the field!

MCNAMARA

You'd be talking World War Three over a third world country that's resisted the conventional might of the greatest military on earth!

WHEELER

We can still give them something no country can resist...

MCNAMARA

(to JOURNALIST)

We have confidence in our soldiers and marines at Khe Sanh. There will be no defeat.

WHEELER

Send a message to Hanoi Mr. Secretary. Two atomic bombs spoke convincingly to the Japanese...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Listen to your generals. Wheeler is right. The prospect of nuclear attack brought an armistice in Korea and I suggest we at least consider what realistic threat of larger action is available to us for communication to Hanoi.

MCNAMARA

The use of nuclear weapons could drag the Chinese or the Soviets into this conflict, possibly leading to world war...

WHEELER

If our commitment proves to be unreliable, this could lead to our ruin and quite possibly a catastrophic war!

LIGHTS on MACNAMARA and JOHNSON.

MCNAMARA

Mr. President, the bombing should stop. Nothing we have tried is working..

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

November 2nd 1965...

MCNAMARA

It was twilight. Anti war protests had been limited, not drawing much attention from the press. A young Quaker , father of three young children, stood not forty feet from my window at the Pentagon. Without warning, he pours gasoline over himself from a gallon jug...and lit a match.I didn't realise it at first, but he was holding his one year old daughter at the time...A bystander noticed and screamed "save the child!" He flung her out of his arms.

MCNAMARA reads out from a letter.

MCNAMARA

"My husband, Norman Morrison, gave his life to express his concern over the great loss of life and human suffering caused by the war in Vietnam. He was protesting our Government's deep military involvement in this war. He felt that all citizens must speak their conviction about our country's action..."

Pause.

MCNAMARA

The war was the cause...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

May 18th 1966...the Queen Elizabeth Hotel Montreal.

LIGHTS. MCNAMARA behind the podium.

MCNAMARA

Security is not military hardware - though it may include it. Security is not military force - though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activity - though it may encompass it...Who is man? All the evidence of history suggests that man is indeed a rational animal - but with a near infinite capacity for folly. His history seems largely a halting, but persistent effort to raise his reason above his animality. He draws blueprints for Utopia. But never quite gets it built. In the end, he plugs away obstinately with the only building material really ever at hand: his own part comic, part - tragic, part - cussed, but part - glorious nature...

LIGHTS.



JOURNALIST

The Secretary of Defense drops a bomb on Washington - WARMTH!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Without once mentioning Vietnam you told the world that US involvement in South East Asia was a categorical mistake...after I tried so hard to get us in there!

Pause. Berated and bloodied, MCNAMARA is an increasingly isolated figure on stage.

MCNAMARA

By 1967 we will have dropped over a million tons of bombs on South Vietnam, twice as much as that over the North...108,000 sorties, yet infiltration of North Vietnamese forces has risen from 35,000 to 90,000. Civilian casualties keep mounting...

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA and WHEELER.

WHEELER

We need a more ambitious bombing program...

MCNAMARA

What do you have in mind...

WHEELER

Attack the petroleum storage facilities near Hanoi and Haiphong.

MCNAMARA

I will sanction the attacks.

GROMYKO

The North Vietnamese quickly adapted dispersing fuel in underground tanks, increasing oil shipments from China and off loading from Soviet tankers onto offshore barges.

WHEELER

We have reached a cross over point with body counts. Enemy strength has stabilised or even diminished.

MCNAMARA pushes a document across to WHEELER.

MCNAMARA

Read this...

WHEELER

...May 23rd 1967, the CIA concludes, "Despite increasingly effective "search and destroy" operations...the Vietnamese Communists have continued to expand their main forces, both by infiltration and by local recruitment. It appears that the Communists can continue to sustain their overall strength during the coming year."

Pause.

MCNAMARA

What do you have to say?

WHEELER

Well...they're wrong. Your military still believes it can win this war...

MCNAMARA

By allowing the possibility of a genocidal conflict...destruction of all infrastructure, populous cities and towns...

WHEELER

Unleash the full force of America's military might...

MCNAMARA

Nuclear weapons.

Pause.

WHEELER

Exactly. Just about all of the President's advisors disagree with you...Harriman, Lodge, Komer, Rusk. Frankly Mr Secretary, you're isolating yourself.

MCNAMARA

An acceptable military solution is not possible. To save a few thousand Marines we dropped more bombs around the five mile perimeter of Khe Sanh than any other target in the history of warfare...including Hiroshima!

WHEELER

It worked. The North Vietnamese retreated...

MCNAMARA

Defense through deluge...a bankruptcy of tactics..!

WHEELER

I need 200,000 more troops Mr. Secretary and strongly urge we expand ground operations into Laos and Cambodia, increase bombing and mining of North Vietnam and start seriously thinking about an amphibious invasion north of the Demilitarised Zone.

MCNAMARA

You're talking about increasing troop levels to 670,000, mobilising the reserves and spending another ten billion annually on the war...

WHEELER

In order to win this is what has to be done.

MCNAMARA

And for every expansion the North Vietnamese have met and exceeded our capabilities of dealing with it.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

May 19th 1967. You...submit a final memorandum on the war to the President...

MCNAMARA

There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American consciousness and in the world of the United States-especially if the damage to North Vietnam is complete enough to be "successful".

WHEELER

Your memo has aroused strong feelings within the military, especially the Joint Chiefs.

MCNAMARA

Westmoreland cannot not be granted his requests. Escalation threatens to spin the war utterly out of control.

WHEELER

We want heavier US attacks against the North by land sea and air.

MCNAMARA

You know my position-

WHEELER

The Joint Chiefs want their feelings conveyed directly to the President...

MCNAMARA

...expressing their belief that invasion of North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia might become necessary, involving the deployment and possible use of nuclear weapons in Southern China.

WHEELER

Will you convey this directly to the President?

MCNAMARA

The Joint Chiefs have shown nothing but a continued willingness to risk nuclear confrontation. Despite all the logic against it.

WHEELER

That possibility has been the cornerstone of American military strategy since 1945. This is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness.

MCNAMARA

I will resist any further efforts to deploy atomic bombs in Vietnam.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Chiefs gave President Johnson the ultimatum...they hadn't felt the need to go around the Secretary of Defense since...

MCNAMARA

James Forrestal.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

August 25th 1967, a Senate Armed Services Committee's Preparedness Investigating Sub committee is called...

MCNAMARA

All five chiefs of staff and the five senior commanders in the bombing campaign testified against me...

LIGHTS on WHEELER testifying.

WHEELER

The air war in the North was an important and indispensable part of the US strategy for fighting the war in the South...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And the rest...bombing was their crystal ball through which any sort of victory seemed possible.

MCNAMARA

They wanted to "stop swatting flies and go after the manure pile." Only LeMay would talk like that...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The orchestra conductor once again. He was going after you Robert. You became the manure pile.

MCNAMARA

Nothing. There was nothing to show for all the bombs we dropped on Vietnam. The supplies still got through, the morale stiffened against us...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The Chiefs wanted you out Robert. And the hawks in government were willing to serve you up as their sacrificial lamb.

MCNAMARA

Some people were starting to think Le May was insane...advocating massive retaliation. I was bombing's intellectual apostle, the advocate of flexible response and he wanted Armageddon...just like in 1945.

WHEELER

Exactly.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But they still listened to him Robert. It was your state of mind they were worried about. The President didn't want another Forrestal.

MCNAMARA

Forrestal was insane. He committed suicide in a mental hospital! I was...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Yes...

MCNAMARA starts to show the cracks.

MCNAMARA

It...it was the war itself. The nature of it...the morality of it...what it was doing to the country before our very eyes and that we were completely unable to change. And the possibility of nuclear war...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You allowed yourself to embody the goal of saving Vietnam as it was progressively being destroyed.

LIGHTS on MCNAMARA behind the lectern.

MCNAMARA

I submit to you, I am Secretary of Defense and I am responsible for lives and I am not about to recommend the loss of American lives in relation to those targets...the destruction of all of them would not make any material difference in the war, and that is my only point.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But there was more wasn't there? Your final meeting with the President's senior advisors held at the State Department...

MCNAMARA

It was like any other meeting!

GROMYKO

You fell apart Robert. It is common knowledge even in Russia.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Stating the unutterable...

MCNAMARA, in one last gesture of defiance, rises to his feet and relives the moment. His voice shakes the foundations of the theatre.

MCNAMARA

THE GODDAMNED BOMBING CAMPAIGN, IT'S BEEN WORTH NOTHING, IT'S DONE NOTHING, THEY'VE DROPPED MORE BOMBS THAN IN ALL OF EUROPE IN ALL OF WORLD WAR TWO, AND IT HASN'T DONE A FUCKING THING!

Pause. All on stage are silent, as if witnessing someone's execution. LIGHTS. All stand to attention. The US national anthem is played. Hands are placed on hearts. JOHNSON places a medal on his chest.

MCNAMARA

Dear Mr. President...I cannot find the words to express what is in my heart today...

MCNAMARA is almost crippled with emotion. He cannot continue his speech.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You certainly couldn't.

MCNAMARA

That never happened to me before in my life...to this day I'm not sure whether I was promoted or fired.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

They made you Head of the World Bank. It was both.

MCNAMARA

February 27th 1968. As my last official act, I refuse General Westmoreland's request for 200,000 additional troops.

GROMYKO

Everyone thought you were suicidal by the end...some actually hoped...

MCNAMARA

I was not suicidal. Those last days were merely...the most difficult of my life...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

So instead of killing yourself you killed your career. Instead of taking an active opposition against a war you no longer believed in, you let it grind on for another seven years.

MCNAMARA

As you would have done Foster. Or reached for the unthinkable.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Which as Secretary of Defense you had to be prepared to do.

MCNAMARA

I laid the groundwork for the Outer Space Treaty of '67, the Non Proliferation Treaty of '68, the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty of '72...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And set in motion forces for nuclear growth that would continue for another twenty years...even as you knew nuclear war was completely irrational.

MCNAMARA

Three million six hundred thousand Vietnamese were killed..the equivalent in US population of twenty seven million.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You didn't admit that publicly for another twenty years...when it no longer mattered.

MCNAMARA sits, a broken man.

MCNAMARA

(to DULLES)

I finally had to abandon counterforce capability, the notion of graduated pressure, in favor of massive retaliation. You were right all along. The use of nuclear weapons has to be made...unthinkable.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

By this time no-one would listen to you...

GROMYKO

The light that was Robert McNamara...had gone out.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Your time was up. A new breed of warrior had arrived in the corridors of power, more ruthless than any of their predecessors...

GROMYKO

(Shaking his head)

Kissinger...

LIGHTS on KISSINGER.

KISSINGER

I waited on the wings for my moment and now in the shape of a most improbable figure, it had arrived...

## Act Three

## ACT THREE SCENE ONE

LIGHTS. MUSIC. RICHARD NIXON stands waving to the throngs as the Republican Convention reaches its climax.

MCNAMARA

August 1968. Richard M. Nixon wins the Republican nomination in Miami...

KISSINGER

This is his favorite moment...when everything seemed possible..

MCNAMARA

The country was crying out for change.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nixon was an aberration. He should never have been made president.

KISSINGER

Not at all. He was the ultimate Cold War leader...not just talking about nuclear diplomacy...he pushed its limits beyond what any of you were capable of...

LIGHTS on NIXON at the lectern..

NIXON

This is a disastrous war based on a directionless foreign policy!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nixon has a dangerous misunderstanding of foreign policy. Winning the nomination, Nixon is of course a disaster. Now the Republican Party is a disaster.

KISSINGER

Fortunately, I thought, he can't be elected-or the whole country would be a disaster!

MCNAMARA

Unfortunately Nixon wins the November election...

NIXON

Victory for the VietCong would mean ultimately the destruction of freedom of speech for all men for all time, not only in Asia but in the United States as well...

MCNAMARA

Is he serious?



JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Don't worry. He said that in 1965.

MCNAMARA

I hear the crashing fall of dominoes...to the last decibel.

NIXON

As the peace candidate, I have a secret plan to end the Vietnam War!

MCNAMARA

(To KISSINGER)

And now you are working for him.

KISSINGER

He promised me I would be his national security adviser if I scuttled Johnson's peace initiatives with the North Vietnamese in 1968. How could I have refused..?

SOUND of celebratory music. (Hail to the Chief).LIGHTS on KISSINGER and NIXON waving to the throngs of supporters.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Mr. Nuclear Weapons meets Mr. Foreign Policy...

KISSINGER

However we got into Vietnam, whatever the judgement of our actions, ending the war honorably is essential for the peace of the world...

NIXON

Henry and I are like the "odd couple". But somehow, the son of Quaker farmer from California and a German Jewish immigrant would make it work...

KISSINGER

A new Administration must be given the benefit of the doubt and a chance to move toward a peace which grants the people of Vietnam what they have so long struggled to achieve: an opportunity to work out their own destiny in their own way.

MCNAMARA

He has ignored the fact that we are destroying Vietnam and ripping the cultural fabric of our own country...to end the war honorably.

KISSINGER

January 21st 1969. Nixon's first day in office and who should his first meeting be with? Not his Secretary of State or Defense. But his National Security Council Advisor. Me. I made sure the State Department was relegated to a secondary role and never be in a position to second guess the President.

MCNAMARA

Or you.

NIXON

From Vietnam to the Middle East the problems we faced abroad were immense, not to mention how the hell we deal with China...this man was going to help me deal with them all.

MCNAMARA

But uppermost in their minds was Vietnam...that was where the blood and treasure of this country was being spilt. Any victory had to happen here even if it meant letting the Arabs and Israelis blow each other to kingdom come...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nixon really can't remember whether he has read something in a newspaper or in an intelligence report...

LIGHTS on NIXON and KISSINGER.

NIXON

I have a plan Henry.

KISSINGER

Peace with honour?

NIXON

No. Operation Duck Hook.

KISSINGER

Duck Hook. Of course. I have read the notes.

NIXON

What do you think?

KISSINGER

It fits in with everything that I have written about, everything that I believe in Mr. President. Coercive diplomacy...a smooth escalation from conventional to nuclear weapons. No firebreaks.

MCNAMARA

I spent years trying to prevent this from happening.

LIGHTS on GROMYKO.

GROMYKO

Just as the head of your CIA submits an honest report that minimises the Soviet nuclear threat..

KISSINGER

“Consequently, we consider it highly unlikely that they will attempt within a period of the estimate to achieve a first strike capability...”

NIXON

Who wrote that Henry?

KISSINGER

Richard Helms Mr. President. Head of the CIA.

NIXON

This can't get out Henry. If the CIA minimise the Soviet threat...

KISSINGER

Duck Hook will be dead in the water...I think you should fire him Mr. President.

NIXON

I can't do that. The Senators have been alerted. It's too out in the open. If it looks like we're pressuring him to falsify -

KISSINGER

Re assess. Re assess their report.

NIXON

I don't want the CIA report to make us look like fools Henry.

KISSINGER

Helms knows when to yield a point. His statements are contradicting the public position of the Secretary of State. He will understand what to do...

MCNAMARA

Deletions will be made. When the CIA chief clashes with the Secretary of Defence, he just isn't a big enough guy on the block.

KISSINGER

It's all back on the table...Anti Ballistic Systems, and of course...Duck Hook.

NIXON

I don't want anyone else to know about this Henry. Other than my most trusted aides...like yourself. If word was to get out...

KISSINGER

Of course.

NIXON

I like to call it the November ultimatum. A carefully orchestrated series of threats culminating in the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the Vietnamese if they ignore my final ultimatum on...

KISSINGER

November 1st 1969.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

(with a Nixonian flourish)

Hence the November ultimatum!

KISSINGER

Makes complete sense Mr. President.

MCNAMARA

Duck Hook remains a secret to much of the Washington establishment.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nothing remains a secret for too long within the Washington establishment. William Watts, an assistant to the National Security Council, finds out by accident.

MCNAMARA

Watts recognised the high stakes gamble Nixon was taking...

KISSINGER

A savage unremitting blow will bring the North Vietnamese around.

NIXON

What if they don't Henry. What if they don't listen to our threats?

KISSINGER

When we meet with the North Vietnamese in Paris they will have to listen. Ultimately, they have no choice...

NIXON

I have another idea Henry. I call it the Madman Theory ...

KISSINGER

Yes...

NIXON

I want the North Vietnamese to believe that I've reached the point that I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that "for God's sake, you know, Nixon is obsessed about Communism.

(MORE)

NIXON (cont'd)

We can't restrain him when he's angry...and he has his hand on the nuclear button," and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace.

KISSINGER

(ecstatic)

You have the guts of a riverboat gambler Mr. President!

MCNAMARA

August 4th 1969. Paris France...the threats begin...

KISSINGER

If by November 1st no major progress has been made toward a solution, we will be compelled, with great reluctance, to take measures of the greatest consequences.

NIXON

That's not enough Henry. Eisenhower, Truman, they all made threats...they have to see we mean business.

KISSINGER picks up the red phone.

KISSINGER

You want them to get the message..? Alright.

KISSINGER

I am ordering all SAC forces to go to Def Con One.

LIGHTS. ALARMS. SIRENS. NOISE OF JET ENGINES. Images of American military might on a hair trigger alert.

NIXON

Christ Henry, we haven't done anything like this since the Cuban Missile Crisis!

KISSINGER

Maximum Force Readiness. Def Con Three alone should tell them we mean business. All B52'S and Minuteman missiles are poised for a full scale nuclear attack. The Soviets must pressure the North Vietnamese to give up their operations in the South or we will go to war with the Soviets.

MCNAMARA

But there is no proof that the Soviets have that kind of control over the North Vietnamese. Even the Chinese connection is looking tenuous...

KISSINGER

Nonsense. They will listen.

NIXON

As long as only we and the Soviets know this Henry.

MCNAMARA

Def Con One lasts twenty nine days. Planes begin to malfunction...

NIXON

Nothing! Goddammit! The North Vietnamese haven't budged.

MCNAMARA

October 14th. A quarter of a million people come to Washington for the moratorium the following day...

Images of war machines overlap with the very real faces of the PROTESTERS. Life versus Death. NIXON feels the world crushing in around him as he contemplates escalation to nuclear war. He holds the red phone, ready to take the fateful step. The images become solely of people, families, children, not your stock images of hippies protesting. NIXON remains frozen.

KISSINGER

Mr. President, protesters or not, we haven't reached the top of the ladder. I guarantee you it will only take one nuclear weapon on the major dykes...

NIXON

This could lead to widespread mobilisation of the National Guard...this could be a national disaster...

KISSINGER

The North Vietnamese must believe you've reached the point where you will do anything to stop the war! The Madman Theory remember!

MCNAMARA

My God...

NIXON steadies himself to make the call.

KISSINGER

Put your hand on the button Mr. President! Just like you said, Ho Chi Minh will be in Paris in two days begging for peace! But you have to do it NOW!

NIXON comes perilously close to using nuclear weapons on North Vietnam. At the last moment, he puts the phone down, refusing to do it. KISSINGER stares on in shock.

NIXON

I knew for sure that my ultimatum failed. I couldn't help thinking about the irony of this protest for peace.

KISSINGER

(befuddled rage)

I don't understand it...the North Vietnamese should have bowed to threats from the greatest military on earth! It should never have reached this point. They faced annihilation...

GROMYKO

It is Kissinger's idea that it is a good thing to make a false threat that an enemy believes is a true threat. It is a bad thing if we are threatening an enemy with a true threat and the enemy believes it is a false threat. The North Vietnamese told Kissinger that "False or true, we Vietnamese don't mind. There must be a third category - for those who don't care whether the threat is true or false."

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

They would have cared once they saw mushroom clouds over Haiphong.

MCNAMARA

(To KISSINGER)

Anyhow, you brought them to the negotiating table when bombing of North Vietnam was resumed and finally, Haiphong and other strategic harbours were mined without consulting Congress.

KISSINGER

Not at all. Nixon spent at least fifteen minutes with those leaders that counted. I remember it well.

MCNAMARA

Risking confrontation with China or the Soviets. Do you really think that would have solved it?

KISSINGER

Absolutely.

MCNAMARA

I spent years trying to prevent the Joint Chiefs from doing such a thing and now it is preferred policy of the Secretary of State...

KISSINGER

Not preferred policy. But a realistic option, something you could not come up with in six years! One that we have to be prepared to use if it is to have any credibility.

MCNAMARA

No president will go for it. Kennedy was ready -

KISSINGER

Kennedy had no idea what he was doing! He saw all out war as the only option...invade Cuba or destroy the Soviet Union. You call this diplomacy? Limited nuclear war is possible. The Commander in Chief simply has to be willing to take the risk.

GROMYKO

And in 1980 that Commander in Chief had finally arrived...

KISSINGER

No! It is over. Your failure has been proven Robert. You repudiated your own work to advocate the abolition of all nuclear weapons...understandable of course for a man who could not support any position on their use.

GROMYKO

It is not over. Just as you elected a president who made nuclear war all the more likely we produced a leader who ensured Russia would never take part in such a conflict...

MCNAMARA

Reagan and Gorbachev...

KISSINGER

I did not agree to this! My diplomacy was the greatest justification of our position during the Cold War. We had every right to fear the Soviets.

MCNAMARA

And they us...

KISSINGER

Of course!

GROMYKO

You must continue Robert. Judgement must be made. Go behind the smile of your B grade actor. Anyhow it is too late. They have arrived...

LIGHTS on WEINBERGER and REAGAN relaxing comfortably in the Oval Office.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

You can't be serious...

GROMYKO

President Ronald Reagan with his first Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger...



MCNAMARA

Gromyko is right...the pieces finally fit into place...ones that all the presidents before couldn't explain or refused to acknowledge...why the US would never respond to any Soviet moves on disarmament...

KISSINGER

Because the Soviets could never be trusted!

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Reagan was a realist who saw the Soviet Union for what it was...

MCNAMARA

My warnings went unheeded and this is what happened...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

What happened was the hope of the Republican Party and the one leader capable of bringing the Soviets to their knees...

GROMYKO

August 1984. An off the record comment is captured for eternity...

KISSINGER

He was joking! Nixon and I joked like that all the time...

REAGAN

I've signed legislation which outlaws the Soviet Union. The bombing starts in ten minutes.

GROMYKO

Reagan made nuclear war seem like an inevitable clash of historical and religious enemies...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Which we were.

LIGHTS.

REAGAN

You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we're that generation that's going to see it come about. I don't know if you've noted any of those prophecies lately, but believe me, they certainly describe the times we're going through.

WEINBERGER

I have read the Book of Revelation, and yes, I believe the world is going to end by an act of God. I hope, but everyday I think that time is running out. I worry that we will not have enough time to get strong enough to prevent nuclear war. I fear we will not be ready.

REAGAN

What's happening with the MX missile Casper?

WEINBERGER

The press are giving us a really hard time with this one so I suggested we call it the Hallmark missile. I hope we never have to do it, but if we do I want the Russians to know that we cared enough to send them the very best.

REAGAN laughs. LIGHTS on REAGAN and JOURNALISTS.

JOURNALIST

How do you survive a nuclear war Mr. President?

REAGAN

I can answer that. Dig a hole, cover it with a couple of doors and then throw three feet of dirt on top. It's the dirt that does it. Everybody is going to make it if there are enough shovels to go around. Any more questions?

The assemblage of PRESS somberly move away from REAGAN.

REAGAN

No one would cheerfully want to use atomic weapons. But the last person in the world that should know we wouldn't use them is the enemy. He should go to bed every night being afraid that we might.

MCNAMARA

Reagan had a very clear idea that we must build a capability to disarm the Soviet Union; to disarm them or destroy them.

REAGAN

With the MX missile we have the ability to decapitate the leadership of the Soviet Union in six minutes.

MCNAMARA

A pre-emptive first strike is now considered not only possible...but probable.

REAGAN

I have increased the defence budget to 1.6 trillion over five years to include 17,000 more warheads.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

That translates to...

MCNAMARA

Five to ten hydrogen bombs per day.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

America is the chosen agent for God's vengeance...

MCNAMARA

You still believe that now?

Pause.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

It was the only answer.

MCNAMARA

October 1986...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Reagan is still the president. George Schultz the new Secretary of State...

LIGHTS on SCHULTZ standing at REAGAN'S side.

SCHULTZ

There will be a summit meeting at Reykavik Mr. President.

GROMYKO

And we too have a new leader one who will not be controlled by the past...

REAGAN

Gorbachev wants to end the arms race and get rid of all nuclear weapons...

LIGHTS . GROMYKO assumes the role of GORBACHEV. He moves from the periphery to centre stage across the conference table and opposite REAGAN and SCHULTZ.

SCHULTZ

We still have the Strategic Defense Initiative Mr. President. Star Wars in space. Gorbachev can't agree to it.

MCNAMARA

He sees it for the waste of time that it is. All he has to do is deploy the next generation of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles...

GORBACHEV

The Topol M is our latest missile.

MCNAMARA

And SDI will be completely ineffective...

GORBACHEV

That's exactly what I did. We need to restrict our nuclear assumptions Mr. President. Allowing the development of an unreliable missile defense system will only complicate a daunting task.

REAGAN

I too want to get rid of all nuclear weapons. Can't he see that's also my goal?

MCNAMARA

But your advisors don't want to...Schultz, Wolfowitz, Perle...all those you brought to a summit meeting to reduce the threat of nuclear war are all in favour of continuing the arms race.

LIGHTS.

SCHULTZ

Mr. President. It seems to me Gorbachev is preparing for a first strike capability. Whatever you do, SDI cannot be put on the table.

REAGAN

But we're this close to abolishing nuclear weapons!

GORBACHEV

It all comes down to SDI Mr. President. If you are so determined to field test it, we cannot agree or hope to achieve an end to nuclear weapons.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Only SDI can stop this disaster from unfolding. He must say no to Gorbachev's proposals...

REAGAN

What do the others say...

SCHULTZ

Wolfowitz and Perle and both in agreement..

MCNAMARA

An inch away from an unparalleled historic decision...and President Reagan slips a piece of paper to his Secretary of Defense sitting right next to him.

SCHULTZ opens a piece of paper. All eyes are on  
SCHULTZ.

REAGAN

Am I wrong? Wrong to break the deal over field testing SDI?

MCNAMARA

A deal unlike any other in over fifty years... the deal of the century. The thought wasn't even possible a decade...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

A week ago.

GORBACHEV

Join us Mr. President. Rescue the world from its worst nightmare!

MCNAMARA

The Secretary of State, with a few chosen words...can change the course of history...

SCHULTZ looks at the paper one more time. He turns to REAGAN.

SCHULTZ

No Mr. President. You are right.

Pause. Silence on stage. No one moves.

REAGAN

This meeting is over.

GORBACHEV

When future generations read the transcripts of this meeting, they will not forgive us, if we let this opportunity pass.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

The opportunity has passed.

As REAGAN and SCHULTZ turn their backs on GORBACHEV, he remains front and centre, facing history and judgement. He is unflinching.

GORBACHEV

All Soviet satellites will no longer be propped by Soviet power. Soviet combat forces will be removed from Afghanistan. Sakharov will be returned from exile...

MCNAMARA

Reykavik is only a month old...

GORBACHEV

And I have already begun to dismantle the Soviet Empire...

MCNAMARA

Speaking at a Communist Party plenary meeting Gorbachev declares...

GORBACHEV

Listen to the demands of the American people, the Soviet people, and the peoples of all countries!

SCHULTZ

He's separating the question of intermediate range nuclear missiles from those of arms control and SDI...

REAGAN

What in heaven's for?

GORBACHEV

I will not accept no Mr. President. I propose the US and Soviet Union agree without delay to remove all such missiles from Europe within five years.

SCHULTZ

You cannot agree to this. The Soviets are aiming at a first strike capability.

REAGAN

What can I tell them?

SCHULTZ

No agreement without onsite inspections. The Soviets will never do it!

GORBACHEV

I agree to on site inspections! This Treaty is too important.

REAGAN

(Desperate)

George...

MCNAMARA

The US had never dealt with someone like Gorbachev...

SCHULTZ

We cannot allow the Soviets to examine US bases and systems!

REAGAN

But they've agreed! It was our demand and they've agreed to it!

SCHULTZ

What about intermediate range missiles based in Russia. Demand their removal.

GORBACHEV

No problem. Get rid of them all!

SCHULTZ

The Pentagon...will never allow it.

MCNAMARA

So...it's a myth. Our openness to inspections that we've used to rebuke the Soviets with for over fifty years is a myth.

SCHULTZ

No one came this close to testing it. We thought no one ever would.

MCNAMARA

Henry Stimson once proposed to Truman...to make an untrustworthy man trustworthy, you have to trust him.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

He was referring to Stalin...and thankfully no American President has taken this advice.

GORBACHEV

But here you were dealing with a trustworthy man...and not one of you was willing to recognise it.

MCNAMARA

No one dared to. You were holding up a mirror...showing America what its reliance on military strength was all about.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

But it was not all over...

MCNAMARA

June 12th 1987, President Ronald Reagan visits the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin...

LIGHTS. REAGAN stands behind a lectern at Brandenburg Gate. GORBACHEV watches bemused.

REAGAN

Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty -- the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev -- Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

GORBACHEV

But I already have Mr. President. Otherwise you would not be standing there waiting for it to fall. Unfortunately, your government is not prepared to notice.

LIGHTS on REAGAN and SCHULTZ.

SCHULTZ

The Warsaw Pact has broken with Moscow.

REAGAN

And the Russians?

GORBACHEV

We will do nothing. When my generals call for a military response I will tell them to command their armies to remain in barracks, even as Solidarity wins a free election in Poland, a dissident is made President of Czechoslovakia, and Ceausescu is executed in Romania. I gave all these countries the signal. And they were listening.

MCNAMARA

December 7th 1988, before the United Nations...

LIGHTS. GORBACHEV is behind the lectern.

GORBACHEV

Necessity of the principle of freedom of choice is clear. Denying that right of peoples, no matter what the pretext of doing so, no matter what words are used to conceal it, means infringing even the unstable balance that it has been impossible to achieve. Freedom of choice is a universal principle and there should be no exceptions...

MCNAMARA

(to GORBACHEV)

You renounced violent force and its threat, the very glue that held the Soviet empire together, and cut conventional forces by half a million men, which meant virtually no Red Army units in Eastern Europe.

GORBACHEV

The world is changing, even we Russians could see that. This is not about your military, Star Wars, your build up of nuclear forces...there is a revolution going and it is non - violent. People want change...

LIGHTS on JOURNALIST, REAGAN and GORBACHEV in Red Square.

REPORTER

Mr. President, do you still consider Moscow the capital of the evil empire?

Pause. REAGAN is clearly uncomfortable with the question.



REAGAN

No. That was from another time.

GORBACHEV

You said that within the walls of the Kremlin, next to the czar's gun, right in the heart of the evil empire. We took note of that. As the ancient Greeks said, "Everything flows, everything changes. Everything is in a state of flux."

MCNAMARA

January 1989. The Presidency of Ronald Reagan is over. At the inauguration of his successor, Reagan utters the words millions have waited to hear for nearly fifty years...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Not to mention all the ghosts...

REAGAN

The Cold War...is over.

LIGHTS. SOUND of the foghorn as in the opening of the play. Only MCNAMARA, DULLES and GROMYKO are on stage.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Here you are once again..the dream plays out for the last time...

GROMYKO

A cold night on the Martha's Vineyard ferry...

MCNAMARA

It was 1972...my wife and I had made a home there for several years. It was late, there were very few people on board. Not long after the ferry departed, a stranger came up to me...

GROMYKO

"Mr McNamara, there's a phone call for you. Please follow me..."

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And you did...

MCNAMARA

He led me out to the wheelhouse on the edge of the railing, grabbed me by the belt and shirt collar...then tried to throw me into the black water of the Vineyard Sound...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Nothing could pry your hands off that railing..but for those few seconds till he was dragged off you, it might have ended quite differently.

MCNAMARA

I fought for my life...

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

And lived. It was not your time just as it was not time for negotiation till the right leaders came along and that was something none of us could control.

MCNAMARA

Quite possibly we have been wrong from the very beginning, ...wrong about everything...the wizards of Armageddon got it wrong on almost every assessment of Soviet intentions and capabilities for just over fifty years.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

“No government or social system is so evil that it’s people must be condemned as lacking in virtue.”

GROMYKO

“For our attitude is as essential as theirs.”

Pause.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Maybe Kennedy was right.

MCNAMARA

And almost a decade later...in the shadows of history, Paul Nitze, the ultimate nuclear apostle would declare...

GROMYKO

“I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons...”

MCNAMARA

But of course...no one was listening.

LIGHTS fade.

End of play

