

**MACBUSH,**  
**Emperor of the Imperial Empire**

**A Musical Comedy**

by

Stuart Eugene Thiel

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## FOREWORD

Lest I be accused of plagiarism, let me immediately spell out my debt to William Shakespeare, W.S. Gilbert, and Sir Arthur Sullivan. I have followed *MacBeth* fairly closely, actually. The main changes are that Lady MacDuff is "killed" before Banquo (whom I call Aliquot), and that no one is actually killed, except democracy herself. Human careers, not lives, are attacked with murderous intent. I use a lot of Master Will's original language. Here and there you may recognize phrases from his other works. If you consider that blasphemy, stop reading here. You'll give yourself apoplexy.

The tunes for my songs, several phrases in the lyrics, and two characters (Turdbloom and Count Dickula), come directly from the Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, *The Mikado* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. It's all in the public domain, as is the sheet music, soon to be posted on the web site. Portions of statements by prominent persons, and of Supreme Court opinions, are also recited.

This work is agitprop -- cheerful, silly agitprop -- but agitprop just the same. I have no idea whether it is even possible, let alone profitable, to produce this play. (I doubt it.) When I started this project, I knew almost nothing about writing plays, staging scenes, lighting, operettas, Elizabethan argot, etc., etc., etc. I don't know very much more now. I know a little about Gilbert & Sullivan and a little more about Shakespeare. Among other things, all this ignorance means that if you're trying to stage this show, feel free to make changes.

I had two moments of inspiration -- the breath of God -- that led me to write this play. First, the name, "MacBush," just popped into my mind one day.<sup>1</sup> Could I write a parody of *MacBeth* starring someone named MacBush? At first look, I couldn't -- no matter what you think of Laura Bush, she's no Lady MacBeth. Then came the inspiration. Barbara MacBush! That's Barbara, Sr., the one who called Geraldine Ferraro a million-dollar "something that rhymes with witch." So, I dug up a copy of *MacBeth* (plentiful on the web) and started to read. I had it in mind to cast Ann Coulter, Michelle Malkin and some third harpy as the three weird sisters. Shakespeare himself beat me to it. One of his witches is named "Graymalkin!" Another has an Adam's apple. From that point on, I was hooked.

I concocted new names for recognizable public figures and places by ear. My choices are not meant to conceal some profound insight.

This whole project may sink without a trace, except that some kid will take a break from his I-Pod and hear some real music. Could be worse.

Stuart Eugene Thiel  
Chicago  
September 2006

PS. Please don't whine to me or anyone else about the slippage between my version of various events and reality. Unlike Disney Corporation, I'm not pretending that I've written a documentary. I've enjoyed much poetic license. And anyway, not that it matters, but most of it is true, according to the pre-9/11 definition (Webster's Second) of truth.

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<sup>1</sup> I have since discovered several more cursory efforts bearing the title *MacBush*. This happens to me all the time; I think I'm first with a clever idea and it turns out that it's been common currency for years.

Also, in the mid-60s, Barbara Garson wrote the play *MacBird!*, melding *MacBeth* with the tribulations of you know who. I flipped through *MacBird!* long ago, remember almost nothing, and did not revisit it while working on this project. Any parallels to *MacBird!* are coincidental, except for the "!" on "*MacBush!*" Any parallels to *MacBeth* are deliberate.

## MACBUSH, The Emperor of the Imperial Empire

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MACBUSH, Governor of Glamis,<sup>2</sup> President of Cawdor, later, Emperor of the Imperial Empire.

LADY MACBUSH, his Mother.

MR. TURDBLOOM, MacBush's Chamberlain and Political Manager.

COUNT BELLICOSA, Minister of War.

BARON GONZO, Minister of Justice.

BARON HECKUVA, Minister of the Interior, then Boss of Emergency Management.

COUNT DICKULA, Official Regent, and Minister of Everything Else.

AMBASSADOR MACDUFF, former Ambassador to an unnamed country.

LADY MACDUFF, his wife.

LENNOX, a minor nobleman.

DOCTOR HOWARD, Director of the Democrats.

The Spectre of ALIQUOT, with whom MacBush had contested the throne in 2000.

Featuring:

### **THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS CHORUS**

Whose members play, as needed:

COOLA, GRAYMALKIN and CEDILLA, the three weird sisters;

a POLL-WATCHER,

REYNARD, a cable TV reporter;

JUSTICE FUCHSIA, a Judge on the High Court;

a JANITOR;

APPARITIONS;

COURTIERS;

CITIZENS;

SPIES;

SERVANTS;

JOURNALISTS; and

PUNDITS.

The action of the play spans the first several years of the 21st Century.

Act I.	December, 2000
Act II.	September, 2001
Act III.	Summer, 2003
Act IV.	Late Spring, 2004
Act V.	August, 2005
Act VI.	July - October, 2006

Orthography: Dialog in *italics* is to be delivered as an aside (stage whisper). Dialog in {curly brackets} emanates from a television or other device; the actor is not on stage. Indented dialog means that the speaker is in another place (e.g. Justice Fuchsia, Act I, Scene iii, or the two parties eavesdropping on the sleepwalking Lady MacBush, Act VI, Scene ii).

Set: One upstage corner, preferably elevated one or two feet, should be spotlighted so as to convey the idea that the character there, and those on the main stage, are doing their thing at the same time, but in different places. An ordinary desk should do the trick.

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<sup>2</sup> Pronounced to rhyme with "ham is," not with "moms."

**ACT I. December, 2000**

*[The White House Press Chorus is onstage, looking busily journalistic.]*

**SONG: PRESS CHORUS: WE ARE GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS**

If you want to know who we are,  
We are gentlemen of the press:  
Each one of us going far  
'Cause we're gonna get great access!

We stenographize as we're told:  
So our story's above the fold --  
And you're wrong if you think we're bold, oh!

If you think that we're worked by strings,  
Like a Japanese marionette,  
You don't understand these things:  
It is simply Court etiquette.

Perhaps you suppose that we  
Can't spend the day on our knees  
If that's what you think, puh-leeeee! Oh!

If you want to know who we are,  
We are gentlemen of the press --

We will go far  
To get access  
And write any, any, any, any, any, anything they suggest!  
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!  
And that is why  
We have success.

*[Chorus of journalists retreats far upstage, where it will stay throughout the play. When suitable, they do journalist things, e.g. take notes, flash flashes. Otherwise, they are unobtrusive.]*

*[First J. remains downstage for one line.]*

FIRST JOURNALIST. The time? December, 2000. The place? A remote orange grove, somewhere in The Orange State. . .  
*[rejoins chorus]*

**SCENE I. An orange grove. Stormy. Dark.**

*[Three Witches detach themselves from the Chorus of Journalists: Coola, Graymalkin and Cedilla. All three are supermodel-thin and more or less attractive. Coola and Cedilla are blondes; Graymalkin is dark. Coola wears a micro-miniskirt 20 years too young for her; Cedilla, evening dress; Graymalkin, casual Banana Republic-style shorts and top.]*

GRAYMALKIN.  
When shall we three meet again?  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

CEDILLA.  
When the battle's lost and won;  
And MacBush's reign is well begun.

COOLA.  
If the counting's ever done.

GRAYMALKIN.  
Where's the place?

COOLA.  
The battle rages in the courts and city halls of the Orange State.

ALL.  
Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
To victory, nothing can compare.

*[Witches vanish. As they do, the lights come up to make blinding sunshine for a moment, then blackout for scene change]*

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SCENE II. A town of Cawdor.

*[Enter citizens]*

CITIZEN ONE.  
What bedraggled man is that? Perhaps he can relate  
The tumultuous events in the Orange State.

LENNOX.  
That is a Democratic poll-watcher  
Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought  
For an honest election. -- Hail, brave friend!  
Goes the recount for good, or naught?  
What portends?

POLL-WATCHER.  
Doubtful it stands.  
The votes are counted, yet neither man won,  
Unlikely as that sounds. The votes are almost all counted  
And equal for Aliquot and for MacBush.  
Aliquot should prevail in the recount  
Yet, as we speak, MacBush's lawyers petition  
To be heard at the highest court in the land.  
Meanwhile, MacBush's fixer, firm in his purpose,  
A man unacquainted with no manner of ruthless tactic  
And who is with cash and minions well-supplied –  
Entrusts Dame Fortune to help seal the victory.  
Hope remains for Aliquot, but Dame Fortune sins like a rebel's whore.

CITIZEN TWO.  
And what of Aliquot?

POLL-WATCHER.  
Noble Aliquot, as usual, thinks when he rather should act.  
He may well prove unequal to the contest.  
Mark, citizens, mark! – MacBush played foul from the start;  
Assisted by his kinsmen on television  
And legions of men sent to riot and frighten the vote-counters.

CITIZEN THREE.

Dismayed this not candidate Aliquot?

POLL-WATCHER.

Yes, as the tortoise dismayed the hare.

Armed with favorable precedents, his men

Were deployed to court,

And emerged victorious.

CITIZEN ONE.

But -- ?

POLL-WATCHER.

The capital, Capitol City, reeks of corruption.

The very stench will show you the way.

Noble Aliquot cannot smell it.

He plays fair; it is his folly. Adieu, my fellows.

*[exit]*

CITIZEN THREE. *[turns on television]*

Reynard will give us the latest.

REYNARD (from TV)

{MacBush victory! MacBush victory! MacBush victory! . . . *[continues]*}

ALL.

What? MacBush the victor?

LENNOX.

Messieurs, stay your credulity.

Reynard is a kinsman to MacBush.

Of course he says MacBush is the winner.

CITIZEN TWO.

But the television tells us: the decision is made!

All hail MacBush! All hail MacBush!

CITIZENS ONE & TWO.

All hail MacBush!

LENNOX.

Citizens, I beg you. Suspend

Your judgment in abeyance.

ALL CITIZENS. *[staring at television, chant in synch with Reynard]*

MacBush victory! MacBush victory! All hail MacBush! MacBush victory!

*[all exit. Reynard continues for a few seconds, then fades.]*

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SCENE III. A sunny beach.

*[Enter the three Witches. As they enter, the beach grows dark.]*

CEDILLA.

Where have you been, sister?





TURDBLOOM

Good sir, why do you jump; and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair?

Are you fantastical, or as nervous  
As you outwardly show? Lord MacBush,  
These apparat-chicks say you have won,  
And your most ardent wishes true will come.

*[to Witches]*

He seems stunned, withal.

-- But what of Aliquot?

If you can look into the future,  
And say which grain will grow, and which will not,  
Speak then of our rival, Aliquot,  
And tell us what from what.

COOLA.

Lesser than MacBush, and greater.

GRAYMALKIN.

Not so happy, yet much happier.

CEDILLA.

He shall never be President, but a power just the same;  
A prophet and statesman in all but his name.  
So all hail, MacBush!

MACBUSH.

*[shaking off thrall]*

Wait! Please! Explain your promise;  
Of course I know I am Governor of Glamis;  
But how President of Cawdor? We have petitioned the Supremes,  
Who have yet to agree even to hear my plea. It now seems  
We will succeed, but to what do you owe this strange intelligence?  
*[witches vanish]*

TURDBLOOM.

Sire, they give us hope, but let us use our common sense.

DICKULA.

I believe them. My good friend Justice Fuchsia  
Will serve us as well as anyone could wish.  
Me, Regent of Cawdor! The fix is in.  
And you, the newly-chosen President of Cawdor!  
I tell you, I am absolutely certain we will win.

MACBUSH

I've dreamed of the moment ever since I was a young fellow of forty.

## SONG. MACBUSH & CHORUS: WHEN I WAS A LAD

When I was a lad, the words for me  
Were lazy selfishness and cruelty  
The sort of pastime that I thought was fun  
Was to shoot my little brother with a BB gun!  
*Was to shoot his little brother with a BB gun!*  
My tender years were so misspent  
That now I am the newly-chosen President!  
*His tender years were so misspent  
That now he is the newly-chosen President!*

Next stop was university  
Matriculating on my family's legacy  
And 'though I never quite made the team  
Leading cheers and doing cocaine helped my self-esteem!  
*Leading cheers and doing cocaine helped his self-esteem!*  
They gave to me the "C" for gents  
And now I am the newly-chosen President!  
*They gave to him the "C" for gents  
And now he is the newly-chosen President!*

The political connections of my Dad and Mom  
Kept my tender tushie out of Vietnam –  
I said I'd fly for the National Guard  
But showing up for weekends was just too damn hard!  
*But showing up for weekends was just too damn hard!*  
Without leave, I was oft absent  
But now I am the newly-chosen President!  
*Without leave, he was oft absent  
But now he is the newly-chosen President!*

My need for cash being what it is  
I headed several ventures in the oil biz  
I never struck a gusher, but I didn't mind --  
'Cause a generous investor Dad could always find!  
*'Cause a generous investor Dad could always find!*  
I've never earned a nickel of the cash I've spent  
But now I am the newly-chosen President!  
*He's never earned a nickel of the cash he's spent  
But now he is the newly-chosen President!*

As governor I strove to be  
Santa Claus for rich folks and for industry  
To relax I'd watch the losers being put to death  
And I'd mock their pleas for pardons with their dying breath!  
*And he'd mock their pleas for pardons with their dying breath!*  
And, all along, my true intent  
Was to be, as now, the newly-chosen President!  
*And, all along, his true intent  
Was to be, as now, the newly-chosen President!*

Now, children all, however you be  
Handicapped by ignorance and poverty  
Listen closely now, as I address  
The recipe that guarantees your sure success –  
Be the eldest of a family in the top percent,

And you could be the newly-chosen President!  
*Be the eldest of a family in the top percent,  
And you could be the newly-chosen President!*

[Enter Courtiers; Chorus remains downstage.]

[Lights up, upstage, of a solitary individual in judicial robes, seated at a small table or desk, scrivining away using quill and scroll]

JUSTICE FUCHSIA [talking to himself as he writes]

The issue is not whether counting every legally cast vote can constitute irreparable harm. The counting of votes that are of questionable legality does in my view threaten irreparable harm to Governor MacBush, and to the country, by casting a cloud upon what he claims to be the legitimacy of his election. Count first, and rule upon legality afterwards, is not a recipe for producing election results that have the public acceptance democratic stability requires.

DICKULA.

I am told that the deed is nearly done.  
By Monday, we shall have the election won.  
All hail, President MacBush!

FUCHSIA [looks up and grins]

I just wrote that it's better for democracy that the votes not be counted, because if they were, and Mr. Aliquot got the majority of those votes, it might cast doubt on President MacBush's victory.

ALL.

Hail! Hail! Hail!

FUCHSIA.

Ain't I something?  
[blackout Fuchsia]

DICKULA.

Justice Fuchsia doth happily write the decree that stays  
The recounting of votes. The learned justice says  
That counting all the votes might intimate  
That your lordship's reign is not legitimate.  
As would surely be the case, if Aliquot won the majority! [laughs]  
Have cheer. I have information of the highest authority  
That soon enough, you will be declared the winner.  
Indeed, on election night I was host of a small dinner.  
As Aliquot led in the counting, Justice Daycon said, "This is terrible!"  
And her face was twisted, ugly and unbearable.  
If she, a swing vote, can be so clearly biased  
I'd say we have the best chance cash can buy us.  
So, let us celebrate.

MACBUSH.

[aside.] First Glamis, then Cawdor:  
The greatest is behind.  
Empire: I cannot deny that I have sought her  
But these prophecies are of an uncertain kind.  
Ill or good? How can empire possibly be ill?  
(If I'm the emperor, that is) but still  
My heart races in the role of thief

*Of the seat at the center of all the world's affairs.  
Perhaps it is the path to empire my palpitating heart fears  
But I will soon command unparalleled martial might  
As its Commander in Chief;  
If chance will have me Emperor, why, chance may crown  
If I only bide until the time is right.*

TURDBLOOM.

*[aside (but separate from MacBush)]  
See the fool smirk! He contemplates his empire.  
To achieve his aim, he will certainly require  
My Snickersnee and dagger in fullest measure.  
He is indeed fortunate that dirty deeds  
Are, for me, the source of orgasmic pleasure.*

**SONG. TURDBLOOM & CHORUS:  
I'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST**

As some day it may happen that a victim must be found,  
I've got a little list — I've got a little list  
Of political offenders who might well be underground,  
Who never would be missed — who never would be missed!

That economic columnist who checks our fuzzy math  
The pudgy guy from Michigan who makes the lefties laugh  
Reporters who ask follow-ups or *parlez-vous Francais*  
Or say they don't believe we never heard of Kenneth Lay  
The civil libertarians who on their rights insist  
They'd none of 'em be missed — they'd none of 'em be missed!  
*He's got them on the list, he's got them on the list  
And they'll none of them be missed,  
They'll none of them be missed!*

And the Cabinet officials who resign, then write a book  
On the best-seller list — they never will be missed,  
The people who can prove that our intelligence is cooked;  
They never would be missed — they never would be missed!  
The ones who call us chickenhawks for dodging Vietnam  
The guy who's selling t-shirts at gwobush.com  
And the crazies who mock Lieberman for wanting to be kissed;  
I don't think they'd be missed — I'm sure they'd not be missed!  
*He's got them on the list, he's got them on the list  
And they'll none of them be missed,  
They'll none of them be missed!*

The senators with principles that they won't compromise  
That Minnesota populist — I had him on the list;  
The pestilential bloggers who will not believe our lies  
They never will be missed — they never will be missed!  
Officials who leak documents that make MacBush look bad,  
Detainees who a day in court insistently demand --  
And those who fear dictatorship instead of terrorists;  
I don't think they'd be missed — I'm sure they won't be missed!  
*He's got them on the list, he's got them on the list  
And they'll none of them be missed,  
He's sure they'll not be missed!*

But it really doesn't matter whom you put upon the list,  
For they'd none of 'em be missed — they'd none of 'em be missed!  
*You may put 'em on the list, you may put 'em on the list;  
And they'll none of 'em be missed —  
They'll none of 'em be missed!*

[All exit.]

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SCENE IV. Capitol City. A pub.

CITIZENS ONE & TWO. [*nearly in sync*]  
Is the decision done? Is MacBush  
Yet become President?

CITIZEN THREE.  
Peace! He speaks.

JUSTICE FUCHSIA. The State has failed to specify a micro-detailed procedure for conducting unprecedented recounts. Moreover, the State has not prepared or mobilized an army of identical election judges to do the recounting. Therefore, the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution prohibits the State from conducting any recount at all.

Neener, neener, neener.

{MACBUSH (voice from TV) Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion and character. Our country, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness. . . .}

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SCENE V. President's Palace.

[Enter Lady MacBush, reading a letter. Lady MacBush is a large, imperious elderly woman with very big, very white hair. She is definitely not a mousy brunette.]

LADY MACBUSH (*reading aloud*)

"They met me in the day of success; and I have learned by the perfectest report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. While I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came Count Dickula, who all-hailed me, 'President of Cawdor'; by which title, before, these weird harpies saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, Emperor of the Imperial Empire that shall be!' This have I thought good to deliver to you, my dearest Mother of greatness; that you might not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised to us. Lay it to your heart, and farewell."

Governor, President, Emperor to be;  
If you can find the courage to grasp the nettle.  
I have taught you well; you're serpent-mean  
And ambitious, but perhaps lacking the stamina for the battle.  
The Constitution does not countenance dictators;  
--Goodness! Did I say the word?  
And although the media is tamed, mere spectators  
Or stenographers, we shall need theoreticians.  
Casuists, Jesuits, legal magicians  
Who can convince that anything, no matter how absurd  
Is not only Constitutional, but reasonable.  
With Nofax and Oh? Really? and all our other skills

To repeat repeat repeat repeat, escalatingly shrill  
The conventional wisdom will be that holding some other view  
Is not merely wrong, but treasonable.  
My son, the manliness your father lacks is concentrated in you.

I shall be thy comrade, and no mere mother! Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;  
And refill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, your murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
To cry, "Hold, hold!"

*[Enter MacBush.]*

Governor! President! Emperor to be!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
Your letters have transported me beyond  
This ignorant present, and I feel now  
The future in the instant.

MACBUSH.  
Mother, I am inaugurated.

LADY MACBUSH.  
Your reign begins tonight.

MACBUSH.  
A reign, or a term of office?

LADY MACBUSH.  
A reign. Your coronation awaits only a crisis.

MACBUSH.  
-- Mother, advise me on this;  
Do you think that if I neglect signals and warnings  
Of enemies afoot, and nameless terrors dawning  
A photo opportunity will develop quickly  
Or should we also try dis-disinformation?  
We can say, "MacBush is negligent," lay it on thickly  
So our enemies will take the hint, and hasten to the consummation?

LADY MACBUSH.  
I cannot say as yet;  
We need experts. Whom will you get?

MACBUSH.

*[ticking through a list]* Turdbloom, though a commoner, is Chamberlain; Count Bellicosa, Minister of War; Baron Gonzo, Minister of Justice; Baron Heckuva, Steward of the Lands; Count Dickula, Minister of Everything Else, in particular, petroleum.

I have heard, too, of a law professor, Thieu<sup>3</sup>  
Who can prove fair is foul, and foul is fair;  
With complicated theory full prepared  
To prove the Emperor may do whatever he wants to do.  
Lavish cash will keep our allies in the fold,  
And the press corps, of course, will publish what they're told.  
And then, we must simply repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat --  
Until beside our Lie, the truth looks incomplete.

LADY MACBUSH.

O, excellent, excellent!  
But success depends on concealing our intent

*[Enter Turdbloom, upstage]*

Your face, my son, is as a book where men  
May read much, if not completely all.  
Memorize the talking points, and never veer!  
You must look and act the mediocre, average guy  
Act the part, bear welcome in your eye;  
As a friend with whom they'd like to share a beer.  
Keep the copperhead well hidden, underneath it all.

*[Exit MacBush and Lady MacBush]*

TURDBLOOM.

*[aside]* MacBush must play-act as the mediocre guy;  
I've known him for years. He won't even have to try.

*[Exit.]*

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<sup>3</sup> Pronounced "too."



MACBUSH.

Where's Talbistan?

DICKULA.

-- It's in Asia somewhere.

But I have spoken to an agent who will swear  
That he saw, in Vienna, just a few months ago  
One of the killers enjoying an espresso  
With an agent of the Tiger of Euphratia.  
If your heart skipped a beat, sire, I cannot blame ya';  
It's the Tiger, whom your father merely diminished  
And with whom you've sworn a fight to the finish.

BELLICOSA.

At the time we could not but defeat him, and go no farther.

MACBUSH.

The Tiger – that's the man who once tried to kill Father!

LADY MACBUSH.

Your father should have finished the job, it seems to me.

BELLICOSA.

Anyway, the Tiger planned Yesterday, don't you agree?

ALL.

Aye!!

DICKULA.

Indeed, sire. As your Minister for Everything Else,  
I officially verify that the Tiger's a worthy plum for the plucking.  
Although he's had naught to do with the hurts we've sustained,  
He's notorious for his crimes and general run-amoking.  
We can surely convince the public and its nervous, racing pulse  
That he and our foes are one and the same.  
And we mustn't overlook that one of the spoils  
Is control of those beautiful fields of oil.  
For months we've been drafting elaborate plans  
To arrest him by conquest, and do that by invasion.

MACBUSH

But, Count Bellicosa, what about Talbistan?

Is that not the terrorists' location?

BELLICOSA.

We can do both at once.

Accomplish both missions in a matter of months.

*[interposes his body between MacBush and Lady MacBush, whispers into MacBush's ear.]*

*M'Lord, but wouldn't it be ever so much more satisfying*

*To succeed where your father failed,*

*And for good measure, your father's wealth be multiplying*

*Through his stock shares in companies, largely invested*

*In weapons and munitions, battle-tested?*

*And the Tiger humbled and safely jailed?*

*Your dear mother will be most impressed. . .*

LADY MACBUSH.

I'm standing right here, Count, but I concur, I confess.  
Son, to the great unwashed masses, you can do nothing wrong;  
But the public is fickle; its panic won't last too long.  
And if we catch the mastermind, Ossama, too soon  
That frail bubble, reputation, may burst  
And our progress be stalled, or maybe reversed.  
As long as there's war, then we call the tune  
We'll stifle our critics as unpatriotic.  
*Therefore*, it would be close to idiotic  
To capture Ossama, or lapse from war status.  
The people want us to use our military might  
To kill terrorists. Count Bellicosa is, I fear, quite right  
But for the wrong reason; Euphratia is ripe for conquest  
Not 'cause it's easy, but instead, the reverse. We'll have a war that is  
A quagmire, squared, thus all we could desire;  
Perfect for maintaining our power at crest.  
So how can we pick a fight with Euphratia?

DICKULA.

Easily, M'Lady. My intelligence sources say the Tiger seems  
To have weapons of mass destruction (whatever that means)  
And missiles from Asia, shipped and uncrated  
And aimed so as to threaten our regional Special Allies.  
Our doctrine of the preemptive strike will formalize  
Our writ to arrest the Tiger, doing the world a favor, too;  
Of course, our real authority is simply, "We're stronger than you."

BELLICOSA.

Lady MacBush is wise; time is of the essence.  
Our quiet *coup d'etat* will be accepted by the *hoi polloi* and peasants  
If before they realize our gambit, it is *fait accompli*.

MACBUSH.

Count Bellicosa, I have told you -- *never* speak in foreign languages to me!

BELLICOSA.

My deepest apologies, sire, and amends.

HECKUVA.

But those weapons of mass destruction, on which you depend?  
Inspections have shown, more than once, there are none.

BELLICOSA.

So what? There are a hundred ways that can be spun.  
The inspectors have not walked each hectare of land  
Or done adequate digging deep into the sand  
In short, we just say they have not looked hard enough.  
Any nation or news organ that tries to call our bluff  
Can readily and cheaply be co-opted, bribed or cowed.  
Perhaps all three. Moreover, since your inauguration  
We have thrown together a plan for the invasion.  
The terrorist attack and the public's panicky response  
Was easily predictable and perfect for our wants.  
Although not party to the terrorists' plot,  
We were well prepared, to get whatever could be got.

[All exit except MacBush.]

MACBUSH.

My mother is wise, and so is Bellicosa, however annoying.  
This terrible task with which I've been laden!  
Is Euphratia the place that we should be invading?  
If we're going to do it, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly. If in one fell swoop  
We can begin, conduct and complete our *coup*,  
So the one blow be the be-all and end-all of the matter,  
As we trumpet the perfect safety they are enjoying,  
Most of the public will be disinclined to rebel.  
And for the rest, let them impotently natter.

[Pacing, as one trying to make up his mind.]

But what if justice be even-handed?  
Or worse, what if I be sowing the wind?  
By my whirlwind, I may be painfully reprimanded  
As were Marie Antoinette and Mussolini.  
I may damage or destroy democracy herself  
Beyond anyone's power to rescind.  
If I should release Pandora's genie  
It may resist being replaced on the shelf.  
But who am I kidding? Vaulting ambition  
Will defeat these unmasculine inhibitions  
And I shall see it through, with my mother's help.

[Enter (after a pause) Lady MacBush.]

MACBUSH.

Mom, I doubt that I can do it; the calamity has bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people;  
That good will which is now mine to keep'll  
Trickle away if an unjust war is sought.

LADY MACBUSH.

What? My son, less than a man? Afraid?  
Were you drunk with hope an hour ago,  
Hope that now takes a greenish, pale shade?  
Are you *afraid* to *try* to get what you *desire*?  
What of reproach for cowardice by your own self, your ego?  
We need a lion, but you're acting the prissy cat  
Who wants the fish, but hates getting her paws wet.

MACBUSH.

Shut up, Mother! Shut up!  
I dare do all that may become a man;  
No one can dare do more than I can.

LADY MACBUSH.

But that is not what you say.  
When you dared, then you were a man.  
Besides, that great scholar, Professor Thieu  
Has proved that during war, a president's imbued  
With absolute power; nothing, no matter how pernicious  
Is beyond his scope if that is what he wishes.



GONZO.

My dear Count, I hope you are remunerated for all of these various tasks.

DICKULA.

Alas, no, but I do a brisk trade in the rights to write legislation and to oversee government contract bidding. Privatizing those functions is really very lucrative. The oil companies alone. . . I also retail accurate intelligence information at a very low figure. It lands on my desk, every day. I have no use for it, because I make up my own, and it seems a shame simply to throw it into the shredder. Multinational corporations pay top dollar for good information, and nests must be feathered, you know.

HECKUVA.

What of all the papers in this briefcase?

DICKULA.

Alas, Baron Heckuva, that is a state secret. It will, of course, be revealed presently, when to our best advantage. But meantime I will not tell even you.

MacBush approaches. Please excuse us here.

*[Enter MacBush]*

MACBUSH.

Good morning, gentlemen.

Heckuva, did I ever nominate you for anything?

HECKUVA.

Interior, sire. We're cutting down every tree we can.

MACBUSH.

Good work. But now you're also in charge of emergency management.

Go see the Minister for -- oh, whatever, just go.

We'll take care of the appointment this afternoon.

*[exit Heckuva]*

GONZO.

M'Lord. I have the documents which you must sign

To execute the plan. As Commander in Chief,

You must reluctantly collect, consolidate, combine

All the powers of all the governmental branches

Into the Executive; that is, into you, alone

Until you safely may retire to your ranches.

The people are prepared and primed to panic;

Fully twenty-two percent agree, and are emphatic

That you permanently and promptly take the throne.

MACBUSH.

I'm not going to read all this stuff.

I'm the decider, not the reader.

GONZO.

Very well, sire. Perhaps a run through the titles will be enough.

Too much attention to detail is most unbecoming in a leader.

*[picks up the sheaf of papers, lays them on the desk one-by-one]*

*[paper]*Eavesdropping and wiretaps, declaring you won't take the trouble

To follow the law and obtain a court order;

*[two papers]*Telephone and banking records, the same, only doubled;

*[paper]* Camp X-Ray, for terrorists, set outside our borders  
Where do-gooder lawyers cannot see 'em or reach 'em;

*[paper]* Ah, here's one I wrote! Assures that our troops in the field  
Will face no penalty for tortures most hideous,  
Even at times when they know that the yield  
Will be useless intelligence, not worth impeaching;

*[paper]* And this, if our generals are over-fastidious  
Permits us to outsource any interrogation  
To hardier experts in third-party nations;

*[paper]* The generals must provide a plan for invading Euphratia  
Just as we discussed, in case we decide the Tiger's in league with Ossama,  
And ditto for all of the nations of Minor Asia;

*[paper]* This order nominates and confirms Count Dickula  
As the Authority for Determining What Information Is Classified.

MACBUSH.

You know, all these papers are worse than ridiculous!  
The Constitution's just a goddamned piece of paper –  
Why don't we just wait 'til we have an occasion,  
When some senator or judge needs to pacified  
Then whip up an Order, custom-made for the purpose,  
Perfectly fitting, right down to the commas.

GONZO.

Of course we can, Sire, but this set of decrees  
Can serve, if you will, as insurance or surplus.

My advice as Minister of Justice is that you sign these, then I'll log them and put them away until needed. If we must make a new version, we can simply write it, tear the old one up, and put this one in its place in the files. The log won't show the switch. It'll help protect your position in history, if nothing else.

MACBUSH.

I thought our people were gonna write all the history.  
But, okay. Now go away so I can look these over and sign them.

GONZO.

*[paper]* One more, Sire! The keystone of them all.  
We're at war, and as the Commander-in-Chief  
You're the only authority; your will is the law.  
From congressional meddling you have total relief,  
And, when we are sued, you may order plaintiff to withdraw.  
This power is yours 'til the end of the war.  
The war will end when, and only when, you make the call.  
I call it my "unitary executive" theory of government;  
And you, Sire, are the very man I wrote it for;  
Take the power, and become the colossus your mother meant.

MACBUSH.

C'mon, Gonzo. We both know that this is Professor Thieu's theory. We paid enough for it!

DICKULA. *[quickly]*

Pray excuse me, sire. I don't have Baron Gonzo's poetry, but I support everything he said. I'd stay to help, but as usual, I have other priorities.

MACBUSH.

Where are you going?

DICKULA.

To my undisclosed location, if it please m'lord.

MACBUSH.

Yes, yes, you may both go.

Dickula, while you're hanging around your undisclosed cave,

Don't let all the blood rush to your head.

*[Dickula and Gonzo exit, leaving papers on the desk]*

*[MacBush approaches the desk, sees quill suspended in midair]*

MACBUSH.

Is that a quill pen which I see before me,

Beckoning my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:--

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou but an image of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable

As these modern pens upon this desk.

Should I use a quill instead,

As the Founding Fathers would have done?

*[For the remainder of this soliloquy, MacBush clumsily and comically tries to grab the quill. He succeeds only at the very end of the speech.]*

I know I am callow and incurious;

Given to exercise and other idle pleasures.

But even so, I am not so ill-informed

That I cannot see how these edicts and measures

Can to freedom and liberty be only injurious

And must render the body politic deformed.

"A republic, if you can keep it!"

So it has been kept, pruned and watered well;

Its roots have ever stretched and deepened,

Through trials dangerous, far in excess

Of the foreign bandits who not afflict us

With far more panic than they should compel.

The Indian tribes our forefathers pushed back and farther back

Resisted by striking lonely farmsteads;

Yet the settlers kept coming, bearing on a western head

Bravely facing the daily risk of terrorist attacks.

Black people, too, lived in constant fear of lynching,

For trivial offense, or when some white man's pride was itching.

And, of course, once our nation, newborn and weak, was fated

To fight Britain, the mightiest nation on the earth;

Forty years later, traitorous rebels tried to rip the nation in two;

At no time would the President have aught to do  
With edicts like these, which by history will be rated  
As those from which tyranny set forth.

And yet, to authorize the edicts I've agreed  
Despite the loss of liberty decreed.  
*[Sits at desk, picks up a modern pen, then pauses]*

"Of the people, by the people, for the people!"  
Merely by scratching my name, gone!  
Their fears well-stoked, I'm sure that they, like sheep'll  
Acquiesce, save a headstrong, willful few  
Who fear tyranny, not the foe, and who  
Will base their stout resistance thereupon.

Why don't they understand that I'm no tyrant?  
My rule will be benign, and never strident;  
But when the lives of thousands are at stake  
All errors must be on the side of caution  
Thus, some times, some rights or liberties I'll be quashing;  
But I never, never, never, make a serious mistake.

*[Snatches the quill from the air, positions himself for signing. The quill is very long, and the trembling feather betrays MacBush's nervous indecision and excitement. Begin slow fadeout. He dips the quill in an inkwell and knocks it over; ink spills all over the desk. He rescues the papers before they are stained, but gets ink on his hand and clothing. As the lights fade, we see a large flow of black ink across the desk, then across the floor – far more than the inkwell could realistically have held. In the last bit of the dying light, we see MacBush throw down the quill and pick up a modern pen. He pulls the chair clear of the spilled ink, sits, rests the papers on his thigh and begins signing quickly and carelessly, without any ceremony. Blackout for about ten seconds.]*

*[Lights up. MacBush still seated, but the papers are gone.]*  
*[Enter Lady MacBush and servant]*

LADY MACBUSH.  
My son, have you done it? Have you signed the decrees?

MACBUSH.  
Yes, Mother. I signed them all.  
Find me some ibuprofen for my wrist, please.

*[Lady MacBush gestures, and servant departs.]*  
*[She wrings her hands nervously, pacing a little. She gets too near to the desk, and smears her hand with ink.]*

LADY MACBUSH.  
What's this all over your hand? And pants? And my hand? Surely your blood is not -- yet -- black!

MACBUSH.  
The inkwell overturned; I was slow in jumping back.  
It's nothing, really. When the man returns, we'll send him for the janitor.

LADY MACBUSH.  
Well, you might think it's nothing, but look! All over *my* hand!

MACBUSH.  
Please, Mother, my own wrist and hand  
Ache severely. Where's that servant?

*[Servant enters, with pitcher, glasses, and pills on a tray. He holds the tray while MACBUSH and LADY MACBUSH both take two tablets. Lady MacBush murmurs an instruction (to fetch the janitor), then the servant exits, with tray. MacBush still holds the pill bottle; puts it on the desk.]*

LADY MACBUSH. *[Rubbing the inkstain.]*  
Dammit, rubbing isn't working. I must get that ink stain off.  
Perhaps something like Ajax or Comet will be enough.

*[All exit.]*

-----  
SCENE IV. The same room.

*[Enter Janitor. He is old and slow; most movement seems chronically painful.]*

JANITOR.

Somebody spilled some ink. Where? Ink, ink, ink. Ah, here. There's a heck of a lot of it! Well, no use crying over spilled ink.  
*[wheezy laugh; then he begins to clean up the ink]*

I wonder, though -- is it ink, or maybe the blood of that Count Dickula? He's an evil one, that one, for sure, for sure, for sure. His blood is probably oil, straight from the ground! But this MacBush crew, I'll tell ya. I could name a few who've been hired from Hell itself. Some of them'll have black blood, for damn sure. They'd commit treason, for God's sake, and if the price was right they'd for sure do it for their own sake. They're equivocators down here, but when their time comes, their equivocating won't be in heaven.

Even Mr. MacBush -- he's an equivocator, big time. He could sit in either pan of a scale and swear against the other. Real nice guy, though. Sweet West Texas Crude. I talk to him 'most every day, y'know. Just "hello" in the hallway, you unnerstand, but just as polite and kind as we've ever had here. Too bad he don't drink; he's welcome down in my office -- the janitor's closet, you see -- for a quick snort, any time. I'd never tell no one.

No pretzels, though. *[affectionate chuckle]* 'Member the pretzels? The President. The Leader of the Free World, watching the Super Bowl all by hisself. I wonder if the man has any friends. Heck, I'd'a watched with 'im. Mighta saved his life.

None of them neocons wanted to watch the Super Bowl? Figures. Too busy with their secret conspiracies. I don't unnerstand why Mr. MacBush hired that bunch. His Daddy wouldn't ha' let 'em in the front door. But then, Mr. MacBush ain't nothin' like his Daddy. Too bad.

*[knocking]*

Ah, who is it! I'm trying to work in here! He won't be so impatient at the gates of Hell, he won't.

*[gets up, heads toward door]*

I'm comin'!

LADY MACBUSH. *[offstage]*  
C'mon, you! Open this door!

JANITOR.

*[aside]* Lady MacBush! Her -- Now, she's Mr. MacBush's real father.

I'm comin', ma'am!

*[Janitor opens door; enter Lady MACBUSH.]*

LADY MACBUSH.  
Are you here to clean up that ink spill?

JANITOR.

Yes, ma'am. I was just working on it.

LADY MACBUSH.  
Make it perfect.

JANITOR.

Yes'm. Pardon me, ma'am, but did you get the ink on your hand, there?

LADY MACBUSH.

Yes, yes. I can't get the stain out. After you're done here, bring me a bottle of whatever works. Wrap it up in a towel, or a bag or something. Give it to me, directly, not to anyone else, not even my secretary. Not my daughters. God, especially not my daughters!

JANITOR.

Yes, ma'am, but y'know, some of these chemicals is really bad for your skin.

LADY MACBUSH.

Okay, you've covered your ass. Just do as I tell you. Bring me that bottle as soon as possible.

*[Lady MACBUSH exits]*

JANITOR.

Yes, ma'am.

*[aside] I guess maybe I know who spilled the ink.*

*[resumes work, blackout]*

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**ACT III. Summer 2003.**

**SCENE I. MacDuff's home.**

*[Enter Macduff and Lennox.]*

MACDUFF.

So, Lennox, I've been out of the country, and have only just returned.

LENNOX.

Official business?

MACDUFF.

Sort of. I'll tell you in a moment what I've learned.

But tell me, first – how go the war drums?

LENNOX.

The Tiger's poor troops were summarily vanquished  
Far more quickly than we'd forecast or wished;  
Idle in victory, our soldiers languished  
And with much triumphal pomp and costume,  
Lord MacBush declared the mission accomplished.

MACDUFF.

By your face, that's not the end of the story.

LENNOX.

Nay. The Tiger escaped, and 'though his army had surrendered  
Much payment in blood had yet to be tendered.  
Lord MacBush and Count Bellicosa should have remembered  
That even the oppressed will patriotically resist  
When their homeland's unlawfully entered.

MACDUFF.

Quagmire.

LENNOX.

Indeed.

How fared your business abroad?

MACDUFF. *[lowering his voice]*

The indictment of the Tiger is a fraud.  
You will recall Lord MacBush's speeches,  
Adducing his reasons for this unprovoked war?  
I was in Africa, where I determined beyond cavil  
That he was lying, fibbing, and prevaricating.

LENNOX.

All three? The assertion is of course no surprise.  
And you will doubtless convince those with professional eyes.  
But the public? The pundits will all soliloquize  
With certain pomposity and pompous certainty  
That your claims are naught but inventions and lies.

MACDUFF.

But how, in my place, would a patriot act?  
Surely only my character is at risk of assassination.  
I'll take that chance.  
Silence is not an option. What consequences –  
Would attend if I speak out?

LENNOX.

Retaliation swift and sure. The sole restraint  
Will not be civility or decency, or anything so quaint;  
But only whether they are sure the taint  
Of their bad deeds will never touch the Palace  
    And disturb the carefully tended image of MacBush the Saint.

MACDUFF.

Can you not prophecy the form it will take?

LENNOX.

Can you keep your family safe?

MACDUFF.

My old friend, forgive me. I cannot tell you why,  
But an unguarded word can cause my wife and her colleagues to die.  
But to speak thus, to the wrong ears, would be treason!

LENNOX.

Turdbloom demands your blind allegiance;  
To crush you by committing treason  
Dissuades the next MacDuff, with good reason –  
He knows that crossing Turdbloom will  
    Be punished by extremes indecent.

MACDUFF.

Aye. Farewell, my friend.  
*[exit]*

LENNOX.

And you, my friend, must balance on a knife  
Patriotic duty against livelihood and wife.  
*[exit]*

-----  
SCENE II. A dark cave. In the middle, a caldron boiling.

*[Thunder. Enter the three Witches.]*

GRAYMALKIN.

Round about the caldron go;  
In the poison'd entrails throw.--  
Toad, that under cold stone,  
Days and nights has thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot!

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;  
Fire, burn; and caldron, bubble.

COOLA.

Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the caldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,--  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;  
Fire, burn; and caldron, bubble.

CEDILLA.

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,  
Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,  
Finger of birth-strangl'd babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,--  
Make the gruel thick and slab:  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our caldron.

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;  
Fire, burn; and caldron, bubble.

COOLA.

Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

CEDILLA.

By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes:--  
Open, locks, whoever knocks!

*[Enter MacBush.]*

MACBUSH.

How now, gray hoydens of the air!  
We've come to this forsaken place  
To conjure you, by that which you profess,--  
And find what black art indicates  
About our ultimate success;  
Enemies lurk in all directions.  
How will our velvet monarchy  
Be viewed by future history?

The weighty burdens that we bear  
Demand attention and reflection.

GRAYMALKIN.  
Speak.

COOLA.  
Demand.

CEDILLA.  
We'll answer.

GRAYMALKIN.  
Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,  
Or from those of our masters?

MACBUSH.  
Call 'em, let us see 'em.

GRAYMALKIN.  
Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten  
From the murderer's gibbet throw  
Into the flame.

ALL.  
Come, high or low;  
Thyself and office deftly show!

*[Thunder. An Apparition of an Elephant Head rises.]*

MACBUSH.  
Tell me, thou unknown power,--

GRAYMALKIN.  
He knows thy thought:  
Hear his speech, but say thou naught.

APPARITION.  
MacBush! MacBush! MacBush! Beware Macduff;  
Traitor to you, but not to his nation.  
-- Dismiss me:--enough.

*[Descends.]*

MACBUSH.  
Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;  
Thou hast harp'd my fear aright:--but one word more,--

GRAYMALKIN.  
He will not be commanded: here's another,  
More potent than the first.

*[Thunder. An Apparition of a Toddler]*

APPARITION.--  
MacBush! MacBush! MacBush!

MACBUSH.  
Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

APPARITION.  
Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for no person of woman born  
Shall harm MacBush.

*[Descends.]*

MACBUSH.  
MacDuff is thus harmless, of woman born  
And yet, he knows things that threaten us harm.  
The first apparition we surely shan't scorn;  
And we'll not rely on the second one's charm.

*[Thunder. An Apparition of a Child, wearing Mardi Gras beads and crown, rises.]*

It rises like the issue of a king;  
Is what he wears upon his baby brow the round  
And top of sovereignty?

ALL.  
Listen, but speak not to it.

APPARITION.  
MacBush shall never vanquish'd be  
Until the cold salt water of the sea  
Shall rise up and over a city of Cawdor  
Leaving behind her, death, ruin, disorder.  
*[Descends]*

MACBUSH.  
That will never be;  
Who can bid the sea to abandon  
Its usual bed by his commanding?  
Rebellion's head will never rise,  
And MacBush won't ever temporize  
With rebels, traitors or usurpers.  
I beg you, terrible peace-disturbers  
To tell me, please, just one last thing –  
Is MacBush the name of Cawdor's next king?

ALL.  
Seek to know no more.  
*[witches disappear]*

*[Enter Heckuva, carrying newspaper, panting]*

HECKUVA.  
What's your grace's will?

MACBUSH.  
Saw you the weird sisters?

HECKUVA.  
No, my lord.

MACBUSH.  
Came they not by you?

HECKUVA.  
No indeed, my lord.

MACBUSH.  
How long have you been lurking here?  
What did you see? What did you hear?

HECKUVA.  
Sire, please. I only just arrived. I did not see nor hear anything.

MACBUSH.  
What are you doing here?

HECKUVA.  
Count Dickula bid me to hasten and show you this article. See his notes in the margin.

MACBUSH.  
Tell us what it says.

HECKUVA.  
Ambassador MacDuff is the author –

MACBUSH.  
-- What!? What has he written?

HECKUVA.  
He asserts that you lied to the public, to win their support for the war.

MACBUSH.  
So what? Our enemies have been claiming that since we gave the speech.

HECKUVA.  
MacDuff says he has proof that you *knew* the information was false.

MACBUSH.  
Undoubtedly, Count Dickula has a plan.

HECKUVA.  
I believe so, sire, but he has told me nothing.

MACBUSH.  
Lucky you. We shall return to the capital at once.  
Summon our helicopter. Call Dickula and tell him  
To meet us on arrival, and in the interim  
Not to indulge in his villainous stunts.

HECKUVA.  
Yes, M'Lord.  
*[Exit]*

MACBUSH.  
Heckuva and the harpies? Are they in league? To what end?  
What's Heckuva to them, or they to Heckuva?  
*[Exit]*

-----  
SCENE III. President's Palace.

*[enter Turdbloom, who paces a little]*  
*[enter First Journalist]*

TURDBLOOM.  
I have a very, very big scoop for you. How's your writing hand? Good shape?

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
Very good shape. How can I help?

TURDBLOOM.  
Have you ever met Lady MacDuff?

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
Once or twice. She's pretty hot.

TURDBLOOM.  
She'll be aflame soon. Here's the scoop. She's a spy. One of ours, of course. She runs a network of agents in several countries of South America. It's a good operation; she's good, and she picks good people.

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
So why are you telling me this? Surely you don't expect me to publish it?

TURDBLOOM.  
Why not?

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
Merely telling me this is tantamount to treason!

TURDBLOOM.  
Pursuant to a decree by Count Dickula, Regent and Authority for Determining What is Classified, this information is declassified. He said so, just before I came here. You now have a constitutional right, and a constitutional duty, to break the story. Or should I take it to someone else?

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
You'd better take it to someone else. It's too much, sir. I can't do it. But you can count on me to keep my mouth shut.

TURDBLOOM.  
You'd better. This is going to cost you some access points, you know.

FIRST JOURNALIST.  
Yes, sir, I know. But I still can't do it.  
*[exits]*

*[enter Second Journalist from other side of stage]*

TURDBLOOM.

I have a very, very big scoop for you. Have you ever met Lady MacDuff?

SECOND JOURNALIST.

Yes, I know her fairly well. Why?

TURDBLOOM.

She's a spy.

SECOND JOURNALIST.

What!?

TURDBLOOM.

Calm down. She a spy for our side. I want you to write that in your column.

SECOND JOURNALIST.

What's going on?

TURDBLOOM.

Never you mind.

SECOND JOURNALIST.

Does this have anything to do with her husband's Op-Ed last week?

TURDBLOOM.

Of course not. What kind of man do you think I am?

SECOND JOURNALIST.

*[aside.] A rhetorical question, I am certain.*

*[Conversation goes to mime as lights fade. We have just enough light to see Second J. exit, and Third J. enter.]*

-----

SCENE IV. MacDuff Home.

*[telephone rings. Enter Lady MacDuff, who answers.*

*As she does, the caller, is revealed on a distant corner of the stage (alternatively, he need not appear at all; his voice is sufficient).]*

LADY MACDUFF.

You've seen the paper?

{CAWDOR'S AGENT IN PERU.

Yes.}

LADY MACDUFF.

My friend, our cover is blown, blown, blown. Tell your people to burn everything and save themselves. You have the emergency cash?

{AGENT.

Yes. Lady MacDuff, what's going on?}

LADY MACDUFF.

It's political payback. My husband exposed one of His Excellency the Great MacBush's lies. Turdbloom and Dickula have struck back at him through me, and through me at you.

{AGENT.

But what of the damage to your nation? To your intelligence gathering?}

LADY MACDUFF.

Elegant, nay? Dickula is saying to everyone, "We will even go so far as to commit treason to punish you if you cross us." Right out in the open. Besides, Count Dickula has little interest in gathering intelligence. He makes it up to suit the moment.

{AGENT.

Will he get away with it?}

LADY MACDUFF.

Probably. But enough. You must get away yourself. Get off the phone and get to the safe house. Call me when all your people are accounted for. Farewell. And – I'm sorry. Tremendously.

{AGENT.

Farewell, Lady MacDuff. I shall call you soon.

*[hangs up, spotlight on him does quick fade]*

LADY MACDUFF. *[hangs up, tearful]*

How many are going to die today? For foolishly trusting me?

*[phone rings again. She picks up.]*

Hello?

{CIVIL SERVANT.

*[appears in the same spot as the Agent (as before, he can be an offstage voice).]*

Five-six-two, this is eight-six-eight. }

LADY MACDUFF.

Knock it off, Dan. It's not a funny day.

{CIVIL SERVANT.

OK, here it is short and sweet. We have two teams protecting you at your house right now, but you've got to get to a safe location right away. }

LADY MACDUFF.

I know. I'm packed. My husband is not here; someone has to tell him not to come home until he's talked to me. Also, don't forget to route this number to the safe house.

{CIVIL SERVANT.

Will do. No problemo. Get moving. There's a cab on your curb, number eight-six-eight. You'll recognize Kasala, the driver. No need to say a word; she'll get you there. Got it?}

LADY MACDUFF.

Sure. Thanks. [*hangs up; Civil Servant hangs up, is blacked out*]

Never, never forget: espionage is a dangerous business. It's right there in the manual – Chapter 1, "Never, never forget: espionage is a dangerous business." I never forgot it. My people never forgot it; jeez, they're the ones in the danger zone. Professionals, every one of them. Constantly cautious – watching north, east, south, west.

We forgot to look upward.

[*exit*]

-----

SCENE V. President's Palace.

[*Enter MacBush, Lady MacBush*]

LADY MACBUSH.

The Apparitions said you must beware MacDuff,  
Yet no person born of woman can do you harm.  
And even when the land's aflood by Neptune's arm  
The water will not harm *us*. Overall, a self-contradictory  
Push-me-pull-you of a prophecy. But the harpies' record is good;  
Everything they have forecast has come true, sure enough.  
If you're certain you've not misunderstood  
Then we must solve the riddle, or else our rightful victory  
Might escape our grasp, even at the last possible minute.

MACBUSH.

MacDuff cannot hurt us, but even so, when our assailants  
Hatch a plot, We'll bet we'll see MacDuff's assistance in it.

LADY MACBUSH.

Would you lay off that ridiculous first-person plural?  
The royal "we" sounds just awful when West Texa-fied.

And the F.B.I. people must be notified –  
The MacDuffs must be free of all forms of surveillance  
Lest the agents perceive how our plans are unfurled.

MACBUSH.

Scientists predict the sea will rise  
As global warming melts polar ice  
But surely that calamity  
Will come upon us gradually;  
Costly, sure, in buildings drowned  
But the humans will have ample time  
To climb to higher ground.

LADY MACBUSH.

Delphic oracles demand Delphic interpretations.  
Let us solve the puzzle: why should we beware anyone,  
When by those born of woman, no harm can be done?  
[*Courtier enters, pauses; MacBush nods to him*]

MACBUSH.

Excuse me, Mother. I must tend to my administrification.

LADY MACBUSH.

And remind them of the need for haste; tell them time is dearly of the essence.

[Exit MacBush]

**SONG. LADY MACBUSH: THEY CALL ME DOWAGER**

They call me Dowager  
Witchy old Dowager;  
    They call me the *eminence grise* –  
But if I'm the Dowager  
I'll show you how witcher-  
    -y forces you to your knees!

My eldest is finest, he's  
First of a dynasty,  
    Siblings awaiting their turn –  
With voting by Diebold,  
We'll always get threefold  
    The votes that we've actually earned.

They call me Dowager  
Hateful old Dowager,  
    Out of my beautiful mind;  
But if I'm a Dowager  
Watch for the howitzers  
    Aimed straight at you and your kind!

Those New Orleans refugees,  
Foul underprivilegees  
    Everything's working for them;  
I'm really afraid that they  
Might even want to stay –  
    Then Texas might go to the Dems!

They call me Dowager  
    Hateful old Dowager  
Heart and soul blacker than pitch –  
Permit me to borrow  
My word for Ferraro –  
    Just call me a million-buck bitch!

I hope Angela Lansbury plays me in the movie.

[Exit]  
-----

**ACT IV. Late Spring 2004.**

SCENE I. President's Palace.

*[Enter MacBush.]*

MACBUSH.

To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus . . .  
The Democrat leaders are easily spooked  
And, so, I have no fear that any thrust  
Will by them or by their kind be so much as rebuked.  
And the bloggers and other so-called progressives  
Will discover that without power, being aggressive  
Is of no avail. But what of Aliquot?  
Only he has the brains and disposition  
To rally my foes to effective opposition.  
As I consolidated power, his energy ran low  
But he did speak out, first opposing my rush to war --  
Now, a year later, he has sharpened his invective  
To say my rationale for war has been deceptive.  
Indeed, he stops just short of saying that I'd  
Been so hot for war that I'd deliberately lied.  
For just such emergencies, we have a corps  
-- the *press* corps.

*[Enter three Pundits]*

Was it not yesterday I promised you  
Each an exclusive interview?

FIRST PUNDIT.

It was, so it please your highness.

MACBUSH.

Well then, now – *[pauses]*  
Have you consider'd Aliquot's speeches?

SECOND PUNDIT.

What do you mean, Excellency?

MACBUSH.

*[aside]* "Highness!" "Excellency!" quite egregious  
Yet I do enjoy the sycophancy.

*[to pundits]*

Surely you have not forgotten Aliquot?  
It was a little less than three years ago  
That I beat him by a landslide, and took up residence.  
Tonight he plans to deliver a speech.  
I have here advance copies, one for each;  
Even upon quick perusal, you perceive  
That his primary purpose, at all events,  
Is to declare that I, in the lust of hot blood  
And Oedipal revenge that did willfully deceive  
The citizens, so they would clamor for invasion.  
You must, it is your patriotic duty,  
Nip this treasonous insurgency in the bud  
By stripping Aliquot of the esteem and good repute he  
Must have to put the citizens mood for persuasion  
Of his unpatriotic scheme to prevail next year

When he runs for re-election --

-- Stay! I misspoke; I mean

When he runs for election to this throne, that is mine  
by right. *[aside]* -- *This compulsive spilling of secret beans  
Must cease, lest I be in these pundits' power,  
And compelled to admit yet more, disrupting our  
Plans to transcend our puny Constitutional sphere;  
And, in myself, all three branches of government combine.*

*[Enter Turdbloom]*

*[to Turdbloom]*

Ah, Turdbloom, I was about to send for you. Please  
Beg of these gentlemen of the press that they exert  
Themselves to be unbiased, they and their fellows,  
As they comment on tonight's speech by Lord Aliquot.  
*[Turdbloom huddles with Pundits, downstage.  
MacBush moves far upstage, out of earshot]*

TURDBLOOM.

Yes, sire. *[to pundits]*

Do you remember the release  
Of water from that dam, and the photo opportunity,  
Delayed so Lord Aliquot could take a nap and change his shirt?  
You missed your deadlines. Hmmm. . . some others. . .  
Remember last summer, when he accused you of being  
Mere cogs in a "highly effective propaganda machine!"  
Mr. "Love Story" owes amends to the whole media community.  
Besides, he's such an annoying know-it-all;  
I'm sure each and every one of you can recall  
His patronizing sighs and smirks as he spoke of scientific  
Matters in terms polysyllabic and over-specific.  
Who does he think he is? He affects not to know the rule  
Not to broach any of the many subjects beyond the limited ken  
Of you three wise, and experienced, and graying gentlemen,  
The doyens of the press corps. If you prefer treatment as a fool,  
Repeated every day, for eight years, as in "Groundhog Day,"  
Then your columns should wonkishly focus on only the content  
Of tonight's address. But if you do, be careful not to say  
Anything that might possibly, marginally, iota-wise, be construed  
To disparage the wisdom or bravery of the President  
In our time of war, lest you be literally, royally, thoroughly screwed.  
According to secret decrees whose existence I'll deny,  
Disrespect to MacBush the Great is more than sufficient reason  
To have you hung for *lese majeste*, which we will call treason.

FIRST PUNDIT.

We understand.

TURDBLOOM. *[to MacBush, returning]*

These gentlemen and I find we thoroughly agree  
As to the importance we attach to reports unbiased  
They'll hew to that mark, to the n times nth degree,  
Lest they pay the toll laid upon those who try us.

FIRST PUNDIT.

Precisely as you have said, my liege. Hail MacBush!

MACBUSH.

*[Aside] Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
Collies, coyotes, Yorkies, poodles, and foxes  
All go by the class of dogs. Yet the paradox is  
That the more perfect the man appears, it's much the worse  
For him who shares with him a dangerous confidence.*

So, gentlemen, none is perfect. Tell us, then  
What's your weakness? Present by rhetoric and evidence  
Reasons you are unworthy men, and thus  
Worthy couriers of our trust.

FIRST PUNDIT.

M'Lord. I confess I cherish, beyond all else, my vanity.  
My fellows talk of my wisdom, serenity, and suave urbanity;  
They call me their "Dean," an honorific which, I must admit  
Plays to my vanity in a most unbecoming way. I cannot abide  
Any high official to whose superior mind I must submit;  
It cuts to the inner core of my over-inflated pride.  
A thousand pardons, M'Lord, but your rival Aliquot  
Is one such man, one to whose sagacity I must defer;  
It is agonizing to my ego and my reputation.  
I shall do as Turdbloom instructs, and as I infer  
Is also your wish, to stabilize the current status quo.

TURDBLOOM. *[aside to Pundits]*

*You fool! Make no mention to Lord MacBush of our conversation.*

SECOND PUNDIT.

Your Excellency. I am a lazy man, but one who very much enjoys  
The comforts of a large salary and bottomless expense account.  
As things stand, I have it all, and would not jeopardize a bit.  
My employer, as you know, is your close friend and supporter.  
I, as the saying goes, do not intend to bite the hand that feeds me.  
*[turns head to Turdbloom, nods and winks]*  
Tell me what you want, and rely on me to deliver all;  
My word is valuable, because my readers think me liberal.

MACBUSH.

And you, sir?

THIRD PUNDIT.

Lord MacBush, I am your man heart and soul; I would do nearly anything you would ask. All I ask in return is access – a scoop or two, an exclusive interview, perhaps some off-the-record chat. But there will no fault you can find with me even if all of these small requests are denied. Your cause is my cause, and my pen is your pen.

MACBUSH.

What say you, Turdbloom?

TURDBLOOM.

I believe all three, m'lord. They speak truly. They have stated their prices, and even *in toto*, it is low. My counsel is to set them on Aliquot, and let them go.

MACBUSH.

Very well. Gentlemen, good day. I look forward to hearing of your accounts of Aliquot's remarks.

*[All exit MacBush and Turdbloom]*

**SONG. PUNDITS: THREE DOYENS OF THE PRESS**

ALL.            Three doyens of the press are we,  
                 Mouthpieces of the G.O.P.  
                 Mocking the Dems relentlessly  
                 Three petty doyens we!

FIRST P.       Democrats are a source of fun  
SECOND P.     None are safe, we care for none;  
THIRD P.      They're only a joke that's just begun!  
                 Three doyens of the press!

ALL.            Three writing syndicated columns  
                 Measuring prose with cadence solemn  
                 We always see 'em as we call 'em!  
                 Three petty doyens we –  
                 Three petty doy -- ens we!

THIRD P.      We spin for MacBush on ev'ry day;  
FIRST P.       Columns written to portray  
SECOND P.     Democrats in disarray --  
                 Three doyens of the press!

SECOND P.     Things are never what they seem  
THIRD P.      We torture facts to fit the meme  
FIRST P.       To make the center look extreme --  
                 Three doyens of the press!

ALL.            Three writing syndicated columns  
                 Measuring prose with cadence solemn  
                 We always see 'em as we call 'em!  
                 Three petty doyens we –  
                 Three petty doyyyyyy - ens we!!

*[All exit.]*

-----  
**SCENE II. President's Palace. MacBush's Office.**

*[Enter MacBush]*

*[he sits, picks up TV remote, turns on TV (screen is turned away from the audience).*

*We hear real commentary on Aliquot's speech]*

{TALKING HEADS *[MacBush clicks through the channels. Each line should be a different voice]:*

He went on and on; I think it's fair to use the word "rant."  
... was screaming, just like Doctor Howard. . .  
... It looks as if he's gone off his lithium again . . .  
... single craziest political performance of my lifetime. . .  
... he's insane. I think he's gone off his medication. . .  
... gained credence with the lunatic wing of his party. . . }

*[intercom buzzes]*

{ SECRETARY (on intercom)  
The three pundits are all here, sire. }

MACBUSH. [*mutes TV*]  
Send them in.  
[*Enter Three Pundits*]

Gentlemen, I was just watching your highlight film. [*points to the TV*]  
Heck of a job, all of you. Heck of a job. [*shakes hands with all three*]

PUNDITS.  
Thank you, M'Lord.

MACBUSH.  
Aliquot will never take this throne!

SECOND PUNDIT.  
Doctor Howard, the screamer, is crazy, too. As party leader,  
He's determined to squander all their funds on rural candidates  
While passing up the *tres, tres* cool people, of whom we approve.  
We'll skewer him.

MACBUSH.  
Watch your language, you. This is a family values regime.

SECOND PUNDIT.  
Pardon my French, sire. I didn't think.

MACBUSH.  
Keep up the good work, and I'll see to it you're on the honors list.

FIRST PUNDIT.  
Honors List, M'Lord?

MACBUSH.  
Yes, the Medal of Freedom. They're authorized; we may as well use 'em.  
We use 'em for bribes in Euphratia.

THIRD PUNDIT.  
Oh, thank you, M'Lord! My mother will be so proud!  
But shouldn't you call it the Medal of Freedom of the Emperor of the Imperial Empire?

SECOND PUNDIT.  
Or maybe just the "Emperor's Medal?"

MACBUSH.  
I like the sound of that, there, Brushfire.  
But for now, I'm merely President of Cawdor.  
When you're typing, don't forget that.  
But I want to hear how it sounds!

**SONG. MACBUSH & PUNDITS: I AM THE EMPEROR OF GREAT CAWDOR**

I am the Emperor of Great Caw-dor --

*And a right good Emperor, too!*

You're very, very good,

And my debt is understood

To my journalistic crew.

*We're very, very good*

*And his debt is understood*

*To his journalistic crew.*

I am faithful with my phallus,

Thus returning to the Palace

All its honor and its dignity;

Although of the Ten Commandments

I've been smashing nine to fragments

I never do adultery.

*What, never?*

No, never!

*What, never?*

Well, hardly ever!

*Hardly ever does adultery --*

*So give three cheers, and one cheer more*

*For the faithful Emperor of Great Cawdor!*

*Give three cheers, and one cheer more*

*For --*

*The Emperor of Great Cawdor!*

I do my best to satisfy you all

*And with you, we're quite content*

You're exceedingly polite,

And I think it only right

To return the compliment.

*We're exceedingly polite,*

*And he thinks it only right*

*To return the compliment.*

Although you all are clever

Only one of you has ever

Challenged any of my alibis --

And in return I promise

To you all but Helen Thomas,

I'll never tell press a lie!

*What, never?*

No, never!

*What, never?*

Well, hardly ever!!

*Hardly ever?*

Hardly ever!

*Hardly, hardly ever?*

Well --

--Only if it works for me!  
*Lying only when it works for he --*  
*So give three cheers, and one cheer more*  
*For the truthful Emperor of Great Cawdor!*  
*Give three cheers, and one cheer more*  
For --  
*The Emperor of Great Cawdor!*

Now, gentlemen, I'm afraid I have to ask you to go. I'm a busy man. It's time for my afternoon gym session, then a nap.

PUNDITS. *[bowing]*  
Very well, M'Lord.

SECOND PUNDIT.  
We're eager to serve in any way.

MACBUSH.  
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Out!

*[All exit]*

-----

SCENE III. Cabinet Meeting Room (next day)

*[Enter Officials and Aides (including Dickula, Gonzo, Turdbloom, Heckuva.)*  
*[They take their places at the table, but remain standing.]*  
*[Enter MacBush, taking his seat]*

MACBUSH.  
Please be seated. Let's begin. Count Dickula will preside.

DICKULA.  
First, old business; for nearly two years we have set to the side  
Any discussion of policy or plan by which we contrive  
To keep M'Lord's vow to capture Ossama dead or alive.

GONZO.  
Move to table.

BELLICOSA.  
--Second.

DICKULA.  
--All in favor say "aye."

ALL.  
Aye!

DICKULA.  
Very well. This is, according to my  
Calculations, the ninety-seventh consecutive week  
The matter has been tabled, all the while without a single leak.  
Let us congratulate ourselves for our sealed lips  
That have kept this secret without a single slip.  
New business?

MACBUSH.

Yes, what of Aliquot? Will he contest  
Next year's election? What do you think of his ravening screed  
That he referred to as a "speech?" What sort of plan will we need  
To keep him and his extremists firmly suppressed?  
The opinion-makers agree; he was "crazy," "wild-eyed," "fanatical"  
And with a little care and feeding, they will continue to say so,  
But we think there's nothing so potentially problematical  
As the disaster that might follow a challenge by Aliquot.  
We must stifle Aliquot, for once and for all!

*[Servant enters; nods to MacBush]*

Discuss it among yourselves. I must take a call.

*[Exit MacBush]*

*[The others converse in low tones.]*

*[Enter Aliquot's spectre, takes MacBush's seat. He is invisible to all but MacBush and the audience. His posture is confident, assured. He is wearing a beard. Earthtones optional.]*

*[Enter MacBush]*

MACBUSH.

Who let him in here? Throw him out! Now! Right now!  
What are you doing here, disturbing our meeting?  
These matters are classified! Guards! Guards! Guards!  
You prig! Your goody-goody reputations deserves ten more beatings;  
You know you'll never live in the Palace. In Ohio and Florida  
The voting machines are rigged, to give much more of the  
Well-earned thrashing to those who would dare disregard  
Our right to the throne which to us was endowed!

BELLICOSA. *[taking MacBush aside, whispering]*

*M'Lord! M'Lord! Do you think you see someone? Lord Aliquot?*

*Believe me, sire. Aliquot is not here, nor, judging*

*By the reviews of his speech, will he ever see this room again.*

*Please cease this wild talk of rigged voting machines*

*In case someone here takes note, and spills the beans;*

*Piercing the bubble that protects us from dissent*

*And it will have been your loose lips, alone, that sank you.*

DICKULA.

I'm sure you all wouldn't think of begrudging  
Our Lord MacBush a few moments to collect his thoughts  
The past few days have been overloaded and fraught  
With the awesome burdens of the Commander-in-Chief  
Which he must bear alone, without relief.  
His Grace is the Decider; the buck stops at his desk  
And too frequently that buck interrupts and mars his rest.  
So, please, everyone, go quickly back to work;  
His condition's top secret, lest the bond market go berserk.

*[All exit all but Dickula, Bellicosa, and Aliquot's spectre]*

MACBUSH.

Surely you see him, Bellicosa, Dickula  
Sitting in our chair, still wearing that silly beard,  
His mien triumphant, his silent face articulate  
As if he had cheated us of office, and not the reverse  
As if he were the one deserving to be feared  
And we were history's fuzzy, fading blurs.

*[Spectre rises, gestures to someone offstage, then exits.]*

BELLICOSA.

What now, M'Lord?

MACBUSH.

He's leaving! But another enters! Beardless, broad shoulders  
Affecting wire glasses clipped to his nose –  
In a wheelchair! With a cigarette holder!  
It's not Aliquot, it's F.D.R.!  
He's smiling! At us! Like the cat seeing the bird!  
Wait. He's gone, but another comes. It's Harry Truman! –

BELLICOSA.

Come with me, sire, and leave these absurd –

MACBUSH.

We shall stay right here, where we are!  
Harry's leaving, soon we'll see a new man –  
Of course! John Kennedy! Now we understand.  
L.B.J., Jimmy Carter, and – no! Even him! William Jefferson Clinton!  
Oh, no! Clinton leaves! Surely Fate will not expand  
This parade of Democrats into the future? Please, God, no!  
Now -- Now – Now – Then enter as a throng!  
A dozen! Ten or more! They're coming into view, slowly.  
I see now. Democrat politicians. Those who go  
In this group are those who are partially or wholly  
Committed to try to gain our throne next year.  
*[aside] (Lieberman? Who does he think he's kidding?)*  
But all of them, every one, staking his or her career  
On the election that we know is rigged. Only, but –  
What if the pattern is holding? We saw their history.  
What if these visions are giving us the prophecy  
That one of this group will sit here, where we belong?

DICKULA.

By your report, Sire, you see only apparitions  
Of the opposing party. Perhaps the purpose of the visions  
Is to provide you the intelligence  
That one of them will win, but not 'til five years hence?

MACBUSH.

Count Dickula, we thank you. Of course it is as you say.

BELLICOSA.

Was Aliquot himself in that final throng, by the way?

MACBUSH.

I did not see him. I wonder why?  
Surely he won't quit, without another try?

DICKULA.

He cannot stomach all the campaign strife.  
And now, Sire, let us escort you to the loving care of your wife.  
*[All exit]*

-----

SCENE IV. President's Palace.

*[Enter Lady MacBush, Bellicosa]*

LADY MACBUSH.

Sit, worthy friend. My lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him, and extend his passion.

BELLICOSA.

What shall I say to the Cabinet?

LADY MACBUSH.

Simply that my son was quite upset.  
He's on guard for terrorists 24/7  
A wearisome task no assistant can leaven.  
By the way, where was Lord MacDuff?

BELLICOSA.

He was busy abroad; for his return there was not time enough.

LADY MACBUSH.

Hmmmmmm. . .  
*[Lady MacBush exits]*

*[Enter Heckuva from other side]*

BELLICOSA.

Don't fret, Heckuva. M'Lord MacBush  
Is not at death's door. We have no need to push  
Him to do more work than he can stand. As you know,  
He's never been able to make himself go  
More than a few hours without taking a rest,  
And this damned war puts him hard against the test.

HECKUVA.

And how goes the war?

BELLICOSA.

What? Could it be that you're out of the loop?  
The war is terrible – far beyond my power to recoup.  
The Tiger is hiding, but as yet, no change in regime  
Because no Euphratian of consequence will serve on our team.  
We have, of course, a sleazy schemer to prop up as puppet,  
But the bleeding will continue; he has no power to stop it.  
We have searched, without success, over all obstructions

For any devices we can pretend are weapons of mass destruction.  
Our troops must be given rest, and refit with new equipment  
Not issued as we lowballed the duration of our commitment.  
Morale is in the toilet, and our soldiers will, in time  
Vent their bitter rage on captives, as revolting war crimes.  
The tortures they inflict will cause them nightmares and shame  
For the rest of their lives. They will see the men they've maimed  
Whene'er they close their eyes, and sometimes when they don't  
And hear in endless loop each groan their victims groaned.

HECKUVA.

But Baron Gonzo has cleverly proven, with a memorandum of law  
Stating that torture of insurgents is not a war crime at all.

BELLICOSA.

And the nightmares, Heckuva? The nightmares? Can the clever Baron write  
A memo that will give our boys the peace to sleep at night?

*[All exit]*

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ACT V. August 2005

SCENE I. Democratic Headquarters (a shabby office)

*[Enter Dr. Howard, Lennox and MacDuff]*

*[Dr. Howard's words and posture are stiff, formal, and pompous. But this is not his natural way; he is constantly restraining exuberant passions as he speaks.]*

LENNOX.

Last autumn, the citizens did foolishly affirm  
MacBush's reign; since then, his actions have confirmed  
His intent to maintain his regal power perm-  
-anently, flouting custom and constitution,  
And augment that power according to his autocratic terms.

MACDUFF.

A rare brave official has responded to the woes myself and particularly my Lady;  
He begins to prosecute the matter and to embolden the courts to their duty  
To treat the traitors, Dickula and Turdbloom, as traitors deserve.  
Doubtless MacBush will pardon them, at the end,  
As his father did in his turn, 'way back when.  
But that will further expose the full evil of the regime.  
But meanwhile, mayhem and strife in Euphratia have killed  
Hundreds of Cawdor's youths, and thousands of Euphratia's.  
To what end? the Tiger is found, and imprisoned, but the vacuum  
He left is filled with horrible strife. For all the treasure squandered on the war,  
The Euphratians are far more wretched, and far less free, than before.

LENNOX.

By checks and by balances he's neither balanced, nor checked.  
To him, the leaders of his party almost daily genuflect;  
The journals never dare to show him disrespect,  
And even our own "leaders," in the House and Senate both,  
Compete to see who can be the most circumspect.

HOWARD.

Although there is, at long last, some resistance. His plan to bilk old people of their pensions has utterly failed. He and his allies overreach, badly: their popularity wanes for their wicked, maladroit attempt to make a long-suffering, dying woman into their pawn. They harassed the judges, who bravely did their jobs; and Lord MacBush even persuaded his brother to send the militia, but they were stopped by the local sheriff (another unsung hero).

And, most important, his allies in the Congress believing themselves, like MacBush, above the law, have sold off to any citizen or foreigner nearly every government property, privilege, contract or law that wasn't somehow nailed down. They have achieved depth and stench of corruption to rival that of the unburied corpses after a great battle. The public is slowly taking note. The bullies of the airwaves have revealed their feet of clay, if not pure lead. At long last they're being called to account for the dangerous, hateful falsehoods that they've spread, and the strangely incongruous lives they've led. So take heart, my friend. There is yet hope.

LENNOX.

Hope? Dare one hope the triangulators and poltroons  
Of the so-called opposition will ever find opposing opportune?  
Don't hold your breath. They won't fight; they'd just as soon  
Drift along, and not rock any boats, lest something happen  
To interrupt their comfort or burst their pretty blue balloons.

MACDUFF.

Still, my friends, ere Dame Prudence mark us with her stamp,

We must follow our own grassroots, like the brave woman encamped  
At the entrance gates of the Summer Palace,  
Asking of MacBush, "For what was my son lost?"  
The turning point is reached; it's time to call his bluff  
A hundred little hints show we can overcome the malice  
Of Turdbloom, who frights by a vow of revenge, at any cost –  
He went too far by his attack upon my dear wife, Lady MacDuff,  
And his wrath no longer tortures his minion's dreams.  
The public's confidence rose fast, and quickly it contracts;  
I predict we shall hear little complaints, see a few firming spines  
From among the columnists and politicians  
Who have for so long remained rigidly, fearfully, in line.  
A hole in the dam, dear Lennox, is usually sufficient  
For the lake it forms to become a cataract  
Wrecking the dam and everything downstream.

LENNOX.

A cataract, you say? Let us pray, then, for a flood  
To wash away MacBush, and stanch our nation's blood.  
*[exit all]*

-----  
SCENE II. The President's Summer Palace.

*[Enter MacBush, Lady MacBush, Turdbloom, Heckuva]*

HECKUVA.

M'Lord, M'Lady, please. The weathermen are all agreed  
Two storms now at sea are gathering to themselves titanic force  
And these two angry sisters are intent on a course  
For the coast near Creole City. In a matter of hours;  
These terrible virgins will double and again double their speed –  
For their passion's release they need cities of man.  
First one, then the other, like Lot's daughters of old,  
Their will is to ravish while being deflowered.  
Against their fury the levees can't possibly hold;  
The city will soon be covered by a filthy mix of water and sand;  
Brine from the sea, untreated sewage, wreckage and debris,  
Evil brews of chemicals from factories upstream,  
And the bodies of hundreds of neighbors, drowned.  
Those with cars, and good credit, have reached higher ground  
But thousands are lacking the transport to flee;  
They must stay and face the wall of water.  
There is still time, M'Lord, for saving some of these,  
Converting them from "victims" to "evacuees."

MACBUSH.

And so, to avert a calamitous slaughter?

LADY MACBUSH.

Just a minute, son; just a minute.  
Don't forget my friends and neighbors –  
The Brevetts, the Tattersalls, the Courtneys and Logans  
Who are counting on you to make good on your slogans  
And help them hold on to the fruits of their labors  
By cutting their taxes as much as you can.  
But, for every dime that we send to those losers

They'll demand twenty cents, and then thirty, then fifty  
They'll constantly whine and invent lame excuses  
For ever more handouts; their need will be infinite.  
Creole City's a cesspit, a vice-ridden sump;  
The generous help of the righteous and thrifty  
Will be thoughtlessly gulped, all at once, in one lump.  
Surely those people can clean up their own mess,  
And are quite undeserving of any largesse?

HECKUVA.

M'Lady, I'm sure that your instincts are right  
But I, as the Czar of emergency management  
Must do something, now, to respond to their plight;  
Lest the death and destruction be laid to my charge.  
Among bloggers is more than one Madame Defarge  
Knitting records of who deserves prison or banishment.

MACBUSH.

Surely, sirrah, you do not mean to suggest that we  
Cannot deal with these "bloggers" if they dare to speak out;  
Our command of the news, of both print and T.V.  
Has converted their leaders from lions to lambs;  
One and all are the Democrats cowardly phonies  
If you search every one, you will find no *cojones*.  
If the bloggers should rise, then these "leaders" will freak out  
And will need no assistance to see that they're damned.

LADY MACBUSH.

Moreover, *Baron Heckuva*, do I hear you say  
The reign of MacBush may some day come to an end?  
I must tell you I cannot possibly comprehend  
Your flirtation with the grievous crime of *lese majeste*.  
You should advise your tongue to be better policed.

HECKUVA.

Beg pardon, Madame. No offense was meant, not, . . . not in the least.

[*Exit Heckuva, enter Turdbloom*]

TURDBLOOM.

[*to MacBush*] Forgive me for interrupting your vacation, M'Lord.

MACBUSH.

What do you want?

TURDBLOOM.

Sire, some musicians and players are nearby, and invite your attendance.

MACBUSH.

Are they any good?

TURDBLOOM.

I cannot say, sire, although they say that one can fiddle like Nero.  
But it's a day for easy politics; the music does appeal  
To rednecks and gay-bashers, your core supporters.  
The players in this venue will behave; none would dare  
To embarrass you, Emperor of Great Cawdor, in person.

Discouraging words will surely be as remote  
As the nearest First Amendment Zone – at least half a mile.

MACBUSH.  
Sounds like fun. When do we leave?

TURDBLOOM.  
Not until tomorrow, sire. I'll draw up the itinerary at once.

MACBUSH.  
Can we avoid that woman at the gate of the palace grounds?

TURDBLOOM.  
Of course, sire. I shall arrange a fleet of SUVs.

MACBUSH.  
Why not just put her under arrest?

TURDBLOOM.  
But, sire – on what charge?

MACBUSH.  
Disturbing the Emperor. Good enough?

TURDBLOOM.  
Of course, your Excellency.  
I shall consult with Baron Gonzo immediately.  
*[Exit Turdbloom.]*

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ACT VI. July - October 2006

SCENE I. The President's Palace.

*[Enter MacBush and entourage -- ]*

MACBUSH.

It's gone on far too long; it cannot be a fluke.  
Just five years ago, the gauges of public approval  
Almost burst, as the mercury soared to record highs;  
But now, for months, that same gauge signifies  
Disdain and scorn from over half the public  
Including many who'd rejoice at my removal.

TURDBLOOM.

Sire! Allow me, please, to voice a small rebuke;  
The people aren't displeased with you --  
The summer of their discontent has been gratingly subject  
To unprecedented payments to the merchants of gas.  
Regarding our policies in Minor Asia  
They wish we'd declare victory, then abandon Euphratia  
And move along to something new.  
Count Bellicosa and I must urge you  
To seize the initiative, and switch your focus  
To Euphratia's evil neighbor, Persia.  
Regime change in one is every bit as important as  
Regime change in the other.

BELLICOSA.

Let's attack Persia, so our poll numbers soar!

DICKULA.

M'Lord, Persia's the gateway to the Caucasus  
Strategic for its oil, and also Russia's back door.

MACBUSH.

Yes, but me and what army? Our troops in Euphratia  
Will need months and months to refit and recover.  
And besides, I've said daily, we must "stay the course;"  
Which we can't hardly do now, with all of our force.

TURDBLOOM.

Opportunity's window gets smaller each second.  
When we chose autocracy, we never quite reckoned  
That we'd lose our control of congressional caucuses;  
But with your polls in the toilet, November the seventh  
Marks the shifting of power to people who hate ya'  
As the jackass ascends the political heavens.

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SCENE II. Bunkcombeport, the residence of Lady MacBush.

*[Enter Journalist and a Waiting-Gentlewoman.]*

JOURNALIST.

It's been a year, or more, since her catty calumnies on the desperate flood victims having the temerity to seek refuge in her private city. Since then, she has been most circumspect in her public utterances. But I'm sure her remarks in the privacy of this chamber are still juicy as ever. I've come all the way to Bunkcombeport to see this. I hope it's as good as you say.

GENTLEWOMAN.

Nay. She speaks, but with no more spark than in public. I bid you come at night because she walks in her sleep. I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon it, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

JOURNALIST.

A great perturbation in nature,--to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching-- In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say?

GENTLEWOMAN.

That, sir, which I will not report after her.

JOURNALIST.

You may to me; and 'tis most meet you should.

GENTLEWOMAN.

Neither to you nor any one; having no witness to confirm my speech. That is why I asked you to come. To be a witness.

JOURNALIST.

Caught you even a glimpse of the paper she –

GENTLEWOMAN.

Sssssh! Here she comes!

*[Enter Lady MacBush, with a taper.]*

This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

JOURNALIST. *[Whispers]*

How came she by that light?

GENTLEWOMAN.

Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 'tis her command.

JOURNALIST.

You see, her eyes are open.

GENTLEWOMAN.

Ay, but their sense is shut.

JOURNALIST.

What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands.

GENTLEWOMAN.

It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a half an hour or more.

JOURNALIST.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder. I bet she has a closet full of Lysol and bleach.

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Hush!

LADY MACBUSH.  
Yet here's a spot.

JOURNALIST.  
Hark, she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

LADY MACBUSH.  
Out, damned spot! out, I say!-- One; two; why, then 'tis time to do't ;--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?  
What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?

JOURNALIST.  
Do you mark that?

LADY MACBUSH.  
And Lady MacDuff; where is she now? What of her patriotic duties? Will these hands ne'er be clean? All those secret decrees, executive orders – cruelty, injustice, torture – signed in ink as black as blood. No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

JOURNALIST.  
Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

GENTLEWOMAN.  
She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

LADY MACBUSH.  
Here's the smell of the ink still: all the oils of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh!

JOURNALIST.  
What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

GENTLEWOMAN.  
I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

JOURNALIST.  
Well, well, well,--

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Pray God it be, sir.

JOURNALIST.  
I cannot report this – secret decrees? If they are only in her weary imagination, I would look the fool. And if they do exist, in a secret file, to report them would violate national security. I could be thrown in jail!

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Or be blackballed from the Press Club.

JOURNALIST.  
That's even worse!

GENTLEWOMAN.  
It's just as well. Your report would soon have found me thrown to the flowers.

JOURNALIST.  
Flowers?

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Turblooms. But do reassure me: did you hear her speech?

JOURNALIST.  
Aye.

LADY MACBUSH.

Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so pale:--I tell you yet again, our plans are laid; my son shall never yield the Palace. He's there for life!

My dear, hapless husband, his secrets will remain safe. The records of his crimes, of twenty and more years ago, will never be revealed whilst a MacBush occupies the President's Palace. The shame! The *hoi polloi*, not even my dear neighbors, will never understand the truest patriot, who disdains mere statutes that try to deflect him from his duty. True, he should have silenced the Tiger of Euphratia when opportune. The Tiger knows the score; he must be silenced, and soon. All that keeps him quiet is that he knows if he ever uttered the first sentence, he would suffer a splitting migraine before he could utter the second. And the headache would be fatal; we'd see to that.

*[knocks on wall]*

To bed, to bed; I'm knocking at the door, but the custodian does not come; come, come, come, come, give me your hand: what's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed.

*[Exit Lady MacBush.]*

JOURNALIST.  
Will she go now to bed?

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Directly.

JOURNALIST.  
Foul whisperings are abroad: unlawful deeds  
Do breed unbridled troubles: infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.  
Too bad her religiosity is so patently false.  
More needs she the divine than the physician.--  
God, God, forgive us all!--Look after her;  
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,  
And still keep eyes upon her:--so, good-night:  
My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight:  
I think that I shall not report this apparition.  
Indeed, I dare not speak.

GENTLEWOMAN.  
Good-night, sir.

*[All exit.]*

-----  
SCENE III. Democratic Headquarters.

*[Enter Lennox, Howard]*

LENNOX.  
Forgive me, please, Doctor, for the endless way I rant  
As our party finds no David to battle the tyrant;

Fear of Turdbloom's revenge keeps us weak and compliant;  
Our comrades appear to think that victory can be achieved only by guile;  
They pretend to be MacBush's men, and keep their true colors quiet.

HOWARD.

None born of woman can defeat an evil machine; we must call our own majesty, a document that has led us for two hundred years. The Constitution herself must unseat the usurper. You and I, we are merely her servants.

Our party must field an army – an army of candidates, proudly Leftish, to challenge the tyranny in every district of the land. The wrath of the citizens, rising in righteousness, shall overwhelm the corrupt voting machines and corrupter officials, so none can deny the people's victory at the polls.

We must have faith that as the truth emerges on its own, the thrall binding the gentlemen of the press will be broken, so they can reconsecrate themselves to the ideals of their calling.

LENNOX.

Neither comrades, nor press, will respond, but to fear  
Perhaps we should warn, in terms firm and sincere  
That the progressive legions of the web overhear  
Their every transgression, and we'll use those lists to divide which ones stood tall  
And which ones gave in to the head Puppeteer.

HOWARD.

Nay, we won't have need to threaten anyone.

Proud of our ancient heritage and the institutions of our party, we shall depose the tyrant and begin the wearying task of repairing the damage he has wrought. That labor may last ten or twenty years. But hear our prayer: MacBush is not an old man. Dear God, may he live that whole time, haunted by shame and with the scorn of citizens and their children ringing his ears on every remaining day.

Our party, serving the Constitution, will apply all the powers of our offices to shine the light of a dozen suns into the dark profaned cellars of the President's Palace. They accused *us* of leaving the place untidy! Be prepared to find filth beyond any in the tales of Hercules.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

LENNOX.

What of the courts?

HOWARD.

The Court will return to following, not writing, the election returns. Once again, a switch in time will save nine.

*[All exit.]*

-----  
SCENE IV. Same.

*[Enter Democrat rank and file, led by Fighting Dems in full regalia.]*

FIRST FIGHTING DEM.

Our power is gathering, inspired by Aliquot,  
MacDuff and the inestimable Doctor Howard.  
Our candidates are running in every district.  
Revenues burn in them; for their dear causes  
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm  
Excite the mortified man.

SECOND FIGHTING DEM.

On November seventh  
Shall we well meet them;  
We shall be fully prepared.

FIRST FIGHTING DEM.

What does the tyrant?

THIRD FIGHTING DEM.

He is deeply entrenching; his lawyers and publicity flacks are deployed.  
The media's thrall has waned, a little, they no longer defer by reflex.  
Even his brother's hand-picked election judges seem subdued.  
He notices not that the more he claims to be the scourge of terrorists,  
The more the citizenry, including his own soldiers, marks that he is not.  
Some say he's mad; others, that lesser hate him,  
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,  
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of truth.

SECOND FIGHTING DEM.

Soon will he feel the evil of his tortures sticking on his hands;  
His looting the treasury, his rape of the very lands  
Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
Those he commands move only in command,  
Nothing in love: now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

THIRD FIGHTING DEM.

Well, march we on,  
To give obedience where 'tis truly owed:  
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal;  
And with him pour we, in our country's purge,  
Each drop of us.

*[All exit, marching.]*

-----  
SCENE V. The President's Palace.

*[Enter MacBush, Doctor, and Attendants.]*

MACBUSH.

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
'Though the floods have ruined the Creole City  
I cannot taint with fear. Who shall unseat me?  
Whoever may try, he, or even she, must be born of woman!  
The spirits have pronounc'd me thus,--  
"No person of woman born shall harm MacBush."—  
Do your best, you traitors!  
You and your Frenchified allies;  
Bring it on! The heart I bear,  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

*[Enter a Journalist; enter Turdbloom, separately.]*

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!  
Where did you get that goose look?

JOURNALIST.

There are ten thousand--

MACBUSH.

Geese, villain?

JOURNALIST.

Candidates, sir. They challenge your Highness in every precinct of the land.

MACBUSH.

Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear,  
Thou lily-livered boy. What candidates, patch?  
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What candidates, whey-face?

JOURNALIST.

Those vying for election, so please you.

MACBUSH.

Take thy face hence.

*[Exit Journalist.]*

TURDBLOOM.

Their fear of derision as Frenchmen seems no longer to quell  
Their misbegotten urges to rise and rebel.  
Yet we still possess our power, tried-and-true  
To terrorize the citizens, with specters of bolts from the blue,  
And to still dissent by provoking another foreign war.  
Both of these gambits, M'Lord, have served us well, before.

MACBUSH.

Summon Bellicosa and Gonzo.

TURDBLOOM.

Already done, sire. And Count Dickula, too.

*[Enter Bellicosa, Dickula, Gonzo, Heckuva]*

DICKULA.

What's your gracious pleasure?

MACBUSH.

What news more?

HECKUVA.

Election forecasts continue dismal, as before.  
If we don't do something drastic, we're gonna get our butts kicked.

MACBUSH.

What progress on our plans for Persia?

BELLICOSA.

We cannot attack by ordinary warfare.  
Our troops in Euphratia must stay there  
And we have committed all of our reserves.  
To teach the Persians the lesson they deserve

Requires surgical strikes, delivered from the air;  
We must proclaim and insist that foul is fair,  
So our foulest weapons become our fairest  
Indeed, we can fling them from the safety of these very chairs.  
Nuclear missiles, hoarded all these years, never used;  
We can destroy all of Persia while our troops relax, unbruised.  
Not mere destruction, either; but as the Romans served Carthage  
Radioactivity will, for centuries, infect the scene of this carnage.  
The pollution must also infect those states adjacent  
This, too, is good, as they won't forget or grow complacent.  
All will see that if we must chastise one nation,  
The whole neighborhood will suffer collateral radiation;  
To forestall such a fate, they'll arrest and expose  
Any acts by their neighbors which *we* might deem bellicose.  
Done right, with panache, the missiles we'll have hurled  
Will leave us ascendant over all of the world.

DICKULA.

M'Lord, the man and the hour are met, in yourself  
I know, in your soul, hesitation still lingers,  
But Count Bellicosa and I, and many other Right Thinkers  
Have planned, all these years, for precisely this moment;  
If you pick up our detailed plans from the shelf;  
You'll see right away everything you need to know  
And we're here to respond to your questions and comments.  
The Russians collapsed and the Chinese have been slow;  
You can conquer the world by with a simple command  
And dominate all of those slumbering lands.  
By showing your steel with a pre-emptive strike  
You'll affirm to all nations you mean what you say.  
As the prophet, Sun Tzu, said, the best way to win such a contest  
Is by sapping away your enemy's will to resist.  
Burma, Bolivia, England, and France  
For Third World, First World, friend and foe alike;  
Capitulation comes first, then they'll grant our demands.  
(And our internal foes likely will crap in their pants.)  
I say, summon the football, give the buttons a push  
And watch the whole world pay respect to MacBush.

MACBUSH.

England and France? Even they?

DICKULA.

We will not need an army of occupation,  
We can dominate them in a more subtle way;  
We'll own all their wealth in the shell of their nation.

HECKUVA.

Won't the nuclear powers, like England and France  
Live up to their martial traditions, and fight?  
It's now or it's never, for if they surrender  
They'll forever be stripped of those plowshares that might  
Be made into swords. Their chance may be slender,  
But the hopeless alternative will stiffen their stance.

DICKULA.

The Frenchies' tradition is to capitulate.  
I have no worries at all on that score;  
For Britain and Canada, we're making plans for  
Annexation as sixteen or eighteen new states.

BELLICOSA.

Besides, their best missiles, old and inferior  
Can't reach to our coast, let alone our interior.

HECKUVA.

Suppose the Canadians open their border  
To smuggle the weapons in, a piece at a time;  
To search all those white people would cause such disorder  
That we'd be better off if they just used a rocket.

DICKULA.

Heckuva, your contrarian logic is something sublime,  
A word to the wise: I'd advise you to stop it.

GONZO.

I've studied it, sire, discerning no flaw;  
As long as we're warring, your will transcends law.  
International law, the Geneva Conventions  
Are moot once we've conquered away all dimensions.  
The damage that's done, the megadeaths lost  
Don't matter to us, 'cause we won't pay the cost.  
From just Europe alone, the tribute collected  
Mean domestic taxation can be wholly neglected.  
It's a win-win for all of us, and no one will snivel  
Except libertarians, plain vanilla and civil.  
But if, here and there, some should rise in objection  
Our troops will be waiting, retrained for subjection.  
And for your reassurance, the authors are two;  
I've obtained the concurrence of Professor Thieu.

DICKULA.

To quell any fears that our people might rebel,  
We'll carefully nurture some terrorist cells;  
Now and then an explosion in some village or port  
Will remind people how they all need our support  
As panicky citizens implore our protection  
They'll race one another to rat out insurrection,  
In the pathetic belief that they're being patriotic.

HECKUVA.

Surely our nation is not that kind of nation.

DICKULA.

The *nation* may not be that kind of nation,  
But *we* are that kind of leadership – despotic.

HECKUVA.

Morally, it reeks -- it smells like pigeon guano --

DICKULA.

I'm warning you, buddy. There's room in Guantanamo.

**SONG. DICKULA, BELLICOSA, HECKUVA**  
**(with MACBUSH & GONZO):**

**THE MUSHROOMS THAT CLOUD IN THE FALL (tra la)**

DICKULA & BELLICOSA.

The mushrooms that cloud in the fall, Tra la,  
Guarantee our Congressional hold.

As I'm sure all of you can recall, Tra la,  
A war keeps the voters in thrall, Tra la,

And they vote for the guys in control.  
And that's what I mean when I say to you-all,  
"I welcome the mushrooms that cloud in the fall."

Tra la la la la la, etc.

ALL. Tra la la la, etc.

HECKUVA.

The mushrooms that cloud in the fall, Tra la,  
Have nothing to do with the case.

Smart bombs that are con-ven-tion-al, Tra la,  
Will wipe out their homes and their halls, Tra la,  
Without killing off the whole race.

And that's what I mean when I say to you-all,  
"We don't need the mushrooms that cloud in the fall."

Tra la la la la la, etc.

ALL. Tra la la la, etc.

DICKULA & BELLICOSA.

The mushrooms that cloud in the fall, Tra la,  
Will glue voters to their TV's.

With provocative words in the crawl, Tra la,  
Dissenters will find themselves mauled, Tra la,  
And our power is sure to increase.

And that's what I mean when I say to you-all,  
"I welcome the mushrooms that cloud in the fall."

Tra la la la la la, etc.

ALL. Tra la la la, etc.

HECKUVA.

The mushrooms that cloud in the fall, Tra la,  
Will bring foreign nukes on our heads.

They'll blast, with inaccuracy small, Tra la,  
A swath from St. Pete to St. Paul, Tra la,  
And another from Maine to Merced.

And that's what I mean when I say to you-all,  
"Think twice before sowing the mushrooms of fall."

Tra la la la la la, etc.

ALL. Tra la la la, Tra la la la, etc.

MACBUSH.  
Heckuva, you're fired.

DICKULA.  
In fact, you're under arrest. Guards!

*[guards enter, lead Heckuva away]*

*[telephone rings; Gonzo answers]*

GONZO.

Hello?

*[pause]*

President MacBush! How are you?

*[pause]*

Yes, of course, he's right here.

*[hands the phone to MacBush]*

M'Lord, it is your father.

MACBUSH.

*[aside] My Higher Father is the only father who matters.*

Hello? Dad? I only have a minute. I'm doing the decider thing.

*[pause]*

Of course, you're giving her the best care possible?

*[pause]*

Good! Great! You're doing a heck of a job, Dad. Thanks.

I'll come up to see you both, first chance I get.

*[pause]*

Don't forget your apron.

*[pause]*

Probably tomorrow, or Wednesday. In fact, why don't you work it out with my secretary?

I'll forward you now. Thanks a lot, Dad. Take care of yourself.

*[pushes phone keys to forward the call; then hangs up]*

My mother is losing her mind. She's been sleepwalking. She's been taken to a mental hospital. Betty Ford wouldn't take her. She can't stop washing her hands. She says they're black with foul ink. She's also mumbling words like "usurper" and "dictator" and begging God's forgiveness. I have no idea what she's talking about, do you? Dictator? Maybe she means the Tiger of Euphratia. But he's been locked up so long that he's more like the Alley Cat of Euphratia.

DICKULA.

I'm dreadfully sorry to hear this news, sire. You will go there tomorrow?

MACBUSH.

Yes.

DICKULA.

*[aside] God help us if she's too sick to control her own whelp.*

*MacBush in command means we're all beyond help.*

Sire, you must finish your work here now, then give way to your sorrow.

MACBUSH.

You're right.

*[pause]*

And the Persians can't hit us back? You are certain?

BELLICOSA.

In public, we say they can, while keeping the curtain

Drawn tight over our intelligence that they cannot possibly retaliate

Until many years hence, probably more than a decade.

TURDBLOOM.

Diplomatically speaking, there's plenty of time  
To solve the thing peacefully, working through channels  
But domestically matters are well beyond urgent;  
The Democrat wing of the Democrat party  
After twenty years' sleep is awake and insurgent.  
They're out for revenge, they lead in the polls,  
Purging Quislings like Lieberman off of their rolls.  
If they take the Congress, they will swear in new panels,  
Commissions, committees, with summons, subpoenas,  
To dig up the proof of what they call our "crimes,"  
Even worse, so they say, than an unfaithful penis.  
Sire, denying our political peril would be worse than foolhardy.

DICKULA.

To be only thus powerful, balanced on Fate's scales, is nothing.  
But to be safely thus, we must turn back the tides  
Fear is the key to this particular door,  
We must overstate the danger, and start a new war.  
A "push-button" war, where the lives we'll be snuffing  
Are foreigners, only, with none on our side.  
And, yes, hand-in-hand with this bloody prophylaxis –

MACBUSH.

We'll promise our base we'll cut more of their taxes.  
An excellent plan, Count, but I'm still uncertain –  
Why were you so inept when you ran Halliburton?

Everyone go – I need to decide. I'm the Decider.

*[All exit all but MacBush]*

*[brooding; picks up phone, puts it back down; gives way to sobbing]*

Mother, not even you were tough enough for this power play.  
I'll see you tomorrow; tomorrow . . . How's that old thing go?

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps *something something something* last syllable of recorded time --

*[musing, drawing out the words]*

Last syllable of recorded time --

Last syllable of recorded time -- *[here he accents the second syllable of "syllable", giggles]*

Last syllable of recorded time – *[draws it out]*

My God, of course! Last syllable of recorded time!

*[looks up sharply, falls to his knees]*

Yes, Father? *[long pause]*

*[bows his head]*

Thy will be done.

*[stands, fidgets, excited]*

It's the Rapture! And I am the Chosen One.  
To the Apocalypse I say, "Bring it on!"  
Right here, right now.  
It's God's will. He just told me so.

Where's the guy with the nuk-u-lar football?

*[looks at audience, pregnant pause, exaggerated smirk]*

There ain't gonna be no tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow!

*[Blackout. END]*