

The Kennedy Century

A Historical Re-telling

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Agency Information

PART ONE

At the beginning is darkness, then the shadows of nine people are projected against the screen. As the voices speak, the spotlight alternates on the different shadows, in different colors of red, white, and blue.

VOICE 1

JFK was one of the greatest Presidents our country has ever seen.

VOICE 2

Kennedy was an ego-maniac only obsessed with scoring women and giving more power to his family name.

VOICE 3

JFK was killed by the CIA.

VOICE 4

I don't even think I could tell you a single thing that Kennedy did for this country.

VOICE 5

JFK had no empathy, he wasn't anything like his brother Bobby.

VOICE 6

Robert Kennedy would have been the greatest President this country has ever seen.

VOICE 1

Robert Kennedy was a Self-righteous prick who only cared about power. The whole "good man" routine was a stunt.

VOICE 2

Robert Kennedy was killed by the Hoover and the FBI.

VOICE 3

If only Teddy Kennedy were as noble as his brothers.

VOICE 4

Ted Kennedy did so much more for the United States than his brothers ever had the chance to.

VOICE 5

Those Kennedys were all brainwashed under their father. What an evil man.

VOICE 6

The daughters didn't even do anything.

VOICE 1

The daughters were more influential to the country than the boys ever could have been.

VOICE 4

The Kennedys are one of America's longest political dynasties.

VOICE 5

The children have hardly done anything. They let the torch burn out.

VOICE 3

JFK Jr. Is still alive and just waiting to make his presence known.

VOICE 1

John F. Kennedy-

VOICE 2

Robert Kennedy-

VOICE 4

Teddy Kennedy-

VOICE 3

Jackie Kennedy-

The spotlights go off. The shadows vanish.
20th Century enters, He stands facing the
audience. He adjusts his tie as he speaks,
maybe fixes his cufflinks, maybe fixes his
hair.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

There is not one moment in the entire 1900s that a Kennedy was not present and active in the ever-changing world's events. They may all have shared a last name, and yet they all had different agendas, wants, and desires. At the top of the pyramid is the patriarch, Joe Kennedy. The son of Irish immigrants who used every resource he had available to him to find himself as the ambassador to the United Kingdom under the Roosevelt administration. He stood there at the center of an ever-changing world, in the middle of one of the world's worst depressions. A World war behind him, another yet to make it's presence known.

He had nine children with his wife Rose, the daughter of John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, the mayor of Boston. A daughter of a political dynasty already in the works.

He stands straighter. As he introduces the Kennedy, their shadow appears projected on the screen.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

Joseph... John... Rosemary... Kathleen... Eunice... Patricia...Bobby...Jean...Edward. This is a story of triumph, or tragedy, of black and white, of shades of grey.

The shadows slowly start to disappear behind him.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

This is a world of red and blue ties. A world of papers on papers on papers, from invoices, to resolutions, to a post-it note reminding you to call back the Governor of Oklahoma. It is a world of change in every fiber of the oval office. It is a world that smells of booze from three days ago still clinging to top of the line suits.

21st Century enters. She watches 20th Century with scrutiny as he speaks.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

It is a world of revolution. It is a world of radical change and people who refuse to be silent any longer. It is a world where people would kill to get what they feel they haven't and people would choose to be killed for the same reason. It is a world of tragedy. It is a world of pain.

He looks at 21st Century. They stare at each other, past meeting present.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

It is a world of family, of people who are only together because they are forced to. Of people who would love to rip each other apart at the seams, but would be heartbroken if it were to actually happen. Of people who love with the most muted of voices. It is a world of bright vibrant colors, and muted tones blending together as one.

20th Century and 21st Century stare out to the audience.

20TH CENTURY

(To Audience)

It is a world of fiery oranges, deep rich blues, Beatles yellows ,and white. And black. Especially white and black. It is a world of pain. A world of loss. A world of change. A world of Camelot.

Jack enters and walks in between them.
They exit off of opposite sides of the stage.

JACK

(To Audience)

Nobody paid attention to me my entire childhood. That's one thing that I want to make incredibly clear. Sure, I was loved. We all were. I was taught to be the best person I could be. We all were. I was taught, above all else, to love my family and to be kind. We all were. But I wasn't groomed from birth to be the perfect Kennedy to be sent out into the world. I wasn't the dashing hero of my family. That was my brother.

Joe Jr enters, carrying a backpack like they
are back in school.

JACK

(To Joe)

Did you tell Mom and Dad yet?

JOE JR.

Tonight.

JACK

Dad is going to go ballistic.

JOE JR.

He'll get over it. It's the right thing to do.

Jack scoffs playfully.

JOE JR.

What?

JACK

Joseph Kennedy Jr. War hero. Determined to fight Hitler and defy his father because "it's the right thing to do".

Joe Jr playfully pushes Jack's shoulder.

JOE JR.

Cut it.

JACK

Makes for a pretty good Presidential campaign if you ask me. The first Irish Catholic President of the United States.

Beat.

JOE JR.

Well, you gotta start somewhere.

JACK

Making me look bad.

JOE JR.

What, did you almost get expelled again?

Beat.

JOE JR.

Jack.

JACK

But I didn't. That's gotta count for something.

JOE JR.

I thought going to Harvard was going to change all of that.

JACK

It did.

JOE JR.

We'll see. I'll see you at dinner.

Joe Jr exits. Jack turns back to the audience.
21st Century crosses upstage.

JACK

That kid was going somewhere, much to the joy of my family. Sure, there were eight supporting characters standing proudly behind him, but this is Joe Jr.'s story of triumph and overcoming discrimination. The Irish were the most oppressed group of people in the 1930s.

21st Century stops walking and looks at Jack. Jack notices.

JACK
(To 21st Century)

I... I mean that's what my father thinks, at least.

21st Century rolls her eyes and exits.

JACK
(To Audience)

Joe saw his chance to make a difference and after he graduated from Harvard, he enlisted in the United States Navy as a pilot. Against my father's wishes. The Irish bull. No one had ever gone against my father's wishes before. If I didn't know Joe was so smart, I'd think he was the stupidest man imaginable. I got to witness this exchange first-hand: at the family dinner table.

The dining table rolls out. It's large and elegant, it has to be to fit all eleven Kennedys. Each Kennedy comes to the table to sit one by one, first Jack, then each of his sisters, then Bobby and Teddy together, then Joey. It doesn't matter the seating arrangement, but Jack and Kick **MUST** sit next to each other. Rose enters, a newspaper clipping pinned to her dress. She sits at one end of the table. After a few beats, Joe Sr. enters.

JOE JR.

Good evening Father.

ROSEMARY
(Almost cutting him off but not quite)

Hi Daddy.

Rose tenses.

JACK
(To Audience)

Every parent has their favorite child. If you ask your parent and they tell you differently, odds are it's not you. In a family of nine children, it can turn into a war for affection at the drop of a pin.

JOE

Good evening children. Did we all have a nice day at school today?

Rosemary nods energetically.

JACK

(To audience)

For my father, he was quite partial to his oldest four, especially Joe and Rosemary. Joe was his prime vessel he could mold into the All-American that would bring honor and pride to the Kennedy name. Almost like a second life than an eldest son.

Joe pats his eldest son's shoulder.

JACK

(To Audience)

Rosemary is our father's beacon of light. She always has a smile on her face and my father is just gravitated toward it like a magnet.

Rose stands and walks over to where Rosemary is sitting. She tries to fix Rosemary's hair, Rosemary snaps her hand away.

ROSE

Rosemary!

JACK

(To audience)

She... had her outbursts. She could be aggressive. Sometimes violent. Always, always naive. It worried my parents. That she could get herself hurt or someone could take advantage of her and that... that could impact Joe's journey to the White House.

Joe comes over to his wife and his daughter and puts his hand on his wife's shoulder as if to say "I'll take care of this." Rose walks back over to her seat. He kneels down next to her.

JOE

Rosie, that wasn't a very nice thing to do to your mother.

ROSEMARY
(Defeated)

I know.

JOE

What do we say to Mother?

Rosemary faces her mother without making eye contact.

ROSEMARY

Sorry, Mother.

ROSE

That's quite alright dear. I accept your apology.

Joe goes back to his seat at the table.
Rosemary unclips the newspaper article from her dress.

ROSE

I'll save this for second helpings.

JOE

Let's say grace now children.

They all do the sign of the cross: in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

JOE

Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive, from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

They all say Amen and begin eating.

JOE

So Jack, did you have fun at the party last night?

Jack looks shocked. There is a choir of snickers from his siblings. He quickly looks at Kick next to him.

JACK

That's the game you want to play?

KICK

I didn't say anything Jack, I promise.

JEAN

(To Audience)

Some of us liked to sneak in from a night of debauchery pretty late into the evening. We thought our parents would never find out, they were upstairs asleep. How could they know? Come to find out years later that while the Kennedy children were swapping secrets out on the back porch, our father could hear every word from the balcony where he read his morning paper.

She goes back to eating then notices that the audience still has their attention on her.

JEAN

(To audience)

I'm the youngest daughter of nine. I notice things.

Jack looks visibly humiliated.

JACK

Dad, I... I

JOE

We will discuss this after dinner.

Jack nods.

ROSE

So children, what do we think about Germany's invasion of Poland?

JOE JR.

I-

JACK

(To Audience)

Here we go.

JOE JR.

Think it's deplorable and Hitler should be stopped.

JOE

Oh, do you?

JOE JR.

Yes. I do actually. And that is why I have signed up for the United States Navy. I ship out next week for Europe.

ROSE
(Fearful)

What?

JOE
(Betrayed, Angry)

You what?

JOE JR.

I'm doing what I think is right. Like you both always taught me to do. Look, I know what you are thinking but I don't think appeasement is the right thing to do, Dad. I know how much you BOTH respect Neville Chamberlin, but I think he is making a cowardly decision. We have to stand up for liberty and democracy. That is what America has always stood for. And I think Roosevelt agrees with me.

The family freezes in place. Eunice stands.

EUNICE
(To Audience)

Roosevelt and Daddy had a very rocky relationship. Daddy helped to secure Roosevelt the Irish Catholic vote during his first election, and in return my father asked for employment in the administration. Joseph P. Kennedy was the first chairman of the SEC, the U.S. Stock and Exchange Commission, and then won the most coveted job he could want: Ambassador to England. For my father, it was like coming back home to the Irish motherland. We all moved to London for years and were adored by the press and the Brits alike.

Projections grace the screen of the Kennedy's time in London, attending balls, dressing up, finally landing on a very famous video of young Bobby saying "this is my first time in London and I am very excited." The projections then disappear.

EUNICE

He worked closely with Neville Chamberlin and agreed with many of his views, including a very important one in the late 1930s: Appeasement. Letting Adolf Hitler invade any country he wanted and spread fascism throughout the globe, all to avoid the United States aiding in the cause to fight back. That didn't sit well with the four time elected President. Lyndon Johnson can probably take it from here.

20th Century rolls Franklin Roosevelt out on the stage in a wheelchair to the corner of the stage, a phone on his lap. Lyndon Johnson walks beside him.

LYNDON

(To audience)

Roosevelt called up Kennedy, charming as ever. And the conversation started out as any would between a President and his ambassador.

ROOSEVELT

(Into the phone)

Joe! How are you? How was the flight?... Perfect. Say why don't you come down to the Oval Office around 9:30 tomorrow. We can discuss Chamberlin's strategy... perfect. See you then, Joe.

Roosevelt hangs up.

LYNDON

(To audience)

Then he turns to me with one of them shit eating grins and says-

ROOSEVELT

I'm gonna fire that son of a bitch.

They grin together. 20th Century rolls Roosevelt off, Johnson follows.

EUNICE

(To Audience)

And that was it. Daddy was out. Churchill and the war was in.

Eunice sits back down. The scene resumes.

JOE

Oh, don't talk to me about Roosevelt. That man is just like his cousin. He is a bully and he will be responsible for thousands of young mans deaths. I am not prepared for you to be one of them. You have too much ahead of you.

JOE JR.

That's a risk I'm willing to take. As an American.

Beat. The parents look at each other.

JOE

You are at the at the age where your mother and I can't stop you, but we don't have to be happy about it. Isn't that right, mother?

Beat.

ROSE

I suppose. What day do you leave?

JOEY

Thursday.

ROSE

Well, we will just have to make the most of the time that we do have together.

EUNICE

My big brother. A war hero.

They start eating in silence. Jack looks astonished.

KICK

(To Jack)

Something wrong?

JACK

Even as he is defying their wishes, he is doing it perfectly.

(To Audience)

I couldn't believe it. My father, a man who was on the verge of losing his job because he refused to let Americans get involved in the next Great War, was actually okay with potentially sending his son off to be a casualty. And for the first time in my life, this burning passion for wanting something more out of life rose within me and I-

(To the Table)

I'm going to join the United States Navy.

Everyone at the table freezes.

JOE

Excuse me?

ROSE

You what?

JACK

(To Audience)

I have absolutely no idea why I said that. I don't want to join the Navy. I just...

(To the Table)

You heard me. I'm joining the Navy. I think I should serve my country too.

ROSE

John-

JACK

(To Audience)

She never called me John unless I was about to spend an hour of timeout in the closet. Now I'm almost twenty-three years old, but I can still only imagine what the adult version of that punishment would be.

JOE

What makes you think that YOU can join the Navy?

JACK

Why couldn't I?

KICK

With your conditions?

JACK

(To Audience)

My sister Kick is my best friend. She's like the female version of me, very carefree and laidback, but that also means she's not afraid to speak her mind. She's right, too. I wasn't... the healthiest as a child.

Patricia stands up.

PATRICIA

(To audience)

Addison's disease is a disorder that occurs when the human body can't produce enough of certain hormones. Symptoms include fatigue, weight loss, darkening of your skin, low blood pressure and blood sugar, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal, muscle, or joint pain, irritability, and depression.

She turns to him. He stares out at the crowd.

PATRICIA

Can be life threatening.

She sits down.

JACK

(To Audience)

I never thought I was going to live to be in college. I spent most of my childhood in bed, reading and learning everything that I possibly can. So when I did have the energy to take on the world, I did everything I possibly could.

(To his family)

Why can Joe Jr. Serve the navy and I can't?

JOE JR.

Jack, it's not your fault. Why don't you just leave the fighting to me?

JACK

I think that both of us can fight in the family's honor across the Atlantic.

JOE

Oh no you don't. If you want to fight in the Navy, that is one thing. But going overseas is a whole other. What if something happens to you and your family isn't there? We left England for a reason. To make sure-

KICK

(Finishing his sentence)

Everyone was safe.

She glares at her father. If he notices, he doesn't say anything. Her mother sure notices.

KICK

(To Audience)

He always said that was the reason. And maybe it was. England was getting dangerously close to the fighting, and soon after he sent us all back London was bombed, leveling the city. But I just didn't understand. He sent everyone back but himself and Rosemary, saying that her school was good for her and he didn't want to pull her out when she was doing so well. But the people that Rosemary loved more than anyone in the world were her family and she hated being away from them for too long. John and Joe didn't care much, they were too busy finishing up their degrees in Harvard, but the rest of us were heartbroken to say goodbye to our life in London. I personally was devastated to say goodbye to my love Billy Cavendish, a Lord. A dreamboat. A Protestant. (Giggles) what is love without giving your parents a heart attack?

JACK

(To Joe)

Well, then how am I supposed to serve in the Navy?

JOE

I can arrange for you to sit in the Navy office in Washington.

JACK

(You've got to be kidding me)

A desk job?

JOE

A safe job.

Beat. Jack goes to fight back, then stops himself. What is the point of fighting?

JACK

Yes, Dad.

The rest of the family, minus Jack and Joe Jr, stands up and rolls the table off. The two brothers sit alone.

JOE JR.

Maybe it's not a terrible idea.

JACK

That's easy for you to say. He would absolutely never dream to hinder your ambitions. The first-

JOE JR.

Irish-Catholic President of the United States.

JACK

Irish-Catholic President of the United States.

JOE JR.

Will you please stop saying that? It's bad enough that I have to hear it all the time from Dad.

JACK

You are the one who insists on making everything a competition.

He playfully pushes his brother. Joe Jr pushes back. They get into a playful wrestling match, laughing the whole time. Joe Jr manages to twist Jack's arm behind his back.

JOE JR.

Had enough?

JACK

Never- okay ow, okay uncle. Uncle!

They both ease up, collapsing back on their chairs. For a moment, Jack struggles to catch his breath.

JOE JR.

(To Audience; Remorseful)

He's so good at putting on an act that I forget how much pain he is in.

(To Jack)

I envy you, you know.

JACK

What is there to envy? Not being as loved by my parents? Not having my parents by my side whenever I need them? Not being as physically fit, as charming, as adored as you?

JOE JR.

Not having the weight of the world of your shoulders. Not having anything expected of you. You could do anything that you want to do. What do you want to do?

Beat.

JACK

I have no idea.

JOE JR.

Well, you can start by working the Naval Office. Have fun in Washington.

JACK

Have fun in Berlin.

Joe Jr exits, taking his chair with him, leaving only one chair and his brother alone on stage.

JACK

(To Audience)

He became a honored war officer. That's Joe for you. Everything he did, he did perfectly.

Kick headed across the pond as well, under the guise of serving with the Red Cross, when in reality she really just wanted to be with Billy. Not much long after, he proposed to her. Both of their parents were furious and held a meeting between the families in order to come up with a way to make the marriage work “with as little hiccups as possible.” It was like if the Montague's and the Capulet's sat down for a meeting.

He pauses, almost to reflect. A young, blonde staffer enters, rolling a small desk on stage with her. There are files galore, a desk lamp, and a name plate reading: “L.C. John F. Kennedy”

JACK

(To audience)

Meanwhile, doing office work during one of the most exciting times of your life to date is a real slog... that is, if you don't have the right distractions.

The young staffer freezes. The spotlight on her is bright, yet quickly dims out as he speaks.

JACK

(To Audience)

I want to introduce you all to Inga Arvad, or Inga Binga, as I referred to her. She was bright. She was attractive. She was charming. She was enchanting. She was a lot of fun.

By now the spotlight has dimmed completely. She unfreezes, sauntering over to him.

INGA

Jack, the General requested those files about naval bases out of Dunkirk.

JACK

I thought the General said to not move those files under any circumstances.

INGA

Well, you know how fickle he can be. I guess that he changed his mind.

JACK

I don't like the way he looks at you. Like he has a problem with you.

INGA

Maybe he's just jealous that I am with the most handsome man in the Navy.

She kisses him. He melts completely under her touch. As she pulls away, she holds her arm out.

INGA

The files, my love?

He hands her the file off of his desk. She nods graciously and starts to exit.

JACK

Will I see you tonight?

INGA

(exiting)

I'll have to see.

Jack beams, then turns his attention back to the audience. He suddenly becomes embarrassed.

JACK

(To Audience)

Yeah, so as it turns out, uh, Inga was a German spy. That didn't make the big guys too happy to find out. Nor was I too thrilled because, well, I thought she just liked me. So I get moved off of desk duty and I get sent into combat aboard the PT-109 and the Captain of the boat. And I was happy. Drained, exhausted, but happy.

Jack exits. Joe Kennedy enters and turns to face the audience. He doesn't seem to notice a Doctor rolling Rosemary onstage in a stretcher.

JOE

(To Audience)

My fears about Rosemary were starting to increase rapidly. By the age of 23, she was starting to develop violent seizures. Her outbursts were starting to become increasingly violent and she would disappear, sometimes for hours at a time. People would find her walking down the street alone at random points of the day. I had to make sure something didn't happen to her. I reached out to some of the best doctors that money could buy, and they suggested a new experimental procedure told to work wonders.

Joe walks over to Rosemary and kisses her forehead. He shakes the doctor's hand and exits.

DOCTOR

Okay, Rosemary. Do you know the song "Mary had a Little Lamb"?

ROSEMARY

Yes, Sir.

DOCTOR

Would you mind singing that for me? Your Father said that you have a beautiful voice.

As she starts singing, the doctor starts cutting.

ROSEMARY

(Singing softly)

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb. Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow.

The doctor goes to stop, but Rosemary keeps singing. As procedure, he keeps cutting.

ROSEMARY

(Singing softly)

And everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went. Everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.

She just keeps going. The doctor hesitates for a brief moment, but it's procedure. He continues to cut.

ROSEMARY

(Singing slowly, softly)

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb. Mary had a little...

She stops. The doctor relaxes, then steps back. Something has gone terribly wrong.

DOCTOR

(To Audience)

A lobotomy is a surgical treatment of a mental disorder that involves severing connections in the brain's prefrontal cortex, causing most of the connections to and from the prefrontal cortex, the anterior part of the frontal lobes of the brain, to be severed. Since 1941, lobotomy's have been heavily criticized by the medical field.

He turns back to Rosemary. She can't get up on her own, so he helps her up. She can't walk. He sits her back on the stretcher. She turns to him and opens he mouth. She can't speak. She turns to the audience.

DOCTOR

(To Audience)

Following the lobotomy, Rosemary Kennedy was sent to spend the rest of her life in an institution in Jefferson, Wisconsin. She had the mental capacity of a two year old, losing the ability to speak intelligibly and to walk correctly. She died of natural causes in 2005 at the age of 86 with her surviving siblings by her side. The news about her procedure didn't become public knowledge until 1987.

Joe enters and comes to Rosemary. He tends to her.

ROSEMARY

Da....Da

JOE

Shhh. I know. It's okay. I'm right here.

DOCTOR

(To Audience)

Joe Kennedy never told his family what happened to his eldest daughter, not even his wife. They didn't find out until searching through his records after his stroke in 1961.

The Doctor wheels Rosemary off, Joe Kennedy following. Kick enters on the other side in a white dress, Joe Jr by her side.

KICK

Thank you for being here with me for this.

JOE JR.

Don't thank me. This was made by Churchill and Roosevelt.

KICK

You know what I mean, Joe.

He kisses her cheek.

JOE JR.

I know and I'm proud of you.

KICK

(To Audience)

I made a decision that I felt was best for me. Just as Honey Fitz told my mother not to marry my father, I decided to go against my parents wishes and marry Billy. I became a Lady of Cavendish. My family was unable, or in some cases unwilling, to come to the wedding of my new Protestant husband, but my older brother was stationed in London at the time and was able to give me away.

JOE JR.

(To Audience)

She made a beautiful bride and I know she is going to have a beautiful marriage. Billy is a good kid and he would do anything for Kick. And if he hurts her in any way, I'll kick his ass. I want to tell her all of this, I want to tell her that we all know how much Mother loves God, but she will always love her children more. That she's always been the special one for both of them, that she was the reason Mother came back when she thought about walking out. That if anyone can change Mother's mind on something as silly as which version of God someone believes in, it's Kick.

She starts to walk ahead of him, then realizes he's slowed down. They stare at each other. A slow smile creeps upon both of their faces.

KICK

What?

JOE JR.

Nothing.

They beam at each other.

JOE JR.

Come on, your new life is waiting for you.

Joe escorts Kick offstage. Jack enters, wearing cargo pants, a tank top, and his naval cap.

JACK

(To Audience)

Aboard the PT-109, I get a first real sense of what life away from the Kennedys really means. I am not some snobby rich boy from the cape of Massachusetts... I mean I am, but I'm not seen that way by the fellow soldiers on the boat, boys and men from every place in the world. It was a culture shock well before the 1960s. And I was put in charge of more than anything I could have been put in charge of in my family: others lives. And that comes to the surface of the Pacific in 1943. As we were traveling along the Solomon Island, a Japanese destroyer ship ran straight through our ship and split us in half.

The lights turn red and there is a BOOM followed by a low siren wailing.

JACK

(To Audience)

Two of my men were killed instantly. Others weren't so lucky. One of my crew-mates was badly burned, and I had injured my back again in the collision. If we just stayed there and accepted our circumstance, we would have been surrendering ourselves to the enemy. If we fled, survival wasn't guaranteed. And the decision to make was mine and mine alone.

Projection of a fiery ocean appears behind him. He must make a choice-fast.

JACK

(To Audience)

I decided to turn to my men and have us come to a vote. I said "There's nothing in the book about the situation like this. A lot of you men have families and some of you have children. What do you want to do?"

Beat.

JACK

(To Audience)

"I have nothing to lose."

The projection of the ocean turns into one of a desolate island slowly.

JACK

(To Audience)

So I grab the strap of the man injured in the explosion by my teeth and drag him three and a half miles to a nearby island, with the rest of my crew following close behind. We reach the island exhausted and starving, but safe. We find some natives stationed on the island and I had to find a way to communicate a search and rescue. They didn't speak my language and we don't speak theirs. I grab a coconut from a tree and carve inside the shell: NAURO ISL..COMMANDER...NATIVE KNOWS POS'IT...HE CAN PILOT...11 ALIVE...NEED SMALL BOAT...KENNEDY.

The projection of the island disappears and
20th Century enters. He's holding a medal.

JACK

(To Audience)

We were rescued a few days later. While I was just happy to be back home in the states and back to safety, the military saw what I did as going above and beyond what was required of me. I was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

20th Century shakes Jack's hand and exits
offstage. Jack fiddles with the medals in his
hands.

JACK

(To Audience)

I didn't think of being a hero when I was dragging my crew mate in the ocean. I thought about how much pain I was in, about how maybe my father was right. Maybe I wasn't cut out for this. I thought that I always knew I was going to live a short life, but I didn't think that it would end like this at all. But... I guess I did good.

Joe Kennedy enters, with the rest of his
family following him, except for Kick. Joe
holds two glasses of champagne.

JOE

To my son! The war hero! One of the bravest among us! To Jack!

ALL

To Jack.

Jack looks very happy to be acknowledged, though he seems to be pretending to be embarrassed. Rose takes his hand. This is clearly a big deal.

ROSE

There is a lovely dinner waiting to celebrate my son. And I made sure that the cooks made Boston cream pie, just for this day.

JACK

Thank you mother.

ROSE

Come, dinner is calling.

The family exits, except for Joe Jr and Jack.
It's tense.

JOE JR.

Congrats. You deserve all this.

JACK

Do you really think that?

Beat.

JOE JR.

What were you doing in that part of the water anyway? I thought that was enemy water.

JACK

I'm going to go get some dinner. You know how Dad is.

JOE JR.

Yeah.

JACK

If you aren't there in time for dinner to start-

JOE JR.

You don't eat. Yeah. I know.

Jack sees his slow anger and nods. He hands his brother his glass of champagne. He exits. Joe drinks the entire glass.

JOE JR.

I'll show them.

He turns to the audience.

JOE JR.

(To Audience)

Maybe I was jealous that my brother was getting all of the attention. I know that is a bratty way to think, but you try being groomed for greatness for over twenty one years and then have all of that seeming to melt away for your younger brother to get all that attention. I had to get that back. Not long after my leave is over and I return back to Europe, my missions were up and I was actually able to discharge from the military and head home. But I wasn't done yet. So I wrote to my family and told them that I had signed up for one more mission. "Don't worry, I'll be home in a few more weeks. "

Projections appear of a dark, cloudy sky. An old military plane flies through the sky. 20th Century lurks in the background.

JOE JR.

(To Audience)

The mission was supposed to be simple and easy. A quick fly over enemy territory. I was set to fly over in an airplane full of explosives, light and detonate the explosives and parachute out of the plane before the explosions went off. A rescue vessel was to pick me up once I had hit the water. For a lesser experienced pilot, it could have been deemed a suicide mission. For a more educated pilot, the same could be said. But I wasn't worried, not even a little bit. I would be home in no time-

A large explosion flashes across the screen and a BOOM stuns the crowd, 20th Century, even Joe Jr himself.

JOE JR.

(To Audience)

The explosion came quickly and too soon. I wasn't able to get out in time. I don't have much of a recollection. I wasn't scared. I wasn't even really aware of what happened. I just wish I could have seen my family one more time to tell them everything was going to be alright. I wish I wasn't so hard on Jack. He's just trying his best. He's got a lot heading for him.

Joe Jr shows no regret or remorse. He turns to 20th Century.

JOE JR.

Hey. Did we win the war?

20th Century smiles and nods his head. He exits. Joe Jr looks out into the audience one last time. Then he heads offstage. Jean Kennedy enters on stage. As she speaks, the rest of the Kennedy family comes in, rolled in on a couch and two chairs. The voice of Bing Crosby plays softly on the stage.

JEAN

(To Audience)

I'll never ever forget that day as long as I live. It was a warm day in Hyannis Port in the middle of August 1944. Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Seeing You" was playing on the phonograph. Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

A door knocking sound plays. Rose heads offstage.

ROSE

One moment, children.

JEAN

(To Audience)

Two priests answer the door, asking my mother if my father was there and may they speak to him.

ROSE

(Offstage)

He just went upstairs, Fathers. May I take a message for him? He would be happy to stop by once he wakes up.

JEAN

(To Audience)

They paused. This wasn't going to be easy. I remember the words all too well. "Ma'am, your son Joe is missing in action. We need to speak to your husband."

Beat.

ROSE

(Offstage)

Just a moment, Fathers.

JEAN

(To Audience)

Mother heads upstairs to fetch Daddy. They are there for a few moments. I remember the priests staring at us. I was the only one who seemed to notice. Finally, Dad comes downstairs and speaks to our visitors. They break the news to him. Then, it was his turn to break the news to us.

Joe enters with his arm wrapped around his wife.

JEAN

(To Audience)

This was the first time I had ever seen my father like this. Sadly, it wasn't the last.

Jean goes back to her family. None of the children acknowledge him at first.

JOE

Children.

His voice changes that.

JOE

There was an accident. Joe Jr is missing in action and they presumed him dead.

He pauses, trying and failing to regain his composure.

JOE

(Tearful)

I want you all to be especially good to your mother.

Beat. The news sinks in. Suddenly, Jack stands.

JACK

He wouldn't want us sitting here, mourning him and what could have been. He would have wanted us to celebrate him and all that he meant to us.

JOE

Jack-

ROSE

Jack's right.

JACK

(To Audience)

I remember those words very clearly because she never said those words before and she never said it again.

ROSE

He loved sailing. We should go out sailing in his memory. I can have the cooks pack a picnic.

JOE

Rose, are you sure?

She places her hand on his arm.

ROSE

I'm sure. But we are going to St. Francis first to pray for him.

BOBBY

Yes, Mother.

ROSE

Come. Let's go.

The family goes to leave. Joe doesn't move.
Jack and Kick realize and stop walking.

JACK

(To Kick)

I'll handle it.

KICK

Jack-

JACK

Trust me. I know what I'm doing.

Beat.

JACK

I'm the oldest now.

KICK

Alright, oldest. Go ahead.

Kick nods and exits. Jack turns to look at his father, analyzing him.

JACK
(To Audience)

He made that face again.

JOE
(To Audience)

He was going to be President.

JACK
(To Audience)

I hated when he made that face in front of us. That's the same face when I got moved from my desk job in the Navy.

JOE
(To Audience)

I was going to be the father of the President of the United States.

JACK
(To Audience)

It's the same face he made when I came home with a bad report card.

JOE
(To Audience)

I was going to be the father of the first Irish Catholic President of the United States.

JACK

Dad? Everyone is waiting to go on the boat. Are you coming?

JOE
(To Jack and Audience)

And that son of a bitch Roosevelt killed my son.

JACK

But Dad, what about Hitler? We can't just let him get away with all this. He's killing millions of people.

JOE

Were they Irish?

Beat.

JOE

Exactly. What is the point of pissing powerful men off? Joe was supposed to become the next President.

Beat.

JACK

(To audience)

As he started speaking, it was like something in him started changing.

He finally turns and stares at Jack, as if he has noticed him truly for the first time in his life.

JOE

You're up. Time to prove yourself.

Joe exits.

JACK

(To Audience)

And from that point on I knew, if my neck was ever cold, it was my father breathing on it. I then turn to a life of politics, I had been studying journalism in college, even publishing my thesis as an award winning book on appeasement in England, but given the... unexpected circumstances and my passions changing, I turn to my best friend Lem Billings to disclose my new plans.

Lem enters, rolling a suitcase. He wears a graduation cap and an open graduation gown.

LEM

Harvard Business School, Class of 1948!

JACK

Congratulations, Lem. My dad wanted me to give you this.

He hands Lem a large white envelope out of his pocket. Lem's eyes widen at the amount of cash inside.

LEM

God bless your father for pulling his money out of the stock market in '29. Tell Joe that his favorite son said thank you.

JACK

(To Audience)

I met Lem at boarding school in Choate when we were 15 years old, and we became best friends all throughout school. He failed medical tests to get into the military, so instead he went to Harvard Business School.

LEM

So what is next for you, naval hero Jack Kennedy?

JACK

I think I'm going to get into politics.

LEM

That's terrific! You could go all the way.

JACK

(Surprised, confused)

Really?

LEM

What makes you seem so surprised?

JACK

Just... nice to know that people believe in me.

LEM

Where do we start?

JACK

I'm thinking the U.S. House of Representatives.

Lem holds out his hand.

LEM

Well, count me in for assistance.

Jack smiles and they shake hands. They head offstage, lightly pushing each other like boys do for some reason. Kick enters with a black veil over her head.

KICK

(To Audience)

I wasn't a wife for a very long period of time. Billy died in September of 1944, one month after I lost my big brother. We only had the ability to spend 5 weeks together before he was shipped off to war. I decided to stay in London instead of going back to be with my family. A few years later, I met the Earl Fitzwilliams, and he was even worse for the Kennedy image than Billy. Yes, he was Protestant, but that was a mountain that I was already experienced in climbing. He was also currently in the process of divorcing his wife. A cardinal sin in the Catholic church. Now, in the late 1940s, that was a lot bigger deal. That would make our marriage null and void in the Church's eyes, as well as the eyes of my mother.

Rose enters, her short, petite frame fuming.

ROSE

No.

KICK

But Mother-

ROSE

God has made it clear that marriage is a life long vow and to break that vow is to go against His will.

KICK

But I didn't get a life long vow. I got five weeks. So am I just supposed to live the rest of my life alone? Tell me how that seems fair.

ROSE

It's in the Bible. The one I taught you to read all throughout your childhood.

KICK

So is "Thou shall not commit adultery." Should I go tell that to Dad and Gloria?

Rose slaps Kick across the face. Beat as this event sets in.

ROSE

If you marry this man, you will be disowned and cut off. No exceptions.

Rose exits. Kick rubs her cheek.

KICK

(To Audience)

My father is a man who can be persuaded and a man that can persuade. I know talking to him may change things, though it's not a promise. I found out in May 1948 that my father was to be in Paris, so I convinced him to meet with me and the Earl to get his blessing. We get on a private plane and the pilot tells us a storm is over Paris, but the Earl is eager to be married again. So we press on. We should have listened.

A crack of lighting flashes across the stage
and a clap of thunder booms! 21st Century
slowly enters.

KICK

(To Audience)

One hour into the flight, we lost radio connection. A few minutes later, we hit turbulence. Up and down. Up and down. Once we left the clouds, we went straight into a nose dive. We lost a wing of the plane. We lost one engine. We lost the other. We lost the tail. I remember wanting to scream, wanting to cry, wanting to say my prayers one last time, but physically not being able to get any noise out. I remember thinking "this is it. I'm going to die disowned from my family. I'll never get a chance to make amends." I just hope they know how much I love them. I just hope it's quick.

She turns to 21st Century.

KICK

I just wish I got a chance to meet you.

They exit as Jack enters rolling a suitcase.
He's a mess.

JACK

(To Audience)

I was set to meet my father in Paris for Kick's funeral. Mother had decided she wasn't going to attend. She said God would unfortunately have the final word. The Devonshires were gracious enough to plan out her funeral. Because she wouldn't allow the rest of the children to go to France, my father and I were the only ones attending. I head into the airport, my plane starts boarding, and I... I can't do it. I can't get on the plane. I can't say goodbye to my best friend. Not this early, not like this.

He starts backing up.

JACK

(To Audience)

I don't get on the plane. My father is the only Kennedy at the funeral.

I turn my attention to the next thing I have to focus on. The House of Representatives. The election wasn't easy, but we have a strong base.

Bobby crosses the stage, taking Jack's suitcase with him..

JACK

(To Audience)

Bobby was my campaign manager. Ruthless, logical, and best of all, knew how to say no to my father. That's a talent I couldn't even manage.

Pat, Eunice, and Jean cross, wearing "Kennedy" skirts and red, white, and blue hats.

JACK

(To Audience)

My sisters hosted the famous Kennedy teas, attracting the women voters and the children. Their job was to show the family man that Jack Kennedy was, how much he cared for his inner circle.

Joe enters and stands next to Jack, arm around him like a proud father.

JACK

(To Audience, overly cheery)

My father was the wallet. He funded the campaign not just with money, but with connections.

Joe claps Jack's shoulder, then exits. Jack returns back to normal.

JACK

(To Audience)

But I also had to remind the voters behind his back that I did not stand for appeasement like him. With a lot of luck and a lot of work, we win the seat in Congress, and we get right to work.

The podium rolls on stage and Jack steps in front of it. The audience is now Congress. We get to see THE John F. Kennedy in action.

JACK

“Mr. Speaker, I believe that the defense production bill in the form it has come before the House is wholly inadequate to accomplish the vital task of stabilizing prices, wages, and rents. I am opposed especially to the following provisions of the bill: First, the prohibition of further rollbacks of beef prices. Second, the authorization of the 20 percent increase in rent over the 1947 maximum rent, plus the same 20-percent increase on all allowably adjusted increases since 1947. Third. The amendment to the bill, to be offered by the Education and Labor Committee, which would seriously hamper the Wage Stabilization Board’s tasks of stabilizing wages in a just and reasonable manner. The 20-percent increase in rents above 1947 maximum rents provided for in this bill, although seeming reasonable, would but add to the burden of those Americans already most heavily burdened by the present high cost of living- the lower- and middle-income rent payers. Thus, it is apparent that, taking duplication of those landlords receiving the 15 percent increase leases and those who have received individual adjustments into consideration, upward of half of Boston’s controlled rent payers have been increased only the 8 percent granted in the general tax increase. The inflationary forces that are now pushing the cost of living upward are far more severe than any in our history. The job of controlling these forces has been complicated by the already inflated price levels that were in existence at the time of the commencement of the Korean struggle. Faced with this most serious and complicated economic emergency, our actions has been too little and too late until we find ourselves in our present precarious position. Thus we are now paying and will continue to pay a heavy price for our failure a year ago to take the necessary action to control the cost of living. It is, therefore, imperative that the Defense Production Act that will be in effect during the coming year when the impact of the defense program will be more heavily felt, should give the President the powers that he has asked for to control the economy and to provide for the common defense.” [JFK Library and Museum]

Jack pushes the podium back offstage and relaxes.

JACK

(To Audience)

Soon, and by soon I mean one term, I get bored of the House and run for the Senate against Henry Cabot Lodge, the grandson of the man who beat my grandfather in the Senate. It took a lot more fighting, but in the end had the same basic ingredients. Bobby, tea, and the wallet of Joe Kennedy. While I serve my time in the Senate, Bobby is busy taking on the mafia in the Rackets Committee.

Jack steps back. Bobby enters on one side.
Momo Giancana enters on the other.

BOBBY

Would you tell us if you have opposition from anybody that you dispose of them by having them stuffed in a trunk? Is that what you do, Mr. Giancana?

GIANCANA

I decline to answer.

BOBBY

Would you tell us anything about your operations or will you just giggle every time I ask you a question.

GIANCANA

I decline to answer.

BOBBY

I thought only little girls giggled, Mr. Giancana.

GIANCANA

Oh is that the way we are going to play, Bobby?

Bobby turns to go after him, but Jack stops him. Giancana sees his chance to exit.

JACK

Watch yourself.

BOBBY

But-

JACK

Watch yourself.

BOBBY

But he-

JACK

Bobby.

Bobby pauses. He takes in a deep breath and nods.

BOBBY

I gotta go start working on your campaign.

JACK

So soon?

BOBBY

They keep getting bigger don't they?

JACK

Shouldn't you be spending time with your new wife?

BOBBY

I'm sure Ethel won't mind if I take your work home with me.

Bobby freezes in place.

JACK

(To Audience)

I had my eyes set on a pretty seat: the White House. And it was going to take a lot more than just tea parties to win. First, I had to go up against Hubert Humphrey, a good old boy from Wisconsin. And he played every card he could against me. Lucky for me and unlucky for them, I had Bobby Kennedy on my team. He was there when they played the Catholic card.

Bobby turns to face the audience.

BOBBY

Did they ask my brother Joe if he was a Catholic before he died for this country?

JACK

(To Audience)

And he was there to answer when late candidate Lyndon Johnson leaked to the press about my Addison's disease.

BOBBY

Jack is as healthy as a race horse. He's strong, fit, and pulled a fellow soldier three and a half miles by his teeth. Does that scream lack of adrenaline to you.

Bobby steps back. Joe Kennedy enters.

JACK

(To Audience)

My father was considerably less hands on than the House and the Senate. He still sent his money, but he was mostly phone calls screaming at Bobby than in person screaming at aides and volunteers. He was always there though to deliver his famous line if anything were to go wrong: "this may be the best thing that ever happened to you."

Joe steps back. Jackie enters. The light on her is not as bright as the one on Inga, but it holds steady.

JACK

(To Audience)

I had a new teammate on my side this election, my new wife Jacqueline Bouvier, Jackie. We got married during my time as Senator and the wedding was one of the biggest social events of the year. A journalist. A modern woman. Elegant. What the next new President should have in a wife. She also has a wicked sense of humor, a good head on her shoulders, fluent in two languages, and willing to speak her mind if she feels she has to. We got married quickly after courting, and she has stuck by my side through all of this.

She goes up to him to kiss his cheek. He senses the audience is watching, so he pulls back. She gets the hint and steps back. Lyndon Johnson enters, rolling the podium back out on stage. He walks up to Jack and shakes his hand.

JACK

(To Audience)

I ask the Senator from Texas, Lyndon Johnson to be my Vice Presidential candidate. Not all are happy.

Lyndon Johnson steps back. Bobby steps forward.

BOBBY

Jack! Are you crazy?

JACK

We need southern votes Bobby.

BOBBY

Southern votes my ass. After all he said about Dad. After all he said about you.

JACK

He gave me his full endorsement back in January.

BOBBY

And then he took it away again.

JACK

And then he gave it back.

BOBBY

You trust someone that slimy to help you run the country at the highest level? You want someone that slippery, that self-indulging to be one heartbeat from the President?

JACK

I'm forty-three years old, Bobby. I'm not going to die in office.

Beat.

JACK

Trust me, okay? It's JACK Kennedy for President.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

The day that Jack won the nomination was the best day of my life. The day he picked Johnson as VP was the worst.

Bobby steps back. Jack walks up to the program.

JACK

“Governor Stevenson, Senator Johnson, Mr. Butler, Senator Symington, Senator Humphrey, Speaker Rayburn, Fellow Democrats. Thank you Mr. Stevenson. It was my great honor to place his name in nomination at the 1956 Democratic Convention, and I am delighted to have his support and his counsel and his advice in the coming months ahead. With a deep sense of duty and high resolve, I accept your nomination. I accept it with a full and grateful heart-without reservation- and with only one obligation- the obligation to devote every effort of body, mind and spirit to lead our Party back to victory and our Nation back to greatness. I am grateful, too, that you have provided me with such an eloquent statement of our Party's platform. Pledges which are made so eloquently are made to be kept. “The Rights of Man”- the civil and economic rights essential to the human dignity of all men- are indeed our goal and our principles. This is a Platform on which I can run with enthusiasm and conviction. “ [JFK Library and Museum]

Spotlight on Bobby.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

He is a natural. Poised. Elegant. Electrifying. All he has to do is speak and he generates votes.

JACK

“I hope that no American, considering the really critical issues facing this country, will waste his franchise by voting either for me or against me solely on account of my religious affiliation. It is not relevant. I want to stress, what some other political or religious leader may have said on this subject. It is not relevant what abuses may have existed in other countries or in other times. It is not relevant what pressures, if any, might conceivably be brought to bear on me. I am telling you now what you are entitled to know: that my decisions on any public policy will be my own- as an American, a Democrat, and a free man. Under any circumstances, however, the victory we seek in November will not be easy. We all know that in our hearts. We recognize the power of the forces that will be aligned against us. We know they will invoke the name of Abraham Lincoln on behalf on their candidate- despite the fact that the political career of their candidate has often seemed to show charity toward none and malice for all. “

JOE

(To Audience)

This was not the boy that I remember raising. The one who got just average report cards. The one who threw his siblings into the pool. The one who became Teddy’s godson because solely because Joe Jr became Jean’s. This wasn’t Jack. This was Joe Jr.

JACK

“We know that it will not be easy to campaign against a man who has spoken or voted on every side of every known issue. Mr. Nixon may feel it is his turn now, after the New Deal and the Fair Deal- but before he deals, someone had better cut the cards. But we are not merely running against Mr. Nixon. Our task is not merely one of itemizing Republican failures. Nor is that wholly necessary. For the families forced from the farm will know how to vote without our telling them. The unemployed miners and textile workers will know how to vote. The old people without medical care- the families without a decent home- the parents of children without adequate food or schools-- they all know that it’s time for a change. But I think the American people expect more from us than cries of indignation and attack. The times are too grave, the challenge too urgent, and the stakes are too high- to permit the customary passions of political debate. We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future. As Winston Churchill said on taking office some twenty years ago: if we open a quarrel between the present and the past, we shall be in danger of losing the future.”

JACKIE

(To Audience)

The marriage started off rocky. He was making eyes at other women during our honeymoon. I had recently given birth to a daughter after losing our first as a stillborn. I’m pregnant again. He doesn’t know yet. I wanted to wait until this week was over. Watching him up there, one step closer to everything that he ever built, I really couldn’t be prouder.

JACK

“Today our concern must be with that future. For the world is changing. The old era is ending. The old ways will not do. The world has been close to war before- but now man, who has survived all previous threats to his existence, has taken into his mortal hands the power to exterminate the entire species some seven times over. Here at home, the changing face of the future is equally revolutionary. The New Deal and the Fair Deal were bold measures for their generation-but this is a new generation. It is a time, in short, for a new generation of leadership- new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities. Are we up to the task- are we equal to the challenge? Are we willing to match the Russian sacrifice of the present for the future- or must we sacrifice our future in order to enjoy the present? All mankind waits upon our decision. A whole world looks to see what we will do. We cannot fail their trust, we cannot fail to try. As we face the coming challenge, we too, shall wait upon the Lord, and ask that he renew our strength. Then shall we be equal to the test. Then we shall not be weary. And then we shall prevail. Thank you.”

Bobby, Jackie, Lyndon, and Joe exit. Walter Cronkite rolls out two chairs. He sits in one. Jack sits in the other.

CRONKITE

Senator, you said that you hadn't planned on being a politician. And we, of course, have heard the story many times, occasionally from your own lips, I believe, but that you got into politics sort of to take the place of your other brother, Joe, who was killed during the war.

JACK

Yes. He was going to be a politician, I think. In fact he was a delegate to the 1924-1940 convention when he was only 24. And then he was killed in the war and I came back from the war and I was in the hospital for a while and I decided to run, and- here we are.

CRONKITE

Was it a conscious feeling on your part of taking Joe's place?

JACK

No, but I-I never would have run for office if he had lived. I think he was- destined to be very successful in politics. But, I was, at the end of the war I was interested in politics, at least in the issues the country faced. I had been a reporter at the United Nations Conference and then at the Potsdam Conference in Germany in 1945. And when the congressional seat became vacant, as I had grown in an atmosphere where government and politics were followed by both my grandfathers and my father and my brother, and there I was so that I never would never would have imagined before the war that I would have become active in politics but everything seemed to point to it in '46.

CRONKITE

You don't have any sense of being a stand-in for Joe in this Presidential race?

JACK

No, I don't. Time has moved on. I once said that I thought that- I think he would have done very well and would have been very successful, but I have sort of made my own career now. But then I always feel that he would have done very well indeed.

CRONKITE

Did you have any great ambitions for your father to become President? Do you remember your emotions at the time?

JACK

No. Actually I don't think he ever would have thought he would be nominated. There were other potential candidates for the Democratic nomination and of course there was no indication that President Roosevelt would not run. So that while his name appeared in the paper, I don't think he ever inhaled the atmosphere.

CRONKITE

Would you feel any restriction against naming a member of the family to the Cabinet, for instance?

JACK

I think it would probably be unwise. But I would hope that if I were successful that they would contribute- be able to contribute their services. I think they are both very able and they both worked extremely hard. My brother Bobby was my campaign manager in '52, and he has been my campaign manager since I started to run and he is terribly single-minded in his interest in public affairs and being of service and I would hope he could be. Merely because I happened to hold office I don't think should bar him.

CRONKITE

Senator, there's an awful lot of mudslinging and charges and counter charges and truths and falsehoods and something in between in a political campaign. What accusation against you has hurt you most personally?

JACK

My skin has gotten thicker over the years and I don't really- I can't say that I've been particularly, I don't think I've been unfairly treated in the last months. I think the religious issue is frustrating in that I've made my views clear month after month think the religious liberty as they are. It's frustrating, but after all, the Presidency is a one to ever run and they have a right to ask me questions and to have reassurance.

But after giving the answers and after my public record indicates that what I say I mean, then it becomes somewhat disappointing that I am not able to get it across more effectively. However, I haven't been- on the whole, I've been fairly treated.

CRONKITE

Senator, one final question: What single quality do you think will be the most important that you take to the White House?

JACK

Well, I think I've had- a historical view of the United States and of it's relations through the world. I've been interested in it really since I was very young, and I think a sense of the past where we have been in this country, the relations in Europe, will be a great help in the future. I remember a story about many of the papers prepared by some talented young men at the Versailles Conference, on the future of Europe, were based on recommendations by Talleyrand at the end of the Napoleonic Wars at the meeting at Vienna. I think that Lincoln said, "Until you know where you have been, you don't know where you are going." And that's the way I feel. I think a-of course- a sense of responsibility, and a sense of great interest in our country, and also a sense of the historical past here and through the world, I think are very valuable for the future.

They shake hands. Cronkite and Jack stand and Cronkite exits, rolling the chairs off with him.

JACK

(To Audience)

Kennedy fever is electric in the 1960s. The teas are back, with Ethel and Jackie as the new campaigners. The voters love the idea of a new kind of candidate, one who thinks for himself and finds the best in both parties. It also helps to have good friends.

Frank Sinatra's campaign song plays. Jack does an old man dance to it for a moment before it fades out.

JACK

(To Audience)

Sinatra and I share a girlfriend. Anyway, I fight all across this country and meet people of all backgrounds. I also had help from the first televised Presidential debate that I have had years of experience with the new media and Richard Nixon, well...

A projection of Richard Nixon sweating, drinking water, and looking relatively nervous flashes.

JACK

(To Audience)

Doesn't. It was a long, hard fight, and one of the closest elections in American history, but one Tuesday in November. The people made their choice.

Joe enters, hugging his son. He pulls back to look at him.

JOE

You are making Bobby your attorney general.

Joe exits without a second glance.

JACK

(To Audience)

Did he not hear what I told Cronkite?

He laughs and shakes his head. A flag lowers down behind Jack. He steps back up to the podium.

JACK

“Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, Reverend Clergy, fellow citizens: The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe- the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God. Let every nation know, wether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty. Let every nation know, wether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge- and more. To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their our freedom- and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside. Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course- both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war. So let us begin anew- remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. Let both sides unite to heed in corners of the earth the command of Isaiah- to "undo the heavy burdens... (and) let the oppressed go free." " [JFK Library and Museum]

20th Century enters stage left and watches from the wings. 21st Century enters stage right and watches from the wings. Jackie enters and stands by her husband's side.

JACK

"All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe. In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility- I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you- ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man. Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards which we ask of you. With a good conscience our sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on Earth God's work must truly be our own. "

JACKIE

(To Audience)

It is a tradition for the new President to kiss his wife after his inauguration speech.

Jack passes Jackie without looking at her. He instead turns to the audience. As he speaks, she looks devastated and exits offstage.

JACK

(To Audience)

It was in my hands. The whole world was in my hands. Every Tom, Dick, and Harry were counting on me to protect them, and I was marching us headfirst into nuclear global annihilation. But we had to show the Soviet's that we were tough. America doesn't back down. America doesn't lose. And yet I was the first person to push that ideology to the breaking point. Eisenhower said I wasn't cut out to be President, Eleanor Roosevelt said I wasn't cut out to be President. They said I was too young to be the leader of the free world, too inexperienced. And I didn't want to prove them right. The first mishap was the Bay of Pigs invasion. A disaster. The first major stain in the Presidency. I learned the first fatal mistake of my Presidency. Trust your family first and foremost. I leant on my father for all of my life, but after his stroke in 1961 that left him unable to speak, I realized my new number one confidant was Bobby,

Bobby enters, handing his brother a folder.
The Oval Office appears onstage behind him.

BOBBY

We have a problem. Soviet weapons found in Cuba.

Jack looks worried. He heads over to the desk and begins to work.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the month the world was the closest to nuclear destruction. The US found Soviet missiles located in Cuba, aimed for the States. We were out of options very quickly: either do nothing and pray, be diplomatic with people that had never been diplomatic before, or fight and embrace certain destruction. We realized we had to let the American people know. They deserved transparency.

Jack looks up from his desk to address the nation.

JACK

It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union. To halt this offensive buildup, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba, from whatever nation or port, will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back. This quarantine will be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carriers.

We are not at this time, however, denying the necessities of life as the Soviets attempted to do in their Berlin blockade of 1948.

Jack looks back down.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

Through behind the scene talks with world leaders, we were able to reach a deal with the Soviets. Them promising to remove the missiles in Cuba if we promised to remove our missiles in Turkey. We agreed on one condition: our removal of missiles must be kept secret from the public. America doesn't back down. Jack thought of this as a failure, that it was his responsibility how close we were to destruction, but he doesn't give himself credit for being the reason everyone is still alive today.

Bobby exits. The attention is now on Jack.
Jack sits in the Oval office, focused on his work. He doesn't hear Jackie enter. She watches him, entranced.

JACKIE

His eyes never lit up when I entered the room. I never wanted them to. Because the day that I would dread most, the day I would spend the rest of my life praying would never come, is the day that light left.

She goes over to stand behind him.

JACKIE

He was a wonder to watch at work. He knew that the spotlight was always on him, that the world anticipated his next move like a game of chess. He was both King and Queen, the figurehead that had all the glory but none of the power and the one calculating protection behind the scene.

Bobby enters, walking up to Jack without acknowledging Jackie's presence.

BOBBY

(To Jack)

Wallace plans to strong-arm us on this Supreme Court decision.

JACKIE

(To Audience)

Bobby is the bishop. The Catholic backbone.

JACK
(To Bobby)

What are you still doing here? Go home to your pregnant wife Bobby.

JACKIE
(To Audience)

Steady. Constant.

BOBBY
(To Jack)

You first.

Beat.

JACKIE
(To audience)

Johnson was the knight. Flexible. A smoke and mirror show. He seems like he can do anything. The missing puzzle piece. But in reality, he holds no power.

JACK
(To Bobby)

I have a lot of work I still have to do.

Bobby flips through some papers.

JACK
Nothing? You aren't going to say anything?

BOBBY
Would it help?

JACKIE
(To audience)
I was the rook. I knew my place. I couldn't do much.

JACK
(To Bobby)
Bobby, just go home. I'll take care of it. Plus, Ethel will just keep calling all night and we won't get anything done anyway.

BOBBY
Jack, I-

JACK

Go.

Bobby weighs his options: defy his brother
or go home to his loved ones.

JACKIE

(To Audience)

But I was steady. I was reliable. He knew he could always find me in the castle and I
would lay myself down for him in whatever way he needed.

He chooses the latter.

JACK

(To Bobby)

I'll see you tomorrow. Tell Ethel I said hello.

BOBBY

Night Jack.

As Bobby exits, he sees Jackie for the first
time. They make eye contact.

JACKIE

(To audience)

Everyone else was a pawn. He knew the rules. He knew the players and he had one
strategy to win.

Bobby exits.

JACKIE

Make sure he knew more than you did. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is the sharpest
sword that never dulls. I think three years went by without seeing any more of his face
than just a side profile.

The desk moves offstage. Jack is still sitting,
now nose deep in a book.

JACKIE

(To audience)

I had to do something. I had to show him I knew how to play the game.

(To Jack)

I want to take the children and go on vacation.

JACK

This isn't a good time for me to leave.

JACKIE

I didn't ask for you to come.

Beat. He turns to look at her.

JACKIE

Now you look at me.

JACK

Jackie.

JACKIE

(To audience)

They said I had no idea what he did when I'm not there. I knew a lot more than they thought I did. I knew Marilyn wasn't just singing Happy Birthday.

(To Jack)

I want out.

JACK

You can't do that.

JACKIE

You are giving me no other choice.

JACK

I'm about to run for re-election Jackie. Do you know what this will do to me?

JACKIE

It'll make sure that you never become President again. The first President divorced while in office.

(To Audience)

I knew he didn't care what I did, or even if I took the kids with me. I had to hit him where it hurts, his Presidency.

JACK

What do you want?

JACKIE

(To Audience)

I want more than I could ever tell him.

(To Jack)

Get it together. Or I will take the kids and I will leave.

JACK
(To Audience)

She meant it. I never saw that look in her eyes before. She knew where to hurt me.

JACKIE
(To Jack)

Got it?

Jack nods.

JACKIE

Good.

Jackie exits at the same time that Lem enters. He has a duffle bag, like he's ready to leave at any moment.

JACK
(To Lem)

I can't go.

LEM

What? Why not?

JACK

I have things I have to take care of here.

LEM
(To audience)

I don't know what she said to him, but it definitely got the job done.

JACK

Besides, we got that whole Wallace thing to take care of.

LEM

Good luck with that. Let me know if you need anything. I'm gonna enjoy the beach weather.

Jack grins. Lem exits.

JACK
(To Audience)

When you are President, you come into the job thinking that everyone has to listen to you, but some people aren't so willing to change.

One of those people being Alabama Governor George Wallace. Wallace was a man stuck in time, unwilling to change. The Kennedy administration, however, was currently siding with revolutionary forward thinking leader, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reverend King enters. His presence absorbs the entire stage.

KING

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of it's creed: "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

King exits.

JACK

(To Audience)

We made the effort to work towards his dream. But Wallace planned to block that effort, including standing in front of the door of the University of Alabama, blocking the entrance of it's two Black students on their first day. What followed was a very important question: not if, but how forcefully are we to remove a current governor from the steps of the college. The presence of the National Guard was enough to scare Wallace to back down peacefully. Not quietly, but peacefully. Bobby and I knew this situation couldn't go by unacknowledged, we needed to address the nation on television and fight for the Civil Rights bill.

The desk moves back onstage and Jack sits behind the desk. King enters again and stands to the side. 20th and 21st Century enter on the other side, standing together, watching.

JACK

"Good evening my fellow citizens: This afternoon, following a series of threats and defiant statements, the presence of Alabama National Guardsmen was required on the University of Alabama to carry out the final and unequivocal order of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Alabama. That order called for the admission of two clearly qualified young Alabama residents who happened to have been born Negro.

I hope that every American, regardless of where he lives, will stop and examine his conscience about this about this and other related incidents. This Nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened. Today we are committed to a worldwide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free. And when Americans are sent to Viet-Nam or West Berlin, we do not ask for whites only. It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops. It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. But this is not the case. “ [JFK Library and Museum]

KING

“In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men—yes, black men as well as white men— would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
[Speeches.org]

JACK

“We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution. One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free. Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them. It is not enough to pin the blame on others, to say this a problem of one section of the country or another, or deplore the fact that we face. A great change is at hand, and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all. Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as reality.”

KING

“It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked “insufficient funds.””

JACK

“Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act, to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law. The Federal Judiciary has upheld that proposition in a series of forthright cases. The executive branch has adopted the proposition in the conduct of its affairs, including the employment of Federal personnel, the use of Federal facilities, and the sale of federally financed housing. I am, therefore, asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments. The orderly implementation of the Supreme Court decision, therefore, cannot be left solely to those who may not have the economic resources to carry the legal action or who may be subject to harassment. Like our soldiers and sailors in all parts of the world they are meeting freedom’s challenge on the firing line, and I salute them for their honor and their courage.”

KING

“But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children.”

JACK

“This is one country. It has become one country because all of us and all the people who came here had an equal chance to develop their talents. Therefore, I am asking for your help in making it easier for us to move ahead and to provide the kind of equality of treatment which we would want ourselves; to give a chance for every child to be educated to the limit of his talents. Thank you very much.”

Bobby enters, rushing in.

BOBBY

Jack... it’s Patrick.

Jack stands up and they both rush off. King slowly exits. A staff member enters, solemn looking.

STAFF

Patrick Kennedy died at 4:04 a.m. The struggle of the baby boy to keep breathing was too much for his heart. The President, his brother the Attorney General, and the President's friend Dave Powers, were with the baby when he died.

The staff member exits, along with 20th and 21st Century. Jack enters. He is despondent, devastated, more upset than he was when he lost his brother. More upset than he was when he lost the Vice-Presidential bid. He struggles to find the words.

JACK

(To audience)

I... held him in my arms when we lost him. He was so small, so frail. He reminded me so much of me, sick, broken. He was hardly able to experience any of the great things that life had to offer. He only lived two days, hardly got a chance to spend time with his mother.

He breaks down in tears. Lem enters and sits next to him and wraps an arm around his friend.

LEM

I wish that I could say something to make this easier, my friend. I can only offer up advice for you. The country will understand if you need to spend more time with your family. Jackie needs you right now. She lost her son without spending any time at all with him. You at least got to hold him.

Jack tries to regain his composure, but Lem's words really get to him.

LEM

John Jon doesn't know what any of this means, but Caroline is old enough to figure things out, and she'll know if you are pushing yourself too hard when you can't handle it. That's not something I think you want to teach your children.

JACK

That's the exact opposite of what my parents taught me.

LEM

Exactly.

Beat. Lem pulls his friend closer.

LEM

The country will understand. Johnson can take care of everything for a little while. That's what he's there for.

JACK

(Slightly amused)

Johnson is an idiot.

Lem smiles.

LEM

So then why did you pick him for Vice President?

JACK

(Slightly laughing)

I have no idea.

They laugh slightly.

JACK

Thank you Lem.

LEM

Go be with your family, pal.

Jack stands up and starts to exit. He turns back, they both salute sadly, and Jack exits.

LEM

(To audience)

Things were different then. Jack was more considerate, compassionate, and caring to his wife and his family. The affairs stopped, all of them. He was the husband that he should have been the day that they got married years ago. Jackie seemed happier as she walked the halls of the White House, like she was starting to be happy that she was there. Jack seemed like a happier man, in love with his family. They became the perfect family that the country projected them to be. The tragedy of losing a son brought them together.

21st Century enters and stands behind Lem, like she is projecting her thoughts on to him.

LEM

(Quickly changing tone to solemn)

And quicker than desired, another tragedy would soon tear them back again. Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963.

Lem exits. Jack, Jackie, Connolly, and his wife enter on stage.

CONNOLLY

Re-election seems to never start too early, huh Mr. President?

JACK

Someone who has been Governor as long as you should already know the answer to that, Connolly.

MRS. CONNOLLY

Mrs. Kennedy, may I just say that you do look lovely. Just radiant.

JACKIE

Thank you very much.

JACK

She always looks radiant.

He kisses her hand. She is surprised by this public display of affection. They share a moment.

CONNOLLY

Well, shall we?

JACK

Lead the way.

(To audience)

So Jackie and I walk to the car with Governor Connolly and his wife. Jackie just looks... radiant. And there's so much going on and this isn't the time or the place to say anything to her but I can't help the urge to...apologize.

Jackie notices Jack staring at her in her famous pink outfit and pill box hat. She watches him for a moment before,

JACKIE

(To Jack)

What?

Beat. We just sit there, watching him take her in.

JACK

Words can't even begin to describe how sorry I am to her. How I wish I could take everything back and start everything over from the day I met her. No one else. No one. I would be the husband she should have had. I want to tell her that she has been the perfect mother to Caroline and John and I will never forgive myself for not being there when Arabella...and to hold Patrick in my arms while he died (his voice breaks) That she is stronger than I could ever be. That I love her and she will always be my wife.

(To Jackie)

Nothing.

They get in the "car." The cheers of Dallas citizens get louder and louder as he speaks. Behind them, the screen is projected with images of the crowd in Dallas.

JACK

As we drive down Dallas, the jubilation is insurmountable. It's contagious. The smile on my face isn't my normal "campaigning/ will disappear as soon as they turn their heads" smile. There is hope. There is electricity. There is still life in this campaign. For a brief moment I forget about Cuba. I forget about Russia. I forget about the Bay of Pigs. I forget about it all. I did all this. All of this fell at my feet but I picked it up and came out the other side because that's what Kennedys do. (Pause) That's what Jack Kennedy does. (Beat.) We turn on to Dealy Plaza and there are people as far as the eye can see. I don't think I remember a time where I have felt like this. I remember Mrs. Connolly saying over the screaming-

MRS. CONNOLLY

(To Jack)

Dallas certainly loves you, Mr. President.

JACK

(To Mrs. Connolly)

Yes, it certainly seems that way.

BANG. The lights go off except for a solo light on Jack. The cheering stops instantly. Everyone freezes except for Jack. He slowly gets out of the "car" and faces the audience. The projection disappears.

JACK

I... don't remember much after. Little glimpses. Flashes. Doctors in surgical mask. People screaming. Everything rushing. Rushing. Rushing. Pink.

He looks back at Jackie. He almost smiles.

JACK

A lot of pink.

Beat. Newspaper articles covering the assassination flash on screen.

JACK

“President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was shot and killed by an assassin today. He died of a wound in the brain caused by a rifle bullet that was fired at him as he was riding through downtown Dallas in a motorcade. Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States. Standing beside the new President as Mr. Johnson took the oath of office was Mrs. John F. Kennedy. Her stockings were spattered with her husbands blood”

He looks down at his suit and his shoes,
almost like he is examining them, before
looking up and continuing to speak.

JACK

“When the historians get around to assessing his three years in office, it is very likely that they will be impressed with just this: his efforts to restrain those who wanted to be more violent in the Cold War overseas and those who wanted to be more violent in the racial war at home.” The New York Times.

He pauses, then starts taking off his tie. The articles fade away as he speaks.

JACK

That doesn't matter as much as I thought it would. I didn't think about my legacy in that moment. I didn't think about the fact that I wouldn't be a two term President, or that I wouldn't even be a full term President. I didn't think about where the Kennedy name would be in five, ten, fifty years.

He undoes his cufflinks.

JACK

You know what I did think about? I thought about Joe. All he didn't get to do and how I never even asked him what HE wanted to do. I thought about Kick. I wondered if she got this feeling, like she knew that she was about to die. I thought about my mother and the fact that she has now lost three-four children really. I thought about Bobby and Teddy. I hope I left enough of a foundation for them. (Beat. He corrects himself) I hope I was a good brother to them. And Eunice and Jean and Patty.

He takes off his jacket and walks over and drapes it over the "car seat." 21st Century enters with a spotlight on her. She watches him intently.

JACK

I thought about Jackie and Caroline and John and how I basically ruined his third birthday. (Beat) My family. I didn't think I was going to make it to 25. To see 46 and to see how far I could make it. That's incredible. That's... I may not have done everything I wanted to do, but I did enough.

He looks at 21st Century.

JACK

(To 21st Century)

I did enough.

(To Audience)

I don't worry about the American people. They are going to be fine.

(Beat)

"I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade
When Spring comes back with rustling shade and apple
Blossoms fill the air
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair...
I shall not fail that rendezvous"

He looks back at Jackie. In a moment of vulnerability, he walks over to her and kisses the top of her head. 20th Century enters with a spotlight on him. Jack walks up to him and shakes his hand. He gives 21st Century a wave, then exits. 20th Century and 21st Century turn to face the audience.

They look worried. Their spotlights go out.
For a brief moment, we live in this darkness,
until

JACKIE
(Wailing)

NO!

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

The Oval Office. Mere hours after JFK's assassination. Bobby stands over the desk, disheveled but it's clear he has made numerous attempts to look put together. He is obviously one misstep from bursting into tears.

BOBBY

99 minutes. That's how long it took for Johnson to "assume his role." 99 minutes from the bullet hitting my brother to Johnson deciding he can't wait another minute to be the next President. And to call me up and ask me how to say the fucking oath.

He slams the chair against the desk, before regaining his composure.

BOBBY

Jack should still be President. My brother should still be here. His body was on the plane when Johnson took the oath. He didn't even get to come home yet before he was replaced.

He looks around the office, getting more and more disgusted.

BOBBY

(In an exaggerated Texas drawl)

"Bobby, it's for the good of the country. To start the healing process." Give me a break. Johnson wouldn't know what's for the good of the country if it was wearing a six inch skirt. (Beat.) I've called everyone. It wasn't Hoover. It wasn't Castro. It wasn't McCone. It wasn't Khrushchev. It was... just a man who set himself inside the Texas School Book Depository, saw a clear chance and took it. (Beat.) I haven't called my mother. I can't bring myself to talk to either of them.

Jackie enters, still wearing her pink outfit but it's now coated in bright red splashes. They watch each other quietly, waiting for the other to speak first. Jackie sits down at the desk.

BOBBY

(To Jackie)

I can get someone to box up the pictures and send them over.

Jackie opens and looks through the drawers
of the desk.

BOBBY

(To Jackie)

If you don't want to stay here with... them tonight, you know you and the kids are more
than welcome with me and Ethel.

He waits for a reply. He receives none.

BOBBY

(To audience)

She hadn't spoken the whole day. The only thing anyone had heard from her all day was
the sound of her screaming. I didn't hear it myself, I couldn't imagine that sound coming
out of her mouth.

He turns to look back at her. She looks
through the papers on his desk.

BOBBY

She's lost two of her children already. To then lose her husband... I couldn't even imagine
losing Ethel. I wouldn't know where to go next. I wouldn't know how I would be able to
go on.

As Jackie gets up from the desk chair and
walks downstage, Bobby walks upstage and
sits in the now vacant seat.

JACKIE

So this is what he has been staring at for the past three years. I expected it to be more.
More... just more. Now this is all his life boils down to. Policy and procedures.

She looks back at Bobby.

JACKIE

I can't help feeling horrible for Bobby. To lose so many siblings that it almost feels
second nature to him. But Jack was his best friend. I can't imagine how this must be for
him.

Lyndon Johnson enters. They both sense his
presence immediately.

LYNDON

Bobby. Jackie.

JACKIE

Hi Lyndon.

LYNDON

Please, take your time removing his personal items from here. If it's done by Monday that's okay

BOBBY

(To Audience)

It hasn't even been 24 hours yet. She is still wearing his blood.

LYNDON

- And don't worry about moving out anytime soon. You are more than welcome to stay with me and Lady Bird anytime you'd like.

JACKIE

(To audience)

I'd kill myself if it meant staying with them.

Johnson steps over to Jackie and wraps his arm around her. Bobby stands up defensively.

LYNDON

We are all here for you, Jackie.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

If he touches her arm again

JACKIE

Thank you, Lyndon.

JOHNSON

Of course my dear.

Bobby rolls his eyes.

JOHNSON

Bobby. I want you to know that there is always room for you in the Johnson administration.

BOBBY

I don't think that we have to worry about this right now Jo- Mr. President. There is the small matter of planning Jack's funeral that I have to worry about first.

JACKIE

You don't have to worry about that Bobby. I can take care of everything.

BOBBY

You shouldn't have to do this alone.

JACKIE

I... I want to do this. I need to know that his final sendoff to the American people is going to be in good hands.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

I...

He thinks better of it and shakes his head.

BOBBY

Well, the family is here if you need anything.

Jackie stares at him for a moment.

JACKIE

(To Audience)

I know he means it. He would do anything for his family and not even think twice. That's the kind of people that they all are. Very "Us against the World." The Kennedys look out for each other. Jack always prided himself on being a Kennedy. It was most of who he was. He always knew that his family would be there to catch his fall...

She starts to tear up, then quickly regains her composure.

JACKIE

(To Johnson)

Lyndon, would you mind giving me and Bobby just one moment? And then I promise we'll be out of your hair.

JOHNSON

(Joking)

Already kicked out of my own office.

Bobby and Jackie both tense, but Jackie does a better job at hiding it.

JOHNSON

Sure thing. You two please, take all the time that you need.

Johnson exits. Jackie immediately breaks down. Bobby pulls her into a hug. She begins to sob. He stands there and lets her. This goes on for some time. Allow the actors to really grieve in this moment. Finally, when there are no more tears left, Bobby sits. Jackie down at the sofa. He kneels down in front of her.

BOBBY

Jackie, I'm so sorry. I should have been there. Maybe I could have...

JACKIE

What? What could you have done? You don't know what they wanted. You could have been targeted too. We couldn't lose you both.

She pauses. Then goes to speak, then stops herself.

BOBBY

What is it?

She hesitates.

BOBBY

(Warmly)

Jackie, it's me. You can tell me anything and you know that.

JACKIE

I just... there was so much blood, Bobby. It was all over me before I even had a chance to think about it. On my clothes... My hair... my face. (She shudders) His head...

He turns to the audience as she mouths everything she experienced that horrible day.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

She just kept talking. And talking. And talking. And I just sat there and... listened. I tried to zone out and just let the words pass over me. But every single word hits me harder than before. But I don't say anything. How can I say anything? She needs to tell someone.

JACKIE

(To Bobby)

...I see it every time I close my eyes. I don't know what to say to Caroline, to John. I... oh Bobby.

She starts weeping and rest her head on his shoulder.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

I just have to push it down for now.

Slowly, she cries herself to sleep and Bobby gently lays her down on the sofa. The sofa moves offstage and only the desk remains. Bobby stands and turns to the audience, regaining his composure. He takes a deep breath.

BOBBY

The next few days are both a blur and drag on all at the same time. Jackie is planning both Jack's funeral and John John's birthday party. I try to help any way that I can, but she insists on doing everything herself. I let her do everything she wants, except...

Jackie enters in a new outfit. She looks completely different.

JACKIE

I thought we said-

BOBBY

Jackie.

JACKIE

It's going to be a closed casket. You promised.

BOBBY

The country needs to see him and say goodbye one more time.

JACKIE

Bobby, I think you need to see him before you make that decision.

BOBBY

But-

JACKIE

Bobby. (Beat) I really think you should look at him.

Bobby nods, then turns to the audience.

BOBBY

(To audience)

I don't know who that was, but that wasn't my brother. That wasn't Jack. The people couldn't see him like this. Not like this.

(To Jackie)

You're right. Closed casket

She nods. Teddy enters and crosses to them. He hands Jackie a black veil. She places the veil over her head and stands in the middle of Bobby and Teddy. Behind them the motorcade and funeral procession is illuminated behind them as they "walk" down the street. 20th and 21st Century stand on opposite ends of the stage, watching the funeral procession pass by.

BOBBY

(To audience)

I remember thinking that we were so open and exposed, walking in the middle of the street like this.

TEDDY

(To audience)

Bobby and Jackie are like stone, but I can feel myself crumbling as we get closer and closer to Arlington.

At this moment, we wait for Jackie to speak. Both men look at her, gauging for any show of emotion. She is stone. She walks.

BOBBY

(To audience)

I look out and I see all of these people staring, watching everything pass by. They are filled with so much loss and pain and I don't know how to fix it. And it's not just today, it's not just this. It's all the distrust, all the betrayal, its everything that we have put this country through since the second World War. They deserve so much more and I just have to sit here and accept that fact that... I can't do anything about it. (Beat) Jack could have.

They walk some more, before coming to a stop. Teddy watches Jackie's movements carefully. She walks over to 21st Century and shakes her hand as Teddy says this next line.

TEDDY

(To audience)

We finally get to Arlington, Jackie, Bobby and I walk slowly to the Eternal Flame. I watch them both, their very cautious and calculating moves, pushing all that sadness to make this easier for everyone.

Jackie mimics lighting the eternal flame. She pauses, falters. She grabs Bobby's arm. He puts his hand over hers. She regains herself.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

They are my heroes.

On the screen behind them is now a projection of John Jr., Jackie bends down to his level.

JACKIE

(To John)

It's okay. You can say goodbye to Daddy now.

On the screen, John Jr. gives his famous salute. The projection disappears. Jackie stands and kisses both Bobby and Teddy on the cheek.

JACKIE

Thank you both.

She exits.

BOBBY
You got a cigarette?

TEDDY
(Bemused)
You smoke now?

Beat.

BOBBY
No. I don't know why I said that. (Sigh) How's Joanie feeling?

TEDDY
What are we going to do?

BOBBY
(To Audience)
And just like that I realize, after thirty eight years of begging to have my voice heard, begging to be seen as important, BEGGING to sit at the adult table, I'm the man of the house now.

(To Teddy)
I don't know.

TEDDY
What are you going to do?

Bobby stares at Teddy for a brief moment, then Teddy nods and exits.

BOBBY
I think about that question for nine months. It's not like I didn't have options.

Johnson enters, slowly. He looks pained. This is going to be hard for him.

JOHNSON
Bobby, my advisors have suggested the idea that you run as my.... VP.

BOBBY
Is that what you want, Mr. President?

Johnson literally swallows down his pride.

JOHNSON

My advisors suggest that having a Kennedy on the ballot will be favorable for both of us. What with the war and King and all. The country could use some comfort. Like it or not, the Kennedy name is comforting to a lot of people. So, how about it?

Bobby stares at him for a moment, before a slow smirk creeps up.

JOHNSON

Just think it over and get back to me.

Johnson crosses Kennedy and exits.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

That was fun to watch. I mean Vice President is great, but I would never work under Johnson. So, I thank him as politely as I can muster, turn down the offer, and hand in my resignation. I sit down and I buckle through an entire five year plan and I run it by Teddy, who is recovering from a plane crash.

Teddy is wheeled in on a stretcher, laying on his stomach.

BOBBY

(To Teddy)

I'm going to run for Senate.

TEDDY

Just once I wish we could meet as a family and not discuss politics.

BOBBY

I think you need another pillow.

TEDDY

I think that Kennedys need to stop getting on planes. So, what's this about being a senator? Senator of where?

BOBBY

New York.

TEDDY

You don't live in New York.

BOBBY

I know that.

TEDDY

You haven't lived in New York in almost thirty years.

BOBBY

I know.

TEDDY

People are going to wonder why you aren't running in Massachusetts.

BOBBY

Okay, then I'll just run against you.

Beat.

TEDDY

So what district in New York?

Teddy is wheeled off. A podium moves onstage covered in red, white, and blue banners.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

I don't tell anyone except the people that I can trust. I plan to announce my plan to run for Senate at the Democratic National Convention. I'm invited to introduce a video dedicated to Jack and I figure the crowd will appreciate the continuation of the Kennedy legacy. My family is ready to start this new chapter, my team is energized to start a new campaign. But, really, there is only one person who truly has final say and she hasn't said much.

Ethel enters, holding a red tie.

ETHEL

I think you should wear this one instead.

BOBBY

What's wrong with the blue?

Ethel crosses to him and undoes his tie.

ETHEL

Not as striking.

She hands him the blue tie as she ties the red tie around his neck.

BOBBY

What do you think?

ETHEL

I think people are very excited to be here and start the campaign.

BOBBY

You know what I meant.

ETHEL

You know I would support you through anything, no matter what. But please just be careful.

BOBBY

Ethel... that's not going to happen to me.

She fixes his collar and pushes a piece of his hair back.

ETHEL

Just please be careful.

He nods. She walks to stand in the "wings," joined by Jackie and Teddy. Bobby walks up to the podium.

ANNOUNCER

(Offstage)

Here to introduce the video, former Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Before Bobby can even speak, he is drowned out by the cheering of the entire stadium. He stands there, shocked. Then sadness washes over his face, followed by joy, then it seems he is feeling nothing at all. Lights on the "wings."

TEDDY

(To Audience)

This goes on for 22 minutes. No stopping. For a while, he tries to get a word in. Then he sees there is no use and he... just waits it out.

ETHEL

(To Audience)

He knows it's not for him. He doesn't care about that. Jack deserves every minute of this. He just doesn't know how he's gonna fit into this story.

Bobby smiles at the audience, sad, defeated.
Then he pushes the podium offstage. Ethel
and Jackie exit. Teddy walks downstage
towards the crowd.

TEDDY

He wins, not without problems. New Yorkers weren't super happy about a Bostonian fighting for them in Congress. But, thankfully, Bobby doesn't have any problems with the Yankees. The next few years float by smoothly, Kennedy brothers fighting for justice in the senate. It was a relationship I never had with any of my brothers before. During childhood, it was Joe and Jack that were inseparable, then to watch Jack and Bobby get close, I'm just glad that I can stop playing with my sisters after all these years. Bobby is on fire, the same raging spirit that took down the mob all those years ago.

Bobby enters.

TEDDY

(To Bobby)

What are we voting this time? No?

BOBBY

No.

Beat.

TEDDY

No as in Yes?

BOBBY

Yes.

TEDDY

... Vote yes?

BOBBY

Good God, Teddy. Vote yes.

Bobby exits.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

He's more passionate than Jack could ever be. More emotional. And that was even before Mississippi.

Ethel enters.

ETHEL

What time did he say that he was coming home?

TEDDY

Mary Jo said that he wanted you to expect him for dinner.

ETHEL

Well, he's about to get cold mush. Teddy, did he seem different on the phone to you?

TEDDY

What do you mean?

ETHEL

I don't know. He just seemed... strange. Like he was constantly thinking about something.

Bobby enters, dragging his feet. He looks around the stage.

TEDDY

There he is!

ETHEL

Welcome home, dear.

She hugs him tight and kisses his cheek. He tries to return the gesture as enthusiastically as possible.

TEDDY

You alright?

As Bobby talks, projections of his trip through the slums of Mississippi are illuminated overhead. He begins by talking to Ethel and Teddy, but slowly turns his attention to us by the end of his monologue.

BOBBY

You couldn't imagine, there was a little girl. She eats once, maybe two times every few days. She wore through her shoes and her mother can't afford to get a new pair. Her mother works as a waitress at a diner that is going out of business. She uses her paycheck, however small, to take care of the tiny, run down house and her three kids. I asked the little girl what grade she was in. She's seven years old and she's never known another way to live. I made the little girl promise me that she would stay in school no matter what. (He sighs) Our family has never known economic suffering. We never knew how lucky we have it. Shamefully, it wasn't something I gave much consideration. But after seeing all that... People in one of the richest countries in the world shouldn't live like this. We failed them.

(To Ethel and Teddy)

I'm not really hungry. I think I'm just going to go lay down.

Bobby exits. Ethel looks at Teddy, then follows Bobby off.

TEDDY

That trip changed him. It got him thinking, which with Bobby is always dangerous. Then, like it always does, imagination gets the best of him.

Bobby enters, much more cleaned up and pristine.

BOBBY

(To Teddy)

I want to run for President.

TEDDY

(To Bobby)

I- don't think that's a good idea.

BOBBY

Why not? I am loved as a Senator. I am loved as a brother of Jack. I already have administration experience. What is there stopping me?

TEDDY

President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

BOBBY

Right.

TEDDY

He still thinks he's riding the high of the Civil Rights Movement. He's not going to give up the Presidency so easily. It's going to be a nasty fight. And a nasty fight would make you both look bad.

BOBBY

And ruin my chances of a '72 presidency.

TEDDY

Exactly.

BOBBY

You're right.

TEDDY

Aren't I always?

Bobby smirks. Teddy exits.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

He's smug, but he's right. He reminds me of Jack in that way. (Beat) So I make the decision not to run. And I'm living with it. (Beat). I'm trying my best to live with it. But then the strangest thing happened.

Johnson enters. Spotlight on Johnson.

JOHNSON

(To Audience)

I have decided not to run for President in the 1968 election.

Johnson exits. Bobby smiles at the audience.

We sit on this for a moment, then Teddy enters.

BOBBY

I'm gonna run for President.

TEDDY

I figured that you would. I think that is a great idea.

BOBBY

You're right.

TEDDY

Aren't I always?

Teddy shakes his hand, then exits.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

Next, I tell Ethel.

Ethel enters.

ETHEL

I think it's a great idea.

BOBBY

(To Ethel)

You do?

She kisses his cheek.

ETHEL

You're ready. You know you have what it takes. You know how much people love you, how much they need this. I'm not saying it's going to be the easiest thing in the world, but I will be here right by your side.

Beat. She starts exiting.

ETHEL

(As she's exiting)

I'm pregnant.

She turns back to him with a smirk, before she's finally gone. He stands there shocked, then grins and rubs the back of his neck.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

That makes 11 kids. The Von Trap family has nothing on the Kennedys. So I throw my hat in the ring and the response is magnetic.

Projections of Bobby riding down the street in a convertible, surrounded on all sides by the American people, light up on the screen. Bobby looks up and watches them. He is shaking hands with everyone he can. A security guard is holding his legs to make sure he's not pulled from the car. Bobby turns back to the audience.

BOBBY

Magnetic. I travel from city to city, talking with every American I can, from Detroit to the rural potato farms of Idaho.

The projections disappear.

BOBBY

There is one city that stands out above all the others. Indianapolis. We visit Indianapolis in April of 1968 and as I'm getting ready to address a crowd, I'm stopped.

Mary Jo enters, holding three different clipboards.

MARY JO

You shouldn't go out there. This city is about to explode.

BOBBY

What are you talking about?

STAFF enters, holding a rotary phone with a wire trailing offscreen.

STAFF

Sir, we need to think about your safety, once everyone here finds out

BOBBY

What do you mean? Finds out what?

Beat.

STAFF

Sir, Reverend King was murdered.

Beat.

BOBBY

I have to talk to them.

MARY JO

Sir, that's impossible. Every major city in America is on fire. DC, New York, Chicago, Detroit

BOBBY

They need someone to listen to them, someone to talk them through this. Let me say something.

Staff 1 turns to Staff. They know they have no choice.

STAFF

Get him the mic.

Staff 1 exits and quickly reenters carrying a mic on a stand. Bobby faces the audience.

BOBBY

(To Mary Jo)

Do they know yet?

MARY JO

(Quietly)

No, sir.

Bobby takes a deep breath.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

“Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm only going to talk to you for just a minute or so this evening, because I have some very sad news for all of you- could you lower the signs, please? I have some very sad news for all of you, and I think, sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world; and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee. Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are Black and are tempted to fill with hatred and mistrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling.

I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King. Yeah, it's true. But to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love, a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke. Thank you very much." [JFK Library and Museum]

Beat. Then the sound of applause. Bobby nods and steps upstage. Mary Jo and Staff look at each other in awe.

MARY JO
(To audience)

Nearly every major city in America rioted that night. Except for Indianapolis. Staff 2's phone rings.

STAFF
(Answering the phone)

Bobby Kennedy 1968.... Oh, good evening Mrs. Kennedy... yes he is....yes you may. Sir?

He hands the phone to Bobby.

STAFF
Mrs. Jack Kennedy on the phone for you sir.

He takes the phone.

BOBBY
Can you give us a moment please?

Mary Jo and Staff exit.

BOBBY
Jackie. It's great to hear from you.

JACKIE
Bobby-

BOBBY
Did you hear the news about Reverend King? I just can't believe how people can be so cruel and hate people who do so much good in the world-

JACKIE
Bobby-

BOBBY

Did you go to the luncheon today with Ethel? I know they are a little cheesy, but they seemed to work for Jack when he was running

JACKIE

Bobby! That's why I'm calling. I can't do this anymore. I can't... I can't help you win this.

BOBBY

What do you mean?

JACKIE

I went to the event and I brought Caroline and John and I... there were so many people. And they swarmed all over us and there was no where for us to walk. And we were trapped and suddenly there is this loud BANG and I- I can't do this Bobby. I'm taking the kids and we are going to Paris.

BOBBY

I don't understand. What's in Paris?

She doesn't answer.

BOBBY

You are kidding me.

JACKIE

Aristotle has been very supportive through everything and he has helped take care of the kids as if they were his.

BOBBY

But they aren't his. He's not their father.

JACKIE

And neither are you.

BOBBY

It hasn't even been five years yet and you are falling into the arms of some Greek oil tycoon. Jack would be so disappointed. Jack would NEVER

JACKIE

Aristotle has been able to help me pull away from this as much as possible. I can't keep reliving this over and over. You weren't there. I have been there at every turn and I-

JACKIE

Jack DID. While we were still married so don't tell me what Jack would be disappointed in.

Beat. She sighs.

JACKIE

I'm sorry, Bobby. Truly I am. But I can't have my kids here when another Kennedy gets killed. I'm sorry

She hangs up her phone and exits. We hear dial tone for a beat until Bobby finally hangs up the phone.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

I don't blame her. How can you blame her? But....

21st Century enters, looking optimistic.
Bobby stands straighter and adjusts his tie.

BOBBY

She needed to do what she needed to do and I have to do what I have to do. And that is plow forward onto winning Nebraska and Oregon.

21st Century exits. Mary Jo and Staff push on Bobby's desk and chair. Bobby sits. Mary Jo exits and Staff hands him several manilla folders.

BOBBY

Nebraska was a walk in the park, 24 out of 25 counties going to my campaign. Oregon... was a tougher nut to crack.

Mary Jo enters as Staff is exiting.

MARY JO

You are down 5% from McCarthy.

BOBBY

(To Mary Jo)

Okay well, 5% is a lot, but it's still early and we have a lot of ground to cover. Portland hasn't been called yet.

Mary Jo exits as Staff enters.

STAFF

Sir, we have the updated numbers, you are down 12% from McCarthy.

BOBBY

(To Staff)

Okay, well that's a drop but it's still not awful. We had John Glenn endorsing us. And people love John Glenn. (Beat). People love John Glenn, right?

Staff exits. Bobby rests his head against the desk. Teddy and Ethel slowly enter. Ethel stands behind Bobby and starts to rub his shoulders. Teddy stands there awkwardly for a beat.

TEDDY

So, did you hear the news?

BOBBY

(Without looking up)

The news that I lost?

TEDDY

That might have been what I was referring to, yes.

ETHEL

Teddy, would you mind giving Bobby and I a minute, please?

Teddy nods, awkwardly pats Bobby's shoulder, and exits. Bobby sits up and takes Ethel's hands.

ETHEL

Now, I know what you are thinking.

BOBBY

The first time a Kennedy has lost a primary.

ETHEL

Is it really such a big deal? It's not like you lost the race. It's a primary.

BOBBY

It's more about what it represents, Ethel.

ETHEL

Exactly. You bleed. All humans do. You, Teddy, and even Jack, you weren't Gods. You were men, and all men used to be boys. And the American people could benefit from remembering that every once and a while. Every President of the United States: Washington, Lincoln, all the way to Johnson was once a boy.

BOBBY

What am I going to tell my father?

ETHEL

You are going to tell him that even though you may have lost the battle, the war is far from over. And if for some unknown reason, he doesn't believe in you anymore, that's okay. I'll always believe in you.

She kisses his head and exits.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

You always have to pick yourself back up. So I do and I pour my heart into the California primary. I slacked off in Oregon, thought I would win it regardless, but I learned that the second you act like you don't care, they don't care about you. I meet with union workers all around the state, including the legendary Cesar Chavez. I talk to families from San Francisco to San Diego. And it all pays off when I take California from McCarthy and Humphrey.

Ethel enters and immediately jumps into his arms for a hug. He spins her around. Mary Jo and Staff enter pushing a podium, elated.

MARY JO

Congratulations sir.

STAFF

You did it.

MARY JO

The crowd wants you to give a victory speech.

Bobby turns to Ethel.

ETHEL

Go on. Enjoy it.

Bobby walks up to the podium.

BOBBY

(To Audience)

I have absolutely no idea what I say to these kids, but I'm positive that I'm talking. I soak in all of the cheers, all of the signs, everything that I'm feeling. I did this. I did this all on my own. I try to put my feet back on the ground.

Ethel puts her hand on his shoulder. He's tethered again.

BOBBY

(To the Crowd)

- And now it's on to Washington and let's win there.

He runs his hand through his hair and steps away from the podium. The podium moves offstage by Mary Jo and Staff. Bobby goes to move downstage and bumps into 21st Century. As he looks at her, she slowly shakes her head. He looks confused. She shakes her head again and exits. He turns his attention back to the audience. Ethel stands behind him, watching him.

BOBBY

(Confused, talking slowly like he's starting to process)

So, we walk off the stage, and suddenly I'm told there some young girls blocking the exit path and we have to take the back route into the kitchen. And I'm basically being guided through the kitchen. My mind is racing from the victory. I may actually have a chance to pull this off. I could actually be the next President of the United Sta-

BANG. Spotlight on Bobby and a soft spotlight on Ethel. She drops to her knees and holds her hands like she is cradling Bobby's head.

BOBBY

(Immediately after the bang, almost continuous)

Pain. Constant, intense pain. I don't know what's happened. I have no idea how bad it is. Ethel's hands are red. Red. Gray and red. A....(he struggles to find his words) a busboy kneels down next to me.

A young man enters and kneels down next to Ethel.

BOBBY
(To the Busboy)

Is everyone else all right?

The Busboy hangs his head.

BOBBY
(To Audience)

He hands me his rosary. I ran out of time.

Projections of headlines flash across the screen.

BOBBY
“Senator Robert F. Kennedy, the brother of a murdered President, died at 1:44 a.m. today of an assassins shots... At his side-”

The projections quickly disappear.

BOBBY
I wonder what Ethel named the baby. I wonder what the baby is going to be. We wanted to be surprised, if it was a boy or a girl. (Beat) I’m never gonna know. You know, Teddy could do anything he set his mind to. He just needs to apply himself. I try to hold on. I really do. But I just want to rest.

He walks over to Ethel and puts his hands on her shoulders. He kneels down and kisses her shoulder.

20th Century enters.

BOBBY
(To 20th Century)

I just have to rest.

20th Century nods, yet quickly exits. He can’t watch. Not again. Bobby stands up.

BOBBY
I wonder what Jack’s been up to. I’m looking forward to seeing everyone.

Bobby nods at the audience then exits.
Lights go out. We sit on this for a moment
until we hear

ETHEL

No. No. No. No.

END OF PART TWO

PART THREE

Teddy stands alone at a podium, dressed in a black suit. He looks crushed, like he can't even begin to wrap his head around what has happened. We watch him take a few breaths for a moment, then:

TEDDY

On behalf of Mrs. Robert Kennedy, her children and the parents and sisters of Robert Kennedy, I want to express what we feel to those who mourn with us today in this cathedral and all around the world. Love is not an easy feeling to put into words. Nor is loyalty, or trust or joy. But he was all of these. He loved life complexity and lived it intensely. My brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life, to be remembered simply as a good and decent man who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it. As he said many times, in many parts of this nation, to those he touched and who sought to touch him: "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not."

He steps out from behind the podium.

TEDDY

(To audience)

I have never been so angry at anyone in my entire life. I have never felt more abandoned, more set up to fail, more lost. I'm the youngest of nine and suddenly I'm the one steering the ship. I'm out here with a sick father, five sisters to protect, and now thirteen surrogate children on top of my own. And I know it's selfish but I can't help thinking "how can Bobby do this to me?" I was never groomed to be the perfect Irish-American Catholic candidate. I followed by example. And now...

The podium moves offstage.

TEDDY

I try to keep both feet on the ground. Press through and focus on the country instead of anything that I could possibly be feeling. And what a time to start deflecting. President Richard Nixon, yes that's right, has started the Apollo missions with the goal of sending an American man on the moon before the Soviets..... Jack's mission. Everything personally and politically comes to a head one year later. July 18th, 1969. Everyone in the world is focused on the Apollo 11 mission. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin become the first men on the moon, ending the space race against the Soviets once and for all.

It also was the weekend celebrating the memory of Bobby one year after his death at a little cabin in Chappaquiddick.

Mary Jo and PARTYGOERS enter, carrying cups. Two partygoers roll out a TV playing the news. 20th and 21st Century enter with them. Teddy strikes up a silent conversation with 20th Century, while 21st Century dishevels his hair, loosens his tie, and takes off his suit jacket.

PARTYGOER 1

(To Mary Jo)

Poor Teddy. First Jack, now Bobby. He hasn't been the same since last year.

MARY JO

I know, it's really awful.

PARTYGOER 1

I've heard around that he has been blackout drunk at bars all the time.

MARY JO

He really needs to consider the optics.

PARTYGOER 1

(Gasping)

Do you think he is trying to run for President in '72?

MARY JO

I don't know but if he did, we all know that he would win. But he just needs to stop acting like the youngest Kennedy.

Teddy sets his eyes on Mary Jo. They make eye contact. 21st Century grabs Teddy's drink and exits. 20th Century turns his attention to the television set.

TEDDY

(He's drunk: it's unclear who he's talking to)

Mary Jo looks radiant. I haven't seen her since last June. She was crushed, I mean all the Boiler Room Girls were, but poor Mary Jo was just devastated.

Then she went to Washington to work on a senator's campaign. (Beat). I should call Joanie and check on her. See if she is warming up to bed rest.

He walks towards Mary Jo.

TEDDY

(Now he is definitely talking to the audience)

I ask her if she needs a ride home.

He walks over to her and whispers in her ear. She seems confused, maybe a bit nervous, but she still nods. He stands there swaying a bit while Mary Jo turns to Partygoer 1 and whispers in her ear.

PARTYGOER 1

How are you heading back?

MARY JO

I'll see you tomorrow.

Mary Jo and Teddy exit. Party goer goes over to the TV set. 20th Century hands her Mary Jo's purse and keys. Partygoer 1 stands there processing for a moment, before exiting. 20th Century exits with the Partygoers as they move the TV offstage. Teddy and Mary Jo reenter. They stand next to each other as if they are sitting in a car. There are sounds of crickets, maybe the running of chipmunk.

MARY JO

You can just take me to the ferry landing. You should head back to the hotel. He nods.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

We left the party at approximately 11:15.

MARY JO

(To Teddy)

Do you have the time?

He looks at his wrist.

TEDDY
(To Mary Jo)

I left my watch at the hotel.

A cop enters stage right, holding a clipboard,
like he is looking over the facts of the case.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

We weren't on the road for very long.

OFFICER
(To Audience)

At around 12:40 in the morning, Deputy Sheriff Christopher Look passed the intersection of Chappaquiddick road and Dike Road and noticed a four door sedan with a man driving and a female passenger approaching slowly past the officer's car. Once the car stopped, the officer asked the passengers for help, the car quickly sped away onto Dike Road, a gravel road off the main Chappaquiddick road. The hour from Senator Kennedy leaving the party to being spotted by Officer Look is unaccounted for.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I mistakingly took the wrong turn and headed toward a narrow bridge, in which I lost control and flew off an old bridge that had no guardrails.

Mary Jo moves to the other side of the stage
from the Officer.

MARY JO
(To Audience)

Water filled the car quickly. The doors were jammed.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I don't know how I got out of the car.

MARY JO
(To Audience)

I have no idea where Teddy went.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I made several attempts to rescue Mary Jo-

MARY JO
(To Audience)

He wasn't there. He wasn't anywhere.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

-To no avail.

MARY JO
(To Audience)

Oh my God. I'm drowning. I'm drowning.

The officer exits. 21st Century comes out for
a small moment to offer Mary Jo a stool.
Mary Jo sits.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I get my cousin Joey Gargan and my friend Paul Markham and bring them to the river.
They try their best to rescue Mary Jo, but to no avail. I just sat there thinking over and
over again "What did I do? Oh my God, what did I do. I'm never going to be President."
We head back to the mainland.

Gargan and Markham enter.

GARGAN

Teddy, you have to call this in and report this.

MARKHAM

He's right Senator. The longer that you wait, the worse that this looks for you.

TEDDY

I will as soon as I get back to the hotel.

GARGAN

Teddy, I'm serious.

TEDDY

I know. I will.

Gargan and Markham exit.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I got to my hotel room... took a bath and rested.

Then I changed into dry clothes and headed outside. I ask a stranger for the time. 2:30 in the morning. Her body was found the next morning, about six hours later. I then made a statement to the police. I try to be the upstanding Senator would be.

Joan Kennedy enters, dressed in all black.
She looks miserable.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

Joanie and I head to Mary Jo's funeral. I figured I might get more sympathy if I wear a neck brace. No one told me that if you really injured your neck, you wouldn't be able to turn your head.

He kisses Joan's hand.

JOAN
(To Audience)

I was pregnant at the time. I suffered a miscarriage before. I had a difficult pregnancy with Kara. I had a difficult pregnancy with Ted Jr. Giving birth to Patrick nearly killed me. The doctor was insistent that I should be bedridden in order to ensure the survival of the baby and of myself. Teddy was more insistent that I attend the funeral with him.
(Beat) I suffered a miscarriage a few weeks later.

She pulls her hand away and storms off.

TEDDY
(To Audience)

I decide the best course of action of action is to plead guilty to leaving the scene of an accident. My time served is suspended. I don't spend a day in jail. I know the next course of action is to save my political career. I must address the nation.

The desk rolls onstage. Teddy sits down and addresses the audience as if it were the nation. Lights up on Mary Jo.

TEDDY

"My fellow citizens: On Chappaquiddick Island, off Martha's Vineyard, I attended, on Friday evening, July 18th, a cook-out I had encouraged and helped sponsor for a devoted group of Kennedy campaign secretaries. When I left the party, around 11:15 p.m., I was accompanied by one of these girls, Miss Mary Jo Kopechne. Mary Jo was one of the most devoted members of the staff of Senator Robert Kennedy. She worked for him for four years and was broken up over his death.

For this reason, and because she was such a gentle, kind, and idealistic person, all of us tried to help her feel that she still had a home with the Kennedy family.” [JFK Library and Museum]

MARY JO

(To Audience)

Our Father, who are't in Heaven, hallow be thy name.

Mary Jo gets progressively more frantic as she speaks. A couple enter on a couch, watching his speech on their TV.

TEDDY

“Little over one mile away, the car that I was driving on an unlit road went off a narrow bridge which had no guard rails and was built on a left angle to the road. The car overturned in a deep pond and immediately filled with water. I remember thinking as the cold water rushed in around my head that I was for certain drowning. Then water entered my lungs and I actually felt the sensation of drowning. But somehow I struggled to the surface alive.”

MARY JO

(To Audience)

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, or Earth as it is in Heaven.

Mary Jo watches the couples reactions to Teddy.

TEDDY

“I made immediate and repeated efforts to save Mary Jo by diving into the strong and murky current, but succeeded only in increasing my state of utter exhaustion and alarm. My conduct and conversations during the next several hours, to the extent that I can remember them, makes no sense to me at all. I regard as indefensible the fact that I did not report the accident to the police immediately. “

MARY JO

(To Father)

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses. As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The couple do seem incredibly engaged-hanging onto every word.

TEDDY

“All kinds of scrambled thoughts- all of them confused, some of them irrational, many of them which I cannot recall, and some of which I would not have seriously entertained under normal circumstances- went through my mind during this period. They were reflected in the various inexplicable, inconsistent, and inconclusive things I said and did, including such questions as whether the girl might still be alive somewhere out in that immediate area, whether some awful course did actually hang over all the Kennedys, whether there was some justifiable reason for me to doubt what had happened and to delay my report, whether somehow the awful weight of this incredible incident might in some way pass from my shoulders. I was overcome, I’m frank to say, by a jumble of emotions: grief, fear, doubt, exhaustion, panic, confusion, and shock. In the morning, with my mind somewhat more lucid, I made an effort to call a family legal advisor, Burke Marshall, from a public telephone on the Chappaquiddick side of the ferry and then belatedly reported the accident to the Martha Vineyard police.”

MARY JO

(Screaming, terrified)

Ted!

The light on Mary Jo fades away, leaving her in the dark again.

TEDDY

“These events, the publicity, innuendo, and whispers which have surrounded them and my admission of guilt this morning raises the question in my mind of whether my standing among the people of my state has been impaired that I should resign my seat in the United States Senate. If at any time the citizens of Massachusetts should lack confidence in their Senator’s character, or his ability- with or without justification- he could not in my opinion adequately perform his duties and should not continue in office. And so I ask you tonight, the people of Massachusetts, to think this through with me. In facing this decision, I seek your prayers- for this is a decision that I will have finally to make on my own. I pray that I can have the courage to make the right decision. Whatever is decided, whatever the future holds for me, I hope that I shall have- be able to put this most recent tragedy behind me and make some further contribution to our state and mankind- whether it be in public or private life. Thank you and good night.”

The couple and couch exit offstage. Teddy stands from his desk and the desk exits.

TEDDY

(To audience)

The results were overwhelming. Ted Kennedy was to remain the United States Senator for Massachusetts. I try to do the best I possibly can to make my father proud. He passed away shortly after this...incident.

While I devastated to lose my father who is so beloved by his entire family, I can't help to breathe a sigh of relief. The cold feeling on the back of my neck was gone. I could finally warm up. So I try my best to move on like I was told to. I get back to work fighting for what mattered to me. Most importantly, healthcare. The American Disabilities Act.

He moves over to the podium. His Senator persona is on.

TEDDY

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities, to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities, to ensure that the Federal Government plays a central role in enforcing the standards established in this chapter on behalf of individuals with disabilities, and to invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.

The persona turns off.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

This Act was incredibly personal to me. My son was diagnosed with a malignant tumor in his leg. His survival was certain, thank God, but the doctors decided that the best course of action would be to amputate above the knee. We were incredibly lucky that we had the funds and insurance to cover this tragedy, but I couldn't help thinking about all of the families who couldn't afford insurance and whose lives would be ruined if something like this were to occur. I decided that couldn't happen. Not in this country. I let the seventies go by, focusing on fight after fight after fight after fight. Then 1980 rolled around.

Joan enters, a flask in her hand. Teddy turns to his wife.

TEDDY

Joanie? How would you like to live in the White House?

Joanie looks over at Mary Jo.

JOAN

Are you sure the people want that.

TEDDY

The American people have moved on.

JOAN

No, Ted. You've moved on.

Joan exits.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

Certainly, my mother will be by my side.

Rose enters, furious once more.

ROSE

No.

TEDDY

Mother-

ROSE

I can't lose another son. I only have one left, Edward. You can't do this to me.

TEDDY

A Presidential election isn't a death sentence, Mother.

ROSE

For a Kennedy, it is.

TEDDY

Mother, I can promise you that nothing bad is going to happen to me.

ROSE

Bobby couldn't promise me that.

TEDDY

I know.

ROSE

Jack couldn't promise me that.

TEDDY

Neither could Joe Jr or Kick. But I can make you that promise.

Rose sighs.

ROSE

You do realize that you are going up against an incumbent President, right?

TEDDY

I know. But nobody likes Jimmy Carter anyway.

Rose nods.

ROSE

I'll start making plans for another tea party.

Rose exits.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

The campaign is bitter. It takes a lot of convincing to get congressional members to endorse me publicly to their constituents. I'm going up against an incumbent President in my own party, an almost impossible fight to win. It also doesn't help that Carter, though a pushover in many ways, is a genuinely likable person. The debate showed just how much contempt Carter and I have for each other. I wasn't doing...great in the polls. But I wasn't doing bad. (Beat) But I wasn't doing great. And then...

He sighs.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

And then Roger Mudd and Sixty Minutes happened.

Roger Mudd enters, bringing with him the same set-up Walter Cronkite had. Teddy sits down, prepared for any question.

MUDD

Mr, Senator, why do you want to be President?

Except that one.

TEDDY

“Well, I'm...uh...were I to make to-to make the announcement to-to run, the reasons that I would run is because I have a great belief in this country that it has more natural resources than any nation in the world, has the greatest educated population in the world, the greatest technology of any nation in the world, the greatest capacity for innovation in the world, and the greatest political system in the world.

And yet, uh, I see at, uh, the current time, most of the industrial nations in the world are exceeding us in terms of productivity, are doing better than us in terms of meeting the problems of inflation, that their dealing with their problems of energy and their problems of unemployment. It just seems to me that this nation can cope and deal with it's problems as it has in the past. We're facing complex issues and problems in this nation at this time, but we have faced similar issues at other times. And the energies and resourcefulness of this nation, I think, should be focused on these problems in a way that brings a sense of restoration, uh, in this country by it's people to- in dealing with the issues that we face, primarily the economy, inflation and the problems of energy and I would uh, basically feel, uh, that it's imperative to this country to either move forward, that it can't stand still, or otherwise it moves backward." [Sixty Minutes]

MUDD

What would you do differently from Carter?

TEDDY

Well, in which particular areas?

He looks at Mary Jo. She watches him. He becomes unnerved.

MUDD

Well, just take uh-uh the question of leadership.

TEDDY

Well, it's on uh on uh on, you know you have to come to grips with the different issues.

MUDD

(To Audience)

I just wanted to know why he wanted to be President, and he couldn't answer that.

Teddy stands and Mudd and his set-up exit.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

What a weird question to not know the answer to. I guess I really wanted to be President because that's what Kennedy men wanted to be. The American people came to the conclusion that if I didn't know why, they wouldn't give me the vote. And I wasn't too upset, to be quite honest. I liked where I was in the Senate. So I lost the Presidency and, quickly after, I made the heartbreaking choice to lose something else.

Joan storms in, semi-drunk and fully furious.

Mary Jo exits finally at peace.

JOAN

Teddy, after all I've done for you, you are just going to throw me away? After everything that I have stood by you for?

TEDDY

Joanie, you aren't happy. And you not being happy makes our children unhappy. And I need to do what is best for all of us, not just me and not just you.

JOAN

No. No no no no. I know what this is about. This is about '84. Or '88. Or fucking '92, isn't it? I have made countless speeches for you, Teddy. I have gone to every event, every debate, in every dirtbag state, all for you. And suddenly, because I'm not the perfect Kennedy or as beloved to your mother as Jackie or Ethel, you think that you would have a better shot without me. Is that what this is about?

TEDDY

This is about us, Joan! Not them, not the press, not the public, us! Believe it or not, I can think about my personal life as well as my political one. So stop trying to make excuses for your failures.

She walks up close to him and looks him straight in the eye, unwavering.

JOAN

(Voice low)

I could say the same to you.

She exits offstage. Teddy sighs, straightens his suit, and turns to the face the audience.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

The news comes out the day after the release of the Iranian Hostages and the Inauguration of Ronald Reagan... I can't watch.

He exits. Joanie enters, wearing a black coat and veil, as if she is mourning the death of the something. She carries a piece of paper and reads from it. As she speaks, 20th Century slowly crosses the stage behind her.

JOAN

Finally, I would like to say that I share with my husband a strong sense of dedication to our children, who have been the greatest joy of both our lives. Their well-being, happiness and fulfillment will be our common bond. Divorce cannot alter that, nor can it alter the love and affection I have had and always will have for members of the Kennedy family.

She folds the piece of paper and tucks it in her coat pocket as she exits. Teddy reenters after a beat, crossing an exiting 20th Century.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

It was for the best honestly. She had a lot of demons that I wasn't around to deal with and I wasn't the best husband to her. And she was right, she was always there for me when I needed her to. Sometimes these things just don't work out even when you really want them to. I'm just glad that Pat got a divorce before me to soften the blow for my mother. I do what I always do. I mourn. I pray. Then I go back to work.

Two Senators, Biden and Thurmond, roll out three chairs and sit. Teddy walks over and sits next to Biden. Anita enters, facing the audience, reading from a piece of paper in her hand.

ANITA

"Mr. Chairman, Senator Thurmond, members of the committee: My name is Anita F. Hill and I am a professor at the University at Oklahoma. During my period at the Department of Education, my working relationship with Judge Thomas was positive. I had a good deal of responsibility and independence. I thought he respected my work and that he trusted my judgement. After approximately three months of working there, he asked me to go out socially with him. " [US Congress]

Biden and Thurmond turn to glance at Kennedy. He stays silent. He stays stone-faced.

ANITA

"I thought that by saying no and explaining my reasons my employer would abandon his social suggestion. However, to my regret, in the following few weeks, he continued to ask me out on several occasions. He pressed me to justify my reasons for saying no to him. My working relationship became even more strained when Judge Thomas began to use work situations to discuss sex. His conversations were very vivid.

He spoke about acts that he had seen in pornographic films involving such matters as women having sex with animals and films showing group sex or rape scenes. He talked about pornographic materials depicting individuals with large penises or large breasts involved in various sex acts. On several occasions, Thomas told me graphically of his own sexual prowess. “

They look to Kennedy again. He says nothing. Clarence Thomas enters on the opposite side of the stage, reading from the paper in his hand.

CLARENCE

“Senator, I would like to start by saying unequivocally, uncategorically, that I deny each and every single allegation against me today that suggested in any way that I had conversations of a sexual nature or about pornographic material with Anita Hill, that I ever attempted to date her, that I ever had any personal sexual interest in her, or that I in any way harassed her. “

Kennedy remains quiet. Biden goes to speak, then changes his mind and gives the cue to Judge Thomas to proceed.

CLARENCE

“And from my standpoint as a black American, as far as I’m concerned, it is a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks who in any way deign to think for themselves, to do for themselves, to have different ideas, and it is a message that unless you cow-tow to an old order, this is what will happen to you. You will be lynched, destroyed, caricatured by a committee to the U.S.- U.S. Senate, rather than hung by from a tree. “

Biden turns to Kennedy, waiting for the talkative man to finally speak.

BIDEN

Senator Kennedy?

Beat.

BIDEN

Ted?

TEDDY

(Taking in a sigh)

“Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Some people just don’t want to believe you. You have to understand that.

That is what the fact of the matter is, and you may be detecting some of that in the course of the hearing and the questions this afternoon. But I hope, Mr. Chairman, that after this panel we are not going to hear any more comments, unworthy, unsubstantiated comments, unjustified comments about Professor Hill being a tool of the various advocacy groups, after we heard from Ellen Wells and John Carr and Joe Paul, all of whom have volunteered to come forward after they heard about this in the newspapers- comments about individual groups and staffers trying to persuade her. I hope we are not going to hear more about politics. You can imagine what Professor Hill would have gone through if she had been a Democrat, and we hear this afternoon she was a Bork supporter; worked in a Republican Administration. I hope we are not going to hear a lot more comments about politics. “

BIDEN

Senator-

TEDDY

“I hope we are not going to hear a lot more comments about fantasy stories picked out of books and law cases, after we have heard from this distinguished panel, or how there have been attempts in the eleventh hour to derail this nomination. I hope we can clear this room of the dirt and innuendo, that has been suggested about Professor Hill as well, about over-the-transom information, about faxes, about proclivities. We heard a good deal about character assassination on Professor Hill. They are unworthy. They are unworthy. “

THURMOND

Senator-

TEDDY

“And quite frankly, I hope we are not going to hear a lot more about racism as we consider this nominee. The fact is that these points of sexual harassment are made by an Afro-American against an Afro-American. The issue isn't discrimination and racism. It is about sexual harassment, and I hope we can keep our eye on that particular issue. “

CLARENCE

Senator Kennedy-

TEDDY

“I want to thank the panel for their testimony, for their response to questions. I found it enormously enlightening. I think the members of the Senate will.

It is very clear that your presence here, the comments you made, the way you responded to questions, that you are doing this as matter of responsibility and justice-justice to an individual who has had the courage in very difficult and trying times, and everyone who has seen the attempts to go after her over the period of the last three days has to understand her hesitancy, but your presence here I think has been enormously helpful to this committee and to the Senate, and I thank you for responding.”

Beat.

ANITA

Thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Senator Kennedy stands and Anita and Clarence exit. Biden and Thurmond rolls the chairs offstage.

Vicki enters, looking over contents on a clipboard. As she walks, she bumps into him.

VICTORIA

My apologies, Sir.

TEDDY

That's quite alright, miss- Victoria?

VICTORIA

Excuse me?

TEDDY

Victoria Reggie. We met in Hyannis Port a few years back.

The recognition soon become apparent on her face.

VICTORIA

Why, yes. My apologies, Senator. It's good to see you again.

TEDDY

What is with all of the formalities? I thought we had become friends.

VICTORIA

(Amused)

Well, I didn't know if it was appropriate to refer to you as Edward in the Senate Office building.

TEDDY

Well, you are right. You can't. I go by Teddy.

VICTORIA

Teddy. Right.

TEDDY

Are you lost? Do you need help finding somewhere?

VICTORIA

I would actually really appreciate that.

TEDDY

Of course. Do you mind giving me one moment?

She nods, then heads offstage. Teddy turns to the audience.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

I'm gonna marry that beautiful woman.

He follows her offstage. John Jr enters. He turns to us, seemingly confused by his own emotions.

JOHN JR.

(To Audience)

My father was a great man, loved by almost everyone who knew him. He adored his family, he adored his job, he adored the American people, but most of all he adored me and my sister Caroline. At least, that is what I have been told my entire life. I have very little recollection of the man or of my time living in the White House. If I had to accurately describe my father solely based on memory and not from photographs I have been exposed to throughout the years, he was ten feet tall, voice as deep as the bottom keys of the piano, and could throw me up as high as Mount Everest. But instead, others jog my memory for me and tell me stories they remember of me, even from people who were just meeting me.

The projection of John Jr saluting his father's casket appears again.

JOHN JR.

(To Audience)

I wish that I could tell you that I remember this moment and I wasn't relying on the image to recollect. But I don't.

He shrugs. He exits. Teddy reenters.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

One thing I never wanted to do as the leader of my family is to deliver the eulogies of those who departed us. The first loss was the matriarch, Rose at 105 years old.

He goes up to the podium again, lacking that enthusiasm that he had in 1980.

TEDDY

"Mother always thought her children should strive for the highest place. But inside the family, with love and laughter, she knew how to put each of us in our place. She was ambitious not only for our success, but for our souls. From our youth, we remember how, with effortless ease, she could bandage a cut, dry a tear, recite from memory "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," and spot a hole in a sock from a hundred yards away. She sustained us in the saddest times- by her faith in God, which was the greatest gift she gave us- and by the strength of her character, which was a combination of the sweetest gentleness and most tempered steel. One spring some years ago, when she was in her 90s, I took her on Good Friday to the three hours devotion. But the nurse warned me in advance that Mother had to eat, so we would have to leave after only an hour. At one o'clock, I whispered: "Mother, it's time to go." She looked at me and sternly said "Not yet, Teddy." So I asked a second time- and her answer came in a tone that was distinctly not a whisper: "Teddy, the service is not over yet." By now, the congregation was discreetly staring at us and clearly thinking, " See, he's trying to get out in church early, but that sainted mother of his- isn't she wonderful?- Just won't let him." [Eulogies.com]

He steps away from the podium to gather his breath.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

And then shortly after, I was tasked with saying goodbye to my sister-in-law Jackie, who died too soon of cancer in her sixties.

He heads back to the podium. A picture of Jackie is projected.

TEDDY

“She was always there for our family in her special way. She was a blessing to us and to the nation- and a lesson to the world on how to do things right, how to be a mother, how to appreciate history, how to be courageous. No one else looked like her, spoke like her, wrote like her, or was so original in the way she did things. No one we ever knew had a better sense of self. No one ever gave more meaning to the title of “First Lady.” The nation’s capital city looks as it does because of her. She saved Lafayette Square and Pennsylvania Avenue. The National Cultural Center was her cause before it was The Kennedy Center. Jackie brought the greatest artists to the White House, and brought the arts to center of national attention. Today, in large part because of her inspiration and vision, the arts are an abiding part of national policy. And then, during those four endless days in 1963, she held us together as a family and as a country. In large part because of her, we could grieve and then go on. She lifted us up, and in the doubt and darkness, she gave her fellow citizens back their pride as Americans. She was then 34 years old. At the end, she worried more about us than herself. She let her family and friends know she was thinking of them. How cherished were those wonderful notes in her distinctive hand on her powder blue stationary. She graced our history. And for those of us who knew and loved her- she graced our lives. “ [Eulogies.com]

John Jr enters. He comes over to his uncle,
who wraps him in a hug.

JOHN JR.

Thank you, Uncle Teddy. She would have loved that.

TEDDY

I meant every word of it, you know. Your mother was an amazing woman.

JOHN JR.

At least she’ll be with Dad again.

TEDDY

She wouldn’t want it any other way.

John Jr pulls a cigarette out of his shirt
pocket. Teddy takes it away from him.

JOHN JR.

Uncle Teddy, come on.

TEDDY

Just like your mother.

JOHN JR.

What? Mom never smoked.

TEDDY

Your mother never wanted you to *know* she smoked.

JOHN JR.

Sarah likes it.

TEDDY

Sarah who? Weren't you with Cindy?

JOHN JR.

Yeah like a few months ago. Sarah Jessica Parker, Uncle Teddy.

Beat.

JOHN JR.

She was in Footloose.

Beat.

JOHN JR.

She used to date Robert Downey Jr, Uncle Teddy, come on. You don't read the tabloids?

TEDDY

I read the Times, John. Your Aunt Patricia is the one obsessed with Hollywood, not me.

John Jr claps his uncle on the arm and exits
offstage.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

Just like his parents. Caroline was adored by all that knew her, but John was the one who everyone knew was destined for greater things. Both his mother and his father saw a life of politics for their son, even if Jack only knew his son as a little boy twirling around and waving his arms around his head like a little helicopter. But he didn't want to follow the path just laid out for him, where's the fun in that? He went a different way.

John enters, charming and charismatic as he
addresses the audience.

JOHN JR.

(To Audience)

It mixes politics, a necessity in American society, with the flare and glamour of the entertainment industry, bringing the two driving forces of American culture together. Ladies and Gentleman, this is George.

The projection of the first cover of George appears behind them. John Jr freezes in place.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

A super model in a powdered wig on the cover of a magazine reporting on politics. This is what he sent out into the world for people to consume. Young people were confused. Old people were confused. But that was the type of person John was. He heard your advice, but that didn't mean he would take it.

John Jr unfreezes. The projection disappears behind them. He turns to Teddy.

JOHN JR.

Last chance, Uncle Teddy. You sure you don't want to come to flight school with me tomorrow.

TEDDY

I don't have the best track record with planes, John. Besides, I don't think that Vicki and Kara would appreciate that.

JOHN JR.

Vicki, I think I can convince. Kara may be a different story.

TEDDY

I promised your mother that I would try to convince you to not go out and get your pilots license. How does your wife feels about it?

JOHN JR.

Carolyn... isn't thrilled, but she is supportive. Why can't you be?

TEDDY

(Sighing)

I promised your mother-

JOHN JR.

And you did that, you tried. Don't worry, I'll have my pilots license in no time.

John Jr exits with a confident grin on his face.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

Always following his own path, always a free spirit, always putting himself in the face of danger. And in the summer of 1999, we lost another Kennedy to the 20th Century. John, his wife Carolyn, and his sister in law Lauren were on a small plane piloted by newly licensed John when, in a swarm of fog, John became disoriented and the plane crashed into the ocean. They were found three days later and I was burdened with the task of writing another eulogy, this time for a kid I considered one of my own.

Teddy returns back to the podium at the end of the stage as John Jr crosses the stage behind him, where his father and 20th Century wait for him.

TEDDY

“Once, when they asked John what he would do if he went into politics and was elected President, he said, “I guess the first thing is call up Uncle Teddy and gloat.” I loved that. It was so like his father. “ [JFK Library and Museum]

Beat. He starts to choke up, gives himself the moment, then regains his composure.

TEDDY

“John had amazing grace. He accepted who he was, but he cared more about what he could and should become. He saw things that could be lost in the glare of the spotlight. And he could laugh at the absurdity of too much pomp and circumstance. He thought politics should be an integral part of our popular culture, and that popular culture should be an integral part of politics. He transformed that belief into the creation of “George.” John shaped and honed a fresh, often irreverent journal. His new political magazine attracted a new generation, many of whom had never read about politics before. “

21st Century stands behind Teddy, dressed in all black, mourning what could have been.

TEDDY

(Laughing sadly)

“John brought this same playful wit to other aspects of his life. He campaigned for me during my 1994 election and always caused a stir when he arrived in Massachusetts. Before one his trips to Boston, John told the campaign he was bringing along a companion, but would need only one hotel room.

Interested, but discreet, a senior campaign worker picked John up at the airport and prepared to handle any media barrage that might accompany John's arrival with his mystery companion. John landed with the companion all right- an enormous German Shepard dog named Sam he had just rescued from the pound. He loved to talk about the expression on the campaign worker's face and the reaction of the clerk at the Charles Hotel when John and Sam checked in. I think now not only of these wonderful adventures, but of the kind of person John was. He was the son who quietly gave extraordinary time and ideas to the Institute of Politics at Harvard that bears his father's name. He brought to the institute his distinctive insight that politics could have a broader appeal, that it was not just about elections, but about the larger forces that shape our whole society. "

21st Century exits. Victoria comes up to him as he steps back from the podium and kisses his cheek.

VICTORIA

You always know what to say.

He takes her hand and kisses it. They sit in that moment for a minute, then;

TEDDY

I should get back to work.

21st Century hands him a landline He picks up the receiver. A woman appears on the other end of the stage, holding a landline.

TEDDY

(Into the phone)

Hello? Mrs. McGinty?

MRS. MCGINTY

Yes?

TEDDY

This is Senator Ted Kennedy. I know you have had better days, but I just wanted to reach out and say I am so sorry for your husbands loss in September and I wanted see if there is anything I could do to reach out.

MRS. MCGINTY

Honestly, Senator, I appreciate all Congress is doing to help us retrieve aid, but they are asking for so much documentation I am not capable of retrieving right now. I'm a single mom with two kids. I can barely get out of bed in the morning. I'm traumatized; my kids are traumatized. Every one of you wants something from me. But you're making it too hard.

TEDDY

Mrs. McGinty, I am so sorry this is happening to you. I will do everything in my power to make this process easier. I know what it is like to lose a family member and I wouldn't wish that on anyone. I want you to call me if there is anything I can do to help, okay?

MRS. MCGINTY

Thank you, Senator.

He hangs up and she exits offstage. An aide rushes in and Teddy hands him the phone.

TEDDY

I don't want to ever hear that Mrs. McGinty or one of the other families has this problem. Fix it!

The aide nods and rushes off. Teddy faces the audience.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

If I could sum up my forty seven year career as a Senator in one word, I would pick fight. I fight and I fight and I fight for decades. Forty seven years in the senate of fighting for human rights, healthcare, education, women, minorities. I try to finish what everyone else in my family had started all of those years ago. I even try to fight for people and issues they never even thought to fight for. They don't call me the Lion of the Senate for nothing. I soon come to realize that when your time has come to pass the torch to the next generation, don't fight it. They know what is best.

He steps back up to the podium, this time with a sense of optimism.

TEDDY

I feel change in the air.

Beat.

TEDDY

“Every time I’ve been asked over the past year who I would support in the Democratic Primary, my answer has always been the same: I’ll support the candidate who inspires me, who inspires all of us, who can lift our vision and summon our hopes and renew our belief that our country’s best days are still to come. I’ve found that candidate. And it looks to me like you have too. I am proud to stand here today and offer my help, my voice, my energy and my commitment to make Barack Obama the next President of the United States. “ [JFK Library and Museum]

Future President Barack Obama enters,
holding hands with his wife, Michelle.

TEDDY

“I remember another such time, in the 1960s, when I came to the Senate at the age of 30. We had a new president who inspired the nation,, especially the young, to seek a new frontier. Those inspired young people marched, sat in at lunch counters, protested the war in Vietnam and served honorably in that war even when they opposed it. They realized that when they asked what they could do for their country, they could change the world. I sense the same kind of yearning today, the same kind of hunger to move on and move America forward. I see it not just in young people, but in all our people. And in Barack Obama, I see not just the audacity, but the possibility of hope for the America that is yet to be. I have seen him in the Senate. He will keep us strong and defend the nation against real threats of terrorism and proliferation. So let us reject the counsels of doubt and calculation. Let us remember that when Franklin Roosevelt envisioned Social Security, he didn’t decide-no, it was too ambitious, too big a dream, too hard. When John Kennedy thought of going to the moon, he didn’t say no, it was too far, maybe we couldn’t get there and shouldn’t even try. My friends, I ask you to join in this historic journey- to have the courage to choose change. It is time again for a new generation of leadership. It is time now for Barack Obama. “

Everything freezes. The crowd stops
cheering. President Obama and Michelle
freeze mid wave.

TEDDY

(To Audience)

And then the news came. Malignant Glioma. The prognosis was... well, it wasn’t good. They told me it wasn’t operable. That I had to just wait for the career to run it’s course. I remember how sick Jack was growing up. Many doctors didn’t think that he would live to adulthood, that he couldn’t be in the military and serve his country. I always admired the way Jack stared at the face of insurmountable odds and pulled through with determination. So I do what I always do, I fight.

Michelle and Barack exit. The projection of the crowd disappears.

TEDDY

I try everything I can. Experimental surgeries, chemo-therapy, but I never stopped working. I never stopped fighting for my constituents. I loved my job.. I lived a long life. That's more than I can say for a lot of my family. Of course I have my regrets, all good men do. But I'm proud of all the things that I accomplished in this lifetime, and for the things I didn't, I'm glad I'll finally have a chance to repay my debts. There's so much more I could have done, but maybe I wasn't the one meant to do the work. I.. I've spoken for so many people throughout my life. I've given so many eulogies, and now...

Somber music starts to play. Barack Obama enters, stepping back up to the podium.

OBAMA

"Today we say goodbye to the youngest child of Rose and Joseph Kennedy. The world will long remember their son Edward as the heir to a weighty legacy; a champion for those who had none; the soul of the Democratic Party; and the lion of the U.S. Senate- a man whose name graces nearly one thousand laws, and who penned more than three hundred himself." [Eulogies.com]

Teddy watches Obama with a proud smile on his face, oftentimes looking down as if embarrassed by all the attention.

OBAMA

"We can still hear his voice bellowing through the Senate chamber, face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature, in support of health care or workers' rights or civil rights. And yet, while his causes became deeply personal, his disagreements never did. While he was seen by his fiercest critics as a partisan lightning rod, that is not the prism through which Ted Kennedy saw the world, nor was it the prism through which his colleagues saw him. He was a product of an age when the joy and nobility of politics prevented differences of party and philosophy from becoming barriers to cooperation and mutual respect- a time when adversaries still saw each other as patriots. In the days after September 11th, Teddy made it a point to personally call each one of the 177 families of this state who lost a loved one in the attack. But he didn't stop there. He kept calling and checking up on them. He fought through red tape to get them assistance and grief counseling.

He invited them sailing, played with their children, and would write each family a letter whenever the anniversary of that terrible day came along. To one widow, he wrote the following: “As you know so well, the passage of time never really heals the tragic memory of such a great loss, but we carry on, because we have to, because our loved one would want us to, and because there is still light to guide us in the world from the love they gave us.””

Obama takes a beat, almost composing himself.

OBAMA

We carry on.

Teddy exits off-screen, passing 21st Century as she enters. She turns to the audience.

21ST CENTURY

The only Kennedy man to live to see the new millennium. One of four Kennedy children who died after a long and eventful life.

A picture of Eunice appears behind her.

21ST CENTURY

Eunice Kennedy Shriver died fourteen days before her brother on August 11th, 2009 at the age of 88. Won the Presidential Medal of Freedom for founding the Special Olympics in 1984.

The picture of Eunice fades away to a picture of Patricia.

21ST CENTURY

Patricia Kennedy Lawford died on September 17th, 2006 at the age of 82. Founded the National Committee for the Literary Arts and worked closely with the JFK Library and Museum and the National Center for Addiction.

The picture of Patricia changes to a picture of Jean.

21ST CENTURY

Jean Kennedy Smith died on June 17th, 2020 at the age of 92. Served as the Ambassador to Ireland under President Clinton from 1993-1998.

The picture of Jean transforms into a picture of Joseph Jr. As she speaks, a collection of pictures of the Kennedy family appears and disappears.

21ST CENTURY

A family of civil servants that fought for the poor and the oppressed. Always fought for the right thing to do, or what they believed at the time was the right thing to do. Fought for their country, ran their country, loved their country as much as they loved each other. In some cases, more than they loved each other. They were by no means perfect and oftentimes found themselves towing the line to the wrong side of history. But they course corrected and relied on those leading the charge to guide their way. Their children became politicians, journalist, environmental advocates, continuing the Kennedy's call to serve. They were more white savior at times than allies, but their hearts were always in the right place. Every story of freedom from the 1900s had a supporting character with the same last name.

21st Century steps back to watch with the audience as Jack enters and stands centerstage. As he speaks, she subtly makes her way offstage.

JACK

“The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds. Those who came before us made certain that this country rode the first waves of the industrial revolutions, the first waves of modern invention, and the first waves of nuclear power, and this generation does not intend to founder in the backwash of the coming age of space. We mean to be a part of it- we mean to lead it. For the eyes of the world now look into space, to the moon and the planets beyond, and we have vowed that we shall not see it governed by a hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner of freedom and peace. We have vowed that we shall not see space filled with weapons of mass destruction, but with instruments of knowledge and understanding.” [JFK Library and Museum]

Bobby enters stage right and stands next to Jack. They do not acknowledge each other.

BOBBY

“This spirit of honest confrontation is what America needs today. It has been missing all too often in the recent years and it is one of the reasons that I run for President of the United States. For we as a people, we as a people, are strong enough, we are brave enough to be told the truth of where we stand. This country needs honesty and candor in it's political life and from the President of the United States.” [JFK Library and Musuem]

Teddy enters stage left and stands next to Jack.

TEDDY

“I am asking you to renew our commitment to a fair and lasting prosperity that can put America back to work. Our commitment has been, since the days of Andrew Jackson, to all those he called humble members of society- the farmers, mechanics, and laborers. On this foundation we have defined our values, refined our policies, and refreshed our faith.”
[JFK Library and Museum]

JACK

“We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.”

BOBBY

“And if we seem powerless to stop this growing division between Americans, who at least confront one another, there are millions more living in the hidden places, whose names and faces are completely unknown- but I have seen these other Americans- I have seen children in Mississippi starving, their bodies so crippled from hunger and their minds have been so destroyed for their whole life that they will have no future.”

TEDDY

“Let us pledge that we will never misuse unemployment, high interest rates, and human misery as false weapons against inflation. Let us pledge that employment will be the first priority of our economic policy. Let us pledge that there will be security for all those who are now at work, and let us pledge that there will be jobs for all who are out of work; and we will not compromise on the issues of jobs.”

JACK

“We have had our failures, but so have others, even if they do not admit them. And they may be less public.”

BOBBY

“I think we here in this country, with the unselfish spirit that exists in the United States of America, I think we can do better here also.”

TEDDY

“Let this- let this be our commitment: Whatever sacrifices must be made will be shared and shared fairly. And let this be our confidence: at the end of our journey and always before us shines that ideal of liberty and justice for all.”

JACK

“Well, space is there, and we’re going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God’s blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked.”

BOBBY

“I don’t want to be part of a government, I don’t want to be part of the United States, I don’t want to be part of the American people, and have them write of us as they wrote of Rome: “They made a desert and they called it peace.””

TEDDY

“For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die.”

They all finally turn and look at each other
and Jack claps both of his brothers on the
shoulders. They smile.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.