

## **The Third Ascent** **By Frank Moher**

Note: This play is written for six actors.

HANK is Stimson in his 20s; HENRY is Stimson in his 50s; STIMSON is Stimson in his 80s.

TOM is Thomas at age 12; TOMMY is Thomas at 42; THOMAS is Thomas in his 70s.

The actor playing STIMSON plays only that one role. The actors playing HANK, HENRY, TOM, TOMMY and THOMAS also play all the other roles in the play.

The first ascent takes place in 1891, the second in 1921, and the third sometime after the bombing of Hiroshima.

Ideally, the play will be done with a cast of aboriginal, Asian, and white actors, with colour-blind casting (ie., aboriginal actors play white and Asian characters, etc.) A Japanese child should play the role of the Japanese boy.

### ACT ONE

(A three level set. These levels can be used horizontally to represent Stimson's three ascents of Chief Mountain at three different periods in his life, or they can be used vertically to indicate movement up the mountain.

In the dark, percussion.

Then, movement on all three levels -- TOM and HANK at the top, TOMMY and HENRY at middle, THOMAS and STIMSON at stage level. Ropes and climbing gear are hauled on, backpacks removed, binoculars called into play.)

Mr. Stimson!

TOM

Hey Stimson!

TOMMY

Over here Tom!

HANK

Put your pack by that boulder there. We won't go any farther tonight.

THOMAS

Is there any way round there?

TOMMY

Try pulling it up! HANK

Why is the last part the hardest? STIMSON

I shouldn't have come here. I don't know why I did. HENRY

Mr. Stimson. TOM

Hey, Stimson! TOMMY

Because we're a couple of old farts, Henry. That's why. THOMAS

Altogether now -- pull! HANK

Is this your idea of a stroll? STIMSON

Pretty big mountain, eh Stimson? TOMMY

Pretty big mountain. Gets bigger every year. THOMAS  
(The upper levels clear. STIMSON and THOMAS remain, STIMSON straggling behind.)

Lord! I am too old for this! STIMSON  
(Winded.)

Buck up, Stimson. You're just used to people carrying your bags for you. THOMAS

No one carries my bags for me, Tommy. STIMSON  
(Sitting.)

Bullshit. I just carried this. THOMAS  
(He puts STIMSON's pack down.)

We'll go round the east side tomorrow. That way no one can see us.

Is it really so awful, Tommy? STIMSON

What? THOMAS

Climbing the mountain. STIMSON

I don't say it's awful. THOMAS

(He scans the mountain.)

I just say we're not supposed to do it. (Light change. STIMSON steps forward.)

STIMSON  
The decision to bomb Hiroshima was almost totally mine. Or rather the decision not to bomb Kyoto was mine. I was offered a list of four potential targets by General Groves: Kokura, Hiroshima, Niigata and Kyoto. Kyoto was the choice of the military because they supposed its population of intellectuals would then put pressure on the Japanese government to end the war. But I said no.

It seemed to me that Kyoto, with its great history and its religious significance for the Japanese, was an inappropriate target for the atom bomb. I had visited the city as Governor-General of the Phillipines, and I had liked it very much. It also occurred to me that while the people of Hiroshima might not be supremely well educated, still, they could not misunderstand the importance of our discovery. Nobody could.

I did not mention this fact to General Groves. I did not suppose he would appreciate it. (Laughter. The Yale University Law School dorms, 1884. HANK is with three of his law school mates: GULLIVER, SUTTON and WESKER, and a professor, DR. POINDEXTER. They drink brandy.)

And then what will you do, Stimson? GULLIVER

Jump off the top! SUTTON

What will you do when you get to the top of this mountain, Stimson? Commune with the gods? WESKER

The view will be rather impressive, I suppose. HANK  
(His CLASSMATES find this very funny.)

SUTTON

(Laughing wildly.)

The view -- ! The view -- ! The view will be rather -- impressive!

(He laughs.)

GULLIVER

If he's still alive to see it.

DR. POINDEXTER

(Raising his brandy.)

Hear hear, Stimson!

WESKER

To Henry Stimson. Our little mountain climber.

GULLIVER

To Hank. The things you don't find out about people!

(They toast him. HANK rises angrily.)

HANK

You really are a stupid lot of buggers, did you know that?

GULLIVER

Ohh.

SUTTON

Ohhhhhhh.

WESKER

Did you hear that, Dr. Poindexter? He called us a stupid lot of buggers.

HANK

Chief Mountain happens to be a very sacred place to the Indians of the area. And climbing it happens to be a test of strength.

GULLIVER

(Indian caricature.)

Ugh.

SUTTON

Me heap big impressed.

HANK

And if I ever get to the top -- if I get to the top -- I will have accomplished a lot more than any of you ponces, lounging about Yale law school and drinking your glasses of port!

WESKER

Brandy.

HANK

Brandy!

SUTTON

We really must make a drinker out of Stimson.

GULLIVER

Oh come now Stimson, we're only having fun. We're really very impressed with your exploits, and we wish you nothing but a successful climb. Isn't that right, gentlemen?

SUTTON, WESKER and DR. POINDEXTER

Hear hear. Hear hear.

(SUTTON and WESKER break up laughing.)

GULLIVER

Dr. Poindexter. Would you care to propose a toast?

DR. POINDEXTER

(Rising.)

To Stimson. Our most courageous student. May he be safe on his travels through the Indian territories. And may he return, his strength well-proved, to guide our young land farther down the road to justice and prosperity. And so may you all.

GULLIVER, SUTTON, WESKER and HANK

Hear hear. Hear hear.

DR. POINDEXTER

To the men of the Yale Law School. You . . . are America's future.  
(Percussion -- three beats. Then:)

TOM

(Entering on level three.)

They say that only one man has ever climbed to the top! They say that when he got there he met the Thunderbird -- and was never seen again.

HANK

Uh, that's not true, actually.

HANK

No?

TOM

No. Actually the first brave to climb the mountain was a Flathead warrior, and he came away invincible. He couldn't be killed in battle.

TOM

Oh.

HANK

The first person to climb the mountain from your tribe climbed it because the buffalo had disappeared, and he needed to know where they'd gone. And then of course some believe that the first person up the mountain was a woman, whose husband had been killed in battle, and so she wanted to throw herself and her baby off. So. What do you think about that?

TOM

You sure know a lot about Chief Mountain.

HANK

Yes. Well I suppose I do.

(He strides around.)

I've brought something special with me. It's called a camera. It's going to be difficult to lug up the mountain. But I do want to document our trip. How old are you, Tom?

TOM

Twelve.

HANK

Twelve. Yes, well you'll want to have some mementos too.

(Pause.)

I've also had a change of heart. I think we should go up the east face. Right here.

TOM

Right here?

HANK

Mm.

TOM

But -- we can't.

HANK

Why not?

TOM

Because -- well look at it!

HANK

Yes, straight up, fifteen-hundred feet. We meet our king eyeball to eyeball. Hm?

TOM

Then I'm going back.

(He starts to pack his gear.)

HANK

Tom.

I'm not going up that way.

TOM  
(He starts to go.)

Tom!

HANK  
(TOM stops.)

I'll give you an extra dollar if you climb the east face with me. And who knows? Maybe someday they'll tell legends about you.

(Pause. TOM holds his hand out for the dollar.)

Oh no. When we get back to Cardston. As agreed.

(TOM goes back to putting up the tent.)

Atta boy.

TOM

All that stuff about the Thunderbird?

HANK

Yes?

TOM

I don't believe all that.

HANK

You don't, eh? Well. We soon shall see.

THOMAS  
(On another level, to STIMSON.)

I don't know, Stimson. I don't know why you come up here.

TOMMY  
(On another level, to HENRY.)

See, the first thing you gotta do is get people interested. If you can get people interested, you can sell 'em just about anything.

STIMSON  
(Light change; STIMSON addresses the audience.)

I first came into the service of the President in 1906. I had been a partner in the law firm of Root and Clarke, and I was a member of the New York County Republican Committee, when President Roosevelt -- that is Theodore Roosevelt -- appointed me U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. I liked Teddy Roosevelt -- he wore his prejudices on his sleeve.

In 1910, I ran for governor in New York and was firmly trounced. Not only did my opponents humiliate me, but I finished behind most of my own ticket as well. The cads. Thereafter I toyed with elected office, but when President Taft appointed me Secretary of War I felt somehow I had found my place. Serving. A servant. I don't mind calling myself a servant. Servants sometimes run the household.

Stimson! TAFT  
(Elsewhere on stage, with his back to the audience. STIMSON watches.)

Yes Mr. President? STIMSON

What the hell's wrong with the army?! TAFT

Well there's nothing really wrong with it, sir. It just needs some reorganization. HENRY

Well then reorganize it, would you? Goddammit. We're preparing to fight the Hun! TAFT

Yes sir. Anything . . . in particular you want President? HENRY

No, goddammit. You're the goddamn Secretary of War! TAFT

Yes, Mr. President. HENRY

You see what I mean. STIMSON  
(To the audience.)

The conduct of World War Two, however, was a different matter entirely. Franklin Roosevelt was a different president; so was Harry Truman. The issues were a great deal more complicated, or so they seemed to me. The world was less innocent. And S-1 changed everything.

Mr. Secretary? BARD  
(Approaching.)

Yes? STIMSON

May I see you? BARD

Of course, Mr. Bard. The Navy is always welcome in my office. STIMSON  
(BARD enters.)

I'm just putting some papers in order. Mrs. Stimson doesn't like me working so late, but



it seems this is the only time left for this sort of thing. And you?

BARD

Well I had a late dinner with the Secretary of the Navy.

STIMSON

Ah yes.

BARD

He does go on.

STIMSON

Yes.

BARD

And then I came back here to draft a memo. It's concerning the Franck report. I thought perhaps you should be the first to read it.

(He holds it out to STIMSON. STIMSON does not take it.)

STIMSON

Well I think I would rather hear it from you.

BARD

Of course.

STIMSON

I think that would be better.

(Pause.)

BARD

Dr. Franck proposes a demonstration of the bomb before we use it. He proposes that we explode it on a deserted Pacific atoll so that --

STIMSON

Yes, Mr. Bard, I have read his report.

BARD

I'm afraid that I agree with him, Mr. Secretary.

STIMSON

Ah yes?

BARD

Well not in every respect. But enough that I am going to have to change my own opinion. I am going to have to dissent from the findings of the Interim Committee. I hope you will understand.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

Mr. Bard --

BARD

Which is why I wanted to see you as quickly as possible.

STIMSON

Mr. Bard . . . we have been over this ground before.

BARD

I know we have, but --

STIMSON

Certainly I can understand that we are all still grappling with this, how shall I say, momentous decision we have made. But the decision has been made. You were there.

BARD

But the decision can be reversed.

STIMSON

Can it?

BARD

I think it can, in light of our scientists' disagreements.

STIMSON

But our scientists are not disagreed. They have told us, a demonstration of the bomb before dropping it is not possible, or at least not advisable. They are not disagreed. Dr. Franck is disagreed!

(Pause.)

BARD

But surely his views should be taken into consideration.

STIMSON

They have been.

BARD

Have they, Mr. Secretary? I am not sure.

(Pause.)

In any event. I don't propose a demonstration. I propose that we provide the Japanese with information about atomic power, and a warning. Then if they do not respond, we may act.

STIMSON

I see.

In our own best interests of course.

BARD

Yes.

STIMSON

(Beat.)

Well I hope you will put your recommendation into letter form to the President. I will see that he reads it.

Mr. Secretary.

BARD

Mr. Bard.

STIMSON

(Shaking his hand.)

(BARD goes. A SCIENTIST appears on one of the levels.)

Estimated altitude of detonation: One-thousand eight-hundred and fifty feet. Estimated number of deaths: ten thousand.

SCIENTIST

(HENRY, GULLIVER and ROOT, pheasant-hunting. HENRY and GULLIVER are about fifty; ROOT is in his sixties.)

The problem with you, Stimson, is you think we're still at Yale. You think we go in for all that Skull-and-Bones, secret handshakes, let's all be frat brothers shit. But we don't. In the world of jurisprudence, it is every man for himself.

GULLIVER

You mean every cad for himself.

HENRY

Pheasant at two o'clock!

ROOT

(They raise their rifles, shoot.)

Blam, blam! Blam, blam! Blam, blam!

HENRY, GULLIVER and ROOT.

Missed.

(Pause.)

I wonder how three such brilliant lawyers can be such damnable pheasant hunters.

HENRY

Perhaps it's because you two keep talking.

ROOT

GULLIVER

Perhaps.

HENRY

Have you ever actually shot any pheasant in this field, Mr. Root?

ROOT

Oh for chrissakes, Stimson, you're fifty years old. Call me Elihu.

HENRY

(Uncomfortably.)

Elihu.

ROOT

Besides, we're out of the office. No, I haven't shot any pheasant in this field. But I intend to. Now let's go.

GULLIVER

Uh, without me, I'm afraid.

HENRY

Giving up so soon, Gulliver?

GULLIVER

I'm going to sit here and commune with nature. You'll understand that I'm sure, Stimson.

HENRY

I understand your feet are sore.

GULLIVER

By the way, did you know, Mr. Root, that Stimson is going out to sit on top of a mountain again this summer?

ROOT

That true, Stimson?

HENRY

Well it's not exactly a mountain –

GULLIVER

You'd better watch him, Mr. Root. Next thing he'll want to go off and become a monk!  
(HENRY grimaces at GULLIVER, then moves to catch up with ROOT, who has moved to another part of the field. Lights fade on GULLIVER, rubbing his feet.)

ROOT

(Looking for birds.)

I don't know where they've gone, Stimson. I think we are shooting at phantoms.

(Pause. They stand there.)  
So how are you anyway? Everything all right?

HENRY  
Oh. Yes, thankyou, sir.

ROOT  
Don't think so.

HENRY  
Sir?

ROOT  
Don't think so. Something . . . down at the mouth about you lately. Didn't get to be Senior Partner without learning to be a judge of men.

HENRY  
Yes, Mr. . . . Elihu.

(Pause.)  
Well I have been a little tired lately.

ROOT  
Tired.

HENRY  
Yes.

ROOT  
You're not very happy out of the White House, are you? Not very happy out of public life?

HENRY  
No, sir. I don't believe I am.

ROOT  
No. Well there'll be a place for you again soon, soon as we get this piker Harding out of office, Y'know, sometimes that man makes me ashamed to be a Republican. Hard-on, my wife calls him. Hard-on! HAHAHAAAA!

(ROOT enjoys this joke immensely. HENRY is embarrassed.)  
And this mountain business. What's the deal there?

HENRY  
The deal, sir?

ROOT  
Went to the mountains myself once. Didn't like 'em. Came home.

HENRY

Well, as I say, it's not really a mountain. It's more of a hill, a large hill, about three thousand feet. And sheer, especially the crown. It's a particularly beautiful place. Beautiful, and awesome, and with a mysterious sort of . . . presence.

ROOT

Presence! Presents are something you give!

(He grins. Reluctantly, HENRY smiles back.)

Well, don't spend too much time mooning about your mountains, Henry. Remember -- Republicans are men of action. Action! Speaking of which -- you heard about all that trouble in Nicaragua?

HENRY

Yes.

ROOT

Somebody oughta take care of it. Pheasant at eight o'clock.

(They raise their rifles, shoot again.)

ROOT and HENRY

Blam, blam! Blam! Blam blam blam blam!

(Pause.)

Missed again.

STIMSON

(From another level, to HENRY.)

He never did shoot any pheasant, you know.

HENRY

What's that?

STIMSON

Root. He was the worst hunter I'd ever seen.

TOMMY

(On another level.)

Hey Stimson. Come on up here. I got something to show you.

HENRY

(Moving to him.)

Can I help you with the fire, Tom?

TOMMY

Nope. But you could hand me that backpack there.

(HENRY does. TOMMY indicates the mountain.)

Y'see that, Stimson? That's the east face. That's the side we climbed up last time we was up here.

HENRY

Yes. I remember.

TOMMY

Pretty hard to believe, eh? Pretty hard to believe we even tried. Then again, you weren't too bright in those days, even if you had been to law school.

HENRY

Well thank you very much.

TOMMY

Now you're much smarter, I can tell. Hey and I'm much smarter too. Take you up the easy side this time, charge you ten times as much!  
(He laughs. HENRY smiles.)

HENRY

I don't mind paying you well, Tom.

TOMMY

No, huh?

HENRY

No. After all . . . I couldn't very well climb it by myself.  
(They work.)

TOMMY

So hey Stimson. You think we taught them Germans a lesson over there?

HENRY

Where?

TOMMY

In Europe. The war.

HENRY

I think we were lucky to get out alive. If the Germans learned any lesson, that is strictly a bonus.

TOMMY

Oh yeah?

HENRY

I cannot tell you how unprepared the American army was. First to have to stand by while Mr. Woodrow Wilson dithered and philosophized and tried to call a spade a shovel. And then to get over there and find our forces in utter chaos -- well. It was more than I could stomach.

TOMMY

You went over there?

HENRY

I fought.

TOMMY

Yeah? No kidding. Hey how about that, Stimson -- you got more guts than I thought.  
(He slaps HENRY heartily on the back, starts to collect wood for the fire.)

Yeah, well I been doin' things too you wouldn't figure. Didn't save the world, maybe. But it sure as hell saved my ass.

HENRY

What's that?

TOMMY

Well, I had me a job puttin' a road inna Glacier for awhile there. And then I had a job buildin' houses. And then I had me a job where I was supposed to watch for bootleggers runnin' whiskey through the pass. Only nobody gives a shit about Prohibition anymore, least of all the Mounties. An' then when I realized that even if I saw somebody, I probably wouldn't stop 'em -- well. That job lasted about two weeks.

HENRY

Alcohol is the curse of your people, Tom.  
(TOMMY regards STIMSON coolly for a moment.)

TOMMY

Hey Stimson. You can call me Tommy now. That's what people call me.

(Pause.)

Anyway. Now that I got a few bucks together, I don't know what I'm gonna do next. But it's gonna be something good. That much I know.

(Quietly, TOMMY prepares his bed for the night.  
HENRY leans back, staring up at the mountain.  
Percussion -- a faint rattle. After a moment:)

HENRY

Do you think it's still up there, Tommy?

TOMMY

What's that?

HENRY

The skull. The old buffalo skull. The old Flathead's pillow. Do you remember? We found it last time we were up there. And we built a cairn for it, to protect it from the rain. And we held it . . . and all that good medicine flowed into us. Do you think it's still there? I hope it is. I like to think it is.

TOMMY

Is that why you come up here? To find that old skull?



Something like that. HENRY

Why Henry. You ol' witchdoctor. You shoulda told me. I coulda bought you one in town. (Smiles.)  
(Movement, voices on all three levels.  
Percussion.) TOMMY

Storm. TOM

Lightning. STIMSON

You think the Thunderbird's waiting for us Stimson? I think it's probably watchin' us right now. TOMMY

Any sign of our base camp, Tom? HANK

No. TOM

We could be in for some weather. HENRY

We could go up this chimney here. HANK

The weather'll be clear tomorrow. We can start as soon as it's light.  
(Pause. Then lights up on STIMSON, PETER JAY DAVIS, who is Stimson's assistant, and JIMMY BYRNES, who is -- at this point -- the Director of War Mobilization. DAVIS takes notes. BYRNES eats licorice "Nibs". In STIMSON's office.) THOMAS

Do you think we should just open up our files to the Japanese? STIMSON

No sir. DAVIS

Do you think we should stop work? STIMSON

DAVIS

No.

STIMSON

Well do you think we should use S-1 at all, Peter Jay?  
(Pause.)

DAVIS

It doesn't matter what I think, Mr. Secretary. What matters is that the military and we are in agreement.

(Pause.)

BYRNES

(South Carolinian.)

Well I don't mind telling you what I think, gentlemen.

STIMSON

I'm sure you don't, Jimmy.

BYRNES

I think the military would much rather invade than drop this bomb. But if we let 'em go in there with their hip pistols out, the Japanese might get a little upset. Licorice, Peter Jay?

DAVIS

No, thankyou, Mr. Byrnes.

BYRNES

And then just watch the casualty figures rise.

STIMSON

Is that official position of the war mobilization office, Jimmy?

BYRNES

I try not to adopt "positions", Henry. I leave that sort of thing to you boys here.

DAVIS

Well according to General Marshall –

BYRNES

General Marshall is dreaming –

DAVIS

The number of casualties in the first thirty days of an invasion would number no more than 30,000. And if we accept the estimate prepared for the Joint Chiefs –

STIMSON

I'm afraid I don't accept their estimate, Peter Jay.

DAVIS

No?

STIMSON

No. It strikes me also as a little undercooked.

(BYRNES laughs.)

Don't forget that I have spent much time in Japan. And it is the hilliest and most treacherous terrain you could imagine. What's more, the Japanese will fight to the death for their Emperor. That is their glory and their downfall. So I would place the casualty figure quite a bit higher than 30,000. Perhaps nearer . . . a million. And that would be in 1946 alone.

(Pause.)

BYRNES

One million American lives.

STIMSON

Possibly.

BYRNES

Versus how many Japanese if we use S-1?

DAVIS

Well actually that figure has been revised upwards as well.

BYRNES

To?

DAVIS

Twenty thousand.

(Pause.)

BYRNES

Well then frankly, gentlemen, I do not know why we are arguing.

(Beat.)

Licorice, Henry?

STIMSON

No, thank you, Jimmy.

BYRNES

I'll leave you two alone.

(Goes. DAVIS starts to go also.)

DAVIS  
I'll prepare a summary for --

STIMSON  
Peter Jay.  
(DAVIS stops, turns.)  
You don't think we should use S-1, do you?

DAVIS  
Mr. Secretary --

STIMSON  
No, I want to know!  
(Pause.)

DAVIS  
I agree with Mr. Bard. I think we should issue a warning to the Japanese and see if that isn't enough. But no, I don't think we should use this bomb.

STIMSON  
I see.

DAVIS  
I don't think it should ever be used.  
(Pause.)

STIMSON  
You know . . . I knew a man once -- Elihu Root -- I knew him first when I was about the age that you are now. And he used to tell me: assume the worst and believe the best.

DAVIS  
Meaning?

STIMSON  
Meaning . . . there will be other ways to end this war.  
(Pause.)

DAVIS  
I hope so, Mr. Secretary. I'll go prepare my notes.  
(Pause.)  
(DAVIS goes. STIMSON stands for a moment, then turns to the audience.)

STIMSON  
I first heard of Chief Mountain in the summer of 1884, my first summer in the Rockies. I first saw it two years later, for by then I had made it an annual matter to take some time off in the summer months to go hiking and hunting in the West. I would take with me two

rifles, a volume of Shakespeare's sonnets, and my well-worn copy of Canon Farrar's The Early Days of Christianity.

Chief Mountain sits on the very northwestern fringe of Montana, just below the Canadian border. It is called the Chief because it juts out onto the prairies as if leading the peaks of Montana into battle. Also, because when viewed from a certain angle, it looks very like the profile of an Indian chief.

(STIMSON and THOMAS, at stage level.  
STIMSON reading from Shakespeare's sonnets.)

STIMSON

"Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,  
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace.  
But now my gracious numbers are decay'd  
And my sick Muse doth give another place.  
I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument  
Deserves –

THOMAS

What's that? A poem?

STIMSON

Yes. A poem.

THOMAS

What's it mean?

STIMSON

Well that's a good question. What's it mean?

(He reopens the book.)

"Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid, My verse alone had all thy gentle grace." Well this means that Shakespeare was once the only one writing poems to his beloved. And so his poems contained all the . . . grace that her beauty inspired.

(Reading:)

"But now my gracious numbers are decay'd, And my sick Muse cloth give another place." In other words, now she has taken up another suitor, and so Shakespeare's poems are no longer as grand as they used to be. "I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument --"

THOMAS

Sounds like a lot of bullshit.

(Beat.)

STIMSON

Well yes. Well I suppose it is. Lovely . . . bullshit. But bullshit all the same.

(STIMSON closes the book.)

Perhaps I'll read this later.

(Pause.)

Lovely night.

(Pause.)

I think I can see the river down there.

(Pause.)

Do you know . . . that both times I have climbed this mountain I have returned to the East and met up with the most extraordinary good luck? It's true. The last time, I returned and was named Governor General of the Phillipines. Well, that was some time later, but you get the idea. And the first time, I returned and stumbled upon "Highhold", my country home.

THOMAS

It's called what?

STIMSON

"Highhold." It's located on Long Island.

THOMAS

Your house has a name?

STIMSON

Well yes. Well I gave it a name.

(Lightly:)

Why don't you give your house a name?

THOMAS

I don't think so, Henry.

STIMSON

You don't think it needs one?

THOMAS

I don't have a house.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

Oh. Oh yes. Well it's just as well, they're hell to keep up.

(Pause.)

You, uh . . . did have plans to build something the last time I was up her, didn't you?

THOMAS

Oh. I expect so.

STIMSON

What was that?

THOMAS

(Rising.)

I'm sure you remember much better than me. Did you want to spend the day up there tomorrow, or is it just up and down?

STIMSON  
Well. I expect I will want to spend some time up there.

THOMAS  
Fine. Just so I know.  
(Pause.)

STIMSON  
A restaurant! That was it! You were going to open up a little Chinese restaurant in Cardston!

THOMAS  
Oh yeah. I guess that was it.

STIMSON  
You were going to sell Chinese food to the Mormons! That's what you told me! The very first Indian to sell Chinese food to the Mormons!

THOMAS  
Yeah. Well I guess I was.

STIMSON  
Did you do it?

THOMAS  
For a while, yeah.

STIMSON  
And?

THOMAS  
And what?

STIMSON  
How did it go?

THOMAS  
I'm standin' here before you, aren't I?

STIMSON  
Yes, but –

THOMAS  
I'm not selling Chinese food, am I?

STIMSON  
I understand, but –

THOMAS

You see any Mormons around here?

STIMSON

Tommy --

THOMAS

WELL THEN HOW THE FUCK DO YOU THINK IT WENT? IT DIDN'T! I CLOSED THE FUCKING SHITHOUSE DOWN!

(Pause.)

STIMSON

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked.

THOMAS

Yeah. Well it don't matter anyway. Stupid goddamn thing.

(Pause.)

Shouldn't of tried it anyway. A Indian sellin' Chinese food -- who's gonna come? Not the Mormons, that's for sure. They wouldn't of come in if they were starving. And not the Indians either. They just thought I was crazy.

(Pause.)

Only ones who used to come in were the Chinese. They used to love my cooking. I never did figure that one out.

(Pause.)

Anyway. Lasted about six months, then I shut 'er down. Sold 'er to a white guy from Lethbridge, and you know what? -- within two weeks that place was packed. Every night. Packed.

STIMSON

Well. I hope you made some money from the sale.

THOMAS

Ha. That's when I started bringin' people up here. To pay off the bills.

STIMSON

You what?

THOMAS

Oh I coulda walked away from it, eh, but I don't do that kinda thing. I don't accept no handouts and I don't run away from my bills.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

You bring people up this mountain?

THOMAS

Well I don't do it much anymore. But I used to bring up four, five parties a year.



Why?

STIMSON

Whaddaya mean, why.

THOMAS

Why? Why would you do something like that? You know how important this mountain is. You know that better than me.

STIMSON

(Pause.)

THOMAS  
(Turning away.)

Nobody knows how to be a Indian as good as you, Stimson.

STIMSON

I don't mean --

THOMAS

Nobody knows how to be a Indian as good as you, Stimson. You're the best goddamn Indian I ever seen!

(Beat.)

Whaddaya mean, why'd I bring 'em up here. To make money! Whaddaya think?

STIMSON

Well there must have been other ways you could make money.

THOMAS

Oh yeah? And what are those, huh? What are those?

STIMSON

Well you could . . . herd horses.

THOMAS

Horses! Ha!

STIMSON

You could have lived on the reservation!

THOMAS

Don't tell me what I could or couldn't do, okay? I'm tired of guys like you tellin' me what I could or couldn't do. Ya come up here, ya turn the land into some kinda dude ranch, and then you tell me this mountain is sacred or some kinda bullshit like that. Well this mountain ain't sacred, Stimson. It usedta be sacred, but it ain't sacred anymore.

STIMSON

I didn't --

THOMAS

An' if you wanna know who's responsible for that, just take a look in a mirror! I wouldn't even of brought people up here if it hadn't been for you! I wouldn't even of thought of the idea if you hadn't give it to me first!

(Pause.)

So don't gimme none of that bullshit.

STIMSON

I'm sorry.

THOMAS

And quit apologizin'. That don't make it better.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

I didn't mean to . . . upset you, it just . . . caught me by surprise, that's all.

(THOMAS just "humphs". Pause.)

Anyway. I don't apologize. But I guess I . . . understand.

(Pause.)

Um . . . here. Here. I have something to show you. I was going to show you tomorrow. But I think I'll show you now.

(He moves to his pack.)

Actually I do want to spend some time up there. I'll show you why.

(He draws out an old bison skull. Holds it out to THOMAS.)

Do you see? Do you see, Thomas? I brought it along to replace the one that was up there. Do you remember? And who knows. Maybe we'll become invincible.

(He smiles. THOMAS stares at him for a moment, then quickly turns and walks away. STIMSON stands there, the skull slowly dropping in his arms.)

TOMMY

Halfway there, Stimson. Halfway there!

GULLIVER

(With his brandy.)

Some people just can't be dissuaded. Our Henry is one of those.

(Percussion -- three beats. Then:)

SCIENTIST

When will you be seeing the President, Dr. Franck?

FRANCK

I won't be seeing the President. I hope to see the Secretary of War.

(Light change. DAVIS moves to meet FRANCK and ARTHUR COMPTON, both scientists on the Manhattan Project.)

Dr. Cormpton!

DAVIS

Hello, Peter Jay.

COMPTON

This is a surprise.

DAVIS

COMPTON

Is it? I thought I'd wired the Secretary that we were coming. My goodness me. Well! I'd like to introduce Dr. James Franck of our Chicago lab. It was Dr. Franck who developed the metals for S-1.

DAVIS

How do you do.

FRANCK  
(German.)

How do you do.

DAVIS

You've been doing some amazing work in the Chicago laboratory.

FRANCK

Thankyou. I wish I could say I was proud of it.

COMPTON

Dr. Franck has a report that he would like to give to the Secretary. It represents the views of a number of the scientists working on the project. Not my views, but --

FRANCK

When will the Secretary be available?

DAVIS

Well he's in a meeting right now.

FRANCK

Fine then. We will wait until he is done.  
(They sit. Light change.)

STIMSON

What most attracted me to the mountain was the wealth of myth and lore that clung to it. For one, the Blood Indians in Alberta had made a standing offer to their southern neighbours, the Piegans, of fifty horses to anyone who could run around its base in a day. For another, the summit of the mountain was said to be the home of the Thunderbird, that terrible creature from who the thunder and the lightning sprang.

DAVIS

(Approaching COMPTON and FRANCK.)

Gentlemen! My apologies for the delay.

(He stands before them.)

Secretary Stimson asks me to extend his greatest good wishes, and to accept your report so that he may peruse it while he is away.

FRANCK

Then he is refusing to see us?

DAVIS

I'm sorry. His day is very full.

COMPTON

My goodness me.

FRANCK

Well perhaps then we can see him tomorrow.

DAVIS

I'm afraid he will be away.

FRANCK

From his office?

DAVIS

From the city.

(Pause.)

FRANCK

Then I shall have to see him now.

(FRANCK makes for the "door". STIMSON, on the other side, does not react.)

DAVIS

Dr Franck.

COMPTON

James. James.

DAVIS

There is no point in going in there, the Secretary is already gone!

FRANCK

Then you listen to me. The only reason I came onto this project was because I was assured -- assured by you, Arthur -- that I would be allowed to make my views known at the appropriate time.

DAVIS

And so you –

FRANCK

I am not being heard! We are not being heard -- this report is the work of some of the Project's most eminent scientists, most of it is not even written by me! If you ignore me now, you are condemning to death tens of thousands of people. Unnecessarily! Horribly! Without any warning! And all because scientists like you, Arthur, are afraid to tell the politicians what you think!

(Beat.)

Well I will not be treated this way, I will not allow you to ignore me, not when I know that the Secretary is standing behind that door!

(STIMSON does not move.)

Please tell him . . . that I will return in the morning. Or he may reach me at my hotel. Arthur has the number.

(FRANCK goes. Pause. DAVIS sits.)

COMPTON

If you . . . could ask him just once more, Peter Jay.

DAVIS

(Pause; weary.)

Leave me the number, Arthur. I'll do what I can.

(Percussion -- a rattle. Lights fade on DAVIS, COMPTON. Lights narrow on STIMSON.)

STIMSON

For centuries, that lonesome summit had lain unconquered.

(Percussion, music.)

Then, it is said, a young Indian brave of the Flathead tribe had set out to make its spirit his own. For eight days and nights he travelled eastward into the mountains, carrying with him a sacred bison skull for his pillow. He climbed the east face of the mountain, grabbing at its black walls with his bare hands, choking down each gasp of panic when they seemed to want to thrust him off and down. Until finally he reached the summit. And there, for four days and nights, he fasted, sleeping in the great cleft that one sees from far out on the prairie. On the first night the Thunderbird came to him and threatened to hurl him off if he did not go down the next day. But he refused to go, and spent the next day pacing the summit, chanting his warrior song and waving his peace pipe in the air as an offering. Again the spirit appeared to him, and again -- ! . . . Until finally, on the fourth night, the spirit yielded, smoked the pipe with the brave, and gave him good medicine to serve him the rest of his life

(Percussion out.)

In 1891, I had been the first white man to climb that mountain. And there at the top we found the old bison skull the Flathead brave had left behind. What joy I felt to hold it in my hands! What exhilaration to discover that the legend was true! How amazing to think that the Indian brave might have been made invincible! What mystery was here! What . . . awe!

(STIMSON stands lost in the moment. Then: TOMMY and HENRY, drunk, singing:)

HENRY and TOMMY

“Counter March! Right about!  
Hear those wagon soldiers shout,  
While those caissons go rolling along.

HENRY

“For it’s Hi! Hi! Hee! In the Field Artillery,  
Call off your numbers loud and strong!

HENRY and TOMMY

“And where’er we go,  
You will always know  
That those caissons are rolling along!”

(They laugh, sit.)

TOMMY

Well if that don’t scare off the Thunderbird, nothin’ will.

HENRY

Ahhhh, you shoulda been there, Tommy. With the cannons booming, and the marchers drumming, and the shells whizzing by. Whizzzzzzzz-bang. Whizzzzzzzz-bang. I was a lieutenant colonel, Tommy -- a very important position.

TOMMY

What was the most dangerous thing you ever seen?  
(Pause.)

HENRY

(Confidentially; melodramatically.)

Once, when when we were in France -- very close to the fighting -- I saved the whole regiment from burning down. Yep. Battery gun blew up, and the whole camp would of died if it hadn’t been for me.

TOMMY

Really?

HENRY

Yep.

TOMMY

Who blew it up -- the Germans?

HENRY

No.

TOMMY

Who then?

HENRY  
(Mumbling.)

We did.

TOMMY

Who?

HENRY

We did. We were practising our gunnery training, and the gun blew up!

TOMMY  
(Laughing.)

You blew up your own gun?

HENRY

No, goddammit, I didn't do it, the gunners did it, and I put it out. Organized the whole camp, an' you know what we did? We threw sand on it.

TOMMY  
(Finds this very funny.)

You put it out with sand?

HENRY

All right, that's it, I'm not tellin' you any more war stories.

TOMMY

No, no, that's very interesting Stimson. Gives me a good idea of what it musta been like there.

HENRY

Ohh it was a great time, Tommy. A great . . . adventure! And I would of fought, too. If they'd let me.

(He swigs from a bottle.)

Hey. Hey. Y'know what? This is the first time I've been drunk in . . . ever.

(TOMMY laughs.)

No no, I think that's true. Never got drunk in law school, was too busy gettin' grades. Never got drunk in the White House, though the president sure as hell did. Can't get drunk at the office, goddamn Elihu might walk in. I have never been drunk in my life.

TOMMY

That's okay, Henry. I like you anyhow.

HENRY

It's you. You're the reason I can get drunk up here, Tommy.

TOMMY

Is that good?

HENRY

It's wonderful.

TOMMY

Well okay then. Why doncha get me a job in the White House? Oh. That's right. You're not in the White House anymore, are you?

HENRY

Goddamn Harding! Goddamn Harding! Hard-on! HAHAHAAAAAAAAHA! That's what . . . somebody calls him.

TOMMY

Who's Hard-on?

HENRY

(Amazed.)

The President of the United States of America! Don't you know anything?

TOMMY

I may not know much, Stimson. But I do know the President of the United States isn't named Hard-on!

(HENRY considers this. TOMMY rolls over.)

Anyway. I don't want a job in the White House. Gonna carve me out my own little niche. Hey, hey: did I tell you what one of my plans is?

HENRY

For what?

TOMMY

For my money! All the money I got saved! Plus what you're gonna give me tomorrow.

HENRY

All right.

TOMMY

Hey, by the way, I wancha ta know I wouldn't do this for just anybody.

HENRY

Do what?

TOMMY

Take ya up the mountain. I wouldn't do this for most people. But you -- I know you respect what's up here. So.

(Pause. Then, confidentially.)

I'm gonna open me up . . . a little cafe. Sell Chinese food to the Mormons. Hey, whaddaya think? Think you'd buy Chinese food from me?



I'm not Mormon.

HENRY

Well I ain't Chinese! But that's the idea, see? That's what'd get people interested.

TOMMY

Why?

HENRY

Well because! I'd be the first Indian sellin' Chinese food to the Mormons. Prob'ly get my picture in the newspaper or somethin'.

TOMMY

What for?

HENRY

Because! It's unusual! Newspapers love that kind of stuff!

TOMMY

I see . . . Well, of course I'd buy Chinese food from you. If it was any good.

HENRY

Ohh, this is gonna be the best, Stimson, you wait and see. You oughta meet my partner. Hair like an angel and cooks like one too.  
(They snigger.)

TOMMY

Well here. Here. I wish to make a small contribution.

HENRY

No no no.

TOMMY

Or an investment, think of this as an investment –

HENRY

I don't want your money, Stimson.

TOMMY

Oh. You don't want my money?

HENRY

Not until tomorrow.

TOMMY

Oh.

HENRY

(Pause.)  
Well if you ever need a loan, you'll know where to come.

(He puts his money away. Pause.)

Yep. Yep. Chinese food to the Mormons.

(Pause.)

Hey, whaddaya think, Tommy? Think you could give me a job?

TOMMY

I dunno. How do ya look in an apron?

(They laugh.)

Yeah, sure. I'll give you a job. What the hell. Might open up two.

(Pause. Dreaming:)

Then once I got that goin' . . . I might try opening a store. Or maybe I'll buy me some race horses. Who knows what I might do?

STIMSON

Tell him it's not going to work.

HENRY

What?

STIMSON

Tell him! My god, we were so stupid!

(Percussion -- three beats. Then:

REPORTERS pursuing STIMSON.)

REPORTER 1

Mr. Secretary! Will you be accompanying the President to Potsdam?

REPORTER 2

Mr. Secretary! Will the Russians be entering the war in the Pacific?

REPORTER 1

Mr. Secretary! Do you have any comment on the appointment of James Byrnes as Secretary of State?

STIMSON

Yes, I will comment upon that.

(THE REPORTERS gather around him, scribbling.)

Mr. Byrnes will make a fine Secretary of State. He brings to the position a deep love of America, and a long friendship with President Truman. I look forward to working with him. Now if you will excuse me, I have work to do.

REPORTERS

(As they disperse.)

Thankyou, Mr. Secretary. Thankyou.

(STIMSON moves to BYRNES and TRUMAN, who -- like TAFT earlier -- we do not fully see.)

Mr. President!

STIMSON

Hello, Henry.

BYRNES

Jimmy. I thought you were in Europe.

STIMSON  
(Surprised to see him.)

Yes, well I had to cancel my plans. The President asked me to stay close by.

BYRNES

Mr. President. I have just received a request that the test date be set back two days.

STIMSON

Two days!

TRUMAN  
(Still unseen.)

Yes, to July 16th.

STIMSON

Goddammit! What's the matter with those people?!

TRUMAN

Tell General Groves no.

BYRNES

The request comes from Dr. Oppenheimer.

STIMSON

Then tell Dr. Oppenheimer no. The President and Mr. Churchill must have the results before them at Potsdam. I thought that was understood.

BYRNES

Yes, but even if the test is pushed back two days, Mr. President, you will still be able to use the information.

STIMSON

If the thing works.

BYRNES

I suspect it is more likely to work if we listen to Dr. Oppenheimer.

STIMSON

Oh all right! But two days only. Tell 'em any longer than that and they goddamn might as well not bother.

TRUMAN

STIMSON  
(With a glance to BYRNES.)

Yes, sir.

(Moving to TRUMAN.)

May I also suggest that we decide now how best to break the news of S-1 to the Russians. Mr. Churchill can be trusted, of course, but Stalin –

BYRNES

Yes, well the President and I have been discussing that, Henry, and we feel that the best strategy would be to tell the Russians nothing at all.

(Beat.)

STIMSON

But surely –

BYRNES

They have no need to know.

STIMSON

Yes, but surely if we hope to establish some sort of arrangement with them later –

BYRNES

What sort of arrangement?

STIMSON

For the disposition of Manchuria. For the control of atomic power.

BYRNES

If you ask me, we have enough “arrangements” with the Russians already. We have all the “arrangements” we need.

(Pause.)

TRUMAN

Jimmy’s right, Henry.

STIMSON

But Mr. President --

TRUMAN

Mr. Stalin does not need our help.

(Rising. Still we do not see him.)

Come into the next room with me, Jimmy.

BYRNES

Yes, Mr. President.

TRUMAN

We can talk about this some more.

(BYRNES and TRUMAN exit. Percussion – chimes tolling twelve. STIMSON turns out.)

STIMSON

When first I saw the pictures from the test site, I thought: it must have been something like that, that night, on that mountain. To confront a force so primeval and pure. To know that it could save or destroy you. To stand with it rising thousands of feet in the air . . . and know that it was the most horrible sight you had ever seen . . . and that you had just climbed 3,000 feet . . . to see it.

(Chimes finish. The other actors stand looking up. Percussion -- a low rumbling, building. Suddenly, a bright white light pours down upon the actors, save STIMSON, from high above. They stand looking up at it, awestruck. STIMSON stares out. Percussion peaks, fades. Lights fade.)

Morning light. THOMAS and STIMSON. STIMSON throws items to THOMAS, who packs them for the climb. They work quietly, rhythmically for a moment.)

STIMSON  
(Working.)

You want to eat before we start, Thomas?

THOMAS

Nope.

STIMSON

No. Well we'll be up there by noon.

(They work. THOMAS stops, turns to STIMSON. STIMSON is about to throw something when he sees THOMAS, and stops.)

THOMAS

Hey Stimson. I'm sorry I yelled at you last night. I don't know what I was doin'.

STIMSON

That's quite all right, Thomas.

THOMAS

It's just that you're not an Indian. And you're not supposed to be up here. And I'm not supposed to be taking you up, but I don't have any choice, I need the money. And I don't see –

Thomas. I said it's all right.

STIMSON  
(Pause.)

Yeah, well, anyway. I was just feelin' mad.  
(Pause. They work.)

It's a good thing I didn't biff you.

STIMSON  
What's that?

THOMAS  
Hit you. You'd probably sue me or somethin'. Being a lawyer and all.

STIMSON  
No, I'd just, uh . . . biff you back.

THOMAS  
Ha. That'd be something, eh? Two old assholes, goin' at it 800 feet in the air. You'd be better off suing me.

STIMSON  
Actually, I don't do much of that anymore.

THOMAS  
What. Fighting?

STIMSON  
Law. I haven't practised law in years. Decades.

THOMAS  
I thought that was what you did.

STIMSON  
Well it was until I got back into public life. Actually, I did arrange to have Goerring and that lot tried.

THOMAS  
Who?

STIMSON  
Goerring. The Nazis.

THOMAS  
You did that?

STIMSON

Yes. As Secretary of War.

THOMAS

Well hey! You're a bigger deal than I thought.

(Pause.)

Well, that was a good job, givin' it to those Nazis. Stickin' people in ovens. A Indian would never do that.

STIMSON

No?

THOMAS

Well no, eh, 'cause a Indian knows the difference between real war and a coward's war. Like when the Nazis dropped that bomb on the Japanese and killed I don't know how many thousand –

STIMSON

That wasn't the Nazis.

THOMAS

What?

STIMSON

That wasn't the Nazis, that was . . . us.

THOMAS

Who?

STIMSON

Us. The United States.

THOMAS

You did that?

STIMSON

Yes.

THOMAS

Well not you personally.

STIMSON

Yes. I had something to do with it.

(Pause.)

I hardly see that it's the same as putting people in ovens. Frankly I am astonished. The connection would never occur to me.

(Pause.)

THOMAS

Well frankly I am "astonished". I just assumed that was the Nazis.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

Well I hardly think it's worth sorting out now. We have a climb ahead of us.

(STIMSON works. THOMAS watches him. Pause.)

THOMAS

(Quietly.)

How much did you have to do with that?

STIMSON

I'm sorry?

THOMAS

How much?

STIMSON

I made the decision.

THOMAS

You did.

STIMSON

I made the recommendation to the President.

THOMAS

Uh-huh.

STIMSON

I helped choose the cities. I chose the date. I was the Secretary of War.

THOMAS

Yeah, I got that.

STIMSON

I do not think it is worth debating now! To be honest, I am quite proud of what we did. We saved at least a million lives.

(THOMAS moves to pick up his gear.)

What are you doing?



Going back down. THOMAS

Now? STIMSON

THOMAS  
Yeah, now. Go find your own way up the mountain. I'm not taking you up.  
(Beat. He throws down his own gear, grabs up STIMSON's, and starts throwing it off the mountain.)  
Get off the mountain. Get off the mountain. Fucking Nazi! Get off the mountain NOW.

No. STIMSON

THOMAS  
I'm not taking you up. I need the money, but I don't need it that bad. THIS MOUNTAIN IS HOLY! If I took you up there, it'd be to THROW YOU OFF.  
(Pause.)  
You got nothing to climb with. It's all down there. Go on down now. Go down.  
(They stand watching each other.)

HANK  
The cumuli. And the snow on the mountains. It's so beautiful up here.  
(Pause.)  
Let's go.

End of Act One

## ACT TWO

STIMSON  
There was no third ascent. I climbed Chief Mountain precisely twice: once when I was 24, again when I was 53. I died in my home at Highhold, in October of 1950. I was 33 years old.

(THOMAS and STIMSON on the middle level, as at the end of Act One.)

You can't leave. STIMSON

Oh no? THOMAS  
(Starting to go.)

See you, Stimson. Write when you get there.

STIMSON

But what will I do?

THOMAS

Climb it yerself!

STIMSON

I can't climb it myself, you just --

THOMAS

Look, Henry, what you do or don't do ain't my concern anymore. If I'd known what kind of man you was, I wouldn't of brought you up here at all. So if you're stuck on this ledge for a coupla years or so, that's fine by me.

(He continues to go.)

STIMSON

And all the others you brought up here. Did you know what kind of men they were too?  
(THOMAS stops, turns.)

THOMAS

They didn't drop bombs on people.

STIMSON

No. But it seems to me you've become awfully discriminating all of a sudden. You've been taking just anybody up this mountain for quite a while now, why stop now? Besides. Are you prepared to refund me money?

THOMAS

No.

STIMSON

No. Well then. I thought you said you don't run away from your debts.  
(Pause.)

THOMAS

I go first, you stay at least five feet behind.

STIMSON

Fine.

THOMAS

No talkin'.

STIMSON

All right.

And this is the last time.

THOMAS

Fine.

STIMSON

(Pause. THOMAS looks around for remaining gear. There isn't any, save the pack containing the buffalo skull. He picks it up.)

Let's go.

THOMAS

Upward! Ever upward, Henry!

ROOT

My father says he seen the Thunderbird once -- but I don't believe him. I don't believe in all that.

TOM

(Percussion -- three beats. Then:)

STIMSON

I see no reason to drive the Emperor from power. He is willing to cooperate with us. And frankly, we need his help.

MARSHALL

He is willing to cooperate with us?

STIMSON

I think so, General Marshall.

MARSHALL

Then who have I been fighting for the last three years?

DAVIS

Our problem is not Hirohito. Our problem is their Secretary of War.

STIMSON

Stubborn buggers, Secretaries of War.

BYRNES

I'll say.

STIMSON

Almost as stubborn as Secretaries of State.

MARSHALL

Well, I don't suppose it matters what we put in the declaration. We are threatening to destroy them, after all.

BYRNES

Yes, but we're not telling them how, are we? Are we?

MARSHALL

No.

STIMSON

No.

BYRNES

Well then do not expect them to give up.

DAVIS

They're a lot more likely to give up if we allow them to save face.

BYRNE S

And you do not think they will see this as a sign of weakness?

DAVIS

No!

BYRNES

Well then I reluctantly say, Mr. Davis, that you do not know the Japanese mind.  
(Pause.)

STIMSON

Well I do.

MARSHALL

What's that, Henry?

STIMSON

I do. I have spent much time on the home island. And I think that qualifies me to speak as much as any man in this room. And I say that so long as the Japanese lay down their arms immediately, we should allow their Emperor to remain. That is what I have put in the Declaration, and that will be my recommendation to the President. Any remarks? Jimmy?

(After a moment, BYRNES sullenly shakes his head "No.")

Good then. You may all go have your dinners.

(Percussion -- three beats.)

HANK

(Looking out.)

I cannot believe I am up here! I cannot believe I made it this far!

(Turning to TOM and a large box camera.)

Now here. Here. I have set the camera up. All you have to do is take the photograph.

The what? TOM

HANK  
The photo-graph. You don't know what that is, do you? Well, I will stand there, and you will stand here. And when I tell you, you are to pull the slide out of this box. And then you pull this lever.

What for? TOM

HANK  
Well, that will place my . . . image, my . . . face -- me -- upon the plate. And then I will be able to take it into a darkroom, and have a picture made up, so that everyone will know that I was up here.

(TOM starts to back away in terror.)

Oh no, now look, there's nothing to be afraid of.

(TOM continues backing away.)

I know! We'll take a picture of you too!

(TOM turns and runs.)

Tom. Tom!

(HANK grabs him and hauls him back.)

Look, how about this: if you take a picture of me, I'll give you another dollar when we get back to Cardston.

(TOM regards him, then moves to stand warily by the camera. HANK moves to his posing place.)

All right. Now stay right there. And don't do anything until I tell you.

(Posing:)

Ha. Wait'll I get these pictures back to Hawthorne Hall. They'll have to double their intake of brandy when they see this!

(He shouts.)

I HEREBY CLAIM THIS MOUNTAIN ON BEHALF OF YALE MEN EVERYWHERE.  
Quick, take the picture.

Wait! TOM

What? HANK

Under your foot. What are you standing on? TOM

(HANK looks down. He has placed one foot on an old bison skull, lying atop the mountain. He regards it, disbelieving. Percussion. TOM moves to pick it up. HANK turns into the next scene, with GULLIVER, SUTTON and WESKER.)

HANK

It was the old Flathead's pillow! It was the bison skull he took with him when he first climbed the mountain!

GULLIVER

Oh come now, Stimson. You don't really expect us to believe that, do you?

WESKER

You don't really expect us to believe in invincible old warriors?

HANK

You can believe what you want.

SUTTON

Pretty convincing imitation of a mountain-climber, mind you.

GULLIVER

Yes, we'll have to get these touched up and published in the paper.

HANK

(Grabbing for the photos.)

Give me those!

WESKER

Stimson has a great future ahead of him as a model, wouldn't you say Sutton?

SUTTON

A great future. A great, great future.

HANK

You are a stupid lot of nincompoops. And those are my pictures, so give them back!  
(He gets them.)

GULLIVER

What I can't believe, Hank, is that you actually dragged a camera all the way up a mountain just so you could come home with these.

HANK

Well I knew you wouldn't believe me if I didn't. I knew you wouldn't believe me anyway, but at least this way you have to think about it. And I wanted to show you! I wanted you to see what it's like up there!

SUTTON

Stunning.

WESKER

Absolutely breathtaking. Where's my glass?

HANK

Not that I'd ever been up there before. But I knew what it would be like. And you know what? It was just like I thought it would be.

(Pause.)

And when I held that bison skull in my hands . . . I could feel the good medicine coming into me. Oh you can scoff and laugh all you like, but it's an experience you'll never have. I could feel myself becoming stronger, and nobler, and wiser. And ready! Ready to serve my country and serve my god and go out into the world and make it better. This nation will do more to improve the world than any that has gone before it, I really believe that now. And we'll be the ones to do it. Us, the men in this room. You know that, don't you? We have a great responsibility before us.

(Pause.)

SUTTON

Yes, but we'll all have to climb that mountain first, won't we?

GULLIVER

You save the world for us, Stimson. We'd rather drink.

(Lights crossfade to STIMSON, also regarding the photo. After a moment:)

STIMSON

I don't know what happened.

HANK

You betrayed me.

STIMSON

What's that?

HANK

You betrayed me. That's all.

(Pause. Then STIMSON turns.)

STIMSON

Byrnes. Byrnes!

BYRNES

Hello, Henry. Licorice?

STIMSON

Would you please put that ridiculous candy away!

(BYRNES registers STIMSON's anger, does so.)

Have you seen this?

BYRNES

What is it?

STIMSON

It's the Declaration I prepared for the President. The part about the Emperor is missing.

BYRNES

Ah yes. Well the President wanted it that way, Henry. He is the President, you know.

STIMSON

Did you do this?

BYRNES

I don't know what you mean.

STIMSON

Did you talk to him?

BYRNES

Of course I talked to him, I am his Secretary of State!

(Pause.)

The President believes, as I do, that the surrender must be unconditional to be any good at all. Get into bargaining with them about whether or not they keep their Emperor, and we have lost the upper hand. There is also the small matter of the next election. We have been telling the people for 18 months that Hirohito breathes fire and eats babies. What are they to think if we suddenly tell them that he's not so bad after all?

STIMSON

But the Japanese will not be able to accept these terms!

BYRNES

Well then we are prepared for that. Aren't we?

(Pause.)

Is that all?

STIMSON

No.

BYRNES

Well I am afraid that will have to be all, Henry. I am out of time.

(BYRNES starts to go.)

STIMSON

Mr. Davis tells me that the Japanese have asked the Russians to negotiate a truce. Is that true?

(Beat.)

I am the Secretary of War! I deserve to know these things!

BYRNES

Well obviously you do know these things.



STIMSON

From you! Not from my assistant!

BYRNES

Yes, it is true the Japanese approached the Russians. We told the Russians to ignore them. They did as they were told.

STIMSON

Why?

BYRNES

Because they are afraid of us, Henry. They know we have something, and they are afraid of us.

STIMSON

I mean why did we not pursue these overtures from the Japanese?

BYRNES

Because who knows what in the hell is meant by them? Who knows what the Japanese want? Because we have already spent two billion dollars on your bomb, Henry, and we're not gonna leave it sitting in the warehouse!

(Pause.)

You really are the most incredibly naive man, Henry. Forgive me for saying so. But I do not know how you came to be Secretary of War. I truly do not.

(BYRNES goes. STIMSON stands for a moment, then turns to the audience. He is vaguely dazed, disoriented.)

STIMSON

What I find . . . most striking now . . . is the absolute hypocrisy of those who would judge us. To them, of course, I am nothing but a criminal and a war-monger. And our decision the inevitable result of a military machine gone mad. Do they really think a decision of this magnitude could be made so callously? Do they really believe we had nothing on our minds but winning the war?

The Japanese replied to the Potsdam Declaration by taking a position of mokusatsu. This was translated by the Domei News Agency as meaning they would "ignore" it. We learned later that in fact they had intended the word's other meaning, which is to 'withhold comment'. But what were we to do if their own news agency did not understand their intentions? What were we to do?

(Sound of wind, rain. TOMMY and HENRY huddle under a tarp. They call out over the storm.)

TOMMY

Helluva day you picked for a climb, Henry!

HENRY

But it was so clear the last time we were up here!

What? TOMMY

Clear! There was hardly any wind! HENRY  
I'm going out there again! (Pause.)

Aw, leave it alone, Henry! TOMMY

No! I have to find it now! HENRY  
(He pulls TOMMY closer.)  
If this keeps up we'll have to go down! If we have to go down before we find the skull . . . I don't know if I can get up here again! I don't know if I'll ever be back here! It was just over there, I'm sure it was! I remember -- the cairn was near the edge of the cliff!

All right. Then I'll come with you! TOMMY

No! No! HENRY

You look over on that side! I'll look over here! TOMMY

But -- HENRY

Just shuddup and start looking, Henry! I wanna get going! TOMMY  
(HENRY starts to go. ROOT sweeps in and leads him another way.)

Henry, my boy! Henry! Drop what you're doing and come with me. ROOT  
(Sound of wind, rain out. ROOT leads HENRY over to the figure of COOLIDGE, whom -- like the other Presidents -- we do not see.)  
President Coolidge, I would like you to meet Mr. Henry L. Stimson! A colleague of mine and a very good lawyer.

Yes, we've . . . met, Mr. President. HENRY

We have?! COOLIDGE

HENRY

Yes, you uh . . . shook my hand at the nominating convention.

COOLIDGE

Oh that's right! Goddammit! I oughta write these things down. Well listen, Stimson, on Elihu's recommendation here, I wanna send you to the Phillipines.

HENRY

The – ?

COOLIDGE

Phillipines. As Governor General.

ROOT

Because you did such a good job in Nicaragua.

COOLIDGE

That you did, that you did! Gettin' those rebels to sit down and talk. Now there's a problem we won't have to deal with again!

(ROOT beams. Pause.)

Well?

HENRY

Well what, sir?

COOLIDGE

The Phillipines, goddammit, whaddaya say?

ROOT

What the President has in mind, Henry, is a little negotiation, a little gentle persuasion, you know, the kind of thing you're good at. Get the nationalists to tone down things a bit -- and get our own people to stop being such a bunch of cusses! Isn't that about it, Mr. President?

COOLIDGE

Absoutely, Elihu. Exactly what I would've said!

ROOT

I don't even know why we're asking. You're obviously not going to say No!

HENRY

Well . . . no --

ROOT

Good! Good! I'll fill him in on the details, Mr. President. You have better things to do.  
(He leads HENRY away.)

Oh, I know it's halfway around the world, Henry, but think of this: that means it's halfway home too. And you'll be able to get over to Japan every once in awhile -- that oughta break things up.

(They stop.)

The reason we like to turn to you, Henry . . . is because you're the kind of man who can get things started. Who can get things rolling. Oh anybody can run a government, but without the ones who were there at the beginning . . . you're an initiator, Henry. That's what I'd call you. An initiator.

(Percussion -- three beats. Then sound of wind and rain, even louder.)

TOMMY  
(Yelling over the storm.)

Any sign of it over there, Henry?

HENRY

No! Not yet! I can't see a thing!

(HENRY moves farther down. He sees something in the distance.)

There it is.

TOMMY

What?

HENRY

I see it! It's over here!

(HENRY runs to the cairn. TOMMY follows a distance behind. HENRY stops, looking down into the cairn. Sound of wind and rain peaks, stops. Pause.)

It's gone, Tommy. The skull is gone.

(Music -- a Japanese lute. HANK crosses to directly opposite HENRY, and begins to build a rock cairn on the spot that HENRY stares at. TOM hands him the stones. As this continues, STIMSON speaks.)

STIMSON

Hiroshima was bombed on the morning of . . . well, that is all history. You know all that. The death toll was rather higher than we expected. We had thought 20,000 people would die. 70,000 died in Hiroshima. 74,000 in Nagasaki.

That is not news to you. It was news to us then.

By dropping the atomic bomb, I believe we saved at least a million American lives. By dropping the bomb, we may also have saved a million Japanese lives. We also put an end to the fireraids which had already killed 100,000 people in Tokyo, and destroyed or irreparably damaged such centres of culture and history as Coventry, Berlin, London, Cologne. We put an end to the military blockade which was causing such hardship in Japan. We knew what we were doing. But there were circumstances. Circumstances which I very much fear history has obscured rather than made clearer.

There is an assumption that distance makes clearer the nature of an event or deed. But it is not so. Study a painting from the middle of the gallery floor and you will see its total effect, yes. But stand with your eyes inches from the canvas and you will begin to see the brushstrokes, the draughtsmanship, the choices of brush and colour that passed through the artist's mind as he stood in that exact same spot. It is only close up that an event can be understood; distance in time or geography only seems to make the event simpler. That is why there was debate in Chicago, and doubt in Los Alamos, as to what we were doing. That is why you sit there now and wonder at our hard-heartedness. But it was not that simple. It was not that simple. That is what I want you to know.

(HENRY turns away from the cairn, which is now almost fully constructed in front of him. He goes; TOMMY follows. HANK places the last rock on the cairn, then moves to pick up the bison skull. He starts to put it in place in the cairn, then hesitates and gives it to TOM to do so. TOM places the bison skull in the cairn, as lights crossfade to:

DAVIS, pursued by REPORTERS.)

REPORTER 1

Mr. Davis, why was there a second bombing at Nagasaki?

REPORTER 2

Mr. Davis, where is the Secretary of War?

REPORTER 1

Mr. Davis, is it true that the Japanese had tried to open peace negotiations through the Russians?

DAVIS

Your questions will have to wait for the Secretary, gentlemen. I am not empowered to answer them.

REPORTER 2

Mr. Davis, is it true that the Russians were planning to occupy Manchuria?

REPORTER 1

Mr. Davis, where is the Secretary of War?

DAVIS

The Secretary is resting at his country home, gentlemen. I suggest that we leave him to do so.

(The REPORTERS and DAVIS leave. Lights up on STIMSON. He is seated. He wears a fine dressing gown. He looks ashen. He reads from a book of Shakespeare's sonnets.)

STIMSON

"How can I then return in happy plight,  
That am debarred the benefit of rest?"

When day's oppression is not eased by night,  
 But day by night, and night by day, oppress'd?  
 And each, though enemies to either's reign,  
 Do in consent shake hands to torture me."

(He stops. Puts the book down. Looks out.

Light shift. STIMSON still seated. He stares at  
 nothing. OLD GULLIVER is there. He drinks  
 brandy.)

OLD GULLIVER

Well the gods have finally conspired to destroy me, Henry. I have been kicked upstairs.  
 I am to become an eminence grise at the law firm, a sort of Hirohito of Fifth Avenue.

STIMSON

Congratulations, Gulliver.

OLD GULLIVER

Thankyou. I do not think Root would be pleased.

(Pause.)

I want you to join me.

STIMSON

To what?

OLD GULLIVER

Come back to the law firm, Henry. Join me in stately desuetude.

STIMSON

Good god, Gulliver. I am almost eighty years old.

OLD GULLIVER

So what? So am I. Almost. We can go for long lunches. We can walk in Battery Park. It  
 will be like old times.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

No, thankyou Gulliver. I think not.

OLD GULLIVER

When you are ready.

STIMSON

Thankyou. No.

(Pause.)

OLD GULLIVER

You aren't going to stay on in Washington, are you?

STIMSON  
No.

OLD GULLIVER  
No. I didn't think so. Working with Truman. It must be like working with a haberdasher.

STIMSON  
He was a haberdasher.

OLD GULLIVER  
Yes, Henry. I know.  
(Pause.)  
Well? What will you do then? If you won't come work with me.

STIMSON  
I shall stay here.

OLD GULLIVER  
And?

STIMSON  
(Rising; tense; anger building.)  
Why must I have everything planned? Why? Because you ask me? I shall grow flowers. I will putter. I will host picnics for the local children. I shall do what I want, Gulliver, and it might not involve you!  
(Pause.)  
I'm sorry.  
(Pause.)  
I'm sorry. Perhaps I should go to bed.  
(He starts to go.)

OLD GULLIVER  
Poor Henry.  
(Pause. STIMSON stops.)  
Poor Henry. No, I shouldn't have asked you. You're much too good for us.  
(Pause.)  
Poor Henry. A good man cast among swine. The world doesn't want to be saved. What is he to do? Wars are declared. Bombs are dropped. Women and children are killed, my, my, my. What an insult to his senses! Sixty years I have known you, Henry. And you are still living in agony.  
(Pause.)

STIMSON  
Get out, Gulliver.

OLD GULLIVER  
What?

Get out. Go home.

STIMSON  
(Firm; controlled fury.)

(After a moment, OLD GULLIVER goes.)

Light shift. STIMSON still in his chair.)

STIMSON  
(A deadness in his voice.)

I wait for the dinner bell. I look out over the ocean. Some evenings there is a sunset. Some evenings there is nothing. I read Shakespeare's sonnets. I play parcheezi to pass the time.

Why do I think back to that mountain? Where I have not visited for thirty years. Why do I think of Tommy now -- why do I wonder if he is still alive? In my mind I climb the mountain. I am nearly at the top. I can feel the breeze blowing down off the summit. I can hear the beat of the Thunderbird's wings.

(Long pause.)

I go for walks above the ocean. I watch the gardener do his work. Sometimes a neighbour comes over -- I listen without hearing. I build castles with toothpicks. I host picnics for the local children. I am . . . in Highhold.

(Pause. A dinner bell tinkles. STIMSON rises laboriously from his chair, starts to move off. Percussion, low, building. STIMSON stands stock still for a moment. Suddenly, he collapses.

Darkness. Percussion. Voices.)

ROOT  
Come pheasant-hunting with me, Henry!

TOM  
Don't go too close to the edge!

TOMMY  
Halfway there, Stimson! Halfway there!

GULLIVER  
Our Henry was one of --

HANK  
You betrayed me.

THOMAS  
Tell him.

HENRY  
Tell him!



BYRNES  
Licorice, Henry?

TOMMY  
Pretty big mountain, eh Stimson?

THOMAS  
Pretty big mountain. Gets bigger every --  
(Sound stops. Light up on DAVIS.)

DAVIS  
Mr. Secretary.  
(STIMSON turns.)

STIMSON  
Peter Jay.

DAVIS  
I can only see you for a few minutes, I'm afraid. My day is very busy.  
(STIMSON moves to him.)

STIMSON  
How are you, Peter Jay?

DAVIS  
Very well, thankyou.

STIMSON  
You're moving to the State Department, I hear.

DAVIS  
Yes, that's right.

STIMSON  
Well, good. Good. Good for you.  
(Pause.)  
Uh, I've come back to Washington because I'm hoping to submit a proposal to the President. I hope to impress upon him the need to control atomic power now that we –

DAVIS  
To control it, sir?

STIMSON  
Yes, that's right, now that we –

DAVIS  
To control it, sir? Isn't it a little late for that?  
(Pause.)

STIMSON

Well, yes. We can't take back what has happened, if that's what you mean. But I do believe we can –

DAVIS

I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary, I really must be going.

STIMSON

If you could help me draw up some –

DAVIS

Perhaps we can get together next –

STIMSON

Peter Jay LISTEN TO ME!

(Pause. DAVIS stops, turns.)

DAVIS

No, Mr. Secretary. I have listened enough.

(Pause.)

You told me once that there would be no need to use the bomb. That there would be other ways to end the war. And I believed you, sir, and I take full responsibility for believing you. But I ask you: did you really believe it yourself?

(Pause.)

Did you really believe that?

(Pause.)

It seems to me now that what has happened was as inevitable on that day as if the bomb bay doors had already opened. Because you were outmaneuvered, Mr. Secretary. You have always believed that the force of a good idea will prevail over the power of men and machines. But it is not so. I see that now.

(Pause.)

So yes, I will help you with your proposal, or whatever it is you want to do. You are a good man and I respect you for that. But I will not be so naive this time as to believe that hoping, or wishing, or believing that something will happen is enough to make it so. Naiveté can kill people, Mr. Secretary. I see that now, too.

(Pause.)

Please see my secretary. She can set up some time next week.

(DAVIS goes. STIMSON stands there. Percussion, loud, building. Peaks. An odd, coloured light rises onstage. FRANCK appears.)

FRANCK

Mr. Secretary.

STIMSON

(Turning; befuddled.)

Yes?

FRANCK

I am James Franck. I worked on S-1.

STIMSON

Oh yes, Dr. Franck. Please, I was just . .

(His voice trails off.)

FRANCK

You have been very busy lately.

STIMSON

Yes.

FRANCK

But you are not so busy now.

STIMSON

No. No. Is there something I can –

FRANCK

I have come to tell you that I will speak out against what we have done, Mr. Secretary. I will speak out against you. I will take your name in vain.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

Yes. Well I stand advised of your enmity, Dr. Franck. Thankyou for informing me.

(STIMSON turns away.)

FRANCK

I have worked twice now for governments that made murder their official policy. It is time for me to atone, would you not say?

STIMSON

You may do as you please.

FRANCK

And perhaps you as well.

STIMSON

Dr. Franck. We were all chastened by the outcome of this horrible war. It is something we cannot repeat. Let us concentrate on that.

(Pause; then, quickly.)

You may be interested to know that I was not the sole author of the Potsdam Declaration. I wished to include a clause that would have allowed the Japanese to retain their monarchy but I was overruled by . . . others. As it is, we have ended up letting them keep their Emperor anyway, so yes, I agree with you, the bombing need not have happened. But I am only one man. I am not the government incarnate!

FRANCK

And that is your defense, Mr. Secretary?

STIMSON

I am not offering you a defense, Dr. Franck, I am offering you an explanation!  
(Pause.)

FRANCK

Where were you when I tried to see you?

STIMSON

When?

FRANCK

In June. I tried to see you. You would not see me.

STIMSON

Ah yes. Well I was rather busy then. Just as I am rather busy now.

FRANCK

You were standing in your office, weren't you?

STIMSON

I was out of the city!

FRANCK

The first time. I was standing on one side of the door. And you were standing on the other.

(Pause.)

And when you left the city, where did you go?

STIMSON

I don't think –

FRANCK

To Europe? To Russia? Some very important state dinner?

STIMSON

I don't remember, and I do not think it is your concern!

FRANCK

Or were you, in fact, still in Washington, Mr. Secretary. That is what my friends tell me. They tell me that you did not leave the city at all!

(Pause.)

If you had seen me, you might have changed your mind.

STIMSON

I very much doubt that.

FRANCK

If you had seen me –

STIMSON

Your letter was widely circulated, Dr. Franck, I am sure it was taken into consideration.

FRANCK

But if you had seen me --

STIMSON

YES, PERHAPS, IF I HAD SEEN YOU PERHAPS I WOULD HAVE CHANGED MY MIND!

(Pause.)

FRANCK

But you didn't. You didn't see me. You stayed in your office.

(Pause.)

You are no better than the men who destroyed my homeland, Mr. Secretary. You are no better than the Nazis. You do not like that comparison, it outrages you. You say, oh, I wanted to stop the bombing, but others would not let me. But when you might have done something, you did nothing at all. I denounce you, Mr. Secretary. I denounce you as a war criminal.

(FRANCK spits in STIMSON's face.)

You have made criminals of us all.

(FRANCK goes. Percussion, building. STIMSON stands there. Percussion peaks. Pause. Japanese lute music. White light floods the stage.

HENRY and A JAPANESE OFFICIAL appear. A YOUNG JAPANESE BOY gambols about nearby.

STIMSON watches.)

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

These woods are over four centuries old. The people come here from Tokyo to worship at the shrines. Or they simply come for the quiet. It is very quiet, once you are among the trees.

HENRY

They remind me of certain woods at home.

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

In the Phillipines?

HENRY

No, not in the Phillipines -- the islands are not my home. No, I mean in the West of America.

(They start to go. The BOY runs by them.)

That boy. Who is he?

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

I don't know. I shall ask.

(The OFFICIAL calls out to the BOY in JAPANESE. The BOY replies.)

He says he is the groundskeeper's son. He is one of the groundskeepers' sons. We have fourteen.

(The OFFICIAL calls to the BOY in Japanese. Then, to HENRY.)

I have told him to come meet a great American.

HENRY

Oh, no, really, it's not necessary. It's not true.

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

Please. He will be able to tell all his friends he has met the Governor General of the Phillipines!

(The BOY runs up to them, bows. HENRY bows gracefully back. The BOY speaks in Japanese.)

He asks is it true that you come from America?

(The OFFICIAL speaks.)

I have told him that it is true, but that now you are visiting from Manila.

(The BOY speaks to STIMSON.)

He says he has many uncles in America, and that they say everyone there is rich. He wants to know if this is true.

HENRY

(Smiling.)

Tell him it is not true, but that everyone there is given the chance to be.

(The JAPANESE OFFICIAL does. The BOY replies.)

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

He asks if you can take him there.

HENRY

Tell him I'm sure when he is older, if his father lets him, he may come to America.

(The OFFICIAL does.)

All right then?

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

Yes. I think he is disappointed.

(HENRY and the OFFICIAL start off. Suddenly, the BOY runs after them and starts tugging at HENRY'S jacket, jabbering in Japanese.)

What -- what does he want?

HENRY

(The OFFICIAL speaks harshly to the BOY. The BOY continues jabbering, and tugging at HENRY.)

What does he say?

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

Nothing. It is foolishness, Colonel Stimson.

No, I want to know!

HENRY

(The OFFICIAL pulls the BOY off HENRY, and throws him to the ground. The BOY kneels there, bowing to HENRY.)

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

He says that if you will take him to America, he will leave his father, and do your bidding. He will be your servant.

Servant?

HENRY

(The BOY speaks again.)

Son.

JAPANESE OFFICIAL

(Pause.)

Tell him to stand up.

HENRY

(The OFFICIAL does.)

Tell him that in America we do not bow before others.

(The OFFICIAL does. Slowly, the BOY stands. HENRY crouches before him. He takes a small card from his wallet and gives it to him.)

This is my card. This is where I live. This is my name. Henry Stimson. When you are eighteen, you write to me here, and have your father write to me too. And if he agrees . . . I will see you are allowed to come to America. Do you understand?

(The BOY looks at the card, looks at HENRY, nods.)

Good. Write in your own language. I will understand.

(They regard each other for a moment, then the BOY starts to run off. At a distance, he stops to look back at HENRY again.)

STIMSON

This is my card. This is where I live. This is my name. Henry. Stimson.  
(Blackout. In the dark, sound of percussion, very loud.)

STIMSON

(More quickly.)

This is my card. This is where I live. This is my name. Henry  
(A deafening crash of thunder drowns out his name. A brilliant white light from high above pours down upon STIMSON. He peers up at it in terror, slowly drops to his knees. Meanwhile, on another level, the figure of FRANCK appears.)

FRANCK

(Reading from his report.)

“The military advantages and the saving of American lives achieved by the sudden use of atomic bombs against Japan may be outweighed by a wave of horror and revulsion sweeping over the rest of the world.

(Here the figure of BARD joins in the reading. He begins at the beginning, so that they do not speak in unison, but softly, so that FRANCK is still heard.)

From this point of view, a demonstration of the new weapon might be made, before the eyes of all the United Nations on the desert or a barren island.

(They are joined by HANK and DAVIS. Again, they begin at the beginning.)

If the United States were to be the first to release this new means of indiscriminate destruction on mankind –

(THOMAS joins in, as above.)

-- she would sacrifice public support throughout the world, precipitate the race for armaments, and prejudice the possibility of reaching an international agreement on the future control of such weapons.

STIMSON

I -- AM NOT -- A CRIMINAL! I knew what we had done! I wrote, I wrote to the President -- you will find the papers in my files! That our ability to destroy ourselves was now complete. That upon us fell responsibility for the future of civilization. That man's very relationship to his universe had been wholly and forever altered.

This is history! This is what is written down! This is what I stand by, not what you would prefer to think of me, not what time in its infinite hypocrisy preaches! THIS!

Yes, we might have exploded it on some deserted Pacific island -- but what if it had not gone off? What if it had not worked? Yes, we might have given the Japanese some warning, but would they have believed us? We might as well have told them we walked among the gods as that we had mastered the power of the sun!



There is . . . in every system . . . an inertia . . . whereby the possible becomes the inevitable, and what might have been is forgotten in the rush towards what is. Like the gravity that sucks a bomb towards its target . . . like the force that draws the sap through the tree . . . a power of the universe we have not mastered. That masters us. A mystery still unhewn.

Oh Thomas.

Thomas!

I stand upon the top of Chief Mountain. I stand here alone. I wait for the judgement of the Thunderbird. Why does he not come to me? Why does he not appear? I have climbed the east face of the mountain. Come to me! COME TO ME!

(Pause. STIMSON stands searching the sky. The JAPANESE BOY breaks position, runs a few steps, stops, looks at STIMSON. STIMSON looks to him, reaches out. The BOY runs away.)

HANK  
(Looking out.)

Light.

It's clearing. TOMMY

I think we had better head down now. TOM

Maybe some tourists got it. HENRY

What if it is his pillow? HANK

Maybe the Thunderbird got it. TOMMY

I don't want to know. HENRY  
(THOMAS rises, starts to move up.)

Come on, Mr. Stimson! TOM

Go you silly fool. Go. STIMSON

TOMMY

We could be back before dinnertime, Henry!

THOMAS

(Appears behind STIMSON. He watches him for a moment.)

Hey Stimson. We better head down now. It's gettin' late.

(STIMSON does not move. THOMAS moves to sit beside him. Looks around.)

I come up here sometimes. Just for myself. Clean up a little bit. Clean up the tourists' junk. Still. All the times I been up here. Winter. Nighttime. Sleep under the stars. If there's any Thunderbird up here . . . I ain't seen him.

(Pause.)

I don't say it's right what I done, Henry. But I done it. So what can I do? Come up here. Clean up a bit. Don't lie to myself. Most of all, don't lie to myself, Henry. That helps.

(Pause.)

Oh. Hey. Here. I brung ya something. Ya left it over there.

(He reaches into the pack, pulls out the bison skull.)

Thought you might want it. It was about the only thing I didn't throw off.

(Pause.)

STIMSON

Put it on the cairn, Thomas.

THOMAS

No. You put it on the cairn.

(He holds it out to STIMSON. STIMSON takes it. Moves to the cairn, places it on top. They are still, looking at it.)

HENRY

(On another level, singing.)

“For it's Hi! Hi! Hee! In the Field artillery,  
Call off your number loud and strong!  
And where'er we go,  
You will always know  
That those caissons are rolling along.”

(The light narrows to a pinspot on the bison skull.

Fade.)

End

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see the *The Third Ascent* information page (click on your browser's "Back" button, or visit <http://www.singlelane.com/proplay/ascent.html>)