

Note: This show periodically replaces their ad breaks with new promotional clips. Because of this, both the transcription for the clips and the timestamps after them may be inaccurate at the time of viewing this transcript.

00:00:00	Music	Music	Eighties-style synth-pop with strong drumbeat and staccato electric guitar plays in background of dialogue.
00:00:01	Adam Pranica	Host	Hey, it's the hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i> here, telling you to vote. And specifically, who to vote for. We've seen enough films on <i>Friendly Fire</i> to know what a "country descending into" type of genre gives you. We would very much like the story of these United States not to turn into that.
00:00:21	John Roderick	Host	Boy, you said it, Adam! Whether you consider yourself to be a real leftist who isn't gonna vote for Biden 'cause the Democrats and the Republicans are just two sides of the same coin, <u>or</u> whether you're a red-blooded American Second Amendment fan who doesn't wanna lose their freedoms and feels like they <u>should</u> vote for Donald Trump just to own the libs, we want to encourage you—as listeners of <i>Friendly Fire</i> —to join with us in voting for Joe Biden. The right-down-the-middle American candidate who isn't going to drive our republic into civil war.
00:00:57	Ben Harrison	Host	And actually has a shot at winning!
00:01:00	John	Host	Yeah. Don't for the Green Party here, please. And don't vote for Trump.
00:01:04	Ben	Host	The election is November 3 rd . Make a plan. Make sure you vote early, if you have that option, where you are. Or by mail to stay safe, if you have that option where you are. Make sure you get your ballot in the mail earlier than Election Day. Give it plenty of time to get there and be safe.
00:01:23	Adam	Host	If you have thoughts about this preroll, you can email those comments to GoFuckYourself@Maxfunkenstein.sex .
00:01:30	Ben	Host	Thank you.
00:01:31	Music	Music	<i>[Music ceases.]</i> "Missile Threat" by Trevor Jones from the album <i>Thirteen Days (Original Motion Picture Score)</i> plays in the background. Slow, foreboding orchestral music.
00:01:33	John	Host	The Cuban Missile Crisis is distant enough now that it can only be read as a kind of campy fun. All those slim, Harvard boys with their Brahmin accents and J. Press suits. They all seem like relics of prehistory. So it stands to reason that we feel like their problems and their politics and the prosumer quality of their munitions—and especially their telephones—and crucially, the danger that they faced—were similarly just elements of some <i>Parcel</i> -ian stage play where the boys wore coconut bras and they all sang "Buttercup." I mean, Castro was such a funny, furry little bear with his Groucho cigar and his coffee can hat, and Khrushchev—stomping around trying to kill the wabbit—standing on two dictionaries to marvel at the electric washer—how could these silly men have posed any real threat to the world?

And then there's our own John Kennedy, long carved in stone on the tabloid Rushmore. An ancient Greek. A hero, who guards us even now while we sleep, dreaming of a greater Martin Sheen still in the White House reading hard books. He liked keeping us safe. This was all so long ago they may as well have been in togas. But just for context, my dad had his 41st birthday during the Missile

Crisis. It wasn't that long ago. I still have some of his suits from that period and they're killer. There was nothing inevitable about the outcome. None of those guys were that much smarter than you or me or Ricky Gervais or James Franco. The fact is that even the smartest people aren't that smart. People are idiots! I used to think you had to be smart to be the president, and then Reagan got elected. And even at age 12 I could tell he wasn't smart. George Bush the elder had the kind of intelligence of a school headmaster that gets pranked the same way every Halloween and never sees it coming.

Clinton was Rotarian smart, but George W.? Do you remember all the commentariat at the time saying, "George W. sounds like an idiot and he acts like an idiot, but don't underestimate him! You have to be super-smart to be a president!" Ha! What a laugh! Turns out not! All those presidents and CEOs we tacitly assume are probably super-secret smart—even when they're visibly flummoxed and have stupid in their eyes—are actually just exactly as stupid as they appear. This is obvious. But at the same time, we think things like the Cuban Missile Crisis got solved. By some smart heroes. It was probably just an accident that all those numb-nuts didn't end the world. *[Sighs.]*

00:04:15 John Host

We've got an election in three weeks and I'm writing and recording this intro at 2:45 a.m. on Wednesday morning, and I honestly cannot confidently make any contemporary reference for fear that two days from now—when it airs—we could be at war with Spain. The current president of the United States—who is undoubtedly showering his underlings right now in Big Mac-scented corona spittle from atop his *Hustler Magazine* shoe lifts—has, among his legion of obsequious carbuncle toadies, some poor Air Force officer who didn't ask to be there, carrying the phone number of the apocalypse in a handbag. There aren't enough checks and balances in the world to have that be the unquestioned state of affairs. I wouldn't trust the nuclear codes to any public figure, with the exception of Carl Sagan, who's dead. And maybe the guys from *Flight of the Conchords*. There aren't even any remotely smart people in the room this time. There don't seem to be any smart people left in the world. And worst of all? They're all wearing terrible suits! Let us hope the will of good men is enough... to counter the terrible strength of this thing that was put in motion. Today on *Friendly Fire—Thirteen Days*.

00:05:32 Music Music

[Music fades out.]

"War" off the album *War & Peace* by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.

War!
Huh!
Yeah!
What is it good for?!
Absolutely—
—nothing!
Uh-huh!

War!
Huh!

Yeah!
What is it good for?!
Absolutely—
—nothing!

Say it again, y'all!

War!

00:05:51 Ben Host *[Song fades down and plays quietly as the hosts speak.]*
[JFK impersonation] Welcome to *Friendly Fire*, the war movie
podcast that will review this movie and do the other things before
the decade is out!

[John laughs.]

Not because it is easy. But because it is hard. *[Regular voice]* I'm
Ben Harrison.

00:06:04 Adam Host *[Adam laughs.]*
I'm Adam Pranica.
00:06:07 John Host *[Applauds.]* Bravo.
00:06:09 Adam Host Please talk like that the entire episode, Ben.

[All laugh.]

00:06:11 Ben Host I'll slip in and out. *[Laughs.]*
00:06:14 John Host I'm John Roderick, and that was great.

00:06:17 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
I was up all night thinking about which Kennedy quote I was going
to mash into that spot, and it wound up being one not in the movie!
Which—I read that this movie was, like, based on a lot of, like,
actual Nixon-like tapes of the proceedings in the Oval Office and
stuff.

00:06:37 John Host They've got tapes! They do! They have the tapes!
00:06:40 Ben Host Amazing. *[Laughs.]* I wonder if they still run those tape machines. I
like to think so. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:46 Adam Host Boy, ya hope so.
00:06:47 John Host In a perfect world. But I think they all got taken out. I think they
figured it out.

00:06:53 Ben Host It would be interesting to have audio of what was going on on Fox
News from moment to moment in this modern era. *[Laughs.]*

00:07:00 Adam Host A Dictaphone is a large device, though. Like, you'd notice it in a
room.

00:07:06 Ben Host Yeah.
00:07:07 Adam Host Most people would, anyway.
00:07:10 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. But it doesn't move, so certain people who won't be
able to pick it up because their visual system is based on
movement.

00:07:17 Adam Host Right.
00:07:18 John Host These were built into some cabinets, I think.
00:07:20 Adam Host There was a moment in this film that I sort of understood the
whole... *[Laughs.]* The whole Kevin Costner-ness of it?

[Ben laughs.]

And it was early on. Early on we're following O'Donnell into work. We get to meet his family. We follow him in his awesome car as he pulls into his parking spot and then walks in. And has a brief conversation with Jackie Onassis. And in this conversation, I was fairly confident that Jackie wanted to fuck O'Donnell.

00:07:58 Ben Host It was very, very flirty. Wasn't it?
00:08:00 Adam Host And I feel like that's... that's this movie.

[Multiple people laugh.]

Like, "Who the fuck is O'Donnell?" Like, he's our main character in a movie about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Kennedys? That's kind of the question that a lot of the ex-cabinet members asked when they saw this movie, was "Who the fuck is O'Donnell?"

00:08:17 Ben Host *[Laughs.]*

00:08:25 Adam Host And I think it's crucial, guys, that it's Jackie O that kind of knights him for the film in this moment.

00:08:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Adam: Like, she gives him the credibility—
—of being in it by giving us a scene with her. Right up front. I felt the same way about that moment. His casual... banter with her, where he was basically saying, like, "You're a naughty girl, Jackie!"

00:08:34 Adam Host
00:08:39 John Host

[Adam laughs.]

Was like, "Oh! Well, I guess this guy's the most important person in American government and also, like, gossip magazine fodder and who is this sexy man?"

00:09:05 Adam Host Right.
00:09:05 John Host It turns out that the actual character did go to Harvard with Bobby Kennedy. Was close to the family. Did—he was present during the events depicted, but as you said, Ben—McNamara and other important actual people, who were on the—

[Ben laughs.]

[Through laughter]—who were on the Security Council and whatnot—all said, like, "He was the appointment secretary. He wasn't really in the room. So..."

00:09:36 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* This film makes the case that he would, like, talk over Kennedy if *[through laughter]* he had a point to make.

00:09:41 John Host He did that several times, right? Like, he was like, "Listen, listen, Jack. Y'know, like—"

[Ben laughs.]

"Sit down and let the big boys talk."

00:09:48 Adam Host The legend of him—the legend of O'Donnell—is what we see in this film. And then I did a little research like you, John, about him. And he's legendarily someone who was on Air Force One during Lyndon Johnson's swearing-in as standing next to Jackie O and Lyndon Johnson. But crucially he's the guy that's cropped out of the photo.

[Multiple people laugh.]

Like, that's O'Donnell. That's O'Donnell with everything that you read about him. Like, that is such a representation of him. Like, he's close enough to be involved in everything, but he's the guy that's cropped out of the photo. And here's a movie that asks the question, "What if he were in every photo?"

00:10:34	Ben	Host	<p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i> He's, like, who you would wonder about if you were, like, Facebook stalking Jackie Onassis 'cause you were kind of interested in dating her—</p> <p><i>[Adam laughs.]</i></p> <p>—but you wanted to see, like, who she'd maybe be involved in in the past and you see that her prof pic is her standing there on Air Force One and you're like, "Well, I know that she wasn't really with LBJ... but who's that arm around her—who's got his hand on her shoulder there? Who's that?"</p>
00:10:58	John	Host	I had never seen that before, Adam, but if you Google that photo...
00:11:03	Adam	Host	Yeah! I did!
00:11:05	John	Host	There are 600 examples of the famous one, and then there's that one where it's just slightly wider shot and there he is, O'Donnell sticking his—he's standing right there! He's touching her arm! I never saw that before. <p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i></p>
00:11:19	Adam	Host	Wow.
00:11:20	Clip	Clip	Yeah. Kenny O'Donnell (<i>Thirteen Days</i>): They need to be able to stick their necks out.
00:11:22	Adam	Host	What this film does is right the wrong of O'Donnell erasure. <p><i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i></p>
00:11:27	Ben	Host	This movie made me think a lot about what makes it similar to and what separates it from <i>Path to War</i> , which is set in a White House not too distant from this. Was made—like, that movie was made two years after this one. You could almost call it a spiritual sequel to <i>Thirteen Days</i> . But they feel super different. Like, they feel like radically different in a lot of ways also.
00:11:57	John	Host	Yeah. We've been watching a <u>lot</u> of movies about this era in American policy and politics, and it's <u>really</u> becoming super-interesting to connect them all together into one big... ziggerat (<i>ziggurat</i>). Like, last week's show, Flight of the Intruder , arguably is part of the family of—every Vietnam movie is an extension of the Kennedy policies of 1962, and watching them kind of tumble into shape, all these different perspectives. It's really—even as somebody who's spent a long time thinking about that era, just seeing these movies in quick succession, it's a real education. The funny thing about O'Donnell—and we learn this in watching <i>Path to War</i> —which is that George Ball, in that movie, was another character that seemed to have an outside or an inordinate amount of influence in the room, given his actual title. Like, George Wall in

the Johnson administration was some kind of Undersecretary of State. And why was he being considered so much?

00:13:32 Ben Host Uh-huh. *[Laughs.]* Why do they keep asking him what he thinks?

00:13:35 John Host Yeah, right.

00:13:36 Adam Host He had that drunk-at-a-party confidence, too. That's how you know you're comfortable.

00:13:40 John Host And O'Donnell also seems to be—like, he's an appointment secretary. Why is he even in the room? But George Ball had what was later called the Ball Rule of Power, and his rule—this is like “the nattering nabobs of negativism”—

[Multiple people laugh.]

—he said, “Nothing propinks like propinquity.”

00:14:06 Adam Host That's something that I could hear slurred through his teeth.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:14:09 John Host You could see, though, that that rule of power doesn't—it doesn't get spoken about as much these days because nobody knows what “propinquity” means. But “nothing propinks like propinquity” is a joke coinage that means, “The more direct access you have to the president, the greater your power regardless of what your actual title in government is.”

00:14:34 Adam Host That makes a ton of sense.

00:14:36 John Host There's a case to be made that even though O'Donnell is sort of derided by Sorensen and McNamara as being, like, a nobody, he did go to college with RFK. He is Irish Catholic. He's one of these Harvard smarty-pantses. And maybe... there's a case to be made that he really was that close to these dudes?

00:15:06 Ben Host He was a trusted non-expert advisor.

00:15:09 John Host But it's super-annoying that all of those famous photographs of JFK and RFK standing out on the breezeway outside of the Oval Office with their hands in their pockets, sitting and talking about stuff?

[Ben laughs.]

All those photographs have been recreated in this movie except with Costner standing between them.

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:30 Adam Host It feels very *Forrest Gump*-y when you go through these moments and you see that weird third added to these scenes, right?

00:15:40 John Host Yeah.

00:15:41 Adam Host You're right. They're so familiar when you see the guys out there throwing the old pigskin around. Like, “Who's this other guy? What's he doing here?”

00:15:52 John Host “Who's this main guy? Why isn't he president of the United States?”

00:15:55 Adam Host Right.

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:56 Ben Host He's like the Talleyrand of the Kennedy administration.

00:15:59 John Host How much of this stuff—Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis—how much of it do you know, you guys, already? How much of it is in your DNA?

00:16:10 Ben Host I saw this movie in the theatres, and I think that this was kind of my—like, I don't think Cuban Missile Crisis was something they

taught in social studies or whatever when I was in middle school.
So.

00:16:23 John Host No. They were too busy teaching you that Columbus was a genocidal killer!

[Multiple people laugh.]

And they took the Cuban Missile Crisis stuff off the syllablit—
syllablis!

00:16:35 Ben Host *[Adam laughs.]*
Yeah. Well, so—I'm trying to think how the years lined up. Because my junior—no, my sophomore year high school history textbook was *People's History of the United States*.

00:16:49 Adam Host *[John chortles.]*
The Howard Zinn book?

00:16:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah.

Adam: Wow.

00:16:53 Ben Host **John:** That explains so much. *[Laughs.]*
And, like, my history teacher was like a—like, “Hi. I’m Dave, your history teacher. I’m a socialist.”

00:17:01 John Host *[All snicker.]*
Right.

00:17:03 Adam Host *[All laugh.]*
John, you and I couldn’t have done a better job making up a story.

[All laugh.]

00:17:12 John Host That Ben just admitted was his truth.
[Through laughter] It really explains everything.

[Ben laughs.]

00:17:17 Ben Host Everything.
But I don’t think that—like, I think we were focused on, like, further back in the past stuff? Than—

00:17:23 John Host Sure. Real colonialism, not this ginned-up 20th century colonialism.

00:17:28 Ben Host This is like cosplaying colonialism. These guys only aspire to what the Spaniards accomplished.

00:17:36 John Host Right.

00:17:38 Adam Host I went to public schools and learned about this in a proper history class.

00:17:43 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
“Proper,” huh?

00:17:45 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*
Right. *[Laughs.]*

00:17:47 John Host As the elder member of our *Friendly Fire* clan—and the one that is most boomer-proximate and let’s say just boomer-damaged—right?

[Multiple people laugh.]

Growing up in a world that was still really dominated by like active duty boomers? I feel like *[through laughter]* by the time, Ben, you were in your twenties, the boomers had lost their vitality? They were all starting to take like erectile dysfunction drugs at that point?

And—

00:18:18 Ben Host

Yeah. There were still drawing the biggest salaries at all their companies but not, like, really super-focused on anything.

00:18:27 Adam Host

They were using the money on side-by-side bathtubs with their partners.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:18:31 John Host

Right. But you know, when I was in my teens and twenties, the Boomers were in charge of FM radio. I mean, they were like—they were so omnipresent. And so the Cuban Missile Crisis and Bay of Pigs and the sixties and Vietnam and all that stuff, it was just—it was still in the newspapers every day because everything that happened to the boomers seemed to them to be the only things that ever mattered in history. Or they were the culmination of history. And that was the education climate that I went to school under. Right? Where it was just like, “Wow, the Cuban Missile Crisis! Like, everything turned on it!” And now, y’know... like, my daughter—*[through laughter]* my daughter asked me the other day, “Who’s on the nickel?” And I said, “Thomas Jefferson.”

[Ben laughs.]

And she said, “Was he a president?” And I was like, “Dammit! She doesn’t know who Thomas Jefferson is!” Like, we’re into a different universe, right? She’s never gonna know who McGeorge Bundy is. She’ll never need to, but for some reason, like, I do.

00:19:37 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:19:38 Clip Clip

O’Donnell: I thought it was because he was your brother.

00:19:40 Adam Host

Does it haunt you that you’re sending your daughter to a Benjamin R. Harrison school? You see what’s happening here, right?

00:19:47 John Host

Well, I mean, I sat down and *[through laughter]* gave her a four-hour lesson on Thomas Jefferson. You need a responsible adult in the room if you’re gonna give your kid a socialist education. *[Laughs.]*

00:19:57 Ben Host

The John Roderick history class that starts with Thomas Jefferson and ends with McGeorge Bundy.

[All laugh.]

00:20:04 Music Music

Electric guitar rock music begins playing in background of dialogue.

00:20:05 Ben Host

Something I feel like we’re depriving our school-aged children of in this country.

00:20:08 Adam Host

I would audit that class right now.

00:20:11 John Host

It’s a 300-level class.

[All laugh.]

00:20:15 Adam Host

You know what, Ben, you and I are taking it at this moment!

00:20:18 Ben Host

Yeah, I guess so!

[All laugh. Music fades out.]

00:20:22 John Host

Watching this movie in the theaters in the year 2000, we were going through that period, y’know, the post-Oliver Stone *JFK* era of a

00:20:46 Ben Host revisionist take on all this stuff? Like, let's go back through it. Let's relive it all again. And just, y'know, put the camera places that there weren't cameras before, or at least not cameras we had access to? The "back into the left wing" revision of history? *[Laughs.]*

00:20:49 John Host *[Adam laughs.]*
Exactly. So watching it at the time, y'know, being in the room... and feeling how fraught those few days were, how much Kennedy was surrounded by people advising him that there was only one course of action and that was to go to war. I remember, y'know, being pretty gripped by this movie in the theater and feeling like I'd never fully appreciated how... how high the stakes were.

00:21:24 Ben Host Yeah! Like, I—after seeing *Path to War*, the stakes in that felt super-high as well. But like, they're incalculably higher in this and I think Bruce Greenwood's performance is one of a man who is really overwhelmed by the decision that's in front of him, but it's a movie where the president kind of outfoxes the military machine in a way that *Path to War* is not. Like, there's a lot of similar themes where it's like, "It seems like these Joint Chiefs guys are really kinda stacking the deck so that this goes off and triggers an armed conflict!" And they find a way around that in this movie.

00:22:03 Adam Host If you're constructing a tension that is built around being outnumbered in the way that the story does, why would you add a superfluous person to that? Like, why do we need an intermediary to help us understand what's happening between the Kennedys at this moment? I feel like removing O'Donnell would increase the tension that this film is trying to orchestrate!

00:22:31 John Host Yeah. I agree. I mean, Ted Sorensen, the speechwriter, was there for a lot of that stuff. And you could—Costner could've been Sorensen and just put himself in the room when Sorensen was in the room? It really did not need to be a star vehicle for him.

00:22:48 Adam Host I feel like—this isn't the truth, but I feel like Costner looked at this movie and he was like—he wanted to be Kennedy! He wanted to be Kennedy so bad, but his accent was so shitty that we're like, "We can't make this movie with you as Kennedy." And Costner's like, "Well, what do you want me to do, man? I mean, I guess I can be this third guy, as long as he's the main guy." And here we are. This should be Bruce Greenwood's film to own. All by himself. Because I think he's—and what you were saying, Ben, I—he's so interestingly portrayed in this film. And I think Bruce Greenwood is great at him. I wanted more of him! Quit distracting me with O'Donnell!

00:23:28 John Host Yeah. You want Kennedy to be alone.

00:23:32 Adam Host Yeah.

00:23:33 John Host His brother, Robert, also was kind of hawkish in this moment! JFK didn't have a lot of people in his corner that didn't run all these numbers and come to the inevitable conclusion that we were going to have to invade Cuba. Or we were going to have to drop some bombs. And if we were gonna drop some bombs, we had to go all the way 'cause then we're gonna be fighting over Berlin and pretty soon it was all over. And what Kennedy didn't have was a 45-year-old Kevin Costner—

[Adam laughs.]

—standing there, telling him how everything was gonna go!

00:24:11	Ben	Host	But he's got, like, city miles on him, though. He's got that, like, "I've been in the administration and I'm—my hair is prematurely going grey" thing. They talk about that, right? Like, looking at old pictures of Lincoln. Like, "Woof. Being president really took it out of Lincoln."
00:24:30	Adam	Host	<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i> I mean, Lincoln—famously good-looking before becoming president.
00:24:34	Ben	Host	<i>[John laughs.]</i> Mm-hm.
00:24:35	Music	Music	Short reprise of theme song "War."
00:24:37	Promo	Clip	<i>[Cheering crowd.]</i>

Danielle Radford: Mmmacho man, to the top rope!

[Thump!]

Danielle: The flying elbow! The cover!

[Crowd cheering swells.]

Speaker 2: *[Distant; impact on each word]* One! Two! Three!

[Ding ding ding!]

Danielle: We've got a new champion!

Music: Excited, sweeping music.

Lindsey Kelk: We're here with Macho Man Randy Savage after his big win to become the new world champion! What are you gonna do now, Mach?!

Hal Lublin: *[Randy Savage impression]* I'm gonna go listen to the newest episode of the [Tights and Fights](#) podcast, oh yeah!

Lindsey: Tell us more about this podcast!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* It's the podcast of power, too sweet to be sour! Funky like a monkey! Woke discussions, man! And jokes about wrestlers' fashion choices, myself excluded! Yeahh!

Lindsey: I can't wait to listen!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* Neither can I! You can find it Saturdays on Maximum Fun! Oh yeahhh! Dig it!

[Music fades out.]

00:25:23	Promo	Clip	Music: Inspiring music throughout.
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[The "testimonials" clip between different VOs. They are not talking to one another.]

Speaker 1: I started listening to *Oh No Ross and Carrie* shortly after I broke my arm.

Speaker 2: I was allergic to water. I knew it was time to make a change.

[Music swells hopefully, to a dramatic crescendo]

Speaker 3: There's something about *Oh No Ross and Carrie* that you just can't get anywhere else.

Speaker 1: They're thought-leaders, discoverers, founders.

Speaker 2: Healers.

Speaker 4: Luminaries.

Speaker 5: Ross and Carrie don't just report on fringe science, spirituality, and claims of the paranormal. They take part themselves.

Speaker 6: They show up, so you don't have to.

Speaker 2: But you might find that you want to.

[Music swells unbearably]

Speaker 1: My arm is better.

Speaker 5: My landlord came back from the dead.

Speaker 6: Just go to MaximumFun.org.

Everyone: Thank you, Ross and Carrie!

Carrie Poppy: *[Hurriedly]* *Oh No Ross and Carrie* is just a podcast. It doesn't do anything. It's just sounds you listen to in your ears. All these people are made up. Goodbye.

00:26:09 Music Music
00:26:11 Adam Host

Short reprise of theme song "War."

You know what I love about Steven Culp's performance as Bobby Kennedy? Is how often his mouth is open when he's not talking. Like, so many of the photographs of RFK, I feel like he's always mid-speech or mouth open? Like, I don't feel like RFK was known as a mouth-breather of a person, but it helps you—like, it helps you believe that that's who you're seeing in this movie. In such an interesting and subtle way. I like that choice that he makes.

00:26:43 John Host

As a counterpoint to that—I hope, Ben, that you're with me in this camp.

00:26:48 Adam Host

Oh, come on. Look at you recruiting already.

00:26:51 Ben Host

Witness tampering!

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:26:53 John Host

No, no, no. This is just a little sidebar Ben and I have sometimes, Adam, where, y'know, you're welcome to listen.

00:27:01 Adam Host

Oh, thank you.

00:27:03 John Host

But I don't expect you to contribute. But I found the tailoring in this movie to be an abomination! Absolutely awful!

[Adam laughs.]

			You know, these guys were all wears sack suits, right? That was the—
00:27:16	Ben	Host	Right.
00:27:17	John	Host	They brought sack suits to the world, this crew.
00:27:19	Ben	Host	They went shopping at J. Press.
00:27:22	John	Host	J. Press!
00:27:23	Ben	Host	Right? The day before they went to the inauguration and got their guy sworn in, right?
00:27:29	John	Host	But RFK's suits fit <u>so</u> badly! His jackets were always the wrong size. Kenny O'Donnell's jackets were tailored in this way that every time he raised his arms up the, like, lapels got all crazy pinched? His collars weren't tailored right. These guys were some of the best-tailored dudes in history! The ties were wrong. I can't believe they got it wrong. It was so important. I mean, you could've made this movie with good tailoring and I wouldn't have even paid attention to the plot. I woulda just been looking—

[Multiple people laugh.]

			—I woulda just been admiring the way their shirts fit! And instead, every time somebody was on screen and like raised their arm and their jacket had this crazy gap, I was like, "What kind of made-for-television shit is this?"
00:28:17	Adam	Host	Hey, I kinda want to turn this into a film paper, John. And my paper goes like, "Do you believe that how tormented the Kennedys are takes a hit if they are impeccably dressed in this movie, versus looking a little vaguely unkempt! In a way that may give you a visual cue as to how disheveled their thoughts might be. About things during this time."

[Sound of dot matrix printer plays in background.]

			Like, does it add to an overall feeling about them as characters if they aren't looking fucking amazing during?
00:28:59	John	Host	Well, here's my counter to that. First of all, in reality—in actual fact—they looked amazing during this. It was precisely how... tailored they were—how sort of smart and chic they were—that caused Khrushchev to underestimate them. That caused LeMay to underestimate them. Like, Khrushchev famously said that Kennedy was too intellectual. He was too intelligent to be decisive. And, y'know, a year before this they screwed up the Bay of Pigs so badly. Kennedy was, y'know, fickle and waffled on it. And they got their asses handed to them and it was a massive embarrassment and it caused Khrushchev to feel like he could put missiles in Cuba. He didn't care about Cuba, but what Khrushchev wanted was Berlin.

And he knew—or he felt like he knew—that he would put these missiles in Cuba; that Kennedy would get flustered; and in the process, what Khrushchev would get was concessions in Berlin. Like, he would—y'know, they would trade Cuba for Berlin or whatever. And LeMay and all of those—the brass felt the same way about Kennedy! That he was—that he didn't have the guts. He didn't have the guts to follow through on Bay of Pigs; he didn't have

the guts to attack Cuba when he should've. I mean, they kept—after Bay of Pigs they kept coming up with schemes to invade Cuba. You couldn't have Latin America go Communist! It was, like, fundamental to the Monroe Doctrine. You couldn't have... Communists [*pronounces it "Commonists"*]

[Ben laughs.]

—like, what, 50 miles off the coast of the United States. The fact that Kennedy and RFK were so cute, and their ties fit so well, really played into how little respect anybody had for them.

00:31:01 Ben Host
00:31:02 Adam Host

Hm.

So the counterpoint to my argument that by looking ruffled you're made to believe in their underdoggedness in a way—like, you're cued visually for that—you're saying that the film would've served these characters more by actually tailoring the suits and making them look more capable than they were?

00:31:25 Ben Host

I might have a take on this. This is maybe a stretch as a film paper, but when this movie came out, I feel like the language communicated by a well-tailored suit had really changed in the culture. And I think that, like, a really great suit was kind of synonymous with The Man? And maybe... maybe the suits and the clothes in general are meant to communicate something to the Christmas Day premiere, year 2000 audience that came out to see this film that maybe, like, was kind of different from what was being communicated in the sixties.

00:32:10 John Host

Maybe, but you know if l'm boomer-damaged? That Costner has spent his entire life wanting to be in the White House in 1962. And in putting himself there, I can't believe that he would've missed the opportunity to go full bore—

[Ben laughs.]

—with the freaking tab collars. But Adam, I do think that the movie hints at it several times. The movie hints at the historicity of a few different things. Like, we never talk about Kennedy's physical ailments? But his rocking chair is a main character in the film. And we see him take a couple of handfuls of pills and the camera actually kinda zooms in on one handful of pills at one time. Y'know, that's all, like, a real signaling an awareness of Kennedy's—the fact that he was in constant pain through all of this.

00:33:12 Adam Host

We see him struggling to fuck a bunch of—

[Ben laughs.]

—gangsters' women on the side. Like, those are sad scenes. I don't know about you, but I'm willing—when I'm banging a gangster's moll? A lot of my pain I'm able to forget about for a couple of hours. You know what I mean?

00:33:31 Ben Host

Nothing acts quite as fast as a goomah?

[All laugh.]

00:33:36 John Host

But the film does also hint at the fact—and it's not a hint, but the characters in the film talk about themselves being the smart ones several different times.

00:33:49 Ben Host Yeah. *[JFK accent]* We got a lotta smart guys in this administration! We should lock 'em in a room and kick 'em in the butt!

00:33:54 John Host *[Multiple people laugh.]*
[JFK accent] Yeah, hey! I'm a smart guy! You're a smart guy! We're all smart guys! *[Regular voice]* That's a hat-tip to the perception in their own times of them being the best and the brightest. The movie didn't quite explore the degree to which they were—because of that, because that was their self-image—the degree to which they were underestimated or held in contempt by the rest of the establishment, military and political. And that's something the movie kind of left unexplored. We never hear or see Khrushchev or—y'know, we get, like, a couple of messages through diplomatic backchannels from him. But, y'know, Khrushchev's a major character in this movie. We just never meet him.

00:34:45 Ben Host Yeah. It's got some, like, sports movie elements to it, right? Like, the—like, "Oh, they beat us this round, but we're gonna come back and get 'em next round." Like, I felt like the Adlai Stevenson at the UN scene? Felt like... fans in a—fans watching a game on television? Kind of like, "Yeah! He got 'em! Woo!"

00:35:07 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*
 Like a pitcher that's getting lit up and the manager's about ready to call the bullpen? Like, that—I thought that scene was really well done!

00:35:15 Ben Host It was great! Like, the structure of it is kind of amazing, right? 'Cause it's kind of—it's the same problem that *Path to War* has, is like, "Here are 80 scenes of people yelling at each other in wood-paneled rooms in the White House. How do you make, like, an interesting story arc out of that?" And it just somehow really works with this particular story.

00:35:40 Adam Host I love the euphoria of a great presentation after that Adlai Stevenson moment. Because, like, the music swells and the applause begins, like, when the camera pans over to the slides that they begin to unfold—

[John laughs.]

00:35:55 Ben Host —and put on the—
 "He has visual aids!"

00:35:57 Adam Host *[All laugh.]*
 Yeah.

[All laugh.]

00:36:01 Clip Clip What a moment!
Speaker 1: Gentlemen, if you will observe in photograph A—

[Applause and background chatter gains traction alongside a dramatic swell of music.]

00:36:07 Ben Host **Speaker 2:** Yeah. Yeah.
 The thing, especially, about that that feels very sports-movie-ish is, like, when we do things that are provocative to the Russians in this movie, there are two, like, nuclear weapons tests that the US

performs and both times it smash-cuts back to the Oval Office where Kennedy's like, "Who authorized it? Who did it?!" And *[through laughter]* it's like, infuriating to think that, like, there's somebody under the level of President that could be like, "Hey, um, you know what? Let's bomb an atoll in the South Pacific and just see how that goes right now." Y'know?

00:36:44 Adam Host I really love the paranoia of those scenes. Like, it felt manipulative within the context of the film, because you're getting these interstitials a lot. I think the film even begins with atomic bomb testing footage. But the idea of, like, the lie of control that this president feels like he has over the situation is just represented over and over again by like, "I thought we were running things from this room. With these people. And now I'm hearing about bomb tests in the South Pacific?" Like, it's insane-making for him! Because there is no control.

00:37:21 Ben Host And it's our team doing something bad and the movie, like, treats it as a—like an inconvenience for the good guys that it's bad. Y'know. Like, from the Russian perspective, that is a major escalation of the tensions.

00:37:35 John Host Yeah, from anybody's *[through laughter]* perspective. Can you imagine? It's like, "Oh, shit! The fingers are on the trigger! We're seconds away from war! Oh, and now we just blew up a freaking megaton? Now we're testing missiles over Turkey? Like, what are we doing?!" I think it's important to remember that in 1962, all of that military establishment—everybody involved, including JFK himself, they were all World War Two veterans. And a lot of—like, Curtis LeMay—this was an era when, like, the generals were also rock stars. Right?

Like, LeMay was the guy that basically founded the Air Force. So he's famous! And he's sitting in the room with the president and he's got his own basically doctrine named after him! Like, the whole concept of what a first strike against the Russians would be didn't exist before him. So Kennedy isn't just arguing against a bunch of officers that are kind of there at his discretion! Y'know, you wanna think, like, "Why didn't Kennedy fire LeMay? Why didn't he fire Herbert Hoover?" Y'know, why didn't he come in and just say, "All these guys have been in these jobs for too long. Hoover has been in charge of the FBI for too long. I'm the president. I'm starting over." But he didn't because each one of these guys, they were like little czars of their mini-empires.

00:39:15 Ben Host Well, and it's also something that LBJ deals with in *Path to War* is that he mostly kept the cabinet as constituted and is then stuck with people that he, like, wouldn't have picked himself. So it sort of compounds by the time he's in the Oval Office.

00:39:33 John Host What's crazy about this—the craziest thing about this—is that we now know that in 1962, the entire Soviet Union had something on the order of 10 intercontinental ballistic missiles. They had a submarine force that could not launch nukes. The whole business of putting these missiles on Cuba would have represented the only real way that they could've delivered nukes to the United States. If they had actually launched a strike; if they had invaded Cuba and neutralized these missiles, there would have been no Russian hail of nukes.

00:40:25 Ben Host But we didn't know that at the time, right?

00:40:26 John Host That's the thing that gets... arguable.

00:40:31 Ben Host 'Cause there's a moment, I think, where LeMay says, like, "They're putting these nukes here and them having the ability to nuke us is intolerable. So we've got to invade Cuba because the only way they could escalate would be by nuking us and they would never contemplate that." And, like, there's circularity to that logic. It doesn't actually work, y'know. Like, if the threat is that they're gonna nuke us but also they couldn't contemplate nuking us, then what are we talking about?

00:41:01 John Host I think he might've been saying, "The threat of them nuking us is that this is the only threat of them *[through laughter]* nuking us and if we eliminate them then there is no threat of them nuking us." I don't know how much we were capable of deluding ourselves? And the military-industrial complex capable of not just dishonestly deluding us, but collectively deluding itself? But y'know, that's what we were paying a freaking CIA to do. Right?

00:41:32 Adam Host Mm. Yeah. I mean, contemporarily—this answers the question—what you're talking about answers the question "What constitutes a nuclear deterrent? What number is that?" The answer is one, y'know? This is why we try so hard to prevent countries from developing these weapons. Even one of them.

00:41:50 Clip Clip **O'Donnell:** Jesus Christ! We're lighting off nuclear weapons like it's our own private Fourth of July!

00:41:54 Ben Host Well, that's also something that I thought was a little bit confusing about this movie was that there's that letter—the Khrushchev letter. That they're like, "Finally we have a reasonable offer and we can make a deal with Khrushchev." And then there's another subsequent letter that seems to negate that and then they're like, "Well, y'know, and also we're pretty sure that they have a lot more nukes in Cuba than we had originally thought. There's frogs. There's longer-range things that could hit everything but Seattle." And that's all stated. And then they're like, "Well, let's just ignore everything we learned after the first letter and go back to that as the negotiating point." Which I was personally very attracted to as a conflict-averse person. Like, "Let's just pretend they didn't say the mean things and engage with the nice things!"

00:42:48 John Host *[John laughs.]*
Every email exchange we've ever had with MaxFun!

00:42:51 Adam Host *[Ben laughs.]*
We didn't reply with the mean reply, right, guys? *[Laughs.]*

00:42:56 John Host *[All laugh.]*
"Wait a minute. I didn't send that, did I? No, I don't think so!"

00:43:01 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
"This mail program's really confusing!"
But like, were there other bombs? Or was that all bullshit that LeMay was injecting into the conversation that wasn't true?

00:43:09 John Host No, they were bringing short- and medium-range missiles into Cuba. Partly because... well, those were the missiles that they knew could work. Right? I mean, an ICBM is a multi-stage missile. And it requires—to get from the Soviet Union to the United States effectively, it basically has to go up into space and come back down again. Whereas a—y'know, a short-range or medium-range missile

is just a single-stage rocket. You light it, point it, and, y'know, easier to make. Easier to—cheaper to build. And so these were missiles that they knew worked. And putting them in Cuba was basically like we were doing with Polaris submarines. You just go park it off the coast somewhere. So that was the strategy.

I mean, the Cuban Revolution was only in '59. Castro had only been there a couple of years. And Castro wasn't—I don't think Castro was a born socialist! Castro—when he first—when the Cuban Revolution first happened, he came on a big tour of the United States! And was like, “Hey! My American friends!” Y'know, he wasn't allied with the Soviet sphere. It was only after we rejected him that Khrushchev said, like, “I'll be your friend.” And this was part of that process! Like, “Hey, we'll—” Like, Castro didn't necessarily want Soviet missiles in Cuba. 'Cause he didn't wanna be a puppet of the Russians.

00:44:50 Adam Host Did you read that story that McNamara visited Castro and they were chopping up the Missile Crisis conversationally and McNamara really steps in it. He was like, “Isn't it just good to know that neither side would have ever, like, nuked the other? Like, we can all agree on that!” And Castro is like, “I was so ready to shoot and our missiles were fueled and willing to shoot and I was willing to accept mutually-assured destruction in that moment.”

[John laughs.]

00:45:19 Ben Host
00:45:21 Adam Host

Wowww!
And McNamara gets like blown back in his seat a little bit.

[John laughs.]

00:45:25 Ben Host
00:45:27 Adam Host
00:45:29 John Host
00:45:31 Clip Clip

Like—
Does not compute.
Yeah! Yeah.
That's fantastic. That's fantastic.

00:45:35 Adam Host
00:45:48 Ben Host

Fidel Castro (*The Simpsons*): Ah, they're not so bad! They even named a street after me in San Francisco!
I think we're fairly unkind with the idea of O'Donnell being so instrumental in this film, but as a performance—what was your take on Costner as O'Donnell?

[In stilted accent] I knew Ken O'Donnell. I worked alongside Ken O'Donnell. And you, sir—

[John chuckles.]

00:45:54 John Host
00:46:01 Ben Host

I didn't think the accent was that good. Frankly. It kind of felt like it came in and out.
Yeah. The accent's not great. But I feel like the weight of it is great. And I think it's kind of an interesting... main character that is like, the guy that's trying to help the guy that's actually doing the hard thing? Like, it's kind of... it's kind of like making Robin the main character of a Batman movie?

00:46:23 Adam Host
00:46:24 Clip Clip

Mm.
Dick Grayson (*Batman Forever*): I need a name. Batboy, Night Wing; I dunno. What do you think?

00:46:28 Ben Host
Like, that is filmmaking on hard mode. And I mean, I think that there are problems with this film, but I think it, like, overall works. And, like, those calls he makes to the guys that are gonna be flying the

surveillance missions over Cuba and stuff? Like, you really feel how frightened he is in those moments.

00:46:49 Adam Host I like those moments a lot. I like Costner in 'em for that reason. What I did not like so much was everything having to do with his family.

[Ben laughs.]

00:47:01 Ben Host You're just anti-family, though.

00:47:04 Adam Host Don't give me that Spielbergian "What's wrong with daddy?" ending here. Like, it's so unnecessary.

00:47:11 Ben Host I just see a family of this size and I, like, can't even wrap my mind around it? *[Laughs.]* And I think it's just because of the cultural context I'm from, where I have only ever lived in very expensive cities. Like, nobody I know has had a kid before—I have, like, one friend who had a kid before he turned 30. And the idea of having five kids is just... unimaginable to most of the people in my age cohort and, like, the place I live. Like, how do you even afford it?

00:47:43 John Host It's important to remember that when you were born, your mother and father both held you up so that the sun's rays struck your little golden face and said, "We have made a perfect child. We need no others."

[Ben laughs.]

00:48:02 Adam Host "We will raise this one to adulthood and then fade away. We will take a boat to the other lands."

00:48:15 Ben Host Why is it that Kenny's the one with the shitty grades, but he's the son that O'Donnell goes and visits with his free time? He goes home, like, twice in the entire movie to see his wife.

00:48:16 John Host Maybe Kenny needs a little bit more encouragement!

00:48:28 Ben Host He's the oldest boy, meaning he's the only important child. The rest of 'em are just—

[Ben laughs.]

00:48:41 John Host —one of 'em's gonna be a priest, I guess. One of 'em's gonna be a wife of somebody. Who cares. It's the oldest son that matters!

00:48:42 Adam Host The role of Catholicism is very interesting in this movie. Like, that it's an important pause in the middle? Like, "let's pause the nuclear crisis and go to church" is a real mood. *[Laughs.]*

00:48:47 Ben Host It is.

00:48:58 John Host Well, the church is around the corner from the embassy, right? They just took a little scenic route there?

00:48:58 John Host But also, like, when Ken O'Donnell is calling those pilots, y'know, he takes great comfort in knowing that that one guy is a religious man. That was the one part of this—these events that I think when I saw this movie the first time I did not realize that a U-2 pilot had been shot down during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It's not part of the story that gets told widely. I mean, talk about escalation! Those nuke tests that were happening out in Bikini Atoll somewhere—incredible provocation, but the fact that they actually SAM'd a U-2 and we didn't—and somehow LeMay and his crew didn't succeed in using that as a pretext to start the war. And at least the way this movie makes it seem, that's O'Donnell and the Kennedys conspiring to make sure that even if someone is shot down they're not shot down? That's not what we're calling it?

00:49:50 Ben Host Yeah. That U-2 ran into 70,000-foot sparrows?
00:49:55 John Host Yeah. Right.
00:49:56 Adam Host Would it surprise you to know that the U-2 remains in service as, like, a frontline reconnaissance aircraft?
00:50:04 John Host I know NASA uses them. Do they still use them in the Air Force?
00:50:07 Adam Host Yeah. It's incredible.
00:50:10 Ben Host There's an episode of *Mythbusters* where they—I think Adam Savage is the one that goes up in one. And he, like, has to train for, like, weeks to do it.

00:50:20 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Wow.

00:50:21 Ben Host **John:** No.
Because, like, even being the second seat in a U-2 is, like, no joke. There's little training wheels that they have to put on the end of the wings 'cause they're floppy and would touch the ground when you're getting ready to take off.

00:50:38 Adam Host There's the SR-71 effect, where the seals are loose at sea level, but everything tightens up as the plane rises in altitude.

00:50:47 Ben Host I actually found a very interesting pedantic quibble about the pilots in this movie that I thought I'd share with you guys.

“The flying suits worn by Commander Ecker's Navy photo-recon air crews are completely devoid of name tags, rank, aviator wings, and unit patches. In 1962—”

[Sound of telegraph begins playing in background.]

“—the suits would've had all of these items attached. Quote, 'Sanitized flying suits' did not appear until later in the sixties.”

00:51:14 John Host Hm.
00:51:16 Ben Host Just so interesting, right? Like, I guess if you're a pilot that goes down and wants some, like, plausible deniability you don't want that? But also if your, like, impossible space plane is what you bailed out of, like, they would know? *[Laughs.]*

00:51:30 John Host Impossible space plane? “Whose impossible space plane is this?” “I don't know! Not me!”

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:38 Ben Host That's kind of what I was hoping to get to with that moment of pedantry. *[Laughs.]*

00:51:41 John Host I wanted to say—again—plane nerd style, we see some F-8 Crusaders in this movie and that's another one of those airplanes that we don't see enough movies about Crusaders. They were, in their day, the fastest plane out there!

00:52:03 Adam Host Back when “interceptor” was the primary mission.
00:52:06 John Host Yeah! We just don't get enough of it. And this movie gives us some low-level, high-speed Crusader flights that were very, very gratifying. It's a fast airplane.

00:52:20 Ben Host They're pretty neat. They look a little bit to me like the airplane in last week's movie. The *Intruder*. I guess it's that under-the-nose jet intake that's giving that effect.

00:52:33 Adam Host I think that is the thing that makes the F-8 an ugly-looking aircraft to me.

[Ben laughs.]

00:52:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** It, like—if—

00:52:40 Adam Host **John:** Wow.
To the extent that an aircraft has a face? I do not like the face of the F-8. It looks like it's just screaming with that big, open-mouth intake.

[Ben snickers.]

00:52:51 Ben Host I don't like it.
Like, all the stuff with the ships at sea was really interesting. I didn't see this movie having that mode of like, "Cut to destroyer maintaining the barricade and trying to stop these Russian ships." It does kind of make it seem like the USS *Pierce* is the only ship that is, like, doing the quarantine. *[Through laughter]* Because it's always the one that's going to intercept the Russian ships? But it's fun to see!

00:53:19 Adam Host I love what a problem that submarine presents in that moment. Like, what a— *[Laughs.]* What a multiplication of the issue.

00:53:28 Ben Host Totally.

00:53:29 Adam Host A submarine does. God.

00:53:32 Ben Host I kinda thought that they were gonna ask that ship to say—to just go, like, y'know, "You might get sunk and that will suck." The other thing that is sort of set up at the beginning of this is we don't know if these are operational yet. And I kept expecting them to do, y'know, to stop a Russian ship and board it and find a bunch of, like, cores. Or warheads or whatever. And that's not—that's never a thing. This movie is not, like—does not clean up after itself. We don't see the UN-inspected drawdown or anything.

00:54:04 Adam Host Yeah. Where's that movie? The movie where they load 'em up and ship 'em out?

00:54:08 Music Music The briefest possible clip from the opening theme to *Rawhide* by Frankie Lane. Rhythmic acoustic country guitar.

Rawhide! [Sound of whip cracking.]

00:54:09 Music Music Short reprise of theme song "War."

00:54:12 Adam Host One of my favorite characters in the film is a pilot of one of those F-8s we were talking about. When Commander Ecker returns from his F-8 mission over Cuba, the ground crew notices that his plane has been shot to pieces. And Ecker, remembering that phone call with O'Donnell, says that what they did was they flew into a flock of sparrows. And his wingman is not really great at, like, improv?

[Ben laughs.]

00:54:41 Ben Host Yeah. He got kicked out of The Groundlings.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:54:44 Adam Host He's not taking the cue until he finally does. I think Ecker does his damndest to sell it to his wingman at least. No one really believes it, but, "That's the way it is, guys." Says Ecker. And that's where the story ends for him. I think, like, Ecker convincing the flight line that all of those bullet holes were sparrows—us, the assembled hosts of *Friendly Fire*, are gonna have to decide if this film convinced us of its value as a war film. So on a scale of one to five sparrows, let's decide that.

I think in order to like a film like this you shouldn't have to like Kevin Costner being in it. But it makes you—like, it forces you into that

decision. If you like the movie, you're gonna like Costner's character. If you don't, I have a feeling that's a big reason why. And having O'Donnell as the main character of a Cuban Missile Crisis movie is like doing a Beatles movie from Ringo's perspective! Give me all of the Kennedys! Get O'Donnell out of here! The best part of this movie is the conflict between the hawks and the Kennedys and I don't think we need O'Donnell in there translating that to us. What is he really doing there? The thing that works—that argument between what's tough and what's right. And you hear this all the time from the Joint Chiefs, right? They're saying the Kennedys aren't tough enough—

00:56:15 Music Music

Short clip of "Tuff Enuff" by The Fabulous Thunderbirds from their album *Tuff Enuff*. The vocals sync with Adam's words, then the music quickly fades out.

00:56:16 Adam Host

Tough enough!

—to make the right decision. And that being thoughtful is a weakness for the Kennedys. And I thought that was very interestingly put. I don't know if this is a film that succeeds in making us feel a certain way. Like, I don't know. It shows us this and it tells us this... but there's too much noise to that signal to really hit for me in a way that I think that it should. Maybe the way that it works best is presenting the idea of how difficult it must be to do that mental gymnastics of—like, there's the moment of the two letters, Ben, that you were talking about. Where if we don't like the contents of the second letter, maybe we just go with the first one. And, like, the main point of that entire moment was—like, interrogating the difference between what a person wants you to think and what you think they want you to think. It's crazy-making.

[Ben laughs.]

00:57:48 Ben Host

I think you're supposed to come out of this film believing that these people save the world. And I believe that that's true. I believe that the movie believes it. But I think a better film tells this story better. And I think that movie is out there. I don't think we've seen it yet. I think it's capable, but capable isn't good enough. And capable isn't what makes movies great. So I'm gonna give it three sparrows. Hm. I think I liked it more than you did. There's some "hand of the filmmaker" things in this movie that I didn't understand. Like, this film will cut to black and white occasionally for a while until it gets tired of being black and white and then fades back to color.

00:58:02 Adam Host

Did you ever know why it was doing that?

00:58:04 Ben Host

I couldn't pick up on what it was trying to tell me in those moments at all. And I puzzled about it, but not for long because I was always caught back up in what was happening in the movie. I was there for it. And I think I... can forgive the fact that Kenny O'Donnell was rewritten as a larger part of the history of this because I did like Kevin Costner and I did like the movie. And I think I'm gonna give it four sparrows. Did you guys notice that there were all those nuclear blasts at the beginning and then like occasionally we'd cut to one when there was, like, a test? But then at the end, it looks like a nuclear blast but it's actually the sun?

[Adam laughs.]

			But then you remember: the sun is also a nuclear blast.
00:58:56	John	Host	Whoaaa!
00:58:58	Adam	Host	Whoaaa.
00:58:59	Ben	Host	The sun came up!
			<i>[John makes explosion sound.]</i>
00:59:02	John	Host	The sun came up, y'all! Using the nuclear explosions as segue pieces? The problem was they weren't used consistently. Like, if we had cut to that bomb every time it was sort of the end of the day and the next thing we were anticipating was the beginning of the war? If we did that three or four times and <u>then</u> the last time we saw it, it was the sun coming up in the morning? Like, yeah, okay. I coulda gone with that rhythm. But the movie opens on those explosions kind of the same way—it's like an inverse of the way <i>Strangelove</i> ends.
00:59:42	Ben	Host	Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:59:43	John	Host	But then... we see that—we see a nuke go off a couple of times, but it always signifies something different and it's not a coherent motif. And <u>that</u> stuff gets in the way for me. But I think most importantly, Adam said it best. Which is—you're gonna have Kennedy and RFK saying things they actually said. In moments where history actually turned on those words. And then you're gonna basically put a new character in the form of a guy that <u>both</u> RFK and JFK—two of the most famously arrogant men in the world—
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			—we're gonna put another guy in there that they both respect and look up to and allow interrupt them? Like, my dad <u>knew</u> RFK. And worked for JFK a couple of years before the events of this film. And my dad <u>hated</u> RFK. He said Bobby was an imperious, violent brat. And in this movie, Bobby is like—like, a charming collie. Who just can't wait for Kevin Costner to say another thing. It's not necessary! I wanted to see this movie with Kevin Costner in it, <u>as</u> Kennedy! Or whoever he wanted to be! Have him be <i>[through laughter]</i> in this movie—have him play Jackie! Just not invent a guy that happened to—like, following RFK into the bathroom to decide what we're really gonna do. I could never get past the distraction of it. And I loved a lot of the performances. I loved the way that it stuck pretty close to the actual story. I just couldn't get past the fact that this was an amusement park ride for a famous actor who just wanted to put himself in history.
01:01:45	Adam	Host	Oof.
01:01:46	John	Host	And so I'm with Adam. I think it's a three. I was wincing too much.
01:01:52	Adam	Host	What's the best Cuban Missile Crisis movie?
01:01:55	Ben	Host	It's <i>Blast from the Past</i> , starring Alicia Silverstone.
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
01:02:00	Adam	Host	Uh-huh. John, who's your guy?
01:02:03	John	Host	I think I've established a theme, which is that any movie in which McGeorge Bundy appears, McGeorge Bundy is my guy!
01:02:13	Adam	Host	Yeah.
01:02:14	John	Host	I'm always gonna pick McGeorge Bundy when he arrives on screen. I've yet to see the McGeorge Bundy movie that I wanna

01:02:31 Adam Host see. McGeorge Bundy is always appearing as a bit character in these other men's dramas, but where is *The Life of McGeorge*? Hello! McGeorge!

[All laugh.]

[Taps on microphone.] Anybody home?

[All laugh.]

01:02:41 Ben Host Ben, what about you?
There's a scene where they order the destroyer to fire torpedoes at the Russian submarine. And it cuts down to the deck as some Navy guys are loading the deck-mounted torpedo launchers. And one of 'em says, "Watch your fingers!"

01:03:02 Adam Host Yeah.

01:03:03 Ben Host And, y'know. We've seen a lot of finger trauma—

[Adam laughs.]

—at the hands of depth-charge launchers and torpedo launchers and, y'know, just—like, I feel like being careful about hand safety on a Navy ship is maybe our highest priority. So I really appreciated that guy and he was my guy.

01:03:23 Adam Host Good guy. We frequently see atomic test footage in movies and then we also see that B-roll of what society does. There's the going into their bunkers. There's the classroom scene where everyone's ducking and covering. And there is always a student in the classroom that catches my eye. It feels like there are very few clips of the classroom doing duck-and-cover, because I always find her. She is the girl that—as everyone is getting under their desks—accidentally puts her head down on her desk instead of getting beneath it? It's a form of line anxiety, I feel like. When you practice a thing over and over again and then it's time to do the thing? Your brain kind of short circuits. *[Laughs.]* Into fucking up that moment. And that little girl that puts her head on her desk instead of getting underneath it—

[Ben laughs.]

—is like that embodiment. And my eye finds her every time we see this clip. This clip has been in a bunch of movies, but like, she's my guy. Like, it's time to do the thing you've practiced and you, like, you just short-circuit in the moment.

01:04:39 Ben Host She's no Bert the Turtle! *[Laughs.]*

01:04:42 John Host Yeah. She's a pile of ash, whereas all of her schoolmates are covered with painful blisters.

01:04:46 Music Music Short reprise of theme song "War."

01:04:49 Adam Host John, you never feel anxious before you die roll, right? You always know just what to do.

01:04:54 John Host Uh, no. In fact, it's never clear whether the die roll is gonna—

[Voice gets fainter, then louder, as though moving away from and towards the mic.]

—go off without a hitch or whether the die roll is gonna be a total, unmitigated disaster. But here we go. Are you guys ready? Ready to pick our movie for next ep?

01:05:15 Ben Host We're ready!

01:05:16 John Host Here we go. 120-sided die.

[Sound of die clanking against hard surface.]

Whoaaa! 68!

[Ben laughs.]

01:05:32 Music Music The neighbor of niice!
"Going Home" by James Horner from *The Devil's Own* soundtrack plays in the background. Lilted, Irish-influenced orchestral music with tin whistle and female vocals.

01:05:34 Ben Host Number 68 is a movie about—I guess the Troubles in Northern Ireland. It's from 1997 and directed by Alan Pakula. It's *The Devil's Own*.

01:05:45 John Host Hm.

01:05:47 Ben Host Starring Brad Pitt and Harrison Ford.

01:05:52 John Host Oh. We know Harrison Ford in *Battle with the IRA*.

01:05:58 Ben Host Yeah!

01:05:59 John Host And we know Brad Pitt can do a passable... weird Irish accent.

01:06:05 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* That's true, yeah.

01:06:07 Adam Host Do you think when the director's called to set you always have to invite Pakula? Into it?

[Ben laughs.]

Pakula only shoots at night.

[Ben laughs.]

01:06:19 Ben Host *[Adopting a The Count accent]* "Who put garlic on the craft service table? Ah, ah, ah!"

[Theme song begins playing faintly in background of dialogue.]

01:06:24 Adam Host Wow. I'm excited for this movie! A real loaded cast!

01:06:28 Ben Host Yeah. I remember seeing this in theatres, but I don't really remember anything about it. But I am excited to check it out! So that'll be next week on *Friendly Fire*. So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor... go the spoiler alerts.

[Theme song plays briefly at full volume before receding into background of dialogue.]

01:06:49 Rob Schulte Producer *Friendly Fire* is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Adam Pranica, Ben Harrison, and John Roderick. The show is produced and edited by me, Rob Schulte. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our podcast art is by Nick Ditmore.

Last year at this time, your hosts reviewed one of the ultimate Boat Dad movies: *They Were Expendable*, from 1945. Starring John Wayne! Check it out if you haven't heard that episode already, or revisit it if you're a seasoned listener.

Feel like supporting our show? Well, you can do that by heading to MaximumFun.org/join. And for as little as \$5 a month, not only will you receive our Pork Chop bonus feed—you'll gain access to all Maximum Fun bonus content. And don't forget—you can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram under the handles FriendlyFireRSS. Thank you for listening, and we'll see you next week with another episode of *Friendly Fire*.

[Theme song plays briefly at full volume before fading out entirely.]

01:08:11	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:08:12	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:08:14	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:08:16	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:08:17	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.