

THE MYTH OF THE CUBAN MISSILE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. DEN - NIGHT

An ornate ashtray cradles a lit cigar.

Smoke bellows aimlessly towards the ceiling before its wafted this way and that, by an overheard fan.

A shaky hand extends towards the ashtray.

It grasps the cigar and gently taps the end. Ash falls.

GEORGE CARTWRIGHT (80) takes on the cigar.

Across from George sits SANDY DULLES (early 30's) petite, pretty, and earnest. A pad sits in her lap.

A DIGITAL VOICE RECORDER lies on a table between the two.

SANDY

So, you're saying Fidel never actually tried out for a major league team?

GEORGE

Sweetheart, what I'm saying is that Fidel wouldn't have known a mango from a baseball, until we made him.

Sandy looks past George. A number of cameras focus on her. A PRODUCER encourages her to continue.

SANDY

What do you mean, "we" made him?

George is old, but not so old that he can't admire Sandy's legs as they jut out from her short skirt.

GEORGE

All ancient history, sweetheart. We got bigger fish to fry with this Osama Bin Jack Ass.

SANDY

Perhaps, but people still care about, Fidel Castro.

GEORGE

Why?

SANDY
(looking at her producer)
Well, he's still alive.

GEORGE
(laughs)
So am I sweetheart, and I can
guarantee you that at this point my
"cigar" poses more of a threat to
you than Fidel's.

Sandy smirks and yells...

SANDY
Cut!
(she turns to George)
Listen, old man. I got other
stories to follow up on. If you
don't feel you're worth talking to,
then neither do I.

George sits up in his chair. His face says, "finally".

GEORGE
All right, all right, calm your
timber britches, sweetheart.

SANDY
Speaking of britches, you check
mine out once more, and I'm gonna
toss my hot coffee in your face.

George looks at Sandy's hand as it hovers over a coffee mug,
and then at her.

She means business.

GEORGE
All right, sweetheart. What do you
want?

Sandy settles back into her seat. She nods to the producer
who, in turn, nods to the CAMERAMAN to start rolling.

SANDY
Castro, baseball. Simple question.

GEORGE
Yes, and no.

SANDY
(rolls her eyes)
And why is that?

GEORGE
Cause he loves the game. And hates
himself for it.

Sandy looks up from her pad.

SANDY
What do you mean he hates himself
for it? Because he couldn't make a
major league team?

George sucks on his cigar before placing it in the ashtray.

GEORGE
Nah, if that were the case, you'd
be talking to me about every 84
year old from here to Portland,
Maine.

SANDY
Football is the thing now.

GEORGE
Great game, no doubt about that.
Come Sunday, you'll find me
watching it, but...

SANDY
But, baseball is different.

GEORGE
It surely is.

SANDY
How?

GEORGE
Different cause it's a team sport,
defined by individual achievement.
Pure Americana. Does that sound
like something a Communist could
get behind?

SANDY
It's just a game.

GEORGE
Of course it is, but our games
define us. And we used that
against Castro once he came to
power.

Sandy sits up in her seat.

SANDY

How?

GEORGE

Once we realized that he was there to stay, we started a rumor that he had tried out for the Senators, but couldn't hack it?

SANDY

We?

It's George's time for an eye roll. He picks up his cigar and sucks on it.

GEORGE

The Agency, sweetheart.
(beat)
C.I.A.

SANDY

Why would the C.I.A. spread a rumor like that?

GEORGE

Well, we didn't. Not at first at least. The idea started with the Bureau.

(smiles)

Guess you could say we stole it from em'. You know what they say about the sun shining on every dog's ass once and a while.

Sandy lets out a small smile before her serious face returns.

SANDY

Okay, so you start this rumor that Castro tried out for the Washington Senators, but couldn't hack it. To what end?

GEORGE

Cause' like I said, after the Bay of Pigs we realized he wasn't going anywhere, so we figured the next best thing was to discredit him.

SANDY

But again, it's just a game.

GEORGE

And again, you miss the point, Sweetie.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yes, it's just a game, but you have to remember the time. Baseball was king back then. If we could make Castro seem like just another Joe Wannabe, like the guy down the block, it delegitimized his entire administration. He was just a sourpuss who couldn't make it here.

SANDY

And yet, Cubans love the game, and Castro himself has played up his love of the game.

GEORGE

That came later. The people? Guess they have good taste in recreational activities.

(beat)

Then again, if I was surrounded by all those Cuban woman, I'm not sure I'd be spending my free time watching ball games.

George stumps out his cigar and reaches into his jacket pocket for another. He's about to light one when he remembers himself and offers one to Sandy who declines.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Good girl. I've never trusted a woman who smoked a cigar. Something

(beat)

Unseemly about it. Don't you think?

SANDY

(laughs)

Never given it much thought.

GEORGE

Well, anyway, we painted Castro into a corner with this stupid little idea of ours. So he did the next best thing he could.

SANDY

Which was?

GEORGE

He knew we planted the rumor, and he knew he couldn't overcome it. So he embraced it, and eventually ended up loving the game.

SANDY
That doesn't sound like a
successful operation?

GEORGE
Yes and no. You're right that we
lost control of the message, but
don't discount what's happened over
the years?

Sandy adjusts the recorder.

SANDY
What's happened?

GEORGE
He's dieing, and we've seen more
and more of his people trying to
escape to the States. Not the
least of which are his best
ballplayers who come here to make
millions.

SANDY
What does that have to do with your
operation?

GEORGE
It was a success.

SANDY
But the United States was never
able to unseat him?

GEORGE
You can't view the Agency's ops in
a vacuum. You take the long view.
He's dieing, and communism in Cuba
will die with him. Silly as it
sounds, baseball will have played a
part in that. Or maybe not.
Doesn't change what we did, or what
we are still doing.

Sandy stares at George and contemplates his response.

George takes a long drag on his cigar and exhales. Smoke
shrouds her view and seems to fill the room.

FADE TO:

INT. STATE ROOM - DAY

French doors open on a picturesque view of a white, sandy beach as elegant drapes waft in the steady breeze.

The sunshine blinds the eye.

A large canopied bed lies in the background.

INT. STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Machines hiss and whir.

Slowly, steadily, an INTRAVENOUS SOLUTION does it's work.

Drip. Drip.

Besides the IV solution a HUMIDOR filled with fine cigars.

FIDEL CASTRO, weak and pallid, lies on the bed and struggles to breath.

A NURSE enters the room and checks the IV solution. She pats EL PRESIDENTE'S head and then checks her watch.

She turns to leave, but not before Castro offers a low guttural coupled with a feeble hand that points to his bedside table.

The nurse stops, and turns. She follows his hand to...

A BASEBALL encased in a cheap plastic trophy case. She smiles, walks to the table and removes it.

The nurse holds it up and examines the baseball. In prolific, if not ironic, John Hancock style, it's signed - Fidel "The Cuban Missile" Castro.

She hands it to Fidel who drops the ball. She picks it up and tucks it in his hands.

Seemingly content, his grip strengthens on the baseball and his eyes close.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.