

**Forget the Bomb;  
Or, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Nuclear Secrets  
Technical Terror in One Act  
By Robert MacManus**

*Dark stage. Lights come up on narrator sitting to one side on bar stool.*

*In the Year 2000...*

**Narrator:** Every now and then you get a second chance in life—a chance to take it all back and start over.

This was not one of those times.

A few years ago when I was fresh out of collage, I didn't know what to do with my life. My friend Bob was in the same boat as me.

Here was the sign we saw on the street one day:

*Lights come up on sign, center stage. The sign reads:*

WORK FOR GOVERNMENT  
PROTECT DEMOCRACY  
MAKE BIG MONEY AT HOME  
CALL NOW!  
*Light fade out.*

**Narrator:** We rushed home and dialed the number.

*Lights fade out on Narrator, rise center stage to reveal two college-looking guys, both trying to talk on the same phone.*

**Protagonist:** Hi! I'm here with my friend, Bob. We just got out of college. We want to protect Democracy and make big money at home.

*Lights fade on stage, rise on narrator.*

**Narrator:** The man said that if we met a few minimum qualifications, we could have our dream job, complete with prestige, respect, power, influence, the women would swoon, etc., etc., etc.

We wanted it. In fact, we had to have it.

On Monday we went to an office in the suburbs. We wore our best suits, fresh haircuts, and eager smiles.

The place looked typical enough. Desks, chairs, computers, etc. A stern-looking older lady wrote our names down on a clipboard.

*Fade out on narrator, lights up on stage to reveal an office. A stern-looking woman towers over two college-looking guys in cheap suits.*

**Receptionist:** Write your names clearly and legibly. Write your addresses. Write your references. No more! Additional entries, entries outside the boxes, or incomplete entries WILL disqualify you.

You have three minutes.

*Two applicants begin busily writing.*

**Narrator:** There was one peculiar thing about his office, however. Instead of the usual motivational posters you find in offices (you know the ones with pictures of eagles and athletes touting slogans like “Every thousand-mile journey begins with single step,” or “If you will it, it is no dream,” or “Yes, your life really does have meaning, so stop whining and get back to work,” that sort of thing), this place was covered with pictures of nuclear weapons exploding over the desert, nuclear weapons exploding over the sea, nuclear weapons exploding over mid-sized Japanese cities—that sort of thing.

Bob didn’t seem to think this was at all unusual.

**Bob:** Hey, buddy, relax. All these places are like this. It’s their way of keeping us content in our work. I read all about it in economics class.

**Narrator:** A man with horn-rim glasses told us we made a great decision and that, despite what he read in the papers, not all of our generation were unmotivated losers, with long-hair and vintage clothes.

**G-Man 1:** Kids these days. I tell you!. But you boys obviously are different. You’re just the type we’re looking for. Why, I’ve never seen applications so neatly filled in. Every question answered completely, no unsolicited information, and not a single mark outside the box. Splendid, splendid!

Now, I suppose you’re wondering why I’ve called you here today? Well, I want to explain to you boys about an exciting career opportunity. One that puts you in the center of the most exciting work done today—vital to our democracy. Sound interesting?

*Two applicants nod vigorously.*

**G-Man 1:** That work is the taking of inventory of our nation’s nuclear secrets. You see, since the end of the Cold War—You boys know what the Cold War was, don’t you?

*Two applicants nod vigorously. Blackout on stage.*

**Narrator:** I remember reading about the Cold War. It had to do with us not liking either the Vietnamese or communism, that sort of thing. I remember we had lots of nuclear bombs to stop the Russians, who were bent on our destruction.

Of course, we told the man that we know all about the Cold War. (Actually Bob said that. I was too distracted by the picture on the wall of a bunch of big ships exploding out of the water and flying through the air with the blast of a nuclear explosion right behind them.)

*Lights up to show large, crayon drawing, center stage, of big ships exploding out of a nuclear cloud.*

**Narrator:** Later I looked up the Cold War in the encyclopedia. Here's what it said.

**Encyclopedia guy 1:** COLD WAR—A war of words between East and West. While no shots need be fired, the stockpile of a capacity to destroy all life on Earth is essential.

**Encyclopedia guy 2:** COLD WAR, ENDING—During the Cold War, the East and West each wanted to be in charge. They were convinced that the world was a very small place, so one of them had to go. Resultantly, they built and collected all the bombs they could, so that each side might be able to blow each other up should things get too cramped.

Then one day, the East and the West discovered that the world was a much bigger place than either had originally surmised. There was, in fact, plenty of room for them both. One of the sides also decided that it didn't want to be in charge after all, as being in charge of a planet is a very expensive proposition. So they gave up on the business of blowing each other up and pursued other means of self-entertainment—mainly drugs and the stock market. But they forgot that the network of bombs they had built was still there, along with the network of bunkers, depots, and think tanks that built the bombs, as well as the network of bunkers, depots, and think tanks that supported the bomb-supporting network of bunkers, depots, and think tanks. So all the bright boys they had working in these networks, still under the assumption that there's something to this idea of blowing up other nations, kept on building bombs and thinking about how to use them.

Everyday they would get together in the staff lounge and talk about all the new ideas for bombs they might have had the previous day. Once every few weeks or so one of the bright boys would come up with a particularly daring plan for building a very particular kind of bomb or for blowing up something in particular and they would all get very excited. This went on, day after day, year after year, while the nations they worked for slowly forgot all about them.

*During reading of Encyclopedia Guy 2, lights rise on stage to show people working on bomb designs, slapping each other the back, etc., all in silence.*

**Narrator:** Long story short, we got the job. One month later I found myself in the middle of the largest warehouse I had ever seen—stacked to the rafters with nuclear secrets.

*Lights rise on stage to show Protagonist and Bob with clipboards, in front of large pile of nuclear secrets. Behind them, a backdrop drawn in crayon showing nuclear secrets stacked to the rafters.*

**Protagonist:** What about working at home?!

**Bob:** Shut up and start counting.

*Actors freeze on stage*

**Narrator:** Three months later, after having counted Two-million, Three-hundred and twenty-five thousand, one-hundred and sixty-five nuclear secrets, I had had enough. I was sick of nuclear secrets. I didn't care about the money. I didn't care about the prestige. I didn't care about the women swooning. I wanted out.

*Unfreeze*

**Protagonist:** Bob, I want out.

**Bob:** No-can-do, my friend. We're only just getting started on these nuclear secrets. We'll be here for years at this rate.

**Narrator:** It's very difficult to describe what happened next. I remember I was just about to tell Bob exactly what he could do with his nuclear secrets, when were enveloped in a golden light.

**Protagonist:** Bob, what's the sound.

**Bob:** I don't know, but I don't like it.

*Loud, thudding footsteps can be heard in the background, growing louder and louder. Bob and Protagonist huddle together.*

**Protagonist:** Whatever it is, it's getting closer.

**Bob:** There's not supposed to be anyone in here.

**Protagonist:** GAhh! This wasn't in the brochure.

**Bob:** I'm scared.

**Nuclear Secrets Monster:** *In the background. PUT YOUR CLIPBOARDS DOWN AND STEP AWAY FROM THE NUCLEAR SECRETS.*

*Bob and Protagonist scream. Nuclear monster bursts onto the stage. Monster appears to be giant, anthropomorphic pile of nuclear secrets. It slowly stomps towards Bob and Protagonist. Eventually it towers over them, ready to strike.*

*Lights fade.*

*Pause.*

*Lights up on Narrator.*

**Narrator:** I have only sketchy memories of what happened next. I thought we were gonners for sure. But just before the creature was about to attack, Government agents poured into the room with flame throwers. They torched the big pile of inventories we had been working on.

The then creature just disappeared.

We were shuffled by men in dark suits into dark vans, and driven to a dark place. Then we were sitting in a waiting room.

*Light up to show Bob and Protagonist sitting in waiting room. G-Man two enters.*

**G-Man 2:** Hello boys. I suppose you're wondering why I've brought you here today. Well, it has to do with all those nuclear secrets you've been counting.

*Freeze.*

**Narrator:** Here was the thing: It seems that, sometime during the late 60s, the government had collected so many nuclear secrets that the secrets somehow mutated into a whole new form of life. Rudimentary at first, by the time the Cold War ended the Great Beast of Nuclear Secrets had grown so intelligent that it had developed its own self-preservation instinct. Now whenever the government tried to reduce the number of nuclear secrets, the Great Beast would overpower whatever hapless dimwits they sent into that warehouse and gobble them up.

We had been the government's last hope. They had been trying for years to count the nuclear secrets so they could determine how to control the Beast. They lost dozens of nitwits like us until the government figured out that by destroying the inventories, they could disorient the creature long enough to pull the victims out.

Of course, it was only a matter of time until the Beast figured out how to get around that.

*Unfreeze. Receptionist enters.*

**G-Man 2:** Alright boys. I have both your statements. If you'll just sign here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, and here.

Oh, and also here.

Mildred, please classify these Top Secret, and file them away—somewhere.

Now, if you'll just nod your heads while I flash these non-disclosure agreements in front of you. Thank you.

Very well. You're free to go.

*Thudding footsteps can be heard in the background grown louder and louder.*

**Protagonist:** Oh, no. Not again!

**Bob:** I feel sick.

**G-Man 2:** It's found a way to penetrate our defenses. Mildred! Quickly, declare red alert. Notify the president! Quickly, woman, quickly!

**Protagonist:** All I wanted was to make big money at home.

*Receptionist and G-man rush out. Protagonist and Bob huddle together center stage. Nuclear Secrets Beast bursts onto stage, slowly stomps toward the two. It towers over them, ready to strike.*

*Fade out.*

*Pause.*

*Lights up on Narrator standing center stage, looking like a zombie—shining a flashlight up onto his face.*

**Narrator:** It's a good life counting nuclear secrets. I have power, prestige, job security, and the women swoon. I hope the nuclear secrets go on forever, and I'm sure they will.

*Fin.*

2000, MacManus