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"In the Matter of Marie Yovanovitch"

A verse play in one act

Gary Duehr

Synopsis

Written in iambic pentameter blank verse, this tale of intrigue and betrayal is Shakespearean in scope. The play is adapted from the transcript of the closed-door hearing in November, 2019, of Marie Yovanovitch, former Ambassador to Ukraine, by the House Select Committee on Intelligence as part of the impeachment inquiry of President Trump. Yovanovitch faces questioning on her removal as Ambassador in May, 2019, and the roles that Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, and Yuri Lutsenko, the former Prosecutor General of Ukraine, played in her dismissal.

Character List

CHAIR: The Chair of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, conducting the closed-door hearing

DAN GOLDMAN: Staff lawyer for the House Select Committee

MARIE YOVANOVITCH: Former Ambassador to Ukraine

GOP CHORUS: In grotesque carnival masks, the three actors playing the main characters double as the chorus, who chant a litany of questions by the Republican committee members

Key Figures

AVAKOV: Ukrainian Minister of Interior

RUDY GIULIANI: Former Mayor of New York City, now personal lawyer to President Trump

DAVID HALE: Under Secretary, State Department

GEORGE KENT: Deputy Assistant Secretary, State Department

YURI LUTSENKO: Former Prosecutor General under President Poroshenko

MIKE MCKINLEY: Senior Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State

PARNUS AND FRUMAN: Two business clients of Giuliani

CAROL PEREZ: Director General of the Foreign Service

DALE PERRY: Managing Partner of Energy Resources of Ukraine

POROSHENKO: Former President of Ukraine, defeated in the May, 2019 elections

SULLIVAN: Deputy Secretary of State

ZELENSKY: Newly elected Ukraine President

"In the Matter of Marie Yovanovitch"

The suggestion of a Congressional Hearing Room: long tables, microphones. There is a projection or easel display that diagrams the relationships between the key figures, as well as a timeline of the primary dates, including: February, 2019, her meeting with Avako; March 24, 2019, article in The Hill; May 20, 2019, Marie leaves embassy; July 25, 2019, phone call from Trump to President Zelensky.

CHAIR

Good morning, Ambassador Yovanovitch.
 Welcome to the Permanent Select Committee
 On Intelligence, part of the House's impeachment inquiry.
 I know how you were forced to leave your post
 As the Ukraine Ambassador in Kyiv last May.
 I've read the partisan attacks on your character.
 I've never seen someone who's been treated as badly
 As you have been. I'm deeply sorry for this.
 I want to thank you for your dedication
 And offer our sincere appreciation.
 Mr. Goldman, proceed.

GOLDMAN

Ambassador, please state your full name for
 The record.

YAVONOVITCH

Marie Louise Yovanovitch.

GOLDMAN

We'd like for you to give complete answers
 Based on your best recall.

YAVONOVICH

I understand.

GOLDMAN

Before we get into the circumstance
 Of your removal last May, let's back things up.
 When did you first learn that Giuliani
 Was interested in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR

A year ago,
 November, 2018.

GOLDMAN

How did you hear?

AMBASSADOR

From people in the Ukraine government
Who told me that Yuri Lutsenko, the former
Prosecutor General, had been
In touch with Giuliani. I heard that they
Had plans, you know, that they were going to do
Some things, and this included things to me.
At first I couldn't grasp what they were saying.
To do some things? It sounded like the mob.

GOLDMAN

Ukrainian officials told you this?

AMBASSADOR

Correct.

GOLDMAN

And how did they become aware?

AMBASSADOR

I'll tell you what I think, but I'm not sure
That it's a fact. So this is how I see it.
Lutsenko talked about his ideas freely
With his inner circle. Some people heard
And wanted me to know.

GOLDMAN

Excuse me, could you move the microphone
A little closer?

AMBASSADOR

Sorry.

GOLDMAN

Could you describe
Lutsenko's background?

AMBASSADOR

He's been in politics
For more than 20 years. His strongest ally's
The former President, Poroshenko.

Lutsenko ran the Poroshenko faction
Of the Rada, Ukraine's parliament,
Until the spring of 2016, when he
Became the Prosecutor General.

GOLDMAN

Is he a lawyer?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

Then how did he—

AMBASSADOR

Rada had to take a special vote.

GOLDMAN

So he was Prosecutor General
The whole time you were in Ukraine, correct?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

GOLDMAN

Would you explain his role to us?

AMBASSADOR

The Prosecutor's job is powerful.
Left over from the Soviets, it's like
The FBI and Justice all in one.
They brought Lutsenko in to clean it up—
Because the office was a vehicle
For favors, bribes, whatever. The problems trickled
Down to ordinary people's lives.

GOLDMAN

And did he clean it up?

AMBASSADOR

No, he did not.

GOLDMAN

What do you think of him?

AMBASSADOR

He's very smart.

Lutsenko is, at heart, an opportunist
Who will align himself with any forces,
Sometimes simultaneously, who he
Believes will suit his interests. I liked him
When I first met him. He can be very charming.

GOLDMAN

Would you call him corrupt?

AMBASSADOR

I know I've heard

A lot of people say that he's corrupt.

GOLDMAN

Now let's turn back to Rudy Giuliani.
What was his interest in Ukraine, if any?

AMBASSADOR

Well, he had clients in Ukraine, so that
Was one thing that was possible. Of course,
He was Trump's personal attorney.

GOLDMAN

Let's talk about the time
You met with Giuliani over breakfast.

AMBASSADOR

That was a couple years ago, before
All this started—November, 2017.
Through one of his associates, he asked me
To meet at his hotel.

GOLDMAN

What was the reason

For the breakfast?

AMBASSADOR

I wasn't sure exactly.

I knew that Giuliani was important
Back in the States, so I agreed to go.
And so—yeah. Why did he want me there?
It wasn't often I was asked to meet,
Or rendezvous, I guess, at someone's hotel.

GOLDMAN

What was discussed?

AMBASSADOR

That was the strangest part.
It didn't have a thing to do with me.

GOLDMAN

And so there wasn't—

AMBASSADOR

There were some people there
From Kharkiv, some deputies and businessmen.
They wanted his advice on how to set up
A 911-type system.

GOLDMAN

That was the last
You heard from him?

AMBASSADOR

It was.

GOLDMAN

And did he talk
To anyone else you know?

AMBASSADOR

I don't believe so.
They would have told me.

GOLDMAN

And now you know what Rudy
Wanted in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR

I watch TV,
I read the papers, you know, like everyone
Who's at this hearing now—so yeah, I learned.
It was a very strange experience
To hear about myself in third person.
At first I almost didn't recognize
That it was me.

GOLDMAN

Did you have further talks
With top Ukrainian officials?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

GOLDMAN

What did you learn from them?

AMBASSADOR

That Giuliani and Lutsenko met
Several times last winter, and basically
That they were seeking ways to damage me—
Lutsenko was the one, especially,
Who sought to undercut me in the States.
And I could not imagine why that was.
But now, of course, I see.

GOLDMAN

What do you see?

AMBASSADOR

Well, that I'm no longer in Ukraine.

GOLDMAN

What was Lutsenko's motive?

AMBASSADOR

He wasn't pleased

That we kept pressing him to start reforms.
What he wanted was for the embassy
To set up meetings with the FBI
Director, the Attorney General, and so on.
He'd say, I have important information.
But as you know, there are protocols.
We don't do that. Lutsenko wouldn't share
His intel or his sources. He didn't care.

GOLDMAN

Why was that?

AMBASSADOR

Later we found out
The info that he had was fabrications
About me.

GOLDMAN

What kind of fabrications?

AMBASSADOR

That I gave Lutsenko a do-not-prosecute list.
That's ridiculous. It's something he
Dreamt up. There isn't a shred of truth to it.

GOLDMAN

For the record, did you make a list?

AMBASSADOR

Of course not.

GOLDMAN

While you were still in Kyiv, what else
Did you hear?

AMBASSADOR

Well, it was so amorphous,
Like gossip that I was going to be recalled.
People would ask me, and I'd say no, I'm here.
I'm still at work. But it was very vague.
Then things became more clear last March, the 24th,
When Lutsenko's interview came out in *The Hill*.
That was the first time the charges were made
In public. The media blew up, Giuliani
Released a statement, and Donald Jr. tweeted
That I should be removed from my post at once.
It felt like I was caught up in the middle,
Without any warning. I was undone.
What did I learn? To not trust anyone.

CHAIR

Let's keep your exit separate
From everything else.

AMBASSADOR

That's fine.

CHAIR

Because we'll get
To your removal soon. Okay?

AMBASSADOR

Okay.

GOLDMAN

So after you saw *The Hill*, did you talk
With Washington?

AMBASSADOR

Of course, I got in touch
With folks in back in D.C.—the State Department,
The NSC—trying to figure out
Exactly who said what. No one knew
But there were guesses.

GOLDMAN

You knew that Giuliani
Had met already with Lutsenko?

AMBASSADOR

Yeah.

It was pretty plain.

GOLDMAN

What do you mean?

AMBASSADOR

Well, Giuliani had told the press himself.

CHAIR

Did you realize then what this was all about?
Why Lutsenko would want to push you out?

AMBASSADOR

Probably because he felt the embassy
Was trying to fight corruption, and he did not—
You know, that this was not in his best interest.
I also think that he—I mean, it's hard
To believe—that he was personally angry with me
Because I refused to arrange meetings for him
With top U.S. officials. There was nothing
For them to talk about. Lutsenko, frankly,
Wasn't right for us. After 30-plus years
At posts in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan
I've learned to trust my gut.

CHAIR

You tried to ensure
That everyone used proper channels?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

CHAIR

If someone had things to share with the U.S.?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

CHAIR

Lutsenko didn't agree?

AMBASSADOR

He wanted to work outside the normal system,
Where there is less transparency, let's say,
And more potential to try and tip the scale.
Lutsenko and I are very different creatures.

GOLDMAN

Did Giuliani help him
Through back channels?

AMBASSADOR

It certainly seems that way.

GOLDMAN

When did you figure it out?

AMBASSADOR

Well now, we know,
With perfect hindsight. You'll think that I'm naive.
But I could not imagine all the things
That for the last six months have happened to me.
I could not envision it. We knew
That there was something there. We asked ourselves,
So what is going on? And then *The Hill*
Came out, and suddenly it all made sense.

GOLDMAN

And how did Washington react?

AMBASSADOR

I don't quite—

GOLDMAN

Well, did they try to pressure you or—

AMBASSADOR

No.

They gave me total support.

GOLDMAN

They understood

The article was completely false?

AMBASSADOR

Oh yeah,

Until this hearing today nobody asked
If I was actually guilty. No one asked
Because they knew the whole thing was outrageous.

GOLDMAN

Before you left last May, did you have meetings
With any Ukrainian officials regarding
Giuliani?

AMBASSADOR

It was in February,
When someone senior told me to watch my back,
As if I'd landed in a B movie.
What was next? A meeting in an alley?

GOLDMAN

Describe that conversation.

AMBASSADOR

Here's what he said.

There were two gentlemen from Florida—
Their names were Mr. Parnus and Mr. Fruman—
And they were working on some business deals
With Giuliani and Lutsenko. Nobody
At the embassy had ever met them.
We had no idea what they were up to.
But as you know, one of our biggest jobs
Is helping to promote American interests.
To us, that's apple pie and motherhood.
So if a business is legitimate
And comes to us—

GOLDMAN

Did you believe that they

Were not legitimate?

AMBASSADOR

I didn't know.

You see, you never know what you don't know—
The unknown unknowns. You know?

GOLDMAs

No—I mean yes.

AMBASSADOR

We knew that there was something funny there,
But we had no idea how high it went.
And then last April, Dale Perry releases
An open letter—he's senior manager
At ERU, an energy company in Ukraine.
The letter said that these two individuals
Had natural gas that they would like to sell,
And that they'd like a new ambassador.

GOLDMAN

And did you understand why Parnus and Fruman
Saw you as a problem?

AMBASSADOR

Not really, no.

I thought it was a complete mystery.
It felt so 17th century: a letter,
Intrigue, maneuvering behind the scenes.
It might as well have been by candlelight.
They made me think of *Hamlet's* Rosencrantz
And Guildenstern, those two comic nobodies.

GOLDMAN

So liquified natural gas, or LNG,
Would help with Ukraine's need for energy?

AMBASSADOR

Oh yeah, it's always good to have a backup.

GOLDMAN

Who was the senior Ukrainian official
You spoke with back in February?

AMBASSADOR

Avakov,

The Minister of Interior.

GOLDMAN

Had he talked
Directly with Parnas, Fruman, or Giuliani?

AMBASSADOR

He said that he spoke briefly on the phone
With Giuliani in DC. He didn't want
To meet with him in person.

GOLDMAN

Why was that?

AMBASSADOR

He thought that it could be dangerous.
That it could harm bipartisan support
By getting into U.S. politics.
He was afraid that this terrain was filled
With mines, that it was a tricky place to be.

GOLDMAN

Was Avakov aware of Giuliani's link
To President Trump? Tell us what you think.

AMBASSADOR

Yes, everybody knew.

GOLDMAN

What did they know?

AMBASSADOR

That he was Trump's attorney.

GOLDMAN

And spoke for Trump?

AMBASSADOR

I think—I think they really weren't sure.
I think they hoped—

GOLDMAN

That he did or didn't?

AMBASSADOR

Well, certainly the ones who met with him

Were hoping that he spoke for the President.

GOLDMAN

And why is that?

AMBASSADOR

Because they probably thought
Doors would open for them in Washington.
At least Lutsenko did. You have to remember
That this was during the Ukrainian elections
And President Poroshenko's numbers were down.
They hoped that Trump would come out and endorse
Poroshenko. That's what Lutsenko wanted.
He thought that if he gave some dirt on Biden
To Giuliani, Trump would reciprocate.

GOLDMAN

Did you report your conversation with Avakov
Back to the State Department?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

GOLDMAN

What was

Their take?

AMBASSADOR

They were sort of shocked. They knew
Avakov, they thought that he was credible.
Like when you have a friend who tells you something
You don't want to face. We tried to find out
More, you know, but not with real results.

GOLDMAN

Was there concern about Giuliani
Contacting Ukrainians?

AMBASSADOR

Concern by whom?

GOLDMAN

The State Department.

AMBASSADOR

There was. Back then, we were trying to wrap

Our minds around what the story was.
 At first you don't feel anything, you're numb.
 If anything, we were in denial,
 Like a death or something terrible.

GOLDMAN

Was Giuliani representing State?

AMBASSADOR

No, of course not.

GOLDMAN

After meeting with Avakov,
 Who did you speak to at the State Department?

AMBASSADOR

Probably my boss Phil Reeker, or George Kent,
 The Deputy Assistant Secretary.

GOLDMAN

Did you send any cables?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

Why not?

AMBASSADOR

We felt that it was too political.

GOLDMAN

So at this point—

AMBASSADOR

We wanted to avoid
 Anything domestic: campaigns, elections,
 All that. We'd lose our credibility.
 Were we too careful? Maybe, I don't know.
 When things get messy, it's better to lie low.

GOLDMAN

In February, when you spoke to Avakov,
 Did he make it clear that— Well, let me ask you.
 Was Rudy pushing for a probe into
 Hunter, Biden's son, and his work for Burisma,

The Ukraine energy concern?

AMBASSADOR

I knew
That these were topics —to find things
That could damage a campaign—

GOLDMAN.

By Joe Biden,
His run for President?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

CHAIR

I need
A yes for the official record.

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

Did Giuliani's interests match official
U.S. policy?

AMBASSADOR

Well, when I think
Of U.S. policy, I think about
The people who actually shape it, whether it's Congress
Or people, you know, in the Executive Branch.
And private individuals don't do that.
They don't do official U.S. anything.
They're unauthorized, on their own,
Unaccountable to anyone.

GOLDMAN

What was the response?

AMBASSADOR

Well, we were all disturbed.
We talked to Washington: What do you think
Is going on? It was very worrisome.
Ukrainians themselves had no idea.

GOLDMAN

While you were at your post, you came to know
What Giuliani wanted from Lutsenko?

AMBASSADOR

I did. For Lutsenko to launch a fresh inquiry
Into the Bidens and Burisma.

CHAIR

Let me step in.

If Giuliani and his associates
Were trying to get Ukraine involved in U.S.
Domestic politics, let alone
The next Presidential election, was that in line
With U.S. interests?

AMBASSADOR

The short answer is no.

I mean, we didn't have a policy
Because this sort of thing had never happened.

CHAIR

Or Ukraine's interest either?

AMBASSADOR

No, not at all.

GOLDMAN

Would you describe Giuliani's scheme
As antidemocratic?

AMBASSADOR

Let me just say

That I believe American elections
Should be decided by Americans.

GOLDMAN

Were you aware if State had ever tried
To curb Giuliani from the inside?

AMBASSADOR

Curb him? I don't know. I've no idea.
There were rumblings back in Washington.
You have to understand that I was in
The dark about these things.

GOLDMAN

Did you document your thoughts?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

Although I didn't want to put it down
In writing, and certainly not front channel,
Under Secretary Hale asked me
To send a classified memo to him: what
Was going on, why were people doing this?

GOLDMAN

What did you say?

AMBASSADOR

I told him— Well, in late March I'd sent
An email to the State Department about
The avalanche of stories in the press
Attacking me and our work at the embassy,
As well as Twitter storms, and much, much more.
I was taken aback. I'd never seen
Anything like this. It came from nowhere
Like some kind of natural disaster.

GOLDMAN

Do you remember talking with Kurt Volker,
The Special Envoy to Ukraine, about
Giuliani?

AMBASSADOR

A week after *The Hill*
Came out, we had a conversation. He said,
"It will all blow over. You'll be fine.
I know that it's unpleasant for you now."
And that was the extent.

GOLDMAN

When Volker said,
"It will all blow over," he meant—

AMBASSADOR

Everything.

It felt so good to hear him say those words.
I wanted to believe that they were true.

GOLDMAN

What about Gordon Sondland, EU Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR

Well, in the middle of the media frenzy,
I called up Gordon to ask for his advice.
When this was only about Ukraine, then State
Was great, they gave me their complete support.
But when the story shifted to the White House,
Then everything became more delicate.

GOLDMAN

And what did Sondland say?

AMBASSADOR

He said you need
To go big or go home. You need to declare
Your support for Trump and deny all the rumors.
That was his advice. It was advice
In my position as Ambassador
I didn't see how I could take.

GOLDMAN

Why not?

AMBASSADOR

For one thing, the State Department had gone silent.
What was the point in trying to take on
A fight in public with my U.S. critics?
I literally had no way that I could win.
Be quiet and let them bully me with lies?
Or jump into the political mud with them?
So I told Hale and Sondlund, via email,
Unless the State Department faced down the press
To make it stop, we couldn't do our best.

GOLDMAN

Why not?

AMBASSADOR

Well, if you have the President's son
Tweeting out, "We need to pull these clowns,"
However it was put, it makes it hard
To be Ambassador.

GOLDMAN

What did you want
State to do?

AMBASSADOR

Put out a statement saying,
You know, that I had their full confidence.
Something like that. That made it very clear
I speak for the President and for
The Secretary of State and for the country.

GOLDMAN

Unlike Giuliani?

AMBASSADOR

I didn't say that.

GOLDMAN

But that was what you meant?

AMBASSADOR

Well, what I meant
Was that—what I just said.

GOLDMAN

Not as payback
To Giuliani, but more to attacks—

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

—from others, such as the President's son?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

And how did Hale respond to your request?

AMBASSADOR

He said he'd raise it with the Secretary.

GOLDMAN

Did you hear back?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

Was there a statement?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

So no one at State would make a statement?

AMBASSADOR

Nope.

CHAIR

Could you state, for the record,
That State wouldn't state a statement about
The current state of things?

AMBASSADOR

Yes, that's my statement.

GOLDMAN

And during this time, did you speak directly
To the Secretary—

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

—about
The situation?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

And what about
Your boss?

AMBASSADOR

I spoke to Phil, he said he'd talk
To his superiors on the seventh floor.

GOLDMAN

So he was only the messenger?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

GOLDMAN

And did he tell you what the seventh floor
Was saying?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

And what was their response?

AMBASSADOR

Phil said there was resistance to make an official
Statement, because it could be undermined.
I couldn't believe what he was saying to me.
I literally had trouble with the words.
How could they not support me publicly?
I was the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine.
I was under siege from every side:
Fox News, the President's son, Twitter.

GOLDMAN

I'm sorry, undermined?

AMBASSADOR

They were afraid
What they said could be undermined.

GOLDMAN

By whom?

AMBASSADOR

The President, I guess.

GOLDMAN

Didn't you mind?

AMBASSADOR

Of course I did.

GOLDMAN

So any statement, yours or mine,
Could be undermined—by what, a tweet?

AMBASSADOR

I suppose. No one at State would say a word.

CHAIR

If something did come out, the seventh floor
Was nervous about the President's response?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

CHAIR

Is that a yes?

AMBASSADOR

Yes, that's a yes.

GOLDMAN

I think our time is up. Would you like
A little break?

AMBASSADOR

Yes, thanks.

CHAIR

Okay, let's take
A five-minute recess, then we'll resume
With questions from our colleagues across the room.

Pause.

The three actors turn their backs. They put on GOP buttons and grotesque carnival masks, then face the audience again as the Chorus.

GOP CHORUS

We'd like, Marie Yovanovitch,
To follow up and scratch our itch.
Did you go rogue? Had you conspired?
What's the real reason you got fired?
If we mix up a name or date,
We're sorry—help us get it straight.
We don't mean any disrespect,

But time is short, please be direct.
 Could you lay out how you and State
 Typically communicate?
 By phone, email, teleconference?
 Where's the chain of evidence?
 Who were your contacts, your confidants?
 What were your needs, desires, your wants?
 We'd like to know your train of thought:
 What you remember, what you forgot.
 As for this do-not-prosecute list—
 Is that why you were actually dismissed?
 Why did you hate Yuri Lutsenko?
 Did he know something you didn't know?
 Were you the leak to *The Washington Post*,
The New York Times, the whole East Coast?
 Tell us the story of Burisma.
 Was it corrupt? A total miasma?
 And what's the deal with Hunter Biden?
 His dad was VP—so what's he hiding?
 You like the new guy, President Zelensky?
 Was he your pal or frenemy?
 He wasn't very nice to you
 To say he wanted someone new.
 Who prepped you today, besides your lawyer?
 Friends or family, your ex-employer?
 Some colleagues waiting in the foyer,
 Acting like a legal voyeur?
 How come you haven't heard a thing
 From State or Justice—not a ping?
 No text, no email, no urgent call.
 It's like you don't exist at all.
 Doesn't that seem a little odd?
 You ever feel like you're a fraud?
 You think Trump's wrong about Crimea?
 How about China, North Korea?
 Which cable channel do you watch for news?
 Were you convinced that Trump would lose?
 What do you Google? What do you Search?
 It's time for you to take us to church.
 Isn't Zelensky the one who's corrupt?
 Thank you, Chair. Our time is up.

Pause.

The actors remove their masks and buttons, and sit back down at their mics.

CHAIR

Mr. Goldman, please.

GOLDMAN

So three days after
Trump's call to Zelensky on April 21st
To congratulate him on his win, you're told
To leave and come back to the States?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

GOLDMAN

Who called you?

AMBASSADOR

Carol Perez, the Director General.

GOLDMAN

What did she tell you?

AMBASSADOR

She called me at 10 at night
To give me a heads up, that things were off track.
She said there was a lot of nervousness
On the seventh floor and up the street.
This was the first time that I actually knew
How bad things were. You don't get calls like that
Late at night in Kyiv. It's never good.

GOLDMAN

What's "up the street"?

AMBASSADOR

The White House.

GOLDMAN

Who's nervousness?

AMBASSADOR

That's what I wondered too. I asked her, What's
The problem? She told me that she wasn't sure.
But she was hesitant. I asked if this
Was all about Lutsenko's accusations.
She said she didn't know, that she'd find out
And call me back at midnight. Midnight? Really?

GOLDMAN

Did someone order her?

AMBASSADOR

I got that sense.

GOLDMAN

And by that time, you knew that Giuliani—

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

GOLDMAN

—was calling for—

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

—your head?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

GOLDMAN

Were you aware of anyone else
Calling for your ouster?

AMBASSADOR

There were, you know,
A lot of people talking about me online.
Kafkaesque comes closest to describing
My situation. Guilty. Guilty because
I'd been accused.

GOLDMAN

Were you aware of how the President felt
About you at that point?

AMBASSADOR

He'd said some things.
There were some tweets out there, but not about me.

GOLDMAN

You must have known— You must have understood
That Giuliani and Donald Jr. were both
Acting on his behalf?

AMBASSADOR

I didn't then,
But that is clearly—

GOLDMAN

Go on.

AMBASSADOR

—a fair conclusion.

GOLDMAN

Without my putting words into your mouth,
Who was really driving—

CHAIR

Can I jump in?
Were you aware if Secretary Pompeo
Was happy with your work in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR

I thought he was, yes.

CHAIR

Based on what?

AMBASSADOR

In early March, the seventh floor signed off
On a one-year extension, if not by Pompeo
Then those around him. I thought I had the blessing
Of the seventh floor. Like he's the Pope.

CHAIR

What else did your boss Phil tell you in April?

AMBASSADOR

Phil told me that someone high up at State
Was going to call up Hannity on Fox.
To ask, you know, just what is going on here?
I mean, do you have proof of all these things?
And if you do, tell us; if not, then stop.
I understood the call to Fox was made.

And then things simmered down.

CHAIR

Doesn't it seem odd that the State Department
Would call a talk show host about your job?

AMBASSADOR

I'm not sure what—

CHAIR

But wasn't Hannity
One of those attacking you?

AMBASSADOR

He was.

CHAIR

So someone at State went to Fox to find out
What the story was?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

CHAIR

And what

Was the result?

AMBASSADOR

Things got better.

CHAIR

For how long?

AMBASSADOR

Well, there were little blips.
But it wasn't until the April 21st elections
That everything exploded in a big way.
It got to where I didn't want to read
The papers or watch TV. It was like
The embassy was in a bunker, and we were
Feeling the shocks, waiting for an all-clear.

GOLDMAN

Did Phil Reeker explain
Why it was impossible for you to stay
Another year?

AMBASSADOR

Well, it was pretty plain.

GOLDMAN

And why was that?

AMBASSADOR

Because my presence there
Had become too sensitive.

GOLDMAN

I see.
Did Carol Perez get back to you at midnight?

AMBASSADOR

She called me back a little later, so now
It's one a.m. in Ukraine.

GOLDMAN

What did she say?

AMBASSADOR

She said that people were concerned for me,
That I should come back home to Washington.
And I was like, Why? Has something happened?
She said, I don't believe so. But this is all
For your security. You need to leave,
You need to catch the next plane right away.
I asked her, for my personal safety?
Is something wrong that I should know about?
And she said, No, I don't think that's the case.
So I began to argue that it's unfair,
I'm getting pulled without an explanation.
Imagine how I felt. I had to leave.
It was the middle of the night in Ukraine.
I couldn't sleep. I had to think things through.

GOLDMAN

Why leave so soon?

AMBASSADOR

She didn't say.

GOLDMAN

So what did you do next?

AMBASSADOR

I told my staff assistant to meet me at 8
 So he could start the wheels going—of course
 I had a slate of meetings—and buy me a ticket.
 I didn't know how long that I'd be gone.
 Carol couldn't say. I told her, listen,
 This won't look very good. Could I stay on
 Another week? I'll wind things up and go.
 And she said no, you have to leave right now.
 I asked her, will I be able to return and pack?
 She couldn't answer. I thought I'd never go back.

GOLDMAN

When did you arrive here in D.C.?

AMBASSADOR

A Friday afternoon. So I could relax
 A little over the weekend, see some friends.

GOLDMAN

You met with Phil on Monday?

AMBASSADOR

At 4 o'clock.

GOLDMAN

What did he say to you?

AMBASSADOR

He said that since
 The summer of 2018, a year ago,
 Trump wanted to get rid of me; Pompeo
 Tried to protect me, but couldn't any longer.

GOLDMAN

This was the first time that you heard this?

AMBASSADOR

Oh, yes.

GOLDMAN

How did you respond?

AMBASSADOR

I was stunned.

GOLDMAN

Did he explain why Trump was so—?

AMBASSADOR

No, no.

Everyone assumed it had to do
With Lutsenko and Giuliani.

GOLDMAN

And then you met
With Deputy Secretary Sullivan?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

GOLDMAN

What did he say?

AMBASSADOR

That he felt bad that this
Was happening. I asked what I'd done wrong.
And he said, nothing, you've done nothing wrong.
He asked what I'd do next. He wondered about
My state of mind. Seriously? What did he think?

GOLDMAN

What did you tell him?

AMBASSADOR

I told him I was very disappointed.
I said, you know, I want an explanation.
After more than 30 years, you owe me.
But he had nothing to add. Beyond the fact
The President's decided.

GOLDMAN

Did you meet with Secretary Pompeo
While you were in Washington?

AMBASSADOR

I didn't.

GOLDMAN

You ever meet with him?

AMBASSADOR

I didn't, no.

GOLDMAN

Receive a message?

AMBASSADOR

Not that I recall.

GOLDMAN

You ever meet with anyone else from State?

AMBASSADOR

Only Carol Perez. She helped arrange
My teaching job at Georgetown.

GOLDMAN

So back in May,

Giuliani tells a Ukraine reporter
You were recalled because you were, quote,
"Part of efforts against the President,"
Unquote. Do you remember that?

AMBASSADOR

I do.

GOLDMAN

And how did you respond?

AMBASSADOR

I thought that it

Was all ridiculous, more of the same.

GOLDMAN

You ever badmouth President Trump in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR

Of course not.

GOLDMAN

Or put down U.S. policy?

AMBASSADOR

No. I was the embassy's public face.
I actually felt that for the last three years
We made things better.

GOLDMAN

You mean in terms of fighting

Corruption?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

GOLDMAN

Okay, let me change gears.

In the last few years, did you hear anyone talk

About collusion between the DNC

And Ukraine in 2016?

AMBASSADOR

Yeah, probably.

GOLDMAN

Like when Giuliani told Fox and Friends,

"Keep your eye on Ukraine"?

AMBASSADOR

I did hear that.

GOLDMAN

Or when Trump went on Hannity

And disparaged Ukraine? What did you make of that?

AMBASSADOR

I wondered what this talk would mean.

GOLDMAN

How so?

AMBASSADOR

Well, obviously, for me personally.

But also, what does this mean for policy?

GOLDMAN

In what way?

AMBASSADOR

If Americans believe

Ukraine is corrupt, they might begin to question

The aid we've given them for 30 years.

CHAIR

Excuse me, I'd like to read from the July call
Where President Zelesnksy says to Trump:
"It was great that you were the first who told me
She was a bad ambassador, thank you.
I agree 100 percent it's true."

AMBASSADOR

I have to say that it's still hard to hear.
Especially since I'd already left.

CHAIR

How did you

Get along with him?

AMBASSADOR

Pretty well.

CHAIR

You knew how much Zelensky wanted to have
A meeting in the Oval Office?

AMBASSADOR

I did.

CHAIR

To show that he and President Trump were close?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

CHAIR

And this is at a time Ukraine
Is militarily dependent?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

CHAIR

And economically as well?

AMBASSADOR

Somewhat.

CHAIR

And diplomatically dependent too?

AMBASSADOR

We're Ukraine's most important partner.

CHAIR

And that makes Trump the most important person?

AMBASSADOR

That's true.

CHAIR

So Zelensky has a strong incentive
To go along with what Trump says?

AMBASSADOR

He does.

CHAIR

If Trump has problems with you, then Zelensky
Would probably agree.

AMBASSADOR

It looks that way.

CHAIR

Thank you, that's all I have.

GOLDMAN

Ambassador, have you seen the indictment against
Parnus and Fruman, which came out October 10th?

AMBASSADOR

No, but I've heard about it.

GOLDMAN

I'm going to read
From page 8, the middle paragraph.
It says: "Parnas met with Congressman 1
For his assistance to try and remove or recall
The then U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine."
You understand this reference is to you?

AMBASSADOR

I do.

GOLDMAN

And then it says: "Parnas' efforts
Were made, at least in part, at the request
Of one or more Ukrainian officials."
You know who these officials are?

AMBASSADOR

I don't.

GOLDMAN

What was your first reaction when you saw this?

AMBASSADOR

Again, surprise, total disbelief.
You know how everything is going fine
Until one day it isn't?

GOLDMAN

Yes, I suppose.

AMBASSADOR

It's like when the doctor's office leaves a message
And everything shifts.

CHAIR

Could we get back on track?

GOLDMAN

Okay. Was one of these officials Lutsenko?

AMBASSADOR

That's a pretty good guess.

GOLDMAN

Lutsenko's probe
Into Burisma was dormant, isn't that right?
In order to, quote, "keep them on the hook."
What did he want?

AMBASSADOR

Well, if you have a case
That isn't closed, it's a way to keep
Your hooks in them.

GOLDMAN

Through any means, that is,

By hook or crook?

AMBASSADOR

(Laughs)

Oh yeah. But mostly crook.

GOLDMAN

So if the case is on hold, then only Lutsenko
Has the power to revive it, right?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

GOLDMAN

And he could use that fact as blackmail
Against Burisma?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

As well as people
Entangled with Burisma?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

Plus those
Who want the case to be reopened?

AMBASSADOR

Uh-huh.

GOLDMAN

The phone call on July 25th between
Zelensky and Trump happened after you'd left.

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

GOLDMAN

When did you find out what they said?

AMBASSADOR

The day it was made public by the White House.

I work in Georgetown now; I'm just like you.
CNN, the *Post*. That's all I knew.

GOLDMAN

Did State give you any details earlier?

AMBASSADOR

Only that Trump had asked for help with Biden,
And Zelensky put him off.

GOLDMAN

What were your thoughts?

AMBASSADOR

Well, to be frank, you see, I was amazed
That Trump made those requests. And I was happy
Zelensky hadn't given in to him.

GOLDMAN

Since then you've had a chance to read the White House
Copy of the transcript?

AMBASSADOR

I have.

GOLDMAN

It turns out

What you heard is less than complete, it seems.

AMBASSADOR

Oh yeah. Now I know the ugly part.

GOLDMAN

At the bottom of page 4, Trump says:
"Well, she's going to go through some things."
What did that mean?

AMBASSADOR

I have no idea.

GOLDMAN

Were you afraid they might retaliate?

AMBASSADOR

Who knows? You know, there's a whole universe

Of what "some things" might mean, from bad to worse.

GOLDMAN

Such as what?

AMBASSADOR

Well, right after the transcript
Came out, the FBI received a cache
Of documents on me. Which made me wonder,
Is there an active FBI investigation?

GOLDMAN

You worried about your teaching job?

AMBASSADOR

I am.

GOLDMAN

And about your personal safety?

AMBASSADOR

So far, I'm not.

GOLDMAN

I hear some hesitation.

AMBASSADOR

Some friends of mine
Are very concerned.

GOLDMAN

Although it's not directly
Their concern? Since it doesn't concern them?

AMBASSADOR

And yet, if any of us have a concern,
You'd say we are concerned.

GOLDMAN

Concerning this transcript,
Did you reach out to anyone at State?

AMBASSADOR

No.

GOLDMAN

Did anyone there reach out to you?

AMBASSADOR

They did.

GOLDMAN

Someone other than your friends?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

And who was that?

AMBASSADOR

Mike McKinley.

GOLDMAN

Excuse me?

AMBASSADOR

Mike McKinley, a Senior Advisor.

GOLDMAN

What did you discuss?

AMBASSADOR

He called to see
How I was doing. He said he was surprised
No one had been in touch. It was good
To hear a friendly voice. Someone asking
If I'm okay.

GOLDMAN

And did Mike tell you about
His resignation?

AMBASSADOR

He said he was planning to quit.

GOLDMAN

And did he tell you why?

AMBASSADOR

He was upset

How State was handling everything this year.

GOLDMAN

What did he mean?

AMBASSADOR

Mike believed that State
Should stand behind its officers.

GOLDMAN

Like you?

AMBASSADOR

Like me.

GOLDMAN

And others too?

AMBASSADOR

I guess so, yes.
There was George Kent. And maybe there were others.
He was angry the way that George had been treated.

GOLDMAN

What about?

AMBASSADOR

He said that George had fought
With State Department lawyers, and Mike felt they
Had bullied George.

GOLDMAN

What was the fight about?

AMBASSADOR

I'm not sure. It had with do with papers
Congress had subpoenaed.

GOLDMAN

So Mike thought
That State did not back up its people?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.
He said that State had gone completely quiet
In the face of all the attacks.

CHAIR

Would you like

A break?

AMBASSADOR

How close are we—

CHAIR

We're almost done.

You want to power through?

AMBASSADOR

Yes, that sounds good.

CHAIR

We'll turn the air back on.

My staff tells me it's like a locker room.

Mr. Goldman, proceed.

GOLDMAN

Would you say

The U.S. had two policies in Ukraine,

The official one and Giuliani's? Explain.

AMBASSADOR

Ukrainians were puzzled. Would I be leaving?

Who did we speak for? The U.S.? The President?

It cut the ground out from under us.

GOLDMAN

So in a sense the shadow policy,

No pun intended, sorry, began to trump

The official line?

AMBASSADOR

In retrospect.

CHAIR

While you were still Ambassador, did you

Ever raise alarms with State about

Giuliani's actions?

AMBASSADOR

Well, we had

A whole series of conversations as we

Learned more and more. Would that qualify
 As raising an alarm? I'd say it does,
 But it's not like I sent a cable with bullet points.
 It felt too sensitive.

CHAIR

Who'd you share
 Your feelings with?

AMBASSADOR

The European Bureau.

CHAIR

And at the Bureau?

AMBASSADOR

George Kent.

GOLDMAN

And when was that?

AMBASSADOR

When I was in Washington last January.
 I saw George, so we discussed these things.
 There wasn't much to say.

GOLDMAN

That you were aware of?

AMBASSADOR

That's right, I mean, I didn't know Lutsenko
 Was in D.C. to meet with Giuliani.

GOLDMAN

So when you talked to Kent, you knew much less
 Than you do now.

AMBASSADOR

Oh, yeah.

GOLDMAN

(To the CHAIR)

Do you have questions?

CHAIR

How much time is left?

GOLDMAN

Three minutes.

CHAIR

Okay. I have a few.

GOLDMAN

(To MARIE)

Thank you for your patience. I believe it's useful
At this point in the day to summarize.
Please let me know if you disagree
Or feel that I'm misstating anything.
You have served in the Diplomatic Corps
At foreign posts for 30 years or more.

AMBASSADOR

For 33.

GOLDMAN

And is it fair to say
You were committed to your job in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR

Yes, very much.

GOLDMAN

And you were good at it?

AMBASSADOR

I'd like to think so, yes.

GOLDMAN

In fact your bosses
Were so happy with your work that they
Wanted to extend your tour?

AMBASSADOR

That's right.

GOLDMAN

And then along came Rudy Giuliani.
He represented some American businessmen
Who thought that you were somehow in the way.
Is that how you see it?

AMBASSADOR

I suppose so.

GOLDMAN

We're talking about Mr. Parnas and Mr. Fruman?

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

And Giuliani, of course, was also
On Trump's side, trying to get Ukraine
To investigate the Bidens.

AMBASSADOR

Yes, that's true.

GOLDMAN

Again, you were an obstacle, at least
To Giuliani, Trump, Parnas and Fruman.
You blocked the way of Trump's political scheme,
Plus the financial stakes of Giuliani's
Two Florida clients. That sum things up?

AMBASSADOR

Yeah, it does. That sounds about right.
It seems so easy to look back now in hindsight.
I feel a little foolish not to have seen
The whole scenario.

GOLDMAN

So they partnered
With Lutsenko in order to have you removed.

AMBASSADOR

Yes.

GOLDMAN

They did an expose in *The Hill*,
They leaked to Hannity on Fox, they got
Pete Sessions, in the House, to write a letter
Castigating you. They wanted to "get her."

AMBASSADOR

They did.

GOLDMAN

Well, and it worked, didn't it?

AMBASSADOR

It did.

GOLDMAN

They got you out of the way. In effect,
They threw you to the wolves. Correct?

AMBASSADOR

It's clear

They didn't want me in Ukraine.

GOLDMAN

So why

Were you a threat?

AMBASSADOR

That's the mystery.

From what I've seen these last few months, I think
They felt our policy to make Ukraine
More honest, democratic—that it was me,
As the head, who was the real problem.
I felt there was a target on my back,
A funny feeling like I was being watched.
Do you know *Vertigo*? My favorite Hitchcock.
But who was tailing me? Am I the blonde,
Kim Novak, or Jimmy Stewart, the detective?
And now, I guess, I've died and been reborn.
Is that too dramatic? I feel my life
Was taken from me at the tip of a knife.

CHAIR

We're almost at the end.
This is the lightning round.

AMBASSADOR

Okay, go on.

CHAIR

A few last things. You left Ukraine for good
On May 20th?

AMBASSADOR

That's correct.

CHAIR

The day
Zelensky was inaugurated?

AMBASSADOR

Yes,
By coincidence.

CHAIR

Were you aware
Who the U.S. sent?

AMBASSADOR

Not really. I mean,
I heard that Sondland was in the delegation.
But I was super busy trying to tie up
Any loose ends, to leave Ukraine for the last time.
It was a death. A death that came from nowhere.
The phone call in the middle of the night:
You know, before you answer, something's not right.

CHAIR

Ambassador, we thank you for this long day.
We are adjourned. There's nothing else to say.

END