

**MUNICH CRISIS:
ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE**

By Jamie Gardiner

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

EXT. NUMBER TEN. STREET. EARLY MORNING.

Caption - LONDON AUGUST, 1938

The black door of Number 10. A POLICEMAN stands guard. A cat lies next to the morning's milk and newspapers.

A car pulls up. The cat runs away. General ISMAY, liaison between the military and the Prime Minister, 50s, grizzled, in full military uniform gets out.

ISMAY glares at the POLICEMAN, who hastily pulls open the door. ISMAY strides into Number 10.

INT. NUMBER TEN. HALLWAY. MORNING.

ISMAY marches down the hallway. A group of officers are already assembled. All in uniform, all looking stiff. They salute and fall in behind him.

ISMAY runs into WILSON, Head of the Civil Service, late 50s, wing collar and HALIFAX, Foreign Secretary, also late 50s, tweeds.

WILSON

General-

ISMAY thrusts out a piece of paper. WILSON glances at it, looks serious and takes out his spectacles.

INT. NUMBER TEN. CHAMBERLAIN'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

CHAMBERLAIN, Prime Minister, early 70s, hair going white, in pyjamas. He sleeps in bed.

His bedroom has few personal effects.

A knock on the door. CHAMBERLAIN wakes with a start and sits up. The clock is at 5am. He takes some pills from the bedside table, and swallows them with distaste.

CHAMBERLAIN rolls out of bed and hurriedly puts on his dressing gown whilst brushing his hair. He unfastens a bundle of papers and lays them out on his desk. He sits at the desk and runs his hand through his hair with a sigh. Pretending to be working.

Another knock.

CHAMBERLAIN

Come... come.

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ISMAY strides into the room. An apologetic WILSON follows, with HALIFAX behind.

The rest of the officers pile endlessly in behind. WILSON eventually forces the door closed before they are all through.

WILSON
Good morning, Prime Minister.

CHAMBERLAIN
Good-

ISMAY
We've got a bloody crisis.

CHAMBERLAIN
What is going on? Foreign Secretary?

HALIFAX
German troop build-ups on the Czech border-

ISMAY
They're going to invade.

CHAMBERLAIN
What?

ISMAY unfolds a map. He slams it down onto CHAMBERLAIN's desk, moving a pot of ink and a cup from the desk onto the map to represent armies.

ISMAY
The Sudetenland. That's the German speaking region on the-

CHAMBERLAIN
I know where the Sudetenland is, General.

ISMAY
Half a million men. And bombers. Czechs don't stand a chance.

WILSON
Can we do anything?

ISMAY

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Oh yes, we'll just sail the navy down
the Morava river.

CHAMBERLAIN

So what do you...?

ISMAY

Tell Hitler that if he invades we'll
hit him somewhere else.

Ismay punches the air.

CHAMBERLAIN

(rolling his eyes out
of Ismay's sight)

How does the day look, Wilson?

WILSON

St Paul's. Cabinet... You don't have a
lot of time-

ISMAY yanks the map off the desk, causing the cup and the
pot of ink to overturn. He drops the map onto the bed.

ISMAY

(caustically)

Sorry to impose on you. But I need
mobilisation. This morning.

ISMAY storms out, and all the other officers follow.

INT. NUMBER 10 - CORRIDOR - DAY

ISMAY vents his frustration to another officer.

ISMAY

That man looks at foreign affairs
through the wrong end of a municipal
fucking drainpipe.

INT. NUMBER 10 - CHAMBERLAIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

CHAMBERLAIN swallows another pill from his desk drawer.

WILSON

Wellington said that he didn't know
what effect his army would have on the
enemy but by God they scared him.

CHAMBERLAIN points at the discarded map on the bed.

CHAMBERLAIN

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Horace, remind me exactly where the
Sudetenland is?

WILSON raises an eyebrow, but immediately picks up the map
and lays it out in front of CHAMBERLAIN.

EXT. ROME. DAY.

A parade of dignitaries processes through Rome with crowds
cheering them on.

At the head of the parade is HITLER, German Fuhrer, late
40s, awkwardly wearing white tie. Beside him walks the King
of Italy, who is in his late 60s, in elaborate regal dress.

GORING, the closest thing HITLER has to a deputy, 40s,
paunchy, uniform gleaming with medals, anxiously jostles
his way to the front. He has an envelope in hand. He pushes
the person in front, then realizes with a start that it is
MUSSOLINI, Prime Minister of Italy, mid 40s, jutting chin,
cocky.

GORING
(Italian, subtitled)
Duce. I beg forgiveness.

GORING thrusts out the envelope.

MUSSOLINI looks at the envelope and smiles.

MUSSOLINI
(Italian, subtitled)
Your boss looks like a Head Waiter,
Goring.

GORING smiles.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)
(clicking his finger,
Italian, subtitled)
Some wine over here please.

GORING laughs.

HITLER looks round and GORING snaps to attention and
removes any hint of a smile.

MUSSOLINI takes the envelope.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)
(Italian, subtitled)
He has you trained like a spaniel.

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GORING looks uncomfortable.

GORING
(Italian, subtitled)
This comes from the Fuhrer, Duce.

MUSSOLINI
(quietly, Italian,
subtitled)
He is sounding me out over
Czechoslovakia?

GORING
(Italian, subtitled)
I believe so.

MUSSOLINI
(Italian, subtitled)
He wants my permission?

GORING
(Italian, subtitled)
He does, Duce.

MUSSOLINI puts his arm around GORING.

MUSSOLINI
(Italian, subtitled)
Tell the waiter that what he does in
the Sudetenland is up to him.

GORING nods.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)
(Italian, subtitled)
I can't baby-sit him all the time.

MUSSOLINI winks at, then starts speaking to, a pretty girl
watching from the crowd.

GORING pushes his way up to the front. When just behind
HITLER in the melee he elbows a uniformed officer viciously
and takes his place at HITLER's side.

HITLER looks at him, and GORING snaps his heels.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
Is it...?

GORING

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(German, subtitled)
It's a yes, Fuhrer.

HITLER's eyes glisten.

GORING (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
But France and Britain could still-

HITLER looks right through him.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
Tell the army to prepare to march.

GORING gives the Heil Hitler salute, but HITLER has already turned away. Officers barge past to replace GORING at his side.

EXT. ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL STEPS. DAY.

A restrained crowd, elderly, wearing poppies waits around the steps of St Paul's Cathedral

The cathedral bell rings. Elgar's Nimrod sounds from the interior. The attendees of a memorial service leave.

CHAMBERLAIN, winged collar, umbrella appears at the exit, being led by MRS CHAMBERLAIN, his wife, 60s, plump. She grasps his hand. At the top of the steps she spots a face amidst the people exiting.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Oh look, dear. It's Colonel Henderson.
Come along.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN lets go of her husband's hand to go and chat. He doesn't follow, but stands at the top of the steps. He awkwardly passes his umbrella from one hand to the other as people walk around him.

CHAMBERLAIN's eye is caught by three men, ALFRED, RICHARD and HARRY, 40s, in uniform in the crowd a short distance away. He bows his head, but makes his way hesitantly towards them.

CHAMBERLAIN
Morning.

ALFRED
Prime Minister?

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CHAMBERLAIN

Royal Warwickshire's? Birmingham men?

ALFRED

Yes, sir.

HARRY

You don't remember us-

RICHARD

Shut up, Harry.

CHAMBERLAIN

We have met before?

ALFRED

You signed us up, sir. You was mayor
and you signed our papers.

CHAMBERLAIN looks down.

HARRY

Only four of us left.

CHAMBERLAIN

Four? Where is the fourth?

ALFRED

Ted. Leg was done in. Couldn't get
down for the memorial.

CHAMBERLAIN

Well you tell him I'm sor- grateful.

A plane flies past overhead. CHAMBERLAIN shudders.

ISMAY emerges at the Cathedral entrance.

ISMAY

(shouts)

Prime Minister. Wait-

WILSON appears at CHAMBERLAIN's side, and in a daze he
stumbles down the stairs and the door to a waiting car
opens.

CHAMBERLAIN

(mutters)

We will remember, by God.

INT. CAR IN WHITEHALL - DAY

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CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON sit behind the driver.

CHAMBERLAIN holds the program from the service.

CHAMBERLAIN
(to the driver)
Downing Street.

WILSON
Churchill and his gangster pals were
at church. The glamour boys.

CHAMBERLAIN
Yes.

WILSON
(laughing)
And did you see the Generals' faces at
the Archbishop's prayer for peace?

CHAMBERLAIN turns away and looks out the window.

WILSON (cont'd)
They'll want to mobilise.

CHAMBERLAIN screws up with one hand the memorial program
that he is holding.

INT. NUMBER TEN. HALLWAY. DAY

ISMAY and two Generals march into the hallway in silence.
ISMAY looks around. A wireless set is broadcasting.

WIRELESS
...and the frontiers are closed. As
plucky Czechoslovakian infantry waits,
the ominous sound of German armour
rumbles in the distance-

WILSON enters the hallway.

ISMAY
Wilson, where's the PM?

WILSON
Do you have an appointment?

ISMAY
Where the fuck is he?

WILSON
What-

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ISMAY

I've got the mobilisation papers.

WILSON

Look, he's very busy-

ISMAY

Is he in the office?

WILSON strides down the corridor.

WILSON

Stop.

ISMAY pays no attention to WILSON.

WILSON

Security. Stop that General.

Two elderly looking men appear and bar ISMAY's way. He looks contemptuously at them, and barges past.

WILSON (cont'd)

General, I am so close to announcing that there's been a military coup...

ISMAY turns round, and stops. He batters the wall with his fist, causing a painting to fall off its hook.

INT. NUMBER TEN. CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN sits at his desk using the telephone. He looks at a scrap of paper in his hand.

CHAMBERLAIN

Is that Edward, please?

TED

Ted, yeah.

CHAMBERLAIN

This is Mr Chamberlain, the Prime Minister.

TED

Yeah? That's a coincidence, 'cause I'm King George.

CHAMBERLAIN

I met some of your old comrades today-

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TED

I bet you did.

CHAMBERLAIN

This really is the Prime Minister. I'm calling from Downing-

TED

I'm crocked but I'm not stupid, Harry.

CHAMBERLAIN is frustrated. He turns the Prime Ministerial stamp around in his hands.

CHAMBERLAIN

I just called... I was...

TED

If you're the PM, then you can make sure we don't get into this new damn fool war, Harry-

CHAMBERLAIN

Edward-

TED

I don't have another spare leg to lose this time.

A commotion and raised voices sound from the corridor outside. A thud is heard on the wall from when ISMAY hit it. CHAMBERLAIN sits upright.

CHAMBERLAIN stares intensely at the phone. There is silence.

TED (cont'd)

All right. I'll see you soon, mate.

A CLICK is heard as the phone is put down. CHAMBERLAIN puts down the handset.

There is a KNOCK on the door. It opens and WILSON enters.

WILSON

The junta are here. Apparently Germany's about to invade-

ISMAY storms in.

WILSON (cont'd)

(yelling)

General, get the hell out.

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ISMAY slams a bundle of papers down onto CHAMBERLAIN's desk.

ISMAY
Mobilisation papers. They need signed.
Now.

WILSON
Or we could send a warning through the
Embassy-

ISMAY
Listen, stick to advising on public
health and school lunches-

WILSON
For God's sake-

ISMAY
But not national security.

CHAMBERLAIN sighs and stands up. He puts the mobilisation papers into his bag.

CHAMBERLAIN
I am done here.

ISMAY
What?

CHAMBERLAIN
I will not be rushed on this.

ISMAY
Prime Minister...?

CHAMBERLAIN walks out the door, giving WILSON a look as he leaves.

WILSON stands in the doorway, blocking ISMAY's way.

WILSON
Calm down, General.

ISMAY
Out the way-

WILSON
Calm down.

ISMAY slaps the desk hard.

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ISMAY

Do you think I want this? The army
isn't ready-

WILSON

Well, then-

ISMAY

A Kraut with a fucking ladder would be
more effective in the air than the RAF
right now.

WILSON

So why are you-

ISMAY

Don't you get it? We don't have any
fucking choice.

INT. NUMBER TEN. HALLWAY. DAY

MRS CHAMBERLAIN stands listening to the wireless, with her
hands anxiously by her mouth.

WIRELESS

...and as Chancellor Hitler makes
another uncompromising speech, the
world waits anxiously for the reaction
of Britain and France...

CHAMBERLAIN, looking drained, enters the hallway. He leans
against a desk for support.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN comes up behind him and rubs his shoulders,
which causes him to recoil.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

Come on, dear. Let's get some air.

CHAMBERLAIN

Oh, they need me here.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

You're so self-important, dear. We're
going for a walk.

CHAMBERLAIN

That's-

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

No arguments. I'll get your coat.

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MRS CHAMBERLAIN goes to get the coat. WILSON comes out and stands alongside CHAMBERLAIN.

WILSON

I don't like mobilisation either, you know.

CHAMBERLAIN

Find me another option.

WILSON

What if there isn't one?

MRS CHAMBERLAIN puts CHAMBERLAIN's coat over his shoulders. She takes his hand.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

We're going for a walk, now, Horace.

The front door opens and the CHAMBERLAINS leave.

EXT. NUMBER TEN. STREET. DAY

Downing street is a hub of activity. Uniformed soldiers drag barbed wire barricades across the road. More soldiers are covering the area around the door in sandbags.

The CHAMBERLAINS stop to look at the activity.

A plane is heard overhead, and CHAMBERLAIN jolts stiffly upright.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

It's all right, dear. You're not the one in the plane.

A girl starts to wail. CHAMBERLAIN jerks his head round, and sees that she has just fallen over.

Bodyguards come out the door and wait ahead of the couple, and WILSON stands a short distance behind them.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN tries to lead her husband off, but he stays still.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

Come on, dear.

CHAMBERLAIN

I will stay. I must.

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MRS CHAMBERLAIN lets go of her husband's hand and takes a step forward. She sighs and rolls her eyes.

INT. NUMBER TEN. HALLWAY. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN enters and takes off his coat.

WILSON

You're back? I didn't think you had much choice...

CHAMBERLAIN shakes his head and leads a surprised WILSON into his office.

INT. NUMBER TEN. CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN closes the door.

A clock ticks loudly in the background.

CHAMBERLAIN

Would someone move that clock? It's like a time-bomb.

WILSON

Yes, Prime Minister.

CHAMBERLAIN

Horace, we are being dragged into a fight that nobody wants.

WILSON

Of course nobody wants it-

CHAMBERLAIN

Least of all me.

WILSON

Nobody ever wanted any war-

The phone rings, and WILSON picks it up.

WILSON

Wilson... Yes, yes... When?... I'm with him now.

WILSON puts the phone down.

CHAMBERLAIN

What now?

WILSON

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Damn. The French are mobilising-

CHAMBERLAIN

Already?

WILSON

If we don't mobilise right now it'll look like we're following them-

CHAMBERLAIN

We would be.

WILSON

There isn't much time...

CHAMBERLAIN pours himself a glass of water. The jug slips, and water goes onto his papers.

He sighs and rubs his temple.

WILSON pats CHAMBERLAIN on the shoulder. He then pours him a brandy and offers it.

WILSON

Listen, this is always a hard moment-

CHAMBERLAIN

I spoke to some old soldiers today.

WILSON

It's not ideal doing this after a memorial. But we've-

CHAMBERLAIN

These Generals are about to start a second world war.

WILSON

Let's sign the papers...

WILSON puts a sheaf of papers on the desk in front of CHAMBERLAIN.

CHAMBERLAIN pauses for a long time. He takes a sip of his water - then thinks better and takes a sip of the brandy.

CHAMBERLAIN

I won't do it.

WILSON

But-

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CHAMBERLAIN

I'm going to go and meet Hitler.

WILSON

Prime... There is no time for fanciful-

CHAMBERLAIN

Let us go to Germany. Put the energy into peace that they'd put into war.

WILSON

...If you want the practicalities... You'd have no Civil Service support. You'd be up against a viper... And we don't have time.

CHAMBERLAIN

No time...? Charter a ship.

WILSON

He's going to invade tomorrow.

CHAMBERLAIN

Is that what the Foreign Office say?

WILSON

It's what the BBC say.

CHAMBERLAIN

How... could we...?

WILSON

If you really mean this, you could charter a plane.

CHAMBERLAIN goes pale and leans back in his chair.

CHAMBERLAIN

Fly?

WILSON

Yes.

CHAMBERLAIN

Are these things safe?

WILSON

Not very.

CHAMBERLAIN's hands shake. He turns the mobilisation papers around in his hands.

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CHAMBERLAIN

Better arrange it quickly.

WILSON looks at him to see if he is serious.

WILSON

It's my job to make sure you understand that this is crazy.

CHAMBERLAIN

You have fulfilled it.

WILSON shrugs his shoulders and picks up the telephone.

EXT. HESTON AIRFIELD. AIRSTRIP. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN gets out of his car with WILSON and Halifax, and stands at the foot of the stairs leading to the plane. He looks pale and drawn.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN gets out the other side of the car.

There is a line of well-wishers watching from a few feet away.

HALIFAX

Just hammer it out with him, old boy.

CHAMBERLAIN

That is the intention, Lord Halifax.

HALIFAX

First time I can remember. Aeroplane diplomacy they're calling it-

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

If he's going to risk his life on this... adventure... then make sure he wraps up warm, Horace.

WILSON

Of course.

HALIFAX

-And the aeroplanes are exciting. 20,000lb, apparently. Don't know how they stay in the air...

CHAMBERLAIN looks appalled, breathes in, then turns round and climbs the stairs.

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WILSON follows behind. As soon as he enters the plane the door is closed and it starts to move.

INT. AEROPLANE OVER EUROPE. DAY

The cabin is bare except for two metal benches along the sides and a small heater on the floor.

CHAMBERLAIN sits opposite WILSON. CHAMBERLAIN is wrapped in blankets and looks as though he is asleep.

WILSON reads briefing notes. As he reads he sighs and runs his hand through his hair.

CHAMBERLAIN

What is that?

WILSON, thinking CHAMBERLAIN asleep, is startled.

WILSON

Uh... The usual memo from Winston telling you not to concede - quote - 'one jot or tittle' -

CHAMBERLAIN raises his eyebrow.

WILSON (cont'd)

And a livid note from the French for not consulting them before setting this up. And the briefing on Hitler.

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes...?

WILSON

Successful. Ruthless. Aggressive. Populist. And the anti-Semitism thing.

CHAMBERLAIN

There are a lot of eccentric leaders.

WILSON

And the Jews haven't exactly helped themselves.

CHAMBERLAIN closes his eyes again.

CHAMBERLAIN

(to himself)

We have to try.

(to Wilson)

Does this thing have a lavatory?

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WILSON

Uh... no.

CHAMBERLAIN

My wife thinks this is a stupid idea.

The aeroplane suddenly dips, sending WILSON's paper's flying.

CHAMBERLAIN clasps the edge of the bench tightly.

CHAMBERLAIN

Who do they think will ever fly using these things?

INT. CHANCELLORY. HALLWAY. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON enter the hall, at which point a line of SS men play the British national anthem.

The pair do not seem sure what to do. They settle on standing respectfully.

GORING waits in front of a vast doorway. He is wringing his hands.

GORING

Prime Minister, welcome... The Fuhrer is anxious to meet you.

CHAMBERLAIN

And I him.

The door opens, and GORING leads them into a crowded room.

A huddle of hugely tall soldiers stand around a desk. An INTERPRETER, small, grey, waits in the corner.

The soldiers part, and HITLER becomes visible standing in front of his desk. He is smiling broadly.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Prime Minister. I am glad to see you.

INTERPRETER

Prime Minister. I am glad to see you.

CHAMBERLAIN

And I, Chancellor.

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INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

And I, Chancellor.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Do you like my guard? They are all 7 feet tall.

INTERPRETER

Do you like my guard? They are all 7 feet tall.

CHAMBERLAIN keeps his eyes fixed on HITLER.

CHAMBERLAIN

Very impressive.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Like that of Frederick the Great.

INTERPRETER

Like that of Frederick the Great.

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

But that is just soldier-talk. We have to show you Berlin.

INTERPRETER

But that is just soldier-talk. We have to show you Berlin.

CHAMBERLAIN

Chancellor, I am here because of the Sudetenland-

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

Chancellor, I am here because of the Sudetenland-

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

To business so soon? Ah, yes. The Sudetenland.

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INTERPRETER

To business so soon? Ah, yes. The
Sudetenland.

CHAMBERLAIN

I ask you to call off the invasion.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

I ask you to call off the invasion.

HITLER stands in silence. He plays with a replica grenade
on his desk.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I have no more territorial demands.
But I will not let Germans be bullied.

INTERPRETER

I have no more territorial demands.
But I will not let Germans be bullied.

CHAMBERLAIN

We want to negotiate. Call off the
invasion.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

We want to negotiate. Call off the
invasion.

HITLER

I will not be dictated to by...
fucking Czechs-

INTERPRETER

I will not be dictated to by the
Czechoslovakians.

CHAMBERLAIN

Nobody said anything-

HITLER strikes his desk with the grenade. CHAMBERLAIN
flinches.

HITLER

(shouting German,
subtitled)

I will invade today.

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INTERPRETER

I could invade today.

There is a tense silence.

CHAMBERLAIN

...I could support Sudeten
independence. But outside Germany.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

I would support Sudeten independence.
But outside Germany.

HITLER puts the grenade down. He puts on a pair of
spectacles as he thinks.

There is another silence. Everyone knows that HITLER's
reply will determine whether war is inevitable.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I would accept that.

INTERPRETER

I would accept that.

CHAMBERLAIN exhales in relief.

CHAMBERLAIN

My Cabinet must be consulted.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

My Cabinet must be consulted.

HITLER takes off his spectacles and looks intently at
CHAMBERLAIN.

CHAMBERLAIN

But I will return.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

But I will return.

At this HITLER's face breaks into a smile. He embraces
CHAMBERLAIN.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

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Good, good, excellent... So, am I a monster, Mr Chamberlain?

INTERPRETER

Good. So, am I a monster, Mr Chamberlain?

CHAMBERLAIN

No you are not.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I don't want our countries to quarrel. I have English jam every morning.

INTERPRETER

I don't want our countries to quarrel. I have English jam every morning.

CHAMBERLAIN smiles for the first time. He shakes HITLER by the hand.

CHAMBERLAIN

We will meet again soon.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

We will meet again soon.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Yes, yes.

CHAMBERLAIN leaves.

HITLER stands by his desk. GORING approaches him.

GORING

(German, subtitled)

Mein Fuhrer. Congratulations. History is being made.

HITLER lifts up the grenade and throws it at the ground in anger.

GORING looks surprised, picks up the grenade and gingerly puts it back on the desk.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Too easy. It was too easy.

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GORING

(German, subtitled)

You got everything you wanted.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I could have got more. Damn it.

GORING

(German, subtitled)

Fuhrer, it was a triumph. They buckled-

GORING appeals, but HITLER storms out the door without looking back.

GORING rubs his temple.

INT. LONDON. CZECHOSLOVAKIAN EMBASSY. DAY

Uniformed Czechoslovak Generals and diplomatic staff sit around grumpily in armchairs. The all smoke, and a cloud of smoke hangs over the room.

A wireless set stands in the centre of the room.

WIRELESS

...The Prime Minister flies in to an ecstatic reception. Twenty four hours ago Britain stood on the brink of war. After his trip to Berlin, peace looks within reach...

Benes, President of Czechoslovakia, 50s, spindly, enters with Halifax. He is agitated and snaps the wireless set off.

BENES

You have raped Czechoslovakia.

HALIFAX

Hold on, Mr President-

BENES

I do not know how you can look at me.

Halifax pours a conciliatory drink. Benes ignores it.

HALIFAX

It's realpolitik, old chap. You didn't want war.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

BENES

Is realpolitik German for 'being
fucked over'?

HALIFAX

You don't have to accept the terms.

The Czechoslovak Generals stand up belligerently. They like
talk of not accepting terms.

BENES

But if we don't we're on our own?

HALIFAX

Well, yes.

BENES

And you really think that man will
stop here?

HALIFAX

Why wouldn't he?

BENES

You're an idiot.

HALIFAX

Look here-

BENES

We accept. As if we have a choice.

Halifax brusquely nods and leaves. The Czechoslovakians
remain in silence.

A tear rolls down Benes' cheek.

EXT. PICCADILLY CIRCUS. NIGHT

The illuminated hoardings display the message -
"Europe on Brink of War". This changes to - "Czechs
Agree Terms: NO WAR".

People cheer.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLERY. GORING'S OFFICE. DAY

GORING paces in front of his desk. He speaks on the
telephone, nodding.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

GORING

(German, subtitled)

Yes, Mein Fuhrer... Yes, Mein
Fuhrer... Mein Fuhrer-

The phone goes dead and GORING puts it down. His feet click before he remembers that HITLER is not in the room.

He motions to an SS guard at the door to leave. The guard does so, closing the door after him.

GORING sits down at his desk and picks up the phone again. He rubs his forehead.

GORING (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

Put me through to Henlein.
Sudetenland HQ.

As he anxiously waits, GORING lights a cigarette and starts to smoke.

GORING (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

Heil Hitler. Gruppencapitan,
things have got... calm in the
Sudetenland... Yes, but this is
not helpful. The Fuhrer needs to
bring things to a head...

He smokes impatiently.

GORING (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

You do not understand me,
Gruppencapitan. Let me be clear.
The Fuhrer needs dead Germans.

There is silence for a moment, then the other voice is heard on the telephone.

GORING (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

...Yes, yes... Use Jews or something.
Just organise it.

He puts the phone down.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

A uniformed aide puts his head round the door and then enters.

AIDE
(German, subtitled)
Is everything all right, sir?

GORING (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
I really don't know.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLORY. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY

GORING waits next to HITLER. They stand next to the main entrance.

An aide brings HITLER a cup of coffee. HITLER sips at it, the spits it out.

HITLER
(screaming German,
subtitled)
This coffee is not fucking sweet. It's
not sweet.

The aide freezes; all the other staff in the room stop what they are doing and turn round to face HITLER.

HITLER (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
Who did this?

AIDE
(German, subtitled)
It wasn't me, Fuhrer. It was the
kitchen staff-

HITLER throws the coffee over the aide. The aide momentarily grimaces at the heat, but then gives the Heil HITLER salute as the coffee drips from him.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
Fucking monkeys.

GORING nervously taps his fingers against the file that he is holding.

GORING
(German, subtitled)

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Fuhrer, this is dangerous... we're not completely ready yet-

HITLER silences GORING by glaring at him.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

If I thought this meant war I'd drop the Sudetens like that.

HITLER clicks his fingers.

HITLER (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

But the old man will not make me choose.

Another aide comes in and hands HITLER a telegram. He looks at it and nods. He then walks alone deeper into the building.

Outside, a motorcade can be heard arriving.

GORING looks around and rubs the coffee into the carpet with his feet.

The door opens and the Prime Minister is announced. GORING walks forward with an outstretched arm.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLORY. CORRIDOR. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN and GORING walk down the corridor. CHAMBERLAIN is smiling and carrying a jar of jam under his arm.

GORING looks tense, and smokes a cigarette with intensity.

CHAMBERLAIN

How is Herr Hitler? I have brought him some English jam as a gift.

GORING smokes furiously.

GORING

The Fuhrer is under a lot of strain. You really must understand that-

CHAMBERLAIN

What do you mean?

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

GORING looks like he is about to speak but holds back. Then he signals that they have reached their destination - a grand doorway to HITLER's office.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLORY. HITLER'S OFFICE. DAY

HITLER stands with his back to the entrance looking out the window. Armed guards line the side of the office.

CHAMBERLAIN enters.

CHAMBERLAIN
Chancellor. Good news from London...

TRANSLATOR
(German, subtitled)
Chancellor. Good news from London.

HITLER is silent and CHAMBERLAIN is confused. He tentatively puts the jam down on HITLER's desk.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)
The deal stands. My Cabinet and the
Czechs have agreed-

HITLER turns round waving the telegram with a furious expression.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
Dead fucking Germans.

TRANSLATOR
There are dead Germans.

CHAMBERLAIN takes a couple of steps back towards the door.

CHAMBERLAIN
What...? Whatever it is we can-

GORING hands CHAMBERLAIN the telegram.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
Everything has changed.
(looking at the jam
and shouting)
What the fuck is that?

TRANSLATOR
Everything has changed-

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

HITLER sweeps the jam off the desk with a sweep of his arm.

CHAMBERLAIN cannot seem to take in the change in attitude, and rereads the telegram.

CHAMBERLAIN

We can put international policemen in there. Or guarantees-

TRANSLATOR

(German, subtitled)

We can put international policemen in there. Or guarantees-

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I have tried... I have tried too hard...

HITLER leans in. Flecks of saliva land on CHAMBERLAIN's face.

HITLER (cont'd)

(German, subtitled)

German occupation now or I will raze Prague to the ground.

TRANSLATOR

German occupation is my final demand.

CHAMBERLAIN

If that is your position then we have nothing more to discuss.

TRANSLATOR

(German, subtitled)

If that is your position... then we have nothing more to discuss.

CHAMBERLAIN slowly walks towards the door.

GORING

Wait-

CHAMBERLAIN stops, and there is silence.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

German occupation or I will invade.

TRANSLATOR

German occupation or I will invade.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHAMBERLAIN

For God's sake. International
occupation with a plebiscite-

HITLER

(talking aggressively
over Chamberlain
German, subtitled)
German occupation. German occupation.

CHAMBERLAIN shakes his head quietly and leaves.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLORY. CORRIDOR. DAY

CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON walk down the corridor in stunned
silence.

WILSON

What the hell just happened?

CHAMBERLAIN just shakes his head.

WILSON (cont'd)

He's completely reneged... Maybe we
misread him? Maybe he doesn't want
peace at all?

CHAMBERLAIN

Everyone wants peace.

WILSON shrugs his shoulders and they carry on.

WILSON

What do we do next?

CHAMBERLAIN doesn't react.

INT. AEROPLANE OVER LONDON. EVENING

A small heater glows in the middle of the cabin.
CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON sit on metal benches along the side.

WILSON works and smokes.

CHAMBERLAIN is wrapped up in a blanket and looks like an
old man. He holds his hands out towards the heater.

CHAMBERLAIN looks out the aeroplane window at London. He
visualises explosions in the city and great fires as will
later be seen in the Blitz.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

WILSON

...Can I promise the King that you'll see him tomorrow?

This startles CHAMBERLAIN and brings him out of his imagination with a jolt.

CHAMBERLAIN

Uh...

INT. CAR. LONDON. EVENING

WILSON and CHAMBERLAIN sit in the back seat of their car. CHAMBERLAIN looks out the window as WILSON goes through a pile of papers.

CHAMBERLAIN sees all the preparations for war going on. Military barricades are being set up, and they pass trucks and carts full of soldiers.

WILSON

Halifax says the whole Cabinet's buying Winston's line: Hitler's the devil in disguise.

They pass another barricade, and a bright light is shone into the back seat which causes CHAMBERLAIN to screw up his eyes.

WILSON (cont'd)

Not that he does a very good job of disguising it-

CHAMBERLAIN

Stop the car.

DRIVER

Sir?

CHAMBERLAIN

(urgently)

Stop the car.

EXT. EDGE OF ST JAMES'S PARK. EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN gets out the car and walks into the park. WILSON races to catch up with him.

Volunteers with torches are busy digging trenches in the park as part of the preparation for war.

WILSON

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Prime Minister... Prime Minister-

CHAMBERLAIN

The Cabinet will not agree. Will they?

WILSON

No.

CHAMBERLAIN

Who is organising them?

WILSON

Well, Winston's providing a lot of firepower from outside-

CHAMBERLAIN

Winston, Winston... We are going to meet with him.

WILSON

What?

CHAMBERLAIN

Convince him and they will all follow.

WILSON

(under his breath)

I thought we had learned about negotiating with lunatics.

CHAMBERLAIN turns to a group of men digging.

CHAMBERLAIN

Who told you to dig these trenches?

The men stop digging and look bemused.

WILSON

It's for shelter if there's a raid.

CHAMBERLAIN increases his pace.

CHAMBERLAIN

Far too early.

WILSON

They're expecting you at Number Ten, Prime Minister...

CHAMBERLAIN

Let them wait. Let them wait.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

INT. CHURCHILL'S LONDON HOUSE. CHURCHILL'S OFFICE. EVENING

The furniture in CHURCHILL's office has been moved to the side. A long wooden table stands in the centre with two blocks of ice on it.

CHURCHILL enters in a dressing gown and holding a whisky glass. CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON follow behind.

CHAMBERLAIN ends a long exposition.

CHAMBERLAIN

...and so he rescinded the offer-

CHURCHILL

Doesn't surprise me. But let me show you something that is surprising.

CHURCHILL pulls out a pistol from his dressing gown. WILSON steps between him and CHAMBERLAIN.

WILSON

Jesus Christ.

CHURCHILL

Ha. I'm not going to shoot the PM.

WILSON

That's enough to make this meeting a success already-

CHURCHILL

No, I'm going to shoot ice. Observe.

CHURCHILL points the pistol at a block of ice and fires it. The ice shatters.

CHURCHILL picks up a shard of ice and drops it into his drink before sipping it.

WILSON

What the...

CHAMBERLAIN

Winston-

CHURCHILL

Now for the dynamite... not literally.

CHURCHILL points the pistol at the second block and fires it. The bullet bounces off and smashes the glass in CHURCHILL's hand.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHURCHILL

Fuck. Did you see that?

CHAMBERLAIN

Winston-

CHURCHILL

Mix wood pulp in with the ice and it's stronger than concrete-

CHAMBERLAIN

I need to-

CHURCHILL

And it doesn't melt. We could build ships with it. They just need a bit of money-

CHAMBERLAIN sits down in an armchair.

CHAMBERLAIN

Winston, we need to concede the Germans the Sudetenland-

CHURCHILL

I thought he only wanted autonomy?

WILSON

It all got a bit... fluid.

CHURCHILL

Ha.

CHAMBERLAIN

We forced them to the negotiating table-

CHURCHILL

You're serving them up everything they wanted course by course.

CHAMBERLAIN lightly swats the arm of his chair in frustration.

CHAMBERLAIN

What would you have me do?

CHURCHILL

Set boundaries and fight for them. You'll have to do it sooner or later.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHAMBERLAIN

Send young boys to their death when we
might have peace?

CHURCHILL

You can always have peace. It's what
you're prepared to give up for it.

CHURCHILL gesticulates whilst making this point. As he does
so his dressing gown comes open, and CHAMBERLAIN looks
away. CHURCHILL reties it.

WILSON

Don't be shy, Winston.

CHURCHILL

I'm not shy. I'm worried that when the
PM sees anything big and successful he
gives it to Germany.

CHAMBERLAIN stands up.

CHAMBERLAIN

Goodnight, Winston.

CHAMBERLAIN

Build the ice-ships...

EXT. DOWNING STREET. EVENING

WILSON and CHAMBERLAIN walk down the quiet street.
CHAMBERLAIN pauses at the door to Number 10, looks at
WILSON and opens the door.

WILSON

(under his breath)
Into the valley of death...

INT. NUMBER 10. HALLWAY. EVENING

Noise and activity streams through the open door.

CHAMBERLAIN enters and begins to put his umbrella and coat
away.

Cabinet Ministers waiting in the hall pour over around him.
COOPER, First Lord of the Admiralty, late 40s is agitated.
SIMON, Home Secretary, 60s, chilly stands beside him.

COOPER

He rejected the terms?

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

SIMON
Went back on his word-

COOPER
Outrageous-

WILSON shepherds them into the Cabinet Room.

WILSON
Come along, gentlemen.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN walks past them down the corridor.
CHAMBERLAIN pats her on the arm, but she pulls her arm away
and continues.

INT. NUMBER 10. CABINET ROOM. EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN moves to his place at the Cabinet table and
sighs.

Cabinet Ministers surround him and lean across the table.

Halifax stands behind CHAMBERLAIN.

HALIFAX
(earnestly)
Did you give Hitler the jam?

WILSON gives him a stern look.

COOPER
Next time you might want to try
marmalade. See if that works-

CHAMBERLAIN
The terms have changed. To German
occupation. That's the cost of peace-

COOPER
For fuck-

WILSON
First Lord.

COOPER
You're not seriously thinking about
this?

CHAMBERLAIN
It is a lesser evil-

COOPER

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Jesus, you are. We gave him everything
he wanted and now he wants more-

WILSON
Remember where you are.

COOPER
Is there nothing we won't give up?

COOPER shakes his head, throws his wad of papers onto the
table, and walks to the door.

COOPER (cont'd)
I can't be a party to this.

CHAMBERLAIN
First Lord-

COOPER
Try not to give away Scotland now I'm
gone.

WILSON
Get out.

COOPER leaves. CHAMBERLAIN does not make eye-contact with
anyone.

CHAMBERLAIN
Lord Halifax, we must be patient?

HALIFAX
Well... I'm starting to wonder if we
shouldn't mobilise as a precaution

CHAMBERLAIN looks up in surprise. He then stands up.

CHAMBERLAIN
(shouting)
You bunch of blustering idiots... None
of you get it... Peace at any price?
I'll take it. Maybe you'd take a
million dead young men? You heartless,
egotistical, jingoistic... idiots.

The Cabinet cower at this outburst.

Then it becomes apparent that the outburst was a fantasy
that happened only in CHAMBERLAIN's head.

CHAMBERLAIN is restored to his sitting position, and the
Cabinet to a baying, aggressive pack.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

Very well. I understand the sentiment.
Now, please, I need the room.

The Cabinet members look at each other.

SIMON

What happens now? Are you signing?

WILSON

You heard the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet withdraws, mumbling dissent, out the door until only WILSON is left.

WILSON stands beside him.

WILSON

I don't see that we've got very much
choice now.

An aide comes in with a telegram. CHAMBERLAIN reads it, then throws it down onto the table, takes off his glasses and rubs his forehead.

CHAMBERLAIN

Benes. He says he won't accept German
occupation... How did he even know
about that?

WILSON

Bloody hell. Winston and that cabal of
gangsters. They must have leaked it.

CHAMBERLAIN

Winston? Surely not...

WILSON

You'll need to do a BBC broadcast
tonight. Get back some control.

There is silence.

CHAMBERLAIN

I must sign the mobilisation papers.

WILSON puts the paper in front of CHAMBERLAIN.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

You already have them prepared?

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

WILSON

Ismay's had them ready for days.

CHAMBERLAIN signs. He clumsily knocks over the ink. WILSON rights it.

CHAMBERLAIN

Listen, give me some peace. Before the BBC.

WILSON

Of course.

WILSON leaves.

INT. NUMBER 10. MRS CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE. EVENING

MRS CHAMBERLAIN paces the small room on the telephone.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

...Don't be so silly, Francis... For goodness sake, I won't let you indulge your silly, schoolboy whims... Oh, do be quiet.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN slams down the phone and sighs in frustration.

She slugs the contents of a glass on her desk, and leaves the room.

INT. NUMBER 10 - HALLWAY - EVENING

MRS CHAMBERLAIN walks to the door to the Cabinet room.

She enters and bursts into a tirade.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN

Dear, that boy is-

She then sees that CHAMBERLAIN lies slumped on the floor in front of the fireplace. A shriek is suppressed.

She rushes over to him, and puts a pill from her pocket into his mouth. Then she cradles his head in her arms.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

For God's sake, Neville.

CHAMBERLAIN opens his eyes.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

MRS CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)
I just don't know what to do.

CHAMBERLAIN
You win. No more trips to Berlin.
Mobilisation papers have been signed.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN sighs and releases his head.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)
I thought that is what you wanted?

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
You are a clot-

MRS CHAMBERLAIN playfully swats his head then holds his hand.

CHAMBERLAIN
What?

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Why do you run around after these
Generals? Give Hitler what he wants.

CHAMBERLAIN
It is not that easy.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Francis was on the telephone talking
about joining the air force-

CHAMBERLAIN
Oh, God.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
So don't grandstand with all these
meetings.

CHAMBERLAIN
...I feel old and weak.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Well act strong-

CHAMBERLAIN suddenly leans over and vomits onto the floor beside him.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN holds him.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Oh, Neville.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

WILSON knocks on the door and walks in. He takes in the scene and looks shocked.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN props her husband up and then slumps herself.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
Horace, I've been a bit ill. The Prime Minister's been looking after me.

WILSON
Let me get a doctor at once.

On his way out he looks round.

WILSON (cont'd)
Prime Minister, we need to be at the BBC.

CHAMBERLAIN clammers unsteadily to his feet. MRS CHAMBERLAIN has a concerned look.

INT. CAR - LONDON - EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON sit in the back.

WILSON
The doctor's on his way to her.

CHAMBERLAIN nods distantly.

WILSON (cont'd)
Funny, she didn't look ill?

CHAMBERLAIN ignores this and starts to read the speech notes for the BBC.

CHAMBERLAIN
"We will meet force with force"? "We will not lie under the Nazi steamroller"?

WILSON
The foreign office were keen on those.

CHAMBERLAIN throws the notes down in frustration.

CHAMBERLAIN
Do they think that exchanging threats will keep peace?

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

WILSON shrugs.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

We are a hair's breadth away from war,
Horace.

WILSON

It's robust.

CHAMBERLAIN

Why do I have to say it?

WILSON

So you don't annoy the military, the
Cabinet and the Czechs all at once.

CHAMBERLAIN looks resigned and closes his eyes.

WILSON (cont'd)

But you don't have to say it.

CHAMBERLAIN

What?

WILSON

You're the Prime Minister. You can say
anything you like.

CHAMBERLAIN's eyes open.

WILSON (cont'd)

Just as long as you're ready for the
backlash.

The car slows down and stops as it reaches the BBC
building.

INT. BBC. CORRIDORS. EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN carries his speech and is led through the
building by JOHN REITH, Director General, late 40s, grim.

Staff almost stand to attention as the party walks past.

REITH

Prime Minister. We are glad that you
are doing a broadcast.

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

REITH

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

It's a tense time.

CHAMBERLAIN

For me as well.

REITH

And all the young people of military age especially. But it is what it is... Just in here.

REITH ushers CHAMBERLAIN into a studio.

INT. BBC - STUDIO - EVENING

A simple chair and table with a microphone on it stands in the studio.

CHAMBERLAIN sits down at the table. WILSON and Reith stand at the door.

He pulls out the prepared speech. He holds and stares at it.

REITH

With your permission we are going to start immediately, Prime Minister.

CHAMBERLAIN

Ah... yes, fine.

TECHNICIAN

Three, two, one.

The technician signals that CHAMBERLAIN is on-air.

CHAMBERLAIN seems to reach a decision, and puts the speech down beside him before clearing his throat.

He is going to speak from the heart.

CHAMBERLAIN

Good evening. To-day there is a lull for a brief time, and I want to say a few words to you, men and women of Britain and the Empire. How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing. It seems still more impossible that a quarrel which has already been settled in

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

principle should be the subject of war. But as long as war has not begun, there is always hope that it may be prevented, and you know that I am going to work for peace to the last moment. Good night.

REITH looks astonished.

WILSON smiles, and he exchanges a look with CHAMBERLAIN.

INT. BBC. CORRIDORS. EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON stride down the corridor with renewed confidence.

WILSON

(whispering)

It's going to hit the fan now.

CHAMBERLAIN smiles, and pats him on the arm.

An Executive comes over with a telephone.

EXECUTIVE

Prime Minister, you have a call from Downing Street... General Ismay.

WILSON

What did I tell you?

CHAMBERLAIN nods at WILSON to take the call.

WILSON picks up the receiver and holds it at some distance from his ear as we hear SHOUTING from down the line.

WILSON (cont'd)

General. Get to hell.

WILSON slams the receiver down and then carries on walking with a look of triumph on his face.

WILSON (cont'd)

He's very supportive.

They both smile.

CHAMBERLAIN

Everyone is going to go mad.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

They reach the entrance hall, where lots of BBC workers are gathered. As CHAMBERLAIN enters they cheer loudly.

WILSON

We need to use this moment. Before
it's lost.

CHAMBERLAIN

We are going to go and find a telegram
office.

WILSON

What?

EXT. STREET. LONDON. EVENING

CHAMBERLAIN's car pulls up.

He springs out from the back, with WILSON following.

WILSON

It's my job to tell you this is
unconstitutional and irregular.

CHAMBERLAIN enters the office.

CHAMBERLAIN

Understood.

WILSON shakes his head and follows.

INT. TELEGRAM OFFICE - EVENING

They enter the cramped office. Behind the counter the operator stands with his back to them, broom in hand, listening to CHAMBERLAIN's earlier BBC speech.

CHAMBERLAIN looks fascinated at the office. There is a counter of sweets and cigarettes that he studies.

After some seconds he coughs to attract the operator's attention.

OPERATOR

What the hell... I'm listening to-

The operator sees CHAMBERLAIN and drops his broom.

CHAMBERLAIN

I need you to despatch a telegram-

OPERATOR

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Are you who I think you are? Is this for real?

CHAMBERLAIN

Undoubtedly. Now, the telegram-

OPERATOR

Prime Minister?

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes, and this is the Head of the Civil Service.

WILSON

How do you do?

CHAMBERLAIN grips the operator's arm.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

You must understand that this is top secret.

OPERATOR

Of course, sir. Sorry about before, sir. Didn't see you... Where do you want it sent to, sir?

CHAMBERLAIN appears momentarily puzzled. Then he looks at WILSON, who raises an eyebrow.

WILSON

The Duce's Palace, I suppose.

The operator looks confused.

CHAMBERLAIN

Rome.

INT. DUCE'S RESIDENCE - MUSSOLINI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The room contains elaborate furnishings and an over-the-top four poster bed.

MUSSOLINI lies under the sheets at the side of a GIRL, 20s, blonde, beautiful.

He leans over and tickles her, and she giggles and squirms away.

GIRL

(Italian, subtitled)

Oh, Duce.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

Come here you silly creature.

There is a knock on the door, and an aide enters. MUSSOLINI sits up.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)

(Italian, subtitled)

Fucking hell. What is it, idiot?

AIDE

(Italian, subtitled)

A telegram-

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

A telegram? Get out.

MUSSOLINI throws a pillow at the aide.

AIDE

(Italian, subtitled)

-from the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

Chamberlain, eh?

AIDE

(Italian, subtitled)

He asks for your help in organising a conference.

MUSSOLINI rolls on his side and speaks to the girl.

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

The Prime Minister of the British Empire needs the Duce's help?

GIRL

(Italian, subtitled)

It is all so important.

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

I will help him. Tell the Foreign Ministry to organise it in Rome.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

AIDE

Duce-

MUSSOLINI dismisses him with an imperious wave of the hand.

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

Ah, wait. Better make it Germany.

MUSSOLINI, distracted, tickles the girl again.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)

(Italian, subtitled)

But not Berlin. Don't want a display.
Somewhere provincial... Munich. Now,
get out.

AIDE

(Italian, subtitled)

Yes, Duce.

MUSSOLINI

(Italian, subtitled)

And don't invite the damn Czechs.

(to the girl)

Don't need them bleating like sheep.
Baa.

INT. MUNICH. CONFERENCE DRAWING ROOM. DAY

HITLER, MUSSOLINI, CHAMBERLAIN and DALADIER, Prime Minister of France, 50s, broad shouldered, sit in a semi-circle. Senior aides, including GORING, ISMAY and WILSON, stand around the side.

HITLER sits opposite CHAMBERLAIN. They both look stiff and awkward. DALADIER sits beside CHAMBERLAIN. MUSSOLINI sits at the end looking relaxed.

A small table in front of MUSSOLINI has some German food laid out on it - sausage and bread.

MUSSOLINI

(German, subtitled)

... of course, Munich is no Florence.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I think of it as my home city.

MUSSOLINI

(German, subtitled)

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Well, some people like this sort of thing.

HITLER looks furious. MUSSOLINI picks up a slice of sausage and crams it into his mouth.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)

They say you're better off not knowing how sausages or treaties are made.

MUSSOLINI offers the plate to CHAMBERLAIN.

CHAMBERLAIN

No, thank you. On Czechoslovakia-

MUSSOLINI

Yes, let us talk. German occupation is a done deal, so let's talk about guarantees-

DALADIER

Wait. Who said that-

MUSSOLINI

Let's not get hung up on the detail.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Occupation immediately. Unconditional.

MUSSOLINI and DALADIER laugh, then realise that it is not a joke.

DALADIER

We can't just sign it over without guarantees.

MUSSOLINI

(German, subtitled)

They want guarantees-

HITLER

(sneeringly, German, subtitled)

And what will you do?

MUSSOLINI

He hopes you will be reasonable.

CHAMBERLAIN

Herr Hitler, you are not negotiating.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

MUSSOLINI

Come now, we were getting on so splendidly.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

I have set out my position.

HITLER gets up and walks out. GORING has a worried look and follows him.

MUSSOLINI

You heard the man. Why not agree?

CHAMBERLAIN looks like he is about to say something, but DALADIER and WILSON glare at him.

CHAMBERLAIN

We... must consider it.

MUSSOLINI

Well, if you insist.

MUSSOLINI takes more sausage.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)

I will look after the conference chamber, then.

CHAMBERLAIN and DALADIER leave.

MUSSOLINI (cont'd)

(shouting)

There is not much time.

MUSSOLINI is left eating sausage on his own.

INT. MUNICH - CORRIDOR - DAY

CHAMBERLAIN and DALADIER lead the angry group of British and French down the corridor.

DALADIER

If they want a war then they'll get it. They learned nothing from the last war. We will have to re-teach them-

ISMAY

Absolutely intolerable.

INT. MUNICH - GUEST DRAWING ROOM - DAY

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

The party enter the Guest Drawing Room, which has been given over to them.

Attendants drift around.

DALADIER

We're going to be in here a while.

DALADIER sinks into a deep chair, lights a cigarette and then hails an attendant.

DALADIER (cont'd)

Bring us in some dinner. And wine.

WILSON fidgets with a wireless set, but only gets static.

WILSON

Can't find the World Service.

DALADIER

I don't think they pick it up here.

WILSON

Completely cut off...

ISMAY

His behaviour is fucking intolerable.

CHAMBERLAIN stands sipping from a cup of tea.

CHAMBERLAIN

No. We will tolerate it-

DALADIER

What on earth do you mean?

CHAMBERLAIN

What I will not tolerate is a war.

DALADIER

Peace at any price? Preposterous.

CHAMBERLAIN

We have already agreed to sever the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia-

ISMAY

As an autonomous region-

CHAMBERLAIN

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

I will not start a war over exactly
when or to whom the border posts are
turned over to.

DALADIER

And I will not be party to a grotesque
surrender.

CHAMBERLAIN continues to sip his tea calmly.

CHAMBERLAIN

Well then you will be alone-

DALADIER

What?

CHAMBERLAIN

I won't have young boys' blood on my
hands to prove a point.

CHAMBERLAIN turns to leave.

ISMAY, red-faced, strides up to him.

ISMAY

This is-

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

Go away, General.

WILSON, still fidgeting with the wireless, is surprised to
hear the German national anthem suddenly BLARING out.

WIRELESS

Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles...

WILSON

Damn it.

DALADIER throws his cigarette onto the floor.

DALADIER

Check-mate. Fuck it.

He follows CHAMBERLAIN out the door.

Attendants are beginning to enter with large plates of food
and carafes of wine.

INT. MUNICH. CONFERENCE DRAWING ROOM. EVENING

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

HITLER and GORING stand in one corner of the room. GORING sips champagne, but HITLER looks disgusted with the whole proceedings.

He leaves, disappearing out a door at the back.

The French and Italians are far more merry, boisterously drinking vast quantities.

In another corner, CHAMBERLAIN is drinking a glass of water. Officials gingerly drink champagne. Only ISMAY is knocking it back.

WILSON

Prime Minister, congratulations.

AIDES

Hear, hear.

CHAMBERLAIN

When do we leave?

WILSON

The car to the airfield comes in ten minutes. Like you asked.

CHAMBERLAIN

Good.

CHAMBERLAIN turns round so he is facing away from everyone. He whirls his water contemplatively.

WILSON

You don't seem very happy... You stopped the war-

CHAMBERLAIN

Or postponed it.

WILSON

Oh, now-

CHAMBERLAIN

Ismay may be right, you know. This peace isn't secure.

WILSON

Well, it's too late... Where are you going?

CHAMBERLAIN leaves at a brisk pace.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHAMBERLAIN

To make myself feel secure.

WILSON

How?

CHAMBERLAIN

I do not quite know yet.

WILSON looks exasperated, then puts his glass down and follows.

INT. MUNICH. CORRIDOR. EVENING

WILSON and CHAMBERLAIN walk down the corridor, CHAMBERLAIN looks thoughtful.

WILSON

Prime Minister, you've been successful-

CHAMBERLAIN

Do you have a pen and paper?

WILSON pats his pockets.

WILSON

I don't think you should do anything on impulse...

(finding a pen)

Ah, yes.

INT. MUNICH. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HITLER'S QUARTERS. EVENING

Huge guards stand outside the grand door to HITLER's quarters.

They are surprised to see CHAMBERLAIN, who walks forward.

CHAMBERLAIN

We will see the Chancellor, please.

The guard looks blankly at him.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)

Chancellor... Hitler... Fuhrer.

Some understanding dawns on the guard, and he goes through the door and leaves his colleague looking uncomfortable.

CHAMBERLAIN and WILSON stand outside. WILSON lights a cigarette, while CHAMBERLAIN taps his foot.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Eventually the door opens and HITLER comes out, with GORING following. The INTERPRETER follows. Hitler waves at the guards to tell them to go out of earshot.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
What?

CHAMBERLAIN
I am not here to re-negotiate-

INTERPRETER
(German, subtitled)
I am not here to re-negotiate-

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
It is too late for that.

INTERPRETER
It is too late for that.

CHAMBERLAIN
I stick to my word.

INTERPRETER
(German, subtitled)
I stick to my word.

HITLER looks up sharply and appears furious.

CHAMBERLAIN (cont'd)
May I have a glass of water?

INTERPRETER
(German, subtitled)
Water, please.

HITLER hesitates. Then starts looking around for a glass, swinging open cupboard doors.

HITLER
(German, subtitled)
What do you want?

INTERPRETER
What do you want?

CHAMBERLAIN
I do not feel as if the peace is
secure.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

I do not feel as if the peace is secure.

HITLER

(shrugging, German, subtitled)

It will last for as long as it is in the interests of our countries.

INTERPRETER

It will last for as long as it is in the interests of our countries.

CHAMBERLAIN

Well, I want to give it a firmer foundation-

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

I want to give it a firmer foundation-

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

What are you talking about?

INTERPRETER

What are you talking about?

CHAMBERLAIN

A signed, personal commitment to never going to war and respecting borders.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

A signed, personal commitment to never going to war and respecting borders.

HITLER

(laughing, German, subtitled)

And why would we do that?

INTERPRETER

And why would we do that?

CHAMBERLAIN

...Because if you do not, my navy will blow yours out of the ocean.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

INTERPRETER

Ah-

GORING

Prime-

HITLER silences GORING with a look. He goes red, takes a step towards CHAMBERLAIN, and raises his arm as if to strike him.

CHAMBERLAIN winces, and at the last minute HITLER puts his arm round him in an embrace.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Of course I will sign. We have no more ambitions-

INTERPRETER

Of course I will sign. We have no more ambitions-

CHAMBERLAIN

I am relieved to hear it.

INTERPRETER

(German, subtitled)

I am relieved to hear it.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Come out to the balcony for a celebratory drink.

HITLER points to the balcony.

CHAMBERLAIN

First let us sign.

CHAMBERLAIN makes a signing gesture.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

You don't trust me?

INTERPRETER

You do not trust me?

CHAMBERLAIN does not respond. HITLER looks like he is angry. Then he seems to control it and laughs.

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

CHAMBERLAIN motions to WILSON, who brings out a piece of paper and puts it down on a desk.

HITLER reads it quickly.

HITLER (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
Of course, of course. You can have it
in stone if you're that paranoid.

INTERPRETER
Of course. I am certain.

HITLER holds out his hand expectantly, and GORING puts a pen into it. HITLER signs the paper.

Then he turns round and smiles broadly.

HITLER (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
Now, the balcony.

HITLER points to the balcony.

CHAMBERLAIN
(sighing with relief)
Why not?

HITLER puts his arm round CHAMBERLAIN, and they walk out together.

EXT. HESTON AIRFIELD - STAIRS TO AEROPLANE - DAY

CHAMBERLAIN descends the stairs from the aeroplane to the loud cheers of a big crowd.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN waits at the bottom and gives him a big kiss on the cheek.

MRS CHAMBERLAIN
(whispering)
Well done, sweetie.

CHAMBERLAIN's shoulders drop as tension leaves his body. He turns to a microphone and addresses the crowd.

CHAMBERLAIN
The settlement which has now been
achieved is, in my view, only the
prelude to a larger settlement in
which all Europe may find peace. This
morning I had another talk with the

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

German Chancellor, Herr Hitler, and here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine.

CHAMBERLAIN waves the paper.

CROWD

Hear, hear.

CHAMBERLAIN

My good friends, there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.

EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE BALCONY. DAY

Newsreel style footage shows cheering crowds in front of Buckingham Palace.

CHAMBERLAIN steps out onto the Palace balcony with the King and Queen.

NEWSCASTER

(voiceover)

And thank goodness we have such a man at such a time.

INT. BERLIN CHANCELLERY. LUNCH ROOM. DAY

HITLER and his senior staff, including GORING, all glistening with medals, sit around a lunch table with meat laid out.

HITLER is doing impressions to entertain them. He exaggeratedly cowers and covers his face with his hands.

HITLER

(German, subtitled)

Please Mr Hitler. I have given you all you wanted so please don't hurt me.

Everyone laughs loudly.

GORING

(German, subtitled)

Genius, Fuhrer.

HITLER

MUNICH CRISIS: ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

The democracies are finished.
Decaying. Fat and weak.

HITLER takes out his copy of the agreement signed with
CHAMBERLAIN.

HITLER (cont'd)
(German, subtitled)
But come. Don't mock my friend Mr
Chamberlain. I liked the old man. I
liked him so much I gave him my
autograph.

HITLER grins as he waves the piece of paper triumphantly.
The laughter is now uproarious.

He then flings the paper onto the table.

He stands up, motioning to the staff to follow him. They
jump up and follow behind.

The agreement lies discarded on the table, with one corner
in a bowl of soup. The soup gradually soaks into the paper.

THE END