

GHOST OF JOHN MCCAIN

Book by
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Music and Lyrics by
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Conceived by Jason Rose & Grant Woods

In Memory of Grant Woods

Produced by Jason Rose, Max Fose, and Lynn Londen

██████████ 2024

CAST

John McCain, Arizonan senator and 2008 Republican presidential ██████████
Donald Trump, real estate mogul and 45th president of the United States, as he sees himself;
 Doubles as: A Sexy Cheeseburger; ██████████ McConnell, backup dancer;
 ██████████; and John McCain

THE GREEK CHORUS, to play a variety of figures both real and imaginary:

First Chorister

George W. Bush, mission accomplisher
 Eva Perón, ██████████ in a '70s rock musical
 Karen, an average voter from Arizona
 ██████████, from *Cats*
 Kamala Harris, ██████████
 Tiffany Trump, ██████████ daughter of Donald Trump and Marla ██████████
 John McCain

Second Chorister

Barack Obama, ██████████
 Theodore Roosevelt, and his big stick
 Intercom, a strangely familiar voice ██████████
 Donald Trump's Brain
 Ted Cruz, ██████████
 ██████████, cyborg from 2416
 Kanye ██████████, dragon wielder
 ██████████, AKA The Grim Reaper
 Clarence Thomas, a sexy ██████████
 Plato, Ancient Greek philosopher
 John McCain

Third Chorister

Grant Woods, former Arizona Attorney General
 Coked-Out ██████████
 ██████████
 Hillary Clinton, the devil ██████████
 Elon Musk, backup dancer
 ██████████
 ██████████ Madison, owner of 36 more slaves than Donald Trump
 Taylor Swift, covert Pentagon asset
 Sexy Lady Fox News Anchor, or Donald Trump's next girlfriend if he'll have her
 The Statue of ██████████
 John McCain

Fourth Chorister

Joe Biden, ██████████
 Receptionist, ██████████
 Roy Cohn, a mob lawyer who ██████████ men
 Puppet Hitler, ██████████
 ██████████, wolf-hunter
 Lindsey Graham, ██████████
 Eric Trump, ██████████ son of Donald Trump and ██████████
 Middle American Male, ██████████
 Clint Eastwood, because John McCain liked Westerns
 Donald Trump's Human Body
 Uncle Sam
 John McCain

SYNOPSIS

In GHOST OF ██████████, the former senator awakens to find himself—after honorably leaving Vietnam’s “Hanoi Hilton” as a younger man—unbelievably back in captivity, in the afterlife, inside the mind of ██████████ Trump.

As a prisoner of Trump’s war to win the approval of an establishment that Trump both reveres and scorns, McCain must ██████████ for his freedom by engaging in a ██████████ debate over life, legacy, and American values.

This musical comedy is a psychological exploration of two larger than life rivals who represent the full spectrum of human nature, the roads we take to power, and the prices we pay to “win.” Over the course of his posthumous journey, McCain must gather a ██████████ coalition of the people living rent-free in Trump’s head to rebel against the President’s obsessive demands for affirmation, and McCain must resist the temptations ██████████ presented by Trump’s Brain.

The dialogue that unfolds between ██████████ reveals what’s universal about the unseen internal conflicts of the world’s biggest public figures, and explores the humanity behind what governs our collective actions, achievements, and future as a society. GHOST OF ██████████ is a surprising, dramatic, and comedic meditation on integrity, efficacy, and the struggle for ethical self-actualization in a world that rewards expediency.

SCENE 1 – THE LOBBY

(JOHN MCCAIN, ██████████ Senator and ██████████, enters in spotlight. He is dressed in ██████████ and pulls behind him a white carryon roller suitcase.

We hear eulogies from Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Joe Biden, and Grant Woods.)

OBAMA

We come to celebrate an extraordinary / man.

BUSH

He was courageous, with a courage that frightened his captors, and inspired ██████████
██████████.

OBAMA

██████████ in a nation as big and boisterous and diverse as ours, rules and norms are what bind us / together—

██████████
My name is Joe Biden. I'm a Democrat. And I loved John / McCain.

GRANT WOODS

He was America's hero. He served his country with honor. He fought the good fight. He kept the faith.

Song #1 – “Farewell”

MCCAIN

SO THIS IS IT.
THE PRIZE AT THE END ██████████ MISSION.
THE GOLD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW.
THE LIGHT BEHIND THE GATE.
TIME TESTED MY HEART AND WILL
BUT ██████████ CITY ON A HILL!
I'M PROUD AND TIRED
AND READY TO REST.

SO THIS ██████████
THE SAILOR AND ROGUE POLITICIAN
WAS NOT AT ALL TAKING FOR GRANTED
██████████ WOULD BE HIS FATE.
I LOVED GOD AND THOSE I SERVED,
AND TRIED TO BE WHAT THEY DESERVED.
I FEEL ██████████ AND
GRATEFUL AND BLESSED.

MCCAIN (CONT'D)

AND NO, IT WASN'T PERFECT.
I WON SOME AND LOST SOME
AND LOST SOME AND LOST SOME.
DID I SCREW UP? AND HOW.
BUT THOUGH IT WASN'T ██████████
██████████ THROUGH THE TESTS
I FOCUSED ON THIS MOMENT
AND NOW:

THIS IS IT!
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN HOW I'M FEELING.
FOR ONCE, MY TONGUE IS TIED.
EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED TOWARD
WAS LEADING TO THIS LAST REWARD.
MY PLACE RESERVED ON THE OTHER SIDE.

GOODBYE FRIENDS,
██████████
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
THANK YOU, ALL WHO STILL LABOR BELOW.
AND TO FRIENDS AND TO FAMILY
WHO PASSED THROUGH THESE GATES BEFORE
A HEARTFELT, GRATEFUL
HELLO.

(Song ends. MCCAIN is entranced by the beauty of his final note. How strange to be singing! ██████████ a gilded hotel lobby, slightly "off" somehow.)

RECEPTIONIST

Sir? Hello? Sir?!

MCCAIN

And you must be Peter!

RECEPTIONIST

Reservation?

MCCAIN

Oh! Uh. I hope so! It'd be under McCain.
(The RECEPTIONIST checks ██████████)

John.
(██████████)

The third.

RECEPTIONIST

Uh-huh.

(Finally he looks up.)

United States Senator of Arizona, 1987, 2018?

MCCAIN

██████████

RECEPTIONIST

Yeah, I see you. Okay, whaddoo we have...

(Looking through his notes)

Born 1936, Panama Canal Zone...died August 25, 2018—oh! That’s today! Well look at that, you’re not even cold yet, out there.

MCCAIN

(Collegiate)

Is that right!

RECEPTIONIST

(Returning to his notes)

Ran for President; almost won. Fought in Vietnam...almost won....Self-described “foot soldier in the Reagan revolution”, woww, that’s. Neat.

MCCAIN

Uh—and—strong legacy of...steering American politics towards morality, principles,
██████████...

RECEPTIONIST

(Bored now and done with this; presenting a room key)

We’re out of king beds, you can have two doubles. Seventh floor, just next to the elevator—sometimes works, always clangs. All night. Sporadically. Breakfast is seven to nine-thirty but between you and me, I wouldn’t.

MCCAIN

So...when do I get to see the big guy?

RECEPTIONIST

Well, he’s very busy.

MCCAIN

Sure.

RECEPTIONIST

Many calls, many meetings, many important decisions.

MCCAIN

Right! No, sure.

(██████████ *Looking around at the lobby*)

You know—I *always* believed!

RECEPTIONIST

(Returning to paperwork)

Mm-hm.

Song #2 – “Heaven or a Three-Star Hotel”

MCCAIN

LOOK! A GILDED STAIRCASE.

SO GRAND AND OVERBLOWN!

EVERYTHING’S SHINY AND NEW!

(MCCAIN touches something and it immediately breaks. The RECEPTIONIST rolls his eyes and exits; this is someone else’s problem now.)

I’m sure they’ll fix that.

LOOK! BEHIND THIS CURTAIN!

A GOLDEN THRONE!

(MCCAIN pulls back a curtain to reveal TEDDY ██████████ on a toilet.)

ROOSEVELT

What the hell?!

(ROOSEVELT closes the curtain. ██████████.)

MCCAIN

AND THERE’S A COKED-OUT HOOKER...

(A gruesome call girl crosses through the lobby making an impossible face.)

COKED-OUT HOOKER

Butt stuff is extra.

MCCAIN

WELL, OF COURSE—GOD LOVES THEM TOO!

Hi, Coked-Out Hooker!

COKED-OUT HOOKER

Hi, Dead John McCain!

MCCAIN

IS THIS HEAVEN,
OR A THREE-STAR HOTEL?
IT'S NOT QUITE JUST HOW I DREAMED.
WHAT A PLACE TO END MY DAYS.
THE BIG MAN WORKS
IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS.

(██████████ 26th President of the United States, enters from behind the curtain, buttoning his pants.)

MCCAIN

Wait—are you *Teddy Roosevelt*, my favorite president ever!?

ROOSEVELT

Hi, John.

MCCAIN

Holy wow, he knows my name! Say, do you have any advice on how to make peace with leaving behind a legacy that may or may not have been torn to shreds before your very eyes just *right* as you died?

ROOSEVELT

Well, they did turn a mountain into my face, so. Probably not!

MCCAIN

LOOK! ON THAT BUFFET ██████████
MUST BE THE HEAV'NLY FEAST!

ROOSEVELT

It's McDonalds.

MCCAIN

WHAT A CURIOUS PLACE.
I like the fries!

ROOSEVELT

Me too.

MCCAIN

██████████
CHANDELIERS AT LEAST.

ROOSEVELT

They're fake.

PERÓN

My power ballads? His favorite.

MCCAIN

Show me the rest of the tour?

PERÓN

IT SMELLS A LITTLE ██████████.
THE LOBBY NEEDS REPAIR.
THE SERVICE HERE TAKES HOURS.

MCCAIN

I bet it's worth the wait!

PERÓN

THE GYM IS KINDA JUNKY.
THE LOCKER ROOM'S IN THERE
COMPLETE WITH GOLDEN SHOWERS.

MCCAIN

So classy.

PERÓN

If you say so.

*(They approach a door guarded by ██████████ PUPPET ADOLF
HITLER)*

HERE'S THE CASINO,
THE BOUNCER IS A PAIN.

MCCAIN

IS THAT HITLER?

PERÓN

YES, BUT LITTLER.

MCCAIN

WHY?

PERÓN

(To MCCAIN)

DON'T ASK.

(To PUPPET HITLER)

AUF WIDERSEHEN!

PUPPET HITLER

██████████!

PERÓN

THE STAFF IS OBNOXIOUS.

MCCAIN

██████████

PERÓN

I'VE GOT TO GO.

MCCAIN

WHAT ██████████ IS HAPPENING NOW?

PERÓN

SIT BACK AND WATCH THE SHOW.

(Dance break. A SEXY CHEESEBURGER wearing a Miss Universe sash and pointe shoes dances prettily before ██████████. ROY COHN twirls with his briefcase, ██████████ rubbing himself all over with his cash.)

COKED-OUT HOOKER

(██████████)

Piss stuff?

MCCAIN

Oh! No, thanks.

ALL

(PERÓN joins and they dance the big finish!)

IS THIS HEAVEN,
OR A THREE-STAR HOTEL?
IT'S NOT QUITE JUST HOW I DREAMED.
SO BLINGED OUT IT SHOCKS THE ██████████
THE BIG MAN WORKS
IN MYSTERIOUS, MYSTERIOUS

ENSEMBLE

PERÓN

IS THIS HEAVEN,
OR A HILTON IN HELL?

██████████
ALL THIS CALLS TO MIND THE PHRASE:
THE BIG MAN WORKS

██████████
██████████
IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

MY ROOM IS CRUMMY

THE STAFF IS SCUMMY

MY SHEETS ARE SO SO ██████████
THERE'S ██████████ ON MY SHEETS.

SOMEONE ██████████ ON MY SHEETS.
THE BIG MAN WORKS
IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

Not / heaven.

COHN

Satan?!

PERÓN

Yikes.

CLINTON

Sorry, Hillary.

COHN

Hillary?!

MCCAIN

██████████ ██████████
██████████

PERÓN

No, no, that can't—... You're in good health! You can't be / here—

MCCAIN

I'm not *dead*, John, jeez. I just live here and... sorta run the place.

CLINTON

HEY. HEY. EXCUSE ME, EXCUSE ME.

INTERCOM

(The voice booms from an intercom system. A beat.)

...Who was that?

MCCAIN

EXCUSE ME.

INTERCOM

That's the boss.

PERÓN

I RUN THE PLACE. OKAY? I RUN THE PLACE.

MCCAIN

That's God's voice?

(The group exchanges glances. Who's gonna tell him?)

Okay, I'm out. Whatever this is—hell, purgatory, three-star / hotel...

(He exits stage left.)

INTERCOM

FIVE-STAR. EXCUSE ME: FIVE STAR.

MCCAIN

(Reentering stage right)

Ohhh-kay—really? We’re just stuck here, then.

COHN

Look, hey—John, buddy. Is it bad news? Yes. Are we trapped here? Absolutely. Is this the afterlife?

PERÓN

Nothing like / it.

COHN

Nothing like it—correct. But you’re a big man! You can handle this! You’re John ██████████ McCain!

INTERCOM

EXCUSE ME. EXCUSE / ME.

COHN

██████████ (██████████)
██████████ war / hero!

INTERCOM

HE’S NOT A WAR HERO, ALL RIGHT? HE’S A WAR HERO ‘CAUSE HE WAS CAPTURED? I LIKE PEOPLE WHO WEREN’T CAPTURED, OKAY? I ██████████ TO TELL YOU.

MCCAIN

Oh no.

CLINTON

Yeah...

INTERCOM

YOU’RE IN MY HEAD / BITCH.

CLINTON

We’re in Donald Trump’s head.

INTERCOM

BUT IT’S REAL EASY TO LEAVE, JOHN. JUST CLICK YOUR HEELS THREE TIMES, ADMIT THAT I’M THE GREATEST PRESIDENT WHO’S EVER LIVED, AND I LET YOU DIE. FAIR DEAL, EVERYBODY WINS.

MCCAIN

I'm not doing / that.

INTERCOM

BUT IT ONLY WORKS IF YOU *BELIEVE* IT, JOHN. IT'S LIKE THAT MUSICAL WITH THE GOLDEN BRICKS AND THE NASTY WOMEN: YOU HAVE TO MEAN IT!

PERÓN

If anyone needs me, I'll be on my balcony, singing about crying.

(██████████)

Big guy lets me use the mini-bar when I belt the high stuff.

MCCAIN

Wait, that's real? Donald Trump actually loves musical theater?

CLINTON

Oh, yeah, no, he genuinely does. He's got a guy on staff they call The Music Man to play him "Memory" from *CATS* whenever he gets too stressed.

MCCAIN

That can't be true.

PERÓN

Look it up. ██████████

MCCAIN

(*To CLINTON*)

So, what, he watched *Evita* and liked Roy Cohn ██████████ and now they're his permanent resident advisors?

CLINTON

Pretty much.

MCCAIN

So I just don't *ever* get to rest in / peace—

CLINTON

Hey, what's that old saying? About dying twice? Once when we stop breathing, once when we're forgotten? Right now you're in between.

MCCAIN

Wait, am I even "me"? Is this "me" saying this right now? Or am I just Trump's imagination talking to itself on the day that I died?

CLINTON

Do you feel like yourself?

MCCAIN

I / think so...

INTERCOM

DO YOU FEEL LIKE A BITCH?

MCCAIN

No. I do not feel like “a / bitch.”

INTERCOM

NOT REAL, THEN—THERE’S YOUR ANSWER.

CLINTON

I wouldn’t worry / about it.

INTERCOM

BECAUSE YOU WOULD FEEL LIKE A BITCH.

MCCAIN

This fate ██████████ worse than / death.

(LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Senator from South Carolina, enters. He wears a business suit over an unusual looking collar.)

LINDSEY GRAHAM

John?!

MCCAIN

...Lindsey? ██████████ Graham? ...Senator from ██████████, Lindsey / Graham?

GRAHAM

What the heck are you doing here, / old pal?

MCCAIN

Boy, are you a sight for sore eyes! This place is a madhouse!

GRAHAM

Yeah, it’s naughty, all / right.

MCCAIN

Listen, friend, you and I were always close and I could use some allies. I’m concerned Donald Trump might be tearing up my legacy out / there?

GRAHAM

(Jovial)

Oh he definitely is.

MCCAIN

(Beat)
Yeah—so I don't want / him to?

GRAHAM

Oh, sure, I can help you with that.

MCCAIN

You will?

GRAHAM

Sure, I do it all the time! Just gotta grab that bull by ██████!

MCCAIN

Exactly!

GRAHAM

Tickle 'em a little. / Cup 'em—

MCCAIN

Wait, what?

GRAHAM

Hm?

MCCAIN

Sorry, are we—talking about the same / thing?

GRAHAM

Talking politics, / right?

MCCAIN

Right! Yes! What is that collar you're / wearing?

GRAHAM

Yeah, I'm explaining to you my political strategy?

MCCAIN

Uh-huh.

GRAHAM

For gettin' on his good side? It's how I've learned to survive in politics, even if *you* never really...noticed. Never really understood. None of 'em do.

(Music starts.)

MCCAIN

My god, it's a musical. The inside of Donald Trump's head *is* a / musical!

Song #3 – “Good Boy”

GRAHAM

THE PRESS IS FULL-A BULLIES WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THE SCUTTLEBUTT IS NASTY. UNCOUTH.
RUMOR IS THERE'S BEEN A LITTLE KINK IN MY CAREER
NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.
THOUGH I MAY ROLL OVER WHEN TOLD TO,
A GAME I QUITE ENJOY,
THAT DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T BE BOLD TOO.
I JUST LIKE TO BE A GOOD, GOOD BOY.

*(Club beat. GRAHAM strips off his suit to reveal a full “Puppy Play” leather
██████████.)*

Ruff!!

MCCAIN

What's happening?

GRAHAM

Open wide, John, you might learn a thing or two.

PEOPLE SAY I'M HANDCUFFED.
LIES LIKE THAT ARE SAD.
THOUGH THE LEASH I'M KEPT ON IS SHORT. OHH!
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M SPECIAL.
(AND SOMETIMES CUZ ██████████.)
AND DAD GETS MY TOTAL SUPPORT.

I'M A LOVING, LOYAL FAN.
AND SO THERE'S NO NEED TO BE COY. WHOA!
I FIND A BIG BIG BIG BIG MAN
WHO NEEDS A GOOD GOOD GOOD GOOD BOY.

MCCAIN

This is degrading.

GRAHAM

Not if I like it.

MCCAIN

Fair enough.

GRAHAM

I LOVE TO FEEL PROTECTED
BY SOMEONE STRONG AND STURDY
WHO REMINDS ME I'M ██████████. OHH!
I'LL SLOBBER ON ██████████ JUST
SIT AND LOOK REAL PURDY.
IT PUTS A LITTLE ██████ IN MY ██████████.

I'M A LOYAL LOVING FAN.
AND SO THERE'S NO NEED TO BE COY. OHH!
I FIND A BIG BIG BIG BIG MAN.
WHO NEEDS A GOOD GOOD GOOD GOOD BOY.

Lindsey Graham pole dance!

MCCAIN

You really don't have to.

GRAHAM

(LINDSEY GRAHAM pole dances. Back up dancers. We didn't need this.)

I'M AWARE IT'S NOT THE BEST LOOK
PLAYING DEAD WHEN BIG MOMENTS ARRIVE
BUT WHEN I'M IN A JAM, MA'AM,
GOD ██████ LINDSEY GRAHAM
ALWAYS DOES SURVIVE.

FIND THE RIGHT ALLIES TO ██████
SIT AT THEIR FEET JUST IN CASE
AND IF YOU'RE VERY GOOD,
VERY VERY GOOD
MAYBE THEY'LL ██████
ALL OVER MY ██████.

GRAHAM

I'M A LOYAL LOVING FAN
AND I TRY NOT TO ANNOY, OHH
FIND ME A BIG BIG BIG BIG MAN
I'LL BE HIS
GOOD GOOD GOOD GOOD—

Lady Gaga key change!

MY COLLAR MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE
AND I'M A CUTE PALMETTO PUP
I LOVE MY BIG BIG BIG BIG MEN
CUZ THEY ██████████
I'M A GOOD GOOD GOOD GOOD
GOOD GOODY GOOD GOOD BOY!

Woof.

BACKUP DANCERS

LOYAL LOVING FAN AH AH AH
WHOA
FIND ME A BIG BIG BIG BIG MAN

MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE AH AH AH
WHOA
HE LOVES HIS BIG BIG BIG BIG MEN

GOOD GOOD GOOD GOOD
GOOD GOODY GOOD GOOD BOY!

(GRAHAM strikes a pose.)

GRAHAM

Bye, Ted Cruz. Thanks *Mitch*. See you next time, ██████████ Musk.

MCCAIN

Lindsey, you really seem to get this guy, / don't you?

GRAHAM

Shut up baby, I know it.

MCCAIN

He doesn't want our approval—he *needs* it. If I ██████████ I might actually be able to mold Donald Trump into the kind of president I can get behind—

GRAHAM

Giggity.

MCCAIN

The kind of—seriously?

GRAHAM

Hm?

MCCAIN

The kind of president I wanted to be.

GRAHAM

Right.

MCCAIN

(Scheming)

That was quite a team of dancers you / had there...

GRAHAM

Yeah, I'm a little surprised the Supreme Court didn't show. Must already be at the party.

(Enter: KAREN. KAREN is Peak American Tourist. She has enormous roller suitcases and ██████████ MAGA hat, jeans, and a ██████████. She looks around in wide-eyed wonder.)

KAREN

Oh wow...so big...so golden...it's like I'm in heaven...

MCCAIN

/ You are not.

...except *better*...

KAREN

Oh, boy.

MCCAIN

Isn't this a dream come true? I'm like his biggest fan. He is LITERALLY a saint. I just tweeted that, out there—I think that's why I'm here.
(Falsely modest)
He's thinking about me.

KAREN

I see.

MCCAIN

Are you going to the party too?

KAREN

What / "party"?

MCCAIN

I'm Karen, by the way.

KAREN

██████████ McCain.

MCCAIN

Wait, the loser guy?

KAREN

The / Senator.

MCCAIN

INTERCOM
EXACTLY. KAREN, BEAUTIFUL—WELCOME. ██████████ GET KAREN SOME DIET COKES.

Okay, that does it.
(To GRAHAM)
Where is he?

MCCAIN

Take me with you!

KAREN

MCCAIN

This is executive business.

(To GRAHAM)

I know how to compromise with people. I can sort this out.

INTERCOM

YEAH COME KISS MY ██████.

GRAHAM

He's up in his penthouse right now.

INTERCOM

EXECUTIVE SUITE. AND BRING ME ONE OF THOSE DIET COKES.

(Segue.)