

"The Important Button"

by
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1 EXT. GATED MILITARY INSTALLATION - MORNING 1

We open on the outside of a large, secluded military building. Though it is early (as can be seen from an outdoor digital clock on the installation's exterior), very few cars are parked there. We enter via an automatic door. Ribbons, confetti, and spent party favors strangely litter the floor. Some of them skitter from the gust of air accompanying the door opening.

A spinning newspaper appears on the screen. When it stops, we see the *large* headline: FENTON ACCORDS SIGNED! WORLD WELCOMES A NEW ERA OF PEACE AMONG NATIONS!

And in smaller type below the headline: U.S. to move unneeded military computers to Smithsonian.

FADE TO:

2 INT. ROOM 704: "LAUNCH CONTROL" - NOT MUCH LATER 2

MARIA, 52, a cleaning woman, opens the labeled door and enters. Like the corridors seen earlier, the room is a mess from the peace celebrations. Maria shakes her head and turns up her headphones.

From outside the door, she wheels in the cart containing all she will need to clean up this room. Next, she briefly leaves and returns with her vacuum cleaner. As she holds its power cord looking for an outlet, we notice that all the computer control panels affixed to the floor are off and colorless.

Maria starts picking up the party trash by hand and putting it into the empty barrel on her cart.

FADE TO:

3 INT. ROOM 704 - NOT MUCH LATER 3

The barrel full of celebration remnants and the room noticeably cleaner, Maria is vacuuming the carpeting. She turns up her headphones even more to drown out the machine's loud sucking sound.

After a minute or so, she trips over the power cord, falls onto a dormant control panel - inadvertently palming an important-looking recessed red button - and then to the floor. She rises, shakes her head at her clumsiness, brushes herself off, and continues her job.

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Intent on finishing her work, she doesn't notice that the control panel she fell on is slowly coming to life.

FADE TO:

INT. ROOM 704 - MINUTES LATER

Done with her cleaning, Maria sighs and starts packing her stuff onto the cart. She unplugs the vacuum, wraps the power cord around the hooks on the back, and wheels it out of the room.

In her brief absence, more of the control panels come to life. A screen shows a four-part picture of missile silos' covers sliding away.

Maria returns for the cart. She is enjoying her music too much to notice the video of the smoking missiles readying for launch.

She leaves Room 704, closing the door and flicking off the lights behind her. All the control panels slowly turn themselves completely on, their lights glowing eerily in the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.