

THE COMPLETE SCREENPLAY

ff



OPPENHEIMER

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

'I AM BECOME DEATH, DESTROYER OF WORLDS.'

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Oppenheimer centres on the life of the 'father of the atomic bomb'. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *American Prometheus* by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, the film stars Cillian Murphy as the man who led the effort, in the midst of a world war, to unleash the power of the atom.

Christopher Nolan has fashioned a story of discovery bathed in the light of a thousand suns – but one that is darkened by government surveillance and the travesty of a trial to which Oppenheimer was subjected.

In his introduction to the screenplay, Kai Bird, co-author of *American Prometheus*, praises Nolan's skill in taking an extremely complex life story and miraculously turning it into 'visual art that is faithful both to the history and the man'.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A SYNCOPY PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ATLAS ENTERTAINMENT A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN "OPPENHEIMER" CILLIAN MURPHY
EMILY BLUNT MATT DAMON ROBERT DOWNEY JR. FLORENCE PUGH JOSH HARTNETT CASEY AFFLECK WITH RAMI MALEK AND KENNETH BRANAGH
MUSIC BY LUDWIG Göransson COSTUME DESIGNER ELLEN MIRONICK EDITOR JENNIFER LAME ACE PRODUCTION DESIGNER RUTH DE JONG DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY HOYTE VAN HOYTEMA ASC, FSC, NSC
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS J. DAVID WARGO JAMES WOODS THOMAS HAYSLIP PRODUCED BY EMMA THOMAS, p.g.a. CHARLES ROVEN, p.g.a. CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
BASED ON "AMERICAN PROMETHEUS: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY OF J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER" BY KAI BIRD AND MARTIN J. SHERWIN
THE BOOK

SCIFI

THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED

SOUNDTRACK ON BACK LOT MUSIC/MONDO RECORDS

WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN
AND DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

IMAX

A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

UNIVERSAL

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OPPENHEIMER

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screenplay by

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

based on the book

American Prometheus:

The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer

by

KAI BIRD

and MARTIN J. SHERWIN

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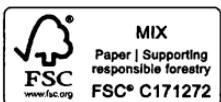
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Introduction

Robert Oppenheimer was always an enigma, even to his closest friends. As a troubled, socially awkward young man, he plumbbed the mysteries of quantum physics. But he also loved the poetry of John Donne and read the *Bhagavad Gita* in the original Sanskrit. He was an aesthete who cultivated ambiguities in his own life. A Renaissance man, he brought together poetry and science. He was both brilliant and naive, insightful and terribly vulnerable. As his fellow physicist Isidor Rabi once remarked, in addition to being 'very wise, he was very foolish'.¹

'In Oppenheimer,' Rabi wrote, 'the element of earthiness was feeble. Yet it was essentially this spiritual quality, this refinement as expressed in speech and manner, that was the basis of his charisma. He never expressed himself completely. He always left a feeling that there were depths of sensibility and insight not yet revealed.'²

This was the complex man who led the effort in the midst of a world war to unleash the power of the atom. The 'father' of the atomic bomb was painfully aware of the moral consequences. He had dedicated his life to science and rational thought. And yet, his decision to join in the creation of a genocidal weapon was, in the words of the physicist Freeman Dyson, 'a Faustian bargain if there ever was one . . . And of course we are still living with it'.³

Oppenheimer's story reminds us that our identity as human beings is now forever intimately connected with the culture of things nuclear. This is particularly true for citizens of the country that used the first atomic bomb on two Japanese cities. 'We have had the bomb on our minds since 1945,' wrote the novelist E. L. Doctorow. 'It was first our weaponry and then our diplomacy, and now it's our economy. How can we suppose that something so monstrously powerful would not, after forty years, compose our identity? The great golem we have made against our enemies is our culture, our bomb culture – its logic, its faith, its vision'.⁴

Christopher Nolan's brilliant film *Oppenheimer* is based on the 2005 biography *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy*

of *J. Robert Oppenheimer*. The book was a quarter-century in the making. My late co-author, Martin J. Sherwin, signed the contract with Knopf in 1980. Over the years, he interviewed nearly a hundred of Oppenheimer's friends, students, relatives and colleagues, most of whom are now dead. The biography also draws on some 50,000 pages of archival materials from all over the world, including Oppenheimer's own massive collection of papers at the Library of Congress, and some 8,000 pages of FBI records accumulated over twenty-five years of surveillance. Few men in public life have been subjected to such scrutiny by the authorities; Oppenheimer's words were captured on tape by FBI recording devices and transcribed. All of these sources gave his biographers the opportunity to create a rich and authoritative narrative.

In the year 2000, when Marty Sherwin invited me to join him on his long biographical journey, we sealed the deal by raising our martini glasses and Marty intoned Oppenheimer's favoured toast, 'To the confusion of our enemies.' Marty then remarked that Oppenheimer's life was much larger than just the story of his building the atomic bomb. He was America's Prometheus, the Greek god who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to humans. And like Prometheus, Oppenheimer had led the effort to wrest from nature the awesome fire of the sun for his country in a time of war. But like Prometheus, Oppenheimer was later punished. 'We would not be spending so much time and effort on this biography,' Sherwin told me, 'if Oppenheimer had not been humiliated in the 1954 security hearing. It is the travesty of the trial that makes the arc for the story.'

Nolan's screenplay artfully captures this narrative as told in *American Prometheus*, the triumphant story of Los Alamos and the Manhattan Project – but also focusing on the tragedy of Oppenheimer's downfall.

In the dark days of the early 1950s, Oppenheimer became the most prominent victim of America's McCarthyite witch-hunt. In 1954, just nine years after he was feted as the 'father of the atomic bomb', Oppenheimer was put on trial in a kangaroo court proceeding – just as another scientist, Galileo Galilei, had been tried and humiliated by a medieval-minded church in Rome in 1633.

Soon after Hiroshima, he began speaking out about the dangers of the atom bomb. In October 1945 he astonished one audience

by saying that the Hiroshima bomb had been used ‘against an essentially defeated enemy . . . it is a weapon for aggressors, and the elements of surprise and terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei.’⁵

His fate was sealed when he blurted out to President Harry Truman, ‘I feel I have blood on my hands.’⁶ Upon which, Truman dismissed him from the Oval Office, telling his aides that he didn’t want to see that ‘crybaby scientist’ ever again. But just a few years later, Oppenheimer spoke out repeatedly against the building of the even more destructive hydrogen bomb. This earned him other powerful enemies, in particular, the animosity of Lewis Strauss, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

It was Strauss who then orchestrated the security hearing trial that questioned Oppenheimer’s loyalty and ultimately stripped him of his security clearance. In the conduct of the trial, the Atomic Energy Commission violated its own regulations for a security review. Among a long list of transgressions, they illegally wiretapped Oppenheimer’s home and the office of his lawyer. Nothing incriminating was discovered. They allowed the three-member security panel access to Oppenheimer’s 8,000-page FBI file – but denied his own lawyer security clearance to read the material being used selectively against his client. They blackmailed otherwise friendly witnesses to turn against Oppenheimer. It was a travesty. And then Strauss leaked the entire transcript of the hearing to the *New York Times*.

Oppenheimer became a pariah, ‘defrocked in his own church’, in the words of yet another adversary, the physicist Edward Teller. Oppenheimer was deeply wounded. He spent the rest of his life as a political non-entity. Upon his death from oesophageal cancer in 1967, Senator J. William Fulbright went to the floor of the Senate and said, ‘Let us remember not only what his special genius did for us; let us also remember what we did to him.’⁷

Nolan’s screenplay should ignite a national discussion about our nuclear history. Perhaps in anticipation of the film, the US government finally revisited the 1954 trial, and in December 2022 the *New York Times* ran a long story reporting that Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm had ‘nullified a 1954 decision to revoke the security clearance of J. Robert Oppenheimer, a top government scientist who led the making of the atomic bomb in World War II but fell under suspicion of being a Soviet spy at

the height of the McCarthy era.¹⁸ Secretary Granholm explained that her department had been ‘entrusted with the responsibility to correct the historical record and honour Dr Oppenheimer’s profound contributions to our national defence and scientific enterprise at large’.

Secretary Granholm’s decision officially corrects the historical record. This lesson is particularly important because of Oppenheimer’s status as a scientist. We are a society immersed in science and technology, some of it based on the very physics that Oppenheimer and his colleagues pioneered. And yet many in the US still distrust science and scientists.

In some discernable measure, we can blame the legacy of the flawed Oppenheimer security trial for this distrust. In 1954, America’s most celebrated scientist was falsely accused and publicly humiliated, sending a warning to all scientists not to engage in the political arena as public intellectuals. This was the real tragedy of Oppenheimer. What happened to him damaged our ability as a society to debate honestly about scientific theory – the very foundation of our modern world.

*

Christopher Nolan’s screenplay is an extraordinarily creative achievement. Oppenheimer’s iconic life is no ordinary story. I only wish that my collaborator, Martin J. Sherwin, was still with us. He died in October 2021 at the age of eighty-four, just days before Nolan announced to the world that he had sold his screenplay to Universal Studios. Marty knew about the project, but he never had a chance to read the screenplay, let alone see the film. But he knew full well how formidable a challenge it was to take a 722-page biography and turn it into a transformative film. He knew that more than one screenwriter had tried and failed to do the same. He would have been excited and gratified to read this script. And I think the biographer in him would have appreciated how well Nolan has taken an extremely complicated life story and miraculously turned it into visual art that is faithful both to the history and the man.

KAI BIRD
March 2023

Notes

1. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 5.
2. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 588.
3. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 5.
4. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. xii.
5. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 324.
6. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 332.
7. Bird & Sherwin, *American Prometheus*, p. 588.
8. William J. Broad, 'Architect of Atomic Bomb Cleared of "Black Mark"', *NYT*, Dec. 18, 2022.

*

Kai Bird is the Executive Director of the Leon Levy Center for Biography in New York City. He and Martin J. Sherwin won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006 for their biography, American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Cast and Credits

CILLIAN MURPHY

EMILY BLUNT

MATT DAMON

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

FLORENCE PUGH

JOSH HARTNETT

CASEY AFFLECK

with

RAMI MALEK

and

KENNETH BRANAGH

BENNY SAFDIE

JASON CLARKE

DYLAN ARNOLD

TOM CONTI

JAMES D'ARCY

DAVID DASTMALCHIAN

DANE DEHAAN

ALDEN EHRENREICH

TONY GOLDWYN

JEFFERSON HALL

DAVID KRUMHOLTZ

MATTHEW MODINE

A Universal Pictures
presentation

A Syncopy
production

In association with
Atlas Entertainment

A Film by

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

OPPENHEIMER

Based on the Book
American Prometheus:

The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer
by

KAI BIRD *and* MARTIN J. SHERWIN

Written for the Screen

and Directed by

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

Produced by

EMMA THOMAS P.G.A.

Produced by

CHARLES ROVEN P.G.A.

Produced by

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN P.G.A.

Executive Producers

J. DAVID WARGO

JAMES WOODS

THOMAS HAYSLIP

Director of Photography

HOYTE VAN HOYTEMA, ASC, FSF, NSC

Production Designer

RUTH DE JONG

Edited by

JENNIFER LAME, ACE

Music by

LUDWIG GÖRANSSON

Visual Effects Supervisor

ANDREW JACKSON

Special Effects Supervisor

SCOTT FISHER

Costumes Designed by

ELLEN MIROJNICK

Co-Producer

ANDY THOMPSON

Casting by

JOHN PAPSIDERA CSA

OPPENHEIMER

THE SCREENPLAY

A VAST SPHERE OF FIRE, the fire of a thousand suns, slowly eats the night-time desert. A line of black type appears:

'Prometheus stole fire from the Gods and gave it to man.'

And the sound of DOZENS OF FEET STAMPING
RHYTHMICALLY . . .

'For this he was chained to a rock and tortured for eternity.'

ROILING PLASMA expands, the sound of STAMPING GROWS
OPPRESSIVE, the STAMPING FASTER and FASTER over —

A FACE. Gaunt, tense. EYES TIGHTLY SHUT. The face SHUDDERS —
the sound CEASES as my EYES OPEN, STARING INTO CAMERA:

Peer into my soul — J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER, aged fifty, close-cropped greying hair. The gentle sounds of bureaucracy . . .

SUPER TITLE:

'I. FISSION'

VOICE
(O.S.)

Dr Oppenheimer, as we begin, I believe you have a statement to read into the record?

I glance down at my notes.

OPPENHEIMER

Yes, your honour —

SECOND VOICE
(O.S.)

We're not judges, doctor.

OPPENHEIMER

No. Of course.

(I start reading)

Members of the Security Board, the so-called derogatory information in your indictment of me cannot be fairly understood except in the context of my life and my work. This answer is a summary of relevant aspects of my life in more or less chronological order . . .

SENATE AIDE
(V.O.)

How long did he testify?

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY (BLACK-AND-WHITE
SEQUENCE)

Close on a prosperous sixty-three-year-old man, LEWIS STRAUSS, as he takes a cup of coffee from a SENATE AIDE . . .

SUPER TITLE:

'2. FUSION'

STRAUSS

I forget. Three days, or so. The whole hearing took a month.

SENATE AIDE

An ordeal.

STRAUSS

I've only read the transcript, but who'd want to justify their whole life?

SENATE AIDE

You weren't there?

STRAUSS

As Chairman, I wasn't allowed to be. Are they really going to ask about it? It was years ago.

SENATE AIDE

Four years ago. Oppenheimer still divides America – the Committee will want to know where you stood.

(checks his watch)

Ready?

INT. CORRIDOR, SENATE BUILDING – MOMENTS LATER
(B&W)

The Senate Aide leads Strauss along the corridor.

SENATE AIDE

Senator Thurmond asked me to say not to feel you're on trial.

STRAUSS

I didn't, till you said that.

SENATE AIDE

Really, Mr Strauss –

STRAUSS

Admiral.

SENATE AIDE

Admiral Strauss, this is a formality. President Eisenhower's asked you to be in his Cabinet, the Senate really has no choice but to confirm you.

They arrive at the door.

STRAUSS

And if they bring up Oppenheimer?

SENATE AIDE

When they bring up Oppenheimer, answer honestly and no senator can deny that you did your duty. It'll be uncomfortable . . .

(smiles)

Who wants to justify their whole life?

*The door to the vast committee room opens – they enter,
FLASHBULBS POPPING as PRESS and PUBLIC see Strauss.*

ROBB
(V.O.)

Why did you leave the United States?

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

The room is SMALL, SHABBY. Surprised, I look up from my statement at the prosecutor, Roger ROBB. Then turn to the THREE BOARD MEMBERS (GRAY, EVANS, MORGAN).

OPPENHEIMER

I wanted to learn the new physics.

GRAY

Was there nowhere here? I thought Berkeley had the leading theoretical physics department –

OPPENHEIMER

Sure. Once I built it. First I had to go to Europe. I went to Cambridge to work under Patrick Blackett.

ROBB

Were you happier there than in America?

INSERT CUT: A YOUNG ME (TWENTY-ONE) LIES IN BED STARING UP, CRYING . . . PARTICLES WITH THE VASTNESS OF STARS MOVE LIKE FIREFLIES . . .

OPPENHEIMER

No. I was homesick. Emotionally immature . . . troubled by visions of a hidden universe . . .

INT. LABORATORY, CAMBRIDGE – DAY

The YOUNG ME, frazzled demeanor, STRUGGLES with equipment.

OPPENHEIMER
(V.O.)

... useless in the lab.

I drop a beaker, it SHATTERS. PATRICK BLACKETT looks over, FROWNING. He picks up an APPLE and takes a LARGE BITE.

BLACKETT
(through apple)

Christ, Oppenheimer, have you had any sleep? Start again.

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I need to go to the lecture.

BLACKETT

Why?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER
(pleading)

It's Niels Bohr.

Blackett check his watch – starts packing up –

BLACKETT

Damn, *completely* forgot. Let's go.

I start to pack up with the other students.

BLACKETT

Not you. Finish coating those plates.

I clean up as Blackett and the other students leave – one leaves an APPLE for Blackett – GREEN WITH STEM AND TINY LEAF.

I pause at a bottle: 'Potassium Cyanide' . . . CLUMSY HANDS SHAKING, I draw CYANIDE into a syringe. I INJECT the apple . . .

EXT. QUADRANGLE, CAMBRIDGE – EVENING

I HURRY across the quad. A lonely figure.

BOHR
(V.O.)

Quantum physics isn't a step forward . . .

INT. LECTURE HALL, CAMBRIDGE – CONTINUOUS

I sneak into the back of the auditorium. Standing, SPELLBOUND, as NIELS BOHR, a charismatic Dane, lectures.

BOHR

... It's a new way to understand reality. Einstein's opened a door, now we're peering through, seeing a world *inside* our world . . . a world of energy and paradox that not everyone can accept . . .

I RAISE my hand to ask a question . . .

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM – DAY

(B&W)

Strauss sits facing the Committee, COUNSEL beside him, PRESS, CAMERAS and PUBLIC behind . . .

SENATOR MCGEE

Admiral Strauss, I'm interested in your relationship with Dr J. Robert Oppenheimer. You met in 1947?

STRAUSS

Correct.

SENATOR MCGEE

You were a commissioner of the Atomic Energy Commission?

STRAUSS

I was, but I met Robert in my capacity as board member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. After the war he was world-renowned – the great man of physics . . .

EXT. INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, PRINCETON – DAY (B&W)

Strauss, younger, fifty-one, bustles out of the Institute –

SCHLESINGER

(V.O.)

... I was determined to get him to run the Institute.

- to welcome the rail-thin figure of Oppenheimer (forty-three), emerging from a TAXI in HAT and coat, PIPE in mouth. ICONIC.

SCHLESINGER

Dr Oppenheimer, an honour.

OPPENHEIMER

Mr Schlesinger.

SCHLESINGER

It's pronounced 'straws'.

OPPENHEIMER

'Oh-ppenheimer', 'aw-ppenheimer' – any way you say it they know I'm Jewish.

SCHLESINGER

I'm a proud member of Temple Emmanuel – 'straws' is the Southern pronunciation. Welcome to the Institute. I think you could be very happy here.

OPPENHEIMER

Oh?

SCHLESINGER

Well, you'll love the commute – the position comes with that house for you and your wife.

Schlesinger points along an avenue of trees to Olden Manor . . .

SCHLESINGER

And your two children . . .

Oppenheimer nods as he follows Schlesinger into the Institute.

INT. INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, PRINCETON –
CONTINUOUS (B&W)

Schlesinger leads Oppenheimer through the Institute.

STRAUSS

I'm a great admirer of your work.

OPPENHEIMER

You're a physicist by training, Mr Strauss?

STRAUSS

No, I'm not trained in physics, or anything else. I'm a self-made man.

OPPENHEIMER

I can relate to that . . .

STRAUSS

Really?

OPPENHEIMER

(dry)

My father was one.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY – MOMENTS LATER (B&W)

Strauss shows Oppenheimer into the well-appointed office.

STRAUSS

This would be your office.

Oppenheimer drifts to the windows – a LAWN rolls down to a POND. He spots a FIGURE – long grey hair poking from under his hat –

STRAUSS

I'm told he's there most afternoons.

The figure gently tosses a stone into the water.

STRAUSS

I've always wondered why you didn't involve him in the Manhattan Project.

Oppenheimer turns to Strauss, interested . . .

STRAUSS

The greatest scientific mind of our time?

OPPENHEIMER

Of his time. Einstein published his Theory of Relativity more than forty years ago, but never embraced the quantum world it revealed.

STRAUSS

'God doesn't play dice.'

OPPENHEIMER

Precisely. You never thought of studying physics formally?

STRAUSS

I had offers. But I chose to sell shoes.

OPPENHEIMER

Lewis Strauss was once a lowly shoe salesman?

STRAUSS

No. Just a shoe salesman.

(opens the door)

I'll introduce you -

OPPENHEIMER

No need. I've known him for years.

Strauss, awkward, stays in the doorway and WATCHES . . .

From afar: as Oppenheimer approaches, Einstein's HAT BLOWS off his head, unleashing a MESS OF GREY HAIR, hat rolling across the grass to where Oppenheimer SCOOPS it up, and we . . .

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

I flip a page. Continue reading my statement.

OPPENHEIMER

I struggled badly trying to visualize this new world . . .

INT. ROOMS AT CAMBRIDGE – DAY

The Young Me lies on the floor, STARING UP . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

. . . you had to retool your mind to see things hovering just out of sight . . .

INSERT CUT: POINTS OF LIGHT MOVE LIKE SPARKS, BUT IN A WAVE.

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

. . . then you could unlock forces never before imagined . . .

I wipe TEARS from my eyes.

INSERT CUT: STARS. SPARKS FROM A CAMPFIRE. I PAT THE NOSE OF A HORSE IN THE DARKNESS AS I FEED IT AN APPLE.

I grow calm, my eyelids lowering . . .

INSERT CUT: AN APPLE – GREEN WITH A STEM AND A TINY LEAF . . .

I OPEN my eyes – JUMP out of bed – SCRAMBLE to dress –

EXT. QUADRANGLE, CAMBRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER

I RUN, DESPERATE, AGAINST the crowd –

INT. LABORATORY, CAMBRIDGE – DAY

I BURST in – Blackett LOOKS UP. ANOTHER MAN has his back to me. Between them on the workbench – the POISONED APPLE . . .

BLACKETT

You alright?

I nod, awkward, trying to control my BREATHING . . .

BLACKETT

Niels, meet J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The other man TURNS, offers his hand – Niels Bohr.

BOHR

What does the 'J' stand for?

BLACKETT

Nothing, apparently.

Bohr takes me in – this strange, BREATHLESS young man . . .

BOHR

You were at my lecture. You asked the only good question.

BLACKETT

Nobody's denying his insight. It's his labouratory skills that leave a little to be desired.

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I heard you give the same lecture –

BOHR

At Harvard. And you asked the same question. Why ask again?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I hadn't liked your answer.

BOHR

Did you like it better yesterday?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

A lot.

BOHR

You can lift the rock without being ready for the snake that's revealed. Now, it seems, you're ready.

Bohr picks up the POISONED APPLE from Blackett's desk . . .

BOHR

You don't enjoy the lab?

I shake my head. Bohr GESTICULATES with the apple as he talks – I watch it bob around – a kitten following a ball of string . . .

BOHR

Get out of Cambridge, with its beakers and potions. Go somewhere they'll let you think . . .

(assesses me)

Gottingen.

BLACKETT

Born?

BOHR

Born. Get to Germany. Study under Max Born. Learn the ways of theory. I'll send word.

Bohr raises the apple to take a bite – I GRAB it –

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Wormhole.

– DROP it into the wastebasket. Blackett peers at it, curious.

BOHR

How's your mathematics?

BLACKETT

Not good enough for the physicist he wants to be.

BOHR

Algebra's like sheet music. The important thing isn't can you read music, it's can you *hear* it. Can you hear the music, Robert?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I can.

SPARKS explode in WAVES, WAVES of FIRE CRASHING on a SHORE of GLASS, FLYING OVER the MEDIEVAL SPIRES of Gottingen, I watch BORN and BOHR and DIRAC, GALAXIES of PARTICLES DISPERSE and REFORM, a CUBIST PAINTING transfixes the Young Me, an ORCHESTRA plays STRAVINSKY, I read THE WASTE

LAND, I WRITE FURIOUSLY at a desk, I WRITE FURIOUSLY on a chalkboard, I SMASH a glass, and ANOTHER, and ANOTHER, WATCHING the SHARDS skid across the floor, CATCHING and REFRACTING LIGHT, I watch RAINDROPS scintillate a PUDDLE, STREAM down a windowpane, I disturb the surface of a sink full of WATER, watching RIPPLES propagate and INTERFERE, I BOUNCE a ball against a corner of my room, studying its trajectory . . .

Cut to:

EXT. INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, PRINCETON –
DAY (B&W)

Strauss watches Oppenheimer hand the HAT to Einstein. Strauss checks his watch, then starts down the hill towards them. As he approaches, Einstein TURNS, walking towards Strauss with a GRIM EXPRESSION . . .

STRAUSS
(friendly)

Albert . . .

Einstein PASSES without acknowledging Strauss. Strauss reaches Oppenheimer –

STRAUSS
What did you say to him?

OPPENHEIMER
He's fine. Mr Strauss, there are things in my past you need to be aware of.

STRAUSS
As Chairman of the AEC I have access to your security file. I've read it. The job's yours.

OPPENHEIMER
You're not worried?

STRAUSS
After all you've done for your country?

OPPENHEIMER

Times change, Mr Strauss.

STRAUSS

The purpose of this Institute is to provide a haven for independent minds. You're the man for the job.

OPPENHEIMER

Then I'll consider it. And I'll see you at the AEC meeting tomorrow.

Oppenheimer turns, heads back up the hill.

STRAUSS

(taken aback)

This is one of the most prestigious appointments in the country . . .

Oppenheimer looks back at Strauss, GRINS -

OPPENHEIMER

With a great commute. That's why I'm considering it.

Strauss watches him go, shaking his head.

SENATOR MCGEE

(V.O.)

So, Dr Oppenheimer brought your attention to his past associations before you appointed him?

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

STRAUSS

Yes.

SENATOR MCGEE

And they didn't concern you?

STRAUSS

Just then I was more concerned about what he'd said to Einstein to sour him on me.

A few CHUCKLES from the room.

SENATOR MCGEE

But later?

STRAUSS

Well, we all know what happened later.

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

The board members listen as I continue reading . . .

OPPENHEIMER

After Gottingen I moved on to Leiden in Holland . . .

INT. LECTURE HALL, LEIDEN – DAY

A packed hall. The Young Me nervously checks my notes.

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

. . . where I first met Isidor Rabi . . .

A stocky young man, ISIDOR RABI (thirty), plonks down next to a DUTCH STUDENT who reluctantly shifts, giving him room.

RABI

A Yank lecturing on the new physics? This I have to hear – I'm an American myself.

DUTCH STUDENT

How surprising.

RABI

Let me know if you need any help with the English.

I start lecturing . . . IN DUTCH. Rabi, confused, leans in.

RABI

Wait, what's he saying?

INT. TRAIN, LEIDEN TO ZURICH – NIGHT

I stare out the window at dark trees, steam and shadows. Rabi dumps his bags down, slumps opposite, sizes me up. Offers me an orange –

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

No, thank you.

RABI

It's a long way to Zurich. You get any skinnier we might lose you between the seat cushions. I'm Rabi.

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Oppenheimer.

Rabi starts peeling his orange.

RABI

I caught your lecture on molecules. Caught *some* of it – we're a couple of New York Jews – how do you know Dutch?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I thought I'd better learn it when I got here this semester.

Rabi STOPS peeling his orange to STARE at me –

RABI

You learned enough Dutch in *six weeks* to give a lecture on quantum mechanics?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

I wanted to challenge myself.

RABI

Quantum physics isn't challenging enough? Schvitzer.

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Shvitzer?

RABI

'Show-off.' Dutch in *six weeks* but you never learned Yiddish?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER
(smile)

They don't speak it so much my side of the Park.

RABI

Screw you. Homesick?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

You know it.

Rabi peels his orange. He turns serious . . .

RABI

Ever get the feeling our kind isn't entirely welcome here?

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Physicists?

RABI

Funny.

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Sometimes. Not in the department.

RABI

They're all Jewish, too.

Rabi tosses me a slice of orange.

RABI

Eat.

I take the orange, 'sipping' at it.

RABI

In Zurich there's a German you *have* to seek out -

YOUNG OPPENHEIMER

Heisenberg.

INT. LECTURE HALL, ZURICH - DAY

A tall man of twenty-six turns from the blackboard -
HEISENBERG. I study his every move. Rabi NUDGES me 'See?' . . .

INT. SAME – LATER

Rabi introduces me to Heisenberg.

HEISENBERG

Oppenheimer, yes. I liked your paper on molecules.

OPPENHEIMER

Probably because you inspired it.

HEISENBERG

If I inspire anything else, let me know. We could publish together.

OPPENHEIMER

I have to get back to America.

HEISENBERG

Why? There's no one there taking quantum mechanics seriously.

OPPENHEIMER

That's *exactly* why.

RABI

He's pining for the canyons of Manhattan.

OPPENHEIMER

The canyons of New Mexico.

HEISENBERG

You're from New Mexico?

OPPENHEIMER

New York, but my brother and I have a ranch outside Santa Fe. That's the America I miss right now.

HEISENBERG

Then you best get home, cowboys.

RABI

That's *his* thing – me and horses? I don't think so.

GRAY
(V.O.)

Did you ever encounter Heisenberg again?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I smile to myself.

OPPENHEIMER

Not in person. But you might say our paths crossed.

ROBB

Doctor, during your time in Europe, you seem to have met
a wide range of other countries' physicists . . .

(consulting notes)

Born, Bohr, Pauli, Dirac, Einstein, Heisenberg . . .?

OPPENHEIMER

That's right.

Robb looks up at me . . .

ROBB

Any Russians?

OPPENHEIMER

None that spring to mind.

(from notes)

Returning to America I accepted appointments at both
Caltech . . .

EXT. BERKELEY – DAY

I walk across campus to the physics department . . .

OPPENHEIMER
(V.O.)

. . . and up at Berkeley.

INT. CORRIDOR, BERKELEY – CONTINUOUS

I struggle to unlock a door . . . it opens –

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – CONTINUOUS

A DUSTY storage space. Scattered tables and chairs. A piano.

EXT. CORRIDOR, BERKELEY – MOMENTS LATER

I step out of the classroom. Look NEXT DOOR . . .

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY – DAY

I enter. A handsome young scientist, ERNEST LAWRENCE, works on an assemblage of curved pipes and wiring with students, including Luis ALVAREZ.

OPPENHEIMER

Dr Lawrence, I presume.

LAWRENCE

You must be Oppenheimer. I hear you want to start a school of quantum theory.

OPPENHEIMER

I am starting it. Next door.

LAWRENCE

They put you in there?

OPPENHEIMER

I asked for it. I wanted to be close to you experimentalists.

LAWRENCE

Theory will get you only so far.

(gestures)

We're building a machine to accelerate electrons.

OPPENHEIMER

Magnificent.

LAWRENCE

Would you like to help?

OPPENHEIMER

Build it? No. But I'm working on theories I'd like to test with it.

LAWRENCE

When do you start teaching?

OPPENHEIMER

I've got my first in an hour.

LAWRENCE

Seminar?

OPPENHEIMER

Pupil.

LAWRENCE

One student? That's it?

OPPENHEIMER

I'm teaching something no one here's dreamt of. But once people start hearing what you can do with it . . .

LAWRENCE

(grins)

There's no going back.

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY - LATER

I stand there, expectant. A student opens the door, looks around, embarrassed -

STUDENT

I'm sorry, I must have missed -

OPPENHEIMER

No, this is it. Mr Lomanitz, right?

LOMANITZ (twenty-one) nods, takes a seat.

OPPENHEIMER

What do you know about quantum mechanics?

LOMANITZ

I have a grasp on the basics –

OPPENHEIMER

Then you're doing it wrong.

(rapid-fire)

Is light made up of particles or waves?

Lomanitz opens his mouth to speak – too slow –

OPPENHEIMER

Quantum mechanics says it's both – how can it be both?

LOMANITZ

It can't.

OPPENHEIMER

It can't. But it is. It's paradoxical and yet . . . it *works*.

Lomanitz is hooked. I turn to the board, chalk out an equation . . . when I turn back –

There are now FIVE students (including SERBER and SNYDER) listening intently . . . I move to Lomanitz to hand him his paper. I pat his shoulder.

OPPENHEIMER

You're gonna be okay.

Dissolve to:

A PACKED CLASSROOM, hanging on my every word as I – now thirty-two, slim, well-dressed, confident – teach in the round. Lawrence listens at the edge, fascinated.

OPPENHEIMER

Consider a star . . . a vast furnace burning in outer space . . .

INSERT CUT: A STAR. A SUN. BURNING, ROILING.

OPPENHEIMER

Fire pushing outwards against its own gravity – balanced.
But if its furnace cools, gravity starts winning. It
contracts . . .

I look around. Make eye contact with Hartland SNYDER . . .

SNYDER

Density increases . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Increasing gravity . . .

INSERT CUT: THE SUN IS SHRINKING, MORE AND MORE
RAPIDLY . . .

SNYDER

Increasing density. A vicious cycle. Until . . . What's the
limit here?

OPPENHEIMER

I don't know. See where the math takes us. I guarantee it's
somewhere no one's been before.

SNYDER

Me?

OPPENHEIMER

Your math's better than mine.

EXT. BERKELEY – DAY

Energetic, dashing, I STRIDE across campus, a group of students,
including Snyder and Lomanitz, following me, hanging on my
every word . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Einstein can't accept the Copenhagen interpretation –

LOMANITZ

'God doesn't play dice.'

OPPENHEIMER

Except he does. Bohr showed us how . . .

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – DAY

I mark up a paper. Lawrence comes in, frowns at the board.

LAWRENCE

You shouldn't let them bring their politics into the classroom . . .

I follow his look: 'SATURDAY 2:00PM, RALLY FOR LOYALIST SPAIN'.

OPPENHEIMER

I wrote that. Lawrence, you embrace the revolution in physics, can't you see it everywhere else? Picasso, Stravinsky, Freud, Marx . . .

LAWRENCE

This is America, Oppie. We had our revolution. Seriously, keep it out of the lab.

OPPENHEIMER

Well, *out of the lab*, my landlady's having a discussion group tonight.

LAWRENCE

I've sampled the Berkeley political scene – it's all philosophy postgrads and Communists talking integration.

OPPENHEIMER

You don't care about integration?

LAWRENCE

I want to vote for it, not talk about it. Let's get dinner.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm meeting my brother there.

SENATOR BARTLETT

(V.O.)

Dr Oppenheimer's file contained details of FBI surveillance on his activities at Berkeley . . .

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

Strauss looks at the senator, cautious . . .

STRAUSS

Yes, as I recall.

SENATOR BARTLETT

Why would they have started a file on Dr Oppenheimer before the war?

STRAUSS

You'd have to ask Mr Hoover.

SENATOR BARTLETT

I'm asking you, Admiral Strauss.

STRAUSS

My assumption is that it was connected to his left-wing political activities.

SENATOR BARTLETT

How would these activities have come to the attention of the FBI?

STRAUSS

Well, if I remember correctly . . .

Cut to:

EXT. HOUSE PARTY, SHASTA ROAD, BERKELEY - NIGHT
(COLOUR)

STRAUSS
(V.O.)

The FBI was taking license plates outside suspected
Communist gatherings and his name popped up.

As I get out of my car, I spot TWO MEN checking the license
plates of cars on the street . . . I am GRABBED -

FRANK
(O.S.)

Gotcha!

My younger brother FRANK (twenty-five) and his date, JACKIE.

INT. LIVING ROOM, HOUSE PARTY, SHASTA ROAD,
BERKELEY - NIGHT

We ENTER the bustling room - I spot a beguiling young
woman -

VOICE
(O.S.)

Robert! Come meet Chevalier.

Mary WASHBURN grabs my tie and leads us to Haakon
CHEVALIER.

WASHBURN

Dr Haakon Chevalier, Dr Robert Oppenheimer, and vice
versa.

OPPENHEIMER

This is my little brother, Frank. Oh, and . . . uh . . .

JACKIE

Still Jackie.

CHEVALIER

Hello, Still Jackie.

OPPENHEIMER

Chevalier. You're in languages.

CHEVALIER

And your reputation precedes you.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm blushing – what've you heard?

CHEVALIER

You're teaching a radical new approach to physics that I have no chance of understanding. But I hadn't heard you were a Party member –

OPPENHEIMER

I'm not.

FRANK

Not yet.

JACKIE

Frank and I are thinking of joining –

OPPENHEIMER

(ignoring Jackie)

I support a range of causes.

Jackie, put out, leads Frank away.

CHEVALIER

The Spanish Civil War?

OPPENHEIMER

A democratic republic being overthrown by fascist thugs? Who wouldn't?

CHEVALIER

Our government – they think socialism's a bigger threat than fascism.

OPPENHEIMER

Not for long – look at what the Nazis are doing to the Jews. I send funds to colleagues in Germany to emigrate. I have to do something. My own work is so . . . abstract.

CHEVALIER

What're you working on?

OPPENHEIMER

What happens to stars when they die.

CHEVALIER

Do stars die?

OPPENHEIMER

If they do they'd cool, then collapse. And the bigger the star, the more violent its demise. Their gravity gets so concentrated . . .

INSERT CUT: THE SUN SHRINKS. THE LIGHT OF THE DISTANT STARS BEHIND IS TUGGED TOWARDS THE DYING STAR, BENDING, STRETCHING.

OPPENHEIMER

It swallows everything. Even light.

CHEVALIER

Good God. Can that really happen?

OPPENHEIMER

The math says it can. If we can get published, maybe one day an astronomer finds one. But all I have is theory. Which can't impact people's lives.

CHEVALIER

If you're sending money to Spain, do it through the Communist Party – they can get it to the front lines.

The beguiling young woman is there with a tray of martinis. This is Jean TATLOCK . . .

TATLOCK

Mary sent me with these. I'm Jean.

OPPENHEIMER

Robert.

CHEVALIER

Haakon Chevalier. The union meeting at Serber's last month?

Tatlock nods. I take a glass.

CHEVALIER

Robert here says he's not a Communist.

TATLOCK

Then he doesn't know enough about it.

OPPENHEIMER

I've read *Das Kapital*. All three volumes. Does that count?

CHEVALIER

That would make you better read than most Party members.

OPPENHEIMER

It's turgid stuff, but there's some thinking . . . 'Ownership is theft.'

TATLOCK

'Property', not 'Ownership'.

OPPENHEIMER

Sorry, I read it in the original German.

Chevalier laughs, delighted, as he leaves us alone.

TATLOCK

It's not about the book, it's about the ideas. You sound uncommitted.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm committed to thinking freely about how to improve our world. Why limit yourself to one dogma?

TATLOCK

You're a physicist – do you pick and choose rules? Or do you use the discipline to channel your energies into progress?

OPPENHEIMER

I like a little wiggle room. Do you always toe the party line?

Tatlock considers this. Sizes me up.

TATLOCK

I like my wiggle room, too.

INT. BEDROOM — LATER

We are FUCKING. Hot, sweaty, a little brutal. Tatlock GIVES UP, climbs off me —

OPPENHEIMER

Wait, wait —

I catch my breath, watching her STUDY my shelves.

TATLOCK

Unexpected.

OPPENHEIMER

What?

TATLOCK

For a physicist.

OPPENHEIMER

You've only got a shelf full of Freud?

TATLOCK

Actually my background's more —

OPPENHEIMER

Jungian.

TATLOCK

You know analysis.

OPPENHEIMER

When I was a postgrad at Cambridge I had some trouble.

She turns to me.

TATLOCK

I'll bite.

OPPENHEIMER

I tried to poison my tutor.

TATLOCK

Did you hate him?

OPPENHEIMER

I liked him very much.

Tatlock turns back to the books.

TATLOCK

You just needed to get laid.

OPPENHEIMER

Wow. Took my analysts two years, and I'm not sure they ever put it that succinctly.

TATLOCK

You had them convinced you're more complicated than you really are.

OPPENHEIMER

We're all simple souls, I guess.

TATLOCK

Not me.

She pulls a book from the shelf: THE BHAGAVAD GITA. She opens the book to find INCOMPREHENSIBLE CHARACTERS.

TATLOCK

What's this?

OPPENHEIMER

Sanskrit.

TATLOCK

You can read this?

OPPENHEIMER

I'm learning -

She climbs on top of me, opens the book in my face.

TATLOCK

Go on, then.

I study the page as Tatlock starts to move.

OPPENHEIMER

In this part, Vishnu reveals his multi-armed self –

TATLOCK

Read the words.

She points to each word as I translate . . .

OPPENHEIMER

‘And now I am become Death . . .

She nods, impressed, starts moving again . . .

OPPENHEIMER

. . . destroyer of worlds.’

EXT. NEW MEXICO – DAY

Moving over the VAST landscape to find three tiny figures. I lead Lawrence and Frank on horseback up a mountain trail.

EXT. CAMPSITE – EVENING

THUNDER. Lawrence climbs off his horse. The wind WHIPS as we set up our tent . . .

OPPENHEIMER

It’ll break before dawn. The air cools overnight. Just before dawn, the storm dies.

INT./EXT. TENT – NIGHT

Lawrence, Frank and I huddle in the BUFFETING TENT, trying to keep a fire going in the WIND and RAIN outside the tent.

FRANK

I'm getting married.

LAWRENCE

Congratulations, Frank.

I look at Frank, sardonic with drink.

OPPENHEIMER

To Jackie?

Frank stares at me . . . the tent stops buffeting . . .

FRANK

Yeah, to Jackie. The waitress.

LAWRENCE

(sensing tension)

Oppie, you're right – it's letting up. I'll see if there's any stars.

Frank watches Lawrence go, then pounces –

FRANK

All your talk about the common man but Jackie's not good enough? We join the Party – you can't hide your disapproval – why? Because that's supposed to be *your* thing –?

OPPENHEIMER

I haven't joined the Party, Frank. And I don't think she should've convinced you to, either –

FRANK

Half the faculty's Communist –

OPPENHEIMER

Not that half.

I point in the direction Lawrence wandered off.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm your brother, and I want you to be cautious.

FRANK

And I want to wring your neck.

I giggle at this. Frank shakes his head, then starts laughing, too. I grab Frank's shoulder. Frank looks up . . .

FRANK

Robert, I won't live my life afraid to make a mistake.

I hold up my hands in defeat –

OPPENHEIMER

You're happy, I'm happy.

FRANK

Then I'm happy you're happy.

EXT. PERRO CALIENTE – MOMENTS LATER

I approach Lawrence, who stares up at the stars.

LAWRENCE

It's so clear I feel like I could see one of those dark stars you're working on . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You can't, that's the whole point.

INSERT CUT: AN EXPANDING DARKNESS EATS THE STARS . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Their gravity swallows light. It's like a kind of . . . hole in space.

LAWRENCE

Is Frank okay?

OPPENHEIMER

Yeah. He just has a shitty brother.

Lawrence smiles at this. Looks around them.

LAWRENCE

It's special here.

OPPENHEIMER

As a kid I thought if I could find a way to combine physics and New Mexico, my life would be perfect.

LAWRENCE

It's a little remote for that.

OPPENHEIMER

Let's get some sleep.

I turn, heading to the tent. Lawrence follows.

OPPENHEIMER

That mesa we saw today? One of my favorite places in the world. Tomorrow we'll climb it.

LAWRENCE

What's it called?

My response is so soft it is almost swallowed by the dark . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Los Alamos.

EXT. STREET, BERKELEY – DAY

Tatlock and I walk down the sidewalk. I try to take her hand – she folds her arms.

TATLOCK

I wasn't expecting to see you.

OPPENHEIMER

I have to make an appointment?

Across the street a young man BURSTS out of the BARBER SHOP, towel across chest, NEWSPAPER in hand . . . the barber runs out – the young man rips off the towel, TOSSES it to him and RUNS –

OPPENHEIMER

Alvarez!

I leave Tatlock on the sidewalk, take off after Alvarez –

EXT. BERKELEY CAMPUS – DAY

Alvarez SPRINTS, newspaper in hand – I follow –

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – CONTINUOUS

I BURST in – Lawrence is trying to calm Alvarez –

ALVAREZ

(breathless)

They've done it! Hahn and Strassman in Germany . . .

Alvarez tosses the paper at me –

ALVAREZ

They split the uranium nucleus.

LAWRENCE

How?

OPPENHEIMER

(reading)

Bombarded it with neutrons.

ALVAREZ

Lawrence, it's fission. *Nuclear* fission. They've split the atom . . .

OPPENHEIMER

It's not possible.

I put down the paper, take up my chalk like it's a weapon, move to the board. Alvarez grabs the paper –

ALVAREZ

I'm going to try to reproduce it.

Alvarez and Lawrence leave. I write and write . . .

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – LATER

Lawrence enters. I turn. Point at the board.

OPPENHEIMER

See. It can't be done.

LAWRENCE

Very elegant. Quite clear. Just one problem . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Where?

LAWRENCE

Next door. Alvarez did it.

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY — MOMENTS LATER

I peer at Alvarez's oscilloscope . . .

LAWRENCE

Theory will take you only so far.

I stand, moving away . . . thinking . . .

OPPENHEIMER

During the process extra neutrons boil off. Which could be used to split other uranium atoms . . .

LAWRENCE

A chain reaction. You're thinking what I'm thinking.

OPPENHEIMER

You, me and every physicist around the world who's seen the news.

ALVAREZ

What? What're we all thinking?

OPPENHEIMER

A bomb, Alvarez. A bomb.

EXT. TATLOCK HOUSE, BERKELEY — NIGHT

Tatlock GRABS a bouquet out of my hands —

TATLOCK

I told you, Robert, no more fucking flowers.

She dumps them in the trash. I just stare.

OPPENHEIMER

I don't understand what you want from me –

TATLOCK

I don't want *anything* from you.

I pause. Then, gently . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You say that. Then you call.

Tatlock kicks at the dirt.

TATLOCK

Don't answer.

OPPENHEIMER

I'll always answer.

She looks up at me.

TATLOCK

Fine. But no more flowers.

She goes inside –

OPPENHEIMER

Aren't you coming?

Slams the door shut behind her. I stand there.

CHEVALIER

(O.S.)

You have to know when you're beaten, Robert.

I turn. Chevalier and his wife, BARBARA, wait in the car.

OPPENHEIMER

It's not that simple, Haakon.

INT. MEETING HALL, BERKELEY – NIGHT

Chevalier and Barbara lead me into the crowded hall. A BANNER – ‘FEDERATION OF ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, CHEMISTS AND TECHNICIANS’.

A man with a British accent greets us. This is ELTENTON.

ELTENTON

Chevalier, good to see you. And the illustrious Dr Oppenheimer. I’m Eltenton. Might you say a word about organized labour on campuses?

OPPENHEIMER

I’ll try to think of something.

Eltenton guides me towards the stage . . .

ELTENTON

I work at Shell, we’ve signed up chemists *and* engineers . . .

OPPENHEIMER

That’s excellent.

I spot Lomanitz, who grins and waves . . .

ELTENTON

So why not scientists in academia?

OPPENHEIMER

Sure. When do we –

Eltenton pushes me onto the stage. People start APPLAUDING at the very sight of me. I can’t quite not smile about this.

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY – DAY

I watch Lawrence examine his cyclotron.

OPPENHEIMER

Teachers are unionized, Lawrence. Why not professors?

LAWRENCE

Don’t you have somewhere to be?

OPPENHEIMER

Academics have rights, too –

LAWRENCE

It's not that. I have a group coming.

OPPENHEIMER

I'll sit in.

LAWRENCE

Not this one.

The door opens. Richard TOLMAN and Vannevar BUSH enter –

OPPENHEIMER

Richard. Dr Bush. What brings you two up north?

They exchange glances with Lawrence. Awkward SILENCE. I rise, letting them off the hook –

OPPENHEIMER

Richard, tell Ruth I'll be down to Pasadena Thursday.

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – CONTINUOUS

As I enter, a magazine FLAPS into my hands from across the room. Students are all reading copies . . .

SERBER

Your paper on black holes – it's in!

I open the magazine as I turn to a STUDENT –

OPPENHEIMER

Get Hartland.

LOMANITZ

September 1st, 1939 – the world's gonna remember this day . . .

Snyder comes in with a newspaper. Glum.

OPPENHEIMER

Hartland, our paper, it's in print!

SNYDER

We've been upstaged.

He holds up the paper: 'HITLER INVADES POLAND'.

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

During the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

Robb looks on intently as I turn the page on my statement . . .

OPPENHEIMER

. . . I found myself increasingly out of sympathy with the policy of neutrality that Communists advocated.

ROBB

And after Hitler invaded Russia, did these Communist sympathies return?

OPPENHEIMER

No. If you'll just allow me to –

GRAY

Mr Robb, you'll have ample opportunity to cross-examine.

OPPENHEIMER

I need to make clear that my changing opinion of Russia did not mean a sharp break with those who held different views. For a year or two during a previous marriage my wife, Kitty, had been a Communist Party member.

Behind me, on a couch, is KITTY (forty-six), listening intently . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But when I first met her, in Pasadena in 1939, she had already disengaged from politics . . .

INT. HOUSE PARTY, TOLMAN HOUSE, PASADENA –
NIGHT

Kitty (thirty-one) watches as I EXPERTLY open the liquor cabinet –

OPPENHEIMER

This is where I keep the good stuff.

KITTY

I thought this was the Tolmans' house.

OPPENHEIMER

I live with them when I'm at Caltech.

RUTH

(O.S.)

You two need anything?

I turn to see RUTH TOLMAN (forty-five) looking at me, mischievous.

OPPENHEIMER

We're fine, Ruthie.

(to Kitty)

You're a biologist?

KITTY

Somehow I graduated to housewife. Can you explain quantum mechanics to me? It seems baffling.

OPPENHEIMER

It is. This glass –

I thump a glass onto the cabinet – pour a drink –

OPPENHEIMER

This drink –

I hand her the glass – fingers touching . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Our bodies . . . are mostly empty space – groupings of tiny energy waves bound together.

KITTY

By what?

OPPENHEIMER

Forces of attraction strong enough to convince us that matter is solid . . .

I push the palm of my hand up against hers.

OPPENHEIMER

And stop my body passing through yours.

Kitty pushes her fingers through mine, interlacing our hands.
I look at a GREY-HAIRED MAN in conversation with Tolman . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You're married to Dr Harrison.

KITTY

Not very.

OPPENHEIMER

Well, there's someone that I . . .

KITTY

Does she feel the same way?

OPPENHEIMER

Sometimes. Not often enough.

As Ruth looks our way I let Kitty's hand go.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm going to New Mexico, to my ranch. With friends. You should come.

Kitty looks meaningfully over her glass at me.

OPPENHEIMER

I meant with your husband.

KITTY

Yes, you did. Because you know it won't make a bit of difference.

EXT. PERRO CALIENTE – DAY

Kitty and I THUNDER along on horseback, climbing a ridge.
I shout ahead to Kitty –

OPPENHEIMER

Why did you marry him?!

Kitty pulls up. I come alongside.

KITTY

I was lost. He was kind.

OPPENHEIMER

Lost?

KITTY

My previous husband died. At twenty-eight I wasn't ready
to be a widow.

Kitty DISMOUNTS. I follow.

OPPENHEIMER

Who was your first husband?

KITTY

Nobody. But my *second* husband was Joe Dallet.
From money, like me, but he was a union organizer in
Youngstown, Ohio. I fell hard.

OPPENHEIMER

How hard?

KITTY

Hard enough to spend four years living off beans and
pancakes, handing out the *Daily Worker* at factory gates.

Kitty takes out a hip flask. SWIGS.

KITTY

By '36 I told Joe I couldn't take it anymore, quit the Party
and joined my parents swanning around Europe. A year
later I said I wanted him back. Him, not the *Daily Worker*.
He said 'Swell, I'll meet you on my way to Spain.'

She hands me the flask. I take a drink.

OPPENHEIMER

He went to fight for the loyalists?

KITTY

On his way we reconciled. One beautiful week in Paris.
Then he went to the brigades and I waited. One day Steve
Nelson turns up in the lobby of the hotel to tell me Joe got
himself killed first time he popped out of his trench.

OPPENHEIMER

Who's Steve Nelson?

KITTY

Head of the Communist Party in San Francisco. You don't
know him?

OPPENHEIMER

I'm not a Communist.

KITTY

You seem to know a lot of 'em.

OPPENHEIMER

Including you.

KITTY

(shakes head)

Ideology got Joe killed. For nothing.

OPPENHEIMER

The Spanish Republic isn't nothing.

KITTY

My husband offered both our futures to stop one fascist
bullet embedding itself in a mudbank. That's the *definition*
of nothing.

OPPENHEIMER

That seems a little reductive –

KITTY

Pragmatic. Steve and his wife brought me home with them to Chicago, then set me up with husband number three. Now here I am . . .

She looks around at the wilderness . . .

KITTY

Wherever the *hell* this is –

I grab her. Kiss her, hard.

INT. TATLOCK'S BEDROOM – DAY

Tatlock and I sit on the floor, backs to the bed like kids. Tatlock has been crying.

OPPENHEIMER

I didn't want you to hear it from someone else.

TATLOCK

You didn't bring flowers. That's something.

I reach into my pocket – she GRABS the small posy from me, TOSSING it aside.

OPPENHEIMER

Jean, we both know I'm not what you want.

TATLOCK

Yeah. But it's a door closing.

OPPENHEIMER

Not as far as I'm concerned.

Tatlock looks at me. Appreciating the sentiment.

TATLOCK

You knocked her up. Fast work.

OPPENHEIMER

Can't keep a good man down.

TATLOCK

I meant *her*. She knew what she wanted. What about the husband?

OPPENHEIMER

We spoke. He's divorcing her so we can get married before she's showing.

TATLOCK

How civilized, you idiot. This is your community – you think rules don't apply to the golden boy?

OPPENHEIMER

Brilliance makes up for a lot.

TATLOCK

Don't alienate the only people in the world who understand what you do. One day you might need them.

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY – DAY

I write 'F.A.E.C.T.' on the board, Lomanitz hands out FLIERS. Lawrence enters, GRABBING a flyer from the nearest student – 'UNIONIZE THE RADIATION LAB'.

LAWRENCE

Lomanitz? What do you make a month?

LOMANITZ

(sheepish)

A hundred and fifty dollars.

Lawrence turns to another student –

LAWRENCE

How are the working conditions?

OPPENHEIMER

That's not the point, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE

What do you have in common with dock workers and farm labourers?

LOMANITZ

Plenty –

LAWRENCE

Right. Everybody out. Now!
(to me)

Not you.

The students file out. Lawrence SLAMS the door – turns on me –

LAWRENCE

What're you doing?!

OPPENHEIMER

It's a trade union –

LAWRENCE

Full of Communists!

OPPENHEIMER

So? I haven't joined the Party –

LAWRENCE

They won't let me bring you onto the project because of this shit! They won't even let me tell you what the project *is* –

OPPENHEIMER

I know what the fucking project is, Lawrence! We all heard about Einstein and Szilard's letter to Roosevelt. Warning him the Germans could make a bomb. And *I* know what it means for the Nazis to have a bomb.

LAWRENCE

I don't?

OPPENHEIMER

It's not your people they're herding into camps! It's mine!

LAWRENCE

You think *I* tell them about your politics? Next time you're coming home from a meeting, take a look in the rear-view

mirror. Listen for sounds on your phone line. And stop being so goddamn naive.

I'm taken aback by this . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Why would they care what I do?

LAWRENCE

Because you're not just self-important, you're *actually* important.

I see the reality. Shift gears –

OPPENHEIMER

I get it. You don't have to worry. I get it.

LAWRENCE

You just need to be more –

OPPENHEIMER

Pragmatic. It's done, Lawrence. I'll talk to Lomanitz and the others. You don't have to worry.

Lawrence looks at me. Sees this is real.

LAWRENCE

Then welcome to the war.

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

I filled out my first security questionnaire . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I glance up from my notes.

OPPENHEIMER

. . . and was informed that my involvement in left-wing groups would not prove a bar to my work on the atomic programme.

SENATOR PASTORE
(V.O.)

Why were his Communist associations not seen as a security risk during the war?

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

Strauss suppresses his irritation at the line of questioning.

STRAUSS

Senator, I can't possibly answer for a security clearance granted years before I even met the man.

SENATOR PASTORE

Fine. What about after?

STRAUSS

After the war, Dr Oppenheimer was the most respected scientific voice in the world. That's why I asked him to run the Institute, that's why he advised the Atomic Energy Commission. Simple as that.

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY (B&W)

Strauss paces -

STRAUSS

What are they accusing me of?

SENATE AIDE

I think they just want to know what happened between 1947 and 1954 to change your mind on Oppenheimer's security clearance.

STRAUSS

I didn't. I was the AEC Chairman, but it wasn't me who brought the charges against Robert.

SENATE AIDE

Who did?

STRAUSS

Some former staff member of the Joint Congressional Committee –

INSERT CUT: A YOUNG MAN LEAFS THROUGH A FILE, COLLECTING HIS THOUGHTS . . . THIS IS WILLIAM BORDEN . . . HE STARTS TYPING . . .

STRAUSS

A rabid anti-Communist named Borden. He wrote to the FBI demanding they take action.

SENATE AIDE

The FBI? Why not come to the AEC direct?

STRAUSS

Why get caught holding the knife yourself?

SENATE AIDE

What did Borden have against Oppenheimer?

STRAUSS

This was the McCarthy era – people hounded out of jobs for any hint of red . . . reading Oppenheimer's security file – his Communist brother, sister-in-law, fiancée, best friend, wife . . . that's before you even get to the Chevalier incident.

SENATE AIDE

But how would Borden have access to Oppenheimer's security file?

STRAUSS

Someone gave it to him. Someone who wanted Oppenheimer silenced.

SENATE AIDE

Who?

SCHLESINGER

Who knows? Robert didn't take care not to upset the power brokers in Washington. His opinions on the atom became definitive and he wasn't always patient with us mere mortals. I came in for plenty of harsh treatment. There was an AEC vote on the export of isotopes to Norway . . .

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM - DAY (B&W)

Oppenheimer sits at the witness table with Joe VOLPE, the AEC lawyer. Strauss is in the audience.

SCHLESINGER

(V.O.)

They drafted in Robert to make me look a fool . . .

CONGRESSMAN

But, Dr Oppenheimer, one member of the AEC board thinks these isotopes could be useful to our enemies in the production of atomic weapons.

OPPENHEIMER

Congressman, you could use a shovel in making atomic weapons, in fact, you do. You could use a bottle of beer in making atomic weapons. In fact, you do.

LAUGHTER. Strauss squirms, embarrassed.

OPPENHEIMER

Isotopes aren't as useful as electronic components, but more useful than a sandwich. I'd put them somewhere in between.

Volpe looks at Strauss, who SMILES, GOOD-HUMOURED . . .

SCHLESINGER

(V.O.)

Genius is no guarantee of wisdom. How could this man who saw so much be so blind?

Cut to:

INT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, BERKELEY – NIGHT
(COLOUR)

I come in. The lights are off. A BABY'S CRIES echo . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Kitty?

She is in the dining room, in the dark, drink in hand.

OPPENHEIMER

Kitty, the project – I'm in.

She sips. SLIDES her drink down the table at me –

KITTY

Let's celebrate.

As the baby CRIES, Kitty comes to me, pulling at my clothes –

OPPENHEIMER

Don't you need to go to him?

KITTY

I've been going to him all fucking day . . .

She moves to kiss my neck – I look upstairs – she PUSHES me away – GRABS her drink . . .

EXT./INT. CHEVALIER HOUSE – NIGHT

I carry the crying infant, PETER, to the front door. Knock. Barbara opens it – sees my distraught face and takes Peter.

INT. LIVING ROOM, CHEVALIER HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

Chevalier hands me a drink. I stare into the liquid.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm ashamed to ask.

CHEVALIER

Anything.

OPPENHEIMER

Take Peter.

CHEVALIER

Sure.

OPPENHEIMER

No, for a while, Hoke. A *while*.

CHEVALIER

Does Kitty know you're here?

OPPENHEIMER

(I laugh)

Of course she fucking knows! We're awful. Selfish, awful people . . .

(I down drink)

Forget I asked –

Chevalier puts out a hand to stop me rising . . .

CHEVALIER

Robert, you see *beyond* the world we live in. There's a price to be paid for that. Of course we'll help.

EXT. NEW MEXICO – EVENING

Kitty and I GALLOP through the trees, EMERGING into the twilight overlooking a valley. Kitty turns to the wind.

KITTY

Everything's changing, Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

Having a child was always –

KITTY

(impatient)

The world is pivoting in some new direction . . . reforming . . . this is your moment.

OPPENHEIMER

We're putting together a group to study feasibility –

KITTY

‘We’ shouldn’t be doing anything. *You* should. Lawrence won’t get this done. Or Tolman, or Rabi. *You* will.

INT. PRESIDENT’S DINING HALL, BERKELEY – DAY

A crowded and lavish lunch. I notice a large man in ARMY UNIFORM, Colonel GROVES, sitting next to another soldier (NICHOLS) with Bush and Tolman. I sidle up to Lawrence at the buffet.

OPPENHEIMER

Who’s the uniform?

The husky GROVES spills sauce on his tunic, wipes at it.

LAWRENCE

I thought you might know.

INT. CLASSROOM, BERKELEY – AFTERNOON

I am working. Groves and Lieutenant Colonel NICHOLS enter.

GROVES

Dr Oppenheimer. I’m Colonel Groves, this is Lieutenant Colonel Nichols.

Groves pulls off his uniform jacket, TOSSES it to Nichols.

GROVES

Get that dry-cleaned.

I watch Nichols leave.

OPPENHEIMER

If that’s how you treat a lieutenant colonel, I’d hate to see how you treat a humble physicist.

GROVES

If I ever meet one I’ll let you know.

OPPENHEIMER

Ouch.

GROVES

Theatres of combat all over the world – but I have to stay in Washington.

OPPENHEIMER

Why?

GROVES

I built the Pentagon. The brass likes it so much they made me take over the Manhattan Engineer District.

OPPENHEIMER

Which is?

GROVES

Don't be a smart-ass. You know damn well what it is – you and half of every physics department across America. That's problem number one.

OPPENHEIMER

I thought problem number one would be securing enough uranium ore.

GROVES

Twelve hundred tons. Bought the day I took charge.

OPPENHEIMER

Processing?

GROVES

Just broke ground at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Now I'm looking for a project director.

OPPENHEIMER

And my name came up.

GROVES

Nope. Even though you brought quantum physics to America. That made me curious.

OPPENHEIMER

What have you found out?

GROVES

You're a dilettante, womanizer, suspected Communist –

OPPENHEIMER

I'm a New Deal Democrat –

GROVES

I said 'suspected'. Unstable, theatrical, egotistical, neurotic.

OPPENHEIMER

Nothing good? Not even 'he's brilliant, but' . . . ?

GROVES

Brilliance is taken for granted in your circles. So, no. Only one person said anything good – Richard Tolman. He thinks you've got integrity. But Tolman strikes me as someone who knows science better than people.

OPPENHEIMER

Yet here you are. You don't take much on trust.

GROVES

I don't take anything on trust. Why don't you have a Nobel Prize?

OPPENHEIMER

Why aren't you a general?

GROVES

They're making me one for this.

OPPENHEIMER

Maybe I'll have the same luck.

GROVES

A Nobel Prize for making a bomb?

OPPENHEIMER

Alfred Nobel invented dynamite.

GROVES

So how would you proceed?

OPPENHEIMER

You're talking about turning theory into a practical weapons system faster than the Nazis.

GROVES

Who have a twelve-month head start.

OPPENHEIMER

Eighteen.

GROVES

How could you possibly know that?

OPPENHEIMER

Our fast neutron research took six months – the man they've undoubtedly put in charge will have made that leap instantly.

GROVES

Who do you think they put in charge?

OPPENHEIMER

Werner Heisenberg. He has the most intuitive understanding of atomic structure I've ever seen.

GROVES

You know his work?

OPPENHEIMER

I know *him*. Just like I know Walther Bothe. Von Weizsäcker. Diebner. In a straight race, the Germans win. We've got one hope.

GROVES

Which is?

OPPENHEIMER

Anti-Semitism.

GROVES

What?

OPPENHEIMER

Hitler called quantum physics 'Jewish science'. Said it right to Einstein's face. Our one hope is that Hitler's so blinded by hate he's denied Heisenberg proper resources. Because it'll take *vast* resources. Our nation's best scientists, working together – right now they're scattered.

GROVES

Which gives us compartmentalization.

OPPENHEIMER

All minds have to see the whole task to contribute efficiently. Poor security *may* cost us the race, inefficiency *will*. The Germans know more than us, anyway.

GROVES

The Russians don't.

OPPENHEIMER

Remind me – who are we at war with?

GROVES

Someone with your past doesn't want to be seen downplaying the importance of security from our Communist allies.

OPPENHEIMER

Point taken. But no.

GROVES

You don't get to say 'no' to me –

OPPENHEIMER

It's my job to say 'no' to you when you're wrong –

GROVES

So you've got the job, now?

OPPENHEIMER

I'm considering it.

GROVES

I'm starting to see how you got your reputation. My favorite response? 'Oppenheimer couldn't run a hamburger stand.'

OPPENHEIMER

I couldn't. But I can run the Manhattan Project.

I turn to the blackboard. Take up my chalk.

OPPENHEIMER

There's a way to balance these things . . .

(I draw)

Leave the Rad Lab here at Berkeley under Lawrence, Met Lab in Chicago under Szilard, large-scale refining – where'd you say? Tennessee . . . all America's industrial might and scientific innovation, connected by rail . . . focused on one goal, one point in space and time, coming together . . . *here*.

I have drawn a cross at the centre of the diagram.

GROVES

And where's that?

INSERT CUT: A BARBED-WIRE FENCE IS STRUNG OUT . . .

OPPENHEIMER

A secret labouratory. In the middle of nowhere. Self-sufficient. Secure. Equipment, housing, the works. We keep everyone there till it's done.

INSERT CUT: A SCHOOLHOUSE IS ERECTED. A CHURCH. A STORE . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

It'll need a school, stores, a church . . .

INT. TRAIN, BERKELEY TO WASHINGTON, DC – DAY

I talk to Groves as Nichols looks on . . .

GROVES

Why?

OPPENHEIMER

If we don't let scientists bring their families, we'll never get the best. You want security? Build a town, and build it fast.

GROVES

Where?

EXT. CAR, LOS ALAMOS – CONTINUOUS

Groves emerges, squinting into the brightness, taking in the stark beauty. I greet him, arms spread wide.

OPPENHEIMER

Welcome to Los Alamos. There's a boys' school we'll have to commandeer, and the local Indians come up here for burial rites. Other than that, nothing for forty miles any direction. And south-east, hundreds of miles of desert. Enough to find the perfect spot.

GROVES

For?

OPPENHEIMER

Success.

Groves scans the horizon. Sniffs the air . . . turns to Nichols.

GROVES

Build him a town. Fast.

(to Oppenheimer)

Let's go recruit some scientists.

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO BOSTON – NIGHT

I watch Groves go over a file.

OPPENHEIMER

How much can I tell them?

GROVES

(without looking up)

As much as you like, till you feel my boot on your balls.

INT. LECTURE HALL, HARVARD – DAY

Groves and I sit talking to BAINBRIDGE and DONALD.

BAINBRIDGE

I'm not a soldier, Oppie.

OPPENHEIMER

Soldier? He's a general –

(jab my thumb at Groves)

I got all the soldier I need. Maybe too much. I'm here
because you know isotopes, and you –

(to Donald)

know explosives better than anyone.

DONALD

But you can't tell us what you're doing?

I glance at Groves. Then CROSS my legs.

OPPENHEIMER

It's about unleashing the strong force before the Nazis do.

BAINBRIDGE

Oh my God.

INT. CORRIDOR, MIT – DAY

Groves and I walk with CONDON.

CONDON

Why? Why would I leave my family?

OPPENHEIMER

I told you, bring your family.

CONDON

Why would we go to the middle of nowhere for who knows how long?

OPPENHEIMER

A year or two. Or three.

CONDON

Why would you think I'd do that?

Groves SNAPS like a bulldog –

GROVES

Why? Why? How about because this is the most important fucking thing that's ever happened in the history of the world? How about that?

I look at Groves, then SHRUG at Condon.

INT. OFFICE, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN – NIGHT

Groves and I sit across the desk from a CONCERNED SCIENTIST.

CONCERNED SCIENTIST

Robert, I hear you. I hear you.

Concerned Scientist GLANCES at Groves then DROPS his gaze.

OPPENHEIMER

General, could you give us a minute?

Groves looks at me. Gets up and goes.

CONCERNED SCIENTIST

They're not gonna let someone like me onto this project. And failing a security check isn't gonna be good for a career even after the war.

OPPENHEIMER

So you're a fellow traveler, so what? This is a national emergency. I've got some skeletons, and they've put me in charge. They need us.

CONCERNED SCIENTIST

Until they don't.

INT. QUADRANGLE, PRINCETON - DAY

Groves and I flank FEYNMAN as he hurries across the quad -

OPPENHEIMER

Heisenberg, Diebner, Bothe, Bohr . . . what do these men have in common?

FEYNMAN

The greatest minds on atomic theory.

OPPENHEIMER

And?

FEYNMAN

I don't know . . .

OPPENHEIMER

The Nazis have them.

FEYNMAN

Niels Bohr is in Copenhagen.

OPPENHEIMER

Under Nazi occupation. Did they stop printing newspapers in Princeton?

FEYNMAN

Niels won't work for the Nazis.

OPPENHEIMER

No. Never. But while *they* have him, *we* don't. So I need you.

INT. TRAIN, PRINCETON TO SANTA FE - NIGHT

Groves is napping. I just start talking.

OPPENHEIMER

Is there any chance of getting Bohr out of Denmark?

GROVES

No dice. I checked with the British. Until we get Allied boots back onto the continent there's no way. Is he that important?

INSERT CUT: BOHR GESTICULATES WITH THE POISONED APPLE.

OPPENHEIMER

How many people do you know who've proven Einstein wrong?

The train BUMPS. I look out the window, impatient.

OPPENHEIMER

It'd be quicker to take a plane.

GROVES

We can't risk a plane. America needs us.

EXT. LOS ALAMOS UNDER CONSTRUCTION – DAY

Dressed in ARMY UNIFORM, I show Rabi and Condon the CHAOTIC SNOWY and MUDDY mesa. CONSTRUCTION CREWS at work. Feynman approaches –

FEYNMAN

The Harvard guys say the building's too small for their cyclotron.

OPPENHEIMER

(to Condon)

Get 'em together with the architects.

Condon hurries off with Feynman. Rabi turns to me.

RABI

When's this place supposed to open?

OPPENHEIMER

Two months.

RABI
(shakes head)

Robert, you're the great improviser, but *this* you can't do
in your head . . .

INT. CONSTRUCTION CABIN, LOS ALAMOS – MOMENTS
LATER

I draw on the board.

OPPENHEIMER

Four divisions – Experimental, Theoretical, Metallurgical,
Ordnance.

RABI

Who's running Theoretical?

OPPENHEIMER

I am.

RABI

That's what I was afraid of. You're spread too thin.

OPPENHEIMER

So *you* take Theoretical.

RABI

I'm not coming here, Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

Why not?

Rabi, seldom at a loss for words, is lost for words . . .

RABI

You drop a bomb and it falls on the just and the unjust.
I don't wish the culmination of three centuries of physics
to be a weapon of mass destruction.

OPPENHEIMER

Izzy, I don't know if we can be trusted with such a weapon,
but I know the Nazis can't. We have no choice.

RABI

Well, the second thing you have to do is appoint Hans Bethe to head the Theoretical division.

OPPENHEIMER

Wait, what was the first?

RABI

Take off that ridiculous uniform – you're a scientist.

OPPENHEIMER

General Groves is insisting we join.

RABI

Tell Groves to shit in his hat. They need us for who we are. So be yourself, only . . . better.

INT. OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I pull on a jacket. Run a hand through newly shorn close-cropped dark hair. Put on a PORK PIE HAT. Pick up my pipe . . .

EXT. LOS ALAMOS UNDER CONSTRUCTION – MOMENTS LATER

I walk the main drag like a SHERIFF, nodding at construction workers as I pass . . . THE ICONIC J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER.

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY – DAY

I look down onto the bustle of students. Lomanitz looks up and waves – then is ERASED by WHITEWASH as workers COVER the windows . . . Serber hands me a key.

SERBER

This is the only key. Teller's here already. Shall I show him in?

OPPENHEIMER

No, wait for the others –

The door BURSTS OPEN and a stooped, slightly heavy young man shuffles in. This is EDWARD TELLER.

TELLER

Let's get started.

OPPENHEIMER

Hello, Edward.

INT. SAME - DAY

I sit at the front, one long leg tucked under my ass. The scientists include Lawrence, Serber, Teller, BETHE, Condon, Tolman, Feynman, Donald, Bainbridge, NEDDERMEYER and Alvarez.

OPPENHEIMER

We'll work here until the T-section at Los Alamos is finished -

I see Teller waving a piece of paper -

OPPENHEIMER

Edward, can I get through my summary?

TELLER

This is more important.

Teller's paper is passed around the room, scientists PALING . . .

TELLER

Calculating chain reactions . . . I found a rather troubling possibility.

Hans Bethe hands me the paper, turns to Teller.

BETHE

That can't be right. Show me how you did your calculations.

TELLER

Of course.

I look up from the paper, grave. Teller watches the ruckus he's caused with evident satisfaction. Bethe approaches.

BETHE

Oppie, this is fantasy. Teller's calculations cannot be right.

OPPENHEIMER

Do them yourself while I go to Princeton.

BETHE

What for?

OPPENHEIMER

To talk to Einstein.

BETHE

There's not much common ground between you two.

OPPENHEIMER

That's why I should get his view.

EXT. WOODS, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY – DAY

I walk through the trees, gaining on two figures. The two men turn. One them is Einstein.

EINSTEIN

Dr Oppenheimer. Have you met Kurt Gödel? We walk here most days.

GÖDEL

Trees are the most inspiring structures.

OPPENHEIMER

Albert, might I have a word?

Einstein senses the gravity. Nods. They leave Gödel staring up at the bare trees.

EINSTEIN

Some days Kurt refuses to eat. Even in Princeton, he's convinced the Nazis can poison his food.

EXT. LAKE, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY –
MOMENTS LATER

Einstein and I emerge from the trees. I pull a piece of paper from my breast pocket. Einstein takes it.

EINSTEIN

Who's work is this?

OPPENHEIMER

Teller.

EINSTEIN

And what do you take it to mean?

OPPENHEIMER

Neutron smashes into nucleus releasing neutrons to smash into other nuclei . . .

INSERT CUT: DARKNESS SPLIT BY GLOWING PARTICLES FIRING INTO EACH OTHER IN AN INCREASINGLY VIOLENT DISPLAY . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Criticality – the point of no return – massive explosive force . . . but the chain reaction *doesn't stop* . . .

Einstein studies the paper . . . he nods.

EINSTEIN

It would ignite the atmosphere.

The air around us CATCHES FIRE . . . THE PLANET EARTH, LONELY IN VAST DARKNESS, IS SUDDENLY ENGULFED IN FIRE.

OPPENHEIMER

When we detonate an atomic device, we might start a chain reaction that destroys the world.

EINSTEIN

And here we are, lost in your quantum world of probabilities, but needing certainty.

OPPENHEIMER

Can you run the calculations yourself?

EINSTEIN

About the only thing you and I share is a disdain for mathematics. Who's working on it at Berkeley?

OPPENHEIMER

Hans Bethe.

OPPENHEIMER

He'll get to the truth.

EINSTEIN

And if the truth is catastrophic?

EINSTEIN

Then you stop. And share your findings with the Nazis, so neither side destroys the world.

I turn to leave.

EINSTEIN

Robert?

(holding out paper)

This is yours. Not mine.

INT. CORRIDOR, BERKELEY - DAY

I come past the secretaries. Bethe is there, excited.

BETHE

Teller's wrong -

I gesture SILENCE as I unlock the Rad Lab -

INT. RAD LAB, BERKELEY - CONTINUOUS

Bethe runs to the cabinet - takes out some papers - hands them to me, excited. I start to scan them, GRINNING -

BETHE

When you narrow Teller's critical assumptions the real picture emerges -

OPPENHEIMER

Bottom line?

BETHE

The chances of an uncontrolled nuclear reaction are near zero.

OPPENHEIMER

Near zero?

BETHE

Oppie, this is good news –

OPPENHEIMER

Can you run more calculations?

BETHE

You'll get the same answer. Until we actually detonate one of these things, the best assurance you're going to get is this –

(jabs paper)

Near zero.

OPPENHEIMER

Theory will take you only so far.

INT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, BERKELEY – NIGHT

Kitty opens the door to the Chevaliers, finger to her lips – I am holding the sleeping Peter.

BARBARA

(whispering)

So beautiful. We miss him.

KITTY

Want to adopt?

OPPENHEIMER

She's kidding.

Kitty shakes her head, 'not kidding'. Barbara takes Peter. I lead Chevalier to the kitchen . . .

OPPENHEIMER

We wanted to see you before we left.

CHEVALIER

For parts unknown . . .

INT. KITCHEN, OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, BERKELEY –
CONTINUOUS

I mix a tray of martinis. Chevalier watches, distracted.

CHEVALIER

You know who I ran into the other day? Eltenton.

OPPENHEIMER

The chemist from Shell? Union guy?

CHEVALIER

Yeah. He was moaning about the way we're handling the war.

OPPENHEIMER

How so?

CHEVALIER

Lack of cooperation with our allies. Apparently, our government isn't sharing any research with the Russians. He said a lot of scientists think the policy's stupid.

My hands SLOW . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Oh, yeah?

CHEVALIER

Yeah. He mentioned that if anyone had information they wanted to pass on, going around official channels, he could help . . .

I look up at Chevalier. Grave.

OPPENHEIMER

That would be treason.

CHEVALIER

Yes, of course. I just thought you should know.

We STARE at each other . . . BANG – Kitty barges in.

KITTY

Brat's down – where are the martinis?

She sees us having a moment . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

The discussion ended there.

I pick up the tray.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

OPPENHEIMER

Nothing in our long-standing friendship would have led me to believe that Chevalier was actually seeking information; and I was certain he had no idea of the work on which I was engaged.

I steal a glance at Robb, then look directly at the board –

OPPENHEIMER

It has long been clear to me that I should have reported this incident at once.

SENATOR MCGEE

(V.O.)

The Oppenheimer situation highlights the tension between scientists and the security apparatus . . .

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM – DAY
(B&W)

Strauss is at the witness table facing the Senate Committee.

SENATOR MCGEE

In hopes of learning how the nominee handled such issues during his time at the AEC, we'll have a scientist appearing before the Committee.

STRAUSS

(private)

Who're they bringing in?

COUNSEL

(private)

They haven't said.

STRAUSS

Mr Chairman, if I may? I'm nominated for Commerce Secretary. Why seek the opinion of scientists -

CHAIRMAN

This is a Cabinet post, Admiral. We seek a wide range of opinion.

STRAUSS

I'd like to know the name of the scientist testifying. And I'd like the chance to cross-examine.

CHAIRMAN

(irritated)

This is not a court.

INT. SENATE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER (B&W)

The Senate Aide shows Strauss and Counsel in.

COUNSEL

Lewis, you're not on trial -

STRAUSS

So everyone keeps saying.

COUNSEL

You act like a defence attorney, the Committee's gonna act like a prosecutor.

STRAUSS

(to Senate Aide)

A formality, huh?

SENATE AIDE

No Presidential Cabinet nominee has failed to be confirmed since 1925. This is just how the game is played.

COUNSEL

It's in the bag, Lewis, so play nice. They bring in a scientist, so what?

Strauss gives a wry smile. Remembers –

INSERT CUT: STRAUSS APPROACHES EINSTEIN AND OPPENHEIMER – EINSTEIN BLOWS PAST WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING STRAUSS . . .

STRAUSS

You don't know scientists like I do, counselor. They resent anyone who questions their judgement – especially if you're not one of them . . .

INSERT CUT: STRAUSS STARES – THE CROWD AT THE ISOTOPES HEARING LAUGHS . . .

STRAUSS

I was chair of the AEC – I'm easy to blame for what happened to Robert.

SENATE AIDE

We can't let the Senate think that the scientific community doesn't support you.

STRAUSS

Should we pivot?

SENATE AIDE

To what?

STRAUSS

Embrace it. 'I fought Oppenheimer and the US won'?

SENATE AIDE

I don't think we need to go there. Isn't there anyone we can call who knows what really happened?

STRAUSS

Teller.

SENATE AIDE

He'll make an impression.

STRAUSS

Can you find out the name of the scientist they've called?

SENATE AIDE

Probably.

STRAUSS

(to Counsel)

We get that name - you call the AEC, find out if he was based in Chicago or Los Alamos during the war.

SENATE AIDE

Why's that matter?

STRAUSS

If he was in Chicago he worked under Szilard and Fermi, not the cult of Oppie at Los Alamos. Robert built that damn place - he was founder, mayor, sheriff all rolled into one . . .

Cut to:

INT./EXT. CAR DRIVING THROUGH LOS ALAMOS - DAY
(COLOUR)

I DRIVE Kitty and Peter through the 'town' . . . Kitty STARES at the newly built BASIC WOODEN STRUCTURES . . .

KITTY

All it needs is a saloon.

INT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I stand in the hall, holding Peter, NERVOUS, as Kitty inspects the house . . . she pokes her head back in –

KITTY

Robert. There's no kitchen.

OPPENHEIMER

Really? We'll fix that. Don't worry.

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I walk Bethe through the security gate.

BETHE

Barbed wire. Guns, Oppie.

OPPENHEIMER

We're at war, Hans.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I step up to join Serber – throw up a slide. Condon, Neddermeyer, Kistiakowsky, Donald, Tolman, Bainbridge and Feynman, amongst other SCIENTISTS, are in attendance.

OPPENHEIMER

Halifax, 1917. A cargo ship carrying munitions exploded in the harbor . . .

INSERT CUT: WOOD AND CONCRETE FRAGMENTS AND FLIES . . .

OPPENHEIMER

A vast and sudden chemical reaction . . .

INSERT CUT: A SHOCKWAVE DRIFTS ACROSS THE TOPS OF THE CHOPPY WATER . . .

OPPENHEIMER

The biggest man-made explosion in history. Let's calculate how much more destructive it would have been with a

nuclear, not chemical, reaction. Expressing power in terms of tons of TNT –

BETHE

But it'll be thousands.

OPPENHEIMER

Then, *kilotons*.

I switch the lights on, step down to let Serber –

SERBER

Using U-235, the bomb –

He sees me wave.

SERBER

Sorry – the *gadget* will need a thirty-three-pound sphere, about this size . . .

Serber reaches below the table, brings up a GOLDFISH BOWL –

SERBER

Or using plutonium, a ten-pound sphere . . .

He puts a large BRANDY GLASS next to the aquarium.

SERBER

Here's the amount of uranium Oak Ridge refined all of last month.

Serber drops THREE MARBLES into the bowl. The scientists stare at the almost-empty goldfish bowl.

SERBER

The Hanford plant made this much plutonium . . .

He drops TWO MARBLES into the brandy glass.

SERBER

If we can enrich these amounts . . . we need a way to detonate them.

Teller is at the back folding a paper plane.

OPPENHEIMER

Are we boring you, Edward?

TELLER

(without looking up)

Yes.

OPPENHEIMER

May I ask why?

TELLER

We came *into* this room knowing a fission bomb was possible. Let's leave it with something new.

OPPENHEIMER

Such as?

TELLER

A 'super' atomic bomb. Instead of uranium, or plutonium, we use hydrogen.

MURMURS of dissent –

TELLER

(shutting them down)

Heavy hydrogen – deuterium. We compact the atoms together under great force and induce a *fusion* reaction. Not kilotons . . . *megatons*.

A HUBBUB develops – I process quickly, then –

OPPENHEIMER

Hang on. How do you generate enough force to fuse hydrogen atoms?

Teller smiles a self-satisfied smile.

TELLER

A small fission bomb.

GROANS all around . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Well, since you're going to need one, anyway . . . can we get back to the business at hand?

Teller SHRUGS.

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

SENATOR BARTLETT

Mr Strauss, the isotopes issue wasn't your most important policy disagreement with Dr Oppenheimer. It was the Hydrogen bomb, wasn't it?

STRAUSS

We did disagree about the need for an H-bomb programme.

SENATOR BARTLETT

Tell us how that came to pass.

As Strauss REMEMBERS we hear a SIREN and we -

Cut to:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT (B&W)

Strauss is in a car, barrelling along behind a POLICE ESCORT -

INT. HOTEL, NEW YORK - NIGHT (B&W)

Strauss and his ASSISTANT rush down the corridor to a door -

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT (B&W)

Strauss enters - a table surrounded by AEC members - Oppenheimer is slouched at the table, pipe blazing, Bush presides . . . Strauss removes his overcoat, revealing a tuxedo . . .

STRAUSS

What do we know?

BUSH

One of our B-29s over the north Pacific picked up radiation.

Rabi uses a compass to indicate an area on the map . . .

STRAUSS

Do you have the filter papers?

OPPENHEIMER

There's no doubt what this is.

STRAUSS

The White House says there's doubt.

Oppenheimer begrudgingly slides them over to Strauss.

BUSH

Wishful thinking, I'm afraid.

OPPENHEIMER

It's an atomic test.

STRAUSS

The Soviets have a bomb? We're supposed to be years ahead of them. What were you guys doing at Los Alamos? Wasn't the security tight?

OPPENHEIMER

Of course it was — you weren't there, Lewis.

NICHOLS

(O.S.)

Forgive me, doctor . . .

Strauss leans around the FLOWERS in the centre of the table to see who is speaking — Nichols, now a civilian.

But I was there.

Cut to:

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY (COLOUR)

Condon, Nichols and I watch cars pull up. Groves emerges.

OPPENHEIMER

Welcome back.

GROVES

Progress?

INSERT CUT: MARBLES DROP INTO THE GOLDFISH BOWL.

OPPENHEIMER

It's nice to see you, too.

GROVES

Meet the British contingent.

SCIENTISTS emerge. A THIN YOUNG MAN offers his hand –

FUCHS

(German accent)

Dr Oppenheimer, Klaus Fuchs.

OPPENHEIMER

How long have *you* been British?

FUCHS

Since Hitler told me I wasn't German.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

Bethe, Teller, Condon, Kistiakowsky, Donald, Bainbridge, Fuchs and Feynman and other scientists listen to –

SERBER

I call it 'shooting' – we fire a chunk of fissionable material into the larger sphere with enough force to achieve criticality.

INSERT CUT: A URANIUM 'BULLET' IS FIRED INTO A SPHERE –

TOLMAN

I've been thinking about implosion. Explosives around the sphere blast inwards, crushing the material.

INSERT CUT: A SPHERICAL ARRAY OF EXPLOSIVES BLASTS INWARD –

NEDDERMEYER

I'd like to investigate that idea.

OPPENHEIMER

I'll talk to the Ordinance division – we'll get you blowing things up . . .

EXT. 'MAIN STREET', LOS ALAMOS – DAY

Condon, Nichols and I show Groves the GROWING TOWN . . .

OPPENHEIMER

School's up and running. I thought of a way to reduce support staff . . .

I open the door to the cabin containing my office –

INT. OUTER OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Groves notices the YOUNG WOMAN working behind the desk –

INT. OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE, LOS ALAMOS – CONTINUOUS

I slump into my chair. Groves is perplexed –

GROVES

Is that . . . ?

OPPENHEIMER

Mrs Serber. I've offered jobs to all the wives. Admin, librarians, computation. We cut down on staff and keep families together.

GROVES

Are these women qualified?

OPPENHEIMER

Don't be absurd. These are some of the brightest minds in our community.

CONDON

And they're already security cleared.

NICHOLS

I've informed General Groves you've been holding cross-divisional open discussions –

GROVES

Shut 'em down. Compartmentalization is the key to maintaining security –

NICHOLS

It's only the top men.

CONDON

Who, presumably, communicate with subordinates.

OPPENHEIMER

These men aren't stupid, they can be discreet.

GROVES

I don't like it.

OPPENHEIMER

You don't like anything enough for that to be a fair test.

Groves shrugs. Gets up to leave. Nichols rolls his eyes.

GROVES

Once a week. Top men only.

OPPENHEIMER

I'd like to bring my brother here.

GROVES

No.

Groves and Condon leave – I corner Nichols –

OPPENHEIMER

I still haven't heard that my security clearance has been approved.

NICHOLS

It hasn't.

OPPENHEIMER

We're going to Chicago tomorrow -

NICHOLS

You should wait.

OPPENHEIMER

You're aware that the Nazis have a two-year head start?

NICHOLS

Dr Oppenheimer, the fact that your security clearance is proving difficult to obtain is not my fault. It's yours.

OPPENHEIMER

It may not be your fault, but it's your problem. Because I'm going.

Cut to:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT (B&W)

Strauss reaches to the centre of the table to move the flowers from between him and Nichols -

STRAUSS

How many people were in the open discussions?

NICHOLS

Too many. Compartmentalization was supposed to be the protocol.

OPPENHEIMER

We were in a race against the Nazis -

STRAUSS

Well, now the race is against the Soviets.

OPPENHEIMER

Only if we start it.

Strauss holds up the filter papers.

STRAUSS

Robert, they just fired the starting gun. What's the nature of the device they detonated?

OPPENHEIMER

The data indicates it may have been a plutonium implosion device.

STRAUSS

Like the one you built at Los Alamos?

Oppenheimer nods reluctantly . . .

STRAUSS

If the Soviets have a bomb, Truman needs to know what's next.

Bush nods. Oppenheimer looks incredulous -

OPPENHEIMER

What's next? Arms talks. Obviously.

STRAUSS

(to Bush)

What about the Super? Does Truman even know about it?

BUSH

Not specifically.

OPPENHEIMER

We still don't know if a Hydrogen bomb is technically feasible.

STRAUSS

My understanding is that Teller first proposed it at Los Alamos.

OPPENHEIMER

His designs have always been wildly impractical. You'd have to deliver by ox-cart not airplane.

STRAUSS

If it could put us ahead again, Truman needs to know about it. And if there's a possibility that the Russians know about it from a spy at Los Alamos . . . we've gotta get going.

OPPENHEIMER

There's no proof there was a spy at Los Alamos.

Strauss holds up the filter papers, raises his eyebrows . . .

Cut to:

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM, CHICAGO – DAY (COLOUR)

Condon and I are led across the field by J. Ernest WILKINS . . .

CONDON

They put it under the football stadium?

WILKINS

The field's not in use, anymore.

OPPENHEIMER

Just as well.

INT. ATOMIC PILE, UNDERNEATH THE STADIUM,
CHICAGO – DAY

Wilkins shows us to SZILARD and FERMI. A scientist with GLASSES takes notes. The group approaches the atomic pile . . .

FERMI

I hear you've got a little town.

OPPENHEIMER

Come and see.

SZILARD

Who could think straight in a place like that? Everybody will go crazy.

OPPENHEIMER

Thanks for the vote of confidence, Szilard.

I spot Glasses SCRIBBLING – I GRAB his pen – he FLINCHES –

OPPENHEIMER

We really need that in the notes?

(to Fermi)

When are you going to try it out?

FERMI

We already did. The first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction. Didn't Groves tell you?

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

Condon and I have just passed through –

HORNIG

Dr Oppenheimer! I tried personnel.

We turn to see a twenty-three-year-old young woman on the other side of the barrier. This is Lilli HORNIG.

HORNIG

They asked if I could type.

OPPENHEIMER

Can you?

HORNIG

Harvard forgot to teach that on the graduate chemistry course.

I smile at this. Turn to Condon.

OPPENHEIMER

Put Mrs Hornig on the plutonium team.

INT. CYCLOTRON BUILDING, LOS ALAMOS –
CONTINUOUS

Condon and I peer up at the equipment. Groves STORMS in –

GROVES

What the hell were you doing in Chicago?!

CONDON

Visiting the Met Lab –

GROVES

Why?!

Condon looks at me. I say nothing. He turns to Groves –

CONDON

You can't talk to us like this. We have every right –

GROVES

You have just the rights I give you! No more, no less.

CONDON

This is ridiculous – we're adults, trying to run a project here.

(to me)

Tell him, Robert.

I look steadily at Groves.

OPPENHEIMER

Compartmentalization is the protocol we agreed to.

CONDON

You've got to be kidding me. Enough of this madhouse – nobody can work under these conditions.

(to Groves)

You know what, Generalissimo? I quit.

(to Oppenheimer)

Thanks for nothing.

Condon storms out. Groves turns to me.

GROVES

Better off without him.

OPPENHEIMER

Aren't you more worried about his discretion out there?

GROVES

We'll have him killed.

(off Oppenheimer's look)

Kidding. He hates me, not America.

OPPENHEIMER

Not everyone has levers like mine to pull.

GROVES

I don't know what you mean.

OPPENHEIMER

You didn't hire me *despite* my left-wing past, you hired me *because* of it. So you could control me.

GROVES

I'm not that subtle. I'm just a humble soldier.

OPPENHEIMER

You're neither humble, nor 'just' a soldier. You studied engineering at MIT.

OPPENHEIMER

Guilty as charged.

GROVES

Now that we understand each other, perhaps you'll get me my security clearance, so I can perform this miracle for you.

General Groves looks at me. Nods.

GARRISON

(V.O.)

General Groves, were you aware of Dr Oppenheimer's left-wing associations when you appointed him?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

Groves, in CIVILIAN CLOTHES, testifies. I watch . . .

GROVES

I was aware that there were suspicions about him . . . I was aware that he had a very extreme liberal background.

GARRISON

In your opinion, would he ever consciously commit a disloyal act?

GROVES

I would be amazed if he did.

GARRISON

You had complete confidence in his integrity?

GROVES

At Los Alamos, yes, which is where I really knew him.

ROBB

General, did your security officers on the project advise against the clearance of Dr Oppenheimer?

GROVES

Truer to say they could not and would not clear him. Until I insisted.

ROBB

You became pretty familiar with the security file on Dr Oppenheimer?

GROVES

I did.

ROBB

General, there's really only one question we need answered here today . . .

Groves shifts, knowing what's about to be asked . . .

ROBB

In the light of your experience of security matters and knowledge of the file . . .

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

I greet Lawrence and Lomanitz as they get out of a car -

ROBB

(V.O.)

. . . would you clear Dr Oppenheimer today?

LAWRENCE

Physics and New Mexico, huh? But my God, what a trek.

OPPENHEIMER

That's why you need a liaison.

LAWRENCE

I'm appointing Lomanitz.

I pat Lomanitz on the shoulder.

OPPENHEIMER

You're gonna be okay.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS - LATER

As the group assembles, General Groves speaks to Lawrence.

GROVES

I'll remind you what we talked about in Berkeley, doctor.

LAWRENCE

Compartmentalization. I understand completely.

Oppenheimer theatrically drops three marbles into the quarter-full goldfish bowl, then ADDS TWO MORE - the room APPLAUDS. Oppenheimer BOWS, steps down. Lawrence BOUNCES up -

LAWRENCE

Greetings from Berkeley. I'm here to update you on our progress and solicit your input. To do so I will be sharing many things that General Groves has told me not to . . .

(to Groves)

Well, General, I said I 'understood', not that I agreed. So, to business . . .

Groves looks at me. I shrug. He leaves.

Cut to:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM – NIGHT (B&W)

Strauss places the filter papers back down on the table . . .

STRAUSS

There were reports of espionage from Los Alamos –

OPPENHEIMER

Unsubstantiated reports –

STRAUSS

I've heard there were Communists on the project – were any of them involved with discussions of the Super?

OPPENHEIMER

We didn't knowingly employ any Communists.

NICHOLS

I seem to remember you demanding that your brother come to Los Alamos.

OPPENHEIMER

He'd left the Party by then.

STRAUSS

And Lomanitz?

OPPENHEIMER

He was never employed at Los Alamos, he was a liaison. Our security was tight, as former Colonel Nichols well knows.

NICHOLS

Our security was the tightest we could make it given the personalities involved. But attempts were made. Doctor, we've all read your file here. Do we need to talk about Jean Tatlock? Or the Chevalier incident?

Strauss watches Oppenheimer glare at Nichols.

Cut to:

**INT. OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY
(COLOUR)**

SECRETARY

(over intercom)

That's Lomanitz on one . . .

I pick up the phone –

OPPENHEIMER

Lomanitz? Okay, hang on, calm down.

INT. COLONEL NICHOLS' OFFICE – MOMENTS LATER

I stand at Nichols' desk.

OPPENHEIMER

There's been another screw-up – Lomanitz just got drafted.

NICHOLS

We *are* at war, doctor.

OPPENHEIMER

Don't be an asshole, Nichols. We need this kid. Fix it, will you?

NICHOLS

It wasn't a mistake. Your friend Lomanitz has been trying to unionize the Radiation Lab.

OPPENHEIMER

He promised to quit all that.

NICHOLS

Well, he hasn't. The security officer at Berkeley is concerned about Communist infiltration through that union - the . . . F-A . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(thinking)

F-A-E-C-T. I'm there next week, maybe I'll drop in to see him.

Nichols TOSSES a security pass across the desk.

NICHOLS

Your Q clearance came through. It's important you not maintain or renew any questionable associations.

ROBB

(V.O.)

Doctor, did you think social contacts between a person employed on secret war work and Communists was dangerous?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION - DAY

I testify, Kitty behind me . . .

OPPENHEIMER

My awareness of the danger would be greater today.

ROBB

But it's fair to say that during the war years . . .

EXT. HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

A TAXI pulls up. I get out, carrying a bag.

ROBB

(V.O.)

. . . you felt that such contacts were potentially dangerous?

I enter, without seeing a CAR FOLLOWING. The PASSENGER jumps out, while the DRIVER checks the time, makes a note.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY, SAN FRANCISCO - CONTINUOUS

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

Were *conceivably* dangerous.

I move to the elevators, watched by the passenger.

INT. CORRIDOR, HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO -
CONTINUOUS

At the door to 805 I reach into my bag . . .

ROBB

(V.O.)

Really? *Known* Communists?

. . . and remove a small BUNCH OF FLOWERS. I knock . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

Look, I've had a lot of secrets in my head a long time. It doesn't matter who I associate with . . .

The door opens to reveal JEAN TATLOCK.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION -
DAY

OPPENHEIMER

I don't talk about those secrets.

INT. ROOM 805, HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO -
CONTINUOUS

Tatlock GRABS the flowers. As I follow her in, she DUMPS them in the wastebasket . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

Robb refers to his papers – Kitty watches . . .

ROBB

You said in your statement you 'had' to visit Jean Tatlock
in 1943 . . .

INT. ROOM 805, HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO – NIGHT

Tatlock and I sit across the room from each other, naked.

TATLOCK

You left. Not a word. What did you think that would do to
me?

OPPENHEIMER

I wrote.

TATLOCK

Pages of nothing. Where'd you go?

OPPENHEIMER

I can't tell you.

TATLOCK

Why not?

OPPENHEIMER

Because you're a Communist.

ROBB

(V.O.)

Why did you *have* to see her?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I sit at the table, self-conscious, testifying . . .

OPPENHEIMER

She had indicated a great desire to see me before we left. At that time I couldn't. But I felt that she had to see me . . .

Kitty watches me testify. I am NAKED . . .

OPPENHEIMER

She was undergoing psychiatric treatment. She was extremely unhappy.

ROBB

Did you find out why she had to see you?

OPPENHEIMER

Because she was still in love with me.

Kitty watches Tatlock, also naked, STRADDLE me, head on my shoulder, facing Kitty . . .

ROBB

You spent the night with her didn't you?

As Tatlock GRINDS on me she locks eyes with Kitty . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Yes.

INT. ROOM 805, HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Tatlock studies me from across the room.

TATLOCK

You drop in and out of my life and don't have to tell me why. That's power.

OPPENHEIMER

Not that I enjoy. I'd rather be here for you as you need.

TATLOCK

But now you've got other priorities.

OPPENHEIMER

I have a wife and child.

TATLOCK

That's not what either of us is talking about.

OPPENHEIMER

Jean, you asked me to come. And I'm glad I did. But I can't come again.

TATLOCK

What if I need you?

I slowly shake my head.

TATLOCK

Not a word?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

All eyes on me, clothed and alone again . . .

ROBB

Did you think that consistent with good security?

Behind me, Kitty's face is stone . . .

OPPENHEIMER

It was, as a matter of fact. Not a word.

ROBB

When did you see her after that?

INSERT CUT: HOT BATH RUNNING. PILL BOTTLE. DOWNTURNED
HEAD IN THE WATER. THE SOUND OF FEET STAMPING,
STAMPING . . .

I JAM my eyes closed, shake off the image –

OPPENHEIMER

I never saw her again.

INT. SAME – DAY

As the room breaks up, Kitty speaks privately to me through CLENCHED TEETH as she gathers her things. No eye contact.

KITTY

I can make the last train back to Princeton.

OPPENHEIMER

I said nothing that I hadn't already said to you, Kitty.

KITTY

Well, today you said it to history.

OPPENHEIMER

This is a closed hearing –

KITTY

If they don't release a transcript, you will!

She DROPS her bag, spilling the contents. Garrison spots a small FLASK as Kitty sweeps it into her purse. I CROUCH –

OPPENHEIMER

I was under oath.

KITTY

You were under an oath to me when you went to see Jean.

She STANDS – I follow – she TURNS back – in my face –

KITTY

You sit there, day after day, letting them pick our lives to pieces. Why won't you fight?

I don't answer. She leaves. Garrison steps up.

GARRISON

Robert, I'm not putting her up there.

EXT. BERKELEY CAMPUS – DAY

I stroll across the campus, enter an administrative building.

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE — MOMENTS LATER

I knock. Johnson opens the door, SURPRISED.

JOHNSON

Dr Oppenheimer, it's an honour. Please, take a seat —

OPPENHEIMER

No need. I just wanted to check whether I should talk to Lomanitz while I'm here — given your concerns.

JOHNSON

That's up to you, really, professor. But I'd be cautious.

OPPENHEIMER

Understood. Oh, and as far as the union goes, I wanted to give you a heads up on a man named Eltenton.

JOHNSON

A heads up?

OPPENHEIMER

He might merit watching, is all.

JOHNSON

I'd love to get more details —

OPPENHEIMER

I've got an appointment now, and I leave early tomorrow —

JOHNSON

Come as early as you like. Since you haven't time now.

GROVES

(V.O.)

You went back the next morning?

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO — DAY

Groves sits opposite. I stare out the window.

OPPENHEIMER

I did. I had to, really.

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Johnson smiles, beckons me in. Indicates a SECOND MAN -

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

This time there was another man.

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO - DAY

I stare out the window. Groves sits opposite.

OPPENHEIMER

Said his name was Pash.

GROVES

Pash? You met Colonel Pash?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION -
DAY

Alone on the couch, I glance up, NERVOUS, as a man in uniform walks past. As he sits, I study the back of his head.

ROBB

Colonel Pash, can you read from your memo of June 29th, 1943?

PASH

'Results of surveillance conducted on subject indicate further possible Communist Party connections. Subject met with and spent considerable time with one Jean Tatlock, Communist, the record of whom is attached.'

ROBB

The subject being Dr Oppenheimer?

PASH

Yes.

ROBB

Whom you had not met?

PASH

Not then, but soon after . . .

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO - DAY

OPPENHEIMER

He's head of security for the project, shouldn't I know him?

GROVES

No, he should know you. I'd never put you in a room with Pash.

OPPENHEIMER

Why not?

GROVES

When Pash first learned about Lomanitz - he told the FBI he was going to kidnap him, take him out on a boat, interrogate him 'in the Russian manner' . . .

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pash sits down next to me, opposite Johnson.

PASH

Dr Oppenheimer, this is a pleasure. General Groves has placed a certain responsibility in me, and it's like having a child, that you can't see, by remote control, so to actually meet you . . . I don't mean to take much of your time . . .

The disarming friendliness of the truly dangerous.

OPPENHEIMER

Not at all. Whatever time you choose.

PASH

Mr Johnson told me of your conversation yesterday, in which I'm very interested. It had me worried all day . . .

OPPENHEIMER

I didn't want to talk to Lomanitz without authorization -

PASH

That's not the particular interest I have. It's something a little more, in my opinion, more serious . . .

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO - DAY

GROVES

When the FBI pointed out that such information couldn't be used in court Pash made it clear that he didn't intend to have anyone left to prosecute. The FBI talked him down, but that's the man you're dancing with.

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - DAY

PASH

I gather you've heard there are other parties interested in the work of the Radiation Lab . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Well, a man attached to the Soviet Consul indicated, through intermediate people, to people on this project that he was in a position to transmit information they might supply.

PASH

Why would anyone on the project want that?

OPPENHEIMER

Frankly, I can see there might be arguments for the commander-in-chief informing the Russians - they're our allies. But I don't like the idea of it going out the back door - it might not hurt to be on the lookout for it.

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO - DAY

GROVES

You said that to Pash?

OPPENHEIMER

I was trying to put it in the context of . . . Russia's not Germany.

GROVES

Boris Pash is the son of a Russian Orthodox bishop. Born here, but in 1918 he went back to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks. This is a man who's killed Communists with his own hands.

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pash spreads his palms . . .

PASH

I'm not the judge of who should or should not get information. My business is to stop it going through illegally. Could you be a little more specific?

OPPENHEIMER

There's a man whose name was mentioned to me a couple of times - Eltenton. I think he's a chemist employed by Shell. He talked to a friend of his who's an acquaintance of someone on the project. To go beyond that would be to put names down of people who are not only innocent but were one hundred percent cooperative.

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO - DAY

Groves is staring at me like I just crapped my pants.

GROVES

You thought Pash would be satisfied with that?

OPPENHEIMER

I was trying to give them Eltenton without opening a can of worms. I told him a cock-and-bull story.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I am up front. Robb questioning –

ROBB

Did you lie to General Groves, too?

OPPENHEIMER

No, I told him I'd lied to Pash.

INT. SAME – DAY

Groves is on the stand, in civilian clothes –

GARRISON

Do you recall your conversation with him about the Chevalier incident?

GROVES

I've seen so many versions of it, I wasn't confused before, but I'm certainly getting there now.

GARRISON

What was your conclusion?

GROVES

That he was under the influence of the typical American schoolboy attitude that there's something wicked about telling on a friend. He did what he thought was essential – disclosing Eltenton.

INT. SAME – DAY

Pash is testifying.

PASH

The memo I wrote at the time states 'Dr Oppenheimer sought to provide information to burnish his image as loyal, clearly having heard of our investigation at Berkeley. He is not to be trusted on matters of security.'

INT. LT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Pash gazes, unblinking, into my eyes . . .

PASH

These other people you mentioned, were they contacted by Eltenton direct?

OPPENHEIMER

No.

PASH

Well now, could we know through whom that contact was made?

OPPENHEIMER

It would involve people who ought not be involved in this.

PASH

Is this person a member of the project?

OPPENHEIMER

A member of the faculty, but not on the project.

PASH

Eltenton made the approach through a member of the faculty here at Berkeley?

OPPENHEIMER

As far as I know - there may have been more than one person involved. If I seem uncooperative I think you can understand that it's because of my insistence in not getting innocent people into trouble.

Pash stares at me. I finally keep my mouth shut.

PASH

You see me as persistent -

OPPENHEIMER

You are persistent, and that is your job. But my job is protecting the people who work for me.

PASH

Instead of us going on certain steps which may come to your attention and be a little bit . . . *disturbing* to you . . . I'd rather discuss those with you first. I'm not formulating any plans, I'm just going to have to digest the whole thing.

I nod at Pash. Get to my feet.

INT. TRAIN, SANTA FE TO CHICAGO – DAY

Groves takes in the story.

GROVES

You're protecting a friend. But who's protecting you?

OPPENHEIMER

You could.

GROVES

If you gave me the name.

OPPENHEIMER

If you order me to, I'll do it.

GROVES

You're making a mistake, Robert. A mistake that may haunt you. You need to *volunteer* this name.

I turn to watch the scenery trundle past.

ROBB

(V.O.)

And did he give you the name?

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY

GROVES

He did.

ROBB

But not at that time.

GROVES

No.

ROBB

In fact, it was some months later, wasn't it?

Groves nods.

INT. SAME - DAY

I study the back of Boris Pash's head . . .

ROBB

And in the months between your interview with Dr Oppenheimer and his eventual naming of Chevalier, did you expend resources trying to find the identity of the intermediary?

PASH

Considerable resources. Without the name our job was extremely difficult.

ROBB

When did you receive the name?

PASH

I was gone by the time Oppenheimer offered it up.

ROBB

Gone?

PASH

They felt my time would be better spent in Europe determining the status of the Nazi bomb project.

ROBB

Who did?

PASH

General Groves. He transferred me to London.

I lift my head at this.

INSERT CUT: MARBLES DROP INTO THE BOWL . . . THREE-
QUARTERS FULL . . .

EXT. LOS ALAMOS - NIGHT

Serber and I walk down the street. Snow falling.

SERBER

Little early for a Christmas party.

OPPENHEIMER

Something's up. Tolman's been away.

SERBER

Where?

OPPENHEIMER

Ruth won't tell.

We head towards Fuller Lodge . . .

INT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS - LATER

A CHRISTMAS PARTY. DEBAUCHED. Kitty, in SANTA HAT, serves/ spikes the EGGNOG. Bethe, Teller, Charlotte Serber, Neddermeyer, Kistiakowsky, Donald, Hornig, Bainbridge, Fuchs, Feynman amongst the revelers. I have Ruth cornered, glancing over at Kitty, who pretends she wasn't looking at me and GRABS at the nearest male arm - pushing eggnog . . .

RUTH

Compartmentalization, Oppie. What makes you think
I know, anyway?

I take *her* glass. Sip from it . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You do a good job of knowing where Mr Tolman is . . .
when it counts.

RUTH

Like now.

I turn – Tolman and Groves enter, brushing off snow . . .

GROVES

Atten-shun! We have an early Christmas present for you . . .

They step aside to reveal . . . NIELS BOHR. I grin.

BOHR

(V.O.)

The British pilots put me in the bomb bay . . .

INT. SAME – LATER

Bohr holds court. I listen at the back.

BOHR

. . . showed me the oxygen – of course I messed it up.
When they opened me up in Scotland I was unconscious.
I pretended I'd been napping.

The crowd LAUGHS, loving it. Bohr peels off to talk to me.

Is it big enough?

OPPENHEIMER

To end the war?

BOHR

To end *all* war.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION – LATER

I sip my drink, watching Bohr read the boards. Tolman, Teller, Bethe and Serber sprawl, party hats, TINSEL scarves . . .

BOHR

Heisenberg sought me out in Copenhagen. It was chilling – my old student, working for the Nazis. He told me things to draw me out . . . sustained fission reactions in uranium . . .

TOLMAN

That sounds more like a reactor than a bomb.

TELLER

Did he mention gaseous diffusion?

BOHR

He seemed more focused on heavy water.

TELLER

As a moderator?

BOHR

Yes. Instead of graphite.

Serber and Tolman GRIN. I nod. Bohr notices us relax . . .

BOHR

What?

OPPENHEIMER

He took a wrong turn. We're ahead. And with you here to help us . . .

Bohr turns to Teller and the others –

BOHR

Gentlemen, could you give us a moment?

They shuffle out. Bohr looks at the MARBLES. Turns to me . . .

BOHR

I'm not here to help, Robert. I knew you could do this without me.

OPPENHEIMER

Then why did you come?

BOHR

To talk about *after*. The power you're revealing will forever outlive the Nazis. And the world is not prepared.

OPPENHEIMER

You can lift the rock without being ready for the snake that's revealed.

BOHR

We have to make the politicians understand – this isn't a new weapon – it's a new world. I'll be out there, doing what I can – but *you* . . .

(points at me)

You're an American Prometheus – Father of the Atomic Bomb. The man who gave them the power to destroy themselves. They'll respect that. And your work really begins.

I take this in. Charlotte Serber enters –

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry, Oppie, but there's a call. From San Francisco.

I look at my watch, surprised . . . look at Bohr, who nods 'Go.'

EXT. SNOWY WOODS, LOS ALAMOS – DAWN

Kitty, on horseback, finds my horse, tied up. She dismounts, moving into the trees . . . She finds me curled up at the base of a tree in the SNOW, distraught.

KITTY

Robert?

She crouches, touches my shoulder – I look up, ASHAMED.

OPPENHEIMER

Her father called . . . they found her yesterday . . . in the bath . . .

INSERT CUT: A WOMAN, FACE-DOWN IN THE BATH, A CUSHION BELOW . . .

KITTY

Who?

OPPENHEIMER

She'd taken pills, left a note . . . not signed . . . she took barbiturates . . .

INSERT CUT: TATLOCK KNEELS IN THE BATH, POPPING PILLS.
SINKS SERENELY ONTO CUSHIONS UNDER THE WATER . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But there was chloral hydrate in her blood . . .

INSERT CUT: GLOVED HANDS HOLDS TATLOCK'S STRUGGLING
HEAD UNDERWATER . . .

I SHAKE OFF the image . . .

OPPENHEIMER

There was a note.

KITTY

Jean Tatlock?

INSERT CUT: OPPENHEIMER, NAKED, SHAKES HIS HEAD AT
TATLOCK.

OPPENHEIMER

We were together — she said she needed me . . . but I told
her I wouldn't see her again. It was me.

Kitty SLAPS me in the face. I look up at her, bleary-eyed . . .

KITTY

You don't get to commit the sin, then have us all feel sorry
for you that it had consequences.

(rises)

Pull yourself together. People here depend on you.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS — DAY

I vacantly preside over a shambles — the goldfish bowl is FILLED
with marbles. As is the glass tumbler . . . Donald, Bainbridge,
Feynman watch the others squabble —

HORNIG

Serber, I'm not quitting my job because plutonium's
radioactive!

SERBER

We can't know what it might do to your reproductive system – Donald, help me out, here –

DONALD

You're on your own, pal.

HORNIG

(to Serber)

Your reproductive system's more exposed than mine. Presumably.

KISTIAKOWSKY

The implosion device is nowhere.

NEDDERMEYER

You can't rush everything, Oppie.

KISTIAKOWSKY

There's rushing and there's getting on with it – pick one, will ya?

BETHE

Teller's not helping – I've been asking for calculations on the implosion lenses for weeks –

TELLER

The British can do it – Fuchs –

FUCHS

Absolutely.

BETHE

It's *your* job, Teller!

TELLER

I'm engaged in research –

BETHE

On a Hydrogen bomb we're not even building!

Teller simply walks away. As he passes me –

TELLER

I won't work for that man.

BETHE

Let him go. He's a prima donna –

SERBER

I agree. He should leave Los Alamos.

I sigh. RISE, clear and direct –

OPPENHEIMER

Kisty, you replace Neddermeyer. Seth, I'm putting you on plutonium. Lilli, go work for Kisty.

(off her look)

Because he needs you.

(to Fuchs)

Fuchs, take Teller's role – you're exclusively on the implosion device.

I head for the door –

OPPENHEIMER

And *nobody* is leaving Los Alamos.

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

Teller is held at the gate. I approach. We face off in the 'street' like gunslingers.

TELLER

They won't let me leave.

OPPENHEIMER

I won't let you leave. Forget Hans, forget *fission*. Stay here and research what you want. Fusion. The Hydrogen bomb – whatever. We'll meet to discuss –

TELLER

You don't have time to meet. You're a politician now, Robert. You left physics behind long ago.

OPPENHEIMER

Once a week. One hour, you and me.

Teller considers this. Nods, turns to the GUARD –

TELLER

Now, raise that fucking barrier.

ROBB

(O.S.)

So the Super was under development on your watch at Los Alamos . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

ROBB

. . . yet, after the war, you tried to deny it was viable.

OPPENHEIMER

No. I pointed out technical difficulties with it.

ROBB

Didn't you try to kill it at the AEC meeting after the Russian bomb test?

OPPENHEIMER

No.

ROBB

But that *was* the recommendation the AEC offered, was it not?

OPPENHEIMER

After hours of discussion . . .

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM – NIGHT (COLOUR)

Me, Bush, Nichols (CIVILIAN), Rabi, Fermi, Strauss and others.

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

. . . about the best response.

BUSH

Truman *has* to do something . . .

Rabi opens his compasses wider . . .

RABI

An H-bomb would be one thousand times the power of an A-bomb.

He draws a circle around Moscow . . .

RABI

The only intended target would be the largest cities.

And a circle around St Petersburg . . .

RABI

It's a weapon of mass genocide.

STRAUSS

Why don't you draw some of those circles on this side of the map?

He points at the USA . . .

STRAUSS

Start here . . .

(gestures around them)

New York.

As I listen to them I hear the sound of FEET STAMPING . . .

FERMI

It's a weapon of attack, with no defensive value.

STRAUSS

Deterrence.

BUSH

Do we need more deterrence than our current arsenal of atomic bombs?

I tense up as the STAMPING SOUND gets LOUDER and LOUDER . . .

BUSH

Drown in ten feet of water or ten thousand, what's the difference? We can already drown Russia, and they know it.

INSERT CUT: DOZENS OF FEET STAMPING, FASTER AND FASTER . . .

STRAUSS

Now they can drown us.

INSERT CUT: . . . SO FAST THE FEET BREAK RHYTHM, CAUSING CACOPHONY . . .

STRAUSS

Gentlemen, I have to ask whether your discussion should be more of a technical one. Robert?

I JAM my eyes CLOSED, SHAKE OFF the image – the sound STOPS –

OPPENHEIMER

Teller's designs are as impractical as they were during the war.

LAWRENCE

The Hydrogen bomb can be made to work, Oppie. You know that.

OPPENHEIMER

We can't commit all our resources to that chance.

STRAUSS

Then how would you have Truman reassure the American people?

OPPENHEIMER

By limiting the spread of atomic weapons through international control of nuclear energy.

STRAUSS

World government?

OPPENHEIMER

The United Nations. As Roosevelt intended.

STRAUSS

I asked what *Truman* should do. The world's changed. Communism threatens our survival.

OPPENHEIMER

Lewis, if we build a Hydrogen bomb, the Soviets would have no choice but to build their own.

STRAUSS

Could they be working on it already? Based on information from a spy at Los Alamos?

OPPENHEIMER

There was no spy at Los Alamos!

BUSH

Gentlemen, let's not get sidetracked.

OPPENHEIMER

I say we use this moment to gain concessions from the Russians by committing that we will not build the Hydrogen bomb.

STRAUSS

Thereby revealing its existence.

OPPENHEIMER

Which you seem convinced they already know.

BUSH

At this point I'd like the Advisory Committee members to meet in privacy to finalize our recommendations.

Strauss nods. Rises. Much of the room follows suit, leaving.

STRAUSS

I'm not sure you want to go down this road, Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

Lewis, we're the *Advisory* Committee. We'll give them our advice.

Strauss shrugs. As he, Lawrence and Nichols leave together, Borden approaches.

BORDEN

Dr Oppenheimer? William Borden – Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

OPPENHEIMER

Oh, yes.

BORDEN

During the war, I was a pilot. One night, flying back from a raid, I saw an amazing sight – like a meteor –

INSERT CUT: BORDEN SPEEDS THROUGH THE NIGHT . . .

BORDEN

(V.O.)

A V-2 rocket heading for England –

INSERT CUT: A ROCKET STREAKS PAST, RIPPING APART THE DARK . . .

BORDEN

(V.O.)

I can't help but imagine what it will be for such an enemy rocket to carry an *atomic* warhead . . .

INSERT CUT: A MISSILE RISES THROUGH THE CLOUDS . . .

I hear the sound of FEET STAMPING . . .

INSERT CUT: DOZENS OF FEET STAMPING FASTER AND FASTER . . .

I peer into the future . . .

INSERT CUT: HUNDREDS OF MISSILES RISE THROUGH THE CLOUDS . . .

I look at the map . . . Rabi's circles EXPAND like raindrops in a puddle . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Then let's make sure we're not the ones to make that possible.

But that's not the answer Borden wanted. He leaves. Fermi and Bush remain. Rabi leans over to me.

RABI

Oppie, you don't want to go up against Strauss.

OPPENHEIMER

If we both speak, they listen to me.

RABI

When you speak, they hear a prophet. When Strauss speaks, they hear themselves.

OPPENHEIMER

They'll listen to a prophet.

RABI

A prophet can't be wrong. Not once.

SENATOR MCGEE

(V.O.)

Didn't you accuse Oppenheimer of sabotaging the development of the Super?

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

Strauss shifts uneasily in his chair.

STRAUSS

I was never one of those who bandied around terms like 'sabotage'.

SENATOR MCGEE

But Mr Borden was?

STRAUSS

As I understand it.

SENATOR MCGEE

How was Mr Borden able to put together such a detailed indictment? He was no longer a government employee, and yet he appears to have had unlimited access to Dr Oppenheimer's file. Might Mr Nichols have given him access to the file? Or someone else at the AEC?

STRAUSS

Feelings ran high on these issues, but that's a very serious accusation, Senator.

Cut to:

EXT. LOS ALAMOS – DAY (COLOUR)

RAIN. I ride my horse through the outskirts. Spot a FLIER stapled to a telegraph pole, ink running: 'THE IMPACT OF THE GADGET ON CIVILIZATION – DISCUSSION, BLDG T₃ 1 SUNDAY, 11AM'.

INT. CYCLOTRON BUILDING, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I enter to find forty scientists meeting. Hornig is speaking.

HORNIG

Germany's about to surrender, the Japanese are losing. It's no longer the enemy who are the greatest threat to mankind – it's us. Our work.

Heads turn as they notice me.

OPPENHEIMER

Hitler's dead. But the Japanese fight on.

The audience is now turned my way . . .

HORNIG

Their defeat seems assured.

OPPENHEIMER

Not if you're a GI preparing to invade Japan. We can end this war.

MORRISON

How can we justify using this weapon on human beings?

OPPENHEIMER

We're theorists – we can imagine a future, and our imaginings horrify us. But they won't fear it until they

understand it, and they won't understand it until they've used it. When the world learns the terrible secret of Los Alamos, our work will ensure a peace mankind has never seen. A peace based on the kind of international cooperation that Roosevelt always envisaged.

Some of the scientists nod. Scattered applause . . .

INSERT CUT: THE GOLDFISH BOWL IS FULL OF MARBLES . . .

EXT. LOS ALAMOS - DAY

I walk down the main drag with Groves.

OPPENHEIMER

Progress.

GROVES

Two years and a billion dollars' worth?

OPPENHEIMER

Hard to put a price on it.

GROVES

Not really. Just add up the bills.

(points)

'Rural free delivery' . . . Eighty babies delivered the first year. This year they've had ten a month.

OPPENHEIMER

Birth control's a little out of my jurisdiction, General.

Groves watches Kitty approach - she's HEAVILY PREGNANT.

GROVES

Clearly.

EXT. CANYON, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

An IMPLOSION DEVICE ROCKS the canyon. Groves, Fuchs and I raise our heads - Kistiakowsky and Hornig rush to the device -

KISTIAKOWSKY

That's the one!

I put my PIPE on the wall as we CLIMB out of the bunker . . .

GROVES

Two viable bombs. I need a date.

OPPENHEIMER

September -

GROVES

July -

Kistiakowsky waves a trail of ticker tape -

KISTIAKOWSKY

That's the sweet spot, gentlemen!

OPPENHEIMER

August.

GROVES

July -

OPPENHEIMER

A test in July.

Fuchs hands me my pipe. I dust it off . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But I need my brother.

(off his look)

Frank knows the desert. He left politics behind - he's been working for Lawrence for two years.

INSERT CUT: FLYING OVER DESERT TO FIND FRANK STANDING BY A JEEP WITH AN ARMY OFFICER.

GROVES

What do we call the test?

OPPENHEIMER

(thinking)

'Batter my heart, three-person'd god.'

GROVES

What?

OPPENHEIMER

Trinity.

INSERT CUT: A STEEL TOWER IS RAISED IN THE DESERT . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

ROBB

So you insisted on bringing on your brother, Frank, a
known Communist –

OPPENHEIMER

Former Communist –

ROBB

You brought a known *former* Communist onto America's
most secret and important defence project?

OPPENHEIMER

I knew my brother could be trusted absolutely.

ROBB

And you feel your judgement was sound on who on the
team could be trusted?

KISTIAKOWSKY

(O.S.)

Fuchs! Head down!

EXT. BERM – DAY

Behind a berm, Groves, Fuchs, Frank and I watch Kistiakowsky
and Hornig arm a detonator. Fuchs shuffles lower.

KISTIAKOWSKY

Everybody ready . . . ?

Kistiakowsky triggers a VAST EXPLOSION, SPLINTERING THE TOWER, SENDING A MASSIVE PLUME OF FIRE INTO THE AIR . . . the SHOCKWAVE throws DEBRIS onto me and Groves . . .

GROVES

I hope you learned something.

FRANK

We learned we're gonna need to be *a lot* further away . . .

GROVES

Well, figure it out. Fast.

(to me)

We leave for Washington tomorrow, and we're going to give them a date.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY, WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

I walk across the lobby - someone GRABS my arm - Szilard, with the Scientist with Glasses in tow. I glance out the window, where Groves is getting into a car, waiting for me . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You're a long way from Chicago, Leo.

SZILARD

If we don't act now, they're going to use this thing against Japan. We booked a meeting with Truman, but somebody killed it. You're meeting the Secretary of War -

OPPENHEIMER

Just because we're building it doesn't mean we get to decide how it's used.

SZILARD

History will judge us, Robert. In Chicago we put together a petition -

Glasses holds out a paper - I PUSH it back - Glasses FLINCHES -

OPPENHEIMER

I'm not getting into that. Tell me your concerns and I'll relay them –

SZILARD

My *concerns*?! Germany's defeated, Japan's not going to hold out alone –

OPPENHEIMER

How would you know? You got us into this, you and Einstein, with your letter to Roosevelt saying we could build a bomb –

SZILARD

Against *Germany*.

OPPENHEIMER

That's not how weapons manufacture works, Szilard.

SZILARD

Oppie, you have to help.

OPPENHEIMER

Fermi's in the meeting. And Lawrence –

SZILARD

They're not *you*. You're the great salesman of science – you can convince anyone of anything. Even yourself.

INT. SECRETARY OF WAR'S OFFICE – DAY

I sit on a couch next to Fermi – Lawrence, Groves and Bush in chairs. Secretary of War STIMSON presides. Military, scientists and officials are scattered through the room.

STIMSON

The firestorm in Tokyo killed one hundred thousand people. Mostly civilians. I worry about an America where we do these things and no one protests.

MARSHALL

Pearl Harbor and three years of brutal conflict in the Pacific buys a lot of latitude with the American public.

STIMSON

Enough to unleash the atomic bomb?

FERMI

In truth, the A-bomb might not cause as much damage as the Tokyo bombings.

STIMSON

What are we estimating?

BUSH

In a medium-sized city, twenty or thirty thousand dead.

OPPENHEIMER

Don't underestimate the psychological impact of an atomic explosion . . . a pillar of fire ten thousand feet tall, deadly neutron effects for a mile in all directions . . . from one.

Single. Device. Dropped from a barely noticed B-29 . . . the atomic bomb will be a terrible revelation of divine power.

Groves carefully monitors my effect on the room . . .

MARSHALL

If that's true it would be definitive. World War II would be over. Our boys would come home.

STIMSON

This could end the war.

OPPENHEIMER

This could end *all* war. If we retain moral advantage.

Groves registers the pivot . . .

STIMSON

How so?

OPPENHEIMER

If we use this weapon without informing our allies, they'll see it as a threat and we'll be in an arms race.

MARSHALL

How open can we be with the Soviets?

BUSH

Secrecy won't stop the Soviets becoming part of the atomic world.

A politician, BYRNES, clears his throat politely –

BYRNES

We've been told they have no uranium.

BUSH

You've been misinformed. A Russian bomb is a matter of time.

LAWRENCE

To stay ahead, our programme has to continue at full pace after the war.

OPPENHEIMER

Secretary Stimson, if I may. Not all the scientists on the project agree. In fact, this might be a moment to consider other opinions –

GROVES

The Manhattan Project's been plagued from the start by certain scientists of doubtful discretion and uncertain loyalty. One of them just tried to get a meeting with the President.

I say nothing. Groves looks directly at me.

GROVES

We need them for now, but as soon as is practical, we should sever any such scientists from the programme. Wouldn't you agree, doctor?

I meet Groves' gaze. Stay silent . . . Nod.

MARSHALL

If a Russian bomb is inevitable, perhaps we should invite their top scientists to Trinity.

BYRNES

President Truman has no intention of raising expectations that Stalin be included in the atomic project.

STIMSON

Informing him of our breakthrough, and presenting it as the means to win the war need not make unkeepable promises. But the Potsdam peace conference in July is the last chance for Truman to have that conversation. Can you give us a working bomb by then?

GROVES

Absolutely. We'll test-fire before the conference.

STIMSON

And Japan?

OPPENHEIMER

If the test works you'll have two bombs for August.

STIMSON

Military targets?

OPPENHEIMER

There aren't any big enough.

CONANT

Perhaps a vital war plant, with workers housed nearby.

FERMI

Could we issue a warning? To reduce civilian casualties.

AIR FORCE OFFICER

They'd send up everything they have against us, and I'd be in that plane.

BUSH

If we announce it and it fails to go off we'd scupper any chance of Japanese surrender.

LAWRENCE

Is there no way to demonstrate the bomb to Japan to provoke surrender?

GROVES

We intend to demonstrate it in the most unambiguous terms. Twice. Once to show the weapon's power. A second to show that we can keep going until they surrender.

STIMSON

We have a list of twelve cities to choose from. Sorry, eleven, I've taken Kyoto off the list because of its cultural significance to the Japanese people.

Stimson senses the unease in the room . . .

STIMSON

Let me make this simple for you, gentlemen. The Japanese will not surrender short of a successful invasion of the home islands. Many lives, American and Japanese, will be lost in that invasion. The use of the atomic bomb against Japanese cities will save lives.

EXT. BASE OF STEEL TOWER, TRINITY TEST SITE - DAY

Frank shows Groves and me the site plan . . .

FRANK

Ground Zero. Observation posts at ten thousand yards north, south and west.

OPPENHEIMER

Where do we trigger from?

FRANK

South ten thousand. Base camp is ten miles south, here. And a further observation point on this hill twenty miles away.

I point to a crew digging a trench from the base of the tower.

OPPENHEIMER

What's that? The trigger lines went in already.

FRANK

The air force requested a line of lights for their B-29.

OPPENHEIMER

What B-29? Our bomb's on the tower.

FRANK

They want to use the test to confirm the safe operating distance.

GROVES

Risky.

FRANK

Not as risky as dropping one over Japan and hoping we were right about the blast radius.

OPPENHEIMER

Don't let them slow us down – we're firing on the 15th.

FRANK

The 15th?! That's not –

Frank sees my expression –

FRANK

The 15th.

INT. LECTURE HALL, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I show the plan to the division heads.

OPPENHEIMER

I'll be at the south observation point with Frank and Kistiakowsky. You'll all be assigned to base camp, far observation, or west observation.

INSERT CUT: I ENTER A TENT AT THE BASE OF THE TOWER – THE SILVER SPHERE OF THE BOMB IS SURROUNDED BY THE TEAM . . .

BETHE

Are those safe distances?

OPPENHEIMER

They're based on your calculations.

RABI

Time to stand behind your science, Hans. Literally.

INSERT CUT: THE BOMB IS HOISTED UP INTO THE TOWER . . .

TELLER

What about the radiation cloud?

OPPENHEIMER

Without high winds it should settle within two to three miles. Evacuation measures will be in place, but we need good weather for visibility so it should be fine. We go on the night of the 15th.

The team exchange looks –

OPPENHEIMER

That's a hard deadline, so if anyone has anything . . . speak now.

BETHE

We need a final implosion test.

KISTIAKOWSKY

Couldn't hurt.

OPPENHEIMER

Do it. Is there anything else that might stop us?

A THUNDERCLAP takes us into –

EXT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

White sheets FLAP CRAZILY in the wind . . . through the window we see Kitty put her drink down reluctantly. She comes out to grab a sheet that has come loose from the line . . . notices a JEEP idling at the gate, ARMED GUARDS patiently waiting . . .

I emerge from the house carrying an overnight bag. Kitty, one hand on the washing line, turns to look at me, curious.

KITTY

It's happening, isn't it?

I watch the sheets flapping. Glance at the guards . . .

OPPENHEIMER

I'll send a message. If it's gone our way . . . 'Take in the sheets.'

She nods. I head towards the waiting jeep.

KITTY

Robert?

I turn, looking at Kitty amongst the FLAPPING SHEETS . . .

KITTY

Break a leg.

EXT. CANYON, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

A BANG as the final implosion test goes off . . . Kistiakowsky and Fuchs raise their heads . . . Kistiakowsky shows Fuchs the tape, grave.

EXT. STEEL TOWER, TRINITY TEST SITE - EVENING

I watch the last TECHNICIAN come down. I nod at the man, then starts my lonely climb . . .

I stare at the silver sphere of the first atomic bomb, its surface STUDDED with detonators, WIRES DRAPED across it like spaghetti. Thunder RUMBLES. I watch the approaching storm . . .

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE - EVENING

Army tents. A WINDMILL SPINS FURIOUSLY . . .

INT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE - EVENING

Fermi moves through the team, taking bets . . .

FERMI

Oppie's taken a very modest three kilotons . . . Teller's in
for forty-five . . .

Rabi pulls out some bills -

RABI

Twenty.

FERMI

Twenty thousand tons of TNT . . . and does anyone want
the side action on total atmospheric ignition?

The scientists groan and laugh. Soldiers look at each other:
'What the hell?' Groves corners the army WEATHERMAN.

GROVES

Are you saying we'll have to delay?

WEATHERMAN

I'm saying it would be prudent.

OPPENHEIMER

Has this weather reached the site?

The weatherman gets on his radio. Kistiakowsky BURSTS in -

KISTIAKOWSKY

Oppie -

The phone rings -

KISTIAKOWSKY

Bethe's calling you to tell you the implosion test failed,
but -

I have the phone to my ear -

OPPENHEIMER

Hans. Yes, he's here. Yes.

(I hang up)

Is he wrong?

KISTIAKOWSKY

No.

OPPENHEIMER

So we're about to fire a dud?

KISTIAKOWSKY

No.

GROVES

Explain.

KISTIAKOWSKY

I can't. I just know the implosion lenses will work.

OPPENHEIMER

If we fire those detonators and they don't trigger the reaction, two years' worth of plutonium will be scattered across white sands.

KISTIAKOWSKY

(holds out his hand)

A month of my salary against ten bucks says it lights.

I study Kistiakowsky. Take the bet.

WEATHERMAN

The wind's picking up at Zero, not the rain. Lightning circling.

THUNDER. Rabi calls over –

RABI

Hey, weatherman, you think it might be time to get your men away from the steel tower with the atomic bomb primed to detonate via electrical charge?

The weatherman laughs. Then GRABS the radio –

WEATHERMAN

Pull 'em out.

OPPENHEIMER

(to Groves)

Let's get to south observation. Make our determination there.

EXT. STEEL TOWER, TRINITY TEST SITE — NIGHT

The last trucks drive away, lightning on the horizon. The bomb sits there, impervious to peals of DRY THUNDER . . .

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE — NIGHT

Groves, the weatherman and I watch rain LASH the desert . . .

OPPENHEIMER

The team hasn't slept for two nights. We stand down, make the bomb safe, it's weeks before we get back here.

GROVES

Then we miss Potsdam.

(checks watch)

I need to get word to Truman by seven.

(to the weatherman)

Our window's closing. What's it doing?

WEATHERMAN

Raining. Blowing. Lightning.

GROVES

For how long, dammit?!

WEATHERMAN

It's holding strong.

OPPENHEIMER

It'll break before dawn.

GROVES

How could you know that?

OPPENHEIMER

I know this desert. The air cools overnight. Just before dawn, the storm breaks.

WEATHERMAN

He could be right. But schedule it as late as possible.

OPPENHEIMER

Five thirty?

Groves considers this. Turns to the weatherman.

GROVES

Sign your forecast. If you're wrong, I'll hang you.

INT. BUNKER, SOUTH OBSERVATION POST – NIGHT

Groves and me, alone. Rain pelting down outside.

GROVES

Three years. Four thousand people. Two billion dollars. If it doesn't go off we're both finished.

OPPENHEIMER

I put my money on three kilotons. Any less, they won't get what it is.

GROVES

What did Fermi mean by 'atmospheric ignition'?

OPPENHEIMER

We had a moment where it looked like the chain reaction from an atomic device might never stop. Setting fire to the atmosphere.

GROVES

Why's Fermi still taking side bets on it?

OPPENHEIMER

Call it gallows humour.

Groves takes this in. Picks the scab –

GROVES

Are we saying there's a chance that when we push that button . . . we destroy the world?

OPPENHEIMER

Nothing in our research over the last three years supports that conclusion except as the most remote possibility.

GROVES

How remote?

OPPENHEIMER

The chances are near zero.

GROVES

Near zero?

OPPENHEIMER

(smiling)

What do you want from theory alone?

GROVES

Zero would be nice.

I check my watch.

OPPENHEIMER

Well, in an hour and fifty-eight minutes, we'll know.

I listen -

OPPENHEIMER

It's letting up . . .

EXT. TRINITY TEST SITE - NIGHT

Searchlights settle on the gleaming steel tower. A line of lights leading from the the blackness of the night-time desert to the tower comes on . . .

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE - CONTINUOUS

Groves and I come out into gentle rain. The wind has fallen off. Frank comes up to meet us.

FRANK

The arming party's left Zero, heading this way, throwing the switches . . .

(to the soldiers)

Turn the cars, ready for emergency evacuation . . .

EXT. SOUTH 1500 POST - NIGHT

Kistiakowsky and military personal, including BAINBRIDGE, get out of a truck. Kistiakowsky THROWS a SWITCH on the ground . . .

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE - CONTINUOUS
Rabi, Fermi and Bethe come outside. A SOLDIER hands them WELDER'S GLASS . . .

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE - NIGHT

Kistiakowsky and Bainbridge get out of the truck and enter the bunker.

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE - CONTINUOUS

Bainbridge pulls out a key. UNLOCKS the arming switches. Kistiakowsky nods, Bainbridge THROWS THE SWITCHES.

BAINBRIDGE

Twenty minutes.

EXT. TRINITY TEST SITE - CONTINUOUS

A SIGNAL ROCKET flares up into the air . . .

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE - CONTINUOUS
Rabi, Fermi and the others watch the rocket go up -

FERMI

Twenty minutes!

EXT. HILTOP DISTANT OBSERVATION POINT –
CONTINUOUS

A group of scientists, including Teller, Feynman and Lawrence, watch the distant rocket sputter . . .

FEYNMAN

That's twenty!

DARK GLASSES are handed out. Feynman refuses, jumping up into the cab of a truck –

SOLDIER

Hey, Feynman –

Feynman TAPS the windshield –

FEYNMAN

The glass stops the UV.

Teller, in dark glasses, is APPLYING SUNSCREEN at night –

TELLER

But what stops the glass?

Feynman looks at Teller. Looks at the glass, shakes his head, grinning . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

Groves moves to me –

GROVES

I'm heading to base camp. Best of luck.

Groves shakes my hand.

GROVES

Try not to blow up the world.

INT. SAME – MOMENTS LATER

I watch Bainbridge take his place at the KILL SWITCH.

OPPENHEIMER

Watch that needle. If the detonators don't charge, or if the voltage dips below one volt, you abort.

Bainbridge nods, watching the meter of the X-unit like a hawk. A nervous hawk.

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS
A loudspeaker broadcasts the countdown –

LOUDSPEAKER

Two minutes to detonation . . .

The two-minute rocket goes up –

ARMY CAPTAIN

Everybody down!

The observers lie on the ground, facing away from the site.

ARMY CAPTAIN

Do not turn around until you see light reflected on the hills. Then look at the explosion only through the welder's glass . . .

LOUDSPEAKER

Ninety seconds . . .

EXT. DISTANT OBSERVATION POINT – CONTINUOUS

Feynman TUNES the radio into the countdown relay –

RADIO

Sixty seconds . . .

Lawrence jumps in next to Feynman. The scientists peer into the distance through the windshield . . . Teller, pale with sunscreen, adjusts his dark glasses . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

Bainbridge PEERS at the X-unit . . . Frank and I peer at the
tower . . . The electronic counter STARTS: 45, 44, 43, 42 . . .

OPPENHEIMER

These things are hard on your heart.

LOUDSPEAKER

Thirty seconds . . .

FOUR RED LIGHTS flicker on –

EXT. STEEL TOWER, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS

The bomb WAKES, detonators on its surface HUMMING . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

The NEEDLE on the X-unit SHOOTS to the right –

BAINBRIDGE

Detonators charged!

I pull on a pair of WELDER'S GOGGLES . . .

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS

Rabi lifts his head to peek around, welder's glass over his
eyes . . . Groves shakes hands with Bush . . .

LOUDSPEAKER

. . . eighteen, seventeen . . .

EXT. DISTANT OBSERVATION POINT – CONTINUOUS

Feynman peers through the windshield. Teller studies the
horizon . . .

RADIO

... twelve, eleven . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

A GONG sounds at T-minus 10 – Bainbridge peers at the needle, which BOBBLES – his hand FLINCHES – the needle settles . . .

LOUDSPEAKER

Ten, nine, eight . . .

Frank and I peer through the holes in the concrete.

LOUDSPEAKER

... seven, six, five . . .

Kistiakowsky SCRAMBLES out of the bunker –

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

– and up onto the embankment, eyes locked on the tiny glow of the distant tower . . .

LOUDSPEAKER

... four, three . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

I stare straight ahead . . .

LOUDSPEAKER

... two, one . . .

Bainbridge watches the needle as the counter goes down to –

... zero.

My breath stops – an agonizing instant before – SILENT LIGHT.
FULL BRIGHT NOON SUNNY DAYLIGHT.

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS

Rabi sees SUDDEN DAYTIME – turns to the LIGHT, peers through the welder's glass at BLINDING SILENT WHITE . . .

EXT. DISTANT OBSERVATION POINT – CONTINUOUS

Lawrence is stepping out of the car as Feynman SHUTS his eyes against INSTANT DAYLIGHT . . . a HUSHED INTAKE OF BREATH from the crowd of sunglasses-clad distant observers . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS

All we can hear is my TREMULOUS BREATHING as the LIGHT becomes less BLINDING, resolving into a FIREBALL, BRIGHT AS THE SUN, BUT GIANT . . . I YANK off my goggles . . . watch the ROILING PLASMA become more visible in its HELLISH CONTORTIONS . . . CLIMBING into the sky like the DEVIL'S CLAW . . .

My PUPILS are PINPRICKS –

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

Now I am become Death, destroyer of worlds . . .

And then – CRACK!! . . . !!! . . . !!! . . . !!!! . . .

I am hit by the WIND and DUST of the SHOCKWAVE –

THE THUNDER of a THOUSAND STORMS ROLLS OVER,
DEAFENING –

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE

Kistiakowsky is BLOWN OFF HIS FEET . . .

INT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

With the wave of DARK THUNDER, TERRIBLE BEAUTY GIVES WAY TO FEAR . . . I TREMBLE as I watch the glowing cloud climb to its full height, its inner fire dimming to a HELLISH SCARLET . . . DUST CLOUD RISING, CRACKLING WITH PURPLISH ENERGY . . .

As the sound diminishes to a RUMBLE and night REGAINS the desert floor, Frank turns to me –

FRANK
(quiet)

It worked.

I nod, awestruck . . .

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE – CONTINUOUS

Startled murmurs, then a few claps . . . then CRAZY, CHEERING, CLAPPING, DANCING . . . in the middle of it all Rabi tries to understand what just happened . . .

EXT. SAME – CONTINUOUS

ECSTATIC CHEERING . . . even Teller SMILES . . . Feynman pulls out some BONGOS and hops onto the hood of the truck . . . people DANCE to his PAGAN RHYTHM as the dawn CREEPS IN . . .

EXT. SOUTH OBSERVATION POST, TRINITY TEST SITE –
CONTINUOUS

Kistiakowsky GRABS me in a big HUG – steps back – holding out his hand for payment. I pull out my wallet, frown – there's nothing in it –

OPPENHEIMER

I'm good for it.

Kistiakowsky GRINS -

KISTIAKOWSKY

Yes, you are! Yes, you are!

EXT. BASE CAMP, TRINITY TEST SITE - MOMENTS
LATER

Rabi, still amidst the celebration, watches a car pull up.

I get out, walking like GARY FUCKING COOPER - the crowd spots
me . . . goes NUTS . . .

Groves turns to an AIDE -

GROVES

Get me Potsdam. Right away.

I nod at Groves, move through the sea of congratulations to find
Serber . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Get a message to Kitty . . .

Serber's face falls, perturbed -

SERBER

We can't say anything -

OPPENHEIMER

Just tell her to bring in the sheets.

Serber grins. I spot Groves on a FIELD TELEPHONE - then am
HOISTED ONTO JOYFUL SHOULDERS . . .

INT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

Kitty wrangles the kitchen phone while she feeds our baby
daughter and young son -

KITTY

Sorry. Yes, Charlotte, go ahead.

CHARLOTTE
(over phone)

Well, I don't know, he just said to tell you to bring in the sheets.

Kitty freezes, letting the phone come off her ear . . .

CHARLOTTE
(over phone)

Kitty? Kitty?

Kitty smiles, tears forming. It is done.

Fade out.

Fade in:

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

I watch CRATES hoisted on trucks by the army . . .

OPPENHEIMER
(V.O.)

They musn't drop it through cloud cover -

INT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

I am talking to the AIR FORCE OFFICER who is supervising the crating of equipment -

OPPENHEIMER

If they detonate it too high in the air, the blast won't be as powerful -

AIR FORCE OFFICER

With respect, Dr Oppenheimer. We'll take it from here.

I lose sight of the bomb as THE CRATE IS CLOSED.

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

Groves appears at my side, watching the loading . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Did Truman brief Stalin at Potsdam?

GROVES

'Brief' would be an overstatement. He referred to a powerful new weapon, Stalin said he hoped we'd make good use of it against Japan.

OPPENHEIMER

That's it?

GROVES

Robert, we've given them an ace. It's for them to play the hand.

Frustrated, I drop my cigarette and GRIND it out –

OPPENHEIMER

You're aiming for the 6th?

GROVES

That's up to the CO in the Pacific.

OPPENHEIMER

Should I come with you to Washington?

GROVES

What for?

OPPENHEIMER

Well . . . you'll keep me informed?

Groves turns to leave –

GROVES

Of course.

(looks back)

As best I can.

I watch Groves leave, uneasy. A truck pulls out, REVEALING TELLER. He crosses, watching the loaded truck move away . . .

TELLER

Would the Japanese surrender if they knew what was coming?

OPPENHEIMER

I don't know.

TELLER

Have you seen Szilard's petition?

OPPENHEIMER

Yeah. What the hell does Szilard know about the Japanese?

I look at Teller.

OPPENHEIMER

You're not signing it?

TELLER

A lot of people have.

OPPENHEIMER

Edward, the fact that we built this bomb doesn't give us any more right or responsibility to decide how it's used than anyone else.

TELLER

But we're the only people who know about it.

OPPENHEIMER

I've told Stimson the various opinions of the community.

TELLER

But what's *your* opinion?

I watch another truck pull out . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Once it's used, nuclear war, maybe all war, becomes unthinkable.

TELLER

Until somebody builds a bigger bomb.

INT. OPPENHEIMER HOUSE, LOS ALAMOS – NIGHT

Kitty comes downstairs to find me sitting at the kitchen table.
The phone in front of me.

OPPENHEIMER

I thought they would call.

KITTY

It's only the 5th.

OPPENHEIMER

In Japan it's the 6th.

INT. OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I pace my office, agitated.

OPPENHEIMER

Charlotte? Try Groves again.

CHARLOTTE

(O.S.)

Truman's on the Radio –!

I BOLT into –

INT. FOYER, OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Charlotte is patching the PA to the radio –

TRUMAN

(over radio)

... Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one
bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the
enemy ...

INT. OFFICE, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

Frank is doing paperwork when the PA WHISTLES –

TRUMAN

(over PA)

That bomb had more power than twenty thousand tons of TNT . . .

INT. CORRIDOR, T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS –
CONTINUOUS

As Frank emerges, others DRIFT into the corridor, shocked . . .

TRUMAN

(over PA)

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe . . .

He hears BANGING and CHEERING – through the window SOLDIERS BEAT on trash-can lids. Frank and the scientists try uncertain smiles and handshakes . . .

INT. OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE, LOS ALAMOS – DAY

I listen to the radio –

TRUMAN

(over radio)

The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East . . .

CHARLOTTE

(O.S.)

Groves on one!

I white-knuckle the phone . . .

GROVES

(over phone)

I'm very proud of you and all of your people.

OPPENHEIMER

It went alright?

GROVES

(over phone)

Apparently it went with a tremendous bang.

OPPENHEIMER

Everybody here is feeling reasonably good about it. It's been a long road.

GROVES

(over phone)

I think one of the wisest things I ever did was when I selected the director of Los Alamos.

I gently put down the phone . . .

TRUMAN

(over radio)

We have spent two billion dollars . . .

EXT. LOS ALAMOS - CONTINUOUS

I walk in a relieved daze . . .

TRUMAN

(over radio)

. . . on the greatest scientific gamble in history and won.

Horns HONK, soldiers CHEER . . . people WAVE . . . I nod back . . .

INT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS - NIGHT

A restless, excitable CROWD is packed into the bleachers, like a HIGH-SCHOOL PEP RALLY . . .

INT. LOBBY, FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS -
CONTINUOUS

Kitty reaches forward and adjusts my tie. We hear the sound of DOZENS OF FEET STAMPING RHYTHMICALLY . . .

INT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS – CONTINUOUS

The impatient crowd is STAMPING IN UNISON . . .

INT. LOBBY, FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS –
CONTINUOUS

Kitty nods at me, I take a breath and PUSH through the door –

INT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS – CONTINUOUS

As I walk past the rear bleachers I get a close view of DOZENS
OF FEET STAMPING IN UNISON . . . the STAMPING FEET GET
FASTER as I approach the stage . . .

The STAMPING GROWS OPPRESSIVE – FASTER and FASTER until
RHYTHM BREAKS, causing CACOPHONY which PEAKS as I step
up . . .

I raise my hands in a theatrically victorious gesture – the crowd
CHEERS . . .

OPPENHEIMER

The world will remember this day.

LOUDER CHEERING . . .

OPPENHEIMER

It's too early to determine what the results of the bombing
are . . .

Though the crowd is still CHEERING, their sound DIMINISHES . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But I'm sure the Japanese didn't like it –

CHEERS. CHEERS. CHEERS. BUT NO SOUND. As I look out at the
EXCITED FACES I can hear my own BREATHING . . . I carry on –

OPPENHEIMER

I'm proud of what you accomplished . . .

The crowd seems to go NUTS, but all we hear is the QUIET CREAKING OF SEATS and SHUFFLE OF FEET as they REACT, HANDS SILENTLY CLAPPING, MOUTHS SILENTLY JAWING . . . I try again –

OPPENHEIMER

I just wish we'd had it in time to use against the Germans . . .

The CHEERING AND CLAPPING PEOPLE GET TO THEIR FEET in MORTIFYING SILENCE . . .

I stare at them, straining to hear something, then –

PIERCING SCREAMS not cheers, as INSTANT DAYLIGHT POURS IN THE WINDOWS – BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER –

My eyes are pinpricks as I see CHEERING/SCREAMING MOUTHS STRETCHED GROTESQUELY WIDE –

CRACK!! . . . !!! . . . !!!!! . . . !!!!!!! . . . THE THUNDER OF A THOUSAND STORMS ROLLS OVER, DEAFENING –

I see FLESH RIPPED FROM THE SMILING YOUNG FACES . . .

I see PLASMA ROILING and the DEVIL'S CLAW reach into the night sky . . . I see piles of ASHES where the young crowd was cheering . . .

INT. SAME – LATER

I DRIFT through a SILENT, KINETIC WHIRLWIND OF CELEBRATION, CLAPPED on the back, KISSED . . . NODDING and HOLLOW SMILES . . .

I see a YOUNG WOMAN LAUGHING . . . I STEP on something, look down to see my foot inside a CHARRED CORPSE . . . I look up, SHAKING OFF THE IMAGE . . . I see young people MAKING OUT under the bleachers, a hand up a sweater . . . I see the young woman again but NOW SHE JUST CRIES AND CRIES AND CRIES . . .

INT. LOBBY, FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS –
CONTINUOUS

DRIFTING through . . . I see a young man sitting, back to the wall, WEEPING, a woman trying to console him . . .

EXT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS – CONTINUOUS

As I exit, REVELERS RUN PAST, JOYFUL . . . turning, I see a young physicist at the wall, bent double . . .

As I pass, he looks up, DISTRAUGHT, VOMIT AROUND HIS MOUTH.

Fade to black.

INT. LOBBY, OVAL OFFICE, THE WHITE HOUSE – DAY

Relief. Gentle formality. I look at the coffee table: *Time* magazine – me on the cover: ‘FATHER OF THE ATOMIC BOMB’.

FEMALE VOICE
(O.S.)

Dr Oppenheimer?

An AIDE on softly clicking heels, points at the magazine.

AIDE

Nice picture.

I look up at her. Blank.

AIDE

President Truman will see you now.

INT. OVAL OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Truman comes from behind his desk to shake my hand –

TRUMAN

Dr Oppenheimer, it's an honour.

OPPENHEIMER

Mr President. Secretary Byrnes.

Byrnes nods, sits. I take a seat. Truman leans on the desk.

TRUMAN

How's it feel to be the most famous man in the world?

I can't think of an answer.

TRUMAN

You helped save a lot of American lives. What we did at Hiroshima was –

OPPENHEIMER

And Nagasaki.

TRUMAN

What?

OPPENHEIMER

Hiroshima *and* Nagasaki.

TRUMAN

Obviously. Your invention let us bring our boys home. Your country owes you a great debt.

OPPENHEIMER

It was hardly my invention.

TRUMAN

It's you on the cover of *Time*.

(indicates Byrnes)

Jim here tells me you're concerned about an arms race with the Soviets.

OPPENHEIMER

Well, it's that . . . now is our chance to secure international cooperation on atomic energy, and I'm concerned –

TRUMAN

You know when the Soviets are gonna have a bomb?

OPPENHEIMER

I'm not sure I could give a –

TRUMAN

Never.

I look at the President, incredulous . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Mr President, the Russians have good physicists and abundant resources –

TRUMAN

Abundant? I don't think so.

OPPENHEIMER

They'll put everything they have . . .

I taper off.

TRUMAN

I hear you're leaving Los Alamos. What should we do with it?

OPPENHEIMER

Give it back to the Indians.

Truman laughs. But I'm not joking. Truman looks to Byrnes for help.

BYRNES

Dr Oppenheimer, if what you say about the Soviets is true, we have to build up Los Alamos, not shut it down.

I WRING my hands, deeply uncomfortable . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Mr President, I feel that I have blood on my hands.

Truman looks at me differently. Pulls the crisp white handkerchief from his breast pocket and offers it –

TRUMAN

You think anyone in Hiroshima or Nagasaki gives a shit who built the bomb? They care who dropped it. I did. Hiroshima isn't about *you*.

Truman gestures to Byrnes, they both RISE. I get to my feet.
Awkward. As I leave I hear –

TRUMAN

Don't let that crybaby back in here.

The door of the Oval Office CLOSES on me . . .

STRAUSS

(V.O.)

Robert saw that hand-wringing got him nowhere . . .

INT. LOBBY, OVAL OFFICE, THE WHITE HOUSE –
CONTINUOUS

Walking past I notice my face staring back at me from the cover
of the magazine on the table . . .

STRAUSS

(V.O.)

By the time I met him, he'd fully embraced his 'father of
the bomb' reputation . . .

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

Strauss sits talking with the Senate Aide.

STRAUSS

He used his profile to influence policy . . .

INSERT CUT: LIFE MAGAZINE – 'OPPENHEIMER, NO. 1 THINKER
ON ATOMIC ENERGY' . . . OPPENHEIMER RUNS A GAUNTLET OF
FLASHBULBS . . . OPPENHEIMER AND KITTY ARE PHOTOGRAPHED
AT OLDEN MANOR . . .

STRAUSS

*But all along – with McCarthy on the rise – he knew
he was vulnerable. His brother was blacklisted by every
university in the country . . .*

INSERT CUT: FRANK WORKS A RANCH IN COLORADO . . .

STRAUSS

Lomanitz wound up working the railroad, laying track . . .

INSERT CUT: LOMANITZ SWINGS A HAMMER . . .

STRAUSS

Chevalier went into exile . . .

INSERT CUT: CHEVALIER CARRIES SHOPPING, STEPPING AROUND CHICKENS IN A RURAL FRENCH ALLEY . . .

STRAUSS

But none of that stopped Robert from pushing the GAC to recommend arms control instead of the H-bomb.

INSERT CUT: STRAUSS MOVES THE FLOWERS ON THE TABLE IN THE HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM, WATCHING OPPENHEIMER . . .

STRAUSS

He was devastated when that didn't go his way . . .

INSERT CUT: HEADLINE: 'TRUMAN ANNOUNCES H-BOMB PROGRAM' . . .

Cut to:

INT. BALLROOM, PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT (COLOUR)

Drink in hand, I watch the room sing 'Happy Birthday' to Strauss. Ruth Tolman is next to me, staring at the NEWSPAPER.

RUTH

I miss Richard more than I can bear . . .

I turn to Ruth, sympathetic.

RUTH

But part of me's glad he didn't live to see where this is all going.

I nod, understanding. She downs her drink and leaves.

SCHLESINGER

(O.S.)

Robert, my son and his fiancée are desperate to meet the father of the atomic bomb . . .

Schlesinger is there with his adult children – I glance at them, raise a glass, then turn away. Schlesinger stands there, humiliated. The couple awkwardly moves off.

SCHLESINGER

Is this a bad time?

OPPENHEIMER

What do you think, Lewis?

SCHLESINGER

I think it must have been a blow for you –

OPPENHEIMER

For the world.

SCHLESINGER

The world? What does Fuchs mean to rest of the world?

OPPENHEIMER

Fuchs? Klaus Fuchs?

Schlesinger looks at me with concern . . .

SCHLESINGER

You haven't heard. Klaus Fuchs, the British scientist you put onto the implosion team at Los Alamos?

INSERT CUT: FUCHS HANDS OPPENHEIMER HIS PIPE . . .

SCHLESINGER

Turns out he was spying for the Soviets. The whole time. I'm sorry, Robert, you must feel awful.

(gestures to bar)

Have another. On me.

Schlesinger moves off. I stand there. Frozen.

SCHLESINGER
(V.O.)

After the truth about Fuchs came out, they stepped up surveillance on Robert. He knew his phone was tapped –

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

SCHLESINGER

He was followed everywhere . . .

INSERT CUT: OPPENHEIMER, DRIVING, CHECKS HIS REAR-VIEW MIRROR, SPOTS A SEDAN FOLLOWING HIM . . .

SCHLESINGER

His trash picked through . . .

INSERT CUT: KITTY, FROM THE KITCHEN WINDOW, SPOTS A SUITED MAN PICKING THROUGH THEIR TRASH . . .

SCHLESINGER

But it never stopped him speaking his mind.

SENATE AIDE

A man of conviction?

SCHLESINGER

Sure. Or maybe he thought fame could actually protect him. When Eisenhower took over, Robert saw one more chance. He took it . . .

INT. CORPORATE AUDITORIUM – NIGHT (B&W)

Oppenheimer is lecturing . . . Strauss is in the crowd . . .

OPPENHEIMER

America and Russia may be likened to two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life. There are various aspects of this policy which I would like to discuss but can't. Follies that can occur only when even the men who know the facts can find

no one to talk about them, when the facts are too secret for discussion, and thus for thought. Candor is the only remedy. Officials in Washington have to start levelling with the American people, and telling them what the enemy already know about the atomic armaments race.

Strauss notices two generals exchanging unfavorable looks.

STRAUSS
(V.O.)

A lot of scientists blame me, but how was I supposed to protect him?

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

STRAUSS

That was the last straw for Robert's enemies.

SENATE AIDE

So he had to lose his security clearance.

STRAUSS

And with it, his credibility.

SENATE AIDE

But how could they do it? He was a war hero – and he'd already told everyone about his past . . .

STRAUSS

Borden dredged it all up again.

SENATE AIDE

But how could Borden get access to Oppenheimer's FBI file? Could it have been Nichols?

STRAUSS

I can't imagine he'd do that. But whoever did unleashed a firestorm that burned a path from the White House right to my desk at the AEC. You see them in there trying to hang Oppenheimer round my neck. I've worked my whole life to get here – the Cabinet of the United States of America –

and now, in front of the entire country, they want to put me back in my place . . . a lowly shoe salesman.

COUNSEL

Lewis, we can win this thing.

SENATE AIDE

I think we can make the Senate grasp that you did your duty, painful though it was. Will Hill's testimony back that up?

COUNSEL

Hill should be fine.

STRAUSS

I don't really know him, but he was one of Szilard's boys in Chicago. And they never forgave Oppenheimer . . .

Cut to:

INT. LECTURE HALL, LOS ALAMOS – NIGHT (COLOUR)

Serber and MORRISON lecture using slides we never see.

STRAUSS

(V.O.)

. . . for not supporting their petition against bombing Japan.

I watch as part of a large audience.

MORRISON

This was taken thirty-one days after the bombing. Virtually everyone in the street for nearly a mile around was instantly and seriously burned by the heat of the bomb.

Serber changes the slide. I react slightly.

MORRISON

The hot flash burned suddenly and strangely.

SERBER

The Japanese told us of people who wore striped clothing upon whom the skin was burned in stripes.

Changes slide. I LOOK AWAY from the screen. I hear the sound of FEET STAMPING as Morrison continues . . .

MORRISON

There were many who thought themselves lucky, who crawled out of the ruins of their homes only slightly injured. But they died anyway. They died days or weeks later from the radium-like rays emitted in great numbers at the moment of the explosion.

EXT. T-SECTION, LOS ALAMOS – NIGHT

I light my pipe. Teller comes up.

TELLER

Did you read this crap in the papers? A British physicist saying the atomic bombings weren't the last act of World War II but the first act of this cold war with Russia.

OPPENHEIMER

Which physicist?

TELLER

I think you knew him. Patrick Blackett?

I remember –

INSERT CUT: BLACKETT TAKES A MOUTHFUL OF APPLE . . .

I smile to myself, rueful . . .

OPPENHEIMER

He may not be wrong. We bombed an enemy that was essentially defeated.

TELLER

Robert, you have all the influence now.

I look at Teller.

TELLER

Urge them to continue my research on the Super.

OPPENHEIMER

I neither can nor will, Edward.

Teller looks at me. Hurt.

TELLER

Why?

OPPENHEIMER

It's not the right use of our resources.

TELLER

Is that what you really believe?

I say nothing.

TELLER

J. Robert Oppenheimer. Sphinx-like guru of the atom.
Nobody knows what you believe. Do you?

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

I hope that in years to come you will look back on your
work here with pride . . .

EXT. FULLER LODGE, LOS ALAMOS - DAY

I give my leaving address, Groves by my side. The THOUSANDS
of members of the Los Alamos community listen . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But today that pride must be tempered with a profound
concern. If atomic weapons are to be added to the arsenals
of a warring world . . . then the day will come when people
will curse the name of Los Alamos and Hiroshima. The
peoples of this world must unite or they will perish. The
atomic bomb has spelled out these words for all men to
understand.

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE echoes around the mountains . . .

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE - MORNING (B&W)

Strauss and Counsel drink coffee. The Senate Aide BURSTS in -

SENATE AIDE

Sorry, Admiral - I stopped off to get this -

The Senate Aide holds up TIME MAGAZINE: Strauss is on the cover - 'THE STRAUSS AFFAIR, SENATE V. PRESIDENT'.

SENATE AIDE

It seems pretty favorable . . .

The Counsel looks over Senate Aide's shoulder -

COUNSEL

There's Oppenheimer. What's the caption?

SENATE AIDE

*'J. Robert Oppenheimer - Strauss fought him . . .
(pauses)*

. . . and the US won.'

COUNSEL

That'll work.

The Senate Aide is perturbed. Looks up at Strauss.

SENATE AIDE

Those are your words. From yesterday.

STRAUSS

We needed to pivot.

SENATE AIDE

But how could you know what Time magazine would write . . .?

STRAUSS

Henry Luce is an old friend.

The Senate Aide stares at Strauss, realizing . . .

SENATE AIDE

You've sat there and let me tell you how this is done. But you've been far ahead. All along . . .

STRAUSS

Survival in Washington is about knowing how to get things done.

SENATE AIDE

You get things done. What was it you said about Borden? Why get caught holding the knife yourself? I'm beginning to think that Borden was holding the knife for you.

STRAUSS

Oh?

SENATE AIDE

As Chairman of the AEC, you had access to Oppenheimer's file . . .

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

I sit there testifying. Robb checks his notes . . .

ROBB

In the years following the war, would you say you exerted a great influence on the atomic policies of the USA?

OPPENHEIMER

I think 'great' would be an overstatement.

ROBB

Really? If we look at the issue of isotopes . . . were you not personally responsible for destroying all opposition to their export?

I think back to my congressional testimony . . .

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM – DAY

The room is all chuckles and smiles at my performance . . .

OPPENHEIMER

You can use a bottle of beer for making atomic weapons, in fact, you do . . . I'd say isotopes are less useful for atomic energy than electronic components, but more useful than a sandwich. I'd put them somewhere in between.

The room LAUGHS appreciatively. I lean over to Volpe –

OPPENHEIMER

How'd I do?

Volpe glances back at Lewis Strauss, eyes down, ENRAGED . . .

VOLPE

Maybe a little too well, Robert.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY

OPPENHEIMER

I was the spokesman, but the opinion was unanimous amongst scientists.

GRAY

That will do for today. We'll reconvene tomorrow, when we'll hear from Dr Isidor Rabi.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, WASHINGTON, DC – NIGHT

I sit on the bed, Garrison and his team go over notes. Kitty raids the mini-bar.

GARRISON

Rabi will help us. But it's going to come down to how much influence Borden has been able to exert on Teller –

Kitty is laughing as she opens a miniature with her teeth.

GARRISON

Did I say something funny?

KITTY

Borden, Borden, Borden. We all know it's Strauss.

OPPENHEIMER

Kitty, Lewis brought me to Princeton.

KITTY

And you humiliated him in front of Congress.

OPPENHEIMER

That was six years ago.

KITTY

The truly vindictive are as patient as saints.

GARRISON

Strauss claims to be neutral.

Kitty THROWS the miniature at me – it SMASHES into the wall –

KITTY

Wake up! It's always been Strauss – and you know it. Why won't you fight him, for Christ's sake?!

She stalks into the bathroom, SLAMMING the door. Garrison watches me clean up the miniature . . .

GARRISON

I've said it before, Robert. We should not put her on the stand –

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE – MORNING (B&W)

The Senate Aide stares at Strauss in morbid fascination . . .

SENATE AIDE

It wasn't Nichols or Hoover or one of Truman's guys – it was you. You gave the file to Borden . . . you set him on Oppenheimer, convinced him to –

SCHLESINGER

Borden didn't take any convincing . . .

INT. NICHOLS' OFFICE, ATOMIC ENERGY
COMMISSION - NIGHT (B&W)

Nichols is behind the desk, but Strauss commands the room, instructing Borden . . .

SCHLESINGER

Take your time, use the entire file. Write up your conclusions and send them to the FBI.

BORDEN

The material's extensive - but it isn't new.

SCHLESINGER

Your conclusions will be. And they'll have to be answered.

NICHOLS

Hoover passes them to McCarthy?

SCHLESINGER

(shakes head)

Oppenheimer's too slippery for that self-promoting clown. I've talked it over with Hoover - he'll hold McCarthy at bay while you do this at the AEC.

NICHOLS

A trial?

SCHLESINGER

No trial. You can't give Oppenheimer a platform, you can't martyr him. We need a systematic destruction of Oppenheimer's credibility so he can never again speak on matters of national security.

BORDEN

What, then?

SCHLESINGER

A shabby little room, far from the limelight . . .

INSERT CUT: ROOM 2022 IS OPENED UP. DUSTED, TABLES ARRANGED . . .

STRAUSS

A simple bureaucratic procedure – his Q clearance is up for renewal.

(points at Borden)

You send your accusations to the FBI . . .

INSERT CUT: BORDEN PULLS PAPER FROM HIS TYPEWRITER. HE SELLS AN ENVELOPE . . .

STRAUSS

Hoover sends them to the AEC . . .

(points at Nichols)

You're forced to act. You write up an indictment . . .

INT. FRONT HALL, STRAUSS RESIDENCE – NIGHT
(B&W)

Strauss opens the door to Oppenheimer . . .

STRAUSS

(V.O.)

Tell Oppenheimer his security clearance is not being renewed . . .

INT. LIVING ROOM, STRAUSS HOUSE – NIGHT (B&W)

Nichols hands the indictment to Oppenheimer, who sits and reads. Strauss hands Oppenheimer a drink . . .

STRAUSS

(V.O.)

But offer him the chance to appeal.

Oppenheimer looks up from the letter.

OPPENHEIMER

Can I keep this?

NICHOLS

No.

STRAUSS

As you can see, Robert, it's not yet signed. If you do decide to appeal, they'll have to send you a copy . . .

Oppenheimer rises. In a daze. Strauss takes his arm . . .

INT. NICHOLS' OFFICE, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION - NIGHT (B&W)

STRAUSS

When he appeals, I appoint a board . . .

INSERT CUT: THE GRAY BOARD TAKE THEIR SEATS IN ROOM 2022 . . .

STRAUSS

They will, of course, have counsel -

INSERT CUT: ROGER ROBB TAKES HIS SEAT . . .

NICHOLS

A prosecutor?

STRAUSS

In all but name.

NICHOLS

Who?

STRAUSS

Roger Robb.

NICHOLS

Ouch.

STRAUSS

Robb will have security clearance to examine Oppenheimer's file . . .

INSERT CUT: ROBB OPENS A MASSIVE BLACK BINDER . . .

STRAUSS

As will the Gray Board . . .

INSERT CUT: A BLACK BINDER IS PLACED IN FRONT OF EACH BOARD MEMBER . . .

STRAUSS

Defence counsel will not.

INSERT CUT: GARRISON, AT HIS TABLE IN ROOM 2022, LOOKS COVETOUSLY AT THE BLACK BINDERS GRACING EACH PLACE BUT HIS . . .

STRAUSS

A closed hearing – no audience, no reporters, no burden of proof.

NICHOLS

No burden of proof?

Strauss sips his drink. Smiles at Nichols . . .

STRAUSS

We're not convicting, just denying.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY (B&W)

Oppenheimer is seated at the witness table . . .

OPPENHEIMER

This answer is a summary of relevant aspects of my life in more or less chronological order . . .

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

The Senate Aide looks like he ate a bad nut.

STRAUSS

What is it you said? 'This is just how it's done'?

SENATE AIDE

Forgive my naïveté.

STRAUSS

Amateurs seek the sun and get eaten, power stays in the shadows.

SENATE AIDE

(points to Time magazine)

You're out of the shadows, now.

STRAUSS

That's why this has to work.

SENATE AIDE

Well, Teller's testifying this morning – that'll help, then Hill is in the afternoon.

STRAUSS

Hill should help us, too.

Cut to:

Close on: a LETTER – AEC letterhead – 'DEAR DR OPPENHEIMER . . .'

STRAUSS

(O.S.)

As you can see, it's not yet signed . . .

INT. LIVING ROOM, STRAUSS HOUSE – LATER
(COLOUR)

I look up from Nichols' letter – SHELL-SHOCKED.

STRAUSS

If you do decide to appeal, they'll have to send you a copy . . .

I hand the letter back to Nichols. Strauss takes my arm . . .

EXT. STRAUSS HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Strauss gently guides me down the steps . . .

STRAUSS

Take my car and driver. I insist.

OPPENHEIMER

I'll have to consult my lawyers.

STRAUSS

Of course. But don't take too long, I can't keep Nichols at bay. I'm sorry it's come to this, Robert.

Strauss, like a parent, puts me into the back of his car.

INT. STRAUSS CAR - NIGHT

I sit in the back, shadows flicking across my face . . .

OPPENHEIMER

(V.O.)

Nichols wants me to fight so that he can get it all in the record . . .

INT. VOLPE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kitty and I sit with Joe Volpe.

OPPENHEIMER

Strauss thinks I should walk away . . .

VOLPE

You could. Your security clearance expires tomorrow. Just let it go.

KITTY

You'd be accepting the charges! You'll lose your job. Your reputation, your place in history! We'll lose our house. Robert, we have to fight.

I look at Kitty. Nod.

VOLPE

As AEC Counsel, I can't represent you. I'll call Lloyd Garrison.

OPPENHEIMER

He's good.

VOLPE

The best. But I have to warn you . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I watch Garrison scramble to make notes . . .

VOLPE

(V.O.)

This won't be a fair fight.

ROBB

During your interview with Boris Pash in 1943, did you refer to microfilm?

OPPENHEIMER

No.

Robb consults a paper in his black binder.

ROBB

You never said 'a man at the consulate expert in the use of microfilm'?

OPPENHEIMER

Not specifically.

GARRISON

I'd like to know what document Mr Robb is quoting from, and if we might be furnished with a copy.

ROBB

The document is classified.

GARRISON

Members of the board, we're now hearing some new account of the interview . . . shouldn't we get back to first-hand information?

ROBB

This *is* first-hand.

GARRISON

How so?

Robb looks at Gray. Who nods.

ROBB

There's a recording of the interview.

Garrison is shocked. I shake my head.

GARRISON

You've let my client sit up here and potentially perjure himself and all this time you had a recording -?

ROBB

No one told your client to misrepresent his former answers -

GARRISON

Misrepresent? It was twelve years ago!

(to the board)

Can we listen to this recording?

ROBB

Mr Garrison, you don't have clearance.

I SNAP at the absurdity -

OPPENHEIMER

But you're reading it into the transcript!

Garrison puts a calming hand on my arm -

GARRISON

Is this proceeding interested in truth or entrapment?

Because if it's truth . . .

Garrison points at the BLACK BINDERS in front of them all -

GARRISON

Where's the disclosure? Where's the witness list?

GRAY

Mr Garrison, this is not a trial – as you're well aware. Evidentiary rules do not apply. We're dealing with national security.

GARRISON

How does national security prevent the prosecution from providing us a list of witnesses?!

Gray looks at Garrison, stony-faced.

GRAY

Perhaps a brief recess is in order.

OPPENHEIMER

If I may? You gentlemen have my words. If you say it's from a transcript then I'll accept it. I've already explained that I made up a cock-and-bull story.

ROBB

But not the level of detail. Why would anyone present such an elaborate fiction?

OPPENHEIMER

Because I was an idiot. I found myself trying to give a tip to the intelligence people, without realizing that when you give a tip you have to offer the whole story. Asked for details, I went off on a false pattern. There was no microfilm, no consular attaché. There weren't three or more people involved on the project. There was one person involved. That was me.

ROBB

Why lie?

OPPENHEIMER

Clearly with the intention of not revealing who was the intermediary.

ROBB

Your friend, Haakon Chevalier. The Communist.

OPPENHEIMER

Yes.

ROBB

Is he still your friend?

I look from smug Robb to the expectant board members . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Chevalier is my friend.

Robb backs down, SATISFIED.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 2022 - DAY

Oppenheimer and Garrison take a break. Rabi approaches.

GARRISON

Dr Rabi, thanks for coming.

Garrison looks around to see Robb conferring with his team.

GARRISON

(lowered voice)

Do you know anyone the prosecution has called?

RABI

Teller, obviously.

(looks at Oppenheimer)

They've asked Lawrence.

OPPENHEIMER

What did he say?

RABI

He wasn't going to help them . . .

OPPENHEIMER

But?

RABI

Strauss told him that you and Ruth Tolman had been having an affair for years. The whole time you lived with them in Pasadena . . .

INSERT CUT: I SIP FROM RUTH'S DRINK AT THE CHRISTMAS PARTY. RICHARD ENTERS, BANGING SNOW OFF HIS SHOULDERS . . .

RABI

He convinced Lawrence that Richard died of a broken heart.

OPPENHEIMER

That's absurd.

RABI

Which part?

OPPENHEIMER

The broken heart. Richard never found out.

Rabi tries not to smile. Shakes his head.

OPPENHEIMER

Is Lawrence going to testify?

RABI

I don't know.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY

Rabi is testifying.

GARRISON

Dr Rabi, what governmental positions do you currently hold?

RABI

I'm Chairman of the General Advisory Committee to the AEC, succeeding Dr Oppenheimer.

GARRISON

And how long have you known Dr Oppenheimer?

RABI

Since 1928. I know him quite well.

GARRISON

Well enough to speak on the bearing of his character, loyalty and associations?

RABI

Dr Oppenheimer is a man of upstanding character, loyal to the United States, to his friends and to the institutions of which he is a part. I've examined his security file, and in spite of the associations in there, I do not believe Dr Oppenheimer is a security risk, and that these associations from the past should bar him from continuing as a consultant to the AEC.

EXT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 2022 – DAY

I sit, exhausted. A segment of orange drops into my lap –

RABI

Eat.

I 'sip' at the orange. Rabi spots Lawrence coming down the corridor – Rabi straightens to his full height – STARES DOWN Lawrence, who looks from Rabi to me. Then TURNS and leaves.

OPPENHEIMER

What was that?

RABI

Nothing to worry about.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – LATER

Robb cross-examines Rabi –

ROBB

Dr Rabi, after the Russian A-bomb test, did Dr Lawrence come to see you prior to the GAC meeting?

RABI

You'd be better off asking him.

ROBB

I fully intend to. Did he come to you about the Hydrogen bomb?

RABI

Yes. We all felt that after the Russian explosion we had to do something to regain our position.

ROBB

So you agreed with those who felt we should launch a programme for the Super at that time?

RABI

No. There were all kinds of legitimate concerns about the allocation of our resources.

GRAY

Would you say Dr Oppenheimer was unalterably opposed to the H-bomb?

RABI

No. He thought a fusion programme would come at the expense of our awfully good fission programme.

ROBB

But that proved not to be the case?

RABI

In the event, both could be done. Los Alamos, which Dr Oppenheimer founded, rose to the occasion and worked miracles, absolute miracles.

ROBB

May I ask one more question? A purely hypothetical question. Suppose this board should not be satisfied that in his testimony here Dr Oppenheimer had told the whole truth . . . What would you say then about whether or not he ought to be cleared?

RABI

If you want to set me up on the board, then I'll give you an answer. But I've never hidden my opinion that I think this whole proceeding is a most unfortunate one.

ROBB

Why?

RABI

He's a consultant – you don't want to consult the guy? Don't. Why go through all this against a man who's accomplished what Dr Oppenheimer has? Look at his record – we have an A-bomb and a whole series of it, and we have a whole series of Super bombs and what more do you want, mermaids?

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM – DAY
(B&W)

Strauss watches with satisfaction as Teller testifies.

TELLER

... that's why I'm here today. To express the warm support for science and scientists Mr Strauss has shown over the years I've known him.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you, Dr Teller. We'll break now, unless there's any immediate business.

STRAUSS

Senator, I'd like to once again request that we're furnished with a list of witnesses.

CHAIRMAN

And I'll remind the nominee that we don't always have that information in advance. We do know that Dr Hill will be here after lunch.

With that, the Chairman BANGS his gavel . . .

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

Robb addresses the board . . .

ROBB

Our next scheduled witness, Dr Lawrence, has apparently come down with . . . colitis . . .

I glance sideways at Garrison, who almost smiles –

ROBB

So I'll proceed instead with William Borden.

I watch as Borden is sworn in.

ROBB

Mr Borden, as a result of your study of Dr Oppenheimer, did you reach certain conclusions?

BORDEN

I did.

ROBB

Did there come a time when you expressed those conclusions in a letter to Mr J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation?

BORDEN

That is correct.

ROBB

Prior to writing that letter, did you discuss the writing of it with anybody connected with the Atomic Energy Commission?

BORDEN

I did not.

ROBB

Do you have a copy of the letter with you?

Robb's assistant distributes copies of the letter . . .

BORDEN

I have one in front of me.

ROBB

Would you be good enough to read it?

GARRISON

A moment, please!

Garrison holds up a finger, FRANTICALLY reading ahead –

GRAY

What's the purpose of the delay? He's simply going to read this.

GARRISON

Mr Chairman, this is the first we've seen of this letter – and I see statements, at least one, which I don't think anybody would be happy to have go into the record – accusations that have not before been made and are not part of the indictment from Nichols.

Garrison holds up the letter –

GARRISON

Is it the opinion of the board that these are matters into which inquiry should now be directed?

I scan down the letter for what he's seen. My face falls . . .

GRAY

Testimony of this witness is not in any way going to broaden the inquiry.

GARRISON

How can it avoid it, sir? Supposing you should believe the witness? Mr Robb is tasked by this board with calling in witnesses, and he brings in one to make accusations of a kind that I don't think belong here.

ROBB

Mr Chairman, the witness wrote this letter on his own initiative laying out evidence which has already been before the board. His conclusions are valid testimony just like the positive conclusions of friends of Dr Oppenheimer. It cuts both ways.

GARRISON

How long has counsel been in possession of the letter?

ROBB

Mr Garrison, I don't think I should be subject to cross-examination by you.

GRAY

Mr Garrison, given that we on the board have all read the letter, isn't it better to have it in the record?

Garrison says nothing. He looks at me, frustrated.

GRAY

Let's proceed.

BORDEN

'Dear Mr Hoover, the purpose of this letter is to state my opinion, based upon years of study of the available classified evidence, that more probably than not J. Robert Oppenheimer is an agent of the Soviet Union.'

I turn the letter face down, staring at its blank whiteness . . .

BORDEN

'The following conclusions are justified. One: Between 1929 and 1942, more probably than not, J. Robert Oppenheimer was a sufficiently hardened Communist that he volunteered information to the Soviets. Two: More probably than not, he has since been functioning as an espionage agent.'

I watch the STENOGRAPHER calmly type this into the record . . .

BORDEN

‘Three: More probably than not, he has since acted under a Soviet directive in influencing United States military, atomic energy, intelligence, and diplomatic policy.’

Devastated, I cannot meet the eye of anyone in the room. Garrison gets up from his place. Sits down next to me.

GARRISON

I’m sorry, Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

Isn’t anyone ever going to tell the truth about what’s happening here?

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM – DAY
(B&W)

Strauss and his Counsel take their seats as the Chairman calls to order. Strauss looks around the room, CHEERFULLY.

CHAIRMAN

We will now hear from Dr David Hill.

Strauss peers at a FAMILIAR man in GLASSES, DAVID HILL – Szilard’s note-taking scientist WHOSE PEN OPPENHEIMER GRABBED . . .

CHAIRMAN

Dr Hill, would you care to make a statement?

HILL

Thank you. I have been asked to testify about Lewis Strauss, a man who has given years of service in high positions of government and who is known to be earnest, hard-working and intelligent.

Strauss glances at Counsel, satisfied.

HILL

The views I have to express are my own, but I believe that much I have to say will help indicate why most of the scientists in this country would prefer to see Mr Strauss completely out of the government.

Strauss narrows his eyes . . .

SENATOR PASTORE
(friendly lob)

You're referring to the hostility of certain scientists directed at Mr Strauss because of his commitment to security, as demonstrated in the Oppenheimer affair?

HILL

No.

Hill takes a sip of water before continuing . . .

HILL

Because of the personal vindictiveness he demonstrated against Dr Oppenheimer, and against all those who have disagreed with his official positions.

Counsel turns to Strauss, who is FIXATED on Hill. The Senate Aide REACTS, surprised. MURMURS echo through the chamber . . .

HILL

In my ten years observation of Mr Strauss I have seen his incapacity to change a position, the subordination of his integrity to the attainment of political goals and an obsessive quest for popular and professional approval . . .

The audience REACTS – Strauss SHAKES his head – the Chairman BANGS the gavel –

CHAIRMAN

Order!

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

Vannevar Bush is sworn in.

BUSH

It appears to most scientists around the country that Oppenheimer is now being pilloried and put through an ordeal because he expressed his honest opinions. The written charges against him are in a poorly written indictment which the board should have rejected from the outset.

EVANS

Dr Bush, I thought I was performing a service to my country in hearing this case.

BUSH

No board in this country should sit in judgement of a man because he expressed strong opinions. If you want to try that case, you can try me – I have expressed strong opinions, often unpopular, many times. I'm doing so right now. When a man is pilloried for doing that, this country is in a severe state . . . excuse me, gentlemen, if I become stirred, but I am.

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM – DAY
(B&W)

Strauss fumes as Hill reads his statement.

HILL

From the standpoint of public welfare, the most injurious exercise of personal vindictiveness in which Lewis Strauss has engaged was in the personnel security prosecution of J. Robert Oppenheimer, who had not hesitated to disagree with Mr Strauss on certain questions of fundamental policy. Oppenheimer made mincemeat out of Strauss'

position on the shipments of isotopes to Norway, and Strauss never forgave him this public humiliation.

Another controversy between them centred around their differences in judgement on how the H-bomb would contribute to national security. Oppenheimer had considerable influence and prestige, and Strauss was able to find a few ambitious men who also disagreed with Oppenheimer's position, and envied him his prestige in government circles.

Teller, in the audience, stares at Hill . . .

HILL

Strauss turned to the personnel security system in order to destroy Oppenheimer's effectiveness –

SENATOR PASTORE

But, Dr Hill, we've already heard that Mr Strauss did not bring the charges, or participate in the hearings against Dr Oppenheimer.

HILL

I realize that Mr Strauss didn't sign the letter of charges, but I think when all of the evidence is viewed, it becomes highly plausible that the Oppenheimer matter was initiated and carried through largely through the animus of Lewis Strauss.

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

Groves is testifying.

ROBB

General, would you clear Dr Oppenheimer today?

GROVES

Under my interpretation of the Atomic Energy Act, which did not exist when I hired Dr Oppenheimer in 1942 . . .

I would not clear Dr Oppenheimer today if I were a member of the commission.

ROBB

Thank you, General.

GROVES

But I'm not sure I could've cleared *any* of those guys.

ROBB

That's all.

GARRISON

General, Dr Oppenheimer had no responsibility for the selection or clearance of Klaus Fuchs, did he?

GROVES

No, not at all.

GARRISON

You wouldn't want to leave with this board even the remotest suggestion that you're here questioning Dr Oppenheimer's basic loyalty to the United States in the operation of Los Alamos?

GROVES

By no means. I hope I didn't lead anybody to think otherwise for an instant.

GARRISON

Would you say that the revocation of Dr Oppenheimer's position would be in the public interest?

GROVES

The revocation under such extreme publicity I think would be most unfortunate, not because of the effect on Dr Oppenheimer – that I leave to one side – but because of the disastrous effect upon the attitude of the scientists of this country toward doing government research.

GRAY

Thank you, General.

Groves gets up, walks past me with a formal nod.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 2022 – DAY

Garrison checks his watch.

OPPENHEIMER

She'll be here.

GARRISON

Do you even want her here?

OPPENHEIMER

Only a fool or an adolescent presumes to know someone else's relationship, and you're neither, Lloyd.

Kitty comes around the corner. Unsteady. I watch her walk towards us, not entirely straight . . . she catches my eye –

OPPENHEIMER

Kitty and I, we're grown-ups. We've walked through fire together. And she'll do fine.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY

Kitty is at the witness table. From behind I can see her fiddling distractedly with her purse . . .

GARRISON

Mrs Oppenheimer, you are no longer a member of the Communist Party?

KITTY

No.

GARRISON

When would you say that you ceased to be a member?

KITTY

When I left Youngstown in 1936.

GARRISON

Will you describe your views on Communism as pro, anti, neutral.

KITTY

Very strongly against. I've had nothing to do with Communism since 1936. Since before I met Robert.

GARRISON

That's all.

HILL

(V.O.)

The record demonstrates that Oppenheimer was not interrogated by impartial and disinterested counsel for the Gray Board . . .

Robb gets up to cross-examine . . .

Cut to:

INT. SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM - DAY
(B&W)

Strauss watches Hill continue to answer questions . . .

HILL

... he was interrogated by a prosecutor who used all the tricks of a rather ingenious legal background to try to trick Oppenheimer into erroneous statements, and he did succeed in a few instances.

SENATOR SCOTT

You are charging now that the Gray Board permitted a prosecution of Dr Oppenheimer. Do you think, then, that the members of the Gray Board were unfair?

Hill takes a beat to consider this.

HILL

I can only say if I'd been on the Gray Board, I would've protested against the tactics of the man who served in fact as a prosecuting counsel - a man appointed not by the board but by Lewis Strauss.

Strauss strokes his chin, feigning indifference.

SENATOR MCGEE

Who was this?

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

HILL
(V.O.)

Roger Robb.

Robb tries to put himself in Kitty's eyeline . . .

ROBB

Mrs Oppenheimer.

She will not meet his gaze.

ROBB

Did you have a Communist Party membership card?

KITTY

I, I'm not sure . . .

Kitty fiddles with her purse . . .

ROBB

Not sure?

KITTY

Well . . .

She FREEZES. The Board members look at her. Garrison looks at me . . .

ROBB

Presumably the act of joining the Party was sending some money and receiving a card?

Kitty is focused on her purse . . .

ROBB

No?

And then Kitty LOOKS UP at Robb, pure STEEL -

KITTY

It was all just so long ago, Mr Robb, wasn't it?

ROBB

Not really -

KITTY

Long enough to have forgotten.

ROBB

Did you turn in the card or rip it up?

KITTY

The card whose existence I've forgotten?

ROBB

Your Communist Party membership card -

KITTY

I haven't the slightest idea.

ROBB

Can a distinction be made between Soviet Communism and Communism?

KITTY

In the days when I was a member I thought they were definitely two things -

Garrison and I hang on her every word . . .

KITTY

I thought the Communist Party of the United States was concerned with our domestic problems. I now no longer believe this. I believe the whole thing is linked together and spread all over the world. I've believed this since I left the Party sixteen years ago.

ROBB

But -

KITTY

Seventeen years ago. My mistake.

ROBB

But you –

KITTY

Sorry, eighteen. Yes, eighteen years ago.

Robb sighs patiently.

ROBB

Were you familiar with the fact that your husband was making contributions to the Spanish Civil War as late as 1942?

KITTY

I knew that Robert gave money from time to time, yes.

ROBB

Do you remember whether he gave money on a regular or periodic basis?

Kitty smiles sweetly –

KITTY

Do you mean regular, or do you mean periodic, Mr Robb?

ROBB

(annoyed)

I mean . . . regular.

KITTY

He did not.

ROBB

Were you aware that this money was going into Communist Party channels?

KITTY

Don't you mean 'through'?

ROBB

Pardon?

KITTY

I think you mean 'through Communist Party channels'.

ROBB

Yes.

KITTY

Yes.

ROBB

Would it be fair to say that this meant that by 1942 he had not stopped having anything to do with the Communist Party? I don't insist that you answer yes or no. You can answer any way you wish.

KITTY

I know that. Thank you. But the question isn't properly phrased.

ROBB

Do you understand what I am trying to get at?

KITTY

Yes, I do.

ROBB

Why don't you answer it that way?

KITTY

I don't like the phrase 'having anything to do with the Communist Party' because Robert never had anything to do with the Communist Party as such. I know he gave money for Spanish refugees. I know he took an intellectual interest in Communist ideas –

ROBB

Are there two kinds of Communists? An intellectual Communist and a plain ordinary Commie?

Kitty laughs the laugh of the free.

KITTY

I couldn't answer that one.

EVANS
(delighted)

I couldn't either.

Gray shoots a look at Evans. CHUCKLES around the room. Garrison looks at me. Nods. She did good.

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY

I watch Teller testify.

ROBB

Is it your intention to suggest that Dr Oppenheimer is disloyal to the United States?

TELLER

I do not want to suggest anything of the kind. I have always assumed, and now assume, that he is loyal to the United States. I believe this, and I shall believe it until I see very conclusive proof to the opposite.

ROBB

Now, a question which is a corollary of that . . . do you or do you not believe that Dr Oppenheimer is a security risk?

TELLER

In a great number of cases I have seen Dr Oppenheimer act in a way which for me was exceedingly hard to understand. I thoroughly disagreed with him in numerous issues, and his actions, frankly, appeared to me confused and complicated. To this extent, I feel that I would like to see the vital interests of this country in hands which I understand better and therefore trust more.

GRAY

Thank you, doctor.

Teller gets up from the table, as he walks past me he holds out his hand . . .

TELLER

I'm sorry.

I shake his hand.

KITTY

(V.O.)

You shook his fucking hand?!

INT. DINING ROOM, OLDEN MANOR, PRINCETON – NIGHT

KITTY

I would've spat in his face!

GARRISON

I'm not sure the board would've appreciated that.

KITTY

Not gentlemanly enough? You're all being too goddamn gentlemanly.

VOLPE

Gray must see what Robb is doing – why doesn't he shut him down?

Garrison shrugs.

KITTY

(to me)

And you? Shaking Teller's hand – you need to stop playing the martyr.

EXT. OLDEN MANOR, PRINCETON – NIGHT

Garrison drives off. Volpe turns to me –

VOLPE

Robert, you can't win this thing. It's a kangaroo court with a predetermined outcome. Why put yourself through more of it?

OPPENHEIMER

I have my reasons.

Volpe shrugs. Embraces me. Gets in his car.

EINSTEIN

(O.S.)

He has a point, you know.

I turn. Einstein steps into the light.

EINSTEIN

You're a man chasing a woman who doesn't love him any more – the United States Government.

OPPENHEIMER

I'm not sure you understand, Albert.

EINSTEIN

No? I left my country, never to return. The German calamity of years ago repeats itself – people acquiesce without resistance and align themselves with the forces of evil. You've served America well, and if this is the reward she has to offer perhaps you should turn your back on her.

OPPENHEIMER

Dammit, I happen to love this country.

Einstein considers this. Nods slowly.

EINSTEIN

Then tell them to go to hell.

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

Strauss bursts in, fuming . . .

STRAUSS

This has become a trial about a trial!

SENATE AIDE

It's not good that he's telling them that you initiated the hearings.

STRAUSS

He can't prove it. He can't prove that I gave the file to Borden.

SENATE AIDE

He doesn't have to. We're not in court, there's no burden of proof...

Strauss realizes. Shakes his head at himself...

STRAUSS

They're not convicting. Just denying.

The Senate Aide nods.

STRAUSS

Why would Hill come here to tear me down? What's his angle?

SENATE AIDE

Do people need a reason to do the right thing?

Strauss GLARES at the Senate Aide.

SENATE AIDE

I mean, as he sees it.

STRAUSS

I told you Oppenheimer poisoned the scientists against me! Right from that first meeting...

INSERT CUT: STRAUSS WATCHES OPPENHEIMER HAND EINSTEIN HIS HAT AS THEY SPEAK DOWN AT THE LAKE . . .

STRAUSS

I don't know what Oppenheimer said to him that day, but Einstein wouldn't even meet my eye . . .

INSERT CUT: AS STRAUSS APPROACHES, EINSTEIN WALKS PAST WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING HIM, CLEARLY UPSET . . .

STRAUSS

Oppenheimer knows how to manipulate his own. At Los Alamos he preyed on the naïveté of scientists who thought they'd get a say in how we used their work . . . but don't ever think he was that naive himself . . .

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

I am back at the witness table. Robb squares up.

ROBB

Doctor, in your work on the Hydrogen bomb at Los Alamos and in the years following, were you deterred by any moral qualms about the development of this weapon?

OPPENHEIMER

Of course.

ROBB

But you still got on with the work, didn't you?

OPPENHEIMER

Yes, because this was work of exploration. It was not the preparation of a weapon.

ROBB

You mean it was just an academic excursion?

OPPENHEIMER

No. It's not an academic thing whether you can make a Hydrogen bomb. It's a matter of life and death.

ROBB

Beginning in 1942 you were actively pushing the development of the H-bomb, weren't you?

OPPENHEIMER

'Pushing' is not the right word. Supporting and working on it, yes.

ROBB

When did these moral qualms become so strong that you opposed the development of the Hydrogen bomb?

OPPENHEIMER

When it was suggested that it be the policy of the United States to make these things at all costs, without regard to the balance between these weapons and atomic weapons as part of our arsenal.

ROBB

(theatrical confusion)

What did moral qualms have to do with *that*?

OPPENHEIMER

(struggling)

What did moral qualms have to do with it?

ROBB

Yes.

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

Strauss is pacing now . . .

STRAUSS

Oppenheimer wanted to own the atomic bomb. He wanted to be the man who moved the earth. He talks about putting the nuclear genie back in the bottle – well, I'm here to tell you that I know J. Robert Oppenheimer and if he could do it all over he'd do it all the same. He's never once said he regrets Hiroshima – he'd do it all over because it made him the most important man who ever lived . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION – DAY (COLOUR)

I struggle to find an answer for Robb . . .

OPPENHEIMER

We freely used the atomic bomb.

ROBB

In fact, doctor, you assisted in selecting the target for the drop of the atomic bomb on Japan?

Now I can hear the sound of FEET STAMPING . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Yes.

ROBB

You knew, did you not, that the dropping of that atomic bomb on the target you had selected would kill or injure thousands of civilians, is that correct?

OPPENHEIMER

Not as many as turned out . . .

ROBB

How many were killed or injured?

The feet are stamping FASTER and FASTER . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Seventy thousand.

ROBB

Seventy thousand? At both Hiroshima and -

OPPENHEIMER

One hundred and ten thousand at both.

ROBB

On the day of each bombing.

OPPENHEIMER

Yes.

ROBB

And in the weeks and years after?

OPPENHEIMER

It's been put at between fifty and one hundred thousand . . .

ROBB

Two hundred and twenty thousand dead? At least?

I nod.

ROBB

Did you have moral scruples about that?

OPPENHEIMER

Terrible ones.

ROBB

But you testified the other day that the bombing of Hiroshima was very successful?

OPPENHEIMER

Well, it was technically successful.

ROBB

Oh, technically.

OPPENHEIMER

It's also alleged to have helped end the war.

The stamping feet are LOUDER and FASTER . . .

ROBB

Would you have supported the dropping of a Hydrogen bomb on Hiroshima?

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY (B&W)

Strauss TURNS on the Senate Aide -

STRAUSS

But he wanted all the glory and none of the responsibility. So he needed absolution. He needed to be a martyr, to suffer, and take the sins of the world on his shoulders. To say 'no, we cannot continue on this road' even as he knew we'd have to . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

I search for an answer – the FEET STAMPING ever LOUDER –

OPPENHEIMER

It would make no sense at all.

ROBB

Why?

OPPENHEIMER

The target is too small.

ROBB

Supposing there had been a target in Japan big enough for a thermonuclear weapon, would you have opposed dropping it?

OPPENHEIMER

This was not a problem with which I was confronted.

ROBB

I'm confronting you with it now, sir. Would you have opposed the dropping of a thermonuclear weapon on Japan because of moral scruples?

OPPENHEIMER

I believe I would, sir.

ROBB

Did you oppose the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima because of moral scruples?

OPPENHEIMER

We set forth our –

ROBB

I'm asking *you* about it, not 'we'.

OPPENHEIMER

I set forth arguments against dropping it. But I did not endorse them.

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

Strauss paces the room, FURIOUS –

STRAUSS

He knew he'd have to be seen to suffer for what he did. It was all part of his plan. He wanted the glorious insincere guilt of the self-important to wear like a fucking crown. And I gave it to him . . .

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

Robb gets right in my face, incredulous –

ROBB

You mean having worked night and day for three years to build the bomb, you then argued it shouldn't be used?

OPPENHEIMER

No. I was asked by the Secretary of War what the views of scientists were – I gave the views against and the views for.

ROBB

You supported the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan, didn't you?

OPPENHEIMER

What do you mean 'support'?

ROBB

You helped pick the target, didn't you?

OPPENHEIMER

I did my job – I was not in a policy-making position at Los Alamos – I would have done anything that I was asked to do –

ROBB

You would have made the H-bomb, too, wouldn't you?

OPPENHEIMER

I couldn't.

The STAMPING breaks rhythm to become CACOPHONOUS . . .

ROBB

I didn't ask you that, doctor.

OPPENHEIMER

I would have worked on it, yes. But to run a labouratory is one thing, to advise a government is another.

THE LIGHT OF A THOUSAND SUNS POURS IN THE WINDOW . . .

ROBB

And the GAC report, which you co-authored, following the Russian atomic test said that a Super bomb should *never* be produced, did it not?

OPPENHEIMER

What we meant – what I meant – was that it would be a better world if there were no Hydrogen bombs in it.

LIGHT STABS THROUGH CRACKS IN THE WALL . . .

ROBB

Wouldn't the Soviets do anything to increase their military strength?

OPPENHEIMER

If we did it, they'd *have* to do it. Our efforts would fuel their efforts – just as it had with the atomic bomb!

PLASTER BREAKS AWAY AS LIGHT POURS INTO THE ROOM . . .
I JAM my eyes closed, MORE AND MORE EXPOSED . . .

ROBB

'Just as with the atomic bomb.' Exactly. No moral scruples in 1945, plenty in 1949 . . .

The sound STOPS. The light is gone.

GRAY

(gentle)

Dr Oppenheimer, when *did* your strong moral convictions develop with respect to the Hydrogen bomb?

I open my eyes, exhausted . . .

OPPENHEIMER

When it became clear to me that we would tend to use any weapon we had.

Silence.

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY (B&W)

Strauss has stopped . . .

STRAUSS

J. Robert Oppenheimer - the martyr. I gave him exactly what he wanted. To be remembered for Trinity, not Hiroshima, not Nagasaki. He should be thanking me.

SENATE AIDE

Well, he's not.

Strauss looks at the Senate Aide's neck, wondering if he could get one hand all the way around it.

STRAUSS

(speaking softly)

Do you still have enough votes, or is the crowning moment of my career about to become the most public humiliation of my life?

The Senate Aide looks down at his buck slip, counts his tally.

SENATE AIDE

You'll scrape through.

Strauss looks at the Senate Aide. He smiles.

STRAUSS

Then gather the press.

Cut to:

INT. ROOM 2022, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION –
DAY (COLOUR)

I sit with Garrison and listen to Gray pass judgement . . .

GRAY

J. Robert Oppenheimer, this board, having heard testimony from you and many of your current and former colleagues, has come to the unanimous conclusion that you are a loyal citizen . . . However, in the light of your continuing associations and disregard for the security apparatus of this country, together with your somewhat disturbing conduct in relation to the Hydrogen bomb and the regrettable lack of candor in certain of your responses to this board, we have voted two to one to deny the renewal of your security clearance.

I barely hear the rest . . .

GRAY

A full written opinion, with a dissent from Mr Evans, will be issued to the AEC in the coming days . . .

The board rises, aides start collecting files. Still dazed, I take the phone from Garrison –

GARRISON

It's Kitty.

KITTY
(over phone)

Robert? Robert?

I take a breath. Not trusting my voice . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Don't . . . don't . . . don't . . . take in the sheets.

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY (B&W)

We hear the press gathering behind the doors. Strauss checks his tie in the mirror. Smooths his hair. The Senate Aide enters, buck slip in hand.

STRAUSS

Is it official?

SENATE AIDE

I'm afraid there were a couple of unexpected holdouts.

Strauss freezes, absorbing the impact.

STRAUSS

I'm denied?

The Senate Aide leaves him hanging for a beat.

SENATE AIDE

I'm afraid so, sir.

Strauss doesn't know what to do or where to look.

STRAUSS

Who were the holdouts?

SENATE AIDE

There were three, led by the junior senator from Massachusetts. Young guy, trying to make a name for himself. Didn't like what you did to Oppenheimer.

STRAUSS

What's his name?

The Senate Aide checks his tally . . .

SENATE AIDE

Uh . . . Kennedy. John F. Kennedy.

Cut to:

EXT. OLDEN MANOR, BACK GATE OVERLOOKING THE INSTITUTE – DAY (COLOUR)

I approach Kitty, who's been crying.

KITTY

Did you think if you let them tar and feather you the world would forgive you? It won't.

OPPENHEIMER

We'll see.

Cut to:

INT. SENATE OFFICE – DAY (B&W)

Strauss listens to the hungry press pack beyond the door. He
TURNS on the Senate Aide –

STRAUSS

Goddamn it! You told me I'd be fine!

SENATE AIDE

Well, I didn't have all the facts, did I?

STRAUSS

I did what was right for this country. They don't want me in the Cabinet Room? Maybe they should just invite Oppenheimer instead.

SENATE AIDE

Perhaps they will.

STRAUSS

He turned the scientists against me. One by one. Starting with Einstein. I told you about that? About Einstein, by the pond?

The Senate Aide picks up Strauss's hat and coat . . .

SENATE AIDE

You did. But, you know, sir, since nobody knows what they said to each other that day, is it possible they didn't

talk about you at all? Is it possible they spoke about something . . .

Hands Strauss his hat and coat . . .

SENATE AIDE

... more important?

Strauss looks at the Senate Aide like he wants to kill him. The Senate Aide OPENS the office door and the FLASHBULBS EAT STRAUSS ALIVE as we -

Cut to:

EXT. LAKESIDE, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY,
PRINCETON - DAY (COLOUR)

I approach the figure by the lake. The figure's hat BLOWS off, releasing a mass of GREY CURLS. Strauss watches from the doorway as I SCOOP up Einstein's hat . . .

EINSTEIN

Robert. The man of the moment.

I hand him his hat. He looks out at the lake.

EINSTEIN

You once had a reception for me at Berkeley. Gave me an award. You all believed I'd lost the ability to understand what I'd started. So that award wasn't for me . . . it was for all of you.

Einstein turns to me.

EINSTEIN

Now it's your turn to deal with the consequences of your achievements. And one day . . . when they've punished you enough . . .

INT. CABINET ROOM, WHITE HOUSE -- DAY

Dozens of formally attired GUESTS. Kitty by my side. Many faces, now older, are there – Rabi, Lawrence, Frank, Jackie . . .

EINSTEIN

(V.O.)

They'll serve salmon and potato salad, make speeches, give you a medal . . .

LYNDON JOHNSON places a MEDAL around my neck. I SMILE and shake the President's hand. Kitty BEAMS as she, in turn, shakes Johnson's hand . . . Frank comes up to me, gives me a quick embrace –

FRANK

You're happy, I'm happy . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Then I'm happy you're happy.

Lawrence claps me on the shoulder, smiling affectionately . . .

EINSTEIN

(V.O.)

Pat you on the back and tell you all is forgiven . . .

Teller approaches, I smile and take his offered hand . . .

EINSTEIN

(V.O.)

Just remember. It won't be for you . . .

Teller turns to Kitty, offering the same smile and handshake . . .

EINSTEIN

(V.O.)

. . . it'll be for them.

Kitty STARES Teller down, letting his hand hang in the air like a WILTING PLANT . . . and we –

Cut to:

EXT. LAKESIDE, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY,
PRINCETON – DAY

Einstein TURNS to leave. Up the hill, Strauss approaches . . .

OPPENHEIMER

Albert? When I came to you with those calculations?

Einstein pauses. I watch raindrops make circles on the surface of the pond . . .

OPPENHEIMER

We were worried that we'd start a chain reaction that would destroy the entire world . . .

EINSTEIN

I remember it well. What of it?

OPPENHEIMER

I believe we did.

Einstein PALES. TURNS, passing Strauss without a word . . . The sound of FEET STAMPING . . .

Close in on: my staring eyes as I visualize THE EXPANDING NUCLEAR ARSENALS OF THE WORLD . . . THE FEET, FASTER AND FASTER –

When I can take it no longer, I JAM my eyes CLOSED and we – Cut to black.

Credits.

End.

