

# MANHATTAN

Written by

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One-Hour Pilot

*"You Always Hurt The One You Love"*

Shoe Money Productions  
Skydance Productions  
Lionsgate Television  
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ACT ONE

CLOSE ON: A GLEAMING METAL SPHERE.

Like a silvery planet. Or the core of a bomb. It LEAPS out of frame as we WIDEN to find...

INT. WINTER HOUSE - FRANK'S STUDY - DAY

The gleaming balls of a Newton's cradle CLACKING on a desk.

A MAN in a gabardine suit sits mesmerized, watching: FRANK WINTER, 42. An American genius -- headlong, impolitic. He pulls EARPLUGS from his ears. Hearing far-off MUSIC...

PERRY COMO

*Till the wells run dry, and each  
mountain disappears... I'll be  
there for you to care for you  
through laughter and through tears.*

INT. WINTER HOUSE - DAY

Perry Como croons about the end of the world as we TRACK Frank through his midcentury house. Everywhere, signs of domestic life. Glass of water SWEATING on a table. WHIR of a fan. But where is his family? Uneasy, Frank MOVES into...

THE KITCHEN. As: DING! Black smoke RISES from a toaster. Frank stares. A premonition. Something's wrong.

FRANK

Liza? Callie?

Frank MOVES to...

THE FOYER. Panic spiking. Opens the door, stumbles out to --

EXT. WASTELAND - DAY

A scene of breathtaking ruin. Skeletal houses. A white-picket paradise entombed in ashes -- Ground Zero, Pompeii. Frank stands in his gray yard, paralyzed.

He spots an object in the dust, bends to pick it up: a pair of EYEGLASSES, one of the lenses missing. Like some relic of a forgotten world. Frank stares, haunted.

Frank squints back at the destruction. As we REVERSE to find not one but TWO FIERY SUNS blazing in the sky. Like some sci-fi apocalypse. A CAR HORN BLARES and we SMASH CUT TO:

FRANK. His eyes SLAM open from sleep. REVEAL we're:

INT. DESOTO SEDAN - NIGHT

Moving at a high rate of speed. Frank at the wheel. Blinding light fills the car -- the twin suns of a pair of headlights -- as we realize: he's veered into oncoming traffic. Perry Como on the tinny FM radio.

Frank TUGS the wheel -- the car BUCKING as --

EXT. PAJARITO DESERT - NIGHT

The DeSoto SWERVES back into its lane. A black-and-white patrol car HURTLING past in the opposite direction. Seconds from death.

The cop car guns a U-turn. Cherry lights blazing.

EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE - NIGHT

An ocean of sand. The two parked cars the only sign of human life as a heavysset DEPUTY, 30s, approaches Frank's window.

DEPUTY  
Step out of the car.  
(hand on gun)  
Now.

Frank wearily does as he's told. Deputy pats him down.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)  
What the Sam Hill are you doing out here? This is Indian country.

He pulls a DRIVER'S LICENSE from Frank's wallet.

ECU THE LICENSE. Type-written in the name column is "NUMBER 22." The address reads "BOX 1663."

DEPUTY (CONT'D)  
You get this thing in a cereal box?

FRANK  
Listen: you let me go, you'll save us both a lot of trouble.

The Deputy STARES. Out come the cuffs.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAWN

GLEN BABBIT (50s), an avuncular barnacle of a man, trails the Deputy through a sleepy backwater station. Formerly Frank's mentor, now his consigliere.

BABBIT  
What's he charged with?

DEPUTY  
Driving while intoxicated, public  
endangerment, disturbing the peace --

BABBIT  
In the middle of the fucking  
desert? Who'd he disturb, a yucca  
tree?

An OFFICER pipes up from his desk.

OFFICER  
And possession of a counterfeit  
license.

BABBIT  
I'll make sure he gets home safe.  
Those are his things?

DEPUTY  
He's not going anywhere.

Babbit sighs. Picks up a telephone.

BABBIT  
You don't want me to make this  
call.

DEPUTY  
Is it long distance?

BABBIT  
(dialing)  
Don't worry, it's gonna be quick.  
(into phone)  
It's number Thirty Three. Is he  
in?

Babbit offers the phone. The Deputy takes it...

...and hangs it up. Babbit winces as the Deputy sits.

DEPUTY  
Now. Why don't you start by  
telling me where you all came from.

Across the room, a TELEPHONE rings. A wizened SECRETARY  
answers, calls out to the Deputy.

SECRETARY  
Deputy Ross. It's Henry Stimson.

DEPUTY  
I don't know any Stimson.

OFFICER  
Sir -- he's the Secretary of War.

Deputy blanches. Babbit gathers Frank's things, MOVES to the cell where Frank is sitting on a cot, holding a nub of CHALK. Frank stands as Babbit passes his hat through the bars.

FRANK  
We've got a lot to talk about.

Babbit shakes his head. Used to Frank's brusqueness.

BABBIT  
Frank. You sleep it off?

FRANK  
I've been working all night.

For the first time, Babbit registers the cell wall behind Frank. It's crammed floor to ceiling with chalked EQUATIONS.

EXT. PAJARITO DESERT - MORNING

Arid, endless, empty of promise. The sun already scorching. O.S. the rumble of a CAR.

INT. STATION WAGON - MORNING

Packed to the gills with LUGGAGE. Driving cheerlessly is CHARLIE ABRAMS. Untested wunderkind. Jew from St. Louis with a 180 IQ and a \$13 suit. At 26, he is the smartest person he has ever met, though not for long. Charlie's got a road map spread across the wheel. Lost, but won't admit it.

His wife, ABBY -- 25, pretty, pampered -- thumbs through an issue of MOVIE STORY magazine with BETTY GRABLE on the cover. Five-year-old twins JOEY and JUDY are asleep in the back.

CHARLIE  
It's a misprint. There's supposed to be a bridge. I'm writing a letter to Rand McNally.

ABBY  
(playful)  
Tell him you dragged your wife two thousand miles to live like an Apache in the desert.

He shoots her a look. Abby smirks. Their own private vaudeville routine.

Snippets of WAR NEWS on the radio as the road winds through a badland of scrub-oak and rock. Not so much as a telephone pole in sight.

CHARLIE

They said it'd be just like  
Cambridge. "Harvard with sand."

ABBY

Daddy's offer still stands.  
(off Charlie)  
It's a good job, Charles.

CHARLIE

It's a sales job.

ABBY

(eye roll)  
God forbid. You'd think a PhD was  
a vow of poverty. You know  
business is a science.

CHARLIE

The recruiter said I could be the  
next Enrico Fermi.  
(off her blank look)  
He's the Betty Grable of physics.

ABBY

And no one ever heard of him.

CHARLIE

You think anybody'd heard of  
Galileo in 1640?

ABBY

I bet Galileo knew how to read a  
road map.

Charlie laughs: touché. She returns to her magazine as the twins stir in the backseat.

JOEY

I gotta go pee.

Charlie digs around the floor for an empty ROOT BEER BOTTLE. He's passing it to his son, and rounding a switchback, when --

ABBY

*Charlie!*

He JAMS the breaks, FISHTAILS, nearly PLOWING into a BUICK at a dead stop just ahead.

Charlie clenches the wheel, pulse racing. Only gradually registers the strangeness of the scene.

A RIVER OF TRUCKS stretches before them, bumper-to-bumper, glinting in the sun. DAY LABORERS in PICKUPS. FLATBEDS laden with SUPPLIES. At the roadside, men are changing the tire of a SCHOOL BUS. It's full of NATIVE AMERICANS: stone-faced women and girls in traditional Pueblo garb. Eerie.

The DRIVER leans against the bus door, smoking. Leathery, 50s. Thousand-yard stare. Charlie cranes out the window.

CHARLIE

Circus in town? Where's everybody going?

DRIVER

P.O. Box 1663.

CHARLIE

(checks map)

But what's the place called?

DRIVER

It ain't. No names, no street signs. Welcome to nowhere.

Weirder by the minute. Traffic picks up, cresting a rise.

ABBY

*...Charlie?*

Looming up before them, a

CITY ON A HILL

Like a mirage in the sun-blasted desert: a TOWERING VOLCANIC MESA fenced off by miles of RAZOR WIRE, crowned with pre-fab BUILDINGS. Uncanny as a white-picket suburb on Mars.

The road snakes up to a GATE policed by SOLDIERS. MACHINE GUNS bristling from a WATCHTOWER. GUARDS with DOGS searching cars. Charlie whitens.

ABBY (CONT'D)

*That doesn't look like Cambridge.*

INT. / EXT. BABBIT'S CAR - MORNING

GLIDING along a small town MAIN STREET full of SCHOOLCHILDREN, HOUSEWIVES, MILITARY PERSONNEL. The teeming chaos of a frontier boomtown. Leave it to Beaver meets Deadwood meets MASH.

Frank, riding shotgun, fills a scrap of paper with math, a man possessed. Babbit eyes him.

BABBIT

You can't work in your office like everybody else? The army already thinks you're a lunatic, Oppie isn't far behind. Most guys around here would sell their mother to Hirohito for a travel pass. You're gonna throw yours away if you're not careful.

(Frank ignores, jotting)

This isn't Princeton, you're not tenured.

FRANK

It's not West Point either.

Frank foists his notes on Babbit. Babbit squints to read.

BABBIT

You know we've already got a working detonator.

FRANK

I reworked it. Thirty two charges arranged to form an icosahedron.

(off Babbit)

Like a soccer ball. It's 17 percent more efficient. You said our group needed a Hail mary pass...

Babbit studies the math. Awed.

BABBIT

They should lock you up more often.

The car pulls to a stop on a leafy street. Cookie-cutter houses with postage-stamp yards. Frank opens his door.

FRANK

Leave it running.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - MORNING

The house from Frank's dream. Frank shuts the door, moves through the foyer, passing --

THE KITCHEN



Where LIZA WINTER, a 38-year old no-nonsense beauty, is scraping a plate into the trash. She takes in her unkempt husband. Hasn't seen him in 24 hours. Frank treads lightly.

FRANK  
I missed dinner.

LIZA  
And breakfast.  
(stiffly)  
Am I allowed to ask?

Their daughter, CALLIE, enters. 16, sharp-eyed, not quite as grown up as she thinks she is. Frank and Liza smile. Keeping up appearances.

FRANK  
Morning, bug.

CALLIE  
The prodigal father returns.

LIZA  
Dad got home after you went to sleep last night.

CALLIE  
Right. That's why he's wearing the same clothes he wore yesterday.  
(to Frank, dry)  
Don't worry, I tucked myself in.

She pecks his cheek, exits. Off to school. A beat between Frank and Liza.

FRANK  
I was chained to my desk.

Liza eyes him, a thousand questions, all with answers she knows she won't get. She softens, settling on --

LIZA  
Did you get any sleep?

Frank reaches out, TUCKS a stray hair behind her ear. He loves her. Knows they're running on fumes.

FRANK  
I'll see you tonight. I promise.

Liza watches as he heads upstairs, pulling off his tie.

EXT. TECH AREA - MORNING

CRISPLY-DRESSED MEN in fedoras stream toward a barbed-wire fence. Beyond it, a campus of nondescript clapboard buildings, secret nucleus of a secret city. Frank, in a fresh shirt and tie, eyes a phalanx of armed SOLDIERS.

BABBIT

Colonel's tightening the screws on security. He's got MPs combing through our trash at night.

A GUARD at the gate checks their IDs. Babbit flashes an affable smile. Takes in Frank's surly expression.

BABBIT (CONT'D)

Would it kill you to say thank you?

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: a row of anonymous NUMBERS. Each digit painted on a hanging metal card, like those signs you see on factory floors: days since our last accident. But we have no idea what these numbers signify (for now).

**66759.**

Frank eyes the sign as he passes, Babbit tailing him across a vast floor of YOUNG MEN at field desks. We see blackboards hidden by curtains. Propaganda posters: "SILENCE IS SECURITY," etc. Frank gestures with his notes. Voice low. A mile a minute:

FRANK

We'll need equipment. IBM machines for the hydrodynamics. And a real staff. Fifteen, twenty guys.

They come to a crossroads. Frank banks right.

BABBIT

Where the hell are you going?

FRANK

I'm gonna take it upstairs.

BABBIT

You can't just waltz into Oppenheimer's office with some chicken scratch on a cocktail napkin.

They're at a dead stop as REED AKLEY (50s) passes. Shrewd Brahmin in a club tie and hornrims. Not a hair out of place.

AKLEY

Gentlemen.

Babbit nods. Frank gestures once Akley's out of earshot.

FRANK

Akley gets out of bed, the army writes him a check with six zeroes.

BABBIT

Reed Akley shaves every day. And the only thing cleaner than his face is his math.

FRANK

It's *too* clean. There's something wrong with Thin Man.

BABBIT

(heard it before)

Forget Thin Man. Forget Akley. We've spent six months in the basement living off table scraps. This could be a real opportunity, but you go in there half cocked and it's finished.

A beat as Frank considers. His impatience palpable.

FRANK

Fine.

They turn left. There's a bottleneck up ahead: Akley and a half-dozen scientists mill around a closed door while a freckled GI futzes with the knob. The door has an opaque marbled glass window.

FRECKLED GI

Lock's busted. Army Corps is sending a guy.

AKLEY

(patient smile)

Eight Nobel laureates in the building, we can't open a door.

Without a word, Frank unholsters the GI's .45, SHATTERS the marbled glass with the butt. He reaches through the window, opens the door. Returns the gun to the stupefied soldier.

FRANK

Thank you.

Babbit STARES a beat. Follows Frank through the door.

Stenciled below the shattered window is the name of the facility. A name so carefully guarded we will never hear it spoken aloud:

LOS ALAMOS.

Birthplace of the world's first atomic weapon. Leveler of cities. The original doomsday machine. The door swings shut, cutting off our view, as we --

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES. Over the Blind Boys of Alabama's "Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb," we see archive footage of ATOMIC TEST SHOTS: Aztec, Baker, Greenhouse, Wigwam. Bright-colored flowers of destruction.

We see nuclear families in fallout shelters, smiling kids in anti-radiation suits. Bikinis, atomic cocktails. Charred mannequins at Nevada Proving Ground. The Ford Nucleon, Three Mile Island. American fear and hope. Missiles in Cuba, reactors in Tehran, Shock and Awe. All fallout from the Manhattan Project.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. TECH AREA - MORNING

LANCEFIELD, 30s, a smarmy WASP physicist, steers Charlie across the bustling floor. Dangles a security badge.

LANCEFIELD

White badge is your key to the castle. Only scientists and army brass get 'em. Steno girls are allowed in the building but they don't know squat. GIs barely know what state they're in.

Around the room, young scientists stop what they're doing to watch Charlie pass. He notices, self-conscious.

LANCEFIELD (CONT'D)

They all read your paper. Passed it around like a Tijuana bible.

Charlie is dazzled, kid in a candy shop.

LANCEFIELD (CONT'D)

You're looking at the best equipped lab in the country. We've got Triple-A priority and a blank check from the President. Three cyclotrons, two dozen IBM multipliers...and the finest computers money can buy.

They come to a room marked "COMPUTERS." Lancefield opens the door revealing --

INT. TECH AREA - COMPUTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The "computers" of 1944: 12 YOUNG WOMEN crunching numbers. They're knockouts, a harem with bulky Marchant calculators.

LANCEFIELD

Ladies, this is the youngest buck who ever won the Forbes Prize. Say hello to Charlie Abrams.

COMPUTERS

Hi, Charlie!

The Computers smile coquettishly.

LANCEFIELD

(lewd wink)  
No lying down on the job, girls.

Charlie blushes. Through the looking glass to a world where scientists have groupies. And the tour picks up along --

INT. TECH AREA - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Just as Frank and Babbit blow past. Frank's gaze locking on Charlie. Something passes between them -- a flash of recognition -- then it's over. Charlie's eyes wide.

CHARLIE

Was that Frank Winter?

He lags, watching Frank disappear down the hall.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I submitted my paper to twenty three journals. Twenty two editors said yes. He's the only one that didn't.

LANCEFIELD

Don't take it personally, he probably didn't even read it. Winter's got an ego the size of Errol Flynn's pecker.

INT. TECH AREA - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Frank and Babbit on the move.

BABBIT

That was Akley golden goose.

FRANK

I know who it was.

BABBIT

Say what you will about Akley. The man knows how to recruit.

FRANK

Akley recruits talent because he knows he doesn't have it.

But Frank steals a glance back in Charlie's direction. He could use a golden goose right now.

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - DAY

A GI on a ladder updates the digits on the sign we saw earlier: **66803**. Lancefield notices Charlie staring as they pass by.

LANCEFIEELD  
 American casualties. The Colonel  
 keeps a running tally. Case we  
 forget there's a war on.

Lancefield ushers Charlie into --

INT. PROCESSING OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Where a dozen other NEWCOMERS sit filling out paperwork.

LANCEFIEELD  
 We'll need you to answer some  
 questions. Everybody on the  
 project's gotta have security  
 clearance.

CHARLIE  
 What *is* the project? They still  
 haven't told me.

LANCEFIEELD  
 I'll leave that to Dr. Akley. Soon  
 as we've got your commitment.

CHARLIE  
 But I don't know what I'm  
 committing to.

LANCEFIEELD  
 Charlie, this is Shangri La. We've  
 got the highest combined IQ of any  
 town in America and more Jews than  
 Babylon. You'll be wined and dined  
 by the U.S. Army till Hitler and  
 the Japs say uncle.

CHARLIE  
 Who knows how long that'll be?

Lancefield hands Charlie a CLIPBOARD and a PEN.

LANCEFIEELD  
 Well, that all depends on us.

Off Charlie, holding his Faustian contract. Utterly seduced.

INT. STORAGE ANNEX CORRIDOR - MORNING

Five junior scientists huddle around a reinforced door:

SID LIAO, 27, is half-Chinese, all-American and wry; LOUIS  
 "FRITZ" FEDOWITZ, 32, over-mothered, has forty pounds of  
 padding and a nervous cough;

JIM MEEKS, 23, looks like an Eagle Scout (and is); PAUL CROSLY, 29, is polished, privileged and baldly ambitious. HELEN PRICE, 27, is a brilliant tomboyish beauty. We'll come to know them as Frank's team. Liao jimmies the padlock as:

CROSLY

If a career falls in the desert and  
there's no one there to hear it,  
does it make a sound?

Liao shoots him a look. Used to Crosley's griping.

CROSLY (CONT'D)

I respect Frank as much as you do,  
but we're holding our dicks here.  
Akley's got a staff of six hundred  
on Thin Man. We've got six guys.  
And one of 'em's a girl.

CLICK: the padlock POPS open. Liao opens the door with a flourish, the junior scientists slipping into --

INT. STORAGE ANNEX D - CONTINUOUS

A Fort Knox of army supplies and rationed goods. Fritz guards the door, nervous nellie. Crosley makes a beeline for a stack of wooden crates, pries open a lid.

CROSLY

Happy Independence Day.

We see what he's found. An artillery shell as big as an infant. He hefts it out of the crate.

FRITZ

Christ. Be careful.

CROSLY

M114 155 millimeter Howitzer Shell.  
Could flatten a Nazi Panzer at  
15,000 yards. You know how many  
bottle rockets we're gonna make  
with this baby?

HELEN

Somebody's going to lose an eye.

CROSLY

It's Chemistry 101. Besides,  
Liao's a Chinaman. They invented  
fireworks.

Liao rolls his eyes. Fritz looks around, anxious.



FRITZ

If the army catches us, we're gonna wind up teaching math at some high school in Decatur.

LIAO

Fireworks are good for morale.

Fritz squints at the non sequitur. Crosley dumps the shell in his arms, slaps him on the back.

CROSLEY

If we lose morale and the project fails, you'll wind up teaching German.

INT. TECH AREA - BASEMENT - MORNING

The junior scientists hustle down a gloomy corridor, Howitzer shells stuffed under their shirts. They arrive at a door marked I-Group. Babbit and Frank are waiting inside.

FRANK

You're late.

INT. TECH AREA - IMPLOSION OFFICE - MORNING

THUD. A tower of paper hits a desk. Two thousand pages. The culmination of six months' efforts. As:

BABBIT

This was yesterday.  
(holds up Frank's notes)  
This is tomorrow.

We're in a glorified storage room full of third-hand equipment. Home to Frank's team. They consider the mountain of paper, alarmed, as Babbit holds forth.

BABBIT (CONT'D)

The math here is simple. Only one variable matters: *time*.  
(a beat)  
It'll take a year to produce enough plutonium for Akley's bomb. With Frank's new concept for the detonator, we can shave a week off Akley's timeline, maybe longer.

The junior scientists shift in their seats. Distracted by Frank RUMMAGING file cabinets behind them. He's consumed, slamming drawers. The group clearly a little scared of him.

BABBIT (CONT'D)

The army hasn't picked its horse yet. But they will, any day. Before they do, we need to prove how much time our model will save them.

HELEN

But Dr. Oppenheimer's leaving for D.C. tomorrow.

BANG goes a drawer. Babbit nods.

BABBIT

At three PM. If we want a chance, we gotta put hard numbers in his hands before he gets on the plane.

FRITZ

My wife is gonna castrate me if I miss the kids again tonight.

BANG. Another drawer. Crosley's incredulous.

CROSLEY

You want to scrap six months of work for a chance we can save the army *one week*?

Frank looks up. Finally engages:

FRANK

Somewhere in Germany, there's a town just like this one full of scientists who aren't wasting time singing lullabies to their kids. The week we save could be the week that makes the difference.

Frank opens a drawer. Bingo. He retrieves a box of EARPLUGS, fits two in his ears, tuning out the world. Off the group, unnerved...

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - DAY

Abby's surrounded by LUGGAGE in her strange new home. She startles at the sound of VOICES as CLAIRE AKLEY (40s, part Lady Bird Johnson, part Lady Macbeth) sweeps in to greet her with Stepfordish housewives FAY and DOT.

FAY

We're not snooping!

CLAIRE

We're the welcome wagon! This is Fay, and Dot, and I'm Claire Akley.

Expectant looks from the women. Dot prompts:

DOT

Her husband is your husband's boss.

CLAIRE

Technically, Reed is your husband's boss's boss. But we don't stand on ceremony, do we ladies.

The others shrug. Abby covers with a smile, deer in headlights, as the wives offer BAKED GOODS.

DOT

Who says good fences make good neighbors. Good neighbors make brown Betty.

There's a sudden CRASH of cymbals: a jazz LP from next door. The wives seem to enjoy Abby's alarm.

FAY

Thin walls...

EXT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - DAY

Abby stands, helpless, as the welcome wagon unloads her car. Claire obviously the queen bee.

CLAIRE

You'll want to join the Mesa Club and the Culture Council.

DOT

You're a science widow now. Sit around and you'll kill yourself.

CLAIRE

What's your church? Lutheran? Methodist?

Fay lugs a box out of the trunk. On top is a MENORAH. She bites her tongue.

ABBY

Physicist. Charlie's god is Albert Einstein.

FAY  
 (tactful subject change)  
 You're lucky with twins. They  
 ration the Indians. You'll jump  
 straight to the front of the line.

Fay nods to indicate an Indian MAID, 20s, passing with a  
 group of CHILDREN. The kids' heads are SHAVED. Creepy.

DOT  
 (opens cigarette pack)  
 Just watch out the help doesn't  
 smoke your husband's peace pipe.  
 (re cigarette)  
 Don't tell my Walter. If the men  
 can keep secrets we're entitled to  
 a few of our own.

ABBY  
 What do you mean?

DOT  
 Oh, you know. What they do behind  
 their fences.

FAY  
 (voice low)  
 I heard they're building submarines  
 and floating them down the Rio  
 Grande.

CLAIRE  
 (clucking)  
*Fay.*

Abby stares at the children's shaved heads.

ABBY  
 They look like little convicts.

DOT  
 Head lice. I spent a day picking  
 nits out of my best sweater.

AN EXPLOSION thunders across the mesa. Abby jumps. The  
 women barely blink, detonations common as car horns here.

ABBY  
*What was that?*

The women smile beatifically.

CLAIRE

You're going to love it here,  
really.

INT. TECH AREA - IMPLOSION OFFICE - DAY

The junior scientists hunched over their desks, hard at work.

CROSLEY

Reed Akley's gonna win the war.  
Hell, he'll probably win the Nobel  
prize. We'll be locked in the  
basement crunching numbers.

They all look up at the sound of:

MP1

Crosley, Fedowitz, Liao, Meeks,  
Price. We need you to come with  
us.

Two corn-fed MPs stand in the doorway. Clearly not a social  
call. Fritz whitens, opens a desk drawer, revealing the  
pilfered Howitzer shells.

FRITZ

I swear, they talked me into it.  
We were just going to mix up some  
fireworks for the Fourth. As a  
tribute to the sacrifice of our  
boys in uniform...

MP2

We don't care about fireworks.

Oh. Fritz gingerly slides the drawer shut as MP1 holds up a  
file folder. Inside it, a sheaf of stapled BLUE PAGES.

MP1

This look familiar? It came out of  
your file cabinet.

He leafs through the document, reading out page numbers.

MP1 (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four, nineteen,  
twenty, twenty one. There's pages  
missing.

LIAO

See, Crosley? MPs can count past  
ten.

MP2

You familiar with the Espionage Act?

MP1

Whoever, lawfully or unlawfully having access to, or being entrusted with any document, code book, photograph --

LIAO

Whoa, whoa -- *espionage?*

MP 2

No more wisecracks? You hear the one about the Chink in the electric chair?

Before Liao can respond, Frank blows through the door.

FRANK

The hell's going on?

MP1

That's exactly what we'd like to find out. We believe a member of your group is stealing secrets.

FRANK

(considers, nods)  
Get out.

The MPs stare a beat.

MP2

Dr. Winter, there's a protocol here. G-2 has credible intelligence --

FRANK

What I've seen from G-2 is an incredible *lack* of intelligence. They haven't even told you what you're doing here, have they?

Frank gestures at the sheaf of blue papers.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You have any idea what you're looking at?

MP 1

We're not here to debate science --

FRANK

It's not science. It's the property of the government of the United States of America.

MP 1

I'm sorry?

FRANK

Our work is so classified the vice president doesn't know we exist. Far as he's concerned the Manhattan Project is a leaky tunnel on the IRT -- and you're gonna stand there, Sergeant 1st Class with your J-3 security clearance, and talk to me about protocol? You could be court-martialed just for opening that file.

A Mexican standoff. Unclear who wields the power here. The MPs hesitate, fold. As they exit with the papers:

MP1

This isn't finished.

The instant the MPs are out of the room, it erupts into chaos. A fusillade of questions. Frank cuts them dead.

FRANK

Get back to work. I don't have time for this shit. Neither do you. Not today.

Off the group, shaken, as Frank leaves them to their work.

INT. COMMISSARY - DAY

Decorated for the Fourth of July. Row after row of gallon tins with candy-colored labels. In brisk CUTS, a woman's hands toss groceries into an overflowing cart: Dixie cups. Party napkins. Paper plates. She could host a small army.

Liza studies her shopping list like a Baedeker guide. Out of her element. She inspects a box of Jiffy instant pie-crust mix, as...

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Liza Winter. In the baking aisle. We'll make a housewife out of you yet.

Liza looks up. Claire Akley eyes her cart with curiosity.

LIZA

Someone invented pie crust in a box. How is that not on the cover of the New York Times?

Claire lets an awkward beat pass. Polite smile.

CLAIRE

You'll let me know if you need any help in the kitchen...

Liza smiles back. Was that a dig?

LIZA

It's a cookout, not calculus. I'm sure I'll manage.

CLAIRE

(acidly cheerful)

Well, I guess we'll see what it all adds up to tomorrow night.

Liza steers her overflowing cart to the counter, where a balding SOLDIER, 40s, is counting the register. No cash, just RATION STAMPS.

LIZA

Is that all you've got for corn?

Focused on the register:

SOLDIER

We're cleaned out for the Fourth of July. Shipment's due from El Paso next Tuesday.

LIZA

We can't grow our own corn on the Hill? Indians have been planting maize out here for a thousand years.

SOLDIER

Army policy. Ground's no good.

LIZA

For heaven's sake. Rangeland soil is full of potassium.

Soldier quits counting, gives her a paternalistic smile.



SOLDIER

Ma'am, I'm sure your husband's got a brain the size of Kansas, but that ring on your finger doesn't make you a scientist.

LIZA

No, four years at Barnard and a PhD in botany do.

A few housewives with shopping carts take in this interaction. They try not to stare.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

SILENCE. Spartan as a bomb shelter. Exposed pipes on the ceiling. Frank hunkered at his desk, an explosion of paper, the kinetic disorder of genius. We see a framed photo: Frank and Liza with a young Callie, happy. Better days.

We hear an odd tinnitus BUZZ as we realize: Frank's wearing earplugs. He scribbles a note. Frowns, noticing...

A SCORPION on the desk. Predatory claws, malignant black stinger. Frank WATCHES it climb across his papers, incongruous. His face oddly clinical. He picks up an empty lowball glass, inverts it, sets it down on the insect. The trapped scorpion batters the glass, silent, as Frank WHEELS a fresh sheet into his Smith Corona...

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - DAY

We're looking at a large PROPAGANDA POSTER. A drowning sailor points in accusation: "SOMEONE TALKED!"

Charlie stares at the sailor with vague unease.

AKLEY'S SECRETARY

You're crooked...

An odd beat. Oh: his necktie. Charlie straightens it as the office door opens, the secretary showing him into --

INT. TECH AREA - AKLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

An oak-and-leather sanctum, twice the size of Frank's office, not a paperclip out of place. Akley is opening a bottle of PREMIUM WHISKEY, filling two glasses.

CHARLIE

Dr. Akley.

AKLEY  
 "A New Approach to Quantum  
 Cosmology." I wish I'd written it.

Charlie tries to conceal his pride as Akley hands him a drink.

CHARLIE  
 I haven't seen real bourbon since  
 Pearl Harbor.

AKLEY  
 Friends in high places. Call it  
 your signing bonus.

Akley clinks his glass. Watches Charlie take a polite nip.

AKLEY (CONT'D)  
 So, Charlie Abrams. Tell me why  
 you're here.

CHARLIE  
 Sir?

AKLEY  
 You drove two thousand miles.  
 Uprooted your family to a state  
 with more cattle than people. What  
 do you want?

CHARLIE  
 To serve my country. I tried to  
 enlist. Flat feet.

AKLEY  
 I think we can put your skills to  
 better use.

Akley gestures for Charlie to sit. Pulls curtain revealing a blackboard full of MATH. Charlie stares, rapt. Assembling the pieces like a puzzle.

AKLEY (CONT'D)  
 We're waging a war of ideas. It'll  
 be fought on battlefields, but make  
 no mistake -- the peace will be won  
 with brains, not brawn.

CLOSE ON CHARLIE, eyes darting across the blackboard.

AKLEY (CONT'D)  
 Forget about codebreaking. Forget  
 meteorology, optics --

But Charlie's stopped listening. Like he's seen a ghost:

CHARLIE

You're building an atomic bomb.

Akley looks from Charlie to the board, taken aback.

AKLEY

We prefer to call it a *gadget*.

(smiles, impressed)

Most of the new boys, I walk them through the math and they still don't see it.

CHARLIE

They said I'd be working in a radar lab.

AKLEY

Sorry for the smoke and mirrors.

We can't exactly advertise.

(silence)

Dean Everett at Harvard says you're the quickest study he's ever seen.

He also says you want to help *your people*. I understand you've got family in Poland...

CHARLIE

A bomb like that... A gadget, I mean... The burn radius would be two miles wide. It's -- too big...

AKLEY

Charlie, I've got scouts on every campus in America looking out for hitters. You are not a hitter. You're the starting lineup of the '27 Yankees.

(closing the deal)

You can grow old and die writing white papers on field quantization. A hundred savants will read your work and ten will understand it. Or you can join my group and watch the apple fall with Newton.

Off Charlie, dazed. Caught between his ambition and his soul.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

SILENCE. The trapped scorpion bats at its glass as Frank types at his desk. In CUTS we watch Frank fighting the undertow of sleep -- hollow eyed, physically demolished --

He slugs coffee. Types.

Stands at a sink. Splashes water on his face.

Lights a cigarette, smokes. Ashes in the coffee mug. Types.

Jolts awake. Surveys the desk. His eye falls on the scorpion trapped under its glass.

Frank slides the glass across the desk, onto his palm. Stares at the scorpion. A strange beat. Then he closes his hand into a fist. Jaw set against the sting. A shot of adrenaline, jump starting the engine.

Frank drops the scorpion on the ground. Eyes wide, he feeds a fresh page into the typewriter. Off his blind determination...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. WINTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Eight foil pie tins. Eight boxes of Jiffy pie-crust mix. Liza Winter surveys the counter like a mountaineer at the base of Everest. She picks up a box, reads aloud.

LIZA  
Just add water.

How hard can it be? She cranks on the faucet. A ferocious CLANKING of pipes, then... nothing. Another day in paradise.

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - DAY

Liza finds a SPIGOT on the side of the house. Spins the knob, plumbing roulette: not even a trickle.

She SIGHS. Then eyes a flowerbed full of VIOLET CHRYSANTHEMUMS and frowns. One blossom stands apart -- it's a hallucinatory YELLOW. Odd. Liza studies the flower. Something about it troubling her...

EXT. BARRACKS ROW - DUSK

SOLDIERS hump kit-bags through an encampment of Quonset huts and trailers. A freckled, redheaded GI weaves through the chaos. We've seen him before: Frank borrowed his gun to smash the window in the teaser. Call him IOWA. He heads for --

INT. MILITARY TENT - DUSK

WAR NEWS crackles on the radio in a vast makeshift dorm packed with bunk beds. Enlisted men playing Chutes and Ladders, Paddle Ball, War. Killing time instead of Nazis.

Iowa enters to the sound of laughter. A half-dozen grinning GIs are huddled around a LETTER, reading aloud.

GI  
(reading)  
"...the best and bravest son a mother could hope for. I think of your valor on that beachhead and my heart fills to bursting."

Iowa's face falls as he recognizes the words. He charges up.

IOWA  
The hell'd you get that?

GI  
 (reading)  
 "When you're down in the trenches  
 and the bullets are flying --"

Iowa snatches the letter. The GIs smirk.

GI2  
 Hey, Iowa -- you tell her about the  
 time you shot down Yamamoto?

Iowa retreats to his bunk. He smooths the wrinkled letter,  
 turns to a husky GI attacking a CROSSWORD in the next bed.

HUSKY GI  
 (tsk tsk)  
 Lying to your own mother...

IOWA  
 What am I supposed to say? Today I  
 spit-shined the Colonel's boots? I  
 haven't fired a gun since we left  
 Fort Dix.

HUSKY GI  
 (pencils in an answer)  
 War is hell.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank wheels a fresh sheet into his typewriter. Blinks at  
 the empty page. Something gnawing at him.

He takes off his reading glasses, rubs his eyes. Finally  
 glances down at the tortoiseshell frames in his hand.

An eerie beat as we realize: he's holding his glasses  
 precisely the same way he held the glasses in his dream.  
 Frank cocks his head, SEEING SOMETHING. A chain reaction.  
 An epiphany. Whatever it is, it hits him like a hammer.

He POPS one of the lenses out. STARES at the glass disc.

FRANK  
*Son of a bitch.*

INT. TECH AREA - IMPLOSION OFFICE - NIGHT

The junior scientists start as Frank blows in like a train.  
 Clear-eyed, full tilt.

FRANK  
 We had it all wrong. Not explosive  
 charges. Explosive *lenses*.

Frank thrusts a sheaf of papers into Helen's hands.

FRANK (CONT'D)

We're gonna bend the detonation waves. Same way your glasses bend light. It'll save more time. Run the numbers, I'll write it up by morning.

No further explanation. He disappears down the hall. The stupefied team gathers around the papers like they're stone tablets from a mountaintop.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Parked outside the Winters' house. Frank unclips his SECURITY BADGE, locks it in the glove box. He sits a moment, an actor getting out of character. Or into one.

LIZA (PRE-LAP)

How was your day?

INT. WINTER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A dining table and an ocean of silence separate Frank and Liza. Callie between them. Frank's eyes reveal nothing.

FRANK

Fine.

LIZA

(prompts)

Frank?

The Winters' twenty-something Indian maid hovers shyly with a plate. An awkward beat as Frank takes his dinner, barely glancing at the "help." Liza covers with a smile.

LIZA (CONT'D)

Gracias.

Frank cuts into his casserole. It's rock-hard.

LIZA (CONT'D)

The water's out. They'd better fix it by tomorrow.

(off Frank's blank look)

July Fourth? Half the Hill's going to be here, and you know how they drink.

Frank sets down his fork. He'd forgotten the party.

FRANK

It's really not a good week.

LIZA

I didn't set the date. Take it up with Thomas Jefferson.

FRANK

We could have said no.

LIZA

You're the only group head who hasn't hosted. We look like misanthropes.

(then)

People socialize on Independence Day. They stand around in back yards and eat grilled meat and listen to John Philip Sousa. For one night we're going to pretend life is normal.

CALLIE

You in the kitchen is the definition of *abnormal*.

(to Frank, sweetly)

But speaking of independence...

LIZA

No.

CALLIE

No what?

LIZA

No you can't go to school in New York.

CALLIE

But New York is the center of the world!

LIZA

Yes it is. The world of cigarettes and premarital sex.

(to Frank)

Apparently, Callie sent an application to the Chapin school.

Frank and Liza share a look. The solidarity of parenthood.



CALLIE

Alice Roosevelt went there. They have horses, and an Olympic-size swimming pool, and --

FRANK

The Army would never let you go.

Callie blinks at his finality, stung.

CALLIE

*Why are we even here?*

She stands abruptly, her plate CRASHING to the floor.

CALLIE (CONT'D)

Everything's a secret! It's Kafkaesque!

Callie storms upstairs. Frank and Liza watch her go. Frank tries for levity.

FRANK

At least she's reading.

A moment of connection. But it's fleeting. Liza watches him pick at his casserole. Outside looking in.

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Muffled plinking of a piano from the next apartment. Abby is on the sofa in her peignoir, nerves raw. At the sound of the front door she bolts upright.

ABBY

Thank God. I was going to call the police, but there's no telephone in this place.

Charlie enters, plants his "signing bonus" on the table. The whiskey bottle is half-empty.

Abby picks up the bottle as he weaves to the bathroom and pisses with the door open.

ABBY (CONT'D)

This is daddy's brand. You can't get it anymore.

CHARLIE

Can if your work's got triple-A priority.

ABBY  
 Are you drunk? What happened?  
 Charlie, talk to me.

He stares at his wife: desperate to tell her, knowing he can't. And like that, the POWER CUTS OUT.

Pitch black. Charlie moves to the window, trips on a lamp.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
*Charlie?*

CHARLIE  
 It's the whole block.

A beat as he peers out the window at darkness.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 Know how many people live in  
 Berlin? Men, women, kids...

ABBY  
 (baffled, redirecting)  
 I wrote a letter to my father. I  
 said you'd think about his offer.

Charlie sits heavily on the couch.

CHARLIE  
 Jesus, Abby. This is what I *am*.

ABBY  
 You're a loving father to our  
 children. And my handsome husband.

He eyes her. Suddenly sick of talking.

CHARLIE  
 Take off your nightgown.

ABBY  
 (thrown)  
 Charlie...

CHARLIE  
 The twins are out cold. They won't  
 hear us.

ABBY  
 It's not the twins I'm worried  
 about.

She looks pointedly at the wall. Muffled VOICES and PIANO MUSIC drift from next door.

CHARLIE

Give 'em something to put in our  
FBI file.

Abby hesitates. Can't fathom what's got into him. She slowly unbuttons her peignoir, lets it drop to the floor. Charlie pulls her onto the couch. CREAK go the springs.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frank sets a glass in the sink, eyes the party decorations ranged across the counter: crepe paper streamers, American flags, etc. Liza amid the chaos, engrossed in a book, FLOWERS OF THE AMERICAN WEST. Nearby, in a bud vase, the YELLOW CHRYSANTHEMUM she found outside.

LIZA

I give up.  
(off Frank)  
The chrysanthemum. It's supposed  
to be *violet*.

Frank frowns, curious: an effect of radiation? He covers.

FRANK

So it's a hybrid.

LIZA

(flips pages, obsessed)  
You know we're not allowed to grow  
produce on the Hill? Must be  
something in the soil...

She searches his face.

FRANK

Sometimes a flower is just a  
flower.

Small smile from Liza. She reaches for his hand.

LIZA

I miss you. Come upstairs with me.

From the look on her face, it's been a long time. And she's reaching across a chasm.

FRANK

Have to finish some things.

LIZA

Have to.

FRANK

(touches her face)

When it's over, it'll go back to the way it was. You'll see. We'll go anywhere you want. Find a desert island, play Adam and Eve.

He turns to go. Sad little smile from Liza.

LIZA

This *is* a desert island.

INT. TECH AREA - IMPLOSION OFFICE - NIGHT

Paper everywhere. Frank's team busy crunching numbers. An assembly line of math. Crosley shakes his head, amazed.

CROSLEY

*Explosive lenses.* How did I not think of that?

LIAO

Because Frank's smarter than you by a factor of... 14?

HELEN

(to herself)

It's brilliant. But we're never gonna finish in time.

LIAO

What's the over-under on how much time it'll save?

FRITZ

I got a Mars bar says ten days.

MEEKS

You honestly think we're gonna outflank Reed Akley and a staff of six hundred by ten days.

FRITZ

Honestly? I think we're gonna beat 'em by twenty. But I'm spineless, so my money's on ten.

Meeks drops a page of math on Crosley's desk. He frowns down at an open drawer. Pulls out a bright pink package.

MEEKS

Nylons?

Crosley swipes the box. Slams the drawer shut.

FRITZ

He steals 'em from the storage annex.

LIAO

The hell do you want with ladies' nylons?

CROSLEY

They're rationed.

LIAO

So?

CROSLEY

Girls love 'em, girls can't get 'em. I spread the wealth, they spread their --

Helen bolts up. A new plan forming.

HELEN

We need reinforcements.

INT. TECH AREA - COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

Arms full of FILES, Helen pleads their case as the Computers fix their makeup and head for the door.

COMPUTER

No dice, we're punched out for the night.

HELEN

We've gotta have the calculations by tomorrow. You're our only hope.  
(the computers brush past)  
We can pay you.

She signals to Crosley in the doorway. He glares at her, peevish. Finally caves, unfurling a pair of STOCKINGS.

The Computers' eyes go wide. Seduced by synthetic gold.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - FRANK'S STUDY - NIGHT

A warmly-lit sanctum. Frank working, the staccato of the typewriter SILENCED by his earplugs. He looks scraped out, exhausted. We see scraps of text. Kilotons, burn radii. The calculus of mass destruction.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank in bed, staring up at us. Liza passed out. In CUTS we see her shift in her sleep as Frank lies immobile. Brain churning at 10,000 rpm. Until, unaccountably...

A SNOWFLAKE flutters from the ceiling.

Then a second. Then more.

Frank watching, rapt, as snow drifts onto the bed, the end tables, his sleeping wife.

REVERSE to reveal his POV. It's as if the roof of the house has been torn away. The open night sky. Sifting snow.

In a daze, Frank reaches out to catch a flake. Stares into his hand. Sees, as the snowflake melts, that his palm is streaked with RED. Like some biblical plague. A bloody snowfall. He starts at the sound of:

LIZA

Whatever it is, you can tell me.

Frank blinks. His palm is empty. He SLIDES out of bed.

LIZA (CONT'D)

You can't live without sleep.

(off his silence)

How long do you think you can go on like this?

A beat as he considers.

FRANK

Until.

ON LIZA. Until what? Until the war is over? Until he's dead? Liza watches him dress. Deeply unsettled.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. TECH AREA - MEDICAL OFFICE - MORNING

BLINDING LIGHT as a pomaded army DOCTOR shines a beam, checks Frank's pupils. Frank in his undershirt and shorts.

DOCTOR

Are you experiencing unusual stress?

(off Frank's look)

Nightmares?

FRANK

(pokerfaced)

No.

DOCTOR

Some of the men find it helpful to talk to a chaplain. And they're not all Catholic.

Frank gives nothing. Clearly not one for the talking cure. The Doctor unbuckles what looks like a typewriter case.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We give chloral hydrate for insomnia. I can write you a script, but you'll take a word of advice --

FRANK

I'll take the pills.

Doctor nods curtly. Pulls a GEIGER COUNTER from the case. It CLICKS ominously as he sweeps Frank's body.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Liza FLUFFS the pillows on the freshly-made bed. She picks up Frank's rumpled suit, notices... SAND spilling from the pant cuffs. She tips a little hill of sand into her palm. Curious. Realizing how little she knows about her husband's comings and goings.

EXT. BARRACKS ROW - MORNING

Soldiers swarming to the mess hall like ants, our freckled Iowan among them. A JEEP pulls up carrying two PFCs, one with a BROWNING MACHINE GUN slung over his shoulder, the second hefting an ANTELOPE HEAD, gore trailing from the neck. The PFCs' cheeks are painted with blood.

PFC  
 (holding up head)  
 Lookit -- I got Joseph Goebbels!

Passing soldiers whoop. Iowa stares, wide-eyed, wondering how the fuck he got here. Catches sight of a STAFF SERGEANT in the migration, hustles to catch up.

IOWA  
 Sergeant! Sir -- did you get my request?

Sergeant doesn't break stride. Iowa nips at his heels.

IOWA (CONT'D)  
 I put in for a transfer. A deployment overseas.

Sergeant nods. Iowa takes it as encouragement.

IOWA (CONT'D)  
 The Pacific Theater, Europe -- wherever I'm needed.

STAFF SERGEANT  
 Gate C, 2200 hours. You've got the graveyard shift, Private.

IOWA  
 Sir, due respect, I want to see some action.

STAFF SERGEANT  
 So watch the RKO Newsreel.  
 (stops)  
 At great expense, your president has gathered the world's largest collection of prima donnas and longhairs in a Mexican sandbox. Your mission is to babysit 'em.

Sergeant pushes into the mess hall. Leaves Iowa deflated.

EXT. TECH AREA - MORNING

Helen hustles to keep pace with Frank's stride. Frank's got coffee in one hand, a sheaf of typed onionskins in the other.

FRANK  
 You know how to work a mimeograph?  
 We need copies for Oppenheimer so he can sell it in D.C.

He hands Helen the onionskins.



FRANK (CONT'D)

Where are we on the numbers?

HELEN

Still at it. And we're running out  
of nylons.

Blank look from Frank. But he doesn't have time to ask, because up ahead a crowd of LAB PERSONNEL stands watching two MPs frog-march a worried SCIENTIST out of a lab building.

Frank and Helen join Crosley, Babbit, Fritz and Liao. They're shaken up.

FRANK

The hell's going on?

BABBIT

They drafted Bill Timchak.

FRANK

What? *Why?*

BABBIT

Some files turned up in his dorm room. This way he gets a military trial. No rights, no due process. He's a duck in a barrel.

HELEN

They can do that?

CROSLEY

They've got tanks. They can do whatever they want.

The MPs stiff-arm the drafted man into the back of a car.

BABBIT

Colonel's collecting scalps. Word is he's just getting started.

Troubled, Frank watches the car pull away, ferrying the doomed scientist into military limbo.

Off Liao, beside him, shaken.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank's at his desk when Liao enters, holding a MANILA ENVELOPE. All his bravado gone.

FRANK

Don't tell me. They drafted the  
Computers.

Liao just stands there, ashen.

LIAO

I made a mistake. I -- I fucked  
up, Frank.

He pulls a sheaf of BLUE PAGES from the envelope. One glance  
and Frank knows: Liao is the thief the MPs were looking for.

LIAO (CONT'D)

I swear to god I'm not a spy.  
(re papers, ashamed)  
The X-Ray studies... You said it  
was my best work.

FRANK

What the hell did you do?

LIAO

I've got a kid back in Oakland.  
Gracie. She's sick, and the meds  
cost a fortune. I thought when we  
all go home, I could sell the  
patents...

Just then CROSLY appears in the doorway. SEES the blue  
pages, locks eyes with Liao. Stunned.

Frank shuts the door. Grabs the papers.

LIAO (CONT'D)

They're gonna figure it out.  
You've got to help me. Talk to the  
Colonel, explain why I took 'em...

FRANK

You stole secrets from the United  
States Army. You think he's gonna  
stick around for chit chat?

Frank puts the papers in a box on his desk.

LIAO

What are you going to do?

FRANK

Burn them. They can't touch you if  
they don't have proof.

LIAO  
 (spiraling panic)  
 You've got to get me transferred  
 out of here. Send me to Oak Ridge.  
 Hanford. Christ, Frank, I have a  
 family.

FRANK  
 Then act like it.  
 (off Liao)  
 If you want to protect them, do  
 your fucking job like the rest of  
 us.

Conversation over. Liao opens the door. Understanding,  
 maybe for the first time, that he's a prisoner of  
 circumstance. He hesitates. Almost an afterthought:

LIAO  
 All those guards with their guns.  
 Are they supposed to keep spies out  
 or the rest of us in?

INT. TECH AREA - CORRIDOR - DAY

Frank heads for the Computer room. Yesterday's MPs intercept  
 him.

MP1  
 Colonel Cox wants to see you.

FRANK  
 I'm not holding office hours today.

MP1  
 Now.

INT. TECH AREA - COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Computers have finished calculating. Meeks holds the final  
 page, blinking at the math as if it's written in Cyrillic.

MEEKS  
 It can't be right. Did you  
 remember to double-check --

COMPUTER  
 It's right.

Meeks stares at the paper in confusion.

Then spins on his heels and TAKES OFF. Sound DROPPING AWAY  
 as he sprints down the hall with the page of calculations,  
 jostling scientists and soldiers.

INT. TECH AREA - COLONEL COX'S OFFICE - DAY

A wide observation window surveys the tech area. Frank seated across from COL. ALDEN COX, 50s, top brass on the Hill. Built like a refrigerator, and as warm as one. An AIDE takes notes.

COX

We both know why you're here.

FRANK

Assume I don't.

COX

One of your boys stole classified files. I'd like a name.

FRANK

So you can draft him? Stick him in a hole till the end of the war?

COX

For every action, an opposite reaction.

FRANK

*Equal* and opposite.

Cox smiles, indulgent.

COX

When I took this post, they told me ten of you wonderboys would end the war in half a year. That was 1941, back when I still had hair. Now Hitler's got rockets and I've got a standing Wednesday breakfast with the ladies of the PTA.

FRANK

You packed six thousand people into a camp zoned for six hundred. Cut off from the world, locked in a barbed-wire dust bowl, no visitors, no telephones --

COX

This is not a pleasure cruise.

FRANK

It's the *Titanic*. You've got the fastest-growing city in America sitting on the biggest secret in history. Believe me, you don't want to start a witch hunt.

COX

(to Aide)

Get out.

The Aide hesitates, leaves. Cox regards Frank coolly.

COX (CONT'D)

There's a leak in this lab. Someone has been smuggling technical schematics off the Hill.

Frank processes, speechless.

COX (CONT'D)

I have a brother with the 4th Marine Raiders in the Solomon Islands who wants to come home to his family. I knew nine men on the USS Arizona who won't get the chance. Our enemy crawled out of a cave on the other side of the earth and attacked us on our own soil, and they'll do it again. We *will* not hand them the tools.

Cox opens a file on his desk. Three security head shots: FRITZ, MEEKS, LIAO. Frank sets his jaw.

FRANK

There's no spy in my group.

COX

You think Bill Timchak is a spy? He's an *example*. We live in a world of consequences.

The Colonel offers Frank a cigarette. Frank waves it off.

COX (CONT'D)

Must be dreary down there in the basement. No resources, no recognition...

FRANK

I'm not here for recognition.

COX

You can't help your man, but you  
can help yourself. We got a  
shipment this morning, ten state of  
the art IBM machines.

The implicit offer hangs in the air.

FRANK

You think I'd horse-trade a member  
of my team?

COX

*Iactura paucorum serva multos.* We  
sacrifice the few to save the many.

From O.S., the sounds of a scuffle as --

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Hey -- you can't --

*THWACK!* Meeks just SLAPPED the page of calculations against  
the tempered-glass observation window.

ON THE PAPER. At the bottom, red-circled: **12.**

Frank holds Meek's wide-eyed gaze through the glass. No  
longer aware of the Colonel. Aware of nothing but the number  
on the page. Opening the door.

FRANK

Twelve days.

MEEKS

(shakes his head)

Twelve weeks.

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - DAY

Frank crosses the floor at an urgent clip. Oppenheimer's  
Secretary looks up from a deluge of paperwork as he  
approaches.

FRANK

I need two minutes of his time.

SECRETARY

(opens date book)

Dr. Oppenheimer has an opening on  
the eighteenth.

Frank pushes through the door, finds the office empty.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

It'll have to wait till he's back  
from D.C.

(off Frank)

He's already down in the car.

FRANK

I'll ride out with him.

(cutting off her protest)

There's room.

EXT. PAJARITO PLATEAU - DAY

An olive-drab stretched Packard limousine clears the security gate leaving the Hill. Surreal opulence in the desert.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

On the sleekly upholstered backseat, a PORK PIE HAT.

Beside it, in tweed and a cloud of cigarette smoke:  
OPPENHEIMER. Part Prometheus, part Oz. He's 40 but could be 100. A gaunt Buddha with unearthly ice-blue eyes and nicotine-stained fingers. A genius's genius, revered and feared.

Frank sits opposite, back to two SOLDIERS in the front seat. He cranes, surprised, as the limo forks off the main road.

FRANK

I thought we were going to the airport.

OPPENHEIMER

Lamy train depot. The General's seen fit to ground me. Too dangerous to fly -- isn't that right, Tommy?

Up front, the soldiers are stone.

OPPENHEIMER (CONT'D)

Very touching, their concern for my health.

He stubs out his Chesterfield, immediately lighting a fresh one. Picks up Frank's implosion brief and scans the pages.

Frank watches, expectant. Oppenheimer's eyes flick from the brief to Frank then back again. Surprised? Impressed?

FRANK

It's all been road-tested and triple-checked.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Give me five IBM machines and  
thirty good men I can work out the  
hydrodynamics in a month.

Oppenheimer lingers on the final page. Power in his silence.  
Then turns to the primordial landscape outside.

OPPENHEIMER

This country, the Valles Caldera.  
We call it a desert, but it's a  
crematorium. The mesas, all of it  
-- fallout from a volcano that  
exploded a million and a half years  
ago. Someday it'll detonate again,  
and everything you see will be  
buried. Just a question of time.

(smokes)

There are forces beyond our  
control. And the United States  
Army is one of them.

He regards Frank -- unblinking, inscrutable. Simply:

OPPENHEIMER (CONT'D)

Your group is going to be  
dissolved, Frank.

FRANK

(after a beat)

What?

OPPENHEIMER

We're building Akley's bomb.  
They've briefed the OSRD. OSRD  
briefed the S-1 Committee and S-1  
briefed the president. The ship  
has sailed.

ON FRANK, reeling.

FRANK

Well turn it around.

(re papers)

We've got a goddamn scoreboard in  
the Tech Area counting off  
casualties. This war chews up nine  
American kids every hour. I just  
handed you 20,000 lives.

OPPENHEIMER

Do you know the Bhagavad Gita?  
"Man is made by his belief. As he  
believes, so he is." The Army  
believes in the Thin Man.



FRANK

I don't care about the army.

OPPENHEIMER

And that's your mistake.

(to driver)

Tommy?

The limo judders to a stop at the roadside. Oppenheimer opens the car door. Frank looks at him, disoriented, then reluctantly disembarks to --

EXT. PAJARITO PLATEAU - CONTINUOUS

Blinding sun. A JEEP idles, waiting to taxi Frank home.

FRANK

What about you? What do you believe?

In the back of the army limo, the most powerful scientist in history puts on his hat.

OPPENHEIMER

I believe the world is on fire and Thin Man's our chance to put it out. You'll report directly to Akley.

He offers up the implosion brief. Case closed. Frank standing there, defeated -- then taking the papers.

The limo rumbles off, leaving Frank in a rooster-cloud of dust, in the middle of nowhere. Six months' work dead in his hands.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. TECH AREA - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A PAGE OF TYPED NUMBERS. Charlie sits, hung-over, reading a thick red-bound document: THE THIN MAN PRIMER.

A half-dozen Brylcreemed NEOPHYTES sit at the table like an Ivy-League study group. Each with his own primer. Charlie frowns. A splinter of doubt, an itch he can't scratch.

CHARLIE

You notice anything about the math  
in section nine?

NEOPHYTE

If it had tits, I'd marry it.

Charlie studies the page. Grabs his things and scurries out.

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - MORNING

Primer in hand, Charlie catches Akley filing into an office with a pack of INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS.

CHARLIE

Dr. Akley --

AKLEY

Not just now, Charlie.

CHARLIE

There's something wrong with the  
numbers.

Akley smiles indulgently for the benefit of the officers. Guides Charlie to a private corner.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(flipping pages)

It's in section nine, page 184...

AKLEY

Did you finish the Primer?

CHARLIE

I didn't have to. Your math  
assumes a critical mass of pure  
plutonium 239...

AKLEY

I appreciate your exuberance. But  
for the time being your job is to  
absorb the document.

(MORE)

AKLEY (CONT'D)

The tires have been kicked. Six hundred men have already considered the science from every angle.

He starts back toward the officers.

CHARLIE

Including Frank Winter?

Akley regards Charlie with frosty self-assurance.

AKLEY

Let me ask you something. Did you study axial chemistry at Harvard?

(silence)

No? What about the Clark Effect? Variation Theory?

Charlie has never *heard* of them.

AKLEY (CONT'D)

Because they've never been proved. Those are Frank Winter's contributions: flights of fancy. He's a science fiction writer. But you're a scientist... aren't you, Charlie?

Shut down, Charlie watches Akley rejoin the officers.

INT. TECH AREA - BASEMENT - DAY

A defeated Frank descends to his office. Two MPs walk away from Babbit's desk, leaving them alone.

FRANK

The hell was that about?

BABBIT

(smiles)

Dishonorable discharge? Colonel's shipping me offsite.

Frank's floored. Grasps at straws.

FRANK

No. We'll go over his head.

BABBIT

It's not just me. It's the whole group.

FRANK

I'll call Henry Stimson. Tell 'em  
our work is vital to the success of  
the project...

BABBIT

*Frank.*

(a beat)

You were the best student I ever  
had. I didn't know what was  
missing from my work until I saw it  
in yours. And you know I'd back  
you to the edge of the earth...

(off Frank)

But I think we just fell off it.

EXT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - DAY

As Abby hangs laundry in the drab little yard behind the  
clapboard fourplex, missing her Westinghouse dryer. A wet  
nightgown slips off the line. She bends to pick it up,  
exasperated, wilting in the heat, her eye catching on --

ANGLE -- an open window, the neighbors' bathroom. A brunette  
with an hourglass figure stands naked at the mirror, freshly  
showered. In spite of herself, Abby Claire, transfixed...

Until she realizes: the brunette's staring back. She locks  
eyes with Abby in the mirror, her gaze oddly carnal. Makes  
no move to cover herself. Abby falters, looks away, as:

JUDY

Mommy...

Her daughter stands watching her. Scratching her scalp.

JUDY (CONT'D)

My head itches.

Abby seizes her hand. Tows her back into the apartment.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank walks in heavily, looks at his desk buried in files and  
books. Cups of coffee. Twelve-inch globe.

In one motion, he sweeps all of it onto the floor.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Every inch given over to party preparation. Liza's a  
dervish, constantly moving: checking the oven, plating  
canapes, eyeing her watch as the maid, Dyani, enters. Liza  
points to a loaf of cornbread cooling on the counter.

LIZA

Out back with the others. Careful,  
it's hot.

Dyani scoops up the pan bare-handed. She cries out, drops  
the cornbread on the floor. Liza snaps at her:

LIZA (CONT'D)

*Damn it.*

Dyani blinks. Uncomprehending. She doesn't speak English.  
Liza sees there are tears in her eyes. Suddenly softens.

LIZA (CONT'D)

I don't even like cornbread. I'm  
sorry.

(then)

Lo siento.

Liza ices her hand. An oddly intimate moment between the  
women. Two nomads, equally lost in a sea of hors d'oeuvres.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie pauses at the door. Frank is at the desk with a  
drink and the red-bound THIN MAN PRIMER cracked in front of  
him. Eyes fixed to the page:

FRANK

What?

CHARLIE

Frank Winter? Charlie Abrams.

He enters, extends his hand. Frank doesn't look up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I was hoping I could... I've got  
some questions. About Thin Man.

Frank's a glacier. Charlie eyes the wreckage on the floor.  
Maybe he's made a mistake. Presses on:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You read a paper of mine --

FRANK

"A New Approach to Quantum  
Cosmology."

(a glance)

Your approach wasn't new.

CHARLIE  
The judges of the Forbes Prize  
didn't see a problem.

FRANK  
They wouldn't.

He finally LOOKS up, takes in Charlie's disappointment.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
If you've got questions, take 'em  
to the source. You're Akley's new  
toy, right?

After a beat, Charlie nods, turns to go. But something stops  
him. A flash of instinct.

CHARLIE  
Akley's math is too clean.

FRANK  
(stares)  
What did you say?

CHARLIE  
It's too clean. Reactor-bred  
plutonium contains PU-240.

For the first time, he's got Frank's undivided attention.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
I ran a study in grad school,  
isotope modeling in transuranic  
metals.  
(beat)  
It's eighteen percent.

And it's okay if this flies right past us -- it should.  
Frank's look tells us it's fucking important.

FRANK  
Did you publish?  
(off Charlie's hesitation)  
The study. Did you publish.

CHARLIE  
I -- no.

FRANK  
You expect Robert Oppenheimer to  
upend this lab because you *think*  
you remember a percentage from a  
school project you ran what -- a  
year ago?

CHARLIE

Two.

Who *is* this kid?

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I've got a head for numbers.

(off Frank)

184. That's the mile marker  
outside Toledo where I took a whizz  
five days ago. \$2.37. What I paid  
for gas and a root beer in Santa  
Fe.

Frank looks from the Primer to Charlie. Unconvinced.

FRANK

You're *sure* about this.

Suddenly Charlie knows how he can prove himself.

CHARLIE

67,113.

(off Frank)

American casualties. That's the  
Colonel's latest tally.

Frank is up from the desk, surveying the mess of papers  
tornadoed on the floor. Wheels spinning.

His gaze falls on the BLUE PAGES Liao gave him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It means Akley's schedule's off.

It's gonna set him back months.

But Frank knows better. As he heads for the door:

FRANK

That's not what it means.

Off Charlie, utterly mystified.

INT. TECH AREA - BULLPEN - DAY

Frank stands in the middle of the buzzing hive, at a  
crossroads. STARING up at the row of hanging metal numbers:  
**67113**. He looks across the room at --

ANGLE - OPPENHEIMER'S OFFICE

Abandoned, lights out. Oppenheimer's secretary pecking away  
at some memo.

RESUME - FRANK

As he weighs the hardest choice of his life. *Iactura paucorum serva multos*. He turns, moving inexorably in the other direction.

INT. TECH AREA - COLONEL COX'S OFFICE - DAY

Cox looks up from a telex, sees Frank in the doorway. No love lost between these men. Frank enters the office, dark-eyed. Shuts the door behind him. Drops the BLUE PAGES Liao gave him on the Colonel's desk.

EXT. TECH AREA - DAY

Liao's in the glass coffin of a phone booth, an impatient queue of SCIENTISTS waiting. One line for a staff of 6,000.

LIAO  
(into phone)  
Just hold it up to her ear ... So  
wake her up. All she *does* is  
sleep, she's a baby.

A Scientist glares at Liao, taps his watch. Liao ignores it, cradling the phone. Suddenly awkward, fumbling for words:

LIAO (CONT'D)  
Hi Gracie. It's Sid. It's your  
father.

A KNOCK at the glass.

LIAO (CONT'D)  
(covering mouthpiece)  
Jesus, hold your --

But it's not the Scientist. It's two MPs.

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - EVENING

Charlie enters, passes through the kitchen. There's a NEWSPAPER on the counter. Carnage in the Pacific theater.

More newspaper spread on the floor. It's covered with HAIR.

Charlie stares, follows the sound of VOICES to the --

LIVING ROOM

-- where Joey and Judy sprawl, glued to a Buck Rogers serial on the radio, both their HEADS freshly SHAVED.



INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Abby, full throttle, filling her suitcase. Charlie enters.

CHARLIE  
What the hell did you do?

ABBY  
They're reading our mail.

CHARLIE  
What?

ABBY  
(still packing)  
The children have head lice and --  
they're *reading our mail!*

CHARLIE  
They're five years old. They can  
barely write their names.

She snatches up a LETTER, waves it in his face.

ABBY  
I mailed this yesterday. A private  
letter, from me to my father. They  
made notes in the margins --

CHARLIE  
Who did?

ABBY  
I don't know who -- *spies!* The  
army!

CHARLIE  
Abigail --

ABBY  
This place -- they're all crazy!  
We can't stay here, I *won't* --

CHARLIE  
-- you're hysterical --

ABBY  
I'm not allowed to tell him where  
we *live*, Charles! I'm not allowed  
to tell him that our house is  
painted green!

CHARLIE

It's going to take some adjustment,  
that's all.

She's still flying, filling the bag, opening a drawer.

ABBY

We can go home, back to Brookline.  
Stay with my parents till we've  
sorted things out.

Charlie SLAMS the drawer SHUT.

CHARLIE

We're not going *anywhere*. Listen  
to me. This is our home. I made a  
commitment, it's done. We're here  
till the end of the war.

All air sucked out of the room. She sits on the bed,  
reeling. Finally looks up at him and pales.

His nose is bleeding. He touches it, looks at his hand,  
trembling a little.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's the altitude.

ABBY

(shattered)

Charlie. Please. Why in god's  
name would we stay here?

Charlie STARES at his wife. Worlds away from the only life  
she knows. A long beat as he makes a decision.

CHARLIE

What I'm about to tell you -- it's  
highly classified...

There's a radio on the end table. He cranks the volume so  
the neighbors won't hear. As Abby awaits the truth...

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - BACK YARD - EVENING

Tables decked in patriotic bunting. Party lights glimmer as  
early-bird guests filter in and find drinks, the Akleys among  
them. Claire makes a beeline for Liza, looking like she just  
walked out of a salon. As she eyes the slightly homely  
buffet:

CLAIRE

Well somebody ought to call Gourmet  
Magazine.

Liza smiles. Not sure whether to take it as a dig. Claire pulls an index card from her purse.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
My mother's pie crust recipe. A  
hundred percent foolproof.

LIZA  
(accepts card)  
You shouldn't have.

CLAIRE  
Liza, I think you and I got off on  
the wrong foot. Now that Frank is  
going to be working for Reed, I'd  
really like to be friends.

An awkward beat as it dawns on Claire:

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Frank didn't say anything?  
(embarrassed)  
Well I'm sure he was waiting for an  
opportune moment.  
(abruptly, re buffet)  
Would you look at that beautiful  
aspic!

Claire regards the buffet as Liza gathers her dignity...

INT. WINTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Liza stands at the sink. Hiding out. We hear the front door  
SLAM and Frank stalks in, moves to the cupboard.

LIZA  
Where have you been? Half the PhDs  
in America are eating canapes in  
our back yard.

FRANK  
Get rid of them.

LIZA  
What?

FRANK  
Cancel the party.

LIZA  
Did something happen at work?  
(dead air)  
Frank --

As he pours a drink, struggles to maintain a veneer.

FRANK

Work is fine.

LIZA

We made a deal when we came here.  
I wouldn't ask questions unless I  
absolutely needed the answers. And  
you would never lie to me.

FRANK

And I haven't.

LIZA

No, you'd have to talk to me to  
lie. You disappear in the middle  
of the night. When you're here,  
you're a thousand miles away.  
(fighting emotion)  
We used to lie in the dark and tell  
each other everything.

FRANK

I can't do that anymore. You know  
I can't.

Liza gathers herself.

LIZA

You remember that paper I presented  
on the purple orchid? *Orchis*  
*mascula*?

FRANK

When the war is over we'll go back  
to Princeton. There will be other  
papers.

LIZA

(pressing on)  
*Orchis mascula* -- it lives on three  
continents, sun and shade, from  
Spain to Siberia. It can survive  
almost anywhere.

FRANK

Listen --

LIZA

But it can't survive alone. It's  
got a partner.

(MORE)

LIZA (CONT'D)

It's called a mycorrhiza -- a spore that attaches to the orchid's roots. They make up their own little ecosystem. Cut off that communication and the orchid just... shuts down.

(then)

We were an ecosystem. The two of us.

FRANK

You're not a flower. You'll survive.

LIZA

We're not talking about me, Frank.

Frank takes her in.

FRANK

I'm protecting our family.

LIZA

From *what*?

Silence. The weight of secrets bearing down.

LIZA (CONT'D)

You're all alone. And you don't even see it.

A long fraught moment. Then -- the DOORBELL.

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Teeming with SCIENTISTS, bubbly WIVES, some SOLDIERS. Sprung from the lab they're like sailors on shore leave. Charlie and Abby edge through the scrum, kids in tow.

CHARLIE

I'll be right back.

ABBY

Where are you going?

CHARLIE

To find out where I stand.

He leaves Abby in a sea of strange faces.

ANGLE ON: Crosley, Meeks, Fritz and Helen drinking in a corner, holding slips of paper: their new assignments.

CROSLEY

I'm finally used to the desert air,  
they ship me to Hanford to study  
"effects of radiation on salmon  
reproduction." *Fish sex.*

FRITZ

Beats the Chickasaw Ordnance Works.  
They're sending my ass to  
Tennessee.  
(then)  
I told my wife it was a promotion.

MEEKS

Holy shit -- *Liao.*

They're stunned to see Sid Liao arrive at the party wearing  
army KHAKIS, a drafted man.

ON FRANK, manning the grill. Eyes glued to his daughter,  
flirting with a pack of GIs across the yard. She's dolled  
up, wobbling on three-inch heels, slugging wine.

Reed Akley swaggers up with a politician's smile and a bottle  
tucked under his arm. Smug in his victory.

AKLEY

Well, Frank. I understand your  
loss is my gain.

Akley offers the bottle: premium whiskey. Identical to the  
one he gave Charlie. Apparently, this is Akley's gimmick.

AKLEY (CONT'D)

Real Kentucky bourbon. Consider it  
your signing bonus.

Frank WATCHES a GI's snake his arm around Callie's waist.

FRANK

Hold on to it. You may need a  
drink.

Frank brushes past his rival. We follow as he fords the  
party, plucks the drink out of Callie's hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She's sixteen. It's a felony.

GIs blanche as Frank grabs Callie's arm, hustles her into --

INT. WINTER HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Frank shepherds Callie through the house.

CALLIE  
 Maybe I'll settle down with a GI.  
 Pop out a few army brats. You want  
 grandkids, don't you?

Some party guests filter by.

CALLIE (CONT'D)  
 Or I could lead a normal life at a  
 normal school in Manhattan.

Frank smiles tightly as he stiff-arms Callie upstairs:

CALLIE (CONT'D)  
 You can't keep me locked up here  
 like some lab rat. At least ask  
 the Colonel. Or let me talk him.

FRANK  
 It's not safe.

CALLIE  
 What's he gonna do, throw me in the  
 brig?

FRANK  
 New York. It's dangerous.

CALLIE  
 A million people live in New York...

FRANK  
 7,454,000 people live there. In  
 twenty-three square miles on the  
 eastern seaboard.

Callie STARES. Can't fathom why her father knows that  
 number. Or what he's afraid of. Nothing else he can say.

CALLIE  
 And?

FRANK  
 You're a child. Don't wear your  
 mother's makeup.

Hatred in her eyes. She retreats to her room, SLAMS the door.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Frank descends, comes face to face with Liao, awkward in his  
 starched uniform. Just the two of them.

LIAO  
 Guess they didn't need proof after  
 all. They took away my security  
 clearance, my credentials...

Liao shakes his head, his life caving in.

LIAO (CONT'D)  
 I'm on a transport bus, 0600 hours.  
 They won't say where.

FRANK  
 Listen to me. We're going to fix  
 this.

LIAO  
 Know how easy it is to make a  
 soldier disappear?

FRANK  
 The army's not that good at keeping  
 secrets.

LIAO  
 (re: the Hill)  
 They kept this one, didn't they?  
 (then)  
 It was Crosley, wasn't it?

Frank looks at him, pained.

FRANK  
 You've done important work, Sid.

Liao hoists his full glass, downs it. Leaves Frank alone.

INT. WINTER HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Frank gathers himself, avoiding his eyes in the mirror. He turns on the faucet: CLANKING, then WATER. But it's rust-red. He stands there as dirty water pools in the sink.

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Patriotic music. The crowd's getting rowdy. Liao's at the bar, staring daggers at Crosley. He drains his drink, refills it, jostling a young CORPORAL.

CORPORAL  
 Hey. How 'bout a salute?

Liao raises his middle finger, cocks it to his brow.



ACROSS THE YARD Abby struggles to make smalltalk with a gaggle of housewives, including Fay, Dot, and GLADYS, 28.

DOT

I hear *you all* had fun last night.

An insinuating smile. Abby swallows her mortification.

GLADYS

Your husband must be important to rate a place on Snob Hollow.  
(off Abby's blank look)  
The four-plexes by the golf course.  
That's what they call them.

ABBY

(trying)  
It's really not a bad apartment, except for the thin walls.

GLADYS

I know. It used to be *ours*.  
(tight smile)  
Don't bother painting. Reed Akley will find a new pet and you'll be out on your asses like we were.

Abby straightens. Takes a scolding tone.

ABBY

I'd live in a wigwam if it would help them build it any faster.

She's said too much. The women like bloodhounds.

DOT

Build *what*?

FAY

Your husband told you something. Well don't hold out.

Abby wavers. Enjoying the attention. The power of a secret. Knows she shouldn't breathe a word. Lowers her voice:

ABBY

They call it the "gadget."  
(off the rapt women)  
It's a complicated radar system. It can spot one of Hitler's warplanes from the other side of the world.

As we realize: Charlie lied to her. The women GAZE at their husbands. Swept up in this wishful fiction, flush with pride.

ABBY (CONT'D)

There's no telling how many lives  
they're going to save.

AT THE BAR, Liao has Crosley cornered. Tempers redlining.

CROSLEY

I told you, I didn't say a goddamn  
word.

Crosley tries to extract himself, but Liao's got him by the arm. They trade shoves, the young Corporal intervening.

CORPORAL

Hey --

The Corporal seizes Liao's shoulder -- Liao takes a wild swing at him -- Corporal lands a jab to Liao's chin, and --

CRASH! Liao collides with the bar, booze and glass raining down. He sprawls amid the wreckage.

The party at a sudden grinding halt, staring as the Corporal tries to help him up.

LIAO

Get your fucking hands off me.

Terrible silence as he clammers to his feet.

LIAO (CONT'D)

All you good people... You've got  
your heads in the sand.

The crowd looking on, ashen-faced.

LIAO (CONT'D)

What the *hell's the matter with*  
*you?* You send your kids to school  
right next to it. You lie to your  
wives about it --

The Corporal and another soldier haul Liao out of the party. Aghast stares, until...

KA-KRAKKK! -- a roman candle streaks overhead.

Then another. The sky suddenly ABLAZE with color. Scientists and soldiers and wives gazing up at the heavens like children.

All except Frank. He watches Liao disappear from view. His face etched with guilt.

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - SIDE YARD - NIGHT

Fireworks POP as Frank slips past sloshed revelers. AWOL from his own party. Nearly free, when from behind:

VOICE

It's not gonna work.

Frank turns. Charlie on his heels.

CHARLIE

Thin Man. That's what you meant back in your office, isn't it.

(off Frank)

Reactor-bred plutonium is full of PU-240. It's like running a Cadillac on crude oil. Akley's bomb won't work.

FRANK

We can't prove that.

CHARLIE

I was going to ask if I could join your group. But I heard they shut it down.

FRANK

It's been reinstated.

KIDS stream past, SPARKLERS in their hands, as Charlie struggles with the question that's been eating at him.

CHARLIE

Can I ask you something? What about the next war?

(off Frank)

What happens when Stalin's got one? and China, and the Shah of Iran?

Kids frolic in the grass. A game of tag. Charlie watches.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do you know the story of the Golem? A Rabbi wanted to protect the Jews of Prague, so he built an automaton out of mud and brought it to life. First the Golem killed the enemies of the Jews... Then it turned on the Jews themselves.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
See, he couldn't control it. He'd  
built Frankenstein's monster.

A beat, the two men alone in a yard full of crewcut children.

FRANK  
You're going to have doubts. Don't  
bring them into our office.

CHARLIE  
Our office?

Frank extends his hand.

FRANK  
Welcome to Manhattan.

They shake. Not yet friends, barely colleagues. Two men who  
will reinvent the world. Frank turns to go. MOVING on to --

EXT. WINTER HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Frank is halfway across the lawn when some instinct stops  
him. He glances back, sees --

ANGLE - THE HOUSE

Liza at the picture window. Alone, watching him. Their eyes  
meet. Separated by maybe ten yards and a pane of glass.  
They might as well be in different galaxies. A long beat  
passes, a thousand things unsaid, and for a moment it seems  
Frank may cross the distance between them. Then the moment  
passes. Liza watches him turn and walk off into the night.

INT. TECH AREA - FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lights FLICKER on as a couple of Army engineers push a dolly  
through the door. Unloading the first of five new IBM  
multipliers, spoils of Frank's horse trade. One of the  
soldiers eyes the mess of books and papers on the floor. He  
picks up the framed photo of the Winter family. Frank, Liza  
and Callie smiling for the camera. He sets it back on the  
desk.

EXT. THE HILL - NIGHT

A Sousa march drifts from a window. Flags flutter. Life  
carrying on, but not for Sid Liao. Liao stalks down a  
residential street, alone, weaving a little. He tests the  
doors of a row of parked CARS. All locked.

Finally the door of an OLDSMOBILE swings open. Liao looks  
around -- about to cross a line that can never be uncrossed.  
Fireworks CRACKLE as he gets in the driver's seat.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

DARKNESS. Frank undressing. Looks like he hasn't slept in a decade. He unbuttons his shirt. Slows. Stops. Like a man in a confessional:

FRANK

Are you awake? There's something I need to tell you.

(stares into darkness)

We're building a weapon.

Silence. His words hang. We creep in on him as:

FRANK (CONT'D)

It's not like any weapon the world has ever seen. It draws its energy from a fast-neutron chain reaction. The same power that fuels the stars...

His confession carrying us to...

INT. ABRAMS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lights out. Charlie sits alone. Akley's Kentucky bourbon open on the table.

FRANK (V.O.)

If it works -- and it's going to work -- it'll be more destructive than all the bombs dropped in all the wars in history put together...

Charlie gets up, MOVES to the threshold of his children's bedroom. Twins tucked safely in their beds. An oasis of peace in an unimaginably dangerous world.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

SOLDIERS sit or lean on bunks, passing a bottle. The young CORPORAL who slugged Liao at the party holds forth.

CORPORAL

I'm telling you, kid went down like a bowling pin. I barely touched him.

SOLDIER

Hey Schmelling. Where's your sidearm?

Coporal looks down at his SHOULDER HOLSTER. It's EMPTY.

CORPORAL

The fuck?

INT. STOLEN CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a .45 pistol. It's on the car seat next to Liao. He steers toward the MAIN GATE. CARS queuing up to the exit.

FRANK (V.O.)

It'll bring armies to their knees.  
Cities will disappear in the blink  
of an eye...

From Liao's POV through the windshield we see a GI approach the window of a FORD at the front of the line. He studies the driver's PASS. Then nods, and his partner raises the gate. The Ford disappears into the night.

Down goes the gate. The line of cars pulls forward. Thirty yards from freedom. Liao tests the accelerator, jaw set. Fear fighting with resolve.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Spartan as a monk's cell. Helen enters, locks the door behind her and opens her handbag, revealing a BOX OF NYLONS.

FRANK (V.O.)

But it won't just mean the end of  
this war. It'll mean the end of  
all wars forever.

Helen lifts the lid, folds back tissue paper. Nestled within, like treasure, are three coveted pairs of stockings. She removes the nylons and sets them aside indifferently.

There's something else in the box: a sheet of FOLDED PAPER. She spreads it out on the bed. It's a TECHNICAL SCHEMATIC of the IMPLOSION BOMB.

INT. STOLEN CAR / EXT. MAIN GATE - NIGHT

Liao second in line. The GI at the window of the lead car nods to his partner. Up goes the gate.

This is Liao's moment. He hits the gas. But before he can tail the lead car off the Hill, the gate slams down.

GI

Whoa, buddy. This ain't the Indy  
500. You gotta show me your *pass*.  
(seeing Liao)  
No tickee no washee.

Liao stares ahead through the windshield, gun in his hand, hand in his lap. His hand is shaking. Fireworks BOOM.

In Liao's POV, we watch taillights recede and wink out on the far side of the gate. So close to freedom he can taste it.

LIAO  
(low)  
Open the gate.

The GI looks at his partner, sensing something wrong.

GI  
Step out of the car, will ya?

LIAO  
Open the *gate*.

The GI leans in, sees the gun leveled at his chest.

GI  
The fuck are you --

BLAMMM! The passenger window explodes!

ANGLE ON the second GI, gun outstretched.

It's our freckled Iowan kid. We'll come to know him as PRIVATE COLE DUNLAVEY. Only child of elderly parents, writer of fantasy stories, huge hearted. For now, he's just a scared kid a long way from home. He drops the gun.

COLE  
What'd I do?

GI opens the car door and Liao half-slumps out onto the road. The right side of his head is gone, a gory mess. As fireworks ERUPT in the sky. Rockets' red glare. Bombs bursting in air.

FRANK (V.O.)  
A world united in peace by the most  
just and noble nation in the  
history of mankind.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank drops his shirt. We follow it down to the tile floor, covered with SAND.

FRANK  
Whoever builds it first -- that's  
the endgame. So it has to be us.  
Whatever it costs.

As a lamp CLICKS on and we realize: this isn't Frank's bedroom. We're in a rustic adobe. Cracked clay walls.

In the bed, half naked, is the Winter's Tewa maid, DYANI. She makes no move to cover herself.

DYANI

*No entiendo.*

She pulls back the sheets. Frank gets in bed. Finding some refuge. While back on the Hill...

EXT. LOS ALAMOS - NIGHT

The first of many JEEPS speeds toward the main gate as we RISE above the tree-lined streets to find a GUARD TOWER and the miles of BARBED WIRE FENCING that protect the world's most closely guarded secret from the desert wasteland beyond. The pitched suburban rooftops could be Levittown, any town.

EXT. SAN IL DEFONSO PUEBLO - NIGHT

Frank's gleaming DeSoto parked in the windswept Indian camp. Incongruous as Kubrick's monolith. An ocean of sand.

INT. ADOBE - NIGHT

Sheets rumped. A cigarette burns between Frank's fingers. Dyani gently plucks it from his hand. As we realize...

He's asleep. Finally. Peacefully. For now...

The strains of MUSIC pick up. The Mills Brothers crooning the most popular song in America, "YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONE YOU LOVE," as Dyani takes in this unknowable man and we...

FADE TO WHITE.

END OF SHOW