

Journal of
Creative Work

Volume 1, Issue 1, 2007

Oppenheimer

A Play in Two Acts

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Statement of Purpose:

This play was written with the intention of bringing to the world a bit of the soul of the man who died being known as the "father of the Atom bomb" a title Robert J. Oppenheimer came to detest. A brilliant physicist and a gentle man, Oppenheimer dedicated himself only to the needs of his country, even when it went against his own moral position. In the final hour, however, that government maneuvered politically to destroy him personally, by stripping away his security clearance on the eve of its expiration.

The docudrama by Heinar Kipphardt, (trans. by Ruth Speirs) entitled *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, used some of the transcript of the congressional hearings to depict their ultimate outcome, but Oppenheimer went to his grave with a detestation for the play that manipulated his life and his associations as adeptly as the hearings did. This play attempts to honestly depict the man.

Using actual letters and writings from Oppenheimer's life, the play is framed with the man's own memories, and hopefully, therefore, his soul.

OPPENHEIMER

(The house lights fade. The curtain rises on an empty stage with a sunset on the cyclorama. Robert J. Oppenheimer enters. He is an unimposing gentleman with white hair. He speaks crustily and with a sense of urgency, but with love in his voice. Everything he says is with composure. He is well-spoken and knows what he is saying. When emphasizing a point he will lower his voice. He is about five foot eight and of average build. His face is round and his dress casual. He is truly a man who could be called Oppie. A heavy-set cabbie enters with Oppie).

CABBIE

Are you sure you want me here, buddy?

OPPIE

There is a sunset beyond the comprehension of any man. Perhaps one look and you'd want to come of your own accord.

CABBIE

I've seen it before.

OPPIE

From here? This mountain? Look. No. See. See the sky changing color before your eyes. A physical explanation, one that scientists can concoct, will never explain what a man experiences when he sees that sight.

CABBIE

It's a sunset. I've seen it. It's cold. I'll be in the cab. You want me to take those papers.

OPPIE

No. I've come here to understand them.

CABBIE

What are they?

OPPIE

They're my life.

CABBIE

(Thinking Oppie is crazy.)

I suppose.

OPPIE

I suppose they are simply clippings. Scraps even, or perhaps trash. A bit of a newspaper. A note for a speech and a letter from a friend. Why I've kept them for all this time I cannot say. They are simply sentimental to me. You understand, don't you?

CABBIE

I'll be in the cab, bud. I'm waiting?

OPPIE

I'll be along shortly. There's nothing for me here except the sun...and my life.

(He indicates the letters.)

I'll be to the cab momentarily. Go ahead.

CABBIE

I'll wait. Are you going to be all right?

OPPIE

Thank you. I'll be fine.

(The cabbie leaves and Oppie watches him walk off. Oppie looks up at the sunset and then deliberately turns his back on it and toward the audience. He looks around and doesn't know what to do so he sits. He begins reading the scraps of paper he has in his hands. The first is a newspaper clipping.)

OPPIE

The American government is unfair to accuse certain people that I know of being unfair to them. Since this is true, I feel that certain people, and may I say only certain people, in the U.S. government should go to hell.

(Oppie can barely get this out he has such tears in his eyes.)

Yours truly, Certain People.

(He snuffles and composes himself. A letter.)

There is a weight in such a venture which few men in history have had to bear. I know that with your love of men, it is no light thing to have had a part, and a great part, in a diabolical contrivance for destroying them. But in the possibilities of death are also the possibilities of life, and these I know have been uppermost in your mind.

(Again he is choked. A pause. Notecards.)

We are not only scientists, we are men too. We cannot forget our dependence on our fellow men. Our deep moral dependence, in that the value of science must lie in the world of men. These are the strongest bonds in the world, stronger than those even that bind us to one another; these are the deepest bonds - that bind us to our fellow men.

(He looks up.)

Why shut the doors of secrecy that had been open for eleven years?

(He turns upstage to see the sunset again. It is deep red now. He turns back.)

If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky that would be like the splendor of the mighty one. I have become death; the destroyer of worlds.

(A formal paper.)

In some sort of crude sense, which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose.

(He looks up.)

There hasn't been a proceeding like this since the Spanish inquisition. Dry crucifixion? It wasn't so dry...I can still smell the warm blood on my hands.

(A letter.)

I, and everybody who feel as I do are fully aware of the fact that you are here fighting our own fight. Somehow, fate has chosen you as the one who has to bear the heaviest load in this struggle. But who else in this country could represent better than you the spirit and the philosophy of all that for which we are living. Please think of us when you are feeling low. Think of all your friends who are going to remain your friends and who rely upon you. I beg you to remain what you always have been, and things will end well.

(Now his own thoughts.)

Things will end well. A pleasant thought. Not without its faults.

(A report).

I have complete confidence in Doctor Oppenheimer's loyalty...I am convinced that Doctor Oppenheimer has been and is a completely loyal American and, further, one to whom the people of the United States owe a great debt of gratitude for his tireless and magnificent job in atomic research.

(Now to himself.)

Magnificent? Hardly. Magnificent would suggest a reward for those involved. For some? Doubtful. It was mine, and what reward did I receive? Dry crucifixion! Not so dry...another time. Ah, the sunset almost gone. Much like life. But I digress.

(Now right toward the audience, but not directed to them.)

Self-pity doesn't become anyone, particularly someone who deserves it. That's me. Robert. No one has called me that in years. I make no friends now. My children, perhaps, but aside from them, no one. I'm no longer the face in my crowd. I am the crowd in my face though.

(He looks down to the ground. When he brings his head back up he is many years younger.)

Leslie Groves had a fatal weakness for good men.

(The cabbie returns with bags.)

CABBIE

Where should I leave these?

(Oppie is now much more vibrant than he has been. After all, he is now in his late-twenties.)

OPPIE

Put them down. Oh, here. I wish I could pass a larger tip to you, but college professors are not exactly millionaires.

(He gives the cabbie a tip.)

CABBIE

Thanks. You don't have to....

OPPIE

You at least deserve an explanation for the hell you get put through.

CABBIE

Is this really where you want me to leave you?

OPPIE

Here comes Leslie Groves. This is it. Thank you.

CABBIE

You've been a great fare. Just wanted you to know.

OPPIE

(As the Cabbie walks off he speaks under his breath.)

How lucky you are to not be facing man's destiny. If only you knew.

(Leslie Groves enters. He is tall and strong. His hair is graying though he is only thirty plus. He is wearing an army uniform but walking casually. He and Oppie banter playfully, having already figured one another out. Though they are just meeting, they seem to be old friends playing a regular game of intellectual challenges.)

GROVES

Doctor Oppenheimer?

OPPIE

Yes. Robert. Bob. Oppie.

GROVES

It's a pleasure to meet you.

OPPIE

Is it? Who are you?

GROVES

Leslie Groves.

OPPIE

In that case I am Doctor J. Robert Oppenheimer.

GROVES

Yes, of course. Tell me, what does the 'J' stand for? I haven't been able to find out.

OPPIE

For nothing.

GROVES

Maybe after your father, Julius?

OPPIE

(Playfully.)

I won't admit to it.

GROVES

I can't understand why not.

OPPIE

Don't try to understand me, or comprehend me, or believe me. What you see is only a figment of my imagination. Treat me like I'm simply here to entertain you. Just watch me go.

(Oppie laughs and is joined by Leslie.)

Major Groves, it's a pleasure. Should I call you Major? Or maybe just boss?

GROVES

Civilians call me Groves.

OPPIE

What do friends call you?

GROVES

Groves.

(Oppie gives him a harsh look of questioning.)

Leslie.

OPPIE

It's a pleasure to meet you Major Groves.

GROVES

Call me Leslie.

OPPIE

Did I demand that? My apologies. I wanted to know how Doctor Teller refers to you? Colloquially he writes to me of you as Leslie, but I suspect you aren't friends.

GROVES

Doctor Teller is Doctor Teller.

OPPIE

And you are?

GROVES

Major Groves.

OPPIE

I see.

GROVES

But to you I think I'm going to be Leslie.

OPPIE

Because I don't fit the army mold of Major this and Colonel that?

GROVES

Because you're going to be my friend.

OPPIE

Not only do I have an employer but a friend. You aren't what I envisioned Leslie Groves.

GROVES

What was that?

OPPIE

(Speaking quickly, like this has been memorized in his head.)

Old and fat. Greasy and with a mustache cut at the edge of the lips. Neatly trimmed and graying like the hair. Not as much as it is. Muscles less toned than they are and a look less distinguished than it is. Staunch and haughty with a Cuban cigar tucked neatly under the lip and pointing west into the sun. Uniform neat but not pressed, shoes shined but not sparkling. Waist 38, inseam 32, neck 17. Instead I find a real human being. You aren't but maybe thirty. Not too much older than I and certainly not as wise. I wouldn't say that to a new employer, but I can go back to the Physics lab at Berkeley and never see you again. And then there is the fact that you'll take well to honesty.

GROVES

Will I?

OPPIE

Ask me to interpret a man and I will without question. Ask me to understand a man and I will. Ask me to socialize with mankind and I will disappear. I have given you my most fatal flaw. Destroy me now if you intend to do it.

GROVES

You're a clever man Doctor Oppenheimer.

OPPIE

That's why you hired me.

GROVES

You have great knowledge. That's why I hired you.

OPPIE

Cleverness?

GROVES

You waltz into...or onto, Los Alamos, and you make me your friend.

OPPIE

Friends are equal.

GROVES

All right. I sign your payroll, but without you, mine won't be signed.

OPPIE

You overestimate me. I'm just a physicist.

GROVES

You'll change the world.

OPPIE

That's why you hired me.

GROVES

I hired you to create a new science.

OPPIE

You hired me to create a new world. There is no new world...Leslie...there is only the application of nuclear fission.

GROVES

Are you trying to thrill me with chemical theory? I'm well versed. Teller's been...

OPPIE

He's been talking what I've been proving.

GROVES

He's been talking about fusion, not fission.

It can't be done. OPPIE

He thinks so. GROVES

He's right. OPPIE

Then why would you say it can't be done? GROVES

Not here. Not now. Fission first and fusion after. There's a progression of things to happen. First, we make the damned things separate, then we make them join. There can be no automobile without the wheel first. OPPIE

What do I call you? GROVES

Genius? OPPIE

You'd like that, wouldn't you? GROVES

I don't like Bob, and Robert is formal. OPPIE

Oppie? GROVES

(A look from Oppie.)

I've read every word in your files. OPPIE

Let's not make it a colloquialism for everyone. GROVES

(Groves puts out his hand.)

Welcome to my new research center, Leslie. OPPIE

Welcome home, Oppie. GROVES

I'm eager to see the facility. OPPIE

GROVES

Then we should go right away.

(They start walking as the lab set is brought on.)

OPPIE

I assume the changes have been made that I requested?

GROVES

The United States Government is not used to working under orders from a civilian.

(Oppie stops.)

OPPIE

They haven't made the changes. The designs for the lab gave it the appearance of Mary Shelley's imagination. We're not making a Frankenstein here. He could kill only one person at a time.

GROVES

The lab has seen some of your changes.

OPPIE

Bless my Uncle Sam.

GROVES

Your Uncle Sam?

OPPIE

I'm a citizen. And a loyal one. I suspect I know why you'd suggest otherwise.

GROVES

I suppose you do.

OPPIE

I've been given top secret clearance. The United States isn't brilliant - if it were it wouldn't need me - nor is it extremely responsive to requests - if it were my facility would be state-of-the-art before I arrive and begin to throw tantrums - but the government is not stupid. It has men like Leslie Groves to determine the validity of civilian employment in top secret laboratories.

GROVES

I'm flattered.

OPPIE

Don't be. You earned my respect long before we even encountered each other on the telephone. In order for you to bring me here, you had to persevere. You had to determine, without assistance, how valuable I would be in leading this project, and you had to fight my very own history every step of the way.

GROVES

Facts don't lie.

OPPIE

Meaning the powerful strengths of my knowledge and ability to run a physics research lab, or my history?

GROVES

I argue one while the Federal Bureau screeches the other.

(Oppie picks up his bag and walks.)

OPPIE

Accepted.

GROVES

I also know you wouldn't be here without knowing why.

(Oppie stops again.)

OPPIE

Major Groves...Leslie...I've been briefed on the importance of this research. The United States wishes to excel in physics and has chosen to do so by researching new forms of energy with an emphasis on immediate usage for fossil fuel replacement.

GROVES

Very good. The Germans couldn't have put it better.

OPPIE

Is that cultural slander, wartime jargon, or a personal assault?

GROVES

I'm afraid you misunderstand.

OPPIE

What intentions did you have for bringing Dr. Robert Oppenheimer to Los Alamos?

GROVES

"The possibilities of energy usage for mankind are immeasurable. The United States Government has established several research reservations with the intent of not only harnessing new forms of energy, but of leading the world technologically in their unveiling and instrumentation." The speech I was given to give you goes on. I had to memorize it to deliver it right.

OPPIE

Leslie Groves has become less of a military chess piece than the service had intended. Was that a result of dedication or promotion?

GROVES

I like physics and I performed admirably. Managing Los Alamos is considered time off for good behavior.

OPPIE

For me as well. But we seem to continue this tangent and neglect the subject at hand. My purpose here?

GROVES

The speech continues...this part circled in red indelible ink and strictly noted as classified, although a top secret ranking is required to deliver the information...figure that one out.

OPPIE

My instructions were to accept the position of director without knowledge of what or whom I would be directing, or decline. After my acceptance it was inquired of me whether I would be cleared for Top Secret information or not. The intent of the question was to determine my credibility. My answer was sincere: I do not know, nor do I understand politics. Such things as clearance are politics. Shortly thereafter each item of my life, friends, relatives, gifts, jobs, favorites restaurants and cinemas, were all meticulously researched. My clearance came shortly after the detailed excavating. The part circled in red ink?

GROVES

"The Los Alamos site, situated over sixty miles from any civilization, is located in a mountainous region of New Mexico. The research facility is designed to intentionally determine the validity and usability of nuclear fission; the splitting of the atomic particles, thus generating enormous amounts of released bonded energy."

OPPIE

The names Robert Oppenheimer and Leslie Groves can be added to that portion of the pamphlet.

GROVES

If you do what you're supposed to?

OPPIE

Create a bomb.

GROVES

Several times you've suggested that.

OPPIE

Leslie, and I say this with fear of perhaps calling you Leslie for the last time, I am not stupid.

GROVES

We've established that.

OPPIE

I've not been hired to create a new power source to fuel your automobile or light your home. I'm not directing the facility to advance our nation's knowledge or to keep the world abreast of new discoveries. I'm the one who proved, in Berkeley, that nuclear fission was possible.

GROVES

You're the one who proved it?

OPPIE

Edward has, no doubt, belittled my abilities. Petty man that he is. Unfortunate. His heart is good though.

GROVES

(Groves tries to change the topic a bit.)

I've read papers. You didn't do all this single-handedly.

OPPIE

No. But in retrospect, I've directed all that happens in this field. I'm here to direct, am I not?

GROVES

You are.

OPPIE

I'm here to work for the Government, am I not?

GROVES

Yes.

OPPIE

And I am here to create a new weapon...a bomb. Please avoid a politically correct response or a moment of pondering and pandering. I repeat, again with some trepidation, I am not stupid.

GROVES

We're in a war and we will win. A new bomb will certainly give us an edge.

(Oppie picks up his bag and starts to walk.)

OPPIE

This conversation ends here. We understand each other, but my colleagues have hearts for man as well as hearts for science.

GROVES

You don't?

OPPIE

You misled me Leslie Groves. The lab has been modified exactly to my specifications.

GROVES

So there is keeping you off your guard.

OPPIE

Rarely.

GROVES

Let me show you your bungalow.

OPPIE

Out the back door and West into the sun. I studied the layout. Be a friend and put my bag there for me.

GROVES

I'll put the key...

OPPIE

On the front hall table which is on the north side of the entrance.

(Leslie picks up the bag.)

GROVES

I always had a fatal weakness for good men.

(Groves exits. The lab is bright but not cold. It is actually colorful in pastels. The appearance may be more like that of a prison than that of a lab. The windows are barred on the outside, for safety, and the lights are certainly not track lighting. There are not test tubes and beakers. There are books and huge machines, and glass cases with small machines inside. There is no dust. There is a refrigerator in the corner and vinyl furniture including a grouping of several chairs with a coffee table between them. Oppie tries out several chairs before deciding on the one which will be his.)

OPPIE

My chair.

(He stands and goes to the refrigerator, which he opens. He takes out a root beer.)

Down to the root beer. Leslie Groves, you're a better man than I. Let's hope you never learn to appreciate the differences between us.

(Edward Teller enters. He is about 35 and shows it. He is energetic or perhaps better, extroverted. His stature is not tall and strong but instead, he is of medium build and of more than medium weight though he is not fat. His hair is brown and wavy and unkempt. His clothes hang uncomfortably on his body. His pants are a bit too far below his waist and his oxford shirt is less than neatly tucked in. His hands are small and frequently in motion. His demeanor is that of a child in the midst of some enormous game of show and tell. Teller is, however, a brilliant scientist and an even more brilliant person. From Oppie's point of view he is an annoyance. From reality's point of view, he is the humanitarian that Oppie wishes he could be.)

EDWARD

Bob. Bob Oppenheimer. It has been far too long. Your letters were becoming sterile old man.

OPPIE

Edward. So good to see you. Please, call me Robert.

EDWARD

Now there's a clever man with a turn of formality. How's Kitty? Is she here?

OPPIE

She's in Berkeley. She'll be along without much delay. There was such a haste in my departure she decided to put the house in order and find a tenant...

EDWARD

You left her with all that to do? Some husband. Millie wouldn't have let me out of her sight.

OPPIE

Jack's there. You remember Jacques Chevalier?

EDWARD

English professor. Certainly. How is the old commie?

(Oppie is bitten by this comment.)

OPPIE

He's fine. He's French, by the way. And in all actuality an American citizen more than anything else.

EDWARD

Sure. Sure. Parties are parties and not political rallies. Besides, giving money to Spain isn't the same as sympathizing.

OPPIE

He's a good man.

EDWARD

Bob, I wouldn't suggest otherwise. It was just a friendlyism. I'm full of them.

OPPIE

You certainly are.

EDWARD

Say, I love the lab these days.

OPPIE

The photos of the first one struck me as slightly...overexposed.

EDWARD

It is a totally different place. Of course, I've been begging them to make the changes...not quite like this, but it wouldn't matter. They don't listen to scientists.

OPPIE

I'm a scientist.

EDWARD

You are? Why didn't they tell me? Another friendlyism.

OPPIE

I'm being overwhelmed by this friendly-ness.

EDWARD

Thank goodness, the army boys have finally decided a scientist should be considered director. I would have put in for the job myself but I want to stay right here.

OPPIE

I'm afraid you can't get rid of me that easily, Edward. The lab was reconfigured to suit my research style. Conversations may be under zealous for your demeanor but I find them stimulating as well as thought provoking.

EDWARD

I've missed working with you, Bob.

OPPIE

You've been gone from Berkeley for over a year now, haven't you?

EDWARD

That Physics lab must be a totally different place without me.

OPPIE

It is frequently less illuminated with volume...and is therefore less congenial.

EDWARD

Bob, even *you* can't understand my enthusiasm about this stuff.

OPPIE

Understand it? I share it. Though perhaps not as outwardly as you.

EDWARD

We can manipulate the particles that make up life. There's something amazing about that. Some big General was touring the other day and asked what we did. Now you always taught those graduate symposiums, but introductory Physics was my bag. Do you know what I said?

(Very dryly.)

OPPIE

The mounting curiosity may cause me to burst before you can ne'er tell me.

EDWARD

I said, 'Everything in the world is made of molecules.' He understood that.

OPPIE

He was a General. He has to. Now if it were a Colonel I'm sure the story would be different.

EDWARD

Let me finish. So I said, 'every molecule is made up of atoms. Molecules make different things because they are different, and molecules are different because the atoms which make them up have different numbers of components, though the components are the same.'

OPPIE

I've heard you give this speech. 'Water has one oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms.'

EDWARD

Yes, and oxygen and hydrogen are both made of protons, neutrons and electrons, they simply have different amounts of each.

OPPIE

Why do I feel like an undergraduate all over again? Edward, is there a point?

EDWARD

We forget the simplicity of this all. We're only here to break apart electrons from the protons and neutrons. The energy that's used to hold them together is released when that happens.

OPPIE

If it were only that simple.

EDWARD

But it is. And if it is that simple, then fusing atoms together is just as simple. And by fusing them, the extra energy they possess to stay apart is released. That energy is hundreds of times more powerful than the energy which holds them together.

OPPIE

But that is fusion and we are here to prove fission.

EDWARD

You've shown how fusion can occur.

OPPIE

Theoretically. I've also proven how the speed of light can be achieved by mass as well as energy.

EDWARD

It can't.

OPPIE

Albert will be here in a few months. I'm certain he would be privileged to have you sit in on our debates as I prove him wrong.

EDWARD

You can't. Mass can't achieve the speed of energy.

OPPIE

Of course it can't. But I'm willing to wager against Albert when it comes to proving him true. I've simply found a way to confuse him and his theories.

EDWARD

But his formulas are indisputable.

OPPIE

It's senseless to reduce all of humanity into a mathematical formula.

EDWARD

He's a quiet man. He won't take kindly to it.

OPPIE

To a challenge? Ridiculous. He's a scientist. But consider this, Edward. If energy can equal mass multiplied by the speed of light squared, can the theorem not be re-equated to find a determinate mass and energy which could equal the speed of light?

EDWARD

Not in my head, Bob. I'm not as quick as you. Have you learned another language this week?

OPPIE

No.

EDWARD

I expected a nein or a nyet or some other thing. Anyone who knows eight languages has to be a threat to military intelligence. It's a wonder you were given any clearance at all.

OPPIE

No wonder. Certainly not to you.

EDWARD

No, I guess it isn't. I've known how clever you are since the day we met. Well, that was when my committee interviewed you at Berkeley. Now you're my supervisor.

OPPIE

As well as your contemporary. How is Los Alamos?

EDWARD

There's no Piango's here. Los Alamos is just a desert...and a mountain. A mountainous desert or a deserted mountain, whichever way you look at it, there's no Piango's.

OPPIE

The home of the finest Italian food outside of Italy.

EDWARD

You were notorious for spending the evenings there with your students.

OPPIE

Only the brightest...and their girlfriends.

EDWARD

There are no Berkeley girls here.

OPPIE

Jack would bring his poetry, or his latest crusade.

EDWARD

You'll stop missing all of that soon enough. The excitement of this place will overwhelm you.

(Teller turns around and takes off a piece of the set with him as the entire lab set is removed and the Piango's set is put in place.)

OPPIE

But excitement is a result of life. A byproduct, if you will. We do not generate it. Much like energy. It is a consequence and not an intention. We are excited by things we don't understand but hope to achieve. We are excited by the prospect and not the reality. For you the excitement is in the knowledge that you don't understand and that the understanding may never come to you. For me the excitement is in knowing that there is an answer which I can find. And for me the excitement is in the coming of the knowledge. If I'm told something which I do not know or suspect, then I'm excited by this newfound answer. The answers are all there. It's simply a matter of finding them and putting them into motion. And there is an excitement in life turning differently from the direction it's guided in. If a mild man is a murderer or a mad man a genius...that is excitement. If a solution is added to another and unbeknownst to the chef the result is antibiotic, the excitement comes not in the anticipation of the fore coming knowledge but in the anticipation of the result. Either way, the byproduct is excitement...and knowledge.

(This last speech was as much to Edward as it was to the students now gathered at a table at Piango's. The restaurant is red. The table of six is gathered around a checkered tablecloth that boasts two full ashtrays and a number of empty wine bottles. Oppie is much younger now. The sound in the air is that of an accordion and a crooner. Piped in, no doubt. There are other tables and other people at them, but we really see none of this. Actually, we only hear the clanking glasses and low murmur beneath the crooner and the conversation. There is a flicker of candles and a low hovering cloud of smoke which is blue and just above head level.)

KAREN

What a fabulous view on life. You seem to see things with such an open mind.

OPPIE

A closed mind is worthless. Isn't that right Frank?

FRANK

What would be the point of college if we didn't have open minds? I mean, we'd just sit around and listen to professors who ramble incessantly about their own knowledge.

VICTOR

Isn't that what College is?

(They all laugh.)

OPPIE

And Victor supposes that he is my most prized pupil.

VICTOR

Aren't I?

OPPIE

I couldn't adjudicate between you and my own brother. I'll have to abstain.

FRANK

That's all right, Oppie. I may be your brother, but I certainly don't have a fragile ego. How could I around you?

OPPIE

With a face like yours you should have gone into the arts.

KAREN

He does have a fascinating look.

CRAIG

But I think your eyes are more fixed on Dr. Oppenheimer.

OPPIE

This is only my first year...

SCOTT

You're the first professor I've had to say we shouldn't call him 'doctor.'

OPPIE

It's a bit embarrassing.

FRANK

Isn't he also the first professor you've gone out to dinner with?

VICTOR

We're out to dinner with a classmate whose brother happens to be our professor.

OPPIE

I'm sitting right here. Let's not refer to me in the third person.

FRANK

For my brother...no less than the second person.

(They laugh.)

KAREN

Is that really how you feel about the surprises of life?

(She is coming on to him.)

OPPIE

Life takes turns. When those turns surface we follow them with a skip, or avoid them like they're the potholes of humanity.

KAREN

Utterly poetic.

SCOTT

Ooooooh. A Physics lesson in poetry.

CRAIG

Stick around. There may be a biology lesson.

(They laugh.)

SCOTT

Hey, did you hear old man Chevalier is going to the party on Friday?

CRAIG

For the forces?

SCOTT

He's a big supporter.

FRANK

Of what?

(He asks nonchalantly.)

SCOTT

There are some European rebels. They just want peace. I mean, let's face it, Marx wasn't all so bad.

OPPIE

Actually, Marx proposed a society where all men, reasonably equally created, should be treated reasonably equal.

FRANK

Yeah, Oppie, but that doesn't mean the government should control everything they do.

KAREN

People trying to avoid potholes and skip down the turn.

OPPIE

Quite right.

SCOTT

Anyway, I guess Jacques Chevalier in English is a big supporter.

OPPIE

If he believes his support can help.

CRAIG

Are you interested in supporting?

OPPIE

Me?

FRANK

Oppie, that means putting cash up for the commies.

OPPIE

Frank, I'm surprised my brother would be so closed minded.

FRANK

I want to have a career and a life. The United States is not so thrilled about sending checks to the commies.

CRAIG

It's just given to the communist party to support the Spanish rebels. They funnel the money. There's no connection to the communist insurrection at all.

FRANK

I wouldn't ever be....

SCOTT

No. Support for the Spanish rebels is considered a worthy cause.

KAREN

What was the thing about the party?

CRAIG

There's a gathering on Friday at our place. Just a few people who want the world to be a fair place...equal. It's not a communist fund-raiser, just people with similar views getting together.

OPPIE

Intellectual stimulation?

SCOTT

Would you like to come, Doctor Oppenheimer?

OPPIE

Call me Oppie. Certainly.

SCOTT

You don't have to feel obligated to donate or anything.

OPPIE

I'd like to support the cause. It's one I can believe in.

KAREN

I'll be there too. Are you coming Frank?

FRANK

One Oppenheimer isn't enough?

OPPIE

I don't think he wants to be pressured.

FRANK

Hell, I guess I'll be there. Why not?

OPPIE

Unlike you.

KAREN

Great. We can all get together then.

CRAIG

Listen, Scott, are you ready to go? I've got to get back to the apartment and hit the books.

FRANK

Not yet.

OPPIE

Don't stop them when they're being academic. It was a pleasure, boys.

SCOTT

Thanks, Oppie.

(Craig and Scott leave.)

FRANK

Listen, Oppie, I'd better go too. Your class is tough.

OPPIE

Tougher on you than on anyone else too. Nepotism be damned, you're a student in the classroom and not a sibling.

FRANK

Believe me, I know.

(Frank leaves.)

VICTOR

Oppie, I'm glad you're interested in the party.

OPPIE

It sounds like it should be a fine time.

VICTOR

No, I meant...the PARTY.

KAREN

The communist party?

OPPIE

Certainly. It may not be the lifestyle or the living I wish upon myself, but for those who wish it, a right to choose it should certainly be available.

KAREN

A right to choose the lifestyle they want?

OPPIE

I don't think it is a solution. In time, history will certainly mark the demise of this once favored governmental style, but until then, societies must learn from mistakes. They must be educated by mistakes. And mistakes can only be made properly if they are aggressed with the greatest of zeal.

VICTOR

I'm a more avid fan of yours now than ever.

KAREN

Are you heavily involved?

VICTOR

Every penny I can spare I send to Spain.

OPPIE

Victor Alvarez I am amazed how much in common we have.

VICTOR

You donate?

OPPIE

I will. I mean our undying devotion to the causes we find important. Physics...science, and humanity.

KAREN

And open-mindedness.

OPPIE

I should leave you as well. Teaching is far more laborious than my frenzied style would indicate.

KAREN

Stay for just a moment.

OPPIE

Really, I should be off.

VICTOR

I'll beat you to the door, Oppie.

(Victor leaves.)

See you in class.

OPPIE

Can I walk you to your car?

KAREN

Can we speak frankly for a minute?

OPPIE

I think I know what you have in mind. I read you better than most.

KAREN

Am I obvious. I try to be discreet.

OPPIE

Passion is difficult to hide. I'm far better at understanding people than I am at dealing with them.

KAREN

I thought so.

OPPIE

Even our band of six, tonight was far more than I can comfortably dialogue with.

KAREN

All the small talk. It doesn't amount to much. But you do understand me, don't you? And you like me anyway.

(Oppie tries to kiss her. She pushes him away.)

OPPIE

Not the correct move, was it?

KAREN

You don't understand.

OPPIE

Apparently not.

KAREN

How open-minded are you?

OPPIE

To things I don't entirely understand, completely.

KAREN

What I am is something you will never completely understand.

OPPIE

And what is that? I am intrigued.

KAREN

You see me as a woman?

OPPIE

A fascinating one.

KAREN

Women are frail and dainty. Women have emotional unbalance and delicacies.

OPPIE

These are beautiful traits.

KAREN

Close your eyes and imagine society free from its chains.

OPPIE

Is that the struggle of the Marxist or the capitalist?

KAREN

Now think of men. I mean males. The man and his body have their hearts always in the sod. The men steer with sexual reigns.

OPPIE

I've certainly proven to be a fine example of that hypothesis with my behavior. But I fail to see the comparison.

KAREN

I think when a communist rises up to lead communists it is because he, or she, can love communists best because he, or she, knows them best.

OPPIE

It would be ludicrous to expect a capitalist to lead communists.

KAREN

Not only because he doesn't understand them well enough, but because he doesn't really love them.

OPPIE

I don't understand your analogy to men and women, however.

KAREN

You're a man, a capitalist, for example, and I'm a woman, a communist, for example, and you love women, communists, for example, and I love...

OPPIE

Capitalists, yes.

KAREN

No. I love communists.

OPPIE

You love women?

KAREN

I love to lead those I understand. I'm not content with always searching for understanding. I understand what women need. If I can love them I can lead them.

OPPIE

Now I am truly embarrassed by my actions of only moments ago.

KAREN

Your reaction?

OPPIE

Were I to deny your choices I would perjure myself or become a hypocrite.

Fantastic. KAREN

Do you know Jacques Chevalier? OPPIE

This really doesn't bother you? KAREN

Do you know Jacques? OPPIE

Sure. An English professor. KAREN

And a very dear friend of mine. He's married. OPPIE

Oh. KAREN

I suspect he's a homosexual as well. OPPIE

He's married? KAREN

An English professor should be. He's a brilliant man with a heart of solid gold. He's a pillar of virtue and a champion for man and humanity, and I suspect he's a homosexual. OPPIE

How could you think so? He's your friend and he's never told you? KAREN

He's my dearest of friends. The first man to befriend me back in September when I came to work here at Berkeley. OPPIE

You see him frequently? KAREN

All the time. And I resent my mind for intimating that it suspects, but it does, nevertheless. OPPIE

Try to dissect the situation. KAREN

OPPIE

A scientific experiment with relationships. I'm the master.

KAREN

You've done it?

OPPIE

He doesn't look at women. He's married. He probably shouldn't and wouldn't.

KAREN

He might. Anything else?

OPPIE

He looks at men.

KAREN

Comparing himself. Men are basically ego-maniacal.

OPPIE

He looks at their buttocks. He glances at them and then quickly turns away. I watch him and notice.

KAREN

He's examining clothing or some other such thing.

OPPIE

He looks at their slacks...in their slacks. He's looking.

KAREN

No answer for that.

OPPIE

He looks longer at the...

KAREN

Longer ones?

(They laugh.)

Is he a good man?

OPPIE

Definitely. He works hard, cares about people, struggles to do the proper, right thing. He teaches to share his knowledge and help others obtain and maintain theirs.

KAREN

Does he love his wife?

OPPIE

They rarely fight. They are both enormously happy. Each other's company is all they desire.

KAREN

Then if he feels good looking at a couple of bulging crotches, don't let it bother you.

OPPIE

I'm simply curious. I want an answer. I thrive on knowledge of any sort.

KAREN

Here is your answer: he's homosexual. He is a good person and he enjoys the look of a man's body. That doesn't affect you and it doesn't change him. There is certainly nothing wrong with wanting something other people can't understand.

OPPIE

Fusion for me.

KAREN

Of course. Most people can't understand what it is or why you would want it. They don't react negatively to your desire for it because they don't have any similar desires which they can't achieve.

OPPIE

People act negatively toward you?

KAREN

Your brother, Frank, called me a pervert.

OPPIE

Forgive him.

KAREN

I have. He looks at bulging crotches too.

OPPIE

My brother is not a homosexual.

KAREN

No. But he doesn't discount the thoughts he has about men, though he is much happier with a woman.

OPPIE

His own fear of what he thinks he could be is reflected in his attitude toward you?

KAREN

Naturally. I feel sorry for people like him.

OPPIE

He ate dinner here with you.

KAREN

He's read books, no doubt, and learned to understand. We're fine together now. He understands himself.

OPPIE

He's a good boy and a fine brother.

KAREN

Now, Dr. Oppenheimer, I should be going.

OPPIE

I *should* too. But I don't always do what I should. Wouldn't you prefer to stay and talk?

KAREN

I wish I could.

(The set begins to turn into the lab again.)

OPPIE

Talk is so important to the existence of mankind. Frank is such a genius at talk. He gives me the power to understand, simply by talking. And Victor is, perhaps, the most adept listener in existence. He hears each word and extrapolates all possible configurations for the application of things one says. Frank and Victor are fine students of Physics and will be for their entire lives. Physics, after all, is a growing field and not a completed one. Frank and Victor and I will achieve great things one day. Frank speaks, Victor listens and suggests, and I apply. Together we can create an entirely new world. They are the most valuable assets to any unification of physicists. I am always proud to have them working with me, and I know you will be too.

(This last comment is to Leslie Groves who has walked into the lab scene.)

GROVES

I'm glad to have them aboard but I wish you would have consulted me before asking the Bureau to issue them Top Secret Q clearance.

OPPIE

Leslie, they got the clearance. The government works fast for its whiz kid of physics.

GROVES

I'm in charge of Los Alamos.

OPPIE

You are the heart but I am the brain. I thought they should be here.

GROVES

Your brother? Nepotism.

OPPIE

(Raising his voice.)

Damn nepotism, he's a fine physicist and an excellent man. He can speak his mind and discuss details with an amazing clarity for translating information into terms others can't manipulate in their own minds.

GROVES

Victor Alvarez is a brilliant young man. Frank Oppenheimer doesn't have a lot of physical theories under his belt. A degree or three, sure, but he's your brother.

OPPIE

This is about something else, isn't it?

GROVES

If the two of you have some other collusive motive I'll be in a hell of a pile of...trouble.

OPPIE

(Oppie's voice drops to near a whisper, the words are spoken slowly and over enunciated - Oppie will occasionally use this trick to make his word the final say!)

Leslie, you hired me to accomplish a goal as quickly, efficiently and intelligently as humanly possible. You concern yourself with the tragedies of our pasts, I am quite aware. Please, keep close watch on us both. It will ease your mind and allow our relationship to continue to blossom through this scientific spring.

GROVES

I'm sorry. You're right.

OPPIE

(Speaking normally now.)

Well, speak of the devil.

(Frank enters. He is a man that he was not when we saw him last. His hair is black, straight and short but fluffed up. He has sideburns to just above the bottom of his ears. He is five foot eight and extremely well built. He is muscular, but proportionately right. His smile is warm and human and charming. His voice is smooth and comfortable. He walks with confidence but not cockiness, his clothes are very sharp, liberal in nature, comfortable and extremely well fitting. They accent his body. His eyes, however, make him. Women might fear becoming friends with Frank for fear of falling in love with a married man. Frank can look at someone with his piercing black eyes, pools, and he can let them be the portal to the love in his heart. That heart is so big and it leaps at people through Frank's eyes, caresses them, engulfs them, and when he turns away, it's gone. Frank hugs Oppie.)

FRANK

Oppie, I'm impressed. All this at your command. Major Groves, it's good to see you again.

OPPIE

(To Leslie Groves.)

Major?

GROVES

We met once at an interview with ten detectives from the bureau.

FRANK

We're going to accomplish some amazing things.

OPPIE

Our purpose, our intent, and our future.

GROVES

Let's hope so. Oppie, I'm sorry about what I said. I keep forgetting that I'm the secretary around here, and not the president.

OPPIE

I'm sorry I keep acting like president. Neither one of us can pursue this goal without the other.

GROVES

Right again, Oppie. I'll see you at our oh-nine-hundred tomorrow.

OPPIE

Some fascinating new developments.

(Leslie exits.)

FRANK

This place is like the old basement back east. Do you remember the set-up?

OPPIE

I discovered my love for the physical.

FRANK

In that basement?...So did I.

(They laugh.)

I remember test tubes full of blue, and the way the sun would bleed in through that window. It was the most amazing place to me. Where science was being created among all that nature.

OPPIE

I understand the parallel.

FRANK

Nance likes it here too. She says we could raise a family here. I told her the bungalows were probably not the best child-rearing places in the world, but she's got her mind set on this one.

OPPIE

I had already structured our working schedule around a laboratory without Frank Oppenheimer. Amazement struck me when your approval was granted.

FRANK

Well, we left the party about a year ago.

OPPIE

I can still read the absolute joy stricken across your face when you shared your involvement in the communist party with me. "Found our niche," you told me. "We drove to the lab at Cal. Tech., met some Pasadinians, and fell in love with them."

FRANK

Those were great years. But I'm not communist material. Anyway, in those days being a communist wasn't a statement against the government.

OPPIE

What has happened to our society? Freedom of expression was a birthright, but attempting to understand another government has become heresy.

FRANK

(A little saddened by the reminiscing.)

It got old anyway.

(Edward Teller walks into the lab and is doing work as if he has been all along.)

OPPIE

It just struck me impossible for the two communist sympathizer brothers to work together on a top-secret project.

(They both laugh.)

FRANK

Is Doctor Teller here? I can't wait to meet him.

OPPIE

In the lab. Let's go get to work.

(They walk up to Edward.)

EDWARD

Bob. This couldn't be Victor Alvarez?

OPPIE

Edward, this is Frank Oppenheimer.

EDWARD

I was kidding, Bob, I could recognize your brother anywhere. Frankie...it's a pleasure to meet the better half of your family.

FRANK

Doctor Teller I've read all about you. I saw your paper on the fusion procedure.

OPPIE

What paper?

FRANK

Physics in future. He had an article about a month ago. I'm sure you saw it.

EDWARD

Never gave it to Bob. He's my boss, you know. I can't be working on projects the boss doesn't approve of.

OPPIE

Oh, for God's sake, Edward, we are not here to achieve 100 Million degrees, we're here to complete a project for the government.

EDWARD

I do the theory at night, Bob, now calm down.

FRANK

Maybe I should leave.

OPPIE

(His voice drops quiet again.)

Stay right there. I don't want this infantile breach of security to continue his masquerade and as it appears you are the only one with a clear concept of the truth...

EDWARD

Please, Bob, don't put him in the middle of this.

OPPIE

Doctor Teller, have you not been informed that publishing is restricted while scientists are at the establishment of Los Alamos?

EDWARD

The paper was published as a pre-dated Berkeley paper. I was a joint author.

FRANK

That is true. But the new items are amazing.

EDWARD

My apologies, Bob. I'm sorry. I'll give up the fusion and concentrate on this. Frank, let me show you where we are to date.

FRANK

Oppie?

OPPIE

(His voice returns.)

Of course, that is why we're here. My temper overwhelms me at times, Edward. Frank, these outbursts are few and far between. Albert Einstein will be joining us this afternoon to solve the final piece.

FRANK

Who?

EDWARD

Albert Einstein. A self-made physicist. Theory of relativity thinker. Abstract in notion but a direction we feel we may need.

(Victor Alvarez enters.)

VICTOR

Frank, Edward, Oppie. Frank are you as amazed?

FRANK

Just as much. I'm in love.

VICTOR

Edward, I've got the solution to the containment. If we can control the initial impact we can complete the process.

OPPIE

How soon will I be able to schedule a test? We've located a situation several miles from here which will suit the purpose. Safely. At 100 multiples minus.

EDWARD

How soon will Albert be here? He did get the preliminaries, didn't he?

OPPIE

Certainly. Well, gentlemen, I should be elsewhere.

(The set changes to a lectern and a small audience. Robert, at the end of the speech, walks to the back of the lectern where he is lecturing to a crowd at Berkeley.)

OPPIE

With such a simple observation the solution is discovered. It all seems to ripple in the stream of reality and fall into place. The reality of the world is one of physical science. Physical science is the foundation, the building block of all things. Don't let the abstract cloud the fact that when we physicists discuss the nature of science we aren't dealing with inconsequential numbers and figures, but of reality. We can achieve the greatest of things when our minds are allowed to dwell upon reality. Do not consider what we cannot accomplish but do not condemn yourselves, either, to limitless beliefs. You have been trained by the strongest of minds, the most analytical and the most theoretical. It has been, to me, a most prestigious learning to help educate you. By trying to grapple with what I consider simple, you take turns which alter my perceptions. I leave, today, to work for the government in an undisclosed location on an undisclosed project, yet, the skills you have are ones which should easily allow you to discern the undisclosed. You solve riddles well. And that is what I have trained you to do. I shall long miss my short tenure here at Berkeley and I shall remember you all fondly. Be good men.

(There are some applause. Jack Chevalier approaches Oppie.)

JACK

Oppie, I cried.

OPPIE

Jack Chevalier you have a far too sentimental outlook on life.

JACK

Literature affects me. And you have now written some.

OPPIE

Jack, I'll blush.

JACK

Oppie, listen, I'm having a small group tonight. No party...but two couples, us, and I hope the two of you.

OPPIE

Without a dinner before we part for...our undisclosed location, I would be incomplete.

JACK

Wonderful. I'll see you at 6:00. Perhaps when you're there we can step aside for a moment. There's a troubling thing I should warn you about.

OPPIE

Jack? Is something wrong?

JACK

Certainly not. I simply need to get something off my chest and you deserve to be made aware of the serious consequences of the discussion I have recently had with someone.

OPPIE

Puzzling.

JACK

Relax.

(The set begins to change to the bunker. At the end of the next speech the Los Alamos team is gathered in glasses, looking at the blast. It takes place on Robert's last line of the speech.)

OPPIE

Puzzles seem to constantly overwhelm me. I haven't yet grown accustomed to them. Instead they challenge me to overcome them. And today the puzzles seem to be ending and a whole new set of them unwinding before my very eyes. Before my eyes. This place is where solutions come to pass always. This is the place where science and nature become unified. I've seen more magic in my lifetime than any spectator of that very muse shall ever witness. Understand that here and now, as all our efforts become reality, I am humbled before my God. The God that creates all of this. The God that places, within my power, the knowledge I have come to have. If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be the splendor of the mighty one.

(The blast is over now. The men cheer. The lights drop out on all of them, and Oppie is now in a pool of bright white light which is almost drowning him. He turns very slowly but quite directly toward the audience and speaks as if a new understanding has just washed him and cleansed all the past understanding. He is afraid, he is confused and he is alone, metaphorically. He pauses, staring at the audience, the shadows eerie stand still on his face. Then:)

I have become death. The destroyer of worlds.

(Blackout. Curtain.)

ACT II

(The house lights fade to black. The curtain rises but we are looking into darkness. The voice we hear has some reverberation to it.)

GRAY

The hearing will come to order. Chairman Gordon Gray preceding over this proceeding under Section 10 B 5 B one to three of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946. In the matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

(The lights rise on the stage. A bright light, much like the one at the end of Act I is on Oppie who is seated in a brown leather chair with arms Stage Right. His chair is facing the down stage left area. Across from him, behind a long oak table which is placed askew, down stage left to up stage center, sit three men clad in suits. On the far right side of the stage is a shorter oak table which has three seats behind it. This table faces almost directly downstage and two of the seats are occupied. On the far left side of the stage is a similar table with three chairs behind it, all of which are occupied.)

GRAY

Let me start with a few items of discussion for the record. Mr. Garrison, Mr. Robb, you're both fine attorneys. Your legal services are not needed here.

(Gordon Gray is the chairman of this, the Gray board. He is a very tall, very strong, very conservative man, dressed in a gray suit with big lapels and fine pinstripes which are not perceivable by the audience. His hair is dark brown and very thick and wavy. The indentation of his hat may still be there. He is ruggedly handsome with a square face, a chiseled look, and an extremely strong chin and jaw which runs perfectly parallel to his cheekbones. His shoulders are square, his chest is square, his attitude is square. This is a man who knows how to run a business and makes sure that everyone else does too.)

I want to make it quite clear from the beginning that this is an inquiry as a matter of the Atomic Energy Act by request of the Atomic Energy Commission. This is not a trial. We will, of course, proceed in a manner parallel with the constitution, but we are not here to render judgment to any charges. We are here to determine whether the security clearance of J. Robert Oppenheimer should be renewed for consulting services. Dr. Oppenheimer...

OPPIE

Yes?

GRAY

You are currently Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and advisor to the National Security Council?

OPPIE

No.

GRAY

Mr. Oppenheimer, this is for the record and you are required to tell the truth.

OPPIE

Mr. Gray, I am not currently Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

GRAY

Mr. Robb?

(Roger Robb is a fat attorney with dark hair, or what is left of it. He has a three- piece brown and crème suit on which is too small to fit around his belly. He has a lot of energy for a round man, but he channels it into intensity. He is sitting at the table on the left side of the stage and is the attorney for the AEC.)

ROBB

Mr. Gray, gentlemen, I don't know.

GARRISON

(Lloyd Garrison is tall and thin. He has graying, red hair and a very thin face. He would be the epitome of a Southern gentleman if he had a southern accent and not just a lilt. He is extremely handsome, or was in his youth, and he is still extremely fatherly. His tan suit is excellently tailored and only hangs a bit more loosely than it should. This is the man you would want to represent you. He doesn't miss a beat, but he doesn't insult, or jump in when unneeded.)

Mr. Gray, Mr. Morgan, Dr. Evans, I have instructed Dr. Oppenheimer that in order to avoid confusion, he should only answer honestly and succinctly.

GRAY

My question was confusing?

OPPIE

It was.

GRAY

Dr. Oppenheimer, are you currently employed to work for the Atomic Energy Commission?

OPPIE

I am.

GRAY

Why are you not chairman?

OPPIE

I am on suspension pending your decision for my security clearance.

GRAY

I see. Mr. Garrison?

GARRISON

Yes, Mr. Gray?

GRAY

You know Thomas Morgan and Ward Evans?

GARRISON

A noted businessman and fine scientist.

GRAY

Fine. And you understand the procedure we plan to use here during this inquisition?

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, Roger Robb is the premiere litigator here, not I. I take my lead from him.

GRAY

Fine. Mr. Robb?

ROBB

Yes?

GRAY

Are we ready to proceed?

ROBB

The binders you gentlemen have before you contain all pertinent information to this case and I assume that the last week has accorded you opportune time to peruse them.

GRAY

Tom? Ward?

EVANS & MORGAN

Yes.

GRAY

Then let's proceed.

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, I'd be glad to submit the names of my witnesses and the time frame in which I plan to use them if that would be beneficial to the Gray board.

GRAY

That would be most appreciated.

GARRISON

Copies of that information will be available at the end of today's proceedings.

GRAY

Fine.

GARRISON

I hope Mr. Robb will do the same.

ROBB

Mr. Gray, I can't see the necessity of that. My witnesses will be presented as I see fit and when I see fit. That is in accordance with the commission's rules and procedures, is it not?

GRAY

It is.

GARRISON

I just thought that to expedite matters and to create fairness...

GRAY

Mr. Robb has made an excellent point about his witnesses. I suppose now you intend to withdraw your offer of supplying your list?

GARRISON

My offer still stands. I hope Mr. Robb will reconsider.

GRAY

I don't think he needs to. Mr. Robb, we all the have the charges. Would you like to make any statements?

ROBB

I would. Dr. Oppenheimer is a communist. He has consistently proved that to our country. There are several significant issues. First, a relationship Dr. Oppenheimer has had with a known communist, second, his brother Frank's membership in the communist party, and most importantly, a conversation which took place in the house of Jacques Chevalier which Dr. Oppenheimer concealed from the government. These issues, in conjunction with Dr. Oppenheimer's adamant opposition to the H-bomb or super-bomb, will prove that he is unworthy of the trust of this country.

GRAY

Mr. Garrison?

GARRISON

We will refute all of this.

GRAY

That's all you have to say?

GARRISON

I find it difficult to adequately dispute the issues Mr. Robb has brought up since I do not have a Q security clearance.

ROBB

Mr. Garrison, you were offered the opportunity to receive clearance and denied it.

GARRISON

I requested it eight weeks ago and am still waiting.

ROBB

But you originally denied the opportunity.

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, perhaps Dr. Oppenheimer can best explain to you why we decided to not initially procure the clearance.

GRAY

Very well.

OPPIE

We felt we were being treated unfairly.

(Silence.)

GARRISON

Go ahead, Oppie.

(The set begins to change to an office.)

OPPIE

When Mr. Robb received his emergency Q clearance in a record eight days, we felt sure we would be accorded the same preference should we request it. My attorney, Mr. Garrison, had asked for the clearance for himself and his assistant. He was told that his request could be processed, but the request for his assistant could not be. The amount of information required to fully understand my case is far too much for one man. I'm certain you are now aware of this by reading the information you have read. But our determination to not request Q clearance for Garrison is wise. The board will understand, certainly, that without clearance, the defense is limited and will be understood as that. With nine weeks available before the inquiry we have time. If no resolution is come to before the end of next week we should request the clearance for Garrison alone. A standard emergency clearance is usually achieved in four weeks. Roger Robb's eight days were amazing. Yours won't be, but four weeks will give you another four to review all the information necessary to accurately defend me.

GARRISON

If we can establish a relationship with a stronger litigator, then perhaps they can apply for the Q clearance and let me out of this.

OPPIE

Lloyd, I hope you haven't given up on me. At this point I don't know who else could understand the significance, take the time to immerse himself in my situation and my life, and defend me against this inquisition.

GARRISON

Oppie, I won't abandon you, and if we aren't able to secure a good litigator, I'll stay on as your defense. But you know that I'm a bit old, a bit feeble, and a bit kind-hearted to face Roger Robb.

OPPIE

Your apprehensions add to mine immeasurably. I have more confidence in you than in anyone I have known. Please stop undermining my approval of you.

(They both laugh.)

GARRISON

Hell, this is a tough case. You're the father of the Atom-bomb.

OPPIE

A dubious honor. And one I would appreciate remaining in the mountains of New Mexico.

GARRISON

My apologies. But for the last nine years you've been the forerunner in developing policy for this country regarding nuclear power.

OPPIE

I've continually supported the abandonment of fusion. I attempted to squelch funding for mass production of the hydrogen-bomb. I wished only to make research a seeking of knowledge and not an avenue for destroying our brothers.

GARRISON

Oppie, please don't refer to mankind as 'our brothers.' When you started in the game of physics, the Soviet Union didn't exist like it does today. The people we have pointed those bombs at, the communists, are not our brothers, at least, they won't be according to the Gray Board.

OPPIE

Gordon Gray is a staunch businessman. Did you approve of his appointment?

GARRISON

I appealed the selection...the selection of Gray, and Morgan. I didn't question Evans. He's tough and conservative, but he's trained in research.

OPPIE

A potential threat on that account as well.

GARRISON

Regardless, we were denied any appeal.

OPPIE

Standard policy?

GARRISON

Contrary to it. In fact, we should have been given a list of possible names to which we could add or amend with some credibility. You're still a valued member of the political machine.

OPPIE

One parking ticket, however, and I would be in maximum security.

GARRISON

An amazing turn of events.

OPPIE

So allow me to turn to the less dramatic...or perhaps, more melodramatic, for a moment.

GARRISON

At this point, Oppie, I have no idea how you stand. I know you're innocent of the charges. They're all circumstantial. Your relationship with Karen Elton, your brother being a party member...

OPPIE

My donations to the party?

GARRISON

To Spanish rebels. It's really a minor point, or will be to Robb. You supported an issue, not a political affiliation.

OPPIE

This is ludicrous. The most covert action I ever took is inconsequential. But nevertheless I am in this situation.

GARRISON

The one thing that might bury us is the one issue, out of the twenty-three counts, that is not circumstantial. You did not report to the Federal Bureau your conversation with Jacques Chevalier in the kitchen of his house in Berkeley.

OPPIE

I have no defense other than stupidity. I simply was not accustomed to reporting every word I spoke to a government agency.

GARRISON

That omission is going to be difficult to fight. But it really isn't a valid issue. If this were a court of law we would be on extremely safe ground and Roger Robb knows that. There is no legal ground to remove your clearance, but Robb can stir emotions, and he'll do it with a myriad of witnesses.

OPPIE

Do we bring Frank up?

GARRISON

Everyone.

OPPIE

Not Jack. He's my friend and I've hurt him enough.

GARRISON

His testimony can clear you.

OPPIE

He's moved to France to get away from the media scrutiny. By ever mentioning the conversation I destroyed his life. He was researched. I guess he had a relationship with a male student and it was revealed. He lost his position at Berkeley, he lost his wife, he spent every day followed and hounded by government officials. He couldn't take a shower without being watched. I will not allow him to come back.

GARRISON

He would do it if you asked.

OPPIE

Lloyd, this subject is moot. I will not ask him. I keep this letter in my breast pocket. It's from Jack. Listen..."Oppie, I do not have to forgive because I cannot blame you for your decent humanity and honesty. You are my best friend. A simple statement but one which cannot be flowered or altered. You are my best friend."

GARRISON

He can and will save you.

OPPIE

After all I have caused to happen to him...and even now he must wear dark sunglasses and hats in cafes in France to avoid the press...he worries about me. It is time to stop worrying about me.

GARRISON

I'll drop the subject.

OPPIE

Let me satisfy you. This is later in the letter. After I destroyed him and he later became aware of my current situation he wrote this: "There is a weight in such a venture which few men in history have had to bear. I know that with your love of men, it is no light thing to have had a part, and a great part, in a diabolical contrivance for destroying them. But in the possibilities of death are also the possibilities of life, and these I know have been uppermost in your mind. Your dedication to life is unyielding. Stand behind your truth and that dedication will be vindicated."

GARRISON

You're right.

OPPIE

You understand?

GARRISON

Yes.

OPPIE

So where do we go now?

GARRISON

To court.

(The set changes back to the courtroom.)

OPPIE

I'm afraid. I'm afraid of the questions which will be asked of me and I'm afraid of having every detail of my life paraded across a political stage over which I have no control. I am afraid that the men whom I have come to know and respect are now going to attempt to label me a traitor. While that label may have no legal application, within the community that I circulate, as small as those circles are, a translucent letter A will be fixed upon my lapel. Were it only an acronym for adultery my life would be vindicated by my lifestyle. My letter A shall for eternity represent the most minute of mass we can mentally envision...the atomic theory. And for discovering marvelous things at the base of energy, for giving this knowledge to my country, for sharing my application of emotion with my intellectual understanding of

OPPIE (cont'd.)

the things I have discovered and turning this information over to my country, I shall be tried. I am confident that there is absolutely no evidence to concretely prove that I have any affiliation with the communist party. There can be no such evidence because there was never any such alliance. I shall be vindicated. Please understand that this is the case.

GRAY

Is that your statement, Dr. Oppenheimer?

OPPIE

It is.

GRAY

Very well. Mr. Robb?

ROBB

To begin, I would like to bring to discussion the House Un-American Activities Committee's inquiry, many months ago, on the validity of Dr. Oppenheimer's patriotism.

GRAY

Mr. Robb, were these hearings made available to the public?

ROBB

At the time they were considered high-security, and several aspects of the HUAC discussions are still considered sensitive. Those without Q clearances should leave the room.

GARRISON

I assume that means me.

GRAY

You are the only one here without a Q clearance.

GARRISON

Before leaving I would like to make my objection to this quite clear. Dr. Oppenheimer, under no circumstances should be left unrepresented. It is a violation of his Civil Rights and one I can appeal.

ROBB

Mr. Gray, Mr. Garrison could, indeed, invalidate this board's decision based upon this one point.

GRAY

While you are out of the room we will confine questioning to the passing of information and shall not allow any questions, other than those which are stated in writing, to be answered. Further, we shall make the nature of the questioning available to you.

GARRISON

Nevertheless, I object.

(Garrison leaves.)

ROBB

Now, it is true that the House Un-American Activities Committee mistrusted your devotion to this country and its policies and scrutinized your work and devotion.

OPPIE

Yes.

ROBB

Let me state that this HUAC meeting was designed to draw attention to Dr. Oppenheimer. His...

OPPIE

Mr. Gray?

GRAY

Yes, Dr. Oppenheimer?

OPPIE

I have an exceptional capacity for memorizing.

GRAY

Your point?

OPPIE

The HUAC meeting was a matter of research and not to condemn me. Senator Nixon's report was quite clear and I carry a certain pride in it.

ROBB

That information is available to you in your folders. The valid point...

OPPIE

Mr. Gray?

GRAY

Yes, Dr. Oppenheimer?

OPPIE

May I recite Senator Nixon's findings?

GRAY

Any objections, Mr. Robb?

ROBB

I can think of none.

EVANS

Good. This isn't a courtroom. Go ahead Robert.

OPPIE

Thank you, Dr. Evans.

(A pause.)

I don't do a very good Richard Nixon. You'll have to bear with me.

(Laughs.)

I have complete confidence in Dr. Oppenheimer's loyalty...I am convinced that Dr. Oppenheimer has been and is a completely loyal American and, further, one to whom the people of the United States owe a great debt of gratitude for his tireless and magnificent job in atomic research.

ROBB

Yes, but Dick Nixon is a politician without the ability to judge, and his credibility is in question, obviously.

OPPIE

Senator Nixon is a lawyer with the necessary background to interpret evidence. Unless, Mr. Robb, you are suggesting that lawyers are not trained with the ability to interpret facts accurately.

GRAY

Besides, Dick Nixon is one of the most honest, credible men on the face of the earth. Mr. Robb, this subject is not valid to this hearing. Would you like to continue?

ROBB

Yes. I would like to call Karen Elton.

GRAY

So noted.

(Karen Elton enters and takes a seat. Oppie sits at the table which has no one at it.)

ROBB

Ms. Elton...

OPPIE

Mr. Gray?

GRAY

What?

OPPIE

May Mr. Garrison return?

Yes, of course.

(Garrison returns.)

You didn't miss anything.

Karen, I'm sorry.

Don't be.

Miss Elton, while on short sabbatical from his work at Los Alamos, Dr. Oppenheimer came to visit you, did he not?

Yes, in Berkeley. We were friends.

Friends, in fact, who had both vocally supported the communist party.

On one or two occasions. Socially. As a topic...

You were overheard on several occasions, but let's talk about that visit to your apartment in Berkeley.

All right.

Were you a member of the communist party at the time of this liaison?

It wasn't a liaison.

Were you a member of the communist party at the time?

I was.

Are you still a member of the communist party?

No.

GRAY

OPPIE

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

KAREN

ROBB

Can you explain why?

KAREN

It isn't what it was.

ROBB

I see, but at the time you had access to high ranking communist party officials?

KAREN

Yes. I knew them socially.

ROBB

And any information Dr. Oppenheimer may have given you, you could have passed along quite easily.

KAREN

He didn't give me any information.

ROBB

But maybe in the throws of passion he passed along a bit about how that moment was much like an explosion?

KAREN

There were no throws of passion. Our relationship was platonic.

ROBB

Didn't Dr. Oppenheimer spend the night with you in your apartment?

KAREN

He didn't have anywhere else to go. Jack had already moved to a single-bedroom.

ROBB

You both slept in the same bed platonically?

KAREN

Yes.

ROBB

That seems a little bit unlikely. Men feel certain things, women feel certain things...

KAREN

We would never do that.

ROBB

Can you tell the board why that is?

KAREN

We're just friends.

ROBB

Did you have any wine with dinner that night?

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, I know this isn't a court of law, but I need to object to this whole line of questioning...

GRAY

Mr. Garrison, I don't care about how judges handle their courtrooms. We want any and all information here. Now stay quiet. You can ask whatever you want, too.

ROBB

Did you have any wine?

KAREN

A bottle or two.

ROBB

And yet you didn't have sexual relations with Dr. Oppenheimer?

KAREN

No.

ROBB

Think about what you're asking us to believe. Are you lying, or are you just inhuman?

KAREN

I'm a homosexual. I have no interest in men sexually, Mr. Robb.

GRAY

You're a lesbian?

(He is disgusted.)

KAREN

Yes, sir, I am.

GRAY

Mr. Robb, I think we've heard enough from her.

ROBB

I think you have.

GARRISON

Miss Elton, has Dr. Oppenheimer ever given you any information, even his opinions, regarding physics, quantum theory, nuclear power, fission, fusion, or any work related information.

KAREN

He never even mentioned anything like that.

GRAY

Thank you. We won't need any other information.

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, if I might just...

GRAY

There is nothing else that this lesbian can credibly tell us to alter our opinion regarding her relationship with Dr. Oppenheimer. Can we please move on? You may leave.

(Karen stands and walks out.)

KAREN

Be tough Oppie.

OPPIE

I am sorry, Karen.

KAREN

Don't be.

GRAY

Mr. Robb, we're really particularly interested in this "kitchen conversation." Because it is really the first point of interest, chronologically. Dr. Oppenheimer, you did have that conversation before you actually left Berkeley, didn't you?

OPPIE

A couple days before.

GRAY

Mr. Robb. Is this going to be all right?

ROBB

Certainly.

GRAY

Mr. Oppenheimer...excuse me, Dr. Oppenheimer, can you please take the witness chair?

(Oppie does.)

OPPIE

This was a long time ago.

ROBB

Yes. Before you worked at Los Alamos and before you worked for the Atomic Energy Commission and before you served on numerous government boards. Tell us about the conversation.

OPPIE

Well, I gave my parting speech to a group of students at Berkeley and afterward Jack Chevalier asked me to his house for dinner that night. The next day I was leaving for Los Alamos, which, at the time, was an undisclosed location.

ROBB

The next day?

OPPIE

Yes.

ROBB

Just a moment ago didn't you testify that you left "a couple of days" later?

OPPIE

I suppose. It wasn't quite clear in my memory.

ROBB

So everything you say now might not be clear in your memory

OPPIE

The important factors are quite clear. Minor details may be slightly clouded.

ROBB

So some of your testimony might be clouded?

OPPIE

Yes.

ROBB

And yet you were able to remember, word for word, Senator Nixon's findings on your patriotism.

OPPIE

This was a long time ago. I don't memorize unimportant information.

ROBB

I'm sure that the importance of information is up to the board and not to you. Can you please tell us about the evening's event, specifically the kitchen conversation.

(The set has a piece added to it to make the kitchen. The courtroom remains.)

OPPIE

Well, we arrived, my wife and I with little event. We spoke plenty of small talk, not about weather, but generally about literature. Jack loved the classics. The living room was dark and wooden and warm. I was drinking only water that evening, because my gastronomy was slightly askew. My glass had been filled several times and by about the fourth time I refused to let Jack go into the kitchen to fill it for me. I went there myself. I stood in front of the sink, filling it, when Jack came in behind me. There isn't an incredible amount of information we share on culinary talents, but kitchens seem to be a gathering place and consequently our emotions seem to be set aside. Conversations become much more honest. There was a bit of information mentioned earlier. This kitchen, like all kitchens...what was the subject of that information. Jack? What is going on?

JACK

It's almost nothing. I hate to even mention it, Oppie.

OPPIE

There is nothing I distrust more than an avoidance.

JACK

Understandable. You're a good man, Oppie. You have a heart and a soul. That speech today was proof.

OPPIE

Ah, I see now. You wanted to pull me aside and pique my curiosity to praise my noteworthiness.

JACK

Am I that transparent?

OPPIE

This glass is more opaque.

JACK

I suppose it is. But my blood is thicker than its contents.

OPPIE

A cryptic message, my friend, and I like to pride myself on a Holmes-like sense of deduction.

JACK

Then let me ask you this question. Do you know Meyer Polsky?

OPPIE

A silent gentleman who supervises the writing lab. Answers questions amicably but remains aloof and distant.

JACK

You must know him well.

OPPIE

Only by reputation.

JACK

Well, he knows you.

OPPIE

Does he? I don't recall meeting the man.

JACK

He knows you, too, by reputation, but I think, much more.

OPPIE

How so?

JACK

I know him from my party membership.

OPPIE

He's a communist?

JACK

Not only a communist, but today he told me he had the ability to pass information along to the European communists.

OPPIE

Convince me I am not naive when I ask, "you're implying secret and volatile information?"

JACK

Yes.

OPPIE

There's no need for secrecy. You're not aware of any information which has been passed, are you?

JACK

No.

OPPIE

You have not and do not intend to pass any information?

JACK

I don't have access to any information.

OPPIE

What's your concern, Jack? You're safe.

JACK

He asked me about you.

OPPIE

For what purpose?

JACK

He wanted me to tell you he can pass along information.

OPPIE

Jack, I hope you told him I would never do anything to betray my country.

JACK

Of course I did.

OPPIE

My fascination with the communist way of life is nothing but that, a fascination. I am totally loyal to my country. I haven't even revealed to you where I will be doing my research.

JACK

I know that, Oppie. I told him just that. He became defensive and backed off.

OPPIE

Then the story is over. The book can be closed on this event right now. It was only a casual conversation. He never asked if I would pass along information.

JACK

Only through implication.

OPPIE

Then there has been no transgression.

JACK

Should you report this? If you do...my reputation, Oppie. My party membership is hard enough. I'm leaving the party.

OPPIE

I despise a system where we are forced to take a back seat on sensitive subjects, regardless of our interest in them.

(The kitchen set is removed as Jack exits.)

ROBB

"I despise a system where we are forced to take a back seat on sensitive subjects, regardless of our interest in them." Those were the exact words of a man who was about to embark on a scientific journey into sensitive subjects, which he was told he would have to remain silent about. This man, made those comments, knew of this direct source to our most staunch adversary, and then did not report the conversation to anyone for three months. It was, indeed, three months, was it not?

OPPIE

Three months before I mentioned it to Leslie.

ROBB

Colonel Leslie Groves?

OPPIE

Yes.

ROBB

Why did you wait three months?

OPPIE

This was just a passing conversation. It became nothing and meant nothing.

ROBB

Then why did you choose to divulge it at all?

OPPIE

Leslie made a comment about certifying to him any information which might reveal espionage.

ROBB

And what do you believe this comment was in response to?

GARRISON

Objection. Requires Dr. Oppenheimer to speculate on the Colonel's intent.

GRAY

Mr. Garrison, this is informational. Answer the question, Doctor.

OPPIE

I believed that he may have heard about the conversation.

ROBB

Why was that?

OPPIE

I had received a letter from Jack.

ROBB

Gentlemen, I would like to read an excerpt from that very letter. "Oppie, I have left Berkeley. Your indiscretion of our, in quotes, 'closed book,' has led to such hounding by the government that I cannot retain my status or my pride. We plan to leave the country and return to France. I have no hope here. I am surprised at you, and disappointed."

GRAY

I assume this evidence is in our packages.

ROBB

It is. Dr. Oppenheimer, what is your relationship with Jacques Chevalier now?

OPPIE

Friendly.

ROBB

This letter suggests hostility. Why would you consider your current relationship with Jack Chevalier friendly?

OPPIE

Perhaps, because we're friends.

(Chuckles.)

ROBB

Dr. Oppenheimer, what did you say to Jacques Chevalier to calm his mistrust of you?

OPPIE

I told him exactly what transpired.

ROBB

I see, you divulged all the information.

OPPIE

I told Dr. Chevalier that I had explained to Major Groves we had had the conversation only after the government had harassed him.

ROBB

I see. And now Dr. Chevalier, an ex-communist and loyalist of no-country, residing in the heart of Europe, is your friend.

OPPIE

Jacques Chevalier is loyal to the United States.

ROBB

Objection. Move to strike. Speculative.

GRAY

Agreed.

ROBB

Mr. Gray. I think I'm finished with this line of questioning.

GRAY

Very well, then let's...

ROBB

But I would like to read into the record a letter, less than nine weeks old, which Dr. Oppenheimer received from his communist friend in France. "Oppie. I and everyone who feel as I do are fully aware of the fact that you are here fighting our own fight. Somehow fate has chosen you as the one who has to bear the heaviest load in this struggle. But who else in that country could represent better than you the spirit and the philosophy of all that for which we are living. Please think of us when you are feeling low. Think of all your friends who are going to remain your friends and who rely upon you...I beg you to remain what you always have been, and things will end well."

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, may I object?

GRAY

To what?

GARRISON

I have never seen this evidence and have no defense prepared.

GRAY

So noted.

ROBB

I would like to call Colonel Leslie Groves.

(Leslie has entered and takes his seat.)

GARRISON

Colonel Groves you understand that this council has been called to review facts? This is not a court of law, but you are dutifully required to tell the truth?

GROVES

I understand.

(Groves is adequately nervous, and much grayer than he was before.)

ROBB

Colonel Groves, you hired Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer to the atomic project at Los Alamos, is that not correct?

GROVES

I did. After careful research.

ROBB

What type of research was that?

GROVES

Into Dr. Oppenheimer's background.

ROBB

Would that include past associations?

GROVES

It would and did.

ROBB

Are you aware that Dr. Oppenheimer currently has friends who are communists?

GROVES

No, I was not aware of that.

ROBB

Were you aware that Dr. Oppenheimer did have friends who were members of the communist party?

GROVES

I was aware that he *did* have such friends.

ROBB

Were you aware of this before you hired him?

GROVES

I was.

ROBB

Did you feel he was a security risk?

GROVES

After intensive research, I did not.

ROBB

Tell me, Colonel Groves, what are the research procedures?

GROVES

Rather intensive. Interviews are conducted with every possible association. Observations are made of every aspect of a person's life. This includes every location the subject may have been in the previous five years. Even acquaintances are observed.

ROBB

And what kind of information is considered unimportant?

GROVES

Typical things. Memberships in organizations the populous might join.

ROBB

Would this include the communist party?

GROVES

At the time it might have.

ROBB

I see. And what would be considered information pertinent to rejecting a security clearance?

GROVES

Covert actions.

ROBB

Is there ever the possibility that covert actions are not discovered before a clearance is granted?

GROVES

It could happen.

ROBB

In that instance would you reject the clearance?

GROVES

Not if there is no evidence that the actions are continuing. Not necessarily.

ROBB

I see. And if the covert actions, or would you say relationships?

GROVES

Yes, covert relationships.

ROBB

If they were continuing?

GROVES

We would revoke clearance immediately.

ROBB

Would there be further investigation.

GROVES

It's unlikely. Security clearances are not granted easily.

ROBB

I see. So when you discovered that Dr. Oppenheimer had conversed with Dr. Jacques Chevalier in the kitchen of Dr. Chevalier's house, you did not consider discussing selling national secrets a covert action?

GROVES

Well, it was a covert action, but...

ROBB

And when you discovered that Dr. Oppenheimer was continuing his relationship with Dr. Chevalier, what did you do?

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, there's no evidence that Colonel Groves was aware of any continuing covert relationship.

ROBB

Mr. Gray, let me enter into the record a letter from the National Security Council to Colonel Groves that indicated just that.

GARRISON

May I see that?

ROBB

It will require a clearance. Dr. Oppenheimer may see it.

OPPIE

I've seen it.

GRAY

Have you?

OPPIE

I received a copy of the transmission from Colonel Groves. We discussed it.

GROVES

There was nothing suspicious.

ROBB

Of course. Mr. Garrison.

GARRISON

Colonel Groves, you know Dr. Oppenheimer. Can you please tell us what type of individual you feel he is?

ROBB

Objection. Character witnesses are not an inherent part of this inquiry.

GARRISON

I'll rephrase. Colonel Groves, based upon your extensive research into Dr. Oppenheimer's past and present, what can you tell us about him?

GROVES

Oppie is extremely loyal. His devotion to man is second only to his devotion to this country.

GARRISON

Would you consider him loyal even if he were offered the opportunity to sell secrets.

GROVES

I would trust him with my own life.

GARRISON

And with the life of your country?

GROVES

As a military man I have pledged that my life will come before the life of this country. Dr. Oppenheimer can be fully trusted with either.

GARRISON

You know this even after all your research?

GROVES

The research only strengthens Dr. Oppenheimer's case.

GARRISON

Thank you.

GRAY

Colonel Groves, you may step down.

(Leslie leaves.)

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, I would like to object to the continuing information which is brought forth without my previous knowledge. I cannot properly present a defense.

GRAY

We have traveled this road before.

GARRISON

Much of this information, however, does not require clearance, such as letters.

ROBB

Mr. Gray, many of these documents are from Dr. Oppenheimer's personal files. He has had access to them.

GARRISON

These documents were taken from Dr. Oppenheimer several weeks ago, and my requests to see them have yet to be answered by Mr. Robb.

ROBB

I am not required by any regulation to release this information.

GARRISON

There are thousands of documents.

GRAY

I'm fully aware of that.

GARRISON

Dr. Oppenheimer simply cannot remember each and every detail.

GRAY

This is becoming painfully clear.

(The set changes to Oppie's den. A man is there documenting and packaging reports and papers.)

OPPIE

Mr. Gray, eight weeks ago I had spent the day in Mr. Garrison's office. An exhausting day and my memory strained. There is no hope of going through thousands of documents, but my meticulous past leaves every piece of itself in tact. There are but scraps that I keep with me at all times. Pieces of my life. It grows very little because it is the amassed pieces which are so personal to me. All day long I kept thinking, "we must categorize and document each piece. They will be invaluable and my memory simply cannot recall all the details." What the hell are you doing?

(Oppie and Garrison enter the room.)

MAN

Here's the warrant. I am documenting and confiscating these files.

OPPIE

Can he do this?

GARRISON

It appears so.

MAN

Please go about your business.

OPPIE

Go about my business? You sit there packing my entire life neatly into boxes where you will take it away and hold it against me and I must go about my business?

GARRISON

There's no point in it, Oppie. I'll request the records back.

OPPIE

And they will arrive with your security clearance. I'm being meticulously buried alive.

GARRISON

Don't give up hope on me now. Your memory is all we have.

OPPIE

I am old and tired. I have advised presidents and men. I don't deserve this.

GARRISON

And we will prove that.

(Edward Teller walks in.)

EDWARD

Bob? The door was open. Hi Mr. Garrison.

GARRISON

Dr. Teller.

EDWARD

When this man interrogated me I knew you had one helluva defense council.

OPPIE

I think I do.

EDWARD

What's going on there?

OPPIE

The government is packing up my journals and letters, my degrees and dreams. They are now simply state evidence.

EDWARD

Awful. Just awful.

OPPIE

Certainly.

EDWARD

This is just a damned shame. You never did anything wrong. I know it, Bob, and I plan to say it.

GARRISON

Dr. Teller, remember that you simply need to answer the questions.

EDWARD

You're going to ask me what I think of him. He's a damn fine man.

GARRISON

Does he know the National Anthem?

EDWARD

Sure he does. Who doesn't?

GARRISON

Have you heard him sing it?

EDWARD

No, but he's a good man. Tell him, Bob. You know the National Anthem.

(Silence.)

Of course he knows it. What's up?

GARRISON

We don't want to use your testimony.

EDWARD

Bob, tell him how much I know. I've worked with you closer than anyone. I love you, Bob. We came up with fusion together.

OPPIE

I theorized it.

EDWARD

I did it.

OPPIE

You should have left it alone, Edward. Today we can destroy this planet many times over. There's no need for that, and no understanding why you would choose to.

EDWARD

Bob, don't start this again. As chairman of the Commission you put more spurs in my side than I can imagine. It took the Russkies years to catch up on fission, but you slowed me down so much they got fusion nine months after I did.

OPPIE

No one should have done it.

GARRISON

This is probably not a wise conversation. Dr. Teller, you should leave.

EDWARD

Wait a minute. I devoted part of my life to Bob. He may have gone to the Security Council and tried to stop me, but he didn't. And he knows now that I was right. It was just a mistake.

OPPIE

I worked diligently to stop you.

GARRISON

Dr. Teller, really, you shouldn't be here.

EDWARD

I gave you everything and now you write me off. I thought we were friends Bob.

OPPIE

We were.

(Teller starts out.)

My fucking name is not BOB!

(Silence.)

OPPIE

Can we stop all this, now. My clearance will die a natural death in a few months. Can't I just resign?

GARRISON

The investigation is still going to happen. The government likes to uncover their mistakes. We simply have to prove that in this instance they didn't make one.

(Oppie breaks into tears.)

Get some sleep, hang on, believe in yourself, and be ready for a long day tomorrow.

MAN

I'll lock up when I go.

(Garrison exits.)

GARRISON

Goodnight Oppie.

(Oppie speaks to the man as the set returns to courtroom.)

OPPIE

My life is only little scraps of paper, numbered and catalogued and placed into dusty boxes. What is life? A carbon-based unit, a number, a piece of life's catalogue which is placed into a dusty box and buried away. That is what I am. That is what we all are. In life we make choices. I've never been able to project my future. I have never been able to plan it or to plan for it. I've only been able to take each decision, as it arises, and weigh its opportunities and its downfalls. My decisions are always based upon a deep love for my fellow man. This was not always the case. Before Los Alamos I made decisions which would produce the most excitement. Today, I sit here because I wished to be excited as a youngster, and caring as an adult. I feel abnormal for behaving normally.

GRAY

Mr. Robb, have you anyone left?

ROBB

Just one person, and I guarantee it will be brief.

GRAY

It would be appreciated.

ROBB

Dr. Edward Teller

(Edward takes the stand.)

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, I can't see the relevance of this witness.

GRAY

Mr. Garrison, we've been at this for weeks, can we please see Dr. Teller and dispense with these hearings finally. I'm certain you will be happy with the ending.

ROBB

Dr. Teller, I have only two questions. First, what do you think of Dr. Oppenheimer?

EDWARD

He's a decent man, but he can be vindictive.

ROBB

I see. And why were there continued delays in the advancement of the H-bomb which ultimately led to the Soviet Union achieving this technology only months after we did?

EDWARD

Dr. Oppenheimer continually hindered the project's advancement.

ROBB

Thank you.

GRAY

Mr. Garrison, I hope you can remain equally as brief.

GARRISON

I can. Dr. Teller, have you ever known Dr. Oppenheimer to participate in or to be privy to any covert actions whatsoever?

EDWARD

No. But he is...

GARRISON

Thank you.

GRAY

Is that the end of it?

ROBB

It is.

GRAY

Very well. If you have any remarks to guide our judgment, we'll hear them.

GARRISON

Might we recess until tomorrow for closings?

GRAY

Mr. Robb?

ROBB

I don't see any need. I'll be brief.

GRAY

Mr. Garrison, if you would like to recess, we will, but I remind you that we are not looking for arguments, only direction.

GARRISON

I'll proceed now, then.

GRAY

Mr. Robb?

ROBB

Dr. Oppenheimer is a communist sympathizer and we know this from his relations with Karen Elton, his brother's communist party membership, and his relationship and kitchen conversation with Dr. Jacques Chevalier. He then deterred our nation's scientific advancement to allow the Russians to almost overwhelm our technology. Although he may not be a spy, Dr. Oppenheimer is a risk to national security. That is all.

GARRISON

Mr. Gray, Mr. Morgan, Dr. Evans, Robert Oppenheimer is my friend. He is, in fact, friends with Colonel Leslie Groves, and Edward Teller, and he is brother to Frank Oppenheimer. There is no attesting to why people like Dr. Oppenheimer other than that he is a genuinely decent human being. Jacques Chevalier is not a spy, and there is nothing to even suggest this. In fact, there is not one scrap of evidence, to the best of my knowledge, that even remotely suggests that anyone involved in the life of Dr. Robert Oppenheimer is a spy. The kitchen conversation was nothing but a conversation. In actuality, although Dr. Oppenheimer loves his fellow man, he served this country by creating a device to destroy his fellow man. His country came first. It always has and it always will. As a final note I would like to point out that tomorrow marks the end of Dr. Oppenheimer's term as Chair of the Atomic Energy Commission and his security clearance will, at that point, become invalid. If for no other reason than this, please allow him to end his years of service with his head held high.

GRAY

If that is all, I hereby end testimony in the matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

(Blackout. A phone starts ringing. It rings, perhaps ten times before we hear Oppie in the darkness.)

OPPIE

There's no one home. Give up.

(More rings.)

Give up.

(More rings.)

Hello.

(The lights come up on Oppie's den. He is sitting and drinking.)

Lloyd. Let's not appeal to the President. No, I stopped reading the paper since I saw the decision. Lloyd, they didn't even have the decency to call us. The only thing the President can do is uphold the decisions. Dry crucifixion? It wasn't so dry. I can still smell the warm blood on my hands. Lloyd, there hasn't been a proceeding like this one since the Spanish Inquisition. Minority opinion? Someone voted in my favor? Which one? Yes, I'll read it. No, I don't know anyone. Well, wait a minute, my thirteen-year-old, Peter, sent a letter somewhere. I'll read it. Thank you, Lloyd. Goodbye and God bless.

(He hangs up and slowly walks to a table which has three papers on it. He looks through them, chooses one and opens it. He reads the front page.)

"Morgan finds Oppenheimer was mistreated. The case of J. Robert Oppenheimer produced a removal of security clearance...

(He mumbles through more of the article.)

...minority opinion as follows: In some sort of crude sense, which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose. The opinion, which suggests Oppenheimer is a totally loyal citizen, asks the question, why close the doors to secrecy which have been open for fourteen years."

(He ruffles through the paper to the back.)

Peter, you didn't send a letter, did you?

(He finds the letter.)

The American government is unfair to accuse certain people that I know of being unfair to them.

(He starts crying.)

Since this is true, I feel that certain people, and may I say only certain people, in the U.S. government should go to hell.

(He is sobbing loudly.)

Yours truly, certain people.

(Oppie picks up some papers from the table and then doesn't move as the set is removed and we are back at Los Alamos field where the sun is almost set.)

Certain people.

(Oppie opens and reads a letter.)

Dear Oppie, I have a job again. I'm a telephone line service man. I climb poles all day long with no supervision. There have been no agents watching me and there has been no questioning. I lost the waiter job several months ago but didn't want to say anything while you were going through what you were going through. I can't blame my supervisor for letting me go. Business was slipping because the Federal agents were watching me at least twice a week. It would scare customers away. I know this is not your fault. I blame ignorance. That is something you could not even understand. Actually, I am happy. There is no responsibility. Bless you. You've done what is right and have suffered for it. I still run like a frightened quail. Do not pity me. Forgive me. Your loving brother, Dr. Frank Oppenheimer."

(Leslie Groves walks up. He is old now.)

Leslie?

GROVES

Oppie.

OPPIE

Why are you here?

GROVES

I knew you would be.

OPPIE

You came here to see me?

GROVES

I've been discharged...honorably.

OPPIE

I'm sorry.

GROVES

I'm proud that the government had the good taste to let me go before I let them go.

OPPIE

You would have done that for me?

GROVES

I would do that to the country that would betray you.

OPPIE

I'm honored Colonel Groves.

GROVES

My friends call me Leslie.

What does Dr. Teller call you?
OPPIE

(Bitterly.)
He doesn't.
GROVES

Did you read my son's letter in the Post?
OPPIE

I read it before he sent it. We mailed it together.
GROVES

How could this have happened to him?
OPPIE

I can't answer that.
GROVES

He shouldn't have to suffer through this.
OPPIE

No. But he's strong and he's loving, like his father.
GROVES

I'm more proud of my son than of anything I've ever done.
OPPIE

Are you proud of yourself, old man?
GROVES

I am. And I'm not old.
OPPIE

Perhaps not. But you aren't a youngster anymore.
GROVES

I prefer to think of myself as chronologically challenged.
OPPIE

(They laugh.)
So, this is Los Alamos?
GROVES

I'm Colonel...Major Leslie Groves. I've always had a fatal weakness for good men.

I'm Dr. Robert Oppenheimer. OPPIE

(They are both crying. There is a pause.)

What shall I call you? GROVES

Friend. OPPIE

Welcome home, friend. GROVES

(They hug as the lights slowly fade.)