

Our City

a play

by Joe Riener

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

Man-on-bench
Olaf Svensen
baseball players
Eleanor Roosevelt
Franklin Roosevelt
Olaf's father
Olaf's mother
James Byrnes
Harry Truman
Timmy
prisoners
Peter Hall
Jack
prison crew members
Warden
Leo Szilard
Leslie Groves
scientists

Poets and their poems:

e e cummings – excerpts from XXX
Walt Whitman – excerpts from "The Wound Dresser"
Hayden Carruth – "On Being Asked to Write a Poem Against the War in Vietnam"
William Carlos Williams – excerpt from "Asphodel - that Greeny Flower"
Langston Hughes – "Some Day"
Stanley Kunitz – excerpt from "Night Letter"
William Butler Yeats – excerpt from "The Second Coming"

PROGRAM NOTES:

A word about the history of the decision to drop the atomic bomb, told as a ghost story: it's all true. From the records, the memos, the memoirs, the intercepted diplomatic and military cables of the Japanese, the facts, and the historians who study them, they say what occurs in the play is indeed what happened, and why it happened. What Byrnes says, both to FDR and Truman, and as a Senator, is part of the historical record. So are the comments of Gen. Groves. Leo Szilard reported his meeting with Byrnes had the theme portrayed in the play.

If you care to look it up, I would recommend starting with *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb*, by Gar Alperovitz. Many more historians offer their perspectives in *Hiroshima's Shadow*, edited by Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz. Erik Larson's *In the Garden of the Beasts* suggests some of the attitudes about Hitler that Olaf refers to. James Byrnes' memoir, *All in One Lifetime* offers his perspective about his relationships with the Presidents.

In 1995, on the 50 year anniversary of the Japanese surrender ending the war, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum planned to display the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The exhibit intended to offer a historical perspective, based on the evidence. Boy did that get American militarists mad. How dare historians question what these noble men had done in the heat of battle to an enemy bent on our destruction. The Smithsonian director in charge of the planned exhibit resigned under pressure. The Smithsonian just showed the plane, with no history.

The Washington Post at that time attacked the historians trying to offer the history in the museum exhibit. Yet that newspaper, in 1945, after the atomic bombings, had questioned their use. They even had urged Truman, well before the bombings, to accept Japanese surrender, even if it meant keeping the Emperor.

The American militarists have always claimed that the bombs saved American lives, because it meant America didn't have to invade Japan. Yet 5,000 Americans died in combat between June, 1945, when Japan would have surrendered if they kept their Emperor, and August, when their Emperor told them to.

FDR, in his discussion of Byrnes with Eleanor Roosevelt, was perhaps generous about Byrnes' racism, but did not underestimate his political gifts. As governor of South Carolina in the 1950's, he strongly opposed the Supreme Court's decision that desegregated schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Byrnes supported the presidential candidacies of Eisenhower, the segregationist Harry Byrd in 1956, then Richard Nixon in 1960, Barry Goldwater in 1964. He eventually changed his own party affiliation to Republican. He helped insure Republican control of South Carolina to the present time.

ACT 1, SCENE 1:

Opening: stage bare except for park bench in middle, mostly upstage, with large desk and two chairs to stage right. Stage left bare. Area behind stage a blank scrim. Stage essentially divided into three areas, each for its own tableau.

House lights still up. Man-on-bench (MOB) walks out on stage. He's in his 60's, dressed in jeans, some sort of athletic team shirt hanging over his jeans, covered by black windbreaker. Has baseball cap on backwards. He's carrying a small cardboard box, big enough to hold a loaf of homemade bread, with something fairly light inside it. His manner is friendly, casual. He walks downstage as close as he can to audience.

MOB: Hi, everyone. Welcome to the _____ (theater company's name) production of *Our City* this evening (or afternoon). Please take a moment to silence your cell phone. (Pointing to someone he knows by name in the audience) That means you, _____ (audience member's name). And you, _____ (another member of the audience). And you, _____ (a third audience member, preferably someone older) I know no one ever calls or texts you, but please, turn it off anyway. It might be a wrong number. You never know. (Beat) We don't want to have any terrible violence like occurred at that Florida movie theater recently. A retired police officer shot another man watching the movie cuz he wouldn't stop texting. Senseless violence (beat) Oh, sorry, (half ironically) I didn't want to bring up such unpleasant memories.

Our play here tonight (or this afternoon) is a ghost story about my father and his generation. I hope you find it entertaining, or, at least, helps you entertain some ideas, or maybe feelings. You'll decide, of course, what my tale will do for you. (Beat) Everyone involved in this story is dead now. (Beat) Except me. I'm afraid the play won't do much for you unless you believe in ghosts and time travel. (Smack head) Of course you do! You're in a theater! One of the natural habitats of such creatures and phenomena! (Starts to wax poetic, like he's Walt Disney) It's where all this make believe (his cell phone rings loudly) explodes (cell phone rings again) into (soto voce) This is embarrassing but I've got to take it. (Then, trying to finish his grand line) magic!

(He goes upstage to bench. Puts box carefully, lovingly, on the bench. House lights down. One light on bench. He sits down as he answers cell phone.)

MOB: Hi, honey. Good flight. Long. (Excitedly, in anticipation?) Any news? (Slightly disappointed, but encouraging.) Oh, ok, any day now, right? ... (changing the subject) Naw, I didn't work on my speech. Read baseball mags. I think I might just offer what the spirit moves me to say at the commemoration. I'm meeting with some poets this morning here on a bench in The Park, so they may help me with language. They wander around here

all the time. I think they might actually appreciate the chance to speak to someone. Give them at least a moment of expression. They're poets, after all – they'd rather talk than be at rest. But I got a ticket to the Carps game tonight. It'll be fun. Ok. Talk to ya later. (With much meaning and sincerity) Best of luck to you, my dear. Love you. Bye.

(Then to audience) It's a beautiful summer morning here. My wife and I used to come every year. She'd like to be with the ghosts of her ancestors. I've come for other reasons today. I'll tell you about them later. Oh, here comes Eddy. (Enter e e cummings, dressed uniquely so audience can distinguish him from other poet-ghost-reciters. Sits on bench next to MOB).

SCENE 2

MOB sitting on bench. In walks the poet e e cummings.

MOB: Hello, Mr. Cummings. I'm so glad you could make it.

CUMMINGS: (recites beginning of poem, but conversationally to MOB, not at all grandly or poetically)

I sing of Olaf glad and big
whose warmest heart recoiled at war:
A conscientious object-or

(Lights down. Lights up stage left.)

SCENE 3

Stage left: Enter Olaf and four young men, dressed in disheveled semi-pro late 1930's baseball uniforms, dirty, sweaty. Jubilant, celebrating. Olaf by far the largest, most athletic of the group.

OLAF: Oh, it was your amazing throw. I just caught it, stood there. (Pointing to Player 1)

P-1: Yeah, right. Stood there. Like Mt. Monadnock you stood there, alright. And does 5 rbi's mean you just stood at the plate too?

P-2: He thought he was going to run you down, knock the ball out of your mitt, like he did that catcher last month from Grovers Corners.

P-3: Didn't even touch the plate! Then you threw to second base, I tagged the fool, double play, game over. Now we're onto the championship game!

P-1: And you know what, gentleman? Two years from now, (putting his arm solemnly around Olaf) I predict we'll see this fine young man behind the plate, in the 1942 World Series! (Mumbles) Unless we all get draf— (can't bear to finish the word. Olaf turns away from players, makes painful face.)

P-2: (Also mumbles. But shakes off the thought of the draft. Able to say, exuberantly) Oh, yeah!

P-4: (acting like a teenage girl-fan) Oh, oh, Mr. Olaf, can I have your autograph? (They all laugh)

Olaf: (playing along) Oh, sure you can, my darling. (Then sadly, soberly, to himself) Maybe. God willing.

(Lights down. Lights up on stage right.)

SCENE 4

Stage right: Franklin Roosevelt sitting behind large desk. His wife Eleanor enters.

ELEANOR: (in absolute fury) Franklin Roosevelt! If you weren't already crippled, I'd break your legs!

FDR: (tentatively, almost submissively, tenderly, quite aware this is round 327 of their lifelong political fight) I'm not sure you ought to be speaking to the President of the United States that way. I do have an army you know. (Beat) Or, I'm assembling one. (Beat) What, my dear wife, have I done wrong this time?

ELEANOR: (with steady indignation) That horrid man! How can you appoint him to the Supreme Court! Why not just give the Klu Klux Klan (emphasis) *complete* control of the Federal Government?

FDR: (In loving, exasperated frustration) No, Eleanor, no! Jimmy Byrnes is no more anti-Negro than you or I! The chief purpose of South Carolina politics is to keep the Negro down, is all.

ELEANOR: (scornfully, rejecting his affection) And how well those whites do that! Over 40% of the citizens of South Carolina are Negroes. Do you realize how differently that state might be, if those (emphasis) *citizens* voted?

FDR: (resigned to her righteous fury) Yes, yes. But the whites there have seen to it that they don't. And if you want to be an elected official in South Carolina, you must conform. It's a job qualification. Like if you want to hold office in Germany right now, you have to be a member of the Nazi Party, and hate Jews. (Self-righteously) At least, we don't murder our political opponents.

ELEANOR: Oh, no? Wouldn't a Negro, running for sheriff in South Carolina, find himself just as dead as a communist running for police commissioner in Germany?

FDR: (reluctantly) Democracy is an attempt, not always successful, to make politics less murderous. Yes, my dear wife, we do fail many times. (Shifting) Byrnes effectively helped pass many New Deal programs. His vote on the Supreme Court for these programs will be crucial.

ELEANOR: But he filibustered against that law that would have stopped white mobs lynching Negroes! Senator Byrnes said, "We need to kill these Negro men because they're rapists!" How can you bear to elevate to the Supreme Court such a thorough white supremacist?

FDR: (dismissively) Oh, he had to go over-the-top with his rhetoric because he was in trouble for supporting so many New Deal programs. (Beat) You thought I wanted that legislation to pass?

ELEANOR: What? You didn't? You sponsored it, supported it with everything in your power.

FDR: Oh, my dear, dear political partner and collaborator. Do you realize what would have happened if anti-lynching legislation had by some miracle made its way into law?

ELEANOR: Yes. Negroes in the South would have been protected for the first time since the end of Reconstruction.

FDR: Oh, no. No southern judge or sheriff would have dared enforce the law. Northern liberals would have demanded I send Federal Marshals into the south to enforce it. Then the Federal Marshals would have been shot. I would have had to send in the United States Army. Even they might have been shot.

ELEANOR: But this time, we won't leave.

FDR: And there we go again, another civil war, dividing our country, right when we know it's going to take *this* country to stop the Nazis and the Japanese. Maybe at some point, once these enemies are defeated, our nation can turn its attention to the plight of the Negro and "the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." But not now, in 1941.

ELEANOR: So all those men who died at Gettysburg almost four-score years ago did die in vain? The Southern Negro may not be a slave today, but they aren't citizens anywhere in the south. They will have to (emphasis) *wait* longer for freedom?

FDR: Politicians get to choose to avoid only one tragedy at a time. The one I'm picking is to make sure the Nazis and the Japanese don't crush civilization and democracy in Europe and Asia. I am a politician. I make choices.

ELEANOR: Choices between devils, I say.

FDR: Always. That's why Dante, when he took his tour through hell, met so many politicians. When the Devil has an army, or 50 votes in the United States Congress, we make our deals. (Shifting the conversation) People call me a brilliant politician. (Eleanor glares at him.) I've done well – with your help. But Jimmy Byrnes (emphasis) *is* the political genius of our time. But geniuses aren't smart enough to get born at the right place. Einstein gets born Jewish in a country soon to be aflame with anti-Semitism. Byrnes in anti-Negro South Carolina. If they'd been smarter, they'd have begun life with wealthy parents in New York, like you and me. (Seriously) Byrnes made the most something, politically, out of the nothing that is South Carolina politics. The country benefits by having him on the Supreme Court.

ELEANOR: (conceding, changing the subject) But Franklin, you must, you must, demand that all combatants in this new European war do not use their airplanes to drop bombs on the civilians in enemy cities. I showed you photographs of that Guernica painting, didn't I?

FDR: (wearily, but happy to have a better answer for this issue) You have. Many times. I would like you to know our Department of State has issued such a plea to Britain, to Germany, to Italy, to Japan, to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. I can't think it will do much good to restrain the fascists. Or the Communists. The Japanese have already bombed Nanking horribly. These conquerors love their terror bombing. And they possess the worst of military vices. They think they're winning. Nothing restrains them. Our directive may put pressure on Churchill. But once people have suffered, as his are, right now, they will want revenge. I fear we are entering into a terrible war, with these powerful machines that can kill so, so, many people. But at least that directive may curtail our own nation doing such awful deeds, once we get into it.

ELEANOR: (with much fear) It must. It must.

(Lights down. Lights up on MOB and e e cummings.)

SCENE 5

(Lights up on MOB and e e cummings)

CUMMINGS: (finishing his Olaf poem)

Christ(of His mercy infinite)
i pray to see;and Olaf, too

preponderatingly because
unless statistics lie he was
more brave than me:more (beat - searching for word) blond
than you

(Lights down. Lights up on stage left.)

SCENE 6

Stage left: Mom, Dad, Olaf standing around kitchen table. Dad and Olaf sharing joy of victory, Mom, out of their view, anxious, distraught, holding envelope.

DAD: Oh, damn. I'm so sorry to have missed that play! Mrs. Soames' pipe burst. You know she requires her daily baaath. Took all day to fix.

OLAF: Oh, I understand. Besides, unless her pipes break again (dad shakes head with supreme confidence) you'll get to see the championship game in 3 days. We're gonna kill 'em.

DAD: Oh. I didn't think you were in favor of killing.

OLAF: Everything's fair in love and baseball. Such a wonderful game. It's all pretend. Nothing's real, or lasts longer than the last at-bat. Well, that base runner I tagged, he'll wake up tomorrow with a bruise on his chest alright. But there'll be another game. Always. It goes on and on, for participants and spectators. Unlike war.

(They glance at Mom. Shrug their shoulders. Go back to baseball.)

OLAF: My teammates think I can make it in the Bigs. (Laughs) You're the only one who knows I can't hit a curve. Good thing these semi-pro pitchers keep trying fast balls.

DAD: (Laughs sweetly. Says in some sultry movie accent) Your secret is safe with me, honey. (They laugh.)

OLAF: The hardest part comes when I sit on the bench. We get talking about Roosevelt, Hitler, what's gonna happen. Everybody starts to ease away from me.

(Mom, unable to bear her anxiety a minute longer, hands Olaf the envelope. He reads the return address.)

OLAF: Not my will, but Thine be done.

MOM: I know we've been talking about this for months, ever since they instituted the draft. But now that it's real (gesturing to envelope) please, please, I beg you, apply for conscientious objector status. You'll be sent to a military base hospital, or to fight forest fires out west.

DAD: You won't have to kill anyone.

MOM: You'd be helping out our country.

OLAF: No. I've told you many times. I won't cooperate at all with the machinery of death.

DAD: You'll go to prison.

OLAF: I know.

MOM: But why? Why waste your time in prison, when you could be helping other human beings who are suffering from war wounds, or whose houses or

property are threatened by fire?

OLAF: You named me after Uncle Olaf, who died 25 years ago in that terrible thing we called The Great War, even though this current one in both Europe and Asia looks like it's going to be far worse cuz of the ships and planes and guns we've greatly improved on.

DAD: He would have loved to watch you play baseball.

MOM: We hoped for a better, longer, safer life for you.

OLAF: You've said many times how stupid that war was, an awful waste of millions of young lives. It impoverished many countries, caused the rise of terrible dictators in both Germany and Russia.

MOM: So go to the draft board and tell them you're not going to fight in this one.

DAD: That's what a conscientious objector is, someone who personally objects to war.

OLAF: But my objection isn't personal. It is moral. My purpose is to fight against the idea of war-making. I don't want to cooperate with them, participate in any way with an institution whose sole purpose is the taking of the lives of other human beings.

MOM: So how does going to prison fight anything?

OLAF: Imagine if 25 years ago all those young men who died anyway just said "No. I'm not going. Put me in jail, whatever, but I'm not going to take any of your orders." Wouldn't that have been a good thing?

DAD: A very good thing.

OLAF: Somebody has to be among the first to stand up, and say that. Somebody has to be willing to cause others to ask, "Why is he going to prison?" so that we can then argue about war itself.

MOM: They'll just lock you up, and throw away the key.

OLAF: Sure. For the first several thousand of us. But even then, when people fully understand we chose this suffering, they might wonder. Never underestimate the power of a few committed people to change the world, you've always told me.

MOM: You've had an odd upbringing. Your father a socialist. Me a Quaker. It is our fault you feel you have to save the world from war.

OLAF: I am glad you've given me the opportunity. There's no blame here. There's possibility.

DAD: Prison will be hard time, with hard men. Other prisoners, inflamed as things are getting these days, will hate you for "shirking your duty to our country" (raising his eyebrows – aware of the irony of prisoners having civic feeling). When you get out, you'll be a convicted felon your entire life. How will you make a living?

OLAF: Maybe in prison I'll learn how to hit a curve ball. And after I get done talking with them, they'll all convert to Quaker socialism! When they fired you from the high school for being a radical, you became the best plumber in town. This is something I've got to do. I'll sort out my life afterwards.

(Lights down. Lights up on stage right.)

SCENE 7

Stage right: Byrnes enters, with FDR at his presidential desk.

BYRNES: Mr. President, you've pulled me off the Supreme Court, after serving less than two years, because you determined I was the best person in this country to manage the allocation of our country's resources in wartime. Now, I don't need to know everything about what this "Manhattan Project" is. I can make assumptions. It's some kind of powerful weapon. You've chosen to give it the highest war priority, over actual bombs, bullets, planes, ships, gasoline, everything else in the war effort.

FDR: (appreciatively, affectionately) Jimmy, you've done a grand job under great difficulties. You've earned your nickname, "The Assistant President." (Beat. Seriously, with much concern.) What worries you about this Manhattan Project, Mr. Byrnes?

BYRNES: You're spending a huge sum of money, maybe upwards of two billion dollars for this "weapon," sir. And from the way the war is coming closer to our victory, you won't need it.

FDR: That would be a good thing.

BYRNES: And that crazy man, General Groves, in charge of it, sir.

FDR: (tolerantly) He gets things done.

BYRNES: But to what end, sir? I'm assuming we're spending desperately on research and development because we are afraid the Nazis were also.

FDR: (correcting Byrnes.) Terrified.

BYRNES: Sir, as you know, I am a politician, first and foremost. I must talk with you about the political implications if the Manhattan Project fails, or the war ends before we use its product in battle.

FDR: What? (Contemptuously) The Republicans? (With rising rage) Those who would have had us stay out of the war, until the Nazis consolidated their hold on one half of the globe, and the Japanese the other? Those people?

BYRNES: Yes. (Ironically) Our loyal opposition. They will say the Democrats almost lost the war, spending money recklessly. How do you think General bull-in-a-china-shop Groves is going to look, explaining to a Congressional Committee that your administration spent two billion dollars on something that didn't work, or we didn't need to use? (Both men roll their eyes at the prospect.) Republicans will claim, against all evidence, that we could have ended the war sooner without this foolish Manhattan Project.

FDR: Oh, they wouldn't ... (catches himself, realizing they would indeed. These two old pols nod in agreement.)

BYRNES: Every family who lost someone in the war will wonder if their son might be alive today, except that the Democrats were involved in a far-fetched science goose-chase, urged on them by some German Jews, with names like Einstein. (Beat. They shudder at the evocation of anti-Semitism.) When we win this thing – one of the greatest feats of war-making ever

accomplished by humanity – the Democratic Party will go down to terrible defeat, along with the New Deal and all its protections and benefits for Americans, because we will be blamed for irresponsible conduct of the war. (Getting consumed in his speech, giving voice to how Republicans would characterize it) “Roosevelt, that stupid old man, cost many lives, and jeopardized victory, because he was enamored of a two-billion dollar boondoggle!” (Realizing he’s gone too far in talking to the President this way. Ashamed. Seeks to apologize.) Oh, I am so sorry, Mr. President. I didn’t mean to address you like that. (Stammering) I got over excited, I guess, voicing my fears, wanting to think like the enemy, err, the Republicans. FDR: (smiling fondly at Byrnes’ enthusiasm) You may have a point, Jimmy.

(Lights down. Lights up on MOB.)

SCENE 8

MOB seated. In comes William Carlos Williams.

MOB: Dr. Williams. Come sit with me here, on this bench.

WILLIAMS: (in casual, conversational mode)

It is difficult
To get the news from poems.
Yet men die miserably everyday
For lack of what is found there.

(Lights down. Lights up stage left.)

SCENE 9

Stage left: Mom, Dad in kitchen. Three days later from previous Olaf scene.)

MOM: (Being brave) Beautiful day. Wonderful day for the championship game.

DAD: (Also, brave) Oh, it's going to be a great day. Olaf's sleeping awful late. What time does he have to be at the field to warm up?

(They look puzzled at each other. Olaf enters, in pajamas, not his uniform.)

MOM: Why aren't you dressed, ready to go?

OLAF: I'm not going.

MOM&DAD: What?

OLAF: At practice yesterday I told my teammates I wasn't going to report for the draft. They held a team meeting. Said they wouldn't play with a coward. Kicked me off the team.

(Vast silence.)

DAD: (groans) Oh, my son, my son. Can't I talk you out of this?

MOM: It's not right for you to take on these huge historical forces by yourself. You're just one person. Please, Olaf. Listen to your father and I.

OLAF: I have. For years. You've said how terrible Hitler is, since I was ten. We went to marches, rallies, almost froze passing out flyers in Times Square, denouncing him, warning Americans how dangerous he was.

DAD: I think my toes are still cold.

OLAF: You said our economic policies towards Japan were cuz we didn't think of them as human beings.

MOM: I know. They are. But we've got to stop their militaries now.

OLAF: Oh, sure. Our country ignores Hitler and the Japanese threats for years, when economic or diplomatic means might have stopped these dictators and militarists from ever gaining total control of their country's allegiance and army. (Mockingly) It was bad for business. We need Hitler to control the communists. (Clarifying, seriously) That is, his own citizens working for economic and political justice. (Back to sarcasm) Who cares what one bunch of yellow monkeys, the Japanese, is doing to the other bunch, the Chinese? Now suddenly, our country wakes up and realizes who are the real threats. We're to unleash this great beast of war against them?

DAD: Oh, but Olaf. Hitler's persecution of Jews ---

OLAF: Jews fleeing Hitler have begged for years to come to the country that has a statue in its main harbor proclaiming, "... give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." We said no. It was too difficult of an *immigration problem*.

DAD: Yes, but they must be stopped now. And the Japanese invasion and

ravaging in Manchuria, China, demonstrate they are terrible threats to the world. We can't let them just go on and on.

OLAF: It seems my choices are to be eaten by one beast or the other. How will my opposition, or my giving my life, make a difference, if what I intend is to stop the beast itself?

DAD: But America is a democracy, albeit an imperfect one. I've railed against its shortcomings whenever I could. We would never do what Hitler's doing, in Poland, Ukraine, or what the Japanese conquerors are doing to the Chinese people in Nanking — bombing or executing civilians, women, children, old people — just because they happened to be born Jewish, or Chinese, or some other group and lived in the enemy army's country. War against them is a far lesser evil than allowing them to continue their rampages.

OLAF: (sarcastically, but lovingly) Oh, now you tell me. I thought evil was evil. You quoted Upton Sinclair to me since I was born: "Evil didn't come from Adam. Or from Eve. It came from the Apple." The economic and political structure of capitalism are what make people do bad things. (Turning to Dad) You showed me that photograph in the paper a couple years ago, of the ship leaving the Wilmington, Delaware harbor, loaded with 20,000 bombs for German or Japanese military use.

DAD: Damn war-mongers.

OLAF: (Turning to Mom) You always added "What made good people do bad things the most was war." You wept for 3 days when you first saw the photo in *The Daily Worker* of Picasso's painting of that Spanish city, Guernica, that portrayed the city being blown to bits in their Civil War.

MOM: Oh, indeed. And that's going to only be the start, I'm afraid.

OLAF: You told me how even though the good guys won the American Civil War and slaves were freed, Negroes still aren't citizens who can vote, or have protection of the law.

DAD: They might be able to flee to Northern ghettos or scratch out a living outside the law in the South, but they're hardly free American citizens.

OLAF: The Union forces gave their "last full measure of devotion" leaving them morally exhausted. When Confederate forces regrouped, the Union pulled all troops from the South, ending Reconstruction and its protection for the freed Negroes. Those who lost the American Civil War established a reign of terror over their former slaves and their descendants that lasts to this day.

MOM: Our country can't even pass anti-lynching legislation, that would prevent white vigilantes from executing any Negroes who threaten their rule.

OLAF: So, yes, I am against all wars, even ones against the terrible people we now confront. I will use my body, even if this means I must suffer, to oppose what the process of war does to any participants. Mom, you once told me how at the core of a spiritual life is the belief that unearned suffering redeems all of us. This beast of war will cause our nation to do terrible

things. I've got to get started paying for that.

(Mom and Dad look at each other. Chastened.)

OLAF: I am your son. You expected me not to be? The most important thing in my life is to live up to the ideals you've lived your lives by.

DAD: (slowly, resolutely) It grieves me that we live in this country, at this time. We have put you in this impossible position. I fear you don't understand how much you will provoke others or how much danger you're putting yourself in, how irrevocably you are entering a world of pain.

MOM: But you are our son. We will stand beside you – always – through this.

(All three hold hands across the kitchen table.)

(Lights down. Lights up on stage right.)

SCENE 10

Stage right: Byrnes enters, with Truman sitting at presidential desk.

BYRNES: (with much sympathy and feeling) The President's death has hit us all so hard. I can't imagine what it must be like for you, Harry, to now have to succeed him.

TRUMAN: The moon, the stars, and all the planets have fallen on me.

BYRNES: I'm so sorry, Harry.

TRUMAN: In your political career, if you hadn't had to shout "nigger" so loud, being from South Carolina, the President would have picked you instead of me, to fill the Vice Presidential slot on the 1944 ticket. The party bosses were afraid Northern Negroes wouldn't vote for you. (Enviously) Except for that, you'd be sitting here, and I'd still be the (wistfully) the happy junior senator from Missouri.

BYRNES: (deflecting, humble, with just a hint of resentment) Oh, Harry, I am proud to have served my country however I could.

TRUMAN: You'll have to help me out, now. (Sarcastically) It's sort of late in the game, for me to get up to speed on our war effort, here in (said slowly, sarcastically) May 1945. (Exaggerating) You realize I know nothing except what I read in the newspapers, and overhear from the gossip of typists and clerks?

BYRNES: (with some chagrin) Ah, yes. You should have been part of all this. We were always so busy, we just never gave it a thought.

TRUMAN: You're going to tell me a whole lot of things right now, I suppose. I'm going to need your help, even more, now that Germany's whipped and quit.

BYRNES: You mean about the war against Japan?

TRUMAN: They're all but gone, too, right? When will we invade?

BYRNES: No need. Japan has no allies. Their best troops are in Manchuria, defending against the anticipated Soviet entrance into the war.

TRUMAN: Those Japs will fight to the last soldier's death, like they did at Okinawa, to protect their sacred "homeland".

BYRNES: If they're ordered to, yes. And they have bullets for their guns. But we sunk their navy, their merchant marine. They have no air force left. Or gasoline. We can bomb anywhere – everywhere – at will. We've incinerated 26 of their cities already.

TRUMAN: ...and their capital Tokyo... (sarcastically) I did read that in the newspapers.

BYRNES: We've got to keep the pressure on them, for a potential invasion in November. But nobody in our military expects them to last that long. They're an island, remember, and the US Navy controls all their sea ports. Soon, they'll have no food.

TRUMAN: Why haven't they surrendered already?

BYRNES: There's a huge split in their military leadership. (Bitterly) The

samurai warriors among them will fall on their swords rather than surrender. But there's a growing peace faction. They've contacted us, through third party diplomatic channels, about peace terms. They want a "clarification."

TRUMAN: (relieved, joyful) Oh, my! (Beat. Suspicious.) What do they want?

BYRNES: We've cracked all their secret codes. We know all they really want is to keep their Emperor.

TRUMAN: (mocking) Their god-man who started it all? Who cheered and blessed their atrocities against the Chinese, the Koreans, the Filipinos, the Indo-Chinese (with mounting fury) Who beheaded our pilots? No dice.

(Repeated as slogan) Unconditional surrender! Hang the bastard!

BYRNES: But he's their nation. They will all die to defend him. Without him, they believe there's no Japanese identity that remains.

TRUMAN: (with complete rage, giving voice to the American nation's fury) So we'll kill them all! (Pounding his desk.) Good riddance to the Japanese nation and all its yellow monkeys! When you're dealing with a beast, you have to treat him as a beast! (Beat. Beat. Beat, as his rage and war cry fill the space.)

BYRNES: (softly, tolerantly) We all feel that way, Harry. But by clarifying the terms of surrender, the war's over. No more American boys die.

TRUMAN: (fury subsiding) That's all they want?

BYRNES: And we'll need the emperor to tell them to stop fighting. Any conquering nation needs a central authority the defeated population will respect and obey. Otherwise there's chaos. The emperor tells his subjects to stop, and the war's over.

TRUMAN: (now sensing the possibilities) Then that's it? We term it "unconditional surrender" and their emperor says what General MacArthur (makes a face indicating how much he dislikes MacArthur) tells him to, and we're done?

BYRNES: (beat) Just started, actually.

TRUMAN: (not understanding. Then understanding) Stalin's already in half of Germany, all of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. He's not leaving.

BYRNES: He's talking about settling matters with Franco in Spain. Then he could go into Italy, Greece...

TRUMAN: He's got a far bigger land army than we do. We'd whip him in a fight, but -

BYRNES: (with much understatement) I don't think the American people would countenance our boys dying in another land war in Europe.

TRUMAN: (enviously) Stalin doesn't have to ask -

BYRNES: He'll take whatever he can grab. He's got Communist parties everywhere. France, Britain, the Middle East, Africa, that support him, cheer him on.

TRUMAN: World communist domination. And we can't stop him. (Beat)

BYRNES: We can.

TRUMAN: With prayer?

BYRNES: (takes a deep breath. He's about to tell.) You kept wondering, but never asking, because "you didn't need to know," (Truman makes contemptuous gesture at that phrase. Byrnes registers the colossal blunder of the new president not knowing what was going on) what exactly was this "science experiment" we were spending so much money on?

TRUMAN: (feigning confusion) You mean the one headed up by the world's biggest asshole, General Groves? I think he's got more enemies in Washington than the Japs. (Making a joke) The Brooklyn Project, wasn't it named? Maybe the Bronx project... Staten Island? Queens? (smiling at his joke)

BYRNES: (not getting the joke, correcting) The Manhattan Project, sir. If it works, Stalin goes no further.

TRUMAN: (incredulous) Huh?

BYRNES: If it works, no nation, ever again, threatens our country. If it works, we live in peace, forever.

TRUMAN: (mocking Byrnes' grand rhetoric) It's a narcotic, we put in the drinking water, that makes us all pacifists?

BYRNES: (so enamored of the power, he doesn't notice Truman's mocking him) If it works, no more young men dying in trenches, or lost at sea. If it works, it will put an end to war as an "extension of diplomacy by other means."

TRUMAN: (acting as if his advisor has gone insane) Oh, my, Jimmy. You've been working much too hard. Tell Japan they can keep their Emperor, and we'll accept their surrender, so you can take the summer off.

BYRNES: (still in his fog) We can't accept it.

TRUMAN: (confused – thinking Byrnes means his end-of-war grandiosity) Sure. (Said as slogans) There is always going to be war. The world is an evil place. We must defend freedom with our blood.

BYRNES: (coming to, a bit) No. Their surrender.

TRUMAN: (still not getting it) Oh, that's not a problem. It's "conditional" a tiny bit, sure, but we can hide that minor detail. The American people will be so happy it's over, we didn't have to invade. All those American boys that would have died in the invasion now get to live lives! They'll start to come home by The Fourth of July! – That we allowed them to keep their emperor won't even be noticed as we're celebrating.

BYRNES: No. We can't clarify the terms of surrender. We don't want Japan to surrender until we know if it works.

TRUMAN: (beat. With a tone of his new authority) I think it is time for the Secretary of State to inform his Commander in Chief what exactly "it" is.

BYRNES: A bomb, Mr. President.

TRUMAN: (incredulous, almost laughing) Two billion dollars for a bomb? Stalin, whose nation lost millions and millions of its citizens in the war, who has demonstrated vast indifference to the lives and welfare of his own citizens, now he's to be made submissive by (emphasis) a bomb? War ends, forever you said, because of (emphasis) a bomb?

BYRNES: (trying to counter Truman's mockery) It's smaller than your desk.
TRUMAN: So what? A small bomb ... (understanding it, a bit) How powerful?
A couple city blocks?
BYRNES: An entire city. One bomb. Smaller than your desk.

(Both men sit in silence. Aware that history has changed.)

(Lights down. End of Act 1.)

ACT 2, SCENE 1

MOB and Walt Whitman

MOB: Well, now, Walt, (said ironically, since MOB is at least same age as Whitman) Come tell us old man ...

WHITMAN: (conversationally)

(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum,
And urge relentless war,
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd
myself
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead...

But in silence in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the
sand...

... some are so young,
Some suffer so much....

(Lights down. Lights up stage left.)

SCENE 2

Stage left: Prison yard. Olaf surrounded by prisoners. "Coward!" "Chicken shit!" "Pervert" among insult heard. One prisoner sneaks up behind Olaf, grabs him by the hair, yanks him violently to the ground, as several other prisoners hold down this big, strong young man.

Prisoner 1: Ok, Timmy. Now.

(Timmy urinates all over Olaf's torso and face. All prisoners cheer. Enter Peter Hall, Jack, and crew. Peter Hall is unusually calm and self-possessed, like a person secure in his vast power. He moves like a president or CEO of a large corporation might, steady, unswerving.)

PETER: Ok, Timmy. You've had your fun. Go along now.

TIMMY AND PRISONERS: Yes, sir, Mr. Hall. (They leave. Olaf lays dazed on the ground. Slowly sits up, looks at Peter.)

PETER: (To Jack) Get a towel, Jack. Clean him up. (Jack goes off stage, gets a towel, returns, wipes Timmy's urine off Olaf, kindly.)

OLAF: Oh, thank you, for rescuing me, sir. I was about to get mad, and might have done something awful. (Extending his hand in friendship to Peter. Peter looks at his hand, makes no motion to shake it.) Hello. I'm Olaf Svensen. (Peter keeps staring at Olaf, like he's a new species. Makes no reciprocating gesture of friendship, but not coldly, just not wanting to connect with Olaf in any sociable way.)

PETER: You're a baseball catcher, a big, strong, fit young man. You could have broken all their necks. Why didn't you?

OLAF: Did Jesus, sir?

PETER: Didn't work out too well for Him, did it?

OLAF: Sir, if I absorb the oppressor's blows, and don't respond, it sends a powerful message.

PETER: Oh, you bet. Especially in here.

OLAF: (changing subject, not noticing that Peter is dressed as a prisoner) Are you the warden?

PETER: (dismissively) He's the front office man. I run the prison.

OLAF: (now noticing Peter's prison uniform) But you're dressed like us, sir?

PETER: (grandly) I am one of the incarcerated, yes.

OLAF: But then why do these men obey you, sir?

PETER: (takes vial on necklace around his neck, places it around Olaf's. Points to the small brown clump visible through the vial.) That's Timmy's left testicle. I didn't take both. Wouldn't want to deny a man the pleasure of passing on his essence to the next generation. And I've found that even if you only have one ball in your hand, the man's heart and mind will follow. (Turning to his crew, says sternly, ruefully.) This is the first time I've ever been called "sir" in here, without having to use my knife. (Crew looks ashamed.)

PETER: This - ah, talisman - will protect you. Your father's a plumber. You

know the trade?

OLAF: Yes, sir. I'm no magician like my dad, but I've helped him out enough, I can do almost all of it.

PETER: Marvelous. We could use your services in here. (To his crew) We might also use those muscles in other ways. (Crew laughs.)

PETER: (As he walks off, with crew, says to them) Extend all the protections. He's young, awesomely foolish, perhaps useful, but very dangerous. He's the one person's mind we can't control in here. We'll have to work to change that.

(They leave. Olaf takes off vial necklace, puts it on bench decisively. Gets up, walks off.)

(Lights down. Lights up stage right.)

SCENE 3

Stage right: a few beats after last scene of Truman and Byrnes.

BYRNES: (by way of explanation) Scientists – (saying new phrase) – “nuclear physicists” – came to The President (blushing, realizing he meant the *former* President) – I mean, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. President – (Truman gestures tolerantly in such a way to indicate he, too, thinks of “The President” as Roosevelt) in 1940. Said they were worried German scientists might capitalize on a theoretical possibility of “splitting the atom”, which would unleash tremendous power. A devastating new weapon for Hitler to use. (Beat, as both men consider what that would have meant.) Mr. Roosevelt authorized our scientists, aided in no small part by the German Jews Hitler chased out (chuckle), to build one before he did. We were so scared....

TRUMAN: ... that you empowered that insufferable Groves to give his project highest war priority, for procurement, for money....

BYRNES: Once we realized Hitler had nothing, we (emphasis) *had* something. It’ll be tested, in the New Mexico desert, mid-July.

TRUMAN: And if it doesn’t work, we’ll just drop my desk on the Japs. That’ll learn `em. And, having spent all that money, *and* it doesn’t work, I won’t have any use for a presidential desk, anyway, right?

BYRNES: Ah, yes, sir. The next Republican president will want his own desk. (Continuing with his plans) We say nothing to the Japanese right now. They’re so paralyzed between the war-party fanatics and the peace faction, that they’ll not be able to accept our “unconditional surrender”.

TRUMAN: (sarcastically) We wouldn’t want to encourage a Japanese peace faction.

BYRNES: (ignoring the sarcasm) By mid-August, we drop the two bombs we’ll have ready by then. We’ve got a few cities we’ve left untouched, since they had little military value, to show clearly what one bomb can do.

TRUMAN: (fully understanding what Byrnes is saying) We tell the Japs, and Stalin, we’ve got plenty more where those came from.

BYRNES: One plane. One bomb. One city – gone.

TRUMAN: Those brutal Jap generals don’t seem to have had second thoughts about all the firepower coming at them, even after we’ve firebombed Tokyo to ashes two month ago. This new devastation may not impress them either.

BYRNES: Probably not. The Japs, however, are very afraid of Stalin’s designs on their country. Once he invades, from the west, Japan will beg us to allow them to surrender ... to us. We’ll permit them to have a nation. (Truman nods, reluctantly) Japan knows Stalin won’t. (Beat. Changing focus) The bomb will stop Stalin, though. Especially because he’s riding so high. He has no idea what power we have with this atomic bomb.

TRUMAN: (laughs) Doesn’t know? We’ve broken both German and Japanese secret military and diplomatic codes. You don’t think Stalin steals our

secrets? He brought his country back from almost certain defeat by the most powerful military invader ever in history. He has a secret police that makes our J. Edgar look like an old snooping school marm in a print dress (they both pause to amuse themselves with that image). He's got no political opposition because (With a touch of envy) he killed them all. You're trying to tell me Stalin doesn't know what his "ally" is spending two billion dollars on? Employing hundreds of scientists of many nationalities?

BYRNES: General Groves has imposed severe secrecy on the entire project.

TRUMAN: Do you think any of these Manhattan Project men have a mother, a wife, a child, now eating a breakfast of eggs, bacon, thick slices of bread with real butter, in a war-ravaged European country, courtesy of the Soviet secret police? (Beat) Stalin knows. Our policy, whatever it shall be, must reflect this reality.

BYRNES: (lamely) But General Groves ...

TRUMAN: (interrupting, dismissing his objection) And we'd better hurry up and use this thing, this "atomic bomb" before he steals the secrets to it and makes his own. Or grabs as much as he can of Japan.

BYRNES: (emphasis) *If* it works

(Lights down. Lights up on MOB.)

SCENE 4

MOB seated on bench. Langston Hughes enters.

MOB: Well hello Mr. Hughes.

HUGHES: (conversationally)

Once more
The guns roar.
Once more
The call goes forth for men.
Again
The war begins,
Again.
False slogans become a bore.
Yet no one cries:
ENOUGH! NO MORE!
Like angry dogs the human race
Loves the snarl upon its face
It loves to kill.
The pessimist says
It always will.

That I do not believe.

Some day
The savage in us will wear away
Some day quite clearly
Men will see
How clean and happy life can be
And how,
Like flowers planted in the sun,
We, too, can give forth blossoms
Shared by everyone.

(Lights down. Lights up stage left.)

SCENE 5

Stage left: Olaf and Peter on a bench in the prison yard. Olaf holding a couple books.

PETER: Great work on that shower plumbing. Very nice having hot water. Everyone here grateful.

OLAF: Oh, I'm glad to help out. Now on to more latrines!

PETER: But you didn't order enough pipe.

OLAF: Yeah I did. Your friend Jack wanted me to order 6 more lengths than we needed. I would just have had to throw it away.

PETER: (sternly) You didn't order enough pipe.

OLAF: (quizzical, then understanding) Oh.

PETER: My knife, and my organization around it, has kept this prison together. (Taking out his knife.) Your protection comes from it. Has Timmy bothered you since, ah, that first time?

OLAF: Not at all. He, and everyone else, has been very friendly. Prison isn't the way my dad said it would be.

PETER: I made this "friendliness" happen. Timmy may not look like much. Six years ago he came upon a family in the woods eating a picnic lunch. Shot each one of them, twice, in the head. Mom, dad, their red-haired 10 year old daughter, 6 year old son holding his teddy bear. Then he sat down and ate the rest of the food. At his trial, when the prosecutor asked him why he did that, he said, "Cuz I was hungry." Timmy's taken a particular animosity towards you. Maybe it's because I'm protecting you, and would never protect him. But who knows? The criminal mind is impossible to fathom. Timmy leaves you alone because he's afraid I'll take his other one. He's never getting out of here, so he's not passing on anything. But I guess he likes having (rubs his crotch) it around. Gives him hope.

OLAF: I never asked for your protection. I don't want it.

PETER: You are ridiculous. The world only understands force. Vicious people like me protect your (contemptuously) pacifism. Don't you realize if you grew up in Germany Hitler would have shot you in your bed, not even waiting to get you to the torture center, or the camp?

OLAF: Yes. I would have been raising hell about him, from the beginning of his rise in German politics. I'd have passed out leaflets, wrote articles in the newspaper, talked to anyone who would listen about his hatred of Jews, his glorification of war and a pure race of people. I would have denounced him to one and all as a very dangerous man, both in his own right, and what he stirred up in other Germans. When he got strong enough, his Brown Shirts would have killed me, as he did to all those who tried to stop him. And Americans didn't care, then, at all.

PETER: Fear keeps Timmy or Hitler in place.

OLAF: (interrupting) Oh, yes, indeed. A crazy man with an army is a very dangerous thing. Before he had an army, though, Hitler was just a fringe

politician, maneuvering for power. The whole world could have seen to it that he never got state power. But we couldn't complain very loudly, because we were doing exactly the same thing in our country, killing Negroes to keep them from having any political power by voting.

PETER: But killers like him always find a way to get what they want. Nothing will stop them. You've just got to have better weapons than they do. Out there, that involves billions of dollars. In here, well, there's a retired prison guard living out his days on an acre of beachfront property on the Gulf Coast. And I've got the only knife in the place. History is always a matter of who has the superior way to kill people. Imagine what Napoleon might have done with a few dozen machine guns? Or Jefferson Davis with real submarines? The Comanches with a bomber squadron? Losers can become winners real fast. Right now the wops and spics in here are getting wooden clubs from their (sarcastically) "woodshop training class." All that stands between us and their domination in this prison are those metal pipes you've got to get us. (Kindly, fatherly) Olaf, everyone has to eat some shit in life.

OLAF: There is *some* shit I will not eat.

PETER: (enraged) You have to!

OLAF: (calmly, determined) The only thing I have to do is die. Right now, in 1943, millions of people are waking up this morning, and part of them knows it may be their last day on earth. No love, no joy, no life, ever again. And they say "Okay." They don't hide, or run away. They are willing to give their life for their country, their community, their comrades or cause. We honor them. Build them monuments. Call them heroes.

PETER: My father died in France at the battle of the Somme.

OLAF: I believe we can create a better world, if all of us refuse to fight in war. I am willing to suffer, and, if need be, to die for this cause. Yet you, and everyone else in here, calls me a coward, a fool, not a man, unnatural. I don't harm anyone in here. In fact, with my plumbing, I've made their lives better. Yet, without your protection, violence will be visited upon me. It seems I threaten you and your world view, more than a Nazi with a machine gun.

PETER: Without me, Timmy destroys you.

OLAF: How did Timmy get a gun to do his murders? Sure, a demented man might use a baseball bat, a knife, even a hatchet. But without a gun, his murders of that poor family would have been much more difficult. How have we formed a society where such people have easy access to powerful weapons? In here, I've seen terrible, vicious fist fights. They were trying to kill each other. But they didn't. Unless you've made your body into a weapon itself, it's very hard to kill someone with just your fists. It's only if Timmy has a weapon, or Hitler an army, that they become a threat. We – you and I – could form a society in here where no one had a weapon, where we worked together to make serving our time here more tolerable.

PETER: You are dreaming.

OLAF: You bet I am. I've been reading what that Indian man, Mohandas

Gandhi, has been writing. (Gestures to book he's holding.) What might happen if you and I were to go talk to (pointedly) the people of Italian or Puerto Rican ancestry in here? What if we focused our power together to restrain guards from beating *any* prisoners for fun, rather than selecting only those not "protected" by one gang or another? What if we collectively refused to eat rotten food? Or didn't work in the laundry unless prisoners thrown into solitary had judicial hearings?

PETER: It would never work. Some small group would split off and make a deal with the warden and the guards, because they would have more to gain that way. Only force and fear maintain order, in here, or out there.

OLAF: A non-violent approach would require discipline. And courage. And, yes, a unity of purpose. But look at the group most downtrodden in America right now. If Negroes said, "I'm not going to stand in the back of the bus, when there's empty seats up front. I'll sit down in the white section. When they throw me off the bus, I'll walk to work."

PETER: Those lazy niggers? Walk to work? (Laughs.)

OLAF: Or what if they sat in the "whites only" section of lunch counters? They would get beat up by white thugs, for sure. Some may be killed. But if this got out, that Negroes were willing to suffer and die for their rights as American citizens – that many Negro soldiers are now fighting for in France and in the Pacific – then all the good people out there would be moved by their consciences to stop the bad people. We've devised ways for this to happen. They're called laws, enforced by (slowly, deliberately) law-enforcement officers.

PETER: Yes. I've made their acquaintance.

OLAF: Imagine an America where political leaders dealt fairly with Negro citizens because these citizens voted.

PETER: (laughs) Oh, sweet Jesus. You won't listen to reason. You are so naive. Niggers voting? That above all will never happen.

OLAF: If enough people absorb the violence and hatred and do not return it, and struggle with discipline, courage and love, oh yes it will.

PETER: Next thing you're going to tell me is that we'll elect a nigger President of the United States.

OLAF: Who knows how wonderful our future might be. The question is, which side will you be on?

PETER: Get me those pipes.

(Lights down.)

SCENE 6

Stage right: Byrnes seated in chair. Szilard enters.

SZILARD: Thank you so much for seeing me, Mr. Secretary. Mr. Truman told me I should talk to you. Called you "The Assistant President."

BYRNES: Constitutionally, the Secretary of State is next in line to the President. If Mr. Truman passes, I am the President.

SZILARD: (excitedly) I was going to plead my case with the President, but then he died. I'm sure he would have agreed with me. (Frantically) We must stop the atomic weapons' development! And we absolutely can't use it!

BYRNES: (calmly) Our nation is grateful to you, Dr. Szilard. It was your foresight in contacting Dr. Einstein, that got this atomic project going in the first place.

SZILARD: Yes! I insisted Albert talk to the President! We had to make sure we developed it before the Germans!

BYRNES: And we have. (Repeating, patronizing) Our nation is grateful.

SZILARD: But when we saw the Germans had done nothing, we should have quit months ago! There's no need!

BYRNES: Would Hitler have used it on London? Leningrad? Moscow? New York?

SZILARD: Oh yes yes yes! That's what spurred us on!

BYRNES: Would the Japanese have detonated it at Pearl Harbor, then, perchance, San Francisco?

SZILARD: Well, yes, I imagine they would have.

BYRNES: And would Joseph Stalin have employed this new weapon on Berlin, Rome, Budapest, even, it seems, against his own people if they rebelled?

SZILARD: It seems so.

BYRNES: Are we at war with Japan?

SZILARD: We've already bombed flat just about every city, of any size, in the whole country.

BYRNES: Have they given up? We took the lives of maybe a 100,000 Japs in Tokyo, and has that made them quit? Have they accepted our terms of unconditional surrender?

SZILARD: Their military doesn't care about their civilian population.

BYRNES: And we should? The Japs who started this terrible war, who tortured or starved or beheaded our prisoners of war, we should take more care for their countrymen than they do?

SZILARD: But they will have to give up soon. There is no military need for us to use this atomic weapon on a civilian population.

BYRNES: Dr. Szilard, you are a scientist. I am a politician. We spend our professional lives seeking political power. You and your colleagues, through brilliant, heroic labors, have presented to me, err, to our country, more power than any political leader has ever had, ever. And you expect me not

to use it, even though every other combatant would have, without blinking?
SZILARD: The whole world watches us! You will offend the conscience of the entire world!

BYRNES: (determined) You bet. That is our intent. (To the whole world) You provoke us, we will destroy you. No one will dare think they can knock us flat, because they bomb some battleships sitting in our harbor. No one will invade any country we are protecting.

SZILARD: Until they build their own.

BYRNES: (scoffing) Are you kidding? Do you have any idea how difficult this was? How expensive it was? (Suddenly realizing this man, in particular, just might, as Szilard nods.)

SZILARD: These weapons will spread over the world. The science was hard the first time. Soviet physicists, or any other nation with ambition, now know what they're looking for. Hundreds, no, thousands of people have an understanding of the destructive power of atomic physics that five years ago only I did.

BYRNES: In a dangerous world, this weapon gives our nation the best protection.

SZILARD: You are a fool intoxicated with your power. You will be using this weapon on defenseless Japanese cities and their civilian populations. You're thereby making the world far more dangerous.

BYRNES: They are (emphasis) *military* targets. The Japs have it coming to them. They started it. And you know who is overrunning Europe right now, raping women, all set to impose a police state upon war-ravaged countries? Who is dead set on spreading their godless and freedom-less poison over the entire world? They aren't defeated at all. They are our (ironically) *allies*.

SZILARD: The Soviets have suffered far more in this war than America. Much of their country was overrun by Nazis. It is to be expected they would want to prevent German militarism from arising ever again.

BYRNES: Look at the horrors of Stalin's purges in the 1930's, his starvation of the Ukrainians and ordinary farmers. Their secret police will get to work doing the same thing in the countries their army is now occupying. Once they get strong enough, they'll execute the political opposition, like they did in Russia. They are monsters, just like the Nazis!

SZILARD: You're arguing that we use this atomic bomb on Moscow?

BYRNES: We can't, just yet. But we can let them know what it can do. We'll show that vicious bastard Stalin what will happen to his country if he tries to take more of Europe than he has already.

SZILARD: You propose to murder Japanese civilians to teach Stalin a lesson?

BYRNES: A lesson for all times: to Stalin's successor, and his, and his, down through the generations. All our country's enemies will all know what we can do to them.

SZILARD: Perhaps we could ask for Japanese volunteers, to line up to die for the betterment of the foreign policy of the United States. We'll call them kamikazes for capitalism and country.

BYRNES: They started it. How we choose to end it, and what benefits accrue to us in the finishing, will be our own business. (Beat) They started it. Thank God we *can* end it, and begin a far better world, with this Bomb.

(Lights down. Lights up on MOB seated with Hayden Carruth.)

SCENE 7

MOB seated on bench with Hayden Carruth

MOB: Hey, Hayden, did they ever ask you to write a poem against the war in Vietnam?

CARRUTH: (conversationally)

Well I have and in fact
more than one and I'll
tell you this too

I wrote one against
Algeria that nightmare
and another against

Korea and another
against the one
I was in

and I don't remember
how many against
the three

when I was a boy
Abyssinia Spain and
Harlan County

and not one
breath was restored
to one

shattered throat
mans womans or childs
not one not

one
but death went on and on
never looking aside

except now and then like a child
with a furtive half-smile
to make sure I was noticing.

(Lights down. Lights up on stage left.)

SCENE 8

Stage left: Mom, Dad, waiting in prison visiting area. Olaf enters, limping.

MOM: Oh, honey, why are there all those bruises on your face and arms?

OLAF: Mom, it was a great game. A big guy comes around third, here comes the throw. Well, he did what he had to do. So did I. He was out.

DAD: (unsure of Olaf's story) Still treating you ok in here?

OLAF: (falsely) Yeah. Food's not very good. But there's now hot showers, and more latrines. My buddies in here may not care much for my ideas, but they like my plumbing. (Proudly) Same as you, dad. And I've got lots of time to read. That Gandhi really is something. It's going to be a whole new world, when this war ends. There's 6,000 war resisters in prison. We will form a powerful force for peace in our world in the future.

DAD: Yeah. Shouldn't be too much longer. France is liberated. There's no more German air force to speak of, or Japanese one, either. Turns my stomach, though, the way British and US bombers keep bombing and burning cities full of civilians, causing terrible fires that suck up all the oxygen and smother civilians in their bomb shelters. Our war propaganda keeps saying they're targeting military installations only. Right. These civilians, in Germany and Japan, have had no control over the decisions of their governments to go to war, yet the democracies hold these women and children responsible by blowing them to bits.

MOM: You've written about this man Peter, that seems to have been the one to help you get all that plumbing done. Is he still your friend?

OLAF: (distantly) Oh, I haven't talked to him in quite a while. We use to have some good discussions, but lately not so much. (Shrugs shoulders.) (Evasively) Look it, Mom, Dad, I've got to run. We've got another game this afternoon. I've got to go warm up. Visitors time and ballfield time overlap. So I'll see you later.

(Olaf leaves.)

MOM: He's lying. They're after him.

DAD: Let's go see the warden.

(Lights half down. Lights back up as Mom and Dad enter Warden's office. Warden sitting behind desk.)

DAD: Thank you for seeing us so quickly, warden.

WARDEN: Well, yeah. I know you folks take a long train ride every week. Wouldn't want you to make it twice in a week. And I sure don't need your Congressman's office calling me about another problem you have.

MOM: I know this is a difficult job. We wouldn't be bothering you if we weren't very worried. We fear Olaf is being beaten in prison. We just saw him now. He's got bruises all over his face, his arms, and he's walking with a

limp. Olaf broke the laws of this nation. For that, he's paying the price. But that doesn't mean he should be beat up by a bunch of sadists.

WARDEN: (sarcastically) Sadists? Here in my prison? I've never heard of such a thing! Imagine that! A country that puts its sadists behind bars, so they can't hurt other people anymore. We'll have to have an investigation. (Leaning over his desk at them, now ominously) I guess your son Olaf will just have to stick up for himself. He thought he'd escape doing his duty in the rough world out there. He's found a rougher one in here. He'll have to change. Those men he lives with are not going to, let me tell you.

MOM: But being beaten isn't part of his punishment. It's your duty to protect him.

WARDEN: My son was killed at Iwo Jima. Do you know how his mother feels right now? No you don't. Because your son is alive. He's got a few bruises is all. He'll heal up just fine. Then at some point he'll be back home, eating dinner with mom and dad, and having a nice life, because my son did his duty, and paid for it with *his* life. Don't you talk to me about duty. (Beat)

DAD: We are very sorry for your loss. But my son, too, has principles. Part of what makes this a country worth defending is that he won't be tortured for having them.

WARDEN: Tell him Peter Hall has no principles, other than power. Prisoners can anger me all they want. I'm bound by law. Peter Hall is not. And, as in every prison in this country, it is the prisoners themselves who control the population. We wardens make a good show for the politicians and the (sarcastically) penologists. (Beat) Olaf seems to have upset Mr. Hall. You want to protect your son? Tell him to make nice with that man. It's up to you, and Olaf. That's all I've got to say.

(Lights down. Lights up, stage right.)

SCENE 9

MOB and William Butler Yeats

MOB: Is this the Second Coming?

YEATS:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

SCENE 10

Stage right: No desk or chairs. Truman standing, looking off in the distance. Byrnes enters.

TRUMAN: (anxiously) Have you heard?

BYRNES: (exuberant) It works! Eighteen thousand tons of TNT! Bright as the sun! Oppenheimer said "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds!" And we control it!

TRUMAN: This is wonderful. Our future is in our own hands. (Jokingly) I'll tell Stalin at our meeting this afternoon, that if he doesn't do as we say, we'll stick one up his ass!

BYRNES: (not realizing Truman was kidding) Oh! No, sir! You can't say a thing! What if this is the only one that works? You can't even be happy. He needs to be as surprised as the Japanese, if those two other ones work, too.

TRUMAN: (mocking Byrnes not getting the joke) Oh, all right. (Seriously) But killers aren't really surprised at killing. (Now presidential) Mr. Secretary of State, I am directing you to order these atomic weapons to be used on the selected targets in Japan as early in August as they can. (Beat.) No warning given to the Japanese. We want to scare the hell out of them. And we certainly don't want to have egg on our face, if the damn things don't work. (now confidentially to Byrnes) Mr. Stalin wants his piece of the yellow pie. Somehow we've got to make sure the Japs surrender to us soon, before he gets there.

BYRNES: Mr. President, a lot of military people, General Eisenhower, Admirals Leahy and Nimitz, Forrestal, McCloy, among others, have been urging me to tell you not to give that order. Just accept Japan's surrender right now.

TRUMAN: Well, Jimmy, the hell with them. They don't sit where I do. And those men don't seem to have had qualms about bombing and burning to death hundreds of thousands of German civilians over the past couple of years. Only you and I have the full view, of what's in the best interest of our country. We use the atomic bombs. That's my decision.

BYRNES: In your statement afterwards, when we finally accept Japan's surrender, either from the bombs, or the threat of Soviet invasion, or the Jap peace faction gets the Emperor to agree to help, be sure to stress that the atomic bombs prevented an invasion by our troops. History sometimes needs to be manufactured, as well as made.

TRUMAN: We would have lost thousands of our boys in an invasion. Hundreds of thousands. Maybe a million. The joy and relief of the American people will drown out Eisenhower's, or any of these "objectors" voices. (Dismissively) Their disapproval of dropping the bombs is a minor political problem at best. Our job was to defeat the enemy, and provide for the continuing security of our nation. We can trust that our countrymen will understand that.

(Exit Byrnes. Lights half-down, then up to Truman, seated at desk, with radio microphone. He reads text of speech from Aug. 9, 1945.)

TRUMAN: The British, Chinese, and United States Governments have given the Japanese people adequate warning of what is in store for them. We have laid down the general terms on which they can surrender. Our warning went unheeded; our terms were rejected. Since then the Japanese have seen what our atomic bomb can do. They can foresee what it will do in the future.

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction.

I realize the tragic significance of the atomic bomb.

(Lights half up on MOB, who is clutching cardboard box and weeping. Then lights full up on him.)

MOB: (as Truman continues, silently) I'm sorry. I know you were listening to Truman's radio address of August 9, 1945. I just start weeping every now and then these days. I didn't mean to distract you.

TRUMAN: Its production and its use were not lightly undertaken by this Government. But we knew that our enemies were on the search for it. We know now how close they were to finding it. And we knew the disaster, which would come to this Nation, and to all peace-loving nations, to all civilization, if they had found it first.

That is why we felt compelled to undertake the long and uncertain and costly labor of discovery and production.

We won the race of discovery against the Germans. Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

(Lights down on Truman, up on MOB)

MOB: Sometimes it just comes over me. (with resignation) I've just let it.

(Lights down on MOB)

(Lights up on Byrnes, General Groves and others celebrating)

PERSON ONE: It's over! It's over! And, (addressing General Groves) "You're a hero!"

GROVES: (with false modesty) Oh not really. These scientists ... (gesturing towards the people celebrating)

SCIENTIST: (mumbling to another scientists) Radiation levels ... much exposure much to be discovered..

GROVES: (overhearing) Come now, gentlemen. I've had several doctors assure me that radiation poisoning is a very pleasant way to die. (Scientists look incredulously at each other. (Everyone laughs, realizing this is Groves doing his outrageous thing.)

(Lights down. Lights up on MOB.)

SCENE 11

MOB seated on bench. Stanley Kunitz enters.

MOB: Professor Kunitz, so glad you could find me here.

KUNITZ: (reciting poem, in conversational tone)

... "Pardon" I plead, clutching the fragile sleeve
Of my poor father's ghost returned to howl
His wrongs. I suffer the twentieth century,
The nerves of commerce wither in my arm;
Violence shakes my dreams; I am so cold,
Chilled by the persecuting wind abroad,
The oratory of the rodent's tooth,
The slaughter of the blue-eyed open towns,
And principle disgraced, and art denied.
My dear is it too late for peace, too late
For men to gather at the wells to drink
The sweet water; too late for fellowship
And laughter at the forge; too late for us
To say, "Let us be good each to the other"?
The lamps go singly out; the valley sleeps;
I tend the last light shining on the farms
And keep for you the thought of love alive,
As scholars dungeoned in an ignorant age
Tended the embers of the Trojan fire.
Cities shall suffer siege and some shall fall,
But man's not taken. What the deep heart means,
Its message of the big, round, childish hand,
Its wonder, its simple lonely cry,
The bloodied envelope addressed to you,
Is history, that wide and mortal pang.

(Lights down. Lights up stage left.)

SCENE 12

Stage left: Timmy and Peter sitting on bench in prison yard.

PETER: Oh, Timmy, I'm so sorry. I heard you lost your brother on Okinawa. This must be a terrible loss for you.

TIMMY: Yes, sir, it is. He used to beat me up all the time, but that made me strong. Pap said the military was what kept him from a life of crime, like mine. He did teach me how to shoot a gun good.

PETER: (pulling out a wrapped towel, presenting it to Timmy) Now that the Japanese have surrendered, I thought I might give you a victory present. And a promise of my protection, if you use the present well.

TIMMY: (unwrapping the towel, revealing the knife. Holds the knife like it is the holiest object.) Oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Hall, sir! I won't let you down, I promise, sir.

PETER: I'm sure you won't, Timmy. As you know, some cowards have escaped doing their military duty. They'll have the rest of their lives to laugh at all those suckers who died on the beaches, in the jungle, never had to come face to face with one Jap-nigger monkey ready to blow their head off.

TIMMY: (laughs with glee) Oh, I don't know anyone like that in here, sir. But if I come across someone, I'll know what to do, sir.

PETER: I'll appreciate that, Timmy. (Beat) I'll need that present back again, when you're done with it. Make sure to keep this private, too, just between you and I.

TIMMY: (looking at Peter, eyes aglow) Oh, yes, sir.

(Exit Peter. Lights half down. Enter Olaf, limping. Lights back up.)

OLAF: Hey, Timmy. Say, I appreciate you not joining in on that ass-whipping I got the other day. I don't know if I could have stood it, to have 11 guys on me.

TIMMY: Oh, no problem, Olaf. Say, have you seen that red-tailed hawk around here? Look, that's him, up in the sky. (As Olaf looks up, Timmy stabs him in the thigh. Olaf screams. Timmy keeps circling around Olaf, assaulting him from outside his field of vision.) That's once, for being a coward. (Stabs again, in right arm) That's for being so nice. (Olaf screams again.)

OLAF: (Through his pain.) Don't do this, Timmy. Prison can become a place for you to repent for the terrible things you've done. It may take a long time. But you could become a good person.

TIMMY: What do you mean? This is the best moment of my life. (Stabs Olaf in other thigh. Olaf falls. Screams again. Prisoners look on, at a safe distance. They know that this violence is authorized by Peter, since that's the only way Timmy could ever have been given a knife. That is, they know not to interfere.)

(Note to directors: This scene should be as brutal as you believe an audience

can tolerate. Then make it more so. Keep in mind Olaf is standing in for the murder of 200,000 Japanese civilians, which the audience can never see, and can't be depicted dramatically, since it happened in an instant, and any witnesses were also incinerated. Olaf's murder carries all that dramatic weight. Don't spare the audience's feelings. The success of this play, and perhaps the fate of humanity, hang on what happens in the pits of the audience's stomachs.)

OLAF: Timmy, you're taking the life of a human being. Do you know that?

TIMMY: So? You're just number five.

OLAF: Please Timmy. For your sake, and (ruefully) mine, don't do this. I don't want to die. I really don't.

TIMMY: (sneaks up behind prostrate Olaf, stabs him in his rectum, shouts) Yahoo! That one's for my brother. (Parenthetically, as an aside) If he had caught me that time, he would have done that to me. (Chuckles at the memory of his escape.)

OLAF: Oh, Timmy, it doesn't have to be this way. It doesn't ...

TIMMY: (Stabbing him twice in the back.) Those two are for your mom and dad. I saw them visit you all the time.

OLAF: Oh, oh, oh (death agony)

(Lights up stage right, on celebratory party, with Byrnes, Groves, other government officials. Moments after Groves has just announced "No congressional hearings on the Manhattan Project!" with cheers all around, Byrnes, grinning, glances over, across the stage, sees Timmy stabbing Olaf. Disturbed, he wanders from his scene, with a glass of champagne in his hand, stands in center of stage, with lights up now on man-on-bench, who watches Byrnes and moves over to stand next to him.)

BYRNES: (moved by the brutality of Timmy stabbing Olaf) Stop it! Stop it! Stop it I say! I am the most powerful man in the United States government! Stop it! (Timmy keeps on stabbing Olaf, oblivious to Byrnes' command.)

MOB: (silently, with firmness yet with gentleness, MOB puts his hand on Byrnes' shoulder, to restrain him. MOB motions to Byrnes to go back to his party. Byrnes slinks back to his side of stage, sits, stunned. Timmy goes on gleefully stabbing Olaf, well past Olaf's physical death. It is as if Timmy believes he might, if he stabs Olaf enough, be able to eradicate something else. Finally, in exhaustion, sated, covered in Olaf's blood, he stops. Stands over Olaf's body. Enter Jack.)

JACK: Oh, Timmy. What a job you've done here. Can I have the knife now, to give back to Mr. Hall? (Timmy blankly hands Jack the knife. Jack stabs Timmy with the knife, straight into his heart. Timmy collapses on top of Olaf. Jack then stabs Timmy in the side, leaving the knife in Timmy's body, and places Olaf's hand on the knife handle. Jack walks away.)

(Lights down on scene.)

SCENE 13

(MOB standing exactly where he was, as he restrained Byrnes and motioned for him to go back to his side of the stage in last scene. As slowly as technically possible, the scrim background, behind the stage now becomes lit up with projection of Hiroshima after the atomic blast. Maybe half-way through MOB's speech will the audience understand clearly what this projection is. They will understand his location.)

MOB: (not mocking audience or Byrnes' reaction to Timmy's violence, just offering an observation, as he quotes.) "Scenes of blood and cruelty are shocking to our ear and heart. What man has nerve to do, man has not nerve to hear." Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote that, right after Simon Legree kills Uncle Tom.....Peter Hall gave up his precious knife because the warden warned him investigators were doing a search. Olaf's parents had complained to their Congressman that something was fishy in the prison. But Peter had plenty of pipe, since he had a crew member change Olaf's order from 4 to 9.

(Going over to the bench, MOB picks up cardboard box, gently caresses it to his chest. Approaches audience of proscenium stage. If theater in the round, MOB can walk around to each side.)

We are all grateful to the men and women who rid the world of German and Japanese militaries. Millions gave their lives for us to live in a far better world. It was a tremendous gift this generation gave to us. (Beat.) Had the bad guys won, *they* might have done to us, what invading Europeans did to the Native Americans. Maybe there would be a sports team in the German capital named the Berlin *Jewskins*. (Beat.) It's a local joke. (Beat.)

And it is a very good thing Stalin couldn't complete the totalitarian police state in Europe and elsewhere that he and Hitler vied so bloodily for. America, and many others, did stand in his way. But did the Japanese civilian population really have to pay so dearly for that? Puzzle me the right answer to that one.

My father, Peter Hall, (beat) got out of prison six months after Olaf's murder. Olaf's parents went to their graves insisting there had been some trick, some coverup involved in his death. They didn't believe the prison report, that two inmates killed each other in a knife fight. My father, investing the money in Florida real estate that he and Jack hid away from their bank robberies, made a fortune. Met my mother, had me. Dad didn't mind paying a doctor to say he'd treated me my whole life for asthma, so I avoided the military draft for Vietnam. He did mind a lot when I became a philosophy professor, and married a Japanese-American woman, whose parents had met in the internment camps in the California desert. Her parents had immigrated from Hiroshima, Japan in the 1920's.

My wife is, ah, (hard for him to say past tense of verb, still so new) was a psychotherapist. A patient of hers thought she was the Devil. Six months ago he bought a gun and shot her. (Beat) She (gesturing to box) always wanted to have her ashes scattered here, in the place where her people are. (Takes out plastic bag of ashes from cardboard box, opens bag, dumps ashes right at his feet.)

The evening after my dad's funeral, Jack told me how Olaf and Timmy actually died. He thought it was pretty funny, getting rid of a cowardly pacifist and a psychotic menace like that. My father did live a whole lot longer than Olaf – or Gandhi - or Martin Luther King, Jr. He bragged for 20 years that he'd lived twice as long as Jesus. Like Truman, he said he never regretted anything he did.

(Image of the destroyed city of Hiroshima after the atomic bombing is now fully visible on the scrim.)

This is Ground Zero. The center of the Bomb exploded right above here (points up). Right over a hospital. (Beat.) Ever since Osama Bin Laden's kamikazes commandeered some commercial aircraft and flew them into The World Trade Center, they've termed *that* site Ground Zero, too. Unites our cities in grief, doesn't it? (Beat) Manhattan Project, indeed. (Beat.) This, too, (gesturing around himself, meaning Hiroshima) is our city. We Americans – all humanity – created it, in reality and in image. I'll give a brief talk at the commemoration they have every year here, later this afternoon.

Speaking of that terrible man, do you recall bin Laden mentioned this city in his message after 9/11? Something about now, we, too, know the sorrow. (Beat) He destroyed more innocent people. How, exactly, that does anything, other than increase human misery, and desire for revenge, we'll never know. There's no fathoming the criminal mind. We can barely get our imaginations around how 3,000 souls perished on that terrible day. Or the almost 2,000 that Hurricane Katrina took from us. Hiroshima and Nagasaki – 200,000 – they now say.

If the Bomb had been used on a desert island, with Japanese generals watching, the world would never have truly understood the Bomb's destructive power. Without the visual evidence, we couldn't picture it. (Gestures at destroyed city background) Because so many people died, we could see it and feel its full horror. Nukes – way more powerful ones, they say – have been around 70 years now. Despite how stupid or crazy or enraged our leaders have been, despite the clamor to nuke Havana or Hanoi, Baghdad or all of Afghanistan, no other city in the world has yet suffered the sudden annihilation from atomic weapons that this one, and Nagasaki, did. So far, our city here scared humanity straight. For that alone we should be eternally grateful to these (emphasis) *victims*.

I come here to atone for my father's cruelty, his violence and murders, and for the sins of his generation. Maybe atoning will help us stay connected to our humanity, when we're aroused, in the future, to commit a comparable crime. There will be many more such temptations, I am sure.

What will you do, to atone? (Beat) I'm sure you'll figure it out.

But then, after the ceremony, (takes off nondescript black jacket, revealing HIROSHIMA CARP baseball jersey, and turns baseball cap around, with same logo on its front) I'm going to a baseball game. Hiroshima's a small-market team competing against far richer teams. They're usually at the bottom of league standings. Hence the name, carp, a bottom-feeding fish. (Beat – waiting for laugh, that usually doesn't come) It's a local joke. They've been my team for many years now. Franchise started just five years after (emphasis) *their* Holocaust. If you sit on the third base line side, you can see the Atomic Dome, right over there (gestures in close distance) where the center of the Bomb was. To people here, all this (gesturing around at destruction) is now a symbol of their heroic resilience after disaster.

(With much hopeful joy) Maybe the Carp will win tonight. (Again, his phone rings. Flustered again, embarrassed. Answers.) (To us) It's my daughter, again. (Then to phone, relieved, joyous) A 7 pounds, 6 ounce baby girl! Everybody healthy! Kazuko. (Beat) Your mother's name. (Sheepishly) Hey, everyone, I'm a grandfather!

(Lights down. End of play.)