

## Going Nuclear

*"Hell no, we won't go!"      "Make love not war!"      "Power to the people!"      "Right on!"*

So the crowd chants, unrelenting, students, hundreds— bellbottoms, beads, hair to the waist— the campus cops get nervous, get mean, macho; the protestors rally, unfazed; Arthur Weiss sits on a bench, reading *Time Magazine*: the cover asks... "Is God Dead?" Arthur doesn't know; no one does; not in 1968. All anyone knows is that a change is coming— and coming fast.

Arthur looks up, watching the crowd. A black youth is shoved to the ground by a University of Illinois campus cop. Arthur stands. The youth kicks viciously, scrambling away, shouting invectives. Arthur approaches; the gendarme raises his club; the black youth hurls a fist into the air in pure defiance, fearing nothing— suddenly, a white hand snatches the white wrist of the cop. It is Arthur: shocked by his own courage, his own rashness. He and the cop lock eyes— and the cop tumbles, his legs kicked out from under him by the black youth. "Run," he says to Arthur. Arthur hesitates— then grabs the young man by the hand, lifts him up, and so together they sprint across the campus green, into the Chemistry Building, up the stairs, through a door, and hurl themselves under a table. Silence. Darkness. A joint is lit.

The two men smoke... and take to talking. They know one another to look at: Joshua Taylor, like Arthur, a graduate student in the science department; they've crossed paths, worked the same labs, etc. But here they speak of the world, of the time. Joshua propounds upon the plight of the black race, about the vitality of the Panthers, the inherent racism of the Vietnam War; a plot to kill black men. Arthur protests that white men die in battle too— Joshua sighs and shakes his head. Arthur retorts that his brother died in the war; shot to death for a pointless Washington policy; as dead as any black man, brown man, red man, or yellow. Here, Joshua breathes deep and nods. His father, Arthur continues, works for the Pentagon. He himself was destined to be a soldier, by nature, by nurture; but he rebelled— *without* violence, *within* the system, and *still*, he is his *own man*. Joshua looks Arthur in the eyes, not breathing, not moving, and says, "You'll see."

Arthur falls into a silent memory— vivid, dreamlike. He is a young boy. He watches rabbits in a field. He enters his house, filling a bowl with cool water for the rabbits. His father watches him. Arthur brings the water to the rabbits. A gunshot. A rabbit dies. Another shot, another rabbit. Arthur's father stands in the doorway of the house firing shot after shot until every rabbit lies dead. Arthur weeps, hurling himself onto the soft, stiff corpses. Through the silence, Arthur's father mouths the words, "Be a man." Arthur lifts one of the rabbits to the sky, studying its lifeless body in the red light of the sun. Suddenly, he begins to laugh. He laughs and laughs and laughs and laughs— and wakes from the memory with a terrible jolt.

"Chaos..." says a man in a white lab coat. "...Theory and Quantum Mechanics, Kinetics... straight A's, yes, yes, very good." A few months have passed. Arthur sits across from the coated man, Dr. Fischer— Dr. Fischer's office, the Radiation Laboratory, Notre Dame. "Well, yes, yes, you're a man who'll *appreciate* our *Van de Graaff*... hmm, ever *used* a generator of such *magnitude*, my boy?" Arthur shakes his head. "Well all's in order so you'll do so *today*, yes?"

Hmmm... if we had a little *direction* in this country, yes, yes the Van de Graaf could *end* this war, no, I'm not against  *nuking the Vietcong this is war isn't it?*" A silence. "I'm a scientist," Arthur replies. "We are *all*," says Dr. Fischer, "children of the Scientific Age. There *are*," he wheezes, "no *Flower Children*. Only Nuclear *Power Children*, yes?" A silence. Dr. Fischer suddenly rises with a wild grin. "Welcome aboard the *team*, my *boy!*" Dr. Fischer shoots out his hand. Arthur shakes it... limply.

A black and white photograph of a dead black man. It is Joshua Taylor— shot in the head. Vic Torkis gazes at the picture. Frank Bono holds the file which holds the image. The Federal Building in Chicago. Vic looks up. "A dead kid." "A dead dissident. A dead SDS dissident. A dead SDS dissident Chemistry Grad Student. A dead SDS dissident Chemistry Grad Student and you'll be spearheading the operation," says Bono— a man of great authority. "No leads, no weapon, no problem. A cut and dry pin up." "Pin up." "Pin it on the Panthers. That's from the top floor. That's the direction of the department. That's the direction of the time. This is war isn't it? Johnson's fighting his, and we're fighting ours." "Pin up." "There's one lead. A white girl called Billie Lee. There's dirt there. Has to be. White girl, black man, easy. The hippie and the thug. Sounds like a country western song, don't it?" Vic nods. "Pin up."

Arthur shoots baskets at the campus court. There is a subtle intensity to his play, a certain discipline. A young longhair, Jeffrey, art teacher at the university, approaches. He wagers a joint on a one-on-one game with Arthur. Arthur himself carries a stick of skunk, so the two play for stakes. In the midst of the contest, as Jeffrey turns aggressive in his moves, Arthur's anger builds, driving his turns and shots and finally erupting in a full body check against Jeffrey. Jeffrey hits the ground; Arthur, shocked at his own actions; Jeffrey smiles, reaches out a hand. "You party?" he asks Arthur. Arthur lifts the artist up. "Sure."

A 1960's party in full swing. Flashing lights, psychedelic music, Arthur enters the apartment. A young Native girl hands him a joint, speaking Cherokee. The partygoers sit about, barefoot; Arthur sees Jeffrey, sits beside him. The Native girl goes about the circle, distributing psilocybin. Jeffrey introduces her as Cherrie, his girlfriend; Arthur swallows the mushrooms, and he and Jeffrey take to talking. The establishment; the Opium Wars; colonialism; Vietnam, etc. Throughout the discussion, Arthur glances at a beautiful girl seated alone on the only piece of furniture in the room. She listens clandestinely to Jeffrey and Arthur, stealing glances. Arthur steals a glance as she does— and the two lock eyes... and smile. Arthur rises; the psilocybin kicks in with its tracers and floaters. The girl's name is Donna, a student at the university; she came to the party with a friend, but the friend left. Arthur and Donna talk, the music droning out their voices, their words— but they are clearly honest words, voices full of humor, full of reality and connection. Cherrie dances a traditional dance; Jeffrey pontificates; Arthur and Donna move closer. Suddenly, a drug-addled vision of Nixon lurks in the corner of Arthur's eye. Arthur touches Donna's face, and the vision disappears. Donna gently removes Arthur's hand from her face and smiles. Arthur looks— but the vision has not returned.

In the early morning light, Arthur wakes on the couch with Donna beside him. He is dressed; she is dressed; she sleeps like an angel; he rises in the afterburnt haze of the drugs. Arthur watches Donna for a while, then moves off into his room. He takes out a shoebox from under

his bed and a letter from his shoebox. Wiping sleep from his eyes, he reads, the words voiced over like a distant echo. *“So, how’s it going? Life here in the real world is as bad as ever, little brother. A real shit sandwich. But that’s Nam. That’s war. And war is Hell. Nam is Hell. The world’s Hell, really. Christ. What would Dad say if he heard that?”* As the epistolary voice carries on, lamenting the war, Arthur imagines his brother in the jungle with his fellow soldiers, narrating the very letter. The men come upon a clearing and see a confederacy of rabbits. The soldiers stop and stare in wonder. *“Have you ever thought about how things aren’t the way they seem to be? How things may, in fact, be exactly the opposite of the way they seem?”* Suddenly, a barrage of machinegun fire decimates the rabbits. *“I think about dying quite a bit these days.”* The machineguns then mow down the soldiers. *“Would it really be a tragedy?”* The men and beasts writhe in blood and sunlight. *“Why not go out a hero and get it over with?”* One rabbit remains. White, perfect, it hops from the mound of corpses into the darkness of the jungle. *“We’re playing a game we don’t understand.”*

Arthur returns to the living room. Donna is gone. The telephone rings. Arthur answers. “Arthur Weiss?” asks a female voice on the other line. “Yes.” “My name’s Billy Lee,” rasps the delicate southern voice. “And we need to talk.”

A diner. Arthur sits across from Billie Lee— a creature of pure sexuality and desire. “So Joshua’s dead,” says Arthur. “And I—” “Might could help. You were there. At the last rally he... I couldn’t reach him after... and then...” “That was months...” “Did he say...” “No, just—” “We were in the SDS together. There weren’t nothing more ‘an that a’tween us, but he... Joshie was *special*.” “You think cops.” “Maybe,” says Billie Lee. “Maybe bigger ‘an even that. Joshy... wanted... to do somethin... *radical*. But an establishment man such as yourself don’t wanna hear nothin bout *that*, do ya. Tow the *straight line*, ain’t that right?” “I was at the rally.” “Sure. But that don’t mean nothin these days. A *real man* don’t just chant— he *does*.”

Arthur and Billie Lee in the throws of carnal lust; an unmade bed, a motel room, the scene of sweat, of sexual rage. The vision of Nixon watches. Arthur flashes his eyes, trying to excise the phantom. Nixon smiles, steadfast.

Vic, the Chicago agent, in a telephone booth, the motel parking lot. Bono on the other line. “Yeah, some dump in South Bend, Indiana... Yeah... Picked up some guy in a diner... No, white... Sure... Got his plate number... A real hellcat, this one... Kids these days... Christ.”

The same diner as before. Arthur a bit unkempt from his encounter. Donna sits across from him— pure, composed. Arthur looks down, sees his fly is still undone. The waitress passes by, wondering at seeing Arthur twice in the same day. Arthur looks away. He admits surprise to Donna that she called. Donna speaks of their legitimate connection, that it wasn’t purely sexual, and that that in itself is meaningful. Arthur subtly zips up his fly. His thoughts, says Donna, on the war, have stuck with her. Rational, reasonable, something the SDS has been missing. “It seems like everyone’s in the SDS these days,” Arthur remarks. Donna agrees, but explains that *everyone* does not mean *the right ones*. There are too many radicals discrediting the movement. Would Arthur like to come with her to Chicago for a conference, to offer his scientific opinion? “Quite the second date,” says Arthur— and agrees to it.

The next morning, the receptionist at the radiation lab informs Arthur that he has a visitor. From the government. Arthur stops by the bathroom, flushes three joints down the toilet, and enters his office. Vic sits behind Arthur's desk— forcing Arthur to sit as if a visitor, as if a guest in his own private space. Vic asks Arthur about Joshua Taylor. Arthur knows nothing. Vic asks Arthur about the SDS. Arthur knows nothing. Vic asks Arthur about Billy Lee. Arthur knows nothing. Vic asks Arthur about the hotel room he booked in Chicago for this weekend, the weekend of the SDS conference, the conference of the group of which Arthur seemingly knows nothing. Arthur is silent. Vic smiles— and says he's only joking, flexing his Federal muscles. He's not here for Arthur; he needs a character witness for Dr. Fischer; a security clearance matter. Is he a good man? A moral man? A patriotic man? Yes. Yes. And yes. Good, then there should be no problem; sensitive government projects, but Dr. Fischer seems up to snuff. Vic rises to leave, but stops himself. "Are *you* a good, a moral, a patriotic man, Dr. Weiss?" he asks. "I try to be," says Arthur. "That's more than most." Vic exits. In the hall, he takes out a pad, flips it open— revealing the name *Arthur Weiss* and a series of personal details scribbled bellow it. Vic pauses, and draws a jagged question mark beside the name.

Arthur talks to Billy Lee on the telephone. She wants to see him, she wants to touch him, she wants him. She's back in Chicago; only a two-hour drive; she'll make it worth his time. Arthur agrees— he'll be in Chicago this weekend— for a physics convention— he'll be busy— but he'll make time and— *suddenly, a knocking at the door*. It is Jeffrey. Jeffrey has brought a few tabs of acid for Arthur. Arthur and Jeffrey take the acid. They talk. Arthur unloads his hopes and terrors. He explains the quagmire with Joshua Taylor, the SDS, the close call with the FBI; he explains his confusion with Donna and Billy Lee; he talks about his fear of his father, his love for his mother, the uncertainty of the future. Jeffrey listens— and tells him to follow his heart. Arthur grows nauseous. He makes for the bathroom. He opens the door. The phantasm of Nixon sits on the toilet reading *Mad Magazine*. The two lock eyes. Arthur closes the door.

Chicago. Arthur and Donna at an SDS meeting. They hold hands, a genuine intimacy in bloom. A man pontificates on the inherent evil of soldiers. Arthur squeezes Donna's hands without realizing. The man continues on about the 'baby-killers' and 'Nazi thugs.' Arthur's anger grows. Donna looks to Arthur. Only the soldiers have actually done the killing; they should be the target. "Your brother was a good man, I'm sure," Donna whispers. "Don't—" Arthur squeezes Donna's hand violently. She pulls away, hurt, shocked. Arthur is himself shocked, filled with shame and anger. How would the soldiers like it if we got *them* with Napalm? Arthur storms out. Donna makes to follow— but thinks better of it.

Arthur at a payphone. He calls Billy Lee. Billy Lee's apartment. He makes love to Billy Lee. After, they lie in bed. Arthur, meditating in the embrace of a beautiful woman, exhales without thought, "Fuck the SDS." Arthur pauses, moves to explain, but Billy Lee just smiles. She agrees; she's done with the SDS; she'd moved on to a splinter cell even when Joshua was still alive, she and Joshua both; a group who felt the SDS rhetoric was getting nowhere. In fact, when Joshua was killed, they were in the middle of a project. But an *establishment man* like *him* wouldn't want to hear anything about all *that*. Arthur grabs Billy Lee sexually— a display half humorous, half aggressive; a simulacra of machismo. "We were gonna build a *nuclear bomb*," explains Billy

Lee. “Weren’t gonna *detonate* it or nothin. Just wanted to show the government that we *could*— could *build one*... and *could* set it off if we so *pleased*. And Joshy were the one what was gonna get it goin. Convert the uranium into plutonium and shoot it all on over to a brain up in Michigan, but I... really shouldn’t be tellin you this, but... it’s just so hard to find a man with Joshy’s courage an’ passion an’ *intelligence* an’... an’ you seem like someone I can trust... to talk to, anyhow, even ‘bout somethin big as *this*. But I wouldn’t ever wanna put you in *jeopardy*, Arthur. You’re too important to me.” “We are all,” whispers Arthur, “Children of the Scientific Age... indeed.” Billy Lee smiles, confused.

Arthur returns to his hotel room. Donna sits on the bed. She is about to speak, but Arthur kisses her— with beauty, with passion, with love. The kiss comes to a slow and delicate end. “We have to end the war,” says Arthur. “Or else...” Donna waits, listening. “...love will die.” A silence. “Won’t it?”

Back in Indiana. Arthur and Donna, a domestic scene. Arthur and Donna cook. Thunder and rain in the night. A palpable intimacy. Arthur suddenly hears the faint sound of crying. He looks about, seeing nothing. Donna asks him to check and see if the water is boiling. Arthur moves to the covered pot— and realizes that the crying is coming from within. He approaches. The crying grows louder. Slowly, Arthur opens the lid on the pot. Within is a family of rabbits boiling to death. They squeal and shriek— their animal sounds turning to human voices— the human voices moaning out in Vietnamese— Arthur thrusts his hand into the water to save them— the sound of a nuclear bomb— and Arthur snaps back to reality. His arm is submerged in the empty pot of boiling water. Donna shouts in alarm. Arthur only now feels the pain and hurriedly pulls his arm out. Suddenly, a knocking at the door. Arthur, gripping his reddened arm, throws open the door. A man of power and intensity stands before Arthur. It is Arthur’s father.

Arthur’s father greets his son tersely. He explains that he’s going off to Vietnam to serve his country and, since he’s the only son he has left, he wanted to bring Arthur a memento and a parting piece of wisdom. “War,” says the old soldier, “is a fight for the heart of a nation, the heart of a people, the very soul of civilization and, being such, can only be won by hearts, by men with hearts... and hearts... are few in the country these days— but America is still, itself, the very soul of civilization; and that, in truth, is what we’re fighting for. That’s why I’ve volunteered. Though that hasn’t won your mother’s heart. So I’m telling you, in the hopes it may win yours. And if not, when I return, perhaps we can all begin again, once we know the very soul of civilization is safe; maybe then, we can be a family once again, or at least, a family like we should have been— a family full of heart.” Arthur’s father gives him a German Luger pilfered during his service in the Second World War. The man makes to leave, stops, looks to Donna, and remarks: “Pretty girl.” He leaves.

Outside, Vic sits parked in the rain. He snaps photographs of Arthur’s father leaving the apartment. Arthur’s father cries— his tears masked by the constant downpour of rain.

Billy Lee smiles at Arthur from across their table at the bar. A dive on the outskirts of town. “I shouldn’t have come,” says Arthur. “Oh, and why’s that?” Billie Lee, playing up her pure sexuality. Arthur thinks quickly: “I have to get to the lab early and—” “Another woman?” “No,

I..." "I'm only *teasin ya, baby.*" Arthur sips his beer. "Have you thought about what I said?" "About what?" "About the *bomb.*" Arthur freezes. "I thought—" "It weren't no joke, if that's what you were thinkin. I just thought maybe... you bein a scientist an' all... and so *brave*—"

Sudden smash-cut to Arthur and Jeffrey in Arthur's apartment. "She wants to me to build a goddamn *nuclear bomb!* I mean, what is *that?* Jesus!" Jeffery sits, listening, silent. "And I've almost got half a mind to do it and that's the crazy thing it's crazy it's crazy that it makes sense and that's what's so goddamn crazy!" "Listen," says Jeffery, rolling a joint. "I sell pot to college kids, my own students, alright, so don't get me wrong, I'm no Mr. America, but—" "How many more people have to *die* over there? We wouldn't even *detonate* the bomb, we—" Jeffrey hands Arthur the joint. "Not that I know how to do it, but some physicist in Michigan—" Suddenly, a key in the door. The door opens. It is Donna. She wears a worried look. Jeffrey nods to Donna, then to Arthur, and extricates himself from the apartment with the flash of a peace sign.

Donna and Arthur stand in silence. "I'm pregnant," says Donna. With every ounce of confidence in the world, Arthur replies, "Let's get married."

Arthur's childhood house. Plastic on the couch. A shrine of photographs of Arthur's brother on the mantle. Donna and Arthur sit across from Arthur's mother. There is a calm and ease; they sip tea. They talk. Arthur enumerates a catalogue of activities in scientific jargon, Donna remarking that even she does not know what Arthur is working on half the time. Arthur's mother asks Donna the expected gauntlet of get-to-know-you's. Arthur's mother is taken with the girl; when are they going to get married, the couple laughs and smiles, lacing fingers. Arthur excuses himself, hopes the two won't take to gossiping too much. All smile.

Arthur dials the phone— it is answered. "Jeffery?" "No, Cherrie. Have you seen Jeffery?" "No, I'm back home—" "Jeffery's missing." Cherrie explains. Jeffery was busted for selling pot to his students; given the choice to be arrested or resign, he resigned. But shortly after, he's completely disappeared. No call, no note. And as Cherrie has been looking for him, she can't seem to find any trace of Jeffrey— past or present. His name appears nowhere on any syllabi, course catalogue, or university directory; it's as if he never was. Arthur assures her that there must be some explanation and hangs up quickly. He re-enters the parlor. The vision of Nixon stands before the mantle holding a fur-lined satchel. The eidolon draws framed photographs from the satchel, placing them beside those of Arthur's brother. The new images are of Arthur, clandestine images, like those of a private investigator— Arthur meeting with Billie Lee, Arthur and his father in the apartment, Arthur and Donna in the throes of a violent conflict. Nixon smiles. Arthur looks to Donna and his mother. The women smile. Arthur trembles.

Rain. Arthur sits alone in his apartment. He smokes a joint. He rises— goes to his bedroom— takes out the shoebox— opens it— it is empty. Arthur looks for his brother's letters, but they are nowhere to be found. Arthur tears apart the apartment, searching for them in a panic. He comes across book after book of maternity guides— but no letters. He takes to hurling the books across the room. The phone rings. Arthur answers. A long, long silence. "Okay, mom," he says. He hangs up. An even longer silence. Arthur dials the phone.

The dive bar. Arthur and Billie Lee. “I can’t tell you how *glad* I am, *baby*,” coos Billy Lee. “We’ll drive up to Michigan, end of the week to see the *brain*.” “Next week.” “This here’s a *time crunch*, sugar. We have to—” “No.” Silence. “I’m attending a funeral this weekend.” Silence. “My father’s dead.”

A dream, a vision, a helicopter over the jungle; the warning system blares, beeps; the chopper swings and plummets towards the umbrage. Two man-sized rabbits in high-ranking military uniform pilot the craft. One, with Arthur’s father’s voice, shouts for the other to “Be a man, damnit!” The other rabbit weeps. The helicopter crashes into a village— the blades, still spinning, decimate the onlookers. Suddenly, the helicopter explodes with the force of a nuclear weapon. A mushroom cloud rises over the jungle: growing and growing and growing and—

Arthur snaps back to reality. He stands at his father’s funeral. It is patriotic; it is militaristic; it smacks of dull theatre and empty pomp. Arthur consoles his mother. An old soldier approaches. Condolences are given. Arthur and the veteran take to talking. The man knew Arthur’s father from WWII; they served in Africa together— saw terrible things, did terrible things; it was a terrible time, but the terrible things helped to end such a terrible time... so could one really call them terrible? Arthur thanks the man for coming and makes to leave. The man interjects, “He was proud of you, you know. Your father.” Arthur does not believe the old soldier. “Proud men like your father,” the man continues, “have trouble... showing pride. Even worse... it is almost impossible for them to show love, their love being... so strong, too strong, stronger than themselves and that scares them... it terrifies a strong man to be out-manned by his own heart. But he did. Love you. Was proud of you. Never shut up about you. Frankly, the Pentagon was sick of hearing your name. Your accomplishments. Your mind. And most of all... your heart.” Arthur shakes the old soldier’s hand. “If only he’d lived a little longer,” says Arthur. “I wonder what he’d have thought... of the road I’m on now... of the man that I’m becoming. I know what he would say... but I wonder... what he’d have really thought.” “Only God knows,” says the man. Arthur pauses. “Who?”

The Federal Building in Chicago. Vic and Bono. “Michigan,” says Vic. “Yeah, there’s a professor out there. *Physics*. At the *university*.” “How did you...” “CIA,” says Bono, “laid this one out straight for us. *Not* a testament to *your work*, Vic. They’ve had this quack Dorfmann bugged last *six months*. He’s got ties to the Weathermen. Some *field-op* put two and two together. Him and Billie Lee. Looks like that’s the direction of this case. Joshua Taylor was just the *tip* of this hippie *dick*. We’re going for the *balls* here.” “So the Panthers...” “Fuck the *Panthers*. We’re taking down the *whole anti-war movement*, friend. Hook. Line. And *sinker*.” Vic nods. Bono grins wildly— and begins to applaud with a slow clap.

The University of Michigan. Billie Lee leads Arthur into an office. Dr. Dorfmann, a man of overwhelming normalcy, sits behind a desk. Billy Lee closes the door. Dr. Dorfmann explains the project to Arthur— beginning with the political, moving to the emotional, and ending with the scientific. “I’ll provide you with a tungsten target and ten uranium-238 specimens shaped in the form of disks,” says Dorfmann. “Your job will be to irradiate the tungsten in the presence of these disks, using a small chamber that has been designed to hook up to a Van de Graaff like the one in your lab at Notre Dame. Now, as you irradiate the tungsten, a significant amount of

adjacent uranium will be converted into plutonium-239 and fission byproducts. What we want, of course, is the plutonium-239. Then, once you've converted all the disks, you'll carefully pack them up and give them to Billie Lee. She'll be responsible for delivering them back to me. So you see, we need someone with a scientific background for this, someone with access to hydrogen ion beam equipment who can do the irradiation and then handle the resulting plutonium responsibly." A long pause. "Like Joshua Taylor," replies Arthur. A longer pause. "Yes," says Dorfmann. "No," says Billie Lee. The two men look to her. "Like you," she says.

Arthur enters his darkened apartment. Donna sits in the shadows— smoking a joint. "The baby..." says Arthur. Donna scowls. She called his mother's house and he'd left three days ago; he'd said he was staying on to console his mother, but he wasn't there, so where was he? He had to clear his head, find peace, says Arthur. Donna hits the joint. "The baby..." says Arthur. What do you care about the baby, asks Donna. What do you care about me, etc. Arthur admits that he is a broken man; he is not a child of his time; if only he'd been born in Babylon or Thrace, maybe then he'd have been whole. But he's going to make himself whole. He's going to make the world whole. Maybe then they can begin again, be together like they were... be *whole*... once more... *forever*. Donna throws her arms around Arthur. "I'm scared," she says. "And I don't know why. Nothing's happened. Nothing to be scared of. And nothing's going to happen. Right? Tell me, Arthur. Tell me nothing's going to happen." In the continued darkness of the room, Arthur murmurs, "Yes."

Arthur on his way to the lab— late at night. He carries his gear in a suitcase, reading over Dorfmann's detailed instructions. Suddenly, Jeffrey appears before him. He smiles. Arthur freezes. "Long time," says Jeffrey. "I'm sure Cherrie told you..." "She said you'd..." "Yes, disappeared, no, no, I just didn't have the heart to break it off with her. Does that make me a coward? I suppose it does, but so it goes." Arthur nods. "I'm relocating to New Mexico. Got a teaching gig out there. Notre Dame's washed their hands of me. Purged my name from all the schedules, the directories... almost as if I didn't exist. Spooky, right?" Arthur shrugs. "Well, it's a fresh start. Maybe... we could drop some acid before I leave. A little... going away soiree. Just the two of us." Arthur nods. "What're you up to now?" "Headed to the lab." "Pretty late." "I like the quiet." Jeffrey grins. "Be careful, Dr. Frankenstein. Don't raise any dead in there, you hear?" Arthur tries to smile— but can't. He walks off towards the lab. Jeffrey watches him, smirking. Jeffrey whistles "*Masters of War*." Arthur enters the laboratory.

A scene of scientific rigor and complexity. Arthur manages the Van de Graaf, the reaction chamber, the uranium discs, etc. There is a violence and beauty to the spectacle, something not unlike an old TV horror program supercharged with Brakhage-esque aesthetics, a psychedelic gothic nearly unreal in its terror and serenity.

Arthur completes the conversion. He packs his things. He exits the lab. He walks beneath the moon. Arthur smiles. Arthur howls like a wolf. Arthur laughs. He wanders, woozily, whistling "*Stand By Your Man*."

Arthur awakes in his bed. He smiles, stretches, moves to touch Donna. She is not there. It is two o'clock in the afternoon. The sound of dishes rattling. Arthur smiles again, rubs his eyes, calls out, "Sorry I got in so late, sweetheart. Got stuck in the lab. Big project. Pretty boring stuff, but hey, *I like it*." The rattling continues. "I've gotta go back in tonight, but after that I'm done with all these late hours. Once this project's over... we can start to focus on us. *I can start to*



focus on us— on you— on the baby.” A deep male voice calls out from the kitchen: “I’d rather we focus on Billie Lee Deveraux.” Arthur freezes. Quickly, he roots around in his nightstand drawer— and draws his father’s Luger. Cautiously, Arthur creeps into the kitchen, the gun aimed and ready. Vic sits at the table drinking coffee. “Hope you don’t mind. Late nights. You understand.” Arthur lowers the gun. “Maybe you remember me, Dr. Weiss. Maybe you don’t. What matters... is that I’m here now. And you’re here now. But Billie Lee Deveraux... isn’t. In fact... we have no idea where she is at all.” A silence. “Do *you*, Dr. Weiss?” A pause. “Who.” “Cute girl. Bout five foot two, blonde hair, great tits, international arms dealer, nice ass.” Vic pours Arthur a cup of coffee. “Don’t look so chagrined. Dorfmann didn’t even know. Hell. *I* didn’t know until this afternoon. And Joshua Taylor... well... he *found out*... in the *end*. Sit.” Arthur does, reluctantly. “That plutonium’s crossing the water for a pretty penny once you hand it off to sweet old Billie Lee Deveraux. CIA says it’s headed to the Russians. Pentagon says its headed to the Cubans. Me, personally, I think it’s headed to the highest bidder.” “Bullshit.” “Maybe. Maybe not. But the question really, Dr. Weiss, is where *you’re* headed. Cause you see, you’ve got *friends* it looks like. People in high places. Me, I’d normally just take you in right now. Lock you up with the killers and kid-fuckers and the wolves. But maybe... I’m your friend *too*. Or maybe... you haven’t got *any* friends. Maybe, Arthur... you’re just all alone in this big, bad world of ours. I think, though, that’s a *choice*. It’s *your* choice. So choose *wisely*.” The sound of the coffee burning on the stove. “I haven’t seen Billie Lee since Michigan.” “She’s supposed to call, isn’t she? For the hand off?” “Yes.” “Then, when she does, you call me. If you don’t, well... it may very well be the last call you ever make.” “Like Joshua Taylor.” “That there’s... between Billie Lee and God. I’m not *God*, Dr. Weiss. Are *you*?” Arthur sits silently. “No.” Vic rises. “You and I... are just men of our time.” Vic moves to the door, opens it, pauses. “And being such... we hold history in our very hands.” Vic opens the door. “Don’t fuck up history, Dr. Weiss. It’s all we have left.” Vic exits.

Suddenly, the toilet flushes. Arthur approaches the bathroom, opens the door, and sees Jeffrey sitting on the toilet reading *Mad Magazine*. Jeffrey smiles. “Say what you will about the CIA, but at least we don’t hire squares like that.” He wipes. “And he’ll kill you, you know. Once this is all over. But the Company... we’ll take care of you, Arthur. And Donna. And the baby.” Jeffrey takes out a business card, tosses it at Arthur’s feet. “When Billie Lee calls you, call me. Turkis can’t be trusted. But me? You’ve always been able to trust me.” Jeffrey rolls up the magazine. “Isn’t that right?” Suddenly, Jeffrey slams the magazine against the wall. He slowly removes it. A fly, splattered against the wall. Jeffrey laughs. Arthur runs. Jeffrey continues to laugh and laugh and laugh.

A nightmarish dreamscape. Donna gives birth to a litter of rabbits. Nixon delivers the infant animals, tossing each one at a spinning Van de Graaf— exploding each tiny body in a blaze of green fire. Arthur’s father and brother wrestle naked in Hell as Ho Chi Minh watches. Billie Lee rides an eagle with seven heads over the Kremlin. The dead rise from the earth. The sun explodes. The universe collapses. God watches. Silence.

Arthur snap back to reality. He sits in the dive bar. Six empty whisky glasses. He rises, exits into the night.

Arthur returns to his apartment. It is dark. A note pinned to the refrigerator: “We have Donna. Don’t call Vic. Don’t call Jeffrey. Don’t be an idiot. The football stadium parking lot. 9:00. Be a good boy and bring the goods. Otherwise, I’m bringing the bad. Hugs and kisses— Billie

Lee.” The phone rings. It is Vic. He asks if Arthur has heard from Billie Lee, they have reports she’s in the area. Arthur says he hasn’t, he’ll call when he does. Arthur hangs up. From under the bed he grabs the steel container with the plutonium. He sees the shoebox; he opens it. All the letters are there. He searches through, takes one, and places it in his coat pocket. Arthur makes to leave, sees the Luger on the kitchen table. He takes it, sticks it in his waistband, and exits.

Arthur drives. He makes sharp, erratic turns past red lights, down one-way streets, through alleys, shaking any tail that might be on him. Arthur makes it to the diner. He takes the steel container, throws it in the dumpster out back, and covers it with garbage.

The football stadium parking lot. 8:59. Arthur pulls up. An entire minute of silence. A black van sidles up beside him. He exits the car. Billie Lee exits the van. She coos in grotesque mockery of her southern bell caricature. “Hand it over, sugar. I ain’t got all night.” Arthur needs to see Donna first. Billie Lee opens the back of the van. Donna, tied and gagged. Suddenly, the barrel of a revolver against the back of Arthur’s head. Billie Lee turns Arthur around with the weapon, kicks shut the van door and, without her southern accent, says simply: “Plutonium.” Arthur explains that it isn’t here. Billie Lee pistol whips him, searches his car. She returns to Arthur, cocks her gun, and points it between her eyes. The FBI was following him, he explains. He hid it somewhere else in case they tailed him. He’ll show her where it is, but she has to promise that nothing will happen to him or Donna. Billie Lee retorts that she’s more about the green than the red— unless she’s jerked around one more time. She doesn’t want a repeat of Joshua Taylor. Billie Lee signals to something in the distant darkness. A white van, headlights off, suddenly pulls up. Two men in suits exit, take Donna from the back of the black van and place her in the back of the white. Billie Lee tosses them the keys and they drive off in the black van. “Vic Torkis isn’t half as clever as he thinks he is,” says Donna. “You and him...” back in her southern accent, “well you’re just two peas in a pod, ain’t ya?” Billie Lee ushers Arthur into the white van and they drive off.

“Turn here,” says Arthur. They turn into the diner parking lot. They exit the van. “Don’t move,” says Arthur. Billie Lee turns. Arthur has the Luger pointed at her. “You a killer, Arthur?” asks Billie Lee. “Like your brother? Like your daddy? Nah. You’re not man enough. Never have been. Just an egghead thought he could play the desperado, the revolutionary, the martyr. A man needs something to believe in. But you chose a lie and put all your stock in that. So put the gun down and join us in the real world. It’s not a nice place, but it’s the only place there is.” Arthur cocks the gun. “You’ve got anger in those eyes, Arthur. Always have. But it’s a coward’s anger. An anger at knowing you’re nothing, that you’ll always be nothing. That you won’t ever do anything. And you know it. Just like your father knew. Just like your brother knew. Just like God knows and the devil knows— and I know it too, sweetheart. So how about you...” Arthur pulls the trigger. The gun clicks. Billie Lee laughs. Back in her southern accent: “Now, you didn’t think I’d leave that pistol *loaded* right there aside the *percolator* now, did ya? But I hafta say, sugar—” Suddenly, three rapid-fire gunshots. Billie Lee spins, hits the ground— shot in both eyes and through the forehead.

Vic emerges from the shadows. “Get in the car, you dumb son of a bitch.” Arthur swings open the back of the van and rips off Donna’s gag. Vic tosses him a switchblade and Arthur cuts the bonds. Arthur and Donna lock eyes. They move to embrace.

Smash-cut to Arthur and Donna in the back of Vic’s unmarked car. A screech of wheels.

Arthur looks out the back. The black van pulls into the diner parking lot. The two men jump out. They look after the car, then to Billie Lee, then start to tear through the dumpster. Arthur makes to speak— “The plutonium was picked up about thirty seconds after you dropped it off. Don’t forget who you’re dealing with.” “Where—” “Baltimore,” says Vic. “You two are starting over. Clean slate.” “Jeffrey said—” “Never trust a spook. And besides, this goes higher than both of us.” Vic lights a cigarette. “Your friend says that this all should answer your question.” A silence. “What question?” “What your father would think... of the type of man you’re becoming.” Arthur pauses. “I still don’t know the answer.” Vic sighs. “It’s all... up... to you. It always has been. It always will be. That’s the answer. Jesus. And I thought you were supposed to be some sort of *brain*.” Donna rests her head against Arthur. Arthur meditates on the facts of his life, on his history, on the nature of the world. He smiles. “And one last things,” says Vic. “If you go anywhere *near* a particle accelerator again in your whole goddamned life... I’ll *can* your ass, got me?” Arthur nods, still smiling. On the radio, *The Times They Are A Changin’* starts to play. “Man,” says Vic. “I *love* this fuckin’ song.” He turns up the radio. They drive on through the night, across America, into the future— and all it may hold.