

DIRTY QUESTIONS

**by
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DIRTY QUESTIONS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

John Lee Pike—Secretary of Energy since the beginning of President Reagan's first term. Lawyer. Fit and fifty. Political, Christian, and authoritarian. Actor also plays FATHER.

Carlisle Spence—Acting Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Protection, Safety, and Energy Emergencies. Mid-thirties, tall and attractive. Lawyer and petroleum policy expert.

Sidney Seidman—Carlisle's Deputy. Forty and short. Career bureaucrat and former Vietnam War activist. Actor also plays PLANT OFFICIAL at Savannah River Nuclear Plant.

Warren Smith—The Department's Security Officer. Sixty, ex-Navy, nearing retirement. The Secretary's sounding board. Actor also plays HENRY, an employee at Savannah River Nuclear Plant.

Robert Tonopah—Reporter for the *Energy Insider*, a regulatory journal. Late thirties, investigative. Handsome, rangy, and Western.

Congresswoman Alvarez—Energy Subcommittee Chairman from Washington State. Forty-five, a progressive Republican, Presidential aspirations.

Congressman Mason—Energy Subcommittee member from South Carolina. Ageless Dixiecrat & political boss.

Savannah River Plant Official

Henry—Savannah River Plant maintenance employee

Father—Carlisle's father, an engineer at Oak Ridge National Lab

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in Washington, D.C. in 1983.

A unit set that suggests:

- Secretary Pike's Office
- Carlisle's Office
- Savannah River Plant
- Carlisle's House
- Nuclear Weapons Vault
- Congressional Hearing Room
- A Park

Scene 1: Meeting with the Secretary

AT RISE: *Audio excerpt of a speech by President Ronald Reagan discussing the weapons program.*

The Conference Room of the Secretary of Energy with a projected view of the Mall and the Washington Monument. Present are Secretary of Energy JOHN LEE PIKE; the DOE Security Officer, WARREN SMITH, and CARLISLE SPENCE, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Protection, Safety, and Energy Emergencies. They stand around the conference table.

(The first few words are spoken in medias res before the lights come up. When they do, PIKE's eyes are close; WARREN's and CARLISLE's are open. CARLISLE looks at WARREN then closes her eyes as PIKE intones)

PIKE

Heavenly Father, most wise and good and perfect Lord: We ask you to inspire us and bless the work we perform today, that we may bring everlasting glory to thee, now and forever more. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

PIKE

*(Holds up the front section of **The Washington Post**, taps it)*
Seen this?

CARLISLE

No, sir.

PIKE (reads)

"Radioactive turtles discovered on the grounds of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Nuclear Weapons Plant. Public not informed... but no danger to people, says DOE official."

(tosses the paper on the table)

This makes us look foolish. Every day I pick up a paper or turn on the TV and there's some new report... what was that yesterday?

WARREN

The strike at Fernold, *Christian Science Monitor*.

PIKE

A labor strike! A series on what Ohio residents and environmental yahoos think about DOE facilities. We don't care what they think. This type of publicity damages national security. We've got more Freedom of Information Act requests than people to process them, isn't that right?

(WARREN nods)

We're under attack by the liberal media. That's why I called you, Carlisle. I want you to cover the next hearing on the weapons program.

CARLISLE

The Weapons Program?

PIKE

Defense Programs needs a break, especially Waste Management. I've seen you handle sensitive issues. You're good. It's vital we keep Congress and the media quiet so we can carry out our mission. *Vital*. It's what the Old Man wants, and we're going to deliver.

CARLISLE

I appreciate your confidence in me, sir, and my staff. But frankly, I'm not sure we have the specific expertise to cover Nuclear.

WARREN

We'll make sure Defense Programs gives you what you need. Maybe when it's over you can have some more people?

(looks to PIKE who nods affirmatively)

PIKE

You know how to think on your feet, that's what we need. I know it's not your area, but DP's where we need help. It's the number one White House priority. We've all got to pitch in. I've always depended on you.

CARLISLE

(smiles weakly)

When is it?

PIKE

Thursday.

CARLISLE

Thursday? *Next* Thursday?

PIKE

You'll be fine, better than DP, they're burned out... Just let Warren know if you come up short anywhere. You'll help her out, won't you, Warren?

WARREN

Yes, sir.

PIKE

Great.

(To CARLISLE)

If there are no further questions, I suggest we get on with our business. Thank you.

(CARLISLE exits. PIKE and WARREN remain. PIKE turns from the window.)

PIKE

"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense," sayeth the Lord. "Their foot shall slide in good time."

Can we trust her?

WARREN

She's smart.

PIKE

That's not what I asked. She's Norton's eyes and ears.

WARREN

Norton won't be back, sir. I hear he's a very sick man.

PIKE

Good. He never supported us. Time for retirement.

WARREN

Time to clean house?

PIKE

Time to get our programs on track. What about the Committee?

WARREN

We'll handle Congress, sir. If necessary, you'll go up there...

PIKE

No, no. If Carlisle blows this hearing, I'll take care of her, but you'll go to the Hill.

Security, Warren. The next few weeks are critical, if we go ahead with the change.

WARREN

If, sir?

PIKE

We have to.

WARREN

I understand it's a question of dollars. We sink our whole budget into clean-up or we modify the plutonium criteria to stay productive. I believe those were the only options on the table.

PIKE

We *must* stay productive.

WARREN

Then we must manage the waste.

PIKE

What if this gets out?

WARREN

(Touche')
Security, sir.

PIKE

Think contingency.

WARREN

It's a technical decision. We allowing plutonium in the low-level waste. From what I understand it's perfectly safe because of the... dilution factor. It solves the waste problem without diverting funds from production.

PIKE

What if someone talks?

WARREN

It's a management decision, not a political one. We go through the plant contractors. They're on board. There's no reason to involve the labs or the scientists.

PIKE

We're sure it's not dangerous?

WARREN

No, sir. All the procedures are in place already.

PIKE

I mean to water down high-level waste?

WARREN

No, sir. The material's still controlled, there's just a higher volume. You might not want to live next door, but you wouldn't want to now.

PIKE

Okay. Let's keep the media away and let Carlisle play the Committee like a flute. She's good at that. Did you see her at the SPR hearings?

(SPR is pronounced "Spro")

Too bad she's Norton's gal.

WARREN

I wouldn't say that.

PIKE

She is. Once the Committee's cooled down and Norton's gone for good, she's next.

WARREN

Carlisle's an asset, sir.

PIKE

I'd like to get Grodke from Interior, not too bright but very polished. It's good to have a woman at the AS level.

(He straightens a large framed photo of himself and the President on the credenza)

Carlisle knows nothing. She's perfect. I want a smooth job Thursday, Warren.

(Claps him on the shoulder)

We're doing God's work.

WARREN

Yes, sir.

(WARREN exits, followed by PIKE, who takes his photo with him. SIDNEY enters CARLISLE's office, which has a different, lesser view of the Washington monument. The phone rings and SIDNEY answers)

SIDNEY

Energy Emergencies... Nope, she's upstairs... Yep... Nope... Well, congratulations! Little Carl, perhaps?

(CARLISLE enters, carrying a stack of folders with red Secret stickers on them)

Hang on, she just walked in. It's Carl Bradshaw. Where's Glenda?

CARLISLE

Don't know. Tell him I'll call him back. Come on.

(SIDNEY picks up the phone)

SIDNEY

She'll call you back. Bye.

(hangs up)

So, Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

CARLISLE

I hate public praying.

SIDNEY

Do you feel cleansed and purified deep in your soul? Why, I'll bet that all the little turbines and fuel rods are just glowing with God's word.

CARLISLE

They're glowing all right. We've got a special assignment for Defense Programs. We've got to take the heat off them at the next hearing. I want you to go to their staff meeting this morning. It's at ten. Get my calendar. Where's that convention next week?

SIDNEY

(Gets her calendar)

You need a secretary.

CARLISLE

I thought I had one.

SIDNEY

American Petroleum Institute, Tuesday in Sacramento.

CARLISLE

Okay. Make up a list of all the appointments next week. Tell the rest of the staff I want a meeting at three today.

SIDNEY

I'm not doing that. Where's Glenda?

CARLISLE

She's in training. The sixth floor's supposed to send someone. Call them again. In the meantime, please do what I ask.

(CARLISLE takes a swig of Mylanta antacid)

We've got to do a briefing book and dirty questions. I don't know anything about nuclear weapons, so concentrate on an overview: history, current policies, a Congressional rack-up, and maybe some media clips. Call Eileen and ask her to come with you to their staff meeting at ten. Tell her I want some legislative material...

SIDNEY

Wait a minute.

(he takes a file out of her hands and drops it on the desk)

CARLISLE

What?

SIDNEY

Before you jump into this with all five feet, what's going on? We don't work with them, not on doomsday tests, not on petroleum tests, nothing. If Pike wants you to cover up something in the weapons program, you can bet it's brown and stinks.

CARLISLE

Don't be vulgar. We are the Environmental Safety and Protection Office as well as Energy Emergencies. We should be involved.

SIDNEY

Not weapons. I'm telling you, something's wrong. This is how the bureaucracy works: Defense Programs is separate. Always has been. I don't want to work on it.

CARLISLE

Excuse me?

SIDNEY

I've been around a lot longer than you have. Democrat, Republican, doesn't matter. Stay away from it.

CARLISLE

I don't have a problem with it. We're cleaning up the sites, not as fast as the states want, but it's always like that; we never do anything fast enough for them. Look, I wouldn't choose to work on it, but the Secretary asked me. He's got his reasons. And cleaning up nuclear waste *is* an important goal of the Administration.

SIDNEY

You believe that? I've got something else to sell you ... I'll tell you what you should do: Open up the gates of every damn weapons plant in the country and let the NRC and the EPA start regulating them. That's what they're afraid of. And make the EPA to do an Environmental Impact Statement on every program and proposal!

CARLISLE

Let's find out what's going on first. Be a good deputy--go to the meeting, keep your mouth shut, and don't make Eileen take all the notes.

(WARREN enters)

Hi, Warren. I'll be right with you.

(Gets some money out of her purse and hands it to SIDNEY)

On your way back, get me a six-pack of Tab and two Snickers bars, please. And get yourself something.

SIDNEY

(Takes the money)

Balanced diet.

(he exits)

CARLISLE

(calling after him)

Hey, Snickers bars are the staff of life! Thank you!

(WARREN enters)

WARREN

Good morning.

CARLISLE

Hi there! Look at these bruises.

(indicates her calf)

Do you know what I did yesterday? I couldn't get the safe open so I got mad at the furniture.

WARREN

We've been up here before, Carlisle.

(He looks up the combination number in a folder he's carrying, turns the dial, and opens the safe.)

There's nothing inherently wrong with this safe. I don't know why it sticks for you.

CARLISLE

Sidney can't get it open. Carl can't get it open either. No one can get the thing open, so we hide files behind the radiator.

WARREN

(showing her the file)

Are you sure you're using the right combination?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir, a thousand times, yes.

WARREN

(Takes some notes)

I'll put in an order for a new unit, but don't hold your breath. I don't know what people are going to do around here when I retire. No one's been through the vault the way they're supposed to since the AEC, and you know when that was.

CARLISLE

I know.

WARREN

It's going to get worse too because soon there won't be anyone left who knows what should be kept. They're not training people like they used to. Those new guys in Securities and Safeguards? They're hot to get the new equipment but you know where they leave their burn bags?

CARLISLE

Where?

WARREN

I found a burn bag stuffed in the trash in the men's room next to their office and two in the loading dock dumpster. I went to see Andy and I said "Look, I know you're short on men. I know you have to hire the kind of people Pinkerton's rejects, the Service rejects, but national security's being compromised every day of the week here." When I was in the Navy, if you disposed of a burn bag in an unauthorized manner, you'd get a week in the brig... wish we had a brig.

...people they're hiring nowadays: homosexuals, potheads, men who don't pay their alimony. Not like it was in your father's day, those were real days...

CARLISLE

I don't know what we'd do without you. They'd have to put me in a straight-jacket. I know my Dad depended on you.

WARREN

He was a good man. Dedicated to Mission.

CARLISLE

He certainly was. While you're here, can I ask a few questions about the DP material?

WARREN

Sure.

CARLISLE

(Indicating pile of Secret folders)

They've given me this stuff and Sidney's over there now, but the memos mention internal audits, and I don't see any audits. Are they in the vault?

WARREN

I don't have 'em. Something happened not long ago that got everybody riled up. I don't remember exactly....

CARLISLE

What were they excited about?

WARREN

They didn't like the results. Heard Joe Boling say the appraisals would never go final. You should ask him.

CARLISLE

I will. In the meantime, would you get me whatever you have going back to, say, '79, '80. Any appraisals you can find. Also, I'd like to see the production reports for the same period.

WARREN

May take a while. I don't have much help.

CARLISLE

I know, and I don't care if they're not the final versions. I know how that works, if the report doesn't go final, it doesn't exist.

WARREN

And no one has to do nothin'. Tricky business.

CARLISLE

You really know the ropes.

WARREN

Yes, ma'am. First Oak Ridge, then Savannah River, now Headquarters.

CARLISLE

What was it like at Oak Ridge?

WARREN

Most exciting job I've ever had. We were making history, and we knew it. Future of the free world rested in our hands. More in the hands of people like your father than mine, but everyone did his part. We had to. The Project was critical.

CARLISLE

He never talked about it. Guess the security briefings really worked.

WARREN

We had to be careful. Security was as tight as a monkey's....

CARLISLE

Was he hard to work with?

WARREN

He was all business. Testing was a dedicated group of men. It's about time they put someone serious on this waste thing. These folks, nowadays, bunch of jockeys.

(leans in)

...there are some real yo-yo's over on E corridor. Everyone's got his own idea anymore. No one left to take orders and do the darn job. Bunch of wing-dings running the world, that's my opinion.

CARLISLE

You think the Secretary's a wing-ding?

WARREN

He's political, noon till night, all about the President.

CARLISLE

I'm glad DOE's got someone as dedicated as you. I appreciate whatever you come up with. Let me know soon as you have anything.

WARREN

I'll get right on it.

(Gets ready to exit)

Watch your step, Carlisle. Straight and narrow.

CARLISLE

Aye-aye, sir. Thanks.

(WARREN exits. CARLISLE looks at the files and makes notes. SIDNEY enters with more files. He dumps the files on a table and the six-pack of Tab, Snickers, and a bag of pretzels on her desk)

SIDNEY

What is all this horseshit?

CARLISLE

(continues skimming and writing)

Hmm?

SIDNEY

God, those people are crazy. Why, they think we're Communists. They're worried about you. After all, you're not one of the boys. And you probably don't love The Bomb. Ugh! I'll be glad to get back to watching ships pass through the Straits of Hormuz. What are you doing?

CARLISLE

Taking notes for the talking points and the questions. When I finish, I want you to start on the testimony. I don't know what angle they're coming from so we should be ready: contracts, audits, health and safety, monitoring, you know. It's a huge operation. I can see why they need help.

SIDNEY

I wish you'd been there.

CARLISLE

Yeah?

(She opens a Tab and puts the Tab in a small refrigerator and the Snickers in the desk drawer)

SIDNEY

Essentially, they want us to get Congress to shut the press up. I started telling them that was, you know, unconstitutional, but they didn't want to hear it. They're into this national security guru stuff.

CARLISLE

Anything else?

SIDNEY

They don't want us involved. They're pissed off with Pike and figure it's a short term thing. Probably right.

CARLISLE

I want you to brief everyone at the staff meeting. Try to keep personalities out of it, okay. I know some of them are ideological, but try to stick to the facts, because if you alienate people...

SIDNEY

I'm not trying to win brownie points as Miss Personality.

CARLISLE

Screw you!

SIDNEY

Listen to me: For thirty years, the military's dumped radioactive waste like it was dishwater. Now they've got a problem. It's a matter of time before the lid blows off, maybe literally. What

I'm trying to get through your fluffy hairdo, sister, is that the pot may be ready to boil and you agreed to mind the stove.

CARLISLE

No one from the outside gets in, right? We're self-regulating.

SIDNEY

"Self-regulating." Yes, at DOE, the fox knows what's best for the henhouse.

CARLISLE

The press is saying that's not a good idea. I agree. But before we let anyone else in, *we* should find out what's going on.

SIDNEY

Now you're Dick Tracy?

CARLISLE

We'll get better results with honey than vinegar.

SIDNEY

You're so sweet.

CARLISLE

There's more than one side to this. Maybe security would be compromised by opening inspections.

SIDNEY

What are you talking about?

CARLISLE

(Referring to memos)

Apparently, there are people in the communities stirring up trouble, some of them in responsible positions.

(she reads)

"Environmental extremists and union organizers are deliberately provoking situations and encouraging antagonistic, unpatriotic beliefs among site employees."

SIDNEY

Go wave the flag somewhere else.

CARLISLE

Isn't it possible these outside people are exploiting the situation politically?

SIDNEY

What the hell does "unpatriotic beliefs" mean? Are we going to have to start saying the pledge of allegiance at staff meetings? "I pledge allegiance to The Bomb and to the psychosis for which it stands..."

(CARLISLE turns away from him)

Don't turn your back. If I have to work on this horseshit, I've got two jobs: save your hide and find out the real issues, not necessarily in that order.

CARLISLE

Fine.

SIDNEY

So you be honey and I'll be vinegar. I don't care. But for God's sake, stop talking like a right-wing moron.

CARLISLE

You're rude as hell, you're totally unmanageable...

SIDNEY

And I'm right.

CARLISLE

Maybe. Warren's scouting the files for me.

SIDNEY

(derisively)
Warren!

CARLISLE

He may come up with something. He's no friend of the First Amendment, but he's loyal to me, and Pike patronizes him like crazy.

SIDNEY

This whole thing could be a trap.

CARLISLE

Now who's paranoid.

SIDNEY

When lightning going to strike, your hair stands on end. If you roll out of the way the second before it happens, you can save your life. Stay alert.

CARLISLE

I hope we get a second's notice.

SIDNEY

I'm going to lunch. Want anything?

CARLISLE

(Indicates Tab)

All taken care of.

(ROBERT TONOPAH enters, wearing a jacket, white shirt, bolo tie, and black jeans. He carries a battered leather briefcase and a brown paper bag)

SIDNEY

I'll be back shortly.

(SIDNEY exits, scowling at TONOPAH)

TONOPAH

Howdy.

CARLISLE

Mr. Tonopah.

TONOPAH

(He pulls lunch items out of the paper bag)

Tuna croissant, coleslaw, sliced turkey on wheat, Snickers. Take your pick.

CARLISLE

Ah!

(She reaches for the candy bar, he snatches it away)

TONOPAH

Uh-uh, that's dessert. You want to grow up to be big and strong like Secretary Pike, don't you?

CARLISLE

(Takes a Snickers out of her drawer)

No comment.

TONOPAH

(He opens a sandwich)

Got another soda?

(CARLISLE gets a soda from the refrigerator. TONOPAH looks over at the papers on her desk. She quickly puts them in the drawer)

Is that what I think it is? TONOPAH

No. CARLISLE

You going to be at the hearing on Thursday? TONOPAH

Yes. CARLISLE

Testifying? TONOPAH

What are you working on these days? CARLISLE

The hearing on Thursday. TONOPAH

Why, how considerate of you to drop by with lunch today, Mr. Tonopah. CARLISLE

What can I say? I'm psychic. TONOPAH

Like when you brought me the Budget report before anyone else had it? CARLISLE

I'm cultivating my sources. TONOPAH

I'll say. CARLISLE

Why don't we have dinner tonight? TONOPAH

CARLISLE

Why don't we not have dinner, and say we did?

TONOPAH

Drinks?

CARLISLE

No. You married?

TONOPAH

Divorced. Like you.

(CARLISLE looks surprised)

I take great interest in your career.

CARLISLE

I didn't know your little paper conducted background checks.

TONOPAH

It doesn't.

CARLISLE

I'm busy today. What do you want?

TONOPAH

Ever heard of a guy named Stanford?

CARLISLE

No.

TONOPAH

You should see his name in your reading. He put out a report the Department snuffed.

(No response from CARLISLE, leaning in)

I'd love to see a copy of it.

CARLISLE

Query Public Information. Then file a FOIA...

(Pronounced "foya")

TONOPAH

It'd be much quicker if you gave me a copy.

CARLISLE

I think lunch is over, Rob.

TONOPAH
You haven't touched your sandwich.

CARLISLE
I don't intend to. Goodbye.

TONOPAH
Okay, I'm going.
(He picks up his briefcase)

CARLISLE
(Handing him the other sandwich)
Take that with you.

TONOPAH
(He takes some papers and a booklet from his briefcase and lays them on her desk)
For your testimony. You can thank me later.
(He picks up the soda and exits. CARLISLE leafs through the papers he left. SIDNEY enters)

SIDNEY
“Dreamboat” sail away?

CARLISLE
He’s not that cute.

SIDNEY
You eating this?

CARLISLE
No. Help yourself. He left it.

SIDNEY
(Drops it in the trash)
No, thanks.
(Picks up the papers TONOPAH left)
What’s this?

CARLISLE
Some fact sheets. There's one on Savannah River. Cutie-pie left it.

SIDNEY

(He flips through the booklet)

What about this? God!

(He reads a photo caption)

"Wayne Bowman was disfigured by X-ray treatments. His nose and mouth have been surgically realigned; even so, his bottom teeth are completely exposed." Look at this guy.

(He holds up the picture to show CARLISLE.)

CARLISLE

Put it away.

(Averts her face)

SIDNEY

Jeez, that's bizarre.

CARLISLE

Give me that!

(SIDNEY tosses it to CARLISLE who throws it in the trash)

SIDNEY

What's eating you?

CARLISLE

Nothing.

SIDNEY

You sure? You look ill.

CARLISLE

I'm fine. That's not the route we're taking.

(CARLISLE puts the material in her briefcase.)

That reminds me, I need plane reservations to Aiken, South Carolina for Monday morning. The earlier, the better. And I want to get back by 7:00 P.M.

SIDNEY

Where the hell's the secretary? I'm not doing this?

CARLISLE

Gloria is sick, Stephanie's answering Pike's phones, and I don't know where everyone else is.

(Reaches for a notecard)

Then call this guy and tell him when I'm arriving. I want to go "soak up the environment" for a few hours.

SIDNEY

Don't soak up too much.

CARLISLE

You ever heard of anyone named Stanford?

SIDNEY

Nope.

CARLISLE

Apparently he's written some appraisals about Savannah River.

SIDNEY

Yeah?

CARLISLE

See if you can use your infamous network to dig them up.

SIDNEY

All right. I'm out of here. Bradshaw's having a shower or some such... free cake. Want some?

CARLISLE

Did you even hear me?

SIDNEY

Stanford. Appraisals. Savannah River. I'm on it.

CARLISLE

(She blows him a kiss)

M-wa!

(SIDNEY exits. Lighting and clothing changes indicate the following day. CARLISLE reads and writes. SIDNEY enters)

SIDNEY

(Produces several "holy joe's" - manila government envelopes)

I'm not going to tell you what I did to get this, but here it is: Stanford's appraisal, versions one, two, three, and four. There have been at least four more, but this gives you the general idea: Low-level waste stored in cardboard boxes, inadequate safety logs. Untrained safety personnel. Releases of radioactivity that never got logged; lack of health data on the employees; frequent contaminations, especially in something called "the tank farm," leaks, power-failures, accidents. Oh, and the plant's built on a high-risk earthquake fault. There are some meeting notes too,

something in Gaithersburg. I didn't have time to look at those so check them out. Be careful Monday.

CARLISLE

I take back what I said about your performance.

SIDNEY

This stuff is dynamite. Tonapah probably didn't know what he gave us.

CARLISLE

Good.

SIDNEY

You want me to go with you?

CARLISLE

No. I want you to work on the testimony. I'll do the dirty questions. Maybe it won't be quite as bad as we think.

SIDNEY

It'll be worse.

CARLISLE

I said I'd keep an open mind and I will.

SIDNEY

You know that dumb-like-a-fox routine you pull on the 6th floor?

CARLISLE

(In a sweet Southern voice)

Gosh, Admiral, I can never keep fusion and fission straight in my mind, can you?

SIDNEY

Use it.

(SIDNEY exits. CARLISLE opens the files, reads, and writes. CARLISLE'S FATHER enters: a ghost, played by the same actor as PIKE. He wears a mask of facial disfigurement over part of his face. He walks through, looks over her shoulder as she reads. She senses a presence, looks around, but can't see him. He stays onstage at the edge of the scene, watching her.

CARLISLE gussies herself up: hair, jacket, bow and cumberbund, briefcase. THE PLANT MANAGER, played by the same actor as who plays SIDNEY, meets her and conducts the

through the four stations of the plant)

PLANT OFFICIAL

Right this way, Miz Spence, we're pleased you came down. As you know, the plant was built in 1950, went into operation in '53. Since that time we've been protecting the nation while following all the rules of environmental safety. You know, DOE's the world's leader in nuclear product management.

(Indicating an imaginary map of the plant)

First station. Production occurs in one of the five reactors: R Reactor, that's on standby; P Reactor; K Reactor; the C Reactor; and L Reactor, which we're going to restart in the next 12 months.

(He takes her to the 2nd station, the Production Reactor)

Second station. As you can see, Reactor R is producing plutonium. This happens here and this happens there and, see that needle? That means everything is safe and working the way it should. Notice the glove boxes our employees use in the reprocessing area. Our employees are the plant's most valuable resource. We follow the necessary precautions to make sure their health and safety is protected at *all* times.

(They move to 3rd station, Command Central)

This third station is Command Central for the back end of the fuel cycle. We handle the waste several ways depending on the level of radioactivity, the type of material, whether it's liquid, solid, or sludge, and the waste level in the containment areas. Here's some very low level waste.

(PLANT OFFICIAL lifts the lid off a cardboard box)

CARLISLE

Are those cardboard boxes?

PLANT OFFICIAL

No, Ma'am. They're low-level waste storage containers.

CARLISLE

They look like cardboard boxes to me.

PLANT OFFICIAL

No, ma'am.

(HENRY, an employee in the Waste Management area, enters. HENRY is played by the same actor who plays WARREN. He is wearing overalls and industrial gloves. HENRY picks up the cardboard box and starts to leave with it)

CARLISLE

Just a moment, I'd like to talk to this man.

PLANT OFFICIAL

Mrs. Spence, we're late for the Fourth Station...

CARLISLE

Excuse me, I'm not late. I'd like to talk to this gentleman.

(To HENRY)

Excuse me, sir.

(CARLISLE extends her hand but withdraws it when she sees the big gloves)

HENRY

Yes'm?

PLANT OFFICIAL

This lady is from Headquarters. Take off your gloves. She wants to talk to you.

(HENRY puts the box down and removes the gloves. CARLISLE extends her hand and shakes HENRY's)

CARLISLE

Good morning, I'm Carlisle Spence from DOE Headquarters.

HENRY

Yes'm.

CARLISLE

What's your name?

HENRY

Henry Jones, ma'am.

CARLISLE

Nice to meet you, Mr. Jones. What do you do here?

HENRY

Ma'am, I'm a safety technician.

CARLISLE

And what do you do exactly?

PLANT OFFICIAL

Thank you, Henry. Right this way, Miz Spence...

HENRY

I make sure the waste goes in the right container. These boxes here. We log them here, ma'am.
(*indicating the safety log book*)

CARLISLE

Is that the Safety Log? May I look...?

HENRY

(*Hesitant, looking at PLANT OFFICIAL*)
I don't know, ma'am...

PLANT OFFICIAL

She's allowed.

(*Reluctantly, the PLANT OFFICIAL stands back and lets CARLISLE look at the loose leaf binder. She reads entries from the log aloud*)

CARLISLE

"06-14-82 H Area "600-800 gallons evaporator overheads spilled to ground from seepage basin manhole. "The release to ground was 0.5 percent of the annual guide to plant streams from F and H areas. The contamination was actually carried to the retention basin via the storm sewer system."

08-blank-82 H Area 11,700 gallons water contaminated to about 450 d/m/ml released to seepage basin.

8-19-82 H Area 50 sq. feet ground area contaminated to 20,000 c/m beta-gamma during transfer to seepage basin."

(*CARLISLE flips back a page in the log and points to an entry*)

Mr. Jones, would you mind reading this?

HENRY

(*HENRY reads with difficulty, skipping over words he doesn't understand*)
"5- 82 H Spill...tank 16... Two thousand five hundred... Workers skin and... three workers..."

CARLISLE

That's fine, thank you. Who usually makes these entries?

HENRY

Foreman, ma'am. Or one of the engineers.

CARLISLE

I see. How long have you worked here?

HENRY

Twelve years, ma'am.

CARLISLE

And where did you work before you came to DOE? Before Savannah River?

HENRY

I worked in a chicken shed south of Aiken.

CARLISLE

Chickens? And did you work anywhere else before that?

HENRY

I always worked, ma'am. I 'cropped, picking cotton, mainly, or hauling tobacco, produce.

CARLISLE

This is a pretty good job?

HENRY

Yes, ma'am. It's a real good job.

Ma'am, if you're through, I need to...

(HENRY indicates the cardboard box on the floor)

CARLISLE

Yes, sorry. I didn't mean to hold you up. Thank you so much.

HENRY

Yes, ma'am.

(HENRY picks up the box and exits)

PLANT OFFICIAL

We'll better skip the Tank Farm, we're late.

CARLISLE

No, we have time. What's over there?

PLANT OFFICIAL

Those are storage tanks. The uncooled tanks hold 1,300,000 gallons. They're 34 feet deep, concrete and steel with an earth cover. The cooled tanks hold about 750,000 gallons. They have

cooling coils inside a steel tank. Tight as drums.

CARLISLE

Really?

PLANT OFFICIAL

Sure thing. Now, the plant manager's got lunch waiting for you back at his office so we'd better take the short cut around Station 4. Not much to see. Operations are pretty routine around here.

(An alarm goes off)

That's nothing, probably a little spill. You won't see anything exciting.

(A second alarm joins the first)

That's just to make sure the men know what's happening.

(HENRY runs through the scene and exits)

Could be a drill. We do drills all the time. Safety's our number one priority.

(PLANT MANAGER exits)

Scene 2: The Dirty Work

(CARLISLE's office, the next morning. CARLISLE enters with SIDNEY)

SIDNEY

So what happened?

CARLISLE

I couldn't eat my lunch. Emergency vehicles shuttling back and forth all afternoon. They wouldn't say, some kind of spill. I guess something happens every day. They seemed pretty embarrassed it happened while I was there...

(CARLISLE refers to her notes)

Okay. I marked up what you wrote. Looks good. The last hearing was five weeks ago before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Environmental Affairs. Long-term nuclear waste storage... the questioning went way off into other things... Looks like there are constituent problems. Can't say I'm surprised. They must hear those sirens...

We should say we know there are environmental concerns, we're developing solutions, working with the States--South Carolina and Georgia--and DOE's expediting the clean-up of the sites. Get this down, Sidney--expedite the clean up, modernize the plant and the equipment, monitor the environmental readings more closely, and ...

(She scrambles through her notes)

...guard the health and safety of the workers and residents. If questions come on anything else, we'll file answers later.

(Hands papers to SIDNEY)

Refine the new draft by noon please. Here's the intro and the closing. And here are some notes--finish the dirty questions. Pick up every embarrassment of the last hearing and add your own. We'll go over them later.

(WARREN enters)

SIDNEY

I need to talk to you. Now.

CARLISLE

Give me a few minutes. Finish the testimony. Please.

(SIDNEY exits)

Cocktail?

(She drinks some Mylanta from the bottle)

Come up with anything?

WARREN

You had no business doing that.

CARLISLE
Excuse me?

WARREN
You weren't cleared!

CARLISLE
(Holds up the identity badge around her neck)
What's this? No one stopped me at the plant.

WARREN
They assumed... you should've told me.

CARLISLE
(Sweetly)
You're right. You know, it all came up so suddenly...

WARREN
Don't play that game with me, I know you. I knew your father...

CARLISLE
I have to testify. I need to see what I'm what I'm talking about.

WARREN
You knew you needed permission.
(Silence)
They should have called up here... damned jockeys, the kind of people... You're in trouble now.
(Silence)
I guess it's too late to tell you to watch yourself.

CARLISLE
Why should I have to watch myself?

WARREN
You can't... Carlisle, DP is different! There's protocol...

CARLISLE
I should have cleared it with the 6th floor, I know, but the hearing's Thursday, I didn't have a lot of time. I thought I should go look around before I went to the Hill. Perhaps that was *ad hoc* in retrospect...

WARREN

You have no idea...

CARLISLE

So tell me.

(silence)

How am I going to learn if you don't clue me in? You've got to tell me the rules. What do I have no idea about?

WARREN

I wish you'd told me you were going down there... Joe Boling caught hell.

CARLISLE

Did he? See this?

(CARLISLE grabs the ID badge hanging around her neck)

Since when does an AS need clearance beyond "Q level?"

WARREN

Everyone needs clearance for the weapons plants.

CARLISLE

From who?

WARREN

Plant management.

CARLISLE

They work for us.

WARREN

I'm just telling you the procedure.

CARLISLE

Did you find anything in the vault?

WARREN

I can't get a thing out of DP, they're close-hold people. But I dug up this.

(He passes her a computer printout)

It's a list of non-routine occurrences at Savannah River.

CARLISLE

Thanks.

(Flips through the pages)

Leaks, spills, contamination.... I had the privilege of browsing a safety log yesterday. Who fills those things out? It's not the maintenance employees.

WARREN

I found out something else. The Inspector General's looking at Savannah River.

CARLISLE

Our Inspector General?

WARREN

Didn't know it myself.

CARLISLE

I thought you knew everything.

WARREN

Not in DP.

CARLISLE

How long till they report?

WARREN

Don't know.

CARLISLE

The Secretary didn't mention this... He must know.

WARREN

You'd think.

CARLISLE

The name 'Stanford' ring a bell?

WARREN

No.

CARLISLE

You haven't heard about any appraisals?

WARREN

No. And no one's talking. Actually, people are talking... about security breaches in your office.

CARLISLE

My office?

WARREN

Can't say who—couldn't even tell you if a security watch was on for your office...

(leans in)

... *could not tell you that.*

CARLISLE

I see.

WARREN

... but I could say, keep everything locked up, keep that safe locked, don't leave documents around. You're liable to forget them at the end of the day. If there's nothing to find, there's no need to worry. Especially on weapons or waste. As a precaution, I want to classify everyone's notes.

CARLISLE

No! It's such a pain in the neck.

WARREN

Your neck.

CARLISLE

Okay. Come back after lunch with your rubber stamps and your log and we'll have a party.

WARREN

(Gets up to go, pats CARLISLE on the shoulder paternally)

Good girl.

CARLISLE

Warren.

(WARREN pauses)

Thank you.

(WARREN exits. SIDNEY enters with coffee)

SIDNEY

So what else did you see?

CARLISLE

Reactors reacting. Waste tanks, holding areas. Everyone on his best behavior. Except for the non-routine vent, of course, that they pretended wasn't happening. Those meeting notes, they're about some scheme ... I don't know... reclassifying waste as something else. I want you to figure

it out, I couldn't make sense of it.

SIDNEY

What about him?

(Indicating WARREN)

CARLISLE

He's on our side, kind of.

(Waves the computer print out)

Gave us the Safely Log.

I don't know. You talk to the plant management and the waste problems "are absolutely nothing to be concerned about, ma'am." But when I asked questions, I was the Biggest Threat to the Free World since the Rosenbergs. And I mean the Rosenbergs. The whole place exudes "1950."

Did you hear about the IG?

SIDNEY

No.

CARLISLE

I don't like that at all! Warren didn't know and now you don't know. The IG' office is investigating Savannah River. And, by the way, DP won't give anything to Warren.

SIDNEY

I could've told you that.

CARLISLE

How did you get those appraisals?

(Silence)

Good job.

SIDNEY

As soon as you give this testimony, I want you on a plane to visit a sick relative.

CARLISLE

I don't have any sick relatives.

SIDNEY

Make one up. I want you gone for at least two weeks. I mean it. I've got a bad feeling. Thursday afternoon, you're out of here.

CARLISLE

What about you?

SIDNEY

They can't touch me. I've been here fourteen years. I was Union Treasurer for ten. But no one'll raise an eyebrow if a political appointee disappears, even one that used to be Career.

CARLISLE

You make it sound like the Mob's coming to fit me for cement shoes.

SIDNEY

Pike can make you vanish.

CARLISLE

We could be wrong.

SIDNEY

They're not trying to hide those appraisals?

CARLISLE

No, they are. So it's a question of who we believe, this guy Stanford or the plant management. I guess he's a whistleblower.

SIDNEY

Who's got the most to lose? Who's in the cement-pouring business?

CARLISLE

And who's not telling us everything?

(TONOPAH enters her office. CARLISLE groans)

SIDNEY

Want me to call Security?

TONOPAH

Is that any way to say Good Morning?

CARLISLE

Finish the draft. I'll handle this.

(SIDNEY exits to his office)

TONOPAH

That has an exciting ring.

CARLISLE
You wish. What can I do for you?

TONOPAH
I was wondering what I could do for you?

CARLISLE
Yes?

TONOPAH
Over coffee.

CARLISLE
No time.

TONOPAH
(Produces pastry)
Danish?

CARLISLE
I've eaten. What's up?

TONOPAH
I'm looking for anything on Savannah River operations.

CARLISLE
File a FOIA.
(pronounced "Foya")

TONOPAH
But on what?

CARLISLE
You *are* a tricky fellow!

TONOPAH
Just a blue-blooded American seeking justice and information.

CARLISLE
Not necessarily in that order.

TONOPAH
Correct. First information; justice comes later.

CARLISLE
You're an optimist, how sweet.

TONOPAH
Optimism, darlin', is its own reward. How was your trip?

CARLISLE
Please leave.
(Makes himself at home)

TONOPAH
But I like you! You're fairly attractive with an appealing personality, tough on the outside, warm on the inside, I imagine. Except for that streak of laziness, you're close to perfect.
(She can't resist a small smile)
But I sense a not-happy person.

CARLISLE
I'm busy.

TONOPAH
I sense... frustration and... doubt.

CARLISLE
You being psychic again?

TONOPAH
I *am* the grandson of a medicine man.

CARLISLE
Right. You get your glow from a tanning parlor.

TONOPAH
You are wrong. I was born on the reservation and worked in a uranium mine after high school. Soon to understand the wisdom of "go to college, young man, and make something of yourself."
(Stacks her papers and moves away from him. He pursues her around the office)
So what's bothering you? It's not something you've read, is it? I wish you'd share the misery. I share with you. Mr. Stanford.

CARLISLE
I'm tired. I toured Savannah River all yesterday. I walked twenty miles...
(indicates high heel shoes)
...in these. I got home late, was in here by 7...

TONOPA
You probably need a foot massage.

CARLISLE
(Pause)
Thanks for the tip on Stanford.

TONOPA
You *have* read something!

CARLISLE
(shrugs)
Maybe.

TONOPA
(looking at her)
Good. And you're thinking about it. Even better. You're skeptical, but you're a lawyer, that comes naturally. Don't talk yourself out of the unthinkable—that's the name of the game.

CARLISLE
Stop staring.

TONOPA
I need data.

CARLISLE
Can't help you.

TONOPA
Okay.
(Nods)
Get some rest.

SIDNEY
(Entering)
Carlisle, I need to talk about the...

CARLISLE
He's leaving.

TONOPA
See you Thursday.
(TONOPA leaves a business card on the desk)

In case you want to know more.

(TONOPAH exits. SIDNEY picks up the card and gives it to CARLISLE, who looks at it and pockets it.)

CARLISLE

Let me see the dirty questions.

(SIDNEY hands paper to her)

Oak Ridge? We don't need Oak Ridge.

SIDNEY

You said prepare for anything. The place is uranium dump.

CARLISLE

(she reads)

Mercury...

SIDNEY

In the water system and trapped underground.

CARLISLE

Missing uranium...

SIDNEY

Enough for 85 atomic bombs. None of it, I might add, expected of being stolen. Just "lost!"

CARLISLE

How long is uranium radioactive?

SIDNEY

Depends on the isotope. Thousands to millions of years.

CARLISLE

It's beautiful near Knoxville, in the mountains. You'd never guess all this was there from just driving around.

SIDNEY

I'll take your word for it.

CARLISLE

(reads on)

Once the mercury gets into the water supply...

SIDNEY

You're screwed.

CARLISLE

(reads)

And Stanford's appraisals...

This answer's ridiculous. No one could say this:

"Stanford's report criticizing waste storage and misusing funds was not made final and therefore not released. The material in his report became out of date very quickly..."

If the material's dangerous for a thousand years, how can his report become out of...

SIDNEY

It's not supposed to make sense; it's supposed to make you *feel* like the government's responding.

CARLISLE

Well, it doesn't.

SIDNEY

You're cranky.

CARLISLE

I'm tired... Oh, and here come the radioactive turtles crawling out of the swamp...

SIDNEY

You *know* they're going to ask about that.

CARLISLE

"The turtles are not at all dangerous to humans...."

(puts the paper down)

This makes me sick reading it.

SIDNEY

Good and dirty. I've done my job.

CARLISLE

This would cause a firestorm if it got out, wouldn't it?

SIDNEY

Not really. People don't care.

CARLISLE

They care.

SIDNEY

You shouldn't end up caring more than the people who're affected. You'll look like a fool.

CARLISLE

(Gathers testimony and papers)

I'm going home.

(Pauses)

There was a lake. I learned to row on that lake.

SIDNEY

Go home, you're hallucinating.

(CARLISLE almost leaves and turns back)

CARLISLE

I almost forgot. Get all your notes together for Warren. They're sensitive, we've got to lock them up. Same with Eileen's.

(CARLISLE exits as TONOPAH re-enters)

TONOPAH

Left my raincoat.

(TONOPAH goes over to CARLISLE's desk, quickly sneaks the Safety Log under the raincoat as he picks it up. SIDNEY looks up and sees him take the document)

Hate to get caught in a downpour...

(SIDNEY moves in front of him)

SIDNEY

You're not going anywhere. Give it back.

TONOPAH

What are you talking about?

(SIDNEY picks up the phone)

SIDNEY

Hey. Come to Carlisle's office right now. I've got a reporter with a document in his pocket ready to walk out the door.

(SIDNEY hangs up)

You're finished, you know that?

(TONOPAH tosses the report back on CARLISLE's desk. SIDNEY looks at it)

TONOPAH

Give me a break. I'm trying to write a story.

SIDNEY

Write it from the DC Jail.

TONOPAH

You don't have anything on me.
(raises both hands innocently)

SIDNEY

Maybe not. But you're never coming in this building again.

(WARREN enters, sizes up the situation, looks at TONOPAH's visitor pass)

WARREN

I've seen you around a lot lately.

SIDNEY

Walked in and took this off Carlisle's desk, cool as ice.
(picks up Safety Log)

WARREN

I told her...

SIDNEY

Just get him out of here and don't let him back in the building.

WARREN

(To TONOPAH)

Come on. We're going to have a talk in the basement.

(WARREN exits with his hand on TONOPAH's shoulder. SIDNEY follows. CARLISLE enters "her house," a sofa, books, a blanket. She takes off her jacket and puts on a bathrobe, sets her alarm, pours a glass of milk, reads a book, cuddling a small pillow, and falls asleep. The lighting changes as she dreams. WARREN enters)

WARREN

Miz Spence? Miz Spence?

CARLISLE

Yes? I'm sorry, I must have dropped off...

(She realizes she's not properly dressed for work, tightens the belt on her bathrobe and runs her hands through her hair, grabs the little pillow)

WARREN

That's okay. It's not formal. Ready?

CARLISLE

Do I need anything?

WARREN

Just your badge.

(WARREN picks up her ID badge from the side-table and hands it to her)

CARLISLE

What are we going to see?

WARREN

Something special. You'll need it for your report. Right this way.

(As they walk across the stage, WARREN points things out)

This is Design.

(papers strewn on a desk)

Over there are the Low Level Burial Grounds. This is going out there.

(They walk past a cardboard box of waste. With a long-handled scoop, he picks some waste up and lets it fall back in the box like ashes)

If we kept going past the Burial Grounds, we'd come to the Tank Farm. That's for the High Level Waste. It's like hot molasses, very hot. We try to air condition it, but sometimes the cooling units break down.

CARLISLE

What happens?

WARREN

Time to put these on.

(He gives her white booties, a white smock with large brass buttons, a shower cap-like hat, and white rubber gloves. She puts them on.)

CARLISLE

Aren't you coming?

WARREN

No. I have work to do in the Burial Grounds.

(WARREN points to stage center)

Right in here. Be careful.

(WARREN exits. Projected behind CARLISLE is an enormous metal door, a vault. The door appears to open. She walks forward. Projected behind her is the weapons vault, shelves of warheads of various sizes, towering over her. The actor played by WARREN re-enters in a guard uniform)

GUARD

You'll need a film badge to enter, Miz Spence. Here...

(He pins a film badge to her bathrobe)

...your father left it for you. I'm sorry, this will have to stay here.

(takes her pillow)

FATHER

(offstage)

Carlisle?

CARLISLE

Yes?

GUARD

Through there.

(GUARD motions her further forward "into the vault." Projected behind her is a small room with several prototype warheads. CARLISLE's FATHER enters and sits with his back to her, writing. FATHER is played by the same actor as PIKE.)

I'll be with you in a moment.

FATHER

I didn't know you were here.

CARLISLE

Quiet!

FATHER

(She looks around)
My job's busy, too.

CARLISLE

So this is your office. I bet you wish you had a window.

FATHER

Why?

(FATHER turns to face CARLISLE and the audience. Using a mask or make-up, FATHER's face appears grotesque from radiation poisoning and he's bald. CARLISLE gasps)

What is it?

CARLISLE

Your face...

FATHER

What's the matter?

CARLISLE

... I'm so sorry...

FATHER

Don't be ridiculous. You're such a nervous girl. I should never have sent for you.

CARLISLE

Let me stay, please!

FATHER

(Softening)
All right, if you're quiet.... I've spend the best years of my life here. I have something to show you. I've been saving it.

(FATHER goes to a cedar chest with a big combination lock that he unlocks)

Come here.

(CARLISLE stands next to him. He opens the lid of the chest and removes a warhead the size of small child. Facing the audience in the side of the warhead is a gold metal button three inches in diameter.)

FATHER

My masterpiece. Touch it.

(FATHER puts her hand on the gold button. He withdraws his hand and she continues to touch the circle and a look of amazement comes over her face)

CARLISLE

It's warm!

FATHER

It's alive. And very patient. One day, it will be yours.

(She pushes it away)

CARLISLE

I don't want it.

(Coldly, FATHER replaces the warhead in the chest and closes the lid. He withdraws from CARLISLE)

People are turning against me.

FATHER

I haven't heard anything.

CARLISLE

How could you? This place is like a coffin.

FATHER

Tell your mother I'll be late. Leave those garments here. You won't need them. Go on, I've got work to do.

(Humiliated, she removes the boot coverings, smock, cap, and gloves)

CARLISLE

I never get it right with you.

FATHER

Because you're spineless and stupid.

CARLISLE

I am not! You don't care about anyone but yourself, and you never have.

FATHER

Don't you dare talk to me like that!

CARLISLE

You're so hateful, I pity you.

FATHER

And you're ungrateful. I give you my prize and you do nothing but disappoint me. Get out!

CARLISLE

(Angry)

You're wrong. What you think is wrong. What you want is wrong! And you're wrong about me!

FATHER

Get out!

(An alarm rings loudly and the lights flash)

CARLISLE

What's happening?

FATHER

I'm not ready!

(As the lights go dark, FATHER exits. When the lights come up again, CARLISLE is standing next to her sofa, her hands in fists. The plant alarm becomes the alarm clock beside her).

CARLISLE

What is it?

(CARLISLE looks around and realizes she's at home. She shuts off the alarm and composes herself. And thinks. She retrieves her jacket and takes the business card TONOPAH gave her out of the pocket. She picks up the phone and dials)

Is this Mr. Stanford? My name's Carlisle Spence, from DOE Headquarters. I need to talk to you about Savannah River.

END OF ACT 1

Scene 3: The Congressional Hearing

(A Congressional hearing room with a table with room for five Members of Congress, two in attendance. In front of each, a microphone, files, and a glass of water. As the lights come up, CARLISLE sits at the witness table facing them; she also has a microphone and a glass of water. Beside her sits SIDNEY. There are several chairs for staff members and the public, where TONOPAH and WARREN sit, separately)

(The hearing is in progress. Enter ALVAREZ and MASON following a break to attend a House floor vote. The two returning Committee members sit down)

ALVAREZ

I apologize for the delay. As you can see, some Members were detained on the floor, but we'll continue. I believe the gentleman from South Carolina has some questions. Mr. Mason?

MASON

Thank you, Madam Chairman. Ms. Spence, I want to say for the record I think Secretary Pike has a strange way of showing candor. I'm facing election next year. My constituents are worried about what they've heard going on at the weapons plant. I want to know where Mr. Norton is!

(CONGRESSWOMAN ALVAREZ leans over and whispers to him while CARLISLE speaks)

CARLISLE

Madam Chairman, Mr. Norton had a heart attack two weeks ago. He's on leave. As Acting Assistant Secretary, my office prepared the testimony, and I'll answer your questions.

MASON

Very well. But I warn you, as I was ready to warn Mr. Norton, and anyone else Pike sends up here: I want answers. And I didn't get any so far. I'm seventy-seven years old and I'm planning on being here after the election. I don't mind spending my next term, or the term after that, or the term after that on this, and let me assure Secretary Pike longevity runs in my family.

CARLISLE

I'll pass that along, sir.

MASON

Far as I'm concerned, your testimony was nothing but fluff. I have a few technical questions about DOE's standards.

(MASON reads the question from notes)

Does the U.S. Department of Energy, today, use a radiation safety standard for drinking water

that is twenty times more lenient than the one used by the Environmental Protection Agency?

CARLISLE

Would you... would you repeat the question, please?

MASON

Does DOE use a radiation safety standard for drinking water twenty times more lenient than EPA's?

CARLISLE

Sir, I'm not sure what EPA's drinking water standard is. I can assure you that the standards set by the Department of Energy provide an ample margin of safety.

MASON

I want to see the figures on paper, Ms. Spence.

CARLISLE

I'll get them to you.

MASON

All right.

(He continues to read from the notes)

On the subject of the disposal of nuclear waste at the Savannah River plant, is it true that the Department of Energy uses *cardboard boxes* to store low-level radioactive waste?

(To ALVAREZ)

What kind of monkey-business is this?

(Returning to the notes)

And... is this... storing nuclear waste in cardboard boxes... considered a safe and modern storage method by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the nuclear industry?

CARLISLE

(SIDNEY taps CARLISLE on the shoulder)

Excuse me.

(She turns to him)

They've got our questions.

SIDNEY

They couldn't.

CARLISLE

They do.

SIDNEY

(Resuming her response)
Excuse me.

CARLISLE

As far as storing nuclear waste is concerned, I believe that *very* low-level nuclear waste is placed into containers that you could describe as "cardboard." However, I don't believe these containers are for permanent storage, sir. I believe... they're used for collection purposes only. As far as whether this is considered safe, let me say that U.S. Department of Energy is the *leader* in nuclear waste disposal.

When I'm in church, Mrs. Spence, I'm gratified to learn of a person's beliefs. In science, I require more substantial evidence. I'd like to see that answer amended in writing also.

MASON

Yes, sir.

CARLISLE

Let me digress a moment here. Mrs. Spence...
(Hunts through papers)

MASON

I'm looking for your biography, which I can't find, but I think your background's in energy law and petroleum studies?

Correct, sir.

CARLISLE

Have you ever been in any branch of the service?

MASON

No, sir. Well, VISTA.

CARLISLE

MASON

I doubt your VISTA experience gave you much familiarity with nuclear science?

CARLISLE

No, sir. I learned about nuclear waste management while serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Emergencies.

MASON

Have you ever been to a nuclear weapons site?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir. Savannah River.

MASON

And when was that?

CARLISLE

Recently, sir.

MASON

Good, because that's where my next questions focus and at my age, you don't like to waste your breath. Did you visit the Waste Management Area? They call it the "back end of the fuel cycle."

CARLISLE

I did.

MASON

Are you familiar with the way high-level nuclear waste is stored?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir. I've seen some the tanks and talked to the maintenance personnel.

MASON

Tell me this. Do you know if the high-level waste tanks purchased last year, *last year*, mind you, have developed corrosion pits in the first year of use?

CARLISLE

(Pause)

I can't answer that, sir. It's classified.

MASON

You don't know or you can't tell me, which is it?

CARLISLE

I can't tell you, sir.

MASON

You want me to assume you're not incompetent, you're just doing your duty?

CARLISLE

Congressman, I'll answer your to the extent of my knowledge given the security laws of the United States Government.

MASON

I hope you're not going to hide like a little girl behind your government's skirts? I want you to look into this because I hear those tanks are damaged and may be leaking into the soil of my state *right now!* I've got constituents to answer to.

I have three more questions, which you probably won't be able to answer, but I'll ask them anyway and we'll have another session behind closed doors.

(To ALVAREZ)

Let's invite the boys up from the DuPres Company next time.

(Pronounced `Du-Pray')

First, do you know if the Department of Energy uses high-level nuclear waste storage tanks made of carbon-steel because they are cheaper to purchase than stainless steel?

CARLISLE

Excuse me.

(She turns to SIDNEY)

Okay, they've got the facts. What do I do?

SIDNEY

Be careful.

CARLISLE

(Resuming her response)

Would you repeat the question please?

MASON

Does the Department of Energy use high-level waste storage tanks made of carbon-steel because they are cheaper than stainless steel?

CARLISLE

(Pause)
Yes, sir, we do.

MASON

You know this for a fact?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir.

MASON

Well, my lights!

CARLISLE

It was in a report. It seemed to be a false economy.

MASON

For the first time today, Mrs. Spence, I agree with you. Perhaps in this same report they mentioned the “frequent and unreported contaminations” at Savannah River? The contaminations that occur when the high-level waste has to be handled because the storage tanks are leaking?

CARLISLE

Congressman, as you know, Savannah River’s huge, over 300 square miles. It has five very old nuclear reactors and dozens of production facilities and storage areas. The DuPres Company employs thousands of workers under their contract with the Department of Energy. If the storage tanks were failing, and I don’t say they are, you understand...

MASON

I understand...

CARLISLE

... but *if* they were failing, the amount of highly radioactive material that had to be handled would probably increase and the number of contamination incidents would go up.

(SIDNEY taps her on the shoulder)
Excuse me.

SIDNEY

What the hell are you doing?

CARLISLE

Being careful.

SIDNEY

They're going to crucify you. Invoke National Security.

CARLISLE

I thought you wanted this out?

SIDNEY

Don't be a chump.

(CARLISLE turns back to the Committee)

MASON

(Leans forward)

Is it true that the Department has untrained, illiterate employees maintaining the safety logs at the back end of the fuel cycle?

CARLISLE

In my opinion, sir, they're not untrained; they're poorly trained.

MASON

How do you know?

CARLISLE

I've interview some of them. And I've seen the logs.

MASON

(He leans back)

I have no further questions, Madam Chairman, but I'd like to reserve the right to continue.

ALVAREZ

Mrs. Spence, thank you for coming today.

(Refers to notes)

I understand the U.S. Department of Energy uses computer models to estimate the radioactivity at the Savannah River plant. Why have you never checked the actual, recorded exposures against the computer estimates?

CARLISLE

I don't know that that's the case. If the Department's relying on a computer model to measure radioactivity, then we ought to compare it regularly to real figures.

ALVAREZ

But it's not current practice?

CARLISLE

I don't know. I'll answer it in my amended responses.

ALVAREZ

How much plutonium is unaccounted for at Savannah River?

CARLISLE

That's classified. I can't discuss it.

ALVAREZ

Is it true that 400,000 gallons of radioactive tritium-contaminated water from a well at Savannah River was dumped on the ground and contaminated the drinking water of the community?

CARLISLE

That's classified.

ALVAREZ

How frequently do the refrigeration coils in the storage tanks break down? Monthly? Weekly? Daily? Isn't there a constant danger of spontaneous explosions? Doesn't the air sometimes pop like pistol caps?

CARLISLE

I don't know.

ALVAREZ

Why not? Is the Savannah River plant built in a high-risk earthquake zone?

CARLISLE

I... I don't know.

ALVAREZ

Really? Is it true that L-reactor, built in 1950, has an outmoded design--with a graphite core and no containment building? Isn't there a strong possibility of a hydrogen explosion?

CARLISLE

Congresswoman Alvarez, I'm here to report our progress in improving nuclear waste management at Savannah River. I'm not an engineer, a geologist, a physicist, or a computer expert. I'll amend my responses.

ALVAREZ

We want answers. I've been told there was a radioactive release in 1961 at Savannah River that was larger than the release at Three Mile Island but it was never reported.

CARLISLE

I have read something ...

MASON

I have a question if the Chairman will permit me?

(ALVAREZ nods)

If you don't know the answer, just say so. I'm beginning to understand your position here.

Do you know if the DuPres Company and the Department of Energy have been diverting nuclear waste processing funds into other programs? Such as programs for manufacturing *more* plutonium for weapons?

CARLISLE

I don't know, sir.

MASON

Is it true your own Inspector General is investigating a cover-up of environmental problems at Savannah River?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir.

MASON

Why?

CARLISLE

I don't know, sir.

MASON

May I remind you you're still under oath?

CARLISLE

The Inspector General's investigation is independent. I won't know anything until the results are released. I don't know when that will be.

MASON

I have no further questions.

ALVAREZ

Ms. Spence, I think you were sent here to waste our time. We've been trying for two years to hold this hearing and I'm disappointed. I have one last question. Knowing what I know you know,

what I know you know, tell me if the U.S. Department of Energy ever dilutes high-level waste and reclassifies it low-level waste?

CARLISLE

Not to my knowledge.

ALVAREZ

Do you agree that would be a dangerous practice?

CARLISLE

I...

ALVAREZ

High-level waste is lethal for thousands of years. It's not the kind of thing we want to lose track of in our landfills, is it?

CARLISLE

Every precaution is taken to keep the high-level waste segregated and safe.

ALVAREZ

Ms. Spence, in the novel, *1984*, the government renamed unpleasant facts. "War is Peace," "Slavery is Freedom," etc.

That's what the Department of Energy's doing. Are you familiar with the term 'plutonium criteria'?

CARLISLE

No, ma'am.

ALVAREZ

It means nothing? I think it means this hearing is a diversion from the real problem. According to my rumor-mill, the high-level waste tanks at Hanford, in my own Washington State, are so contaminated, they make my colleague's Savannah River Plant look like a birthday party.

So contaminated that the U.S. Department of Energy is trying to "relax the plutonium criteria"—isn't that a gentle phrase—so the high-level waste can be reclassified as low-level waste, and the big problem, the \$60 billion problem, vanishes, overnight.

What do you think of that?

CARLISLE

It's horrifying, ma'am.

ALVAREZ

Please amend your answers within five working days of the release of the transcript. This hearing is adjourned.

(Gavel. ALVAREZ and MASON gather papers and exit. WARREN exits. TONOPAH puts his notes in his briefcase and approaches CARLISLE)

SIDNEY

Let's get out of here.

CARLISLE

Take these.

(She piles the two briefing files onto SIDNEY, who drops one. TONOPAH approaches)

SIDNEY

I hope you feel good about this.

TONOPAH

I didn't leak those questions.

SIDNEY

If I see you in the building again, I'll have you strip-searched.

TONOPAH

I've got a right to gather information.

SIDNEY

You stole those questions. You were nosing around our office...

TONOPAH

Carlisle, listen...

CARLISLE

I don't want to talk to you, now or ever.

(CARLISLE and SIDNEY move downstage)

TONOPAH

Wait...

SIDNEY

Come on...

TONOPAH

(Grabbing CARLISLE's sleeve)
I didn't leak those questions.

CARLISLE

Take your hand off me.

SIDNEY

You expect us to believe that? We caught you, remember?

TONOPAH

I didn't say I didn't try... I said I didn't leak them. Someone else did.

SIDNEY

Yeah, right.

TONOPAH

This stuff stinks so bad, *someone's* going to leak it.

SIDNEY

Get lost.

(SIDNEY and CARLISLE move downstage to regroup outside the House Office Building, TONOPAH exits)

CARLISLE

Oh, God. Now what?

SIDNEY

Don't think the sick relative routine's going to work.

CARLISLE

Why not?

SIDNEY

It'll look like you're running away. I wish you'd kept your mouth completely shut. You made it worse.

CARLISLE

I didn't saying anything...

SIDNEY

You confirmed their suspicious. *Any* disclosure or potential responsibility betrays the Brotherhood.

CARLISLE

The Brotherhood?

SIDNEY

It'll take a week for the transcript but Warren's already gone back report to Pike. They'll be calling.

CARLISLE

I guess I shouldn't have given my opinion.

SIDNEY

For once in your life, you didn't bullshit. I ought to be happy.... They'll figure Tonopah got the information from you. Doesn't matter if he stole it or you mailed it first class, means the same to Pike: You're Disloyal to the President.

CARLISLE

Maybe he leaked them. He's trying to undermine us...

SIDNEY

Had to be Tonopah. Pike doesn't want to publicize his precious plutonium disappearing act. Goddamit, Carlisle, we walked right into this! You're an easy target with Norton gone. I should've known. It's my job, I should've known.

CARLISLE

Known what?

SIDNEY

You'll always be Norton's deputy. He hates Norton and the whole Yale cabal.

CARLISLE

I work hard for Pike.

SIDNEY

Has nothing to do with work. Lesson #1: Cover your ass. Lesson #2: Cross Pike and you're history.

(Aside)

I don't know how you got this far.

CARLISLE

Don't you care about what's going on?

SIDNEY

Of course, I care. But I don't pretend I can put the whole mess right in a week. I'm not acting surprised that the powers-that-be want to squash me like a bug.

CARLISLE

Some big F.D.S. radical you turned out to be.

SIDNEY

That's S.D.S., Students for a Democratic Society.

CARLISLE

Whatever.

SIDNEY

I'm a bureaucrat.

CARLISLE

No, you're not.

SIDNEY

Yes, I am. Do you have an exit strategy?

CARLISLE

I'll tough it out.

SIDNEY

Hmm.

CARLISLE

If they're watering down high-level waste, I want to know.

SIDNEY

What do Stanford's notes say?

CARLISLE

Wait a minute...

(scrambling through her briefcase)

SIDNEY

(Disbelief)
You're not carrying them?

CARLISLE

I didn't trust leaving them in the safe. I spoke to him yesterday.

SIDNEY

Who?

CARLISLE

Stanford. I needed confirmation that I wasn't... that he was telling the truth. His notes were seized along with the appraisals. It's a coincidence we ended up with them.

SIDNEY

And?

CARLISLE

He's working with the Senate on more hearings.

SIDNEY

So the Senate side already had the information... What else did he say?

CARLISLE

He's teaching math part-time at a community college in Georgia... and driving for Pizza Hut. I didn't say anything the Committee didn't already know.

SIDNEY

But you admitted it for the first time... Now they've got it all in easy Q&A format, thanks to our superior job on the questions.

CARLISLE

I'd better see the Inspector General.

SIDNEY

Can't hurt at this point. Work that exit strategy, kiddo.
(CARLISLE and SIDNEY exit in opposite directions)

Scene 4: The Showdown

(The next morning in the Secretary's office. PIKE and WARREN are reviewing the newspaper.)

PIKE

I told you to bury those appraisals!

WARREN

Her deputy has his own sources. I'll see if he can be transferred...

PIKE

Listen. Congress got a taste of what they were after yesterday. They'll be back. We're going to ignore them. Something else will come along and they'll go sniffing after that. I want you to lock down this Department, do you understand? Leave her staff alone. I'll take care of Carlisle and that should shut down the leaks. As for mopping up, when that committee calls the next hearing, you go up there with Dupres.

WARREN

Yes, sir.

Sir, we've never had any problems with Carlisle's office before.

PIKE

Putting Carlisle on this was supposed to buy us time. We need time. Nothing can endanger the program or the re-election.

(The intercom buzzes. WARREN picks it up)

WARREN

Send her in.

(He hangs up)

She's here.

(CARLISLE enters)

CARLISLE

Good morning.

PIKE

Seen today's paper?

CARLISLE

Yes, sir.

PIKE

I'm disappointed in you, Carlisle. You've got a leak in your office the size of the Titanic. We're going to investigate.

CARLISLE

How do you know it's not coming from the plant or DP?

PIKE

The Committee had your questions.

CARLISLE

The hearing could have some beneficial consequences. They'll see we're cooperating instead of stonewalling. We can contain any damage. I'll write the responses and call the committee...

PIKE

You've been a dedicated public servant, Carlisle.

(He polishes the photograph of himself and the President on the credenza)

I thought we wanted the same thing for this country and this Department. And maybe we do, but if you're under investigation, you're going to be completely ineffective. You see my problem?

CARLISLE

No.

PIKE

You're going to resign to spend more time with your family.

CARLISLE

I'm not married.

PIKE

Then you're resigning for personal reasons. Health concerns.

CARLISLE

Are you firing me?

PIKE

We hope your affair with a certain reporter won't be made public. Embarrassing. It could jeopardize your security clearance.

CARLISLE

I'm not having an affair with him.

PIKE

Whatever you want to call it.

CARLISLE

I'm not calling it anything.

(To WARREN)

Is this your doing?

(She picks up the newspapers and reads)

"Carlisle Spence, Acting Assistant Secretary of Energy, testified that, quote, if the storage tanks were failing, the number of contamination incidents would increase, close quote."

(Tosses the newspaper back on the conference table)

I don't understand what's so heretical about that. It's the truth.

PIKE

You don't know the full story.

CARLISLE

No, I don't. Why don't I know the full story? Why did you send me up there like a monkey? Why didn't you tell me about the IG's investigation?

PIKE

"Lo there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black, and the moon became as blood and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth."

CARLISLE

Mr. Secretary, we're supposed to be a scientific agency. Good science doesn't punish people when they challenge the facts. It doesn't deny evidence. But that's what we did with Stanford. I assume you know about his appraisals at Savannah River?

(silence)

Why didn't you tell me about the appraisals? You let me go before that committee blind.

PIKE

You've talked to a man who was fired from his job for poor performance. You've read a few memos and now you think you know everything about Defense Programs. Part of our mission is to produce the nuclear material for our Armed Forces. Could we do that if we stopped to investigate every squeaky wheel in the system, every miniscule rule violation?

CARLISLE

I'm not talking about miniscule rule violations. We're covering up major environmental and health problems. People will die because of what we're allowing to happen. The Agency's a doormat the plant contractors wipe their feet on. National security *is* being threatened – by the rationale we've used for forty years to keep the weapons plants unregulated. Americans are the ones being hurt, not Russians.

PIKE

That's forty years of peace.

CARLISLE

You wouldn't say that if you'd fought in Vietnam.

PIKE

I won't tolerate extremists in my weapons program!

CARLISLE

It's not your weapons program. And don't characterize me like that. We're increasing plutonium production. We're making it like there's no tomorrow. We don't need more nuclear weapons.

PIKE

We're maintaining production...

CARLISLE

Don't lie. We're increasing production. We've got years' worth of nuclear material. We're like pack-rats with the stuff, in spite of the fact that we don't have anywhere to put the waste and any way to make it less than brutally harmful.

I know you're trying to change the plutonium criteria. It's bad science and bad law. You're a lawyer. We know we're hurting people. Can you imagine the liability that puts us under? We know there are going to be *thousands* of health claims against us in the decades to come.

PIKE

There's no liability issue. We can't be prosecuted and neither can the plant contractors. There's a limited amount of money, Carlisle. If we do the kind of monitoring and clean-up you're suggesting, there'll be no money left for anything else. Supercollider, renewables research, conservation, all cut.

CARLISLE

That's nonsense. If there was an explosion at Savannah River and a major contamination tomorrow, we'd find the money to clean it up. We'd have to.

PIKE

That's right, and as long as the waste only affects a few people, there won't be a crisis, and Congress won't appropriate the money. I'm running our programs in a balanced way. I've broken no laws. If you think you could do better, and you can convince Congress and the President to let you try, be my guest.

CARLISLE

I'm not positive you haven't broken the law. Even if you haven't, it's time we dealt with the consequences of what we're doing. Dupres says they're running Savannah River using industry best practices. If that's true, why do they need to hide behind immunity and self-regulation? Impartial experts should look at what we're doing. If there's nothing to worry about, there's no need to hide.

PIKE

Obviously, people have been trying to deceive you.

CARLISLE

I haven't been deceived. We're calling the most deadly poison known to man "the particle problem." It's not a speck of dust caught in your eye. It's a poison getting stuck in the lungs of employees and residents who live downwind. Giving them leukemia and kidney cancer, killing them ten, fifteen years after they're exposed. It's... it's a terrible poison.

(choking up)

Don't you know the tanks are leaking like sieves? I've seen them—they're 30 feet deep and so corroded, they can never be moved. They're explosive. There could be a crisis soon.

PIKE

"... and the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall unto earth, and out of the bottomless pit arose the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened."

CARLISLE

What if your children or grandchildren lived on 'Death Mile' near Hanford?

PIKE

I'd move them.

CARLISLE

What if you couldn't? Or didn't want to? Not everyone wants to see his hometown turned into a "National Sacrifice Area."

(At the window)

We think we can control the forces of life and death. We don't. They control us.

PIKE

"And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

CARLISLE

What are you saying? That nuclear devastation is God's will for us? I don't believe even *you* believe that.

PIKE

I believe the Old Man's going to re-elected. I believe we must secure our Nation with a strong defense that includes nuclear weapons. And I believe that's what the American people want. They're not interested in nuclear waste disposal; they want prosperity and security and cheap gas and jobs. Then they're happy.

CARLISLE

Lots of people are interested. Congress is interested. So's the press.

PIKE

Carlisle, you're free to resign. If not, there'll be an investigation that will mar your record no matter how it turns out. I promise you, you'll never get another clearance. You can leave with your record in tact. In fact, I'd like to give you an Award for Outstanding Service, and I mean outstanding. You've done excellent work for the Department during your tenure.

CARLISLE

Don't patronize me.

PIKE

Take a few hours to think it over. Warren, suspend all the clearances in Carlisle's office and seal her safe.

WARREN

Ms. Spence would never divulge classified information, sir.

PIKE

I'm not asking your opinion.

WARREN

Yes, sir.

PIKE

Watch her every minute she's in the building. And take her badge when she leaves. And that's an order.

WARREN

Yes, sir.

PIKE

I'm sorry it's turned out this way, Carlisle. No hard feelings.

(He extends his hand. She ignores it. As she passes the credenza on her way out, she picks up the photograph of the Secretary and the President and turns it face down)

CARLISLE

None on my part.

Scene 5: Postmortem

(Three months later in a park in Washington, D. C. SIDNEY enters and waits. CARLISLE enters wearing jeans and a jacket, looking less formal. She watches him a moment before he sees her)

Hey. CARLISLE

Hey, there. SIDNEY

Coffee? CARLISLE

Can't. SIDNEY

Sidney, I'm sorry. CARLISLE

For what? SIDNEY

CARLISLE
For not calling you back. Or writing back to you. I thought it was best that way.

How's that? SIDNEY

CARLISLE
I didn't want you tarred with the same brush I was...

SIDNEY
Thanks, thanks a lot. Like I care about that? It's a free country, kiddo, you do what you want. You want to head into the unknown with no forwarding address, that's your business.

CARLISLE
Things needed to cool down before I contacted you. It was for your own good!

SIDNEY
Thank, Mom!

CARLISLE

How... How're things at the office?

(silence)

I saw you got a new AS. What's her name, Grodke? How's she working out?

SIDNEY

She's an idiot with fluffy hair.

CARLISLE

I'm sorry to hear that. For both of you.

(Small smile from SIDNEY)

I've... I've been traveling some, since you asked.

SIDNEY

Yeah?

CARLISLE

Touring the Nuclear Diaspora: Hanford, Fernold, and Savannah River. Meeting people, talking.

SIDNEY

Oak Ridge?

CARLISLE

No. Oak Ridge makes me too sad.

Hey, I met Stanford last month. He's teaching full time now. Got rid of the pizza delivery gig. I told him I might take it over.

SIDNEY

You working?

CARLISLE

No yet. I'd like to consult... I sort of besmirched my name around town. The environmental folks don't trust me because I was, technically, a Reagan appointee. I don't want to go back into the Administration even if they'd take me, which they won't.

SIDNEY

What about your law firm?

CARLISLE

I'm no longer a good fit for the petroleum trade, apparently.

SIDNEY

You took the fall, kiddo.

CARLISLE.

Hey. It was a good party while it lasted. Wasn't it?

SIDNEY

Not bad.

CARLISLE

God, you're a tough customer.

SIDNEY

You're a slow learner but I like your style.

CARLISLE

High praise!

SIDNEY

You're welcome.

CARLISLE

So.

SIDNEY

Glad to see you're still alive. Thanks for dropping by. Come again.

(SIDNEY walks away)

CARLISLE

Sidney, wait up.

(He turns)

I have something to tell you.

(silence)

For what it's worth, I leaked the questions.

SIDNEY

Sure. What questions?

CARLISLE

The dirty questions, to the Committee.

SIDNEY

That son-of-a-bitch Tonopah took them. By the way, I saw him a few weeks ago, trying to get

back in. Creep.

CARLISLE

He got a book deal, did you hear that?

Did you hear me?

SIDNEY

You don't have to cover for him. I never understood what you saw in that guy, what a slime ball... looked like a Sicilian gigolo to me. No accounting for bad taste.

CARLISLE

I – gave – Congresswoman Alvarez – the dirty questions. I handed them to her in the parking lot at 7 AM the day of the hearing.

SIDNEY

Bull.

CARLISLE

What do I have to do, show you footage?

SIDNEY

You serious?

(silence)

Why?

CARLISLE

I saw a narrow moment when I could do something. I could potentially help hundreds of people I'd never met. It reminded me of my lead paint days in VISTA. Once I got the idea in my head, it wouldn't go away.

Maybe one day, they'll pass a law to compensate the people for what we've done to them. Maybe EPA or the NRC will get through the gates before it's too late. Maybe we'll even give up nuclear weapons all together. We can't use them. We don't need them.

SIDNEY

And here I thought you were just an airhead.

CARLISLE

You did not!

SIDNEY

Turns out you've got a gut and a conscience. Amazing!

CARLISLE

You're still talking down to me.

I thought it would be harder than it was. I thought I'd agonize over it but... I wondered what my father would think, Mr. Big Bomb himself... He'd probably tell them to line me up and shoot me for treason. He was a twisted individual. He made his choices and I have to make mine.

I mean, do I want to be a person who forgets what she's seen and what she knows is true? Who plays Poodle to Pike's Ringmaster? Or do I want to be a big girl in a tough world and grab the moment that's offered me?

It's not really that hard a question to answer.

Is it?

(CARLISLE and SIDNEY freeze. Lights out.)

END OF PLAY