

Liebe Lise

written by

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EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Rain pours. The Figure of a man wearing a long overcoat and a top hat moves purposely through the darkness.

He passes evenly spaced trees, one after another, well-heeled shoes rhythmically click-clacking on the wet brick of the sidewalk below.

He turns into a long walkway leading to the main doors of a tall, broad building, passing a sign that reads: *Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Chemie*.

SUPERIMPOSE: BERLIN, MARCH 12th, 1938.

The Man removes his hat with weary hands as he reaches the awning.

He throws open the door and hurries through. It slams shut behind him.

The rain continues.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Footsteps.

At the end of a dark hallway, a door stands slightly ajar, silhouetted by light from beyond. The shadowed figure approaches it.

INT. MEITNER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Two tall stacks of paper sit on a desk, the left higher than the right.

Beyond the stacks, LISE MEITNER (59, studious) sits poring over a paper. She scribbles notes.

Knocks at the door. Lise barely glances up.

LISE

Come in.

OTTO HAHN (58, with bushy eyebrows framed by enormous ears) peeks around the door.

HAHN

Busy?

LISE

Just notes. You're here late.

HAHN

Not the only one, I see.

Lise points towards the papers.

LISE

At least I have a reason.

Water drips from Hahn's sleeve to the floor as he sits in a chair across the desk from Lise.

LISE (CONT'D)

Have you been out? You must be freezing!

HAHN

Just for a little while.  
Reorganizing.

LISE

(reburied in her notes)  
What are you organizing?

Hahn turns away, gazing around the utilitarian office. He moves towards shelves on the wall, one of photos and one of award plaques.

HAHN

Correspondence for the institute.  
Funding paperwork. Government...  
dealings. The usual...

Hahn trails off, nervously tapping his hat against the diamond Ring on his hand.

His eyes flit towards a photo of 14 physicists, with younger images of Lise and Hahn near the center of the group. He releases a nostalgic sniff of a chuckle.

Lise's attention is piqued. She finally raises her eyes off of the page, staring at the back of Hahn's head anxiously.

HAHN (CONT'D)

"Bigwig-free Colloquium."

Hahn picks up the photo.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Have you heard from Niels lately?

A weak smile crosses Lise's face.

LISE  
Not much. Second hand from my  
nephew mostly.

HAHN  
Good. And he is well?

LISE  
Seems so.

HAHN  
Away from the madness...

Lise shuffles papers nervously.

LISE  
Is something the matter?

Hahn avoids eye contact, fidgeting with his ring.

HAHN  
The abominable neighbor. Hess is  
fussing.

LISE  
Nothing new then... What are the  
odds he goes back?

HAHN  
At this point I think it's likelier  
that he simply requests the  
directorship.

Lise chuckles. The grins fade fast. Hahn takes a deep breath.  
He opens and closes his mouth, trying to find words.

LISE  
Well... I really should be  
finishing these.

She moves a single page from the tall stack to the shorter  
one.

HAHN  
Anything worthwhile?

Lise flips through pages.

LISE  
It's not just the Curies now.  
Everyone's coming up with  
transuranic decay schemes that  
don't match...

(MORE)

LISE (CONT'D)  
Don't match ours, don't match each  
others'. Cambridge, Rome, Vienna,  
Berkley...

HAHN  
(joking)  
The world war of uranium.

Lise barely entertains the bad joke with a glance before  
scouring the next paper.

LISE  
Fritz is taking the night shift  
recording decay. I need to meet him  
in the morning. Did the uranium  
shipment come through?

HAHN  
It should be in tomorrow.

LISE  
Good. We'll need you back then.

Hahn smiles sadly. Lise glances up and catches the look.

LISE (CONT'D)  
What? What's that look? Are you  
trying to say you can't?

HAHN  
I have a meeting--

LISE  
Otto, we can't just delay... These  
things decay you know.

Hahn snorts.

HAHN  
It's with the money. Hörlein. Can't  
be helped.

He stands. Lise shakes her head, peeved.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
I'd gladly trade, you know. It's  
basically begging.

She starts to shoo him out of her office.

LISE  
Go on. Go on. Tell it to Edith.

HAHN

Edith! She wanted to let you know that we bought tickets to the opera. She wants you to come. Our Hanno will be going too.

LISE

When?

HAHN

Friday.

LISE

What's playing?

HAHN

Wagner. Twilight of the Gods.

LISE

Heavy.

HAHN

We can have beers before. Whisper about the costumes.

LISE

Better. Meet at yours?

Lise's attention slips back to the papers.

HAHN

Yes. Fantastic, I'll let her know--

LISE

After tomorrow though, we really will need you starting back up in the lab.

Hahn shifts his weight.

HAHN

Maybe I can stop by the lab in the afternoon. It shouldn't be too late by then to get a bit of real work done.

LISE

Real work will be done regardless.

HAHN

Good luck! On to a better tomorrow!

As he moves towards the door, he whistles a syncopated rendition of Beethoven's Violin concerto. He goofily spins through the doorway as Lise grins.

The door shuts. Silence falls. Lise finishes a final note on one paper, shakes her head, and moves on to the next.

INT. LISE MEITNER'S APARTMENT, BERLIN - DAWN

The corner of a desk features Lise's bound-paper AUSTRIAN PASSPORT with words clearly visible:

*Reisepass*

*Passeport*

*Republik Osterreich Republique D'Autriche*

Lise sits at her table, the heights of the two stacks from her midnight work switched over. She pores over a paper titled:

*"Sur les radioelements formes dans l'uranium irradie par les neutrons. Par IRENE CURIE et P. SAVITCH."*

A minimalist living room of a spacious one-bedroom flat surrounds her: a sofa, three chairs by a wooden table, the small desk space in the corner, and a kitchenette. Everything is clearly worn and well used.

Nearby, the window is covered in water droplets from a stormy dawn. The concerto continues.

A single egg begins to boil in water.

INT. NIELS BOHR'S OFFICE, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK - DAWN

A hand strikes a match, and lights a cigar. Orange flickers illuminate incredulous eyebrows.

The hand pulls over a pen and paper and writes the date at the top: "13. Marz 1938."

SUPERIMPOSE: Copenhagen, Denmark

NIELS BOHR (52, with combed back hair, greying around the temples, framing a large and friendly ovular face) reclines in a plush chair at his mahogany desk.

Bohr quietly smokes a cigar as he looks out the window over the quad at the University of Copenhagen's Institute of Theoretical Physics.

On the desk lies a morning newspaper.

Headline: *ANSCHLUSS - GERMANY ANNEXES AUSTRIA*

BACK IN LISE'S APARTMENT

The water boils faster, violently pushing the single egg around the pot.

Lise still pores over the scientific paper.

She flips a page, scanning through the bottom of an updated periodic table featuring atomic symbols of elements with rising numbers until Uranium - U (92). Beyond, a gap separates a string of the Transuranic elements numbering 93 and above, clearly splitting them off from those numbered below.

The boiling egg's shell cracks. Lise glances up at the clock and hurriedly stands to turn off the stove.

She pours out the boiling water into the sink. The rising steam envelops her, billowing upward in a mushroom cloud.

Lise picks up the single egg with a cloth. Seeing the crack, she inspects it, running her fingernail along a jagged line. A thin wisp of steam rises from the opening. She wraps and pockets the egg.

Lise pulls on an overcoat, picks up a briefcase, and grabs a pack of cigarettes as she heads to the door.

INT. NIELS BOHR'S OFFICE, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK - DAWN

Niels gazes through thick smoke at a copy of the framed photograph from Lise's office.

ROBERT FRISCH (30s, clean-cut) knocks on the open door.

Niels turns and gives a valiant attempt at a smile as he gestures towards the newspaper.

EXT. LISE'S APARTMENT, BERLIN - DAY

Lise hurries out of her small apartment building towards the street.

KURT HESS (49, bespectacled, with a low top-hat and a soft chin) stands by the building's mailbox, reading a morning newspaper.

LISE  
Good morning Kurt.

Lise curtly nods his way as she turns past him, but Hess pointedly ignores her.

LISE (CONT'D)  
See you at the institute.

Still no response. Lise shakes her head as she walks down the street towards the tall building of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Chemistry, just in sight a block away

Hess's eyes follow her.

A single loud motor car buzzes down the otherwise idyllic street. The eagle eyes of a Nazi Police Officer - the INTERROGATOR - glance towards Lise as he drives past.

She barely registers the car, turns to look both ways, and crosses the street towards the institute.

Lise Meitner walks along a long brick path from the boulevard to the doors, past the sign that reads "Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Chemie."

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Lise marches down the hallway, the reverberating martial rhythm of her footsteps reminiscent of invading infantry.

Lise walks to the end of an empty hallway and disappears past a door labeled LABORATORIUM MEITNER - TRANSURANICS.

Back at the entrance of the hallway, the main door opens. Kurt Hess enters, gazes hard down the empty corridor towards Meitner's lab, and turns to climb the stairs.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, KAISER WILHELM INSTITUTE - DAY

A dozen men, dressed in a mixture of lab coats, professorial attire, and baggy Nazi brownshirts, lounge around a conference room eating a celebratory breakfast spread.

Hands grab at bread rolls, marmalade, jam, cheeses, hams, salami, and honey.

Kurt Hess enters, nodding and smirking slightly to peers but mostly avoiding eye contact as he makes his way to the bread rolls.

GEORG GRAUE (30s, wearing a Nazi brownshirt), pops open a bottle of champagne to a couple scattered cheers. Hess jumps at the noise. Graue laughs, slaps Hess on the back, and pours himself a glass.

GRAUE  
Pass it around!  
(to Hess)  
You look like you could use a  
little loosening up.

HESS  
I don't know if it is appropriate--

GRAUE  
Has this ever happened in your life  
before?

Graue pours more glasses as he waits for a response.

HESS  
Has what happened?

Graue rolls his eyes in disbelief.

GRAUE  
(mocking)  
A day when you could relax and  
celebrate for one moment? Have a  
drink!

Graue hands out a number of glasses to eager recipients and raises his own.

GRAUE (CONT'D)  
Anschluss! May one people join  
together forever!

Hess gives a simpering smile and accepts a glass.

INT. MEITNER LAB, MEASURING ROOM - DAY

Downstairs from the celebration, Lise, now in a lab coat, approaches FRITZ STRASSMANN (36, balding, meticulous), who sits staring blankly at a table full of scientific instruments: a collection of well-ordered wires, dark-shaded bulbs, and small metallic tubes. His pale, clammy face belies his sleepless night.

LISE  
Good morning Fritz. Anything  
unusual?

Fritz shakes his head.

STRASSMANN

Twenty-three minute half-lives,  
clockwork.

LISE

Good, thanks. I've got it covered.  
Get some sleep. Otto might be by  
later, maybe when you're back.

Strassmann nods and departs stiffly.

Laughter and loud banging from the celebration upstairs  
interrupt her focus. She glances at the ceiling, annoyed.

BACK UPSTAIRS

Graue strikes a match, but pauses just before the flame meets  
the cigarette. Hess stares at him with an unsettling  
intensity.

Graue motions as if to offer the still-lit match to Hess, who  
scoffs humorlessly without breaking eye-contact.

HESS

The Fuhrer is against it.

GRAUE

We still have our disagreements now  
and then.

Hess stiffens. A man next to Graue laughs nervously. A couple  
of heads turn.

The match in Graue's hand burns closer and closer to his  
fingers. Moments before the flame reaches his skin, Graue  
uses it to light the cigarette and deftly flicks the match  
out.

Hess blinks unsettlingly. He leans forward and lifts a bottle  
of champagne from the table to pour another glass for  
himself. The last drops of the bottle fall in one by one,  
sending ripples across the surface of the liquid.

The other conversations fall to murmurs as more heads turn.  
Graue raises his eyebrows.

Hess raises his glass for another toast.

HESS

A turning point for Germany. May it  
be for our institute as well.

Some nods from nearby listeners. Graue blinks and hides a smirk.

GRAUE

Ours?

Hess turns and stares towards Graue with venomous eyes. He pauses to take a long sip from his champagne.

HESS

There is one still among us... But it seems the Director's protection of Lise Meitner may soon be at an end. The Jewess endangers our institute.

INT. OTTO HAHN'S OFFICE - DAY

HAHN

Hess said that?

Hahn stands over his desk, with a nameplate reading DIREKTOR - KAISER WILHELM INSTITUTE FÜR CHEMIE.

Graue, still in his baggy brownshirt uniform, sits across from him, nodding.

HAHN (CONT'D)

One would think a guest would still have a veneer of respect.

GRAUE

Hess is an... ambitious man. He barely even hides it now.

Graue glances towards the Direktor name plate. Hahn follows his gaze and furrows his brow.

HAHN

Is that what bothers you about all this?

GRAUE

Well, yes.

HAHN

And Lise?

Graue pauses warily. He opens and closes his mouth before speaking carefully chosen words.

GRAUE

Perhaps a scientist of her...  
caliber might be better situated  
elsewhere.

HAHN

Caliber?

Hahn doesn't want an answer. He shakes his head and looks  
away, out the window.

GRAUE

Institutional funding has been put  
in jeopardy for such  
transgressions. This affects all of  
us.

Hahn doesn't meet Graue's gaze. Graue shifts in his chair.

HAHN

Thank you for telling me.

GRAUE

What will you do?

HAHN

Perhaps we should talk some other  
time.

Graue opens his mouth, but thinks better of responding. He  
stands to accept his dismissal.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MEITNER LAB - DAY

Hahn walks towards the door to the Meitner lab. He reaches  
out as though to open it, but pauses, seems to think better  
of it, and heads towards the exit instead.

As he reaches the exit of the building, Kurt Hess appears at  
the bottom of the stairwell, clutching a sealed envelope. The  
two men nod coldly towards one another as they depart the  
building nearly side-by-side, continuing...

OUT OF THE BUILDING

They pause for a moment as they reach the end of the walkway  
to the road. Hess smirks as he taps the sealed letter against  
an open hand, then saunters off down the sidewalk.

Hahn stares after him for a moment, worried, then turns in  
the other direction.

INT. HEINRICH HÖRLEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

HEINRICH HÖRLEIN (55, bespectacled, surprisingly prominent jowls on an otherwise thin face), sits, adjusting a golden watch on his wrist. Sunlight slants in to an opulent, spacious office.

HÖRLEIN

This was said by Kurt Hess?

HAHN

Yes.

HÖRLEIN

Tell me... How does Lise Meitner still have her position?

Hahn slowly sinks back into his chair, eyes cast down.

HAHN

Well... First it was Front Line Fighter Privilege. The Hindenberg exception until Hindenberg died. She worked X-rays on the eastern front in the war. So that lasted for a little while, but then they removed her from the public university. But, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, being, of course, privately funded--

HÖRLEIN

Ah. So it's us.

HAHN

Well, if it is in IG Farben's interest--

HÖRLEIN

These grants are not officially IG Farben--

HAHN

Pardon me. If it is in the Emil Fischer Foundation's interest, it would be greatly beneficial to the institute if some way could be found for her to continue her work undisturbed. Her Austrian citizenship allowed her to work--

HÖRLEIN

Through the cracks.

Hörlein leans forward.

HÖRLEIN (CONT'D)

No one important has noticed yet?

HAHN

It isn't a close secret...

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Kurt Hess reaches the front of a short line. He wordlessly hands over an envelope to a surly postal worker behind the desk. The envelope is addressed to the Ministry of Education.

HÖRLEIN (V.O.)

It is not advisable for us to be involved in financing perceived undesirable groups or individuals. Hess, disagreeable though he may be, is right. You endanger the whole institute for one person.

BACK IN HÖRLEIN'S OFFICE

HAHN

If there were a way for her funding to come from a separate source--

HÖRLEIN

That is irrelevant. It's that she's there. Hess doesn't like it. I don't like it. Soon, someone else won't like it. If the Ministry of Education hears they will shut us down.

Hahn sits in silence, defeated.

HÖRLEIN (CONT'D)

Perhaps she could continue to work unofficially.

Hahn nods bitterly.

HÖRLEIN (CONT'D)

Nothing more can be done, except protect against the inevitable.

(shrugging)

She might resign from her position.

Hahn rises to leave.

HAHN  
 (grimacing)  
 I'm sure she will take that very well.

HÖRLEIN  
 Would you rather the whole institute shut down? Or you thrown out, and Hess in charge? Everyone would be out...

HAHN  
 Thank you for your time.

Hahn looks back towards Hörlein and nods curtly, then closes the door behind him.

EXT. THIEL PARK - DUSK

Lise walks with EDITH HAHN (51, carrying a sketchbook) by a pond.

LISE  
 He wouldn't listen?

EDITH  
 You could see how a boy that age would be. Even Hanno. He just kept insisting that he didn't want to hear our nagging. All he wants to do is theater.

LISE  
 And he starts upper-levels in the fall?

EDITH  
 Yes. Arndt-Gymnasium Dahlem.

LISE  
 That can be a difficult time.

Edith nods, carefully watching Lise's expression.

EDITH  
 It's good to see you outside.

LISE  
 (surprised)  
 Why do you say that? I'm here almost every day.

EDITH

I know, it's just, with the hours I hear you're at the lab--

LISE

(deflecting, joking)

It would be easier if your husband would pull his weight a bit more. He said he'd start working in the lab again today. No appearance.

Edith laughs.

EDITH

I suppose meetings run long with the news... How is it?

LISE

How is what?

Edith almost rolls her eyes.

EDITH

The news. About Austria. How are you?

Lise gazes out over the smooth pond. A pair of swans gracefully glides between reeds together.

EDITH (CONT'D)

What does it mean for you?

LISE

I don't know.

EDITH

Have you thought about it?

LISE

Well, I've only just heard.

EDITH

Not just... I mean in general. Have you thought about elsewhere?

Lise tries to scoff at the idea, but sighs instead.

LISE

A few years ago it never would have crossed my mind. And now... I'm getting older, Edith. Almost 60. This is my home. Everything I need is here. Everything I know. Even with the troubles--

EDITH

There are other places to live--

LISE

My work is here. Anywhere else  
would negate the pension--

EDITH

We could help if you need. And  
perhaps Niels Bohr could find a  
place for you to continue--

LISE

It's not just me.

Lise stops and gathers her thoughts.

LISE (CONT'D)

I can only do so much. Only so much  
on my own.

EDITH

Would it have to be on your own? If  
it were Copenhagen you would be  
with your nephew Robert Frisch, and  
Georg von Hevesy, and that young  
lady... Hilde?

LISE

Hilde Levi?

EDITH

Yes... Whatever happened to her and  
Hans Bethe?

LISE

He broke off the engagement. Said  
his mother did not want him to  
marry a Jewish girl.

EDITH

His mother? Isn't she--

LISE

Jewish, yes. Niels doesn't invite  
Bethe to his institute anymore.

EDITH

Well, the point is that you would  
have friends there. Niels could  
find you a place to work. And you  
would be safe.

LISE  
 This is my home, Edith. Angry men  
 will shout as they may. They all  
 pass by.

Lise trails off. Edith waits pityingly.

LISE (CONT'D)  
 With Otto running the Chemistry  
 Institute,  
 (pausing, unconvinced)  
 the institute will keep me safe.

EDITH  
 You know, Lise, Otto cares for you  
 very much.

LISE  
 I know.

EDITH  
 As do I.

LISE  
 (quieter)  
 I know.

EDITH  
 These things don't just get better  
 by themselves.

LISE  
 (hopelessly)  
 Perhaps. Perhaps the election will  
 bring some hope.

EDITH  
 Perhaps...

Edith brightens visibly at the thought, a spring returning to  
 her step.

EDITH (CONT'D)  
 I still get so excited. I remember  
 when I would go with Otto and wait  
 outside... It is wonderful to feel  
 like I have a voice, though he says  
 that it's no use this time. I say  
 it always matters. It always  
 matters to show up.

Lise smiles. The two continue walking, staring out at the  
 waving reeds above the water.

EDITH (CONT'D)  
It is beautiful, isn't it?

INT. HALLWAY, KWI - NIGHT

Hahn walks down a hallway lined with posters of published physics experiments.

He stops at the door for Laboratorium Meitner - Transuranics, knocks quietly, then lets himself in.

INT. MEITNER LAB, MEASURING ROOM - NIGHT

Lise sits typing on a typewriter, stopping occasionally to glance down at a stack of hand-written notes. Hahn clears his throat as he approaches.

HAHN  
Lise..

LISE  
I expected you earlier, but I guess  
it is still technically today. Can  
we review this?

She gestures towards the half-typed data manuscript.

Hahn pauses. Lise waits, eyebrows raised.

HAHN  
(nervously)  
I spoke with Hörlein. Our position  
has changed. Your position. You are  
not to come to the institute  
anymore. At least until all this  
blows over.

LISE  
And what did you say?

Hahn shifts his weight. Lise's eyes grow large with realization.

LISE (CONT'D)  
What did you say?

HAHN  
There was nothing.. nothing to be  
said.

LISE

Nothing to be said? Thirty years of  
work, and nothing to be said?

HAHN

I tried to find a way--

Lise numbly pulls the half-finished page out of her typewriter, collects her belongings, and brushes past Hahn into the dark hallway.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Lise marches through rain, head down.

INT. VILLA APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lise enters the building, soaked by rain. She opens her mailbox and pulls out two letters. On one envelope is written Paul Scherrer, ETH Technical Institute, Zurich, Switzerland. Lise opens it.

*Liebe Lise, Enclosed is an official invitation from Zurich for you to lecture before the end of the month. I hope this letter finds you in good standing, and urge you to consider a series of lectures in Switzerland..*

Lise opens the second letter from Niels Bohr, Institute of Theoretical Physics, Copenhagen, Denmark.

*Liebe Lise, Enclosed is an official invitation to host a lecture series on transuranics in Copenhagen during April or at your convenience..*

She stuffs the letters unceremoniously in her coat pocket.

INT. LISE MEITNER'S APARTMENT, BERLIN - DAWN

A single egg rests in boiling water.

Lise sits, staring at the window. Water droplets drip down.

She stands. Turns off the stove. Pours out the water. Wraps the egg. Grabs her briefcase.

She's out the door.

EXT. LISE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lise cruises down the front steps and towards the street. Kurt Hess peers through his apartment window at Lise's retreating figure.

INT. BOSCH'S OFFICE - DAY

CARL BOSCH (63, drooping jowls) sits behind a grand oak desk, peering over a newspaper. Knocks ring out from the door.

BOSCH

Come in!

Lise enters carrying a briefcase.

BOSCH (CONT'D)

Lise! How are you doing?

LISE

I'm... I'm fine thank you. I hope you are well.

BOSCH

As well as one can be. What brings you here?

LISE

I'd like your advice on a situation. And perhaps your help.

Bosch raises his eyebrows.

BOSCH

I'll see what I can do. What is the issue?

Lise sits and opens her briefcase, rifling through it.

LISE

I have work...

She pulls out papers to lay them out on the desk. Bosch's brow furrows, as Lise sighs heavily.

LISE (CONT'D)

It's not finished yet. But I have worked on this project for four years. Transuranics. Parsing out the elements created from neutron bombardment of Uranium.

BOSCH  
I know, I've seen--

LISE  
And now I am supposed to simply  
abandon it.

Bosch sits in silence. Reality dawns on him.

LISE (CONT'D)  
Did you know?

BOSCH  
They asked you to leave?

LISE  
Yes.

BOSCH  
Who?

LISE  
Otto.

BOSCH  
Otto?

LISE  
Just yesterday.

BOSCH  
Otto asked you to leave?

Lise struggles to acknowledge it.

LISE  
Yes.

Bosch sits in silence, pensive.

BOSCH  
Did he explain?

LISE  
He said that Horlein... Horlein told  
him it must be done.

Bosch perks up at this, curious.

LISE (CONT'D)  
If there is any way--

BOSCH  
Of course there's a way.

He gestures towards the papers that Lise half spread across his desk.

BOSCH (CONT'D)  
You keep working. I can talk to Hörlein.

Lise smiles.

INT. HALLWAY, KAISER WILHELM INSTITUTE FOR CHEMISTRY - DAY

Lise walks defiantly down the hallway towards her lab. Hahn appears from around the corner, haggard.

HAHN  
(surprised)  
Lise! I thought--

LISE  
The thorium irradiation results need to be written up.

Lise passes by Hahn, briefly staring him down, then sweeping past. Hahn turns, simultaneously powerless to stop her and pitying her situation.

LISE (CONT'D)  
Someone needs to write it.

Lise enters the lab, closing the door behind her.

INT. MEITNER LAB - DUSK

Lise holds a clipboard in one hand as she copies down a long elemental decay scheme from the Curie's paper onto a blackboard.

A knock on the door behind her interrupts her focus.

LISE  
I'm in the middle of something right now.

The door creaks open. Hahn stands there.

HAHN  
Bosch called me in.

Lise doesn't respond, angrily swiping the chalk harder against the blackboard.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
He called Hörlein. And Hörlein called me. He said he had a change of heart.

LISE  
What does that mean?

HAHN  
He said you could stay.

Lise closes her eyes.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
For now at least. Is there anything you need?

LISE  
No.

Chastened, Hahn turns to go.

LISE (CONT'D)  
An apology would be nice.

HAHN  
Lise, I...

Lise waits.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
I tried to convince Hörlein.

LISE  
And yet, Bosch managed that.

The admonition hangs in the air.

LISE (CONT'D)  
Perhaps some other time would be better to speak again.

HAHN  
(nervously)  
Oh, and Edith wanted me to remind you, the opera is tonight. Would you still like to come with us?

Without turning, Lise responds flatly.

LISE  
Of course.

Hahn nods and leaves, shutting the door behind him.

Alone, Lise stares at the door for a moment. Then back to work.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Edith sits between Lise and Otto with HANNO (16) beside his father. The silence is palpable.

Lise stares furiously out the window, while Otto stares down at his feet in shame. Edith glances between them.

EDITH  
Chocolate?

She offers a bar to Lise. Lise shakes her head. Edith takes a bite instead.

EDITH (CONT'D)  
It's too bad that your friend  
Elisabeth couldn't make it.

Lise nods.

LISE  
Yes. Yes it is.

EDITH  
Have you ever seen Wagner before?

LISE  
Some. Not *Twilight of the Gods*  
though.

EDITH  
Oh, it's to die for!

Hahn glances over towards Lise. For a moment, their eyes connect, hers masking pain and fury, his showing plain sorrow and shame. Hahn can't sustain the contact.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Now near the back rows of an Opera house upper balcony, Edith still sits between Lise and Otto, whose faces are somewhat softened.

The final part of Wagner's Ring cycle, *Twilight of the Gods*, plays the end of its final act on stage below. Fire engulfs the stage, signaling the end of the world.

INT. HAHNS' PARLOR - NIGHT

The Hahns enter through their front door.

Otto begins to take off his hat, but pauses as he sees Edith's face.

EDITH  
(curtly)  
Lise is not to come to the  
institute anymore?

HAHN  
(carefully)  
I did tell you that--

EDITH  
You said there was a technical  
issue regarding the legality of her  
position.

HAHN  
(moving forward)  
Edith--

EDITH  
She came here and I acted like  
things were normal--

HAHN  
That is how we should act--

EDITH  
How we should?! It's embarrassing!

Silence.

HAHN  
It's more complicated than that--

EDITH  
How?

HAHN  
Hörlein reapproved her.

EDITH  
So she's back?

HAHN

At the moment, yes.

Edith freezes. Now she understands. Hahn sees this.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Yes. And there are some at the institute who look less favorably on that. It's only a matter of time--

EDITH

She's stuck. We're all stuck.

Edith sits down, stunned and despairing. Hahn moves forward to sit beside her.

HAHN

We're not stuck.

EDITH

Then what? What can we do?

Hahn reaches out to comfort Edith.

EDITH (CONT'D)

I just thought we could do more.

Hahn says nothing. They hold each other in silence.

INT. VOTING STATION - DAY

Edith opens a door. Over the door, there is a banner; "Grossdeutschland, JA! am 10. April"

The voting station is nearly empty. Edith moves to the back of a very short line.

VOTING OFFICIAL

Identification?

The man in front of Edith shows his ID and receives a ballot, moving away. Edith moves forward.

VOTING OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Identification?

Edith shows her identification. The Voting Official takes it for a moment and inspects it. He hands it back and passes Edith a ballot.

As Edith walks to a voting booth, a guard makes eye contact with her, almost glaring.

In the booth, Edith pulls out a pair of reading glasses. She reads for a moment then throws the ballot down in frustration.

She catches herself and surreptitiously glances around. The guard is still watching her. She looks back at the ballot:

*"Do you approve of the reunification of Austria with the German Reich accomplished on 13 March 1938 and do you vote for the list of our Führer, Adolf Hitler?"*

Below the question is a large circle with "Ja" written above it. To the side is a much smaller circle, with "Nein".

Edith shuts her eyes for a moment, trying to block out the world. She opens them again... and marks "Ja".

INT. LARGE BANQUET HALL, HARNACK HAUS - NIGHT

MAX PLANCK (hunched, bald on the top of his head) celebrates his 80th birthday.

A large, immaculately-dressed crowd mills about, eating hors d'oeuvres and sipping champagne. The crowd includes many of the most influential physicists of all time, including Planck himself, ERWIN SCHRODINGER (51), and WERNER HEISENBERG (36).

Heisenberg jokes to a group.

HEISENBERG

So the mathematician sat down to eat with the Minister of Education, and the minister asks; "How is the state of mathematics in Göttingen now that it is free of Jews?" "Mathematics in Göttingen?", Hilbert replies, "There is really none any more."

Sad chuckles.

Lise sweeps through the crowd towards Max Planck, who stands with ADRIAAN FOKKER (50, Dutch, sporting a well kept goatee).

LISE

Happy birthday Max!

She holds forth a photo album.

MAX PLANCK

Lise! Thank you. What's this?

LISE

A present! Some small proof of the  
existence of time, perhaps.

Max Planck takes the album and opens it to a picture of Lise, Albert Einstein, Paul Ehrenfest, and Planck's children in their 20s, taken around a grand piano.

Planck turns the page. He looks down at a picture of the Planck family, when all four children were still alive and very young.

Planck looks for a long moment. Lise shifts uncertainly.

MAX PLANCK

Thank you. It is good to have such  
wonderful memories. I can tell,  
despite the silence, that the halls  
still remember sometimes..

Planck trails off in thought.

LISE

I hope you'll like it.

MAX PLANCK

I will.

He closes the album and gestures to introduce his friend.

MAX PLANCK (CONT'D)

You remember Adriaan Fokker from  
Leiden?

LISE

Of course! We met through Dirk  
Coster.

Fokker nods congenially.

MAX PLANCK

I heard there was some trouble  
regarding the Austrian issue..

LISE

(in denial, faltering)  
Yes, well, it should all be figured  
out soon.

MAX PLANCK

I should hope so. Excuse me, I see  
my son waving me over to join  
Debye, I think we may begin soon!

(MORE)

MAX PLANCK (CONT'D)

Thank you again for the  
photographs!

Max Planck moves stiffly away from the two.

FOKKER

He's a funny one.

LISE

Yes.

FOKKER

You've known him a long time?

LISE

Over 30 years now. He let me attend  
his lectures when I first  
arrived... He had never let a woman  
in before.

FOKKER

What was he speaking about, the  
trouble? The Austrian issue?

LISE

Oh, well... I am just having some  
bureaucratic issues. There is some  
confusion because I am an Austrian  
citi...(flustered, correcting  
herself) Was... an Austrian  
citizen.

FOKKER

I'm sorry to hear that. If you  
don't mind my asking, what are the  
issues?

LISE

I was born to a Jewish family... I  
don't keep the faith.

(explaining)

Baptized Lutheran... But you see,  
the race is all that matters.

FOKKER

Ah. I see.

LISE

Yes. So my position, documents,  
salary... All in limbo.

FOKKER

Indeed.

LISE  
 (nervously)  
 I'm sorry, I must say hello to some  
 old friends.

FOKKER  
 Of course!

Lise nods politely and walks past Fokker. Her face dissolves  
 into worry as she passes his shoulder.

Nearby, Hahn stands at the edge of a group and catches Lise's  
 movement out of the corner of his eye.

Kurt Hess appears suddenly at Hahn's shoulder.

HESS  
 You know, they were going to give  
 the Planck award to Fermi this  
 year.

HAHN  
 Yes, I heard that.

HESS  
 Do you know why they didn't?

HAHN  
 (annoyed)  
 Yes.

HESS  
 Yes... Because he is married to a  
 jew.

Hahn glances about, looking for a graceful way out of this.  
 He takes a sip of his champagne.

HAHN  
 How is your research going?

HESS  
 (ignoring)  
 If they wouldn't give Fermi such an  
 award, what do you think they would  
 think of those who protect and  
 promote Jews within our own  
 institute?

Hahn collects himself for a moment.

HAHN  
 Herr Hess. It might behoove you as  
 a guest to comport yourself as one.

Hahn moves away.

HESS  
The Ministry of Education knows  
that Lise Meitner defies the law.

That stops Hahn in his tracks.

HESS (CONT'D)  
I sent the letter.

Hess raises his glass and moves away to take a seat.

Lise walks through the crowded banquet hall, exchanging nods, smiles, and hellos with most of the guests she passes.

Near the middle of the banquet hall, Lise approaches a marvelous grand piano. The sounds of the crowd around her grow fainter. She brushes her hand over the keys. She presses down lightly, a single note.

And she remembers a room of joy and music...

HAHN  
Lise...

Lise looks up, her memories interrupted. She's not particularly happy to see Hahn.

LISE  
Hello Otto. What is it?

HAHN  
Hess. He alerted the ministry.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Ten minutes later, Lise stares at a plate full of untouched food. The sights and sounds of chattering, chewing banquet-eaters surround her.

Next to her sits Adriaan Fokker, digging in to a pork roast and potato dumplings. He glances towards her full plate.

FOKKER  
Something on your mind?

LISE  
Do you know Dirk Coster?

FOKKER  
Yes, we work together... What did you have in mind?

LISE  
Leaving Germany.

INT. DANISH CONSULATE - DAY

Lise gazes up at a map of Denmark, highlighted above the northern border of Germany. Sweden is labeled to the east of Denmark, and the Netherlands to the southwest.

DANISH VISA AGENT  
Next!

Lise steps forward.

LISE  
I've been invited to lecture at the University of Copenhagen. I'm here to apply for a travel visa.

DANISH VISA AGENT  
(nodding)  
Passport?

Lise hands her Austrian passport to the Agent.

DANISH VISA AGENT (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Austrian passports are no longer valid.

LISE  
I really must get a visa, this is a very important lecture..

DANISH VISA AGENT  
If you come back with a German passport we will be able to get you the visa.

Lise knows that can't happen.

LISE  
(flustered)  
You see, I've been asked to speak on short notice--

DANISH VISA AGENT  
The process should not take very long, only a few days.

LISE  
Is there no way to begin a visa application here first?

DANISH VISA AGENT  
I'm afraid not.

Lise wavers for a moment. She looks back at the line behind her, filled with harrowed people searching for the same promise of escape.

LISE  
Could I start with my University  
Identification?

DANISH VISA AGENT  
No, that is not proper  
identification. And a passport from  
a country that does not exist does  
not count.

The agent waves for the next in line.

Lise stands still, stunned.

INT. BOSCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Bosch taps his desk nervously.

LISE  
They denied me a visa.

BOSCH  
We still have options open to us.  
Give me a week, I will see what I  
can do.

LISE  
And what is that?

LATER

Bosch excitedly opens a letter.

BOSCH (V.O.)  
(to Lise)  
I have contacts in the Interior  
department.

He reads for a moment, then tosses it aside.

BOSCH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
With the right words, we can  
arrange something more comfortable.  
Or at least buy some time to think.

He opens another faster, glances at it, and tosses it aside too, frustrated.

A new envelope. Another. Another. Crumpled paper.

Bosch opens one last letter, glances at it, crumples it and throws it across the wall with a shout of frustration. He stands alone. A few loose papers flutter. He fumbles around for a moment, grabs a pen and paper, and writes.

20 Mai 1938

*Honorable Herr Reichsminister! Frau Meitner is non-Aryan... With the return of Austria she has become a German citizen, and the question of her dismissal will become acute... She is prepared to leave to assume a scientific position in another country... It is only a question of obtaining for Frau Meitner, who has an Austrian passport, notice that she may return to Germany, otherwise travel abroad for purposes of employment is impossible...*

*Heil Hitler!*

*C. Bosch.*

EXT. TRAIN STATION, BERLIN/DAHLEM - DAY

A train arrives.

Niels Bohr and his wife MARGRETHE (48) step off.

INT. LISE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lise sits at her desk, examining an envelope. On the front, the envelope is addressed to Lise Meitner, Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. In the top corner is the sender's name; *Dirk Coster, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.*

The wax seal has clearly been opened and resealed. Lise stands nervously, walks across the room to her door, and locks it. She returns to her desk to open the note.

*Liebe Lise, I hope this letter finds you well. Lina and the children have asked after you, and we are hoping that you may be able to take some time away from your work to come visit us in Groningen...*

Lise quickly reads the rest of the letter, picks up a pen, and writes a response.

*Liebe Dirk,*

*At present, I cannot travel at all... It may never be possible.*

Knock knock.

The sound rings through the room. Lise looks towards the door with fear.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Lise gets up, as quietly as she can. She tip-toes away, towards her bedroom.

MARGRETHE (O.S.)  
(muffled)  
Lise?!

Lise visibly relaxes.

MARGRETHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Lise, it's Margrethe Bohr. I'm here  
with Niels.

LISE  
One moment!

Lise opens the door.

Margrethe and Niels smile widely.

MARGRETHE  
(hugging Lise)  
It's lovely to see you.

LISE  
Come in! Come in!

Niels and Margrethe enter, Lise closes the door behind them.

INT. DEBYE'S PARLOR - NIGHT

PETER DEBYE (wide face, narrow mustache), pours drinks for Lise and Bohrs.

MARGRETHE  
Is she in or is she out?

Lise looks away. Debye glances towards her, then addresses the Bohrs.

DEBYE  
It's... complicated.

NIELS  
But termination is certain?

DEBYE

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever is. My physics section may be more scrutinized than your chemistry...

I think not so soon though. I can press harder on my contacts in the Netherlands. But if we do this right, we should hope to find you, Lise, a stable position with livable pay, and hopefully preserving your pension.

LISE

That would make things easier.

NIELS

Where would you like to go?

LISE

I should like to stay here... But I suppose that is not possible. It would be hard to live somewhere where German is not spoken.

All shift uncomfortably.

MARGRETHE

Switzerland?

LISE

I've been twice now to lecture at ETH Zurich.

DEBYE

Switzerland will be difficult. Getting a valid passport is likely impossible, and there is no hope of entering without one. The Netherlands and Sweden may be more lenient.

LISE

Well... All other German speaking countries are now one, it seems.

NIELS

(to Lise)

Have you been in touch with your nephew?

LISE

Robert? I spoke with him on the phone regarding the lecture series.

NIELS

I'm sure he would love to see you.

LISE

But the passport--

NIELS

Perhaps the time has come for us to look for solutions to one problem at a time. This situation with the papers may not improve for quite some time.

LISE

What do you suggest?

NIELS

An interim state. Regardless of long-term stability.

LISE

But where would I go if no one will take me?

MARGRETHE

If you would like, you would be more than welcome to stay with us in Copenhagen. As long as you may need.

LISE

That's very kind of you. I would not want to wear out my welcome.

MARGRETHE

You would not! The only place that could happen is here in Germany.

Lise smiles sadly and raises a cup to drink.

LISE

There is actually, one thing I will ask.

Lise pulls out the letter, sealed, addressed to Dirk Coster.

LISE (CONT'D)

Will you take this with you when you leave, and send it to the Netherlands from outside German borders?

Niels and Margrethe glance at each other.

EXT. STREET, LEIDEN NETHERLANDS - DAY

HANS KRAMERS knocks on a door. There is no response. Kramers knocks again. Still no response.

Kramers looks around, thinks for a moment, and begins to walk away.

Coster opens the door.

COSTER

Hans! What brings you over to Groningen?

Hans hurries back to the steps and bounds up them.

HANS KRAMERS

(glancing around)

Bohr gave me a letter. From Lise. She's in trouble.

INT. BOSCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Lise approaches Bosch's office door and enters. Inside, Bosch stands in silence, staring out a window. Debye sits, staring at his hands.

LISE

Is something wrong?

Bosch gestures towards a letter on his desk.

Lise moves forward and glances at the header;

*Interior Ministry to Carl Bosch,  
Director, Kaiser Wilhelm  
Institute, Berlin  
June 16*

Lise reads quickly, murmuring the words on the page;

LISE (CONT'D)

*"Political considerations are in effect that prevent the issuance of a passport for Frau Dr. Meitner to travel abroad.*

(MORE)

LISE (CONT'D)

*It is considered undesirable that well-known Jews leave Germany to travel abroad where they appear to be representatives of German science, or with their names and their corresponding experience may even demonstrate their inner attitude against Germany. Surely the Institute can find a way for Frau Meitner to remain in Germany even after she resigns. And if circumstances permit she can work privately in the interests of the Institute. This statement represents in particular the view of the Reichsfuhrer-SS Heinrich Himmler, Chief of Police in the Reichsministry of the Interior."*

She looks up fearfully.

LISE (CONT'D)

Heinrich Himmler?

BOSCH

I thought perhaps, since the other paths failed... A direct appeal...

Lise drops into a seat.

BOSCH (CONT'D)

Have you received other news?  
Offers?

LISE

Does it matter? If I cannot get out?

BOSCH

A push from outside can only help.  
One thing leads to another.

LISE

Only lecture invites. Dirk Coster from the Netherlands, Bohr in Denmark. Word of a research position, nearly unpaid, in Sweden, if I could get there. But there are too many letters, with ideas always changing.

BOSCH

Have you spoken with Hahn? Does he know anyone, are there any letters he could send?

LISE

I haven't...

BOSCH

And what does Niels suggest?

LISE

An interim state.

BOSCH

Is that what you want?

Lise stares down at the desk, frozen.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, NIEUWESCHANS - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE - GERMAN/DUTCH BORDER

A car parks outside of the main train station building. Dirk Coster steps out, along with E.H. EBELS (middle-aged, with the crisp style of a local politician).

The two approach the building.

EBELS

I cannot promise anything.

COSTER

I know.

Ebels opens the door to walk...

INTO THE STATION

Where a solitary clerk waits alone in a single small room.

TRAIN CLERK

Hello, can I help you?

EBELS

Hello. Yes. Well, two things. First, my friend here needs a ticket to Berlin.

TRAIN CLERK

Next train will pass through in an hour, we can put you on that.

COSTER

Good, thanks.

EBELS

And second- There is a woman. A physicist...

INT. HAHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Lise walks down the hallway. In Hahn's office, the phone rings. No one answers. Lise stops, enters the office, and picks up.

LISE

Hello?

Silence.

LISE (CONT'D)

Hello?

EDITH

(quietly weeping)  
The great misfortune has happened.

LISE

What's that?

EDITH

The great misfortune has happened.

LISE

Edith, are you all right?

EDITH

Lise? No, no... no. I'm so sorry Lise. It's all splitting into pieces. And what they've done to you! It should not be real. Can't be real. Where is Otto?

LISE

Edith--

EDITH

Lise I'm so sorry. Where is Otto?

LISE

I don't know, but I'll find him. I'm going to be right there, all right? You stay where you are.

EDITH  
That's all right--

LISE  
I'll be right there.

Lise hangs up the phone and runs out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - DUSK

Lise waits alone in the disturbingly clean hallway of a psychiatric ward.

Otto Hahn walks down the long hallway, empty except for the solitary figure of Lise.

HAHN  
She may need to stay for some time.

LISE  
Otto, I'm so sorry...

HAHN  
Thank you.

They sit in silence for a moment.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry too. For these months. I should have done more...

LISE  
Thank you. But there was nothing more to be done. I shouldn't have acted that way towards you.

HAHN  
Don't...  
(struggling for words)  
The past is past. We can only move forward.

INT. MEITNER LAB, KAISER WILHELM INSTITUTE - DAWN

Hahn sits on a stool, lab coat on. His head rests on his hand as he softly dozes. The door opens and Lise enters.

LISE  
Otto?

Hahn wakes with a start.

HAHN

Hmmm?

LISE

Have you been here all night?

HAHN

No... No. It is early for you to be here too.

LISE

I enjoy the quiet in the mornings.

Silence.

HAHN

(rising to stand)

Debye left a message for me last night.

Lise shifts nervously.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Dirk Coster is in town. He asks that we meet together today.

INT. DEBYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Debye stands at his window, peering between the blinds.

LISE

Tomorrow?

COSTER

I think that would be best, yes.

LISE

(slowly)

That is what the Dutch border guards expect?

COSTER

Yes. My friend tells me they're close with their German compatriots.

DEBYE

So they will let her through?

COSTER

I cannot promise that. But it does seem to be the best hope we have.

Lise sits for a moment. She looks down. Slowly, she nods.

LISE

Otto...

HAHN

I can take care of everything in the lab.

LISE

(to Hahn)

And Rosbaud?

HAHN

He said he can meet us tonight.

COSTER

Paul Rosbaud? Of Springer Publishing?

HAHN

Yes.

COSTER

Very well. Of course. It is just, the more people involved--

HAHN

He sent his wife and daughter to England--

LISE

Paul Rosbaud has helped us publish for years. He can be trusted.

HAHN

More importantly, he has a car.

Through the blinds, Debye sees Kurt Hess walk across the quad below.

DEBYE

We don't have much time. Let's get the specifics.

HAHN

(to Lise)

You stay late tonight. Paul Rosbaud and I will meet you at your apartment.

DEBYE

Dirk, you'll stay with me.

COSTER

Of course. In the morning, We'll  
meet at the station. 7:30.

HAHN

(to Lise)

You can stay at our house tonight.  
Rosbaud can drive you in the  
morning.

LISE

(a bit overwhelmed)

Yes. Very well.

DEBYE

We have an unwelcome guest on his  
way here. If we wish to avoid hard  
questions, I'd suggest we go our  
separate ways.

Coster stands hurriedly. He shakes hands with Hahn and Debye,  
then turns to Lise.

COSTER

(clapping Lise's shoulder)  
See you in the morning.

Coster exits.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Kurt Hess arrives at the top of the stairs, entering the  
hallway.

Dirk Coster passes him, nodding.

Hahn and Lise appear, hurrying around a corner. Hess avoids  
eye-contact, but glances back as he passes them.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Graue sits in a dim room under a single hanging light. The  
Interrogator takes over a desk across from Graue.

INTERROGATOR

You are a researcher at the  
Institute?

GRAUE

Yes.

INTERROGATOR  
Under Otto Hahn?

GRAUE  
Yes.

INTERROGATOR  
So you must know Lise Meitner.

GRAUE  
...I know of her, yes. She works  
with Hahn.

INTERROGATOR  
Works?

GRAUE  
...worked.

INTERROGATOR  
When was the last time you saw Lise  
Meitner at the institute?

Graue exhales.

INTERROGATOR (CONT'D)  
The question is simple. When--

GRAUE  
Today. She was just visiting. She  
came by to pick up personal  
effects.

INTERROGATOR  
So she has not been illegally  
working there these past three  
months?

GRAUE  
...No... I don't know for sure. But I  
think not.

INTERROGATOR  
Do you know of any plan to help her  
escape the country?

GRAUE  
Escape?

INTERROGATOR  
We have received a tip that Otto  
Hahn is helping her plan an escape.

GRAUE  
Who told you that?

The officer looks up with ice cold eyes. No answer.

GRAUE (CONT'D)  
She can't have travel papers--

INTERROGATOR  
Do you know of any plan?

GRAUE  
No. Lise is the cautious type.

INT. MEITNER LAB - NIGHT

Lise sits at a desk in a spacious office, poring over papers.

She scribbles feverishly in the margins. Her notes, neat and dense, fill all corners of a colleague's work.

The work's title comes into focus.

*On the transuranes and their chemical behaviour.*

Lise scans down to the bottom of the page to read the final line:

*Above all, their chemical distinction from all previously known elements needs no further discussion.*

Lise crosses this out. Below, she writes:

*The process must be neutron capture by uranium-238, which leads to three isomeric nuclei of uranium-239.*

A THUMP disrupts her focus. Then another.

She glances up at the ceiling, then over at a clock on the wall. Near midnight. Her eyes linger on shelves of books and rows of files. Sadness and anxiety fill her face.

She shakes her head, rubs between her eyes, and refocuses to write:

*This result is very difficult to reconcile with current concepts of the nucleus.*

She sweeps the papers into a briefcase, clipping it shut.

Distant, slow footsteps echo down the stairs above the office.

Lise dims her table lamp, descending the room into darkness. Her heartbeat quickens, and her breathing goes shallow.

The footsteps slow outside her door. Lise holds her breath, trying to keep total silence.

The doorknob turns.

Then stops. Locked.

The footsteps begin again, fading away.

Lise exhales.

In darkness, she gathers the last of her belongings and a thick folder labeled *Transuranics*.

She peers out of her window, looking past a limp NAZI FLAG to see the figure of Kurt Hess under a distinct alpine hat receding into the night.

Lise hurries to exit, takes a last, lonely glance around the office, then shuts the door behind her.

#### EXT. LISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lise peers through a gate towards her home; a duplex house, with an upper flat on top of a lower one.

All lights are off.

The gate creaks as she enters, and she lets out a frightened hiss. She glances nervously towards the lower windows. No light, no movement.

Quietly, she shuts the gate behind her.

She tiptoes down the entryway, up the front steps, and gently, painfully slowly, turns the doorknob. The door inches open, and Lise slips through...

#### INSIDE THE HOUSE

She creeps through an entry hall leading directly to a stairway.

She passes a DOOR, leaning as far away from it as possible. In the total silence, she hears the faint whispering winds from outside the house. The faintest hint of an owl HOOTING. And murmuring VOICES on the other side of the door.

She continues forward, faintly trembling. The murmurs fade. Only in her head?

She moves up the stairs, one at a time. Quiet step. Quiet step. CREAK.

Lise freezes. Silence. The distant owl faintly HOOTS again.

Lise takes an apprehensive step. Then another.

She reaches the top of the stairs. The door to her apartment. She opens it and practically leaps...

#### INTO HER APARTMENT

She locks the door behind her. Doorknob. Deadbolt. Latch chain.

She exhales.

Then she gets to work.

Two suitcases lie on the floor by the door, mostly packed.

She pulls another stack of folders off of the table to fill all of the remaining suitcase space.

From her desk, she lifts an old AUSTRIAN PASSPORT, papers loosely bound together with string. She sighs nervously as she looks at it. Dread covers her face. She stuffs it into her pocket. Out of sight, out of mind.

Lise glances around at her home. Signs of comfort fill the space. A worn leather chair. An organized desk, with its wood staining now fading from use.

And photographs. Lining the desk. On a table. Photos of friends laughing together, scientists with wild hair, glasses, cigars.

Lise's eyes land on a family photo; herself surrounded by two sisters who look just like her, and one of their sons, her nephew, Robert Frisch.

She grabs this photo, places it in the suitcase, and shuts the lid.

#### EXT. LISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lise exits the front door as quietly as she came.

She creeps out to the gate. Open. Close.

She's on the sidewalk. She hurries away into the night.

Behind her, in the downstairs window of her house, a light turns on.

AT THE WINDOW

Hess peers into the darkness with prying, suspicious eyes.

INT. HAHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hahn turns a diamond ring over and over again in his hand.

A KNOCK at the door disturbs his thoughts.

He opens. Lise hurries in.

HAHN  
Did anyone see?

LISE  
No one.

HAHN  
Were you the last to leave the  
institute?

LISE  
I heard footsteps...

HAHN  
Hess.

Hahn grimaces.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
If he suspects your departure--

LISE  
We'll have to hope the timing is  
too quick.

HAHN  
I'll go in early tomorrow. If I'm  
there, he should think I can't be  
helping you go.

LISE  
But to get to the station--

HAHN

Taken care of. Springer will drive you and Dirk Coster. Coster will escort you to the Dutch border, where they've made an arrangement with the Dutch guards--

Lise nods rapidly as she begins to hyperventilate. She sits down hard.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Lise?

LISE

I don't want to... I don't want to go. I know it's too late. But my life is here.

Hahn blinks, hiding pain in the depths of his eyes. He points to a photo hanging on the wall of himself as a younger man, standing stately beside his wife Edith, with a hand on the shoulder of his young son.

HAHN

This house used to be filled with laughter. You remember? Shocking, really, with my humor...

Lise chuckles.

HAHN (CONT'D)

But we always knew it was temporary. Every year, every month, every day, little Hanno wasn't so little any more. Then he went off to school... and the world kept changing. Kept darkening. What I didn't expect was to be alone, yet still so near to her. Edith's great misfortune is worse than mine. But we don't need to be inside the walls of that sanitorium to know...

Hahn rises, bent, but still standing.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Stability is an illusion.

Lise's eyes flash with tears.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Your life is where you go... what you choose to do with it.

LISE  
I have no choices.

HAHN  
You always have choices. Right now,  
the best choice would be to get  
some sleep. The guest room is  
prepared. Rosbaud will be here at  
7:30 to pick you up.

Hahn pats Lise on the shoulder as he goes to the stairs.

INT. HAHN'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Lise lies in bed. She stares sleeplessly up at the ceiling.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kurt Hess knocks on a plain wooden door. The door swings  
open, bringing Hess face to face with Graue's Interrogator.

INTERROGATOR  
Yes?

HESS  
Lise Meitner left her home with two  
suitcases.

INTERROGATOR  
If you have a report--

HESS  
She's escaping. Otto Hahn is  
helping her!

The Interrogator gazes skeptically at Hess.

INTERROGATOR  
Thank you for your information. I  
will verify it in the morning. Good  
night.

The officer shuts the door. Hess huffs in frustration.

INT. HAHN'S HOUSE - DAWN

Lise sits in the same spot as the night before. She stares  
out the window at the early dawn light, dreading the day  
ahead. Hahn enters. Lise turns.

HAHN

I should make my way to the  
Institute, so Hess and the police  
will not suspect...

LISE

I understand.  
(standing, stiffly)  
Goodbye Otto.

HAHN

One more thing.

Hahn pulls a diamond ring out of his pocket.

HAHN (CONT'D)

In case there's any trouble at the  
border... It might be useful to  
have this.

LISE

Did you buy this?

HAHN

It was my grandmother's...

LISE

I cannot take it.

HAHN

Please. If you don't I'll give it  
to Rosbaud, and he to Coster.

Lise considers for a moment, then reluctantly accepts the  
ring.

HAHN (CONT'D)

Send a letter, won't you?

LISE

And you must keep me informed on  
the experiments. Promise me.

HAHN

Absolutely. Absolutely.

LISE

All right then.

HAHN

Well, goodbye...

Hahn leans forward and the two share a brief, awkward close  
handshake. Hahn turns and leaves without looking back.

The door slams behind him. Lise watches him through the window as he walks down the street.

PAUL ROSBAUD (angular features) enters the room.

ROSBAUD

Ready?

Lise nods, steeling herself.

EXT. VILLA APARTMENTS - DAWN

Kurt Hess walks out of his lower flat to the front walkway. He looks up again at Lise's window, shakes his head, and marches down the street.

EXT. HAHN'S HOUSE - DAY

The Interrogator peers towards the open windows of Hahn's house for a moment. No movement except the gentle swaying of tree leaves in the morning breeze.

He marches up to the door. He knocks.

No answer.

He knocks again.

No one.

INT. CAR, MOVING - DAY

Rosbaud drives. Lise watches the familiar streets pass by. Music plays on the radio.

ROSBAUD

Pleasant morning, isn't it?

LISE

Yes.

Her eyes drift down the paths of her memory. She shakes her head.

LISE (CONT'D)

How's Hilde?

ROSBAUD

She and Angela left too. Britain.

LISE  
I'm sorry--

ROSBAUD  
Don't be. It's a relief. They're  
safe. I hope to see them this  
winter.

Lise nods, not wanting to talk more.

Rosbaud drives down the final street to the train station.

As they reach the station, Lise struggles to breathe. She looks away from Rosbaud out of the car window. Rosbaud parks and turns off the engine. He glances at his watch.

ROSBAUD (CONT'D)  
What do you want?

Lise shakes her head again, speechless.

ROSBAUD (CONT'D)  
We can go back. Or, we can meet  
Dirk. The train leaves in 20  
minutes.

Lise attempts to steady herself.

ROSBAUD (CONT'D)  
They will watch you. They will  
follow you. There may not be  
another chance.

Lise stares back out the window. She closes her eyes and nods, then opens the door.

INT. BERLIN/DAHLEM TRAIN STATION - DAY

DIRK COSTER (48, curly haired) looks down the board of train departure times and glances back and forth, waiting. Lise and Rosbaud hurry unto the train-side platform.

COSTER  
Lise, ever punctual.

LISE  
Hello Dirk.

Further down the platform, the Interrogator from the police station rounds a corner, eyeing the platform up and down. His eyes land on the three scientists, and his back straightens. He stares hard, vaguely recognizing Lise.

COSTER  
 (acting the part nervous, jokingly)  
 Going to the countryside?

LISE  
 (nodding, playing along)  
 A few days away...

The train horn sounds.

The Interrogator walks straight towards them.

Lise sees him. She nudges Coster.

LISE (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 We must go. Now.

ROSBAUD  
 Good luck.

Coster takes Lise by the arm, breaking into a swift walk away from Rosbaud.

COSTER  
 (loudly, airily)  
 Let's find a compartment  
 together... They must be nearly  
 full now.

The Interrogator nears the pair. His recognition grows and his pace quickens.

THUMP. Rosbaud shifts into his path, nearly sending him sprawling.

ROSBAUD  
 Excuse me...

The Interrogator spins, bristling, almost striking Rosbaud.

ROSBAUD (CONT'D)  
 Pardon me. I wasn't watching where  
 I was going. Are you all right?

The Interrogator nods, turning to resume his chase.

ROSBAUD (CONT'D)  
 (timidly)  
 Could you direct me toward the  
 bathroom?

The Interrogator glances around again, disoriented. He locates a sign.

INTERROGATOR

There.

ROSBAUD

Thank you.

Rosbaud moves away.

The Interrogator turns back, trying to locate Lise and Coster.

Farther down the platform, he sees them walking away from him, arm in arm.

He breaks into a brisk jog.

The couple moves towards the stairs of a train car and begin to step up...

The Interrogator claps the woman on the shoulder.

INTERROGATOR

Papers please.

The couple turns. They are strangers.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Lise sits silently, staring at the countryside pass by through the train window. Moments pass. Coster watches Lise uncertainly.

COSTER

Are you all right?

LISE

I rode out of Berlin... Many times of course. But I remember the first time riding to the front...

Lise pauses. Coster sways with the rhythmic motion of the train.

LISE (CONT'D)

I was to work the X-ray machines. My work in radioactivity, you see...

(pause)

I was not frightened then. Even though I knew I would be so close to the fighting. I thought it was important... To put my skills to use in a time of great need.

(MORE)

LISE (CONT'D)

All those young men, going forth on  
two feet, coming back on  
stretchers... If at all.

(pause)

It was a routine. Just like the  
lab. Set up the instruments, run  
the protocol. Each time, a life at  
stake. We would patch them together  
so they could go back to the  
trenches to keep killing.

Lise falls silent, holding back emotions.

LISE (CONT'D)

I went to war for them. I went to  
war for this country...

Lise trails off, nearly weeping. Coster puts his hand on her  
shoulder.

INT. TRAIN, NIEUWESCHANS, GERMAN/DUTCH BORDER - DAY

Droplets of water quiver on a window, set against a grey fog.

Lise sits in the window seat, nervously peering past the  
dancing droplets.

The train pulls to a stop at a small border station.

COSTER

Lise?

Lise turns toward Coster. Fear is written in her eyes.

Footsteps clip down the hallway. Voices pass faintly through  
the compartment door.

BORDER GUARD (O.S.)

(from the hallway)

Papers?

Lise looks down at HAHN'S RING on her hand.

LISE

(tugging at the ring)

It might be better... less  
conspicuous...

COSTER

(nodding)

Quickly then.

Lise pulls the ring off. She searches for a pocket but

finds none. She glances around wildly, searching for her luggage bag...

KNOCK KNOCK, the guard's hand pounds on the compartment door.

COSTER (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Here.

BORDER GUARD  
(through the door)  
Border control.

Lise hands the ring to Coster who slides it into his coat pocket, right as the compartment door opens.

BORDER GUARD (CONT'D)  
(to Lise and Coster)  
Papers?

Coster raises his Dutch passport to the guard. The guard glances at it, marks a note in a booklet, stamps the passport, and hands it back.

Lise raises her AUSTRIAN PASSPORT.

BORDER GUARD (CONT'D)  
Austrian passports are not valid.  
Not since the Anschluss. You have  
German-issued?

LISE  
No. Only this.

Her hand shakes slightly as the guard takes the passport.

The guard glances at the front, flips the passport over, and skims through the pages.

NAME - LISE MEITNER  
RACE - JUDEN

BORDER GUARD  
(to Lise)  
You are traveling on this  
passport?

LISE  
Yes.

BORDER GUARD  
To what destination?

LISE  
Groningen. Netherlands.

Silence. The guard carefully inspects the many pages of stamps from seemingly every European country.

BORDER GUARD  
Occupation?

LISE  
I'm... I'm a researcher. Atomic physics.

BORDER GUARD  
Hmmm...

The guard reads through the biographical page of the passport again, then looks up. Another guard steps up behind him, peering over his shoulder at the passport, confused.

BORDER GUARD (CONT'D)  
Wait here.

The Guard pockets the passport and steps away, shutting the compartment door behind him.

IN THE HALLWAY

He turns and walks down the passenger car hallway. The others move on, knocking on doors and checking passports.

INSIDE THE COMPARTMENT

Lise and Coster sit in dread.

LISE  
(nervously)  
I could run.

COSTER  
Lise--

LISE  
I'd only need to make it to the end of the platform--

COSTER  
Lise, wait.

LISE  
Wait for what?

COSTER

Look.

Coster points--

OUT THE WINDOW

The Border Guard exits the car and walks towards the German border station.

Further down the platform, a Dutch Guard hurries towards him. Lise and Coster watch as the Dutch Guard hails the German, appearing to ask for a light for a cigarette. The German obliges.

LISE

What is happening?

The Dutch Guard appears to speak to the German amicably, gesturing toward the passport. The German shows him. He nods, listening to the German. The German shrugs.

The Dutch Guard claps him on the shoulder and pulls him in close to whisper in his ear.

COSTER

Everything is falling into place.

The German Border Guard looks up, surprised, and smiles.

The Dutch Guard opens his shoulder bag, reaches in, and pulls out the neck of a large bottle of alcohol. He grins mischievously. The German Border Guard laughs.

The Dutch Guard points toward the passport and gestures back towards the train.

BEYOND THE STATION BUILDING...

A Volkswagen pulls up, screeching to a halt.

Two young, grey-uniformed SS bodyguards step out of the car.

Behind them, a GESTAPO CAPTAIN slowly rises and looks around. Sun glints off of the woven skull-and-crossbones Totenkopf insignia on the man's collar.

His eyes scan the Dutch and German border guards conversing on the platform and the train, stopped amidst the fog, waiting.

The Gestapo captain walks with certainty, flanked by his bodyguards. They march straight past the Dutch guard towards the steps of a train car.

DUTCH GUARD  
 (to the Gestapo Captain)  
 Is there a problem?

GESTAPO CAPTAIN  
 (turning)  
 Internal orders.

BORDER GUARD  
 Orders from who?

GESTAPO CAPTAIN  
 SS. The top. Heinrich Himmler.

The Gestapo Captain turns to lead his group onto the train.  
 His foot reaches the first step.

DUTCH GUARD  
 This station has two countries...

The Gestapo Captain stops. The German Border Guard looks  
 nervously between him and the Dutch Guard.

DUTCH GUARD (CONT'D)  
 What are the orders?

The Gestapo Captain moves off the step and slowly approaches  
 the Dutch Guard. The Captain's hand subtly moves towards his  
 pistol.

GESTAPO CAPTAIN  
 There is a woman on this train. I  
 have orders to take her into  
 captivity.

The Dutch Guard glances toward the Dutch end of the station.  
 There is no backup for him.

GESTAPO CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 And it seems the train is still on  
 the our end of the station.

The Gestapo Captain sweeps away, leading his men up the steps  
 and onto the train.

INT. TRAIN HALLWAY - DAY

The Gestapo Captain marches down the hallway of the train,  
 leading his men. He comes to the door of a compartment and  
 knocks briskly.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

Lise looks toward the door, terrified. Coster grips Lise's hand.

INT. TRAIN HALLWAY - DAY

The Gestapo Captain opens a compartment door.

GESTAPO CAPTAIN

Frau, you have been requested for questioning.

The Gestapo Captain waits for a moment. A fearful ELDERLY WOMAN steps out into the hallway. The Gestapo Captain extends his arm, pointing the way. The Elderly Woman shuffles towards the bodyguards and off of the train.

A moment later, the German Border Guard walks down the aisle to Lise's compartment door. He knocks and opens.

BORDER GUARD

Frau Dr. Meitner... You have very good friends.

With a nod, he returns her passport.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, NIEUWESCHANS, GERMAN/DUTCH BORDER - DUSK

The train moves on through the mist.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Robert Frisch waits on a runway as Lise comes down off of an early passenger plane. Frisch grins roguishly.

FRISCH

Aunt Lise!

LISE

(surprised, barely hearing)

Robert!

FRISCH

Tell me, what's it like up there?

LISE  
 (not hearing, shouting)  
 What's that?

FRISCH  
 (nearly shouting)  
 What's it like in the clouds?

LISE  
 (shouting)  
 Dear God, it's insufferable. But  
 the view is quite nice.

INT. BOHRS' HOUSE - DAY

Margrethe opens the door to the Bohrs' estate home. Lise and Frisch stand outside.

Margrethe embraces Lise.

INT. BOHRS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lise, Frisch, Niels, and Margrethe sit around a large dining room table, complete with high-class dishes and cutlery. Lise gently slices off a tiny sliver of cheesecake and tastes it.

MARGRETHE  
 What do you think?

LISE  
 (outwardly comfortable,  
 inwardly not)  
 It's all quite delicious.

Niels and Margrethe smile.

FRISCH  
 A thanks from me as well. I should  
 be going soon. What are your plans  
 for the week?

MARGRETHE  
 (to Lise)  
 We were hoping to go to the cottage  
 this weekend, if you'd be  
 interested...

FRISCH  
 A proper welcome to Denmark!

LISE  
 The countryside?

MARGRETHE

Come, you must join us!

NIELS

Some time in the open air might do you good.

INT. BOHRS' VACATION COTTAGE, TISVILDE, DENMARK - DAY

Niels Bohr opens the door to a quaint, cozy entry room.

NIELS

Welcome to our humble abode.

LISE

It's lovely!

Frisch chuckles, pointing to a horseshoe hung on the wall by the door.

FRISCH

What's this for? Surely you don't believe it will bring you luck.

NIELS

Of course not. But my understanding is that it brings luck whether you believe it or not.

EXT. DANISH COUNTRY ROAD, TISVILDE - DAY

Lise, Frisch, and the Bohrs walk along a country road.

MARGRETHE

Of course I'm interested.

Frisch chuckles.

NIELS

The theory is that the nucleus is like a liquid drop in form. When it is bombarded, there is a two-stage process. First, a bombarding particle becomes an integral part of a new, unstable nucleus. This occurs quickly. Second, the unstable nucleus disintegrates into an ejected decay product and a resulting nucleus.

MARGRETHE

Like... A log, on fire? Sending out sparks? And the resulting charred wood?

NIELS

Well, potentially, yes. But that heat would be energy from bonds between atoms, rather than from inside a single atomic nucleus.

MARGRETHE

Heat can be released from inside a single atom?

LISE

Small amounts. In the vicinity of 5 mega-electron volts for a standard alpha decay process...

Margrethe blinks, slightly confused.

LISE (CONT'D)

When atoms decay, they release energy with the thrown-off particle or wave.

MARGRETHE

Ah. Like Germany.

Frisch and Niels chuckle. Lise smiles sadly.

FRISCH

Perhaps for Germany, it is great amounts.

INT. LISE'S ROOM, BOHRS' RESIDENCE, COPENHAGEN - DAY

Lise packs her suitcase, meticulously folding clothes.

Margrethe knocks on the open door.

MARGRETHE

Do you need anything?

LISE

No.

She gestures towards the suitcase.

LISE (CONT'D)

It's down to a science now.

MARGRETHE

I'm sorry.

Lise looks up, confused.

MARGRETHE (CONT'D)

Moving from place to place...

LISE

Some people dream to live like this. Traveling about. Visiting old friends. Always on to something new.

MARGRETHE

But not you.

LISE

No. Not me. Everything has been shattered.

(flickering smile)

I cannot look back, I dare not look forward. All I can control is... this...

She gestures to the open suitcase.

MARGRETHE

It will be better soon. Sweden is so beautiful. We cross to visit all the time.

Lise smiles, at a loss for words.

MARGRETHE (CONT'D)

Well... If you need anything else, I'll be outside.

Lise nods. Margrethe leaves. Lise slowly sinks down to sit on the bed.

EXT. SHIPDECK, COPENHAGEN - DAY

Lise struggles through a dense crowd toward the portside rail.

The ship begins to move. Lise manages to squeeze into a tiny space along the rail.

She looks down at Niels, Margrethe, and Frisch stand below.

They smile and wave. Lise waves back.

As the ship pulls away, Lise's eyes glisten with tears. Overcome with emotion, Lise faces the open sea.

INT. SIEGBAHN'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

MANNE SIEGBAHN (cold, stiff, 51) sits at a desk, reading. Lise approaches the desk, briefcase in hand.

LISE  
Dr. Siegbahn?

SIEGBAHN  
(dismissively)  
Lise Meitner... Welcome.

LISE  
Thank you. I was hoping to look around at the lab spaces...

SIEGBAHN  
Ah. Well, I think we can manage that. Come now, follow me.

Siegbahn stands and moves to a door, opening it.

INT. NOBEL INSTITUTE PHYSICS LAB, STOCKHOLM - DAY

Siegbahn leads Lise through the door. The lab is spacious, similar to Meitner's space at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin.

SIEGBAHN  
This is the joint experiment space. Any joint experiments that you are asked to work on with us will be performed here.

LISE  
It's wonderful...

Siegbahn reaches a door at the end of the room.

SIEGBAHN  
And this...  
(opening the door)  
is your personal office.

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

The room is small, barely larger than a walk-in closet. A simple desk sits along one end of a single empty long table. Lise looks on, relief turning to disappointment.

Siegbahn checks a watch on his wrist.

SIEGBAHN

My secretary should be in later if you need anything else. If you'll excuse me, there's work to be done.

He grimaces, nods, and turns to leave. Lise's eyebrows rise at the abruptness of Siegbahn's departure.

LISE

(curious)

Do you have something you're working on?

Siegbahn pauses and looks back inquisitively.

SIEGBAHN

Yes.

Lise waits for more. He doesn't expand on that.

SIEGBAHN (CONT'D)

And you?

Lise stumbles for words, taken aback.

LISE

Well, I... I was hoping to continue an experiment from Berlin.

SIEGBAHN

I commend you for getting to work so quickly. Good luck.

LISE

Are there any assistants?

SIEGBAHN

Assistants?

LISE

Students? Chemists?

SIEGBAHN

No.

LISE  
I'll need some instruments at  
least. Pumps, rheostats,  
capacitors, ammeters--

SIEGBAHN  
Did you bring any?

LISE  
No.

SIEGBAHN  
Can you make drawings?

LISE  
I suppose I could try.

SIEGBAHN  
The workshop may be able to help  
then.

Lise opens her mouth to respond, but Siegbahn is already walking away.

He stops once more at the door.

SIEGBAHN (CONT'D)  
Oh, I'd forgotten. There is mail  
addressed to you from Otto Hahn.  
You can find it in the post room.

With a final curt nod, Siegbahn departs.

Lise is left alone in the barren, new space.

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

Lise pores over a stack of letters from Hahn under a soft yellow lamp.

HAHN (V.O.)  
*Hanno has been conscripted into the  
Hitler Youth. Edith is still quite  
ill in the sanatorium. Alone I feel  
quite helpless.*

Lise's lip trembles. She scans down to the bottom of the page.

HAHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*Zimen has just gotten married. Do you think I ought to give him a present, or hasn't he been with me long enough?*

A ghost of a smile escapes Lise. She puts pen to paper

LISE (V.O.)  
*I think you should give him a small present, it doesn't have to be anything splendid. Just to emphasize the personal relationships a little, which are really not insignificant in your group... Hopefully now the world will be somewhat calmer... Please send my dresses and underwear soon. I need some of them urgently.*

HAHN (V.O.)  
*Concerning your belongings... the three suitcases with clothing are lying there fully packed, but still open. When permission is granted they can be sent right away, subject to a substantial customs levy--*

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - NIGHT

A suitcase lies by the desk. Lise writes furiously.

LISE (V.O.)  
*If I extrapolate to the value of my furniture and books, then it will be a sum I simply cannot pay. My salary is such that I can pay for my room, food, and small daily expenses like bus fare, postage, etc., only by being very thrifty. Stockholm is very expensive, and I dare not think of what might happen if I should become sick. ... Could you send me my fever thermometer? I miss all those little things, and I don't want to buy too much. To get sleeping pills, for instance, one must have a prescription. However, I would be grateful if you would have my books packed separately and insured.*

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - NIGHT

A few stacks of papers now lie at the end of the table, beyond a few lonely empty beakers. Lise eyes these with annoyance as she writes.

HAHN (V.O.)

*Toward the end of last week a new paper by Curie and Savitch about the 3.5-hour substance appeared... We are now working on reproducing them. The substance is certainly not identical to the 2.5-hour substance. (Perhaps a Ra isotope has something to do with it.) It's a great pity that you are not here with us to clear up the exciting Curie activity.*

Lise glances over the paper in question.

LISE (V.O.)

*Dear Otto!... Today I obtained the Curie paper and find many statements hard to understand. Why didn't we find this substance when we repeated the Curie experiment in January? Please write about Edith...*

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - NIGHT

A long coat lies draped haphazardly over Lise's desk. Melting snowflakes slowly form into dripping water droplets on the coat sleeve.

Lise reads standing, pacing.

HAHN (V.O.)

*Edith is slowly recovering... With thorium as carrier we could not find it. It isn't thorium, of course. At most thorium is gradually produced from it. We really could not (or cannot) say anything definite about the 3.5-hour substance in 2 weeks, despite working day and night, when Irene Curie has been at it for 1 1/2 years. We are now almost convinced that we are dealing with several radium isotopes.*

(MORE)

HAHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*You know from the thorium work that one cannot be really sure until many trials are done.*

Lise copies Hahn's proposed two-step process onto a blackboard:



LISE (V.O.)

*I am extremely eager to think over how Ra or Ac isotopes could be produced. Why is it that you think that there are several substances, did you obtain several half-lives? Why do you think it can be enhanced? Did you get considerably more with slow neutrons? And how strong is the activity with equivalent radiation compared to the 16-minute eka-Rhenium? Why do you think there are several isomers? Are more than two substances observed? Please be nice and answer these questions, even if it's not so definite.*

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

A small bookshelf filled with books now lies beside Lise's desk.

Lise sits, slowly turning pages of a photo album. Hahn's most recent letter lies beside it.

HAHN (V.O.)

*Liebe Lise,  
Happy Birthday! I've sent this album of photographs to evoke memories of our 30-year path through life together, memories that come clearly to me again and again in the institute each day... I'll be in Vienna soon to give a lecture--*

LISE (V.O.)

*Thank you for the photographs. Looking at them, I feel for a moment less alone, then altogether more so...*

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Lise appears to make half-hearted small-talk with a number of well meaning guests at a small afternoon tea party.

LISE (V.O.)

*My nephew Robert Frisch organized a small party here. Everyone is very friendly, but I am always reminded of the saying: if one must rely upon the friendliness of people, one must either be very self-confident or have a great sense of humor; the first I never possessed, and the latter is difficult to call forth in my current situation.... I have considerable problems with my sister Gusti, whom I am trying to help, and I read the newspapers carefully every day and know how dreadful things are everywhere in the world. If you see her in Vienna, please tell her that the immigration permit for her is slowly moving forward.*

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Otto Hahn sleeps sitting up. Lise's multi-page letter lies on his lap.

*If you see Gusti on your speaking trip to Vienna...*

Deceleration of the train shakes Hahn awake. He gets his bearings and looks out the window.

From elevated tracks, the city of Vienna spreads out below him.

EXT. VIENNESE STREET - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: NOVEMBER 9TH, 1938, VIENNA, GERMAN REICH

Lise's sister (Robert Frisch's mother), GUSTI, and her husband JUSTINIAN bid Hahn farewell at the doorstep to their building.

GUSTI

When will you see Lise?

HAHN  
 Saturday. Or Sunday at the latest.  
 Niels will be hosting all of us.

GUSTI  
 So our Otto will be there too?

HAHN  
 I believe so.

Gusti and Justinian glance to each other with anxious grins.

GUSTI  
 Can you carry a letter to each of  
 them?

She holds out two sealed envelopes, eyes pleading. Hahn glances up and down the street. It's empty, except for three youths sauntering down the other side.

Hahn accepts the letters and slips them into his jacket.

GUSTI (CONT'D)  
 Thank you. Send them our love.

HAHN  
 I will.

GUSTI  
 And take care of yourself.

HAHN  
 I will. And you as well.

Hahn puts on a top hat, shakes hands with both, and turns to walk down the lamplit street.

Gusti and Justinian disappear into their old, stone apartment building.

In the distance, glass shatters. Hahn turns, searching for the source of the disturbance.

A police buggy drones past him. Laughter faintly rings out from inside.

SMASH.

Hahn spins. A Nazi youth hooligan picks up a second brick and throws it.

SMASH. A second window shatters. Glass rains down on the street.

Hahn looks between the hooligans and the police buggy as it slows down beside them.

A pair of BROWNSHIRTS step out of the car. Instead of moving towards the brick throwers, they march towards Gusti's doorway. They barge through and disappear from Hahn's sight.

SMASH. The remains of a third window sprinkle onto the street.

Hahn stands, frozen, waiting...

The Brownshirts reappear, forcefully shoving Justinian out into the street.

Finally, Hahn moves, trance-like, back towards the police car.

The Brownshirts push Justinian into the car, slamming his head against the door on the way.

Hahn breaks into a run.

The car speeds away.

HOOLIGAN  
Hey! Old man!

Hahn turns towards the youths, wide-eyed. His heavy breathing fogs before his face.

The hooligan moves towards him, peering suspiciously. Hahn nervously rubs his free hand against his coat.

HOOLIGAN (CONT'D)  
Want a throw?

He offers a brick.

Hahn glances at the brick, then at the hooligan's face. A teenager with a shock of blonde hair.

Hahn shakes his head.

The hooligan shrugs.

HOOLIGAN (CONT'D)  
Your loss.

He turns and hurls. SMASH.

Hahn can only stand and watch.

EXT. NIELS BOHR INSTITUTE, COPENHAGEN - DAY

Lise steps out of a car. Pairs and triads converse here and there along the path to the doors of a great hall. Lise's lips curl excitedly as she walks towards the hall.

*A sign: University of Copenhagen Institute of Physics Conference, November 8-14, 1938*

INT. NIELS BOHR INSTITUTE - DAY

Lise opens the doors, and waves of conversation wash over her. The hall is packed. Lise weaves her way through the crowd, searching through the faces. Many recognize her, nodding and giving token greetings.

Lise beams, at home in the warm embrace of a scientific conference.

EXT. COPENHAGEN TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Lise, Niels, Margrethe, and Frisch stand watching a train pull to a stop. Hordes of people pour off. The deluge becomes a stream, then a trickle.

MARGRETHE

Might he have missed the train?

Lise furrows her brow, craning her head and standing on her toes to look through the dispersing crowd. Her head only rises to the shoulder levels of those surrounding her.

FRISCH

You don't think... The provision wouldn't--

Margrethe silences Frisch with a stern gaze.

The four stand in silence. Finally, Otto Hahn steps out of the train onto the platform. Lise shakes as the tension she was holding in dissipates.

She takes one step forward, then another. She begins to shuffle quickly, nearly running.

LISE

Otto!

Lise reaches Hahn and grabs hold of his hands.

Hahn looks past Lise to Frisch.

HAHN

Robert...

(pause)

I'm afraid I bring terrible news  
about your parents.

INT. NIELS BOHR'S PARLOR, COPENHAGEN - FIRELIGHT

Otto Hahn sits with Lise and Otto Frisch.

FRISCH

They seemed well, though?

HAHN

Yes. Not 4 days ago.

Lise glances nervously between Hahn and Frisch. The Bohrs  
listen quietly nearby.

HAHN (CONT'D)

(carefully)

They were in very good health.

Frisch laughs in anger.

FRISCH

Perhaps my father's good health  
will aid him in Dachau.

Lise reaches out to hold her nephew's hand.

HAHN

I'm very sorry for what happened to  
them.

LISE

(to Frisch)

We must not despair. The prisons  
are so full that they cannot hold  
everyone. Surely they will release  
your father very soon.

Frisch scoffs doubtfully. Silence. Glances exchanged.

NIELS

If there is any need for help in  
planning an emigration...

FRISCH

He's a lawyer.

NIELS  
 (lighthearted)  
 We can branch out. Not everyone has  
 to be a physicist.

LISE  
 My sister has been in contact. I've  
 looked into an application process  
 to Sweden for them.

Silence.

LISE (CONT'D)  
 I didn't think all this was  
 possible...

HAHN  
 (quietly)  
 Well--

Frisch shakes his head vigorously.

FRISCH  
 Enough bad news.

All look to Frisch, nonplussed.

FRISCH (CONT'D)  
 Let's hear something else.  
 (to Hahn)  
 What are you working on?

LISE  
 (uncertainly, to Frisch)  
 Robert, if you'd like, we could go-  
 -

FRISCH  
 No. I need to think about something  
 else.

Silence.

HAHN  
 (clearing throat)  
 Well, I'm following up on Lise's  
 experiments, from before she  
 left...

Frisch snorts. Hahn pauses, uncertain of how to continue.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
 We seem to be finding radioactive  
 isotopes of radium.

NIELS  
Radium?

                  HAHN  
Yes.

                  NIELS  
But that would require two alpha  
decays--

                  LISE  
Which would mean a higher level of  
instability. It doesn't fit with  
our past findings on transuranics.

                  MARGRETHE  
Were you not creating elements  
larger than uranium before?

                  LISE  
Yes.

                  MARGRETHE  
But this is smaller?

                  LISE  
Yes, just slightly. Through decay.  
But more than expected.

                  HAHN  
Regardless, we should think to  
publish soon. Waiting could give  
precedence to Paris.

                  LISE  
Publish? It's incomplete...

                  HAHN  
Then we'll publish in two parts--

                  LISE  
We ask them to retract work  
findings that seem to result from  
shoddy work. Publishing this would  
be hypocritical.

Hahn glances between Niels, who shrugs in affirmation, and  
Frisch, who stares into the fireplace.

                  LISE (CONT'D)  
There isn't a proper explanation  
for what's happening yet.

Hahn shifts his weight.

HAHN

The explanation need not be simultaneous. And if our observations are wrong, we can simply retract in our next paper--

LISE

That's silly. It doesn't quite make sense.

HAHN

What does make sense?

This draws Frisch back from his repose. He nods sharply.

Lise shakes her head.

LISE

It needs to be retested. If the results come out the same, then you should publish. And I'll have to think of some way to explain it.

Otto shifts uncomfortably. He sighs.

HAHN

We've fallen behind.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, COPENHAGEN - DAY

Hahn prepares to board his train. He glances around, as though waiting for someone.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

All aboard!

Hahn glances around again, his face falling. He moves toward the train door.

LISE

(shouting, running)  
Otto!

HAHN

Lise!

LISE

You will still write, won't you?

HAHN

Of course.

LISE  
As soon as you start the tests?

Hahn nods.

LISE (CONT'D)  
You must promise me. I don't have  
much else--

HAHN  
I promise.

The train horn whistles, the engine stirs.

HAHN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. For everything that  
happened.

LISE  
It's... It's all right. I'll be  
alright. Oh! I almost forgot...

Lise pulls out the diamond ring.

HAHN  
Oh, there's no need...

LISE  
Take it. I insist.  
(smiling)  
In case you need to bribe the  
border guards...

Hahn smiles.

HAHN  
Keep it. You may need it more than  
I.

LISE  
Well... Goodbye again.

HAHN  
Goodbye.

Hahn and Lise stand together, awkwardly. Hahn boards the now  
slow-moving train.

LISE  
Give Edith my regards! I hope she  
feels well soon!

Hahn nods and smiles sadly as the train whisks him away.

INT. TRAIN - DUSK

Lise sits in a window seat, gazing out. Frisch stands glumly with his hands in his pockets.

The train begins to move and the station slides by. Frisch raises a hand to wave.

LISE (V.O.)  
 You should come for Christmas. It's  
 pleasant there. When your parents  
 come it will be like a new home.

FRISCH (V.O.)  
 I'll be there.

Frisch disappears into the distance.

Lise clutches her suitcase, alone again.

INT. LISE'S HOME, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN - DAY

Lise opens a letter from Otto Hahn.

*"19.12.38 Monday evening, the lab.*

*Liebe Lise! It is now just 11PM; at 11:45 Strassmann is coming back so that I can eventually go home. Actually there is something about the radium isotopes that is so remarkable that for now we are telling only you: They can be separated from all elements except barium. All reactions are consistent with radium. Only one is not -- unless there are very unusual coincidences: the fractionation doesn't work. Our Radium isotopes act like Barium."*

Lise glances over at a rudimentary periodic table of the elements. Her finger traces from the highest atomic number, 92, Uranium, over to 88, Radium, and then up one row to 56, Barium.

Lise places the letter back in the envelope, thinking. She carefully places the letter into a packed suitcase and closes the lid.

INT. SWEDISH HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

Light snow falls outside of a window.

Frisch descends a set of stairs, looking around expectantly for his Aunt Lise's greeting.

Lise sits at a table, breakfast pushed aside, poring over a letter.

Frisch walks cautiously toward Lise.

LISE  
(muttering)  
Barium... Barium...

Frisch, nearly at the table, tries to hide disappointment at being ignored.

FRISCH  
Aunt Lise?

LISE  
(surprised)  
Robert!

FRISCH  
It's great to see you--

LISE  
Yes, yes. Perhaps you could help make sense of this letter. It's from Hahn. Here.

Frisch dutifully reads. Lise stands.

FRISCH  
"Actually there is something about the 'radium isotopes' that is so remarkable that for now we are telling only you. ... Our Radium isotopes act like Barium."

Frisch pauses and looks up at Lise, who is now pacing.

FRISCH (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"Perhaps you can come up with some sort of fantastic explanation. We knew ourselves that uranium can't actually burst apart into barium."

LISE  
Barium... I don't believe it. How could you chip off 100 particles from a uranium nucleus? Barium?

FRISCH  
Perhaps it's an error.

LISE  
No, no. Hahn is too good a chemist  
for that.

FRISCH  
(relieved)  
I'm glad to see you've been keeping  
busy...

Lise does not respond. She stares out a window.

FRISCH (CONT'D)  
Aunt Lise?

LISE  
What's that?

FRISCH  
It's... it's good to see you're  
keeping up with your work.

LISE  
Well, this can hardly be called  
work...

FRISCH  
(worried)  
Would you like to go outside?

LISE  
In the snow?

FRISCH  
Yes. I brought skis with me. Do you  
think we could explore the woods?

LISE  
It would easier to discuss this  
here.

FRISCH  
We can talk as we go. It will be  
good for us.

LISE  
Well, I suppose just for a short  
walk...

She stands and stuffs the letter in her pocket.

FRISCH

Great. Do you have skis?

LISE

No, no. I can walk as fast as you can ski.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Sunlight slants down through bare tree branches. Snow covers the ground. Frisch skis along while Lise walks beside, rereading the letter once again.

FRISCH

Have you been here before?

Lise raises her eyes just long enough to glance around and avoid a low branch.

LISE

(distracted)

I think so. It's hard to recognize amidst the snow.

FRISCH

Maybe it would be easier if you looked.

LISE

If you don't have anything productive to add to the conversation, I can find my own way perfectly well.

Frisch chuckles and stops to adjust a ski.

Lise turns and watches him, taking her eyes off the letter's pages for a moment.

Slowly, melting snow on Frisch's hat forms a liquid drop. The drop crawls down the edge of the hat and falls... splattering on the ski.

Lise remembers...

HAHN (V.O.)

*Stability is an illusion.*

LISE

It shouldn't be...

Lise sits down on a tree stump, pulling out a pen and paper. Frisch looks up.

FRISCH

What?

Lise scribbles furiously.

LISE

Go on ahead if you'd like.

FRISCH

What shouldn't?

Lise looks up.

LISE

The atom. Uranium. It shouldn't split. That would mean all of the transuranic work that we've done is wrong.

FRISCH

Of course. That would be--

LISE

But... if it could actually split... Into multiple, smaller pieces perhaps... Before doing so, the magnetic repulsion of the protons to each other, as the nucleus becomes larger than uranium...

Frisch shuffles over, peering at Lise's first notes. Finally, the importance of the idea dawns on him.

FRISCH

It might overcome the nuclear force?

LISE

Well, yes. If pushed, of course.

FRISCH

...By bombardment.

He pulls out a pen and paper of his own.

LISE

...A drop, overcoming its surface tension... If Bohr is right... For the process to work, the atom cannot be hard. It must be like a liquid drop.

FRISCH  
 (drawing)  
 Like this?

Frisch holds up a diagram:

First: a sphere, with an approaching dot.

Second: the dot impacting the sphere, dimpling into its surface, forming a cigar shape.

Third: the sphere deforming, with the impacting particle causing a split down the middle.

And fourth: two separate, smaller spheres.

LISE  
 Perhaps... Perhaps it could be true. If it were to be barium, the other fragment might be... krypton. 92 minus 56 is 36. But the barium and krypton nuclei would repel each other... And as soon as they overcome the nuclear force to split--

FRISCH  
 (finishing the thought)  
 They will fly apart, from the repelling magnetic force...  
 (calculating)  
 ...By approximately 200 mega-electron-volts. But where does that kinetic energy come from?

LISE  
 It occurs in radioactive decay as well... Particles expelled with energy, from a slight difference in--

BOTH  
 (simultaneous)  
 Mass!

FRISCH  
 Yes!

LISE  
 (excitedly scribbling)  
 Yes. Yes.

FRISCH

When we get back, I can find the nuclear binding energies for barium and krypton, and we can sum them..

LISE

3.3 times 10 to the negative 28th Kilograms. About one-fifth of a proton.

FRISCH

(surprised)

What's that?

LISE

That's the difference between the summed masses and the mass of uranium...

FRISCH

You memorized the packing fractions--

LISE

Of course. It is my job.

FRISCH

(stunned)

That's... That's...

LISE

That's the source of energy.

FRISCH

The mass has disappeared--

LISE

And the energy has appeared. The mass has been converted into energy, by  $E=mc^2$ --

FRISCH

Does it fit?

LISE

The lost mass... is equivalent to about 200 Mega-electron-volts. The same.

FRISCH

That is enormous...

Lise looks up from her calculations.

LISE  
 (pondering, cautiously)  
 Perhaps. Perhaps. Fix your skis. I  
 must write to Hahn.

Lise smiles. Wide. Free.

She looks around. The sun shines down, its light gleaming on  
 the fresh snow.

LISE (CONT'D)  
 I don't know...

FRISCH  
 Know what?

LISE  
 I don't know if I've been here  
 before.

EXT. COPENHAGEN DOCK - DAY

Frisch excitedly follows Niels Bohr towards a large cruise  
 ship.

NIELS  
 Oh what idiots we have all been!  
 But this is wonderful! This is just  
 as it must be! Have you and Lise  
 written a paper about it?

FRISCH  
 Not yet. We copied the  
 calculations. If you have time, you  
 might find them interesting--

The ship's horn blows.

Frisch opens his briefcase and pulls out two carefully folded  
 sheets of paper.

Niels takes the papers as the horn blows again, and the sound  
 turns into a...

INT. FRISCH'S OFFICE, COPENHAGEN

Ringin phone. Frisch picks up.

INTERCUT - INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

As Lise dictates over the phone, Frisch types.

LISE  
Disintegration of Uranium by  
Neutrons: A New Type of Nuclear  
Reaction.

INTERCUT - INT. SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

Niels Bohr looks over Lise's papers.

LISE (V.O.)  
...Hahn and Strassmann were forced  
to conclude that isotopes of barium  
( $Z = 56$ )  
are formed as a consequence of the  
bombardment of uranium  
( $Z = 92$ )  
with neutrons...

EXT. SHIP ON THE OCEAN - NIGHT

The ship pitches to and fro in a mighty squall. Niels gazes through a doorway at the dark, rainy seas with dawning realization. Rain pours down on the deck, droplets spitting and splashing against steel.

LISE (V.O.)  
The formation of elements much  
below uranium has been considered  
before, but was always rejected for  
physical reasons....

The ship's bow CRASHES down through a massive wave, sending spray in all directions.

LISE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
... the particles in a heavy  
nucleus would be expected to move  
in a collective way which has some  
resemblance to the movement of a  
liquid drop.

INT. GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - DAY

A sign:

*GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY PRESENTS THE AMERICAN CONFERENCE  
OF PHYSICS.*

*GUEST SPEAKER 5PM, JAN. 26, 1939, ROOM 209 IN THE HALL OF  
GOVERNMENT:*

*DR. NIELS BOHR, UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN INSTITUTE FOR  
THEORETICAL PHYSICS.*

Niels Bohr moves to the front of the classroom to light applause. Two dozen physicists and chemists fill the room, listening attentively.

LISE (V.O.)

If the movement is made sufficiently violent, such a drop may divide itself into two smaller drops.

NIELS

...The uranium atom had split. It had divided in two.

Murmurs.

LISE (V.O.)

Next... These two nuclei will repel each other and should gain a total kinetic energy of circa 200 Mega-electron volts, as calculated from nuclear radius and charge...

NIELS

...In this, a relatively large amount of energy would be released...

Louder murmurs. At the back of the audience, two scientists jump up and take strides towards the exit, bursting into a run as they reach the doors.

EXT. NOBEL INSTITUTE FOR PHYSICS, STOCKHOLM - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "Summer, 1943"

Lise carrying a briefcase, purposefully strides down a curved path towards the Nobel Institute for Experimental Physics.

INT. LISE'S OFFICE, STOCKHOLM - DAY

Lise sets down a briefcase and carefully lifts out an organized stack of papers. She sets it on top of her clean desk.

Little has changed in the office. It's still sparse, with just the same few simple instruments atop a table pushed against the wall, collecting dust.

Lise to begin reading, but her gaze is caught by an envelope left in the middle of the desk.

Her brow furrows.

She habitually inspects the seal (which seems unopened), opens it and reads:

*Liebe Lise,  
... well-paid work in England and perhaps in America...  
...possible military applications...  
...Heisenberg leads a Nazi effort...  
...Perhaps we can both help to end this war...  
Yours, Robert Frisch*

Her breath catches, then quickens. She glances around at her workspace, at what little she has compared to her lab in Berlin. For a moment, she considers.

She pulls over a sheet of paper and writes.

*Liebe Robert,  
I will have nothing to do with a bomb.*

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Peace.

Brilliant stars line the night sky.

Barely visible, a construction tower of metal beams stands silhouetted against the horizon.

SUPERIMPOSE: NEW MEXICO, 1945

Miles away...

IN A BUNKER

Robert Frisch switches off the lights.

He moves towards the reinforced window slit. Other SCIENTISTS, crowd behind him, looking out into the night at the distant lonely tower.

A radio crackles with static, then a voice comes through

COUNTDOWN (O.S.)  
Ten... nine... eight...

Scientists pull goggles over their heads. Frisch reaches for his own.

COUNTDOWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Seven... Six... Fi--

The voice descends into static.

Frisch fumbles with his goggles. The strap doesn't seem to fit above his ears.

COUNTDOWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
...Two... One... Zero...

Frisch yanks the goggles down over his eyes with a hiss of pain, shaking his head. He looks back out towards the tower as the scientists murmur around him. Did he miss it?

He leans closer...

The window turns white.

Frisch shields his eyes, then gazes in shock at the world's first atomic explosion.

The earth trembles. The heavens boil.

Behind him, men cheer. But Frisch's eyes twitch, as a deep sorrow creeps in.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE - TRUMAN ON HIROSHIMA, AUGUST 6TH 1945

PRESIDENT TRUMAN  
A short time ago, an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. That bomb has more power than 20,000 tons of TNT. The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many-fold. And the end is not yet.

Interspersed with SERIES OF SHOTS - ATOMIC BOMB EFFECTS/MANHATTAN PROJECT

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, utterly destroyed.

Buildings flattened, charred remains.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form, these bombs are now in production.  
(MORE)

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
 And even more powerful forms are in  
 development.

Images of Manhattan project development.

Six men stand around a complicated sphere with dozens of  
 wires and explosives.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
 We are now prepared to destroy more  
 rapidly and completely every  
 productive enterprise the Japanese  
 have in any city. We shall destroy  
 their docks, their factories, and  
 their communications. Let there be  
 no mistake, we shall completely  
 destroy Japan's power to make war.

Burn victims lie in makeshift field hospitals amidst the  
 wreckage.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
 It was to spare the Japanese people  
 from utter destruction that the  
 ultimatum of July the 26th was  
 issued at Potsdam. Their leaders  
 promptly rejected that ultimatum.  
 If they do not accept our terms  
 they may expect a rain of ruin from  
 the air the like of which has never  
 been seen on this earth.

American planes drop bombs.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
 Behind this air attack will follow  
 sea and land forces in such numbers  
 and power as they have not yet seen  
 and with the fighting skill of  
 which they are already well aware.

American troops charge onto a beach.

They hoist the flag above Iwo Jima.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)  
 We have spent more than two billion  
 dollars on the greatest scientific  
 gamble in history, and we have won.

Frisch shakes hands with Manhattan project leaders, including  
 OPPENHEIMER and GROVES.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)

But the greatest marvel is not the size of the enterprise, its secrecy or its cost, but the achievement of scientific brains in making it work. And hardly less marvelous has been the capacity of industry to design and of labor to operate the machines and methods to do things never done before. Both science and industry worked together under the direction of the United States Army, which achieved a unique success in an amazingly short time.

Group image of the chief scientists of the Manhattan project. Oppenheimer, TELLER, BETHE, FRANCK, FEYNMAN, and even Frisch and Bohr among them.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN (CONT'D)

It is doubtful if such another combination could be got together in the world. What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history.

EXT. FARM HALL, REPURPOSED ESTATE-PRISON IN ENGLAND - DAY

An English newspaper boy delivers a stack of Daily Express newspapers. The newspapers make their way through the complex, from the gate guard to a transport wagon to the office of the captain of the guard, then split into smaller batches.

One batch goes to the on-duty guard company. One guardsman takes two copies and walks down a dark hallway. He turns a corner and opens a doorway leading into a parlor room.

There, he hands the second copy to another guard standing in by doorway. Both stare at the cover.

In the parlor, the imprisoned German scientists Otto Hahn, Werner Heisenberg, Max Von Laue, and Carl von Weizsäcker sit at a table playing cards.

They glance over toward the unusually silent guards. Slowly, one guard opens a paper, revealing the front page headline to the scientists;

*THE BOMB THAT HAS*

*CHANGED THE WORLD*

*Japs told 'Now quit' / 20,000 tons in golf ball*

*In God's mercy we outran Germany*

Hahn stares at the paper, slowly drops his cards. Heisenberg turns and reads the title.

HEISENBERG  
(quietly)  
So it is true.

Hahn slowly raises a hand to cover his face. Max Von Laue reaches out a hand to steady Hahn as he silently grieves in his guilt.

EXT. LISE'S HOME, STOCKHOLM - DAWN

Lise sleeps. The phone rings from her desk. She wakes, confused, and glances out at the faint early light through the window. The phone rings again. Lise slowly gets up and makes her way over to the desk. She picks up;

LISE  
Hello?

REPORTER (O.S.)  
Lise Meitner?

LISE  
Yes?

REPORTER (O.S.)  
I'm a reporter for *Expressen*. I'd like to ask you a few questions about your work regarding the uranium bomb.

LISE  
What's that?

REPORTER (O.S.)  
The first uranium bomb used over Hiroshima, Japan. The Americans say the bomb's energy comes from fission, the splitting of an atom...

Lise stands silently listening to the phone, stunned.

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Hello? Dr. Meitner?

FADE TO BLACK:

TEXT ON SCREEN:

*In March, 1940, Robert Frisch co-authored the first report on the properties of a radioactive "Super-bomb." Frisch's father was released from Dachau and fled to Sweden with Frisch's mother.*

*Otto Hahn continued researching uranium fission throughout World War II, but did not directly work on the German bomb project. Hahn was captured by Allied forces under operation ALSOS in 1945 and taken to Farm Hall in England. He was released after the war and returned to Germany.*

*Lise Meitner remained in Sweden for most of the rest of her life. Despite 47 nominations in 25 years, she never won a Nobel prize. In 1997, the artificial element 109 was named Meitnerium in her honor.*

END TEXT ON SCREEN:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: WINTER, 1968

Frisch stands alone, staring down at a freshly turned gravesite. A GRAVEYARD MANAGER approaches.

GRAVEYARD MANAGER

These are the words you wanted?

Frisch nods.

The men lower the stone into the ground.

It reads:

*LISE*

*MEITNER*

*1878-1968*

*A physicist*

*who never lost*

*her humanity*

A single drop of rain falls, splattering, splitting on the stone.

END