

Bertolt Brecht Goes Hollywood

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FADE IN:

INT. HUAC CONFERENCE ROOM - WASHINGTON DC - DAY - 1947

BERTOLT BRECHT (45), a small, gaunt German, timidly sits before the intimidating House Un-American Affairs committee. He wears wire-rimmed glasses and a new suit. Nervously fumbling his cigar.

ROWDY REPORTERS crowd the hearing. Shoving matches break out, as photographers try to get a good shot of Brecht.

ROBERT STRIPLING (35), the clean-cut, chief investigator, addresses Brecht before the distinguished panel. Including Chairman J. PARNELL THOMAS (65), a New Jersey mobster, and freshman Congressman Richard Nixon (30).

ROBERT STRIPLING
Please state your name for the
record.

Brecht speaks pidgin English with a heavy accent. He makes the hard rasping "ch" sound in his name.

BRECHT
Bertolt Brecht.

ROBERT STRIPLING
(rasping the "ch")
Brecht?

BRECHT
Ya, Brecht.

Stripling rasps the "ch" sound several times. Making J. Parnell Thomas involuntarily swallow.

BARTLEY CRUM (28), Brecht's clean-cut attorney, quietly consults with his client.

BARTLEY CRUM
Since when do you speak pidgin
English?

Brecht shoots him a wicked smile and winks.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Please state your occupation?

BRECHT
(slowly)
I am poet und playwright.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 Why did you come to the United
 States, Mr. Brecht?

The rasping "ch" sounds makes Nixon involuntarily swallow.

BRECHT
 To escape government persecution.

EXT. ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL - ROME - DAY - 1616

A Papal procession steps through cathedral doors. Washed in a golden, Caravaggio-esque light.

VATICAN GUARDS hold a bound GALILEO (50) before a zealous mob. He's your typical Renaissance man with long beard and flowing robes.

The mob swarms the steps. Desperate for a glance of the Pope or a chance to hear his holy voice.

Amidst a musical crescendo, POPE PAUL IV (75) reveals himself in a swirl of ceremonial robes, crucifixes and incense. The crowd cheers. Holding up his arms, they become silent. An ancient, SYPHILITIC CARDINAL hands Pope Paul IV an ornate scroll. The Pope unrolls it ceremonially.

POPE PAUL IV
 (in Latin with subtitles)
 In the name of Jesus Christ, our
 Lord and God, I, Pope Paul IV,
 proclaim the writings of Galileo
 Galilei as heresy to the Holy See.
 (beat)
 Henceforth, all his teachings which
 contradict classical thought and
 holy writ shall forever be banned.
 Upon threat of excommunication and
 death.

Vatican guards burn Galileo's life work. Parchment portraying Galileo's view of the solar system flash into heat and light. Tears fill Galileo's eyes. Smoke obscures his face.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - MUNICH - NIGHT - 1933

The marquee reads (in German), The Threepenny Opera. Encore Performance. Written by Bertolt Brecht. Music by Kurt Weill.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - MUNICH - NIGHT

The cultural event of the year. A sold-out house. On stage, amidst a Soho marketplace of beggars, thieves and whores, Brecht's wife, HELENE WEIGEL (45) proclaims the infamy of Mac the Knife. She's a thin, Eastern European woman with a handsome face.

HELENE

(singing)

*And the shark he has teeth, And
there they are for all to see.
And Macheath he has his knife, But
no one knows where it may be.*

(beat)

*When the shark has had his dinner,
There is blood upon his fins. But
Macheath he has his gloves on, They
say nothing of his sins.*

EXT. REICHSTAG COURTYARD - MUNICH - NIGHT

A MOB swirls around more burning books. Some bearing Brecht's name. Flames engulf Germany's House of Representatives.

NAZI BROWN-SHIRT

(in German with subtitles)

The Communists have set fire to the Reichstag. Trying to take the government by force.

The Nazis don't hesitate to use violence. A man's beaten with clubs. Dobermans bare their teeth on short leash. Others fall and are trampled. A horseman drags a corpse through the square.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - MUNICH - NIGHT

The performance ends. Another smash hit. The audience gives a standing ovation. The actors take their bows.

INT. OPERA HOUSE BACKSTAGE - MUNICH - NIGHT

Amidst the APPLAUSE, Brecht listens to the radio in disbelief. Wearing his uniform of workman's cover-alls and leather jacket. (They speak in German with subtitles).

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Communist sympathizers continue to wreak havoc and chaos in the square.

(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Police and soldiers desperately
 attempt to secure the peace before
 more lives are lost.

LEON & MARTA FEUCHTWANGER (60's), a wealthy couple, rush
 backstage. Fear in their eyes. They find Helene waiting to
 take her bow.

HELENE
 What's wrong?

Brecht approaches.

BRECHT
 What's going on? The radio reports
 make no sense.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER
 The Nazis have set fire to the
 Reichstag. They're blaming the
 Communists. Hitler is sure to start
 making arrests. We're leaving
 immediately and suggest you do the
 same.

BRECHT
 Where will you go?

LEON FEUCHTWANGER
 Austria for now. Then America. You
 should join us there.

They exchange good-byes and exit. Helene and Brecht share a
 long, tense look. Frozen with fear.

The audience demands their appearance. Distant SHOUTING and
 WHISTLES pierce the pounding APPLAUSE.

Grabbing hands, Brecht and Helene bolt out the backstage
 door. The GERMAN STAGE MANAGER scurries back to find them.
 Finding the stage door hanging open.

INT. HUAC CONFERENCE ROOM - WASHINGTON DC - DAY - 1947

Flashbulbs ERUPT--blinding Brecht. He cautiously addresses
 the HUAC committee.

BRECHT
 To stay in Nazi Germany is no
 option.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Mr. Brecht, have you ever written
revolutionary plays or poems?

Brecht takes a long drag from his cigar.

BRECHT
Yes. To fight Hitler. To overthrow
Fascists.

The gallery HOOTS and HOLLERS. The gavel BANGS.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Have you ever heard of a journal
called *The New Masses*?

BRECHT
I'm sorry. My English is no good.
Could you say again?

ROBERT STRIPLING
(slowly and
condescendingly)
Have you ever heard of a journal
called *The New Masses*?

BRECHT
I not understand. My English is no
good.

Bartley Crum can't suppress a smile.

ROBERT STRIPLING
(perturbed)
Yes, I know. You've said that
already. I do hope you'll be more
cooperative than our previous
witnesses.

J. PARNELL THOMAS
(with a Jersey accent)
Assign an interpreter for Mr.
Brecht.

Stripling motions to BAUMGARDT, a man who could be Brecht's
twin. He shakes Brecht's hand.

BAUMGARDT
(in German with subtitles)
You're far from home.

BRECHT
(in German with subtitles)
I'm a lamb who's lost my way.

BAUMGARDT
 (in German with subtitles)
 Be careful here. These men are
 butchers

ROBERT STRIPLING
 (exasperated)
 When you two get around to it, I'd
 like you to answer my question.

BAUMGARDT
 (in German with subtitles)
 They want to know if you've paid up
 your *New Masses* subscription.

Brecht suppresses a smile.

BRECHT
 (to Stripling)
 I hear of *New Masses*.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 I should think so. It's a known
 Communist journal. Have you
 submitted work to them for
 publication?

BAUMGARDT
 (in German with subtitles)
 I could go through the motions of
 translating all that but you're
 English is better than mine.

Brecht examines the band of his Cuban cigar.

BRECHT
 Not that I remember.

Stripling thinks he's lying.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 How long have you been in our great
 country, Mr. Brecht?

Stripling gives the "ch" extra emphasis. The entire committee
 swallows.

BRECHT
 Seven years. God bless America.

LAUGHTER roars through the peanut gallery.

EXT. TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILROAD - SIBERIA - DAY - 1941

A long train plows through the barren tundra.

INT. TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILCAR - SIBERIA - DAY

Helene and her children, STEFAN (12) and BARBARA (9), sleep soundly in the rattling railcar. RUTH BERLAU (30), Brecht's secretary, sleeps next to them. She has an unusual beauty with huge, clear eyes and strong nose. Her youthful idealism keeps Brecht's cynicism in check. Brecht's awake. Quietly scribbling in his journal.

BRECHT (V.O.)

Why must I do everything the hard way? Like traveling to America via Siberia.

(beat)

But as Galileo said, "When there are obstacles, the shortest distance between two points is not necessarily a straight line."

(beat)

It's the price we pay for my reluctance to leave Europe. There are no safe havens left.

Brecht's exhausted. Rubbing his eyes, he lies his head down.

INT. GALILEO'S STUDY - FLORENCE - DAY - 1610

Vertical slats of golden light stream through the dark interior. Red fabric drapes along chocolate walls in the stark room.

Brecht sleeps at the desk. Holding a quill pen. A withered hand clasps his shoulder and shakes him awake.

GALILEO

Time to wake. There's plenty of work yet.

Brecht groggily comes around. Carefully examining his new surroundings.

BRECHT

It's just as I imagined.

GALILEO

Surprised?

BRECHT

I guess not.

Brecht stands and explores the room. He touches Galileo's telescope, his hydrostatic balance and thermoscope. Making sure they're real.

GALILEO

Look all you want but don't disrupt anything. My research is very delicate and I like my things just so.

A proportional compass rests heavily in Brecht's hands.

BRECHT

I'm the same way. So tell me something about yourself?

GALILEO

What can I tell that you don't already know?

BRECHT

(thinking a moment)
Not much, I guess.

Galileo condescendingly pats Brecht's cheek.

GALILEO

I knew you were a smart boy.

Galileo takes the compass and puts it back where it belongs.

GALILEO (CONT'D)

I was wondering when someone would finally dramatize my life.

BRECHT

It's quite a compelling story. I'm surprised myself it's taken this long.

Galileo shuffles through Brecht's notes and papers. Scrutinizing his poor penmanship.

GALILEO

I'm not sure I like the direction you're going, however.

BRECHT

Should I care?

The look on Galileo's face says he should.

GALILEO

It's my story.

Brecht takes the papers back. Returning them to their rightful place.

BRECHT

It's mine now.

Galileo shoots Brecht an "Oh? A tough guy!" look.

GALILEO

I don't like others appropriating my work.

BRECHT

(accusingly)

Like your telescope?

Galileo shoots Brecht a cautious look. How much does he know?

BRECHT (CONT'D)

When you sold the patent to the governors of Venice, you conveniently neglected to tell them Hans Lippershey had already invented it.

GALILEO

They were fools. And my improvements were critical. I could see Saturn with my telescope. Lippershey could barely watch his neighbor bathe across the street.

Brecht LAUGHS.

GALILEO (CONT'D)

You think that's funny? You weren't laughing when John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* became your *Threepenny*.

Brecht turns sour. Galileo smiles.

GALILEO (CONT'D)

It wasn't even your idea to adapt it.

BRECHT

You've no idea what it was like before I got involved. And it was my idea to include Kurt Weill.

GALILEO
 (mockingly)
 That takes a genius?

BRECHT
 I polished that turd into a pot of
 gold. Sure, they weren't all my
 ideas but I was the filter through
 which they flowed. I made all the
 final decisions.

Galileo smiles victoriously. Brecht concedes the point.

BRECHT (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 And you're a know-it-all bastard.

EXT. SAN PEDRO HARBOR - LOS ANGELES - DAY - 1941

A BOAT HORN blares. Brecht steps off the gangplank with
 Helene on one arm and Ruth on the other. The children bring
 up the rear.

Marta Feuchtwanger excitedly waits to greet them. Wearing a
 frilly, yellow sundress. FRITZ LANG (50) also waits to greet
 them. An old-school director who carries himself like a
 Prussian general. Monocle and all.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 It's so good to see you. How was
 your trip?

BRECHT
 Long and endless.

Lang shakes Brecht's hand.

FRITZ LANG
 Welcome to the City of Angels.

BRECHT
 Thank you, Fritz. We owe a great
 debt to both of you. Without your
 letters, we'd have never passed
 Immigration.

Marta kisses each family member. She doesn't know Ruth, so
 only shakes her hand. Who is this woman?

BRECHT (CONT'D)
 This is Ruth Berlau. My assistant.
 (taking a deep breath)
 (MORE)

BRECHT (CONT'D)

It feels good to finally be
somewhere.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

We're not there yet. We've a good
hour in the car. I found the cutest
little place for you in Hollywood.
You'll just love it. It's very
California.

HELENE

That's a good thing, I presume?

They walk towards Marta's car. Seagulls dive bomb them
looking for food. Brecht stops dead in his tracks. Shocked by
a monstrous atrocity.

BRECHT

(pointing)

What in the world is that?

A large billboard shows a young woman wearing an apron,
holding a Coke and a slice of pie. *Nothing's more American
than Coke and Apple Pie.*

HELENE

Why would anyone build something so
hideous?

FRITZ LANG

The obvious one. Money. Don't
worry. You'll get use to them.

BRECHT

That worries me even more.

They start walking again.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

Leon has already arranged a meeting
for you at MGM. I don't think
you'll have any trouble finding
work here.

BRECHT

But I don't have any ideas for
film.

RUTH

Don't worry. Inspiration will come
easy inside the belly of the whale.

Brecht LAUGHS.

HELENE

What about *The Life of Galileo*?
That would be easy to adapt.

Brecht attempts to answer but Ruth cuts him off.

RUTH

That work is intended solely for
the theater. Cameras would only
debase its message.

Helene's put off by this remark but Brecht agrees, as they
arrive at Marta's car.

FRITZ LANG

Marta's in charge of you now. I
must get back to work. Welcome to
your exile in paradise. Call me
once you're settled.

Fritz drives away. The others pile into Marta's car. Marta
speaks to Helene quietly.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

Who's this woman?

HELENE

Brecht acquired another "assistant"
while in Denmark.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

She travels with you? You allow
that?

HELENE

When in exile, one must make
sacrifices.

They pull away. TWO MEN WEARING TRENCH COATS watch them go.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Crowded into Marta's car, Brecht's entourage get their first
good look at LA. Brecht's unimpressed.

A two-car garage under construction dwarfs the house it's
intended for.

There's a yard sale out front. Selling crap not fit for a
landfill.

People swarm a new car dealership. Mesmerized by the shiny
sheet-metal. Price tags scrawled on the windshields.

One family lives out of their car. Curtains sewn for the windows. A laundry line hangs from the car to a nearby tree.

They drive past a billboard displaying the latest Buick. *Get there in style or don't go at all.*

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - ARGYLE STREET - DAY

Marta opens the door. Brecht's extended family slowly wander through the furnished, craftsman-style home. Every inch crammed with overly feminine decorations; doilies, dried flowers and other estrogen-charged knick-knacks.

HELENE

(aghast)

It's...stunning.

RUTH

(also aghast)

Yes, I've never seen anything like it.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

I'm so glad you approve. I thought a furnished place would suit you best.

Brecht picks up a statuette of a Norman Rockwell boy taking a leak.

BRECHT

It appears I'm the first man to ever to pass through these doors.

RUTH

(teasing)

You could always live at the YMCA, if you crave male companionship.

BRECHT

No, thank you. Christians give me the...how do you say? The willies.

Helene's mesmerized by an atrocious ashtray depicting a Basset Hound with soulful eyes.

HELENE

We'll do our best to make it feel like home.

Brecht examines a tropically-inspired cocktail service. A large, plastic pineapple serves as the ice cube bucket.

BRECHT

We should have gone to New York.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

(defensively)

You'll find living here much easier. It costs less and with all the studios, there's plenty of work.

HELENE

Work is good.

BRECHT

But New York has Broadway. What else is there?

HELENE

Food. Shelter. Clothing.

BRECHT

We could use some money, right now. Our travel expenses were much higher than we anticipated.

HELENE

(under her breath)

Because of the excess baggage.

Ruth's ears burn but says nothing. Helene explores the rest of the house.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

Don't worry. We'll arrange for a monthly stipend from the German Refugee Fund. It's not much but it's a start. I'm sure Helli will find acting work. And whatever Ruth does...

RUTH

(defensively)

I'm a freelance journalist. As well as Brecht's frequent collaborator.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

(cynically)

Yes, I'm sure you are.

(optimistically to Brecht)

Everything will work out just fine. You'll see.

Helene returns from looking around the house. She doesn't look happy.

BRECHT
Helli, what's the matter?

HELENE
I need to speak to you. Alone.

Brecht's afraid to budge.

HELENE (CONT'D)
There are only two bedrooms.

BRECHT
So? We just...

Brecht does the math in his head. Helene storms off to the kitchen. Brecht reluctantly follows. Walking to his death.

HELENE
I cannot tolerate this. I will not share my bed with her and I won't let my children sleep on the floor.

BRECHT
We cannot cast her out on the street.

HELENE
Says who?

BRECHT
Who does she know here? We'll work something out.

Marta and Ruth stand uneasily in the living room. MUFFLED SHOUTS resonate through the walls. The children GIGGLE uneasily. Helene pulls plates out of the cupboard. Momentarily stunned by the ugly pattern, she SMASHES them on the floor. This German woman has gypsy blood.

HELENE
I don't care how many mistresses you keep. But I won't live with them.

BRECHT
(calmly)
But where will she go? And what about my work? You don't want to slow my writing.

HELENE

(breaking more plates)
I don't want to hear you fucking
her next to me. And I don't care
how bourgeoisie that sounds.

BRECHT

(condescendingly)
Monogamy is merely a construct of
the Church and State to enslave the
masses.

HELENE

What? What was that?

Helene puts her ear to Brecht's crotch.

HELENE (CONT'D)

Your dick's trying to tell me
something but your pants muffle the
sound. Maybe you should open your
fly and let it speak freely?

Brecht grabs her shoulders and pulls her up.

BRECHT

Don't push me, Helli.

Helene pushes him. She pushes a second time.

HELENE

What are you going to do? Huh?

She keeps pushing him. Brecht gets angrier with each poke.

HELENE (CONT'D)

Tell me. What will you do?

BRECHT

Stop it. Cut it out. Stop.

Helene SLAPS him. Brecht SLAPS her. She SLAPS him back. A
tense pause. Eyes full of fire. A passionate embrace. Clothes
are TORN. More dishes BREAK, as they thrash about the room in
a sexual frenzy. In the living room, the muffled noises sound
painful.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

Maybe we should go in there? Before
they kill each other.

RUTH

(timidly)
After you.

A thunderous CRASH. Marta doesn't budge. Fearing for her life.

FADE TO
BLACK.

EXT. CITY STREETS - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht walks through his new neighborhood. Jotting down notes on a small pad. He's accosted by ugly, urban images.

An elderly woman walks her old, crippled dog. His hind end strapped to a two-wheel cart.

Sprinklers furiously water every lawn on the block. One attacks Brecht. Making it look like he wet his pants.

A car has hit a fire plug. The driver door hangs open. A geyser of water shoots into the air.

Brecht stands next to a bus stop. Heavy traffic whizzes past. The bus bench advertises the new Pontiac. *Don't Let Anything Get in Your Way.*

The bus pulls up and Brecht gets on. A bus placard shows the sun setting behind a clump of palm trees. *The New LA. Come for the Palm Trees. Stay for Your Health.*

INT. MGM JUNIOR PRODUCER'S OFFICE - CULVER CITY - DAY

A page turns of *Life* magazine reveals a photo of *The Most Typical Farm Family in Ohio*. GOTTFRIED REINHARDT (25) thumbs through the magazine. He sounds like a cross between Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Earl Jones.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

It's an honor meeting you, Mr. Brecht. My father speaks highly of your work back in Germany.

BRECHT

Thank you. I've always admired his theater work. I wish I could concentrate solely on play writing.
(slyly)
But something has to pay the bills.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

(holding up the magazine)
So what do you have today?

BRECHT

We begin with a fight amongst our perfectly-typical farm family. Destroying their model home. Just before the State Fair opens.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

(thinking)

I don't know. It's a little too...cerebral. My boss is more of a "shoot 'em up" kind of guy. Know what I mean?

Brecht doesn't.

BRECHT

I call my next one, *The Bread King Leaves Bread Baking*. It's about the corrupting process that occurs when growing wheat's separated from the act of baking.

Gottfried, having no polite response, says nothing.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

A millionaire enjoys a loaf of bread baked by a farmer's wife. He tries to buy the recipe but is told it's not for sale. She tells him proudly a loaf of bread requires a day of good work, good neighbors, a heart of gold and a healthy appetite.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

Do you have anything else?

BRECHT

My last idea's just a title. But will, surely, write itself.

Brecht allows a dramatic pause.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

Well, what is it?

BRECHT

Boy Meets Girl, So What?

Gottfried's stupefied. Suddenly, they hear LOUIS MAYER (60) burst out of his office screaming.

LOUIS MAYER (O.S.)
 Those sons-of-bitches! I'll kill
 'em!

Brecht and Gottfried rush to the door. Mayer charges down the hallway. Followed closely by his entourage. Mayer's a balding, pear-shaped man. Wearing an expensive, white suit. His assistant, EDDIE MANNIX (40), a former bouncer from the Bronx, syncopates his stride with Mayer.

EDDIE MANNIX
 (with a Bronx accent)
 It's gonna be okay, boss. We can
 handle these guys.

LOUIS MAYER
 I hate fucking writers! After all
 I've done for them and they want to
 thank me by organizing. I'll burn
 this place down before I deal with
 a union.

EDDIE MANNIX
 It'll never happen LM. You won't
 let it.

LOUIS MAYER
 I'll show that Writer's Guild what
 happens when they try to squeeze my
 balls. I'll fuck 'em right in the
 ass!

EDDIE MANNIX
 Sure thing, LM.

Mayer and his entourage turn the corner and are gone.

BRECHT
 (stunned)
 Who was that?

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT
 My boss.

BRECHT
 What was his problem?

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT
 The screenwriters are organizing a
 guild. That kind of thinking isn't
 very popular around here.

BRECHT

They should be commended. Workers everywhere must unite against big business.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

(nervously whispering)

Just be careful where you say that sort of thing.

BRECHT

Truth will always have a voice.
Call me, when you pitch them my ideas.

Brecht parades down the hallway. Shouting the whole way.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Workers of America unite!

Staff members nervously stick their heads into the hallway. Too afraid to even think these thoughts. Gottfried could die.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - ARGYLE ST - NIGHT

An old Victrola plays an American, big band song. Brecht has fashioned a puppet theater to entertain his family. Helene and the children cuddle on a large couch. Enjoying the show.

One sock puppet looks like Hitler, the other like Stalin. A painted backdrop depicts the gothic architecture of the Nuremburg coliseum. Brecht sings a satirical song that's a blend between *Springtime for Hitler* and *The Sound of Music*.

BRECHT

(Hitler singing voice)

*We have no room for intellectuals.
It's part of the Nazi master plan.
We only want ignorant imbeciles. To
populate our vaunted Fatherland.*

(chorus)

*When the Fuhrer tells us, We are
the master race. Heil! Phffft!
Heil! Phffft! Right in the Fuhrer's
face.*

Musical interlude. Brecht pops his head up and smiles. His family LAUGHS. The puppets beat him back down.

A second backdrop falls depicting Red Square surrounded by onion-domed towers. This show's way over-produced.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

(Stalin singing voice)

You cannot eat the pages from a book. Our workers won't be educated men. Gulags hide us from their knowing looks. Ignorance will keep us all Russian.

(chorus)

When Joe Stalin tells us, He has a five-year plan. Hccck-phewt! Hccck-phewt! Right in his iron hands.

Helene LAUGHS. Brecht pops up with his sock puppets.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Everybody sing!

They all grab hands and dance in a circle.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

(singing)

When the Fuhrer tells us, We are the master race. When Joe Stalin tells us, He has a five-year plan. Their pact of non-aggression, We'll never understand. Who will look out for the common man?

They raise their hands in the air and collapse onto the floor exhausted. The Victrola SKIPS silently back and forth.

BARBARA

Let's do it again, Daddy.

Brecht's pooped.

BRECHT

Show's over folks. It's bedtime.

The children MOAN.

HELENE

Your father's right. I had no idea Sock Puppet Theater would keep you up so late.

BARBARA

Can we do it again tomorrow?

BRECHT

Sure. Another day, another encore performancer.

Brecht kisses the children good-night.

HELENE
 (to Brecht)
 Are you coming to bed soon?

BRECHT
 Not quite yet. I want to work on my
 play.

They kiss.

HELENE
 Don't stay up too late. I know how
 grumpy you get, when you're tired.

Helene and the children go upstairs. Brecht sits down at his desk. Opening a large biography about Galileo. A woodcut print shows Galileo in his study. Pointing a telescope at the stars. Brecht makes a few notes. He lays down his glasses and rubs his eyes.

INT. GALILEO'S STUDY - FLORENCE - DAY - 1610

Brecht's glasses rest on the rustic desktop. Galileo picks them up. Examining the quality of the optics.

GALILEO
 These are good. Who made them?

Brecht grabs them back. Putting them on his face. He distances himself from Galileo. Walking to the window and looking out at 15th century Florence.

BRECHT
 Trust me, you wouldn't want to
 visit.

Galileo allows their physical distance to remain. Picks up a copy of *Das Kapital* from Brecht's desk.

GALILEO
 I've been thinking about your *Das Kapital*. Marx is a smart man but I still don't get it.

BRECHT
 (still gazing at the view)
 I'm not surprised. It's a very 20th
 century concept.

Galileo LAUGHS. Brecht looks at him accusingly.

GALILEO

My entire life's been devoted to observation. It's the only way one can discern the truth. And I just don't think Marxism will work.

Brecht goes toe-to-toe with Galileo.

BRECHT

I'll make it very simple. We don't wait for your church's promise of heaven. We create it. Right here. Right now. With our own hands.

Galileo's ready for a scrap.

GALILEO

You need to get those glasses cleaned. That system's based on personal sacrifice for the good of all.

(emphatically)

It goes against human nature!

(beat)

A system built on greed and the tenacious survival of the individual suits man best. If I were you...

BRECHT

But you're not me. You betrayed everything you believed in, when you recanted before the Inquisition.

GALILEO

My reasons are not for you to judge.

BRECHT

But they are. Your weakness interests me greatly. Unhappy is a land that has no heroes.

GALILEO

No, Brecht. Unhappy is the land that needs one.

This thought puts Brecht on his heels. Filling him with doubt.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DAY

Brecht and Fritz Lang slowly walk the shoreline. Pants curled up to their knees. Waves slap their ankles.

FRITZ LANG

You mustn't let this city get you down. It takes time to get started. I spent my entire first year reading newspapers.

Brecht points to a clump of palm trees near a beach hotel.

BRECHT

Palm trees are the perfect metaphor for this city. They're not indigenous. They provide no function, like food or shade. And they're symptomatic of the epidemic bad taste.

A big wave attacks Brecht. Soaking him to the waist.

FRITZ LANG

(repressing a smile)
That's one way to look at it.

BRECHT

It's easy to be smug, when you're a success. We can barely make ends meet. I need to sell something. Anything. Quickly.

FRITZ LANG

Who have you talked to?

BRECHT

I had a good meeting with Gottfried Reinhardt. His boss may option some of my treatments.

FRITZ LANG

(laughing)
Gottfried couldn't option his ass with both hands. Let me make some phone calls. I'll connect you to the right people. The decision makers.

Brecht's stunned and hurt by this comment.

FRITZ LANG (CONT'D)

Did you read about that Nazi, Reinhard Heydrich?

BRECHT

Yes. The Czech underground should be applauded for assassinating The Hangman.

FRITZ LANG

That's what they called him?

BRECHT

Hopefully, it will inspire the underground movement to carry on against the Nazis.

FRITZ LANG

Sounds like the beginning to an excellent story.

BRECHT

You think?

FRITZ LANG

Let me talk to some people. I may be able to scrounge up some development money.

BRECHT

I'll work on anything that may be seen by an audience. And pays cash.

Brecht smiles and allows himself to enjoy the sunny day.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - ARGYLE STREET - DAY

Helene gets the kids ready for school. Overdressing them for the fair weather. There's a knock at the door. It's Ruth. Helene's not pleased.

RUTH

Brecht asked me to retrieve some of his notes. If you don't mind...

HELENE

I do mind. But you may enter anyway.

Helene steps to the side. Letting Ruth pass through. The children kiss Helene and exit. Leaving the two women alone. Ruth digs through Brecht's effects. Unable to find the folder.

RUTH

I empathize with your position. But you must believe me. I never intended this.

HELENE

I don't think you do understand. I don't care about Brecht's body. You, of all people, should know what I mean. But I do care about his heart.

Ruth finds the folder. Helene grabs it.

HELENE (CONT'D)

And I won't let anyone take that from me. Ever.

The two women play tug-of-war with the folder. Brakes SCREECH outside. They run to the window.

HELENE (CONT'D)

Oh my God!

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - ARGYLE STREET - DAY

A car's hit Barbara. She's sprawled on the pavement. Helene runs to her daughter. Ruth follows close behind.

HELENE

My baby! My poor baby?

Helene cradles Barbara's head in her lap. The driver stands by uselessly. Too frightened to do anything.

RUTH

I'll call an ambulance.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brecht rushes into the room. Finding Helene and Ruth waiting pensively. Keeping a good distance from each other. Helene rushes into his arms.

HELENE

What took you so long?

BRECHT

I came as soon as I heard. Will she be all right?

Helene clings to him tightly. SOBBING. Unable to speak.

RUTH

She broke her wrist and has some scrapes. But the doctor said everything else seems fine.

HELENE

What are we going to do? We have no money for hospital.

Helene breaks down again. Brecht musters a new resolve.

INT. CITY BUS - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brecht steps onto the bus. Ready to tackle the world. Beautiful people don't use public transportation here. There's only one seat available. Next to a crazy man with a broad smile and heavily blinking eyes.

Brecht would prefer to sit elsewhere but has no choice. He politely smiles and sits down. Scratching notes on the back of an envelope.

BRECHT (V.O.)

LA is Tahiti in cosmopolitan form.
I look for price tags on everything. A nearby hill or a lemon tree. I feel like a chrysanthemum in a coal mine.

(beat)

If only I were a true fugitive, like a James Cagney character. For this is the last place anyone would look for a Marxist playwright.

Galileo replaces the crazy man. Reading over Brecht's shoulder. Silently mouthing each written word.

BRECHT

Do you mind?

GALILEO

(feigning injury)
I thought you were more collaborative.

No one on the bus notices this conversation or cares.

BRECHT

(defensively)

I am.

(sighing)

I've just spent too much time with my own thoughts lately.

GALILEO

Freud said recognizing the problem's the first step to a real solution.

BRECHT

What do you know about Freud?

Brecht's bothered by their intimate contact.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Do you mind?

Galileo shuffles away.

GALILEO

Helli's right. You do get grumpy, when you're tired.

BRECHT

I must find work. We should have gone to New York. I just know I don't have time for you right now.

Galileo looks hurt.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Don't be such a baby. I'm saving you for something special. Broadway.

Brecht goes back to his writing. Looking up, the old man returns. Smiling broadly as ever. Brecht uncomfortably smiles back and pulls the brake cord.

INT. LOUIS MAYER'S MGM OFFICE - CULVER CITY - DAY

Louis Mayer repeatedly makes the rasping "ch" sound in Brecht's name. Sounding like he's choking. Brecht sits across Mayer's white desk. Everything in the large office is white. Blinding white. Mayer and his stooge, Eddie Mannix, put up a friendly veneer.

LOUIS MAYER

Brecht? How do you spell that?

BRECHT

B-R-E-C-H-T.

LOUIS MAYER

Brecht? Fritz speaks highly of you. He even called you a genius.

(MORE)

LOUIS MAYER (CONT'D)
 Guess I should know who you are.
 Have you ever written for film?

BRECHT
 GW Pabst made an adaptation of my
Threepenny Opera. I also co-wrote a
 documentary called *Kuhle Wampe*.

LOUIS MAYER
 (slowly)
 Kuhle?

BRECHT
 (even slower)
 Wam-pe.
 (normally)
 The name's taken from a district in
 Berlin. It's about the suicide of a
 young, working-class man. But the
 Nazi censor objected to our
 portrayal of suicide as
 commonplace.

Louis Mayer doesn't look happy. Eddie Mannix mirrors him.

EDDIE MANNIX
 It sounds...controversial.

BRECHT
 Is that bad?

LOUIS MAYER
 This is a business and controversy
 hurts sales. If you've gotta
 message? Send it to Western Union.
 (beat)
 Art's only got value, if the
 artist's dead. Know what I mean?
 (rubbing his hands))
 Now whatcha got for me today? And
 make sure you throw in some two
 dollar words. I've never talked to
 a genius before.

Eddie Mannix LAUGHS wickedly. Brown-nosing his boss.

BRECHT
 It's a comedy of mistaken identity
 called, *The Bordello*.

Mayer's intrigued.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

An aging movie star's career wanes. She's told of a bordello where prostitutes impersonate Hollywood stars. Learning her persona's fired, she confronts the Madam who says there's no market for her anymore. To prove herself a viable commodity, she starts to work there.

Eddie Mannix watches Mayer closely for his response. A smile creeps across Mayer's face.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Our hero falls in love with a customer. She reveals her true identity but he doesn't believe her. In fact, he thinks she's delusional.

Mayer breaks out LAUGHING. Eddie Mannix GUFFAWS like a parrot.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

She now has to prove her identity. But how? ID's can be faked. When she shows her auto registration, he thinks she's stolen the car.

LOUIS MAYER

That's ripe. Then what happens.

BRECHT

It comes down to a revolver. Aimed at her lover. Desperate to prove herself. He calmly says the only way he'll believe is if she shoots.
(dramatic pause)
So ka-pow.

Mayer almost falls out of his chair LAUGHING. Mannix does the same thing. Keeping one eye on his boss the whole time.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

So...you like it?

Mayer sits up. Turning stonefaced. Mannix right behind.

LOUIS MAYER

There are four things wrong with that script. The hero's a hooker. It ridicules Hollywood.

(MORE)

LOUIS MAYER (CONT'D)

The leading lady's over forty and
the leading man gets killed at the
end.

BRECHT

(in disbelief)

But...

EDDIE MANNIX

It's just not box office.

LOUIS MAYER

You know Billy Wilder pitched an
idea like that a while back. I
laughed him right off the lot. That
bolshevik helped found the Writer's
Guild, you know.

Brecht smiles uncomfortably.

EXT. MGM BACKLOT - CULVER CITY - DAY

A Chinese parade dragon reveals an army of Egyptian slaves
marching to their stage. Chorus girls share their smokes with
Apache warriors.

Brecht walks silently through the hustle and bustle. His
plainness makes him stand out like a sore thumb. He leans
against a brick wall. Jotting down a quick poem on a napkin.

BRECHT (V.O.)

Each day I stand in line at the
market where lies are sold. And try
to peddle my wares. But the buyers
are not interested in the truth, no
matter how well it's disguised.

A football hits Brecht. Extras in Nazi uniforms call for it.
Brecht throws the ball back (like a girl). The men return to
their game. In the immensity of the backlot, Brecht looks
small and alone.

INT. THE BROWN DERBY RESTAURANT - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Lunchtime rush. Brecht and Fritz Lang enter as people crane
their necks to see if it's "somebody". Their disappointment's
obvious.

They "do lunch" with producer ARNOLD PRESSBURGER (60). An
overweight Austrian, who's completely embraced the American
lifestyle. All the hair on his bald head's concentrated in
his bushy eyebrows.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER
 (chomping on a stogie)
 You must be Brecht. Fritz tells me
 you're a playwright. What have ya
 done?

BRECHT
*Threepenny Opera, Fear and Loathing
 in the Third Reich, Mahoganny--The
 City of Nets.*

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER
 Never heard of 'em.

BRECHT
 They were produced in Germany.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER
 Germany. Haven't been there for
 years. And don't regret it. Give a
 German a postal uniform and he'll
 think he can rule the world.

FRITZ LANG
 (cutting off Pressburger)
 Brecht. Tell Arnold our idea.

BRECHT
 It's about the assassination of
 Reinhard Heydrich. The notorious
 Nazi who enslaved Bohemia and
 Moravia.

Arnold Pressburger frowns. Behind him, a woman sells flowers
 from table to table.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER
 I dunno. I'm not making pictures
 for geography students.

FRITZ LANG
 What if we say Czechoslovakia
 instead?

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER
 That'll work. With the war on,
 people woulda heard of that.

The food arrives, even though they never ordered. Arnold
 Pressburger digs in immediately.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER (CONT'D)

I took the liberty of ordering. I don't have time to watch people read menus.

Brecht's presented with a hamburger. He hates hamburgers. Lifting the bun, he looks disgusted.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER (CONT'D)

Something wrong with your burger?

BRECHT

They don't agree with me.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

Have you tried ketchup? It makes all the difference.

BRECHT

I've had ketchup before.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

American ketchup's different. Try it.

Pressburger glops some on Brecht's plate. Brecht cautiously tries it. He likes it!

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER (CONT'D)

So what's the hook? There'll be a hundred pictures made about the war this year. What makes this one different?

BRECHT

This story's about the underground. Regular people fighting in their own way. Taking back what's theirs.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

Now that sounds box office. Tell me more.

Pressburger's hogging all the ketchup. Brecht needs more. He steals a bottle off another, unsuspecting table. Slapping the bottle's bottom repeatedly.

BRECHT

The Nazis have to find his killer. They take townspeople hostage. Threaten to kill them. One at a time. Until someone confesses. But there's a conspiracy of silence.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

Great, a ticking clock. What about the girl?

The stolen bottle of ketchup is empty. Brecht finally notices.

BRECHT

What girl?

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

The girl everyone wants to poke. Where does she fit in?

Waiters whiz past with trays full of ketchup bottles. Brecht tries to steal them but they're just out of reach. Sometimes his timing's off. Other times, presented with too many choices, he misses his chance.

Brecht trips an unsuspecting waiter. Food goes flying. He grabs the ketchup bottle before it hits the ground. Success!

BRECHT

(winging it)

Uh, well, her father's been taken hostage. Right before her wedding. The war's shattered their lives. Nothing will be the same again.

Ruby red ketchup finally hits his plate.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

That's good. I like that. Lots of empathy. You really feel her plight and wanna poke her. All at the same time.

BRECHT

(awkwardly)

Yes. Exactly.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

Why don't you guys write up a treatment? Nothing too fancy. Just the bare bones with a bit of flavor.

Brecht smiles, as Pressburger happily chomps into his sandwich.

EXT. THE BROWN DERBY RESTAURANT - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht and Lang cross the parking lot. A billboard advertises Stimples Department Stores: *If We Don't Have It, You Don't Need It.*

FRITZ LANG

I told you we'd sell that treatment.

BRECHT

I can't thank you enough. First you help get us into the country and now this.

A car backing up almost hits them.

FRITZ LANG

Don't thank me yet. You could jinx it. Let's see if we can get this baby on the screen.

Climbing in Fritz's big car, they lurch away. A FISH-EYED FBI AGENT watches them from across the street. Making notes. Lang drives past and overwhelms the agent with auto exhaust. He COUGHS uncontrollably.

INT. RUTH BERLAU'S HOUSE - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

Brecht and Ruth collaborate on the film treatment. It's not going well.

RUTH

Why can't we work on Galileo?

BRECHT

Because Mr. Galilei isn't paying the bills at the moment.

HELENE

But he could be. Given a chance.

BRECHT

We've been over this before. I need this job. We need the money.

RUTH

And I need you. The old you. The one who had the courage to tell the right kind of stories.

BRECHT

Our message is clear. The masses
must unite against repression.

RUTH

But films are below you.

BRECHT

And a film can reach more people in
a day than a play could in a year.

RUTH

Do you really believe that? What
kind of contact is that?

She squeezes Brecht's knee.

RUTH (CONT'D)

In a play, the audience feels this.
The message made firm in flesh. On
film, it's nothing but meaningless
words and deeds.

This gets Brecht hot. He drags her to the floor. Ripping off
her clothes. Biting her neck.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I think you get my point.

INT. ARNOLD PRESSBURGER'S UA OFFICE - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

On an exercise bike that does all the work for you, Arnold
Pressburger shakes the 100-page treatment at Brecht and Lang.
Barely able to remain seated on the wildly gyrating
contraption, as he chomps on a stogie.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

I said put a little flesh on it.
Not turn in a side of beef.

FRITZ LANG

It'll just make writing that much
easier. And you must admit it's
good.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

Parts of it aren't bad.
(off the cover page)
What does *Trust the People* mean?

Brecht attempts to answer. Fritz cuts him off.

FRITZ LANG

It's just a working title. Until we come up with something better.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

I don't know about the concept. It feels...European. I'm making American films. The last thing I want is art.

Brecht and Lang share a knowing look.

FRITZ LANG

We're all on the same page, Arnold. I promise you. The last thing you'll get is art.

Pressburger stops his workout and mulls this over.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER

My gut tells me it's the right. You got yourself a deal.

They all shake hands.

ARNOLD PRESSBURGER (CONT'D)

Go with your gut. That's what I always say.

Pressburger starts working out again. His belly jiggling.

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Brecht and his family move into their new, Spanish/California house. The "Sold" sign still stands in the yard. Price tags hang on their new furniture.

Helene walks inside with a load of boxes.

Brecht turns the sprinkler on. He waves to his new neighbor, Ruth Berlau. She watches from the window next door. Waving back excitedly. Things are looking up for Brecht.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht taps away at his typewriter. Cigar clenched in his teeth. Back in his element and glad to be working.

Fritz Lang walks in whistling with JOHN WEXLEY (35) and his assistant, ALICE HARPER (25), a nervously anorexic woman. Wexley's a tall American, who likes to think he's the next Will Rogers. Wearing head-to-toe Robin's egg blue.

FRITZ LANG

Brecht. Meet your new writing partner, John Wexley.

Brecht stands and cautiously shakes the hand of the gum-chewing American.

WEXLEY

Good meetin' you, Bert. This is Alice, my assistant. She'll be helpin' us plow through this baby. I read the treatment. One hundred pages.

(laughing)

I hope it's not an omen.

Brecht doesn't understand.

FRITZ LANG

Arnold and I thought we should involve an American in the project. Wexley's written some major films. *Angels with Dirty Faces* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*.

Brecht looks skeptical.

FRITZ LANG (CONT'D)

I've got to get going. I want to read something as soon as possible.

Lang heads out the door. Turning at the last second.

FRITZ LANG (CONT'D)

Say. What if Professor Novotny had an ulcer? It could visually show his growing stress.

WEXLEY

Love it, Chief. We'll get right on it.

Lang exits WHISTLING happily. Wexley couldn't be more pleased. Brecht couldn't be more suspicious.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

Brecht walks in the door. Stefan and Barbara rush to hug him. There's a cast on Barbara's left wrist.

BRECHT

Honey, I'm home.

Helene kisses his cheek.

HELENE
How was your day at work, dear?

BRECHT
Exasperating.

STEFAN
Daddy, can we have a dog?

BRECHT
A what?

STEFAN
You know. Four legs. Fuzzy. Waggy
tail.

Barbara begins to BARK.

BRECHT
I know what a dog is. Why would you
want one? They're dirty, slobbery
and transmit deadly disease.

STEFAN
But Jimmy has one.

BRECHT
Then go play with Jimmy's dog. And
promise me you'll wash your hands
when you're through.

The children MOAN in rebuttal.

BRECHT (CONT'D)
Get ready for bed and I'll tell you
a story about a cute, little dog
who brought plague to a small town
in the Rheinland. Killing everyone
for miles.

The children obediently run off. Helene thinks he's
incorrigible.

CUT TO:

Helene massages Brecht's scalp in the kitchen. Kneading
fingers release his tension.

BRECHT (CONT'D)
...but the worse thing is he calls
me Bert. You don't even call me
that.

HELENE

It could be worse. You could be looking for work. We could still have all those bills. You have a lot to say and this picture's perfect for that.

They kiss.

BRECHT

I'm sorry about all the trouble I've brought us. I really don't deserve you.

HELENE

Yes, I know. I stay around because, compared to you, I'm a saint.

Brecht can't forget work.

BRECHT

And our mandatory curfew only makes things worse. It totally disrupts our creative flow.

HELENE

America's at war with Germany. We are enemy aliens.

BRECHT

I wish I was a real threat. It would bring me a little satisfaction.

HELENE

You shouldn't joke about that.
(conspiratorially)
I saw that man again. At the grocers.

BRECHT

Do you think he's police?

HELENE

What else? I also think our phone's been tapped.

Brecht shoots her a questioning look.

HELENE (CONT'D)

And I'm not being paranoid.

Brecht rests his face in his hands. He believes her.

BRECHT

It seems we've come all this way
and still have gotten nowhere.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht, Wexley and Alice work quietly in their cramped office. Brecht tries to keep a good attitude despite the distractions.

Both Americans chew gum. Incessantly.

Alice also twitches her nose. Scrunching up twice and down once. Repeat endlessly.

Wexley, wearing a sporty, yellow suit, paces the room. Sloshing a snowfall dome depicting Hollywoodland set in the hills and surrounded by palm trees.

Alice scrunches and twitches.

Wexley paces and sloshes. Chewing vigorously.

It's driving Brecht crazy. He can't concentrate. Wexley walks past Brecht.

WEXLEY

Hey Bert, you smell somethin'?

BRECHT

(sniffing)

What do you mean?

WEXLEY

I can't put my finger on it. It
smells like...meat cooking.

BRECHT

I don't smell anything.

Wexley continues sniffing. Makes a sour face.

WEXLEY

Oh God, it's you. Haven't you ever
heard of baths? Being European's
one thing but personal hygiene's
somethin' else altogether.

Alice overhears this. Avoiding eye contact, she buries herself in her work. Brecht's hurt by this accusation.

BRECHT

I'm sorry I offend you.

WEXLEY

Nothing a bar of soap can't solve.
Right, Alice?

Alice doesn't expect this. Papers fly everywhere. The more tense Alice gets, the more relaxed Wexley becomes.

WEXLEY (CONT'D)

(laughing)

That's why I keep you on. Tight as
a spring.

ALICE HARPER

I'm sorry, Mr Wexley.

Alice cleans up the mess.

WEXLEY

I've been readin' your work Bert
and frankly--I don't get it. All
these crowd scenes. I can't relate
to 'em as individuals.

BRECHT

That's my point. It's not about
individuals making change but
groups. Entire classes.

WEXLEY

All you Marxists sound alike.
(making finger quotes)
"Repression of the masses." "A
product of the class struggle."
"Dialectic synthesis."

BRECHT

I will not debate anyone whose
knowledge of Marxism starts with
Chico and ends with Zeppo.

WEXLEY

Is there a Ten Commandments of
Marxism that you guys memorize and
recite on cue?

BRECHT

(defensively)

I believe people are basically
decent and want to take care of
each other. We want fair treatment
and equal opportunities.

(beat)

But institutions insist on labeling
and separating us.

(MORE)

BRECHT (CONT'D)
 (emphatically)
 I want to change all man-made
 notions of business, government and
 God.

WEXLEY
 You're an atheist too? How cliché
 can you get? If you wanna make it
 in the New World, you're gonna
 hafta change, pals.

BRECHT
 What do you mean?

WEXLEY
 Like taking a bath everyday.
 Orderin' somethin' besides
 Braunschweiger for lunch. Buying a
 car for Pete's sake.

Brecht considers this idea. Wexley offers him a stick of gum.

WEXLEY (CONT'D)
 When in Rome, buddy.

Brecht takes the gum. Wexley puts his arm around Brecht.

WEXLEY (CONT'D)
 Stick with me, kid. I'll show you
 the ropes.

Alice eyes them warily. This won't end well.

INT. HAUTE COUTURE RETAIL STORE - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Helene and Marta Feuchtwanger go shopping. Helene's never
 seen a store quite like this. Ten dresses, designed on planet
 Mars, are displayed like works of art.

Anorexic models run down a short catwalk. Displaying the
 clothes designed for inhumanly skinny figures. The store's
 older, heavier clientele love it.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 So what do you think of America
 now?

HELENE
 I've learned a great deal about
 removing persistent stains but not
 much else.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 You mustn't get discouraged. You
 haven't been here that long. In
 time, you'll fit in.

Helene casually looks at the price tag. Going bug-eyed.

INT. SALVATION ARMY - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Helene and Marta look over racks of shabby, vintage clothes.
 Helene's much more comfortable now.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 Have you been looking for acting
 work?

HELENE
 Not really. I'm unable to overcome
 my accent. I also don't want to be
 away from the children. Acting once
 consumed my whole life.
 Motherhood's changed that.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 (breaking into tears)
 I really admire you and your
 family.

HELENE
 Marta, what's wrong?

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 It's Leon. He's having an affair.

Helene holds her friend comfortingly. Marta won't calm down.

HELENE
 He's not stupid enough to leave
 you. Is he?

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 I don't know. I've seen smarter.

HELENE
 Men are such...men.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
 How do you put up with it? With
 Brecht and his shenanigans.

HELENE
 I forgive Brecht's imperfections
 because he loves us completely.
 (MORE)

HELENE (CONT'D)
Trust me, I'd have killed him by
now, if he didn't.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER
(breaking down completely)
Your husband even cheats better
than mine.

Helene can only hold and comfort her.

INT. FEUCHTWANGER'S HOUSE - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

New Years Eve. Black tie and evening gowns. Brecht sticks to his personal dress code of cover-alls and leather jacket.

Brecht, Helene, Fritz Lang and HANS EISLER (60) look out a window. Watching two, elderly men pummel each other in the garden. They find the display amusing.

BRECHT
Is that...

FRITZ LANG
Thomas and Heinrich Mann. For obvious reasons, their wives won't let them sit together at church.

Eisler's a balding, Prussian composer. A chronic hypochondriac, he SNEEZES into his everpresent handkerchief.

HELENE
Gesundheit, Hans.

HANS EISLER
Danke. I've yet to experience the health benefits so heavily advertised about this area. My doctor thinks it may be apoplexy.

They roll their eyes. An excited murmur races through the party. CHARLES LAUGHTON (50), a Brit with an enormous belly, wavy hair and an effeminate flair, makes his appearance with his wife, ELSA LANCHESTER (45), a dumpy fag-hag.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER
Charles. Elsa. I'm so glad you could make it.

LAUGHTON
I haven't seen this many Germans, since I was in Berlin, before the war.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER

(off the crowd)

I'll have to buy a larger house, if
Hitler stays in power much longer.

LAUGHTON

Yes. I do hope there'll be some
English spoken tonight.

ELSA LANCHESTER

Charles. Behave. These are educated
people.

LAUGHTON

I wasn't questioning their letters.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER

Leon walks them over to Brecht's group.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER (CONT'D)

Look everyone, Charles and Elsa
have arrived.

FRITZ LANG

(shaking Laughton's hand)

It's good to see you. Do you know
my friend, Bertolt Brecht?

LAUGHTON

(pleasantly surprised)

Brecht?

They shake hands.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER

So what are you working on these
days, Charles?

Through the windows, Thomas and Heinrich Mann duke it out.
Moving in and out of view in a wrestling clench.

LAUGHTON

Right now my garden, old boy. My
career's a bit of a slow coach.
There's talk of a pirate movie but
it's only talk. All very low brow,
you know.

BRECHT

I've always wanted to make a pirate
film.

The group LAUGHS at Brecht. Through the windows, Heinrich Mann puts his brother into a headlock.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Pirates make the perfect metaphor. They steal from government and industry without any of that Robin Hood nonsense.

(beat)

Have you done any theater work recently, Mr. Laughton?

LAUGHTON

Not in years. Film acting, I'm afraid, has made me a bit flabby.

(rubbing his belly)

I miss the tension of live performance.

Through the windows, the struggling brothers loose their balance and fall into the pool--SPLASH!

LAUGHTON (CONT'D)

I've always admired you writer chaps. My only reward as an actor is the chance to play great men. But I've always wanted to take up the pen.

BRECHT

(smiling broadly)

Really?

The gears whir inside Brecht's head.

LAUGHTON

Are you working on a play?

BRECHT

Leon and I are trying to get *Fear and Loathing in the Third Reich* off the ground. I also have a new project about the life of Galileo.

LAUGHTON

Oh fun.

FRITZ LANG

Brecht's also writing a screenplay for me. About the war.

LAUGHTON

Bully for you, Brecht. It appears
you've had no trouble making a
success of yourself here.

Brecht grimaces. Appearances can be deceiving.

CUT TO:

Next to the punch bowl, Ruth refreshes her drink. Fritz Lang approaches. Watching Brecht stand among a bevy of beautiful Aryan admirers.

FRITZ LANG

So you're Brecht's...assistant.

RUTH

(cynically)

Amongst other things. We met in
Copenhagen. I ran a workers theater
there.

(motioning to Brecht)

I know what people say. I never
expected to be an artist's whore.

Lang's surprised by her honesty. The women are mesmerized by Brecht. Every comment is gold.

RUTH (CONT'D)

He's not an easy man to love. But
he possesses a passion I've seen in
no one else. I left my husband just
to be near him.

FRITZ LANG

(admiring Brecht)

I don't know how he does it. He is
some kind of a man.

RUTH

I know how.

(teasingly)

But am far too demure to tell.

EXT. FEUCHTWANGER'S HOUSE - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

Brecht silently walks through the garden. Sprinklers work overtime to maintain life. Brecht silently reflects on his circumstances. Galileo appears next to him.

BRECHT

What are you doing here?

GALILEO

I want you to finish me.

BRECHT

I don't have time, right now.

GALILEO

Really? You bragged so much at the party. I began to think you might have something to say.

Brecht erupts.

BRECHT

The last thing I need is a crotchety, old Renaissance man telling me how to run my life. I have a wife and mistress who do that very nicely. Thank you.

GALILEO

You make me sorry I was ever born.

BRECHT

Good. Now go away. You bother me.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht tries maintaining a good attitude in the disturbing quiet. He pops a stick of gum in his mouth.

Alice's nervous habits plague him. She COUGHS these annoying little COUGHS. Like she's trying to dislodge a chicken bone.

Wexley's work is typed on three-paper carbons. His name's atop each sheet. Brecht reads from the yellow copy.

BRECHT

This wedding dress scene's no good. She comes off as shallow and stupid. A female character must be strong-minded and independent.

Wexley's outfit for the day is an homage to the color umber.

WEXLEY

It's bad enough women have to work durin' the war, Bert. Nobody wants to see that on the screen.

BRECHT

But that is my point-of-view. *Never Surrender* is my story.

WEXLEY

I know it's your idea'r, Bert. But there's a difference between a story and a screenplay.

(condescendingly)

You wanna get this baby made, don'tcha?

(proudly)

I'm just pushin' the right buttons. Producers are like trained seals, when it comes to readin' scripts.

(beat)

Our job's linin' up the horns, so they can honk 'em.

(suspiciously)

You don't wanna make an art picture, do you?

BRECHT

(exasperated)

Believe me, art is the farthest thing from my mind.

WEXLEY

That's good. I was gettin' a little worried there. As long as we're on the same page, everything'll be peachy keen.

BRECHT

That doesn't mean we should turn in crap.

WEXLEY

I'm with you, pal. My name's goin' on the front page.

BRECHT

Good. Let's make the most of our collaboration. Give them something they've never seen before. Something we're both proud of.

WEXLEY

Whatcha gettin' at?

BRECHT

The one element missing in our story is a betrayal...from the inside.

Wexley's eyes widen in anticipation.

BRECHT (CONT'D)

Someone no one would suspect. Like the professor's son-in-law.

Wexley loves it. He shakes Brecht's hand.

WEXLEY

Put 'er there pal and take a five outta petty cash. Let's rework the outline over lunch. I'm buyin'.

They get up to go. Brecht stuffs the yellow sheets in his briefcase.

WEXLEY

Whatcha doin' with my script?

A stupid question deserves a stupid answer.

BRECHT

I'm going to bring it with us.

WEXLEY

Just make sure you give 'em back. I need those copies for my records.

BRECHT

(thinking this odd)

Sure. I'll guard them with my life.

EXT. MAX REINHARDT'S HOME - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

A large, Normandy-style house nestled in the hills. Sprinklers fight to prevent hill fires.

INT. MAX REINHARDT'S HOME - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

A SURLY SERVANT leads Brecht and Leon Feuchtwanger through Max's dark, cavernous home. Filled with baroque furniture.

They find MAX REINHARDT (75) in his study. He plays the part of thespian to the hilt. Wearing a smoking jacket and ascot.

SURLY SERVANT

Herr Reinhardt? Herr Brecht and Feuchtwanger are here to see you.

The Surly Servant stomps off with theatrical flair.

MAX REINHARDT

Brecht. Leon. Greetings.

BRECHT

Is he having a bad day?

MAX REINHARDT

Don't worry about Felix. He gets like that whenever he must clean up one of Gunther's little accidents.

Max Reinhardt picks up his dachshund and kisses him on the nose.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER

It's good to see you Max. You look well.

MAX REINHARDT

I look old. And I'm feeling it.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER

You talk that way, but don't act it. Why else would you be interested in our play?

MAX REINHARDT

Retirement is a bore. Why stop doing the things you enjoy?

BRECHT

When it's something you love, work is its own reward.

Max adores his dog too much. Re-adjusting Gunther's little sweater.

BRECHT

Have you talked to Gottfried lately? He pitched some of my ideas to his boss but didn't have much luck.

MAX REINHARDT

My son has a good heart but is not much of a wheeler-dealer. I'm just glad he has a steady job.

Max sets his dog down. Gunther runs right over to Brecht, who doesn't like dogs. Especially ones wearing little sweaters.

MAX REINHARDT

Oh look, Gunther likes you. You should pet him. It's the only way he'll leave you alone.

Brecht lightly taps the top of Gunther's head.

BRECHT
 Good doggie. Does it always smell
 like a dirty sock?

MAX REINHARDT
 He smells like a dog.

Brecht holds his hand away like it's contagious.

BRECHT
 May I use your bathroom?

INT. MAX REINHARDT'S BATHROOM - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Brecht washes his hands thoroughly and looks for a towel. There aren't any. He won't wipe them on his clothes. He grabs a handful of toilet paper. The tissue disintegrates in his hands. Sticking to his flesh like glue.

Now what? He looks in the mirror and sighs. Breaking down, he wipes his hands on his flannel pants. The toilet tissue becomes one with the fabric.

INT. MAX REINHARDT'S HOME - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Brecht returns to find Max and Leon LAUGHING.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER
 Max was just talking about one of
 his students. It seems this fellow
 just finished a Stanislavsky course
 and was quite a disruption.

BRECHT
 Don't get me started. If I want
 naturalism, I'll loiter inside a
 drugstore.

MAX REINHARDT
 His method is all the rage here.

BRECHT
 So's syphilis.

LEON FEUCHTWANGER
 I don't want to be rude but maybe
 we should talk business. It would
 be quite a coup to attach you to
*Fear and Loathing in the Third
 Reich.*

Gunther humps Brecht's leg. Brecht can't shake him off.

BRECHT

(distracted)

We're desperate to tell a story with a real message. That has a chance on Broadway. You could make that happen.

MAX REINHARDT

You flatter me. Let me tie up some loose ends and start making notes. I think this could be a wonderful collaboration.

Brecht smiles briefly. He looks down and frowns. Gunther loves Brecht and has to let it show.

INT. CENTRAL CASTING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Helene attends her first "cattle call" with kids in tow. The room's jammed with prospective actors. They sit next to a friendly WOMAN IN WHITE (25).

WOMAN IN WHITE

I'm impressed.

HELENE

Excuse me?

WOMAN IN WHITE

(off the kids)

You know. The matronly approach. I'm goin' for the nurse's part. That's why I'm wearin' this. Are they your real kids?

HELENE

Whose else would they be?

WOMAN IN WHITE

I've seen crazier things than rentin' kids to get a role. Know what I mean?

Helene doesn't know.

WOMAN IN WHITE

That's a great accent. Is it yours?

HELENE

Yes.

WOMAN IN WHITE

Sure hope you can turn it off.
Producers expect you to be exactly
what they imagine. Unless you're a
star of course. They'd let me play
a black maid, if I was a star.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

The Brecht family sits down to dinner. Helene presents plates full of Mexican food; enchiladas, refried beans, Spanish rice.

BRECHT

And how was your day?

HELENE

(grumpily)

I don't want to talk about it.

She slaps some food on Brecht's plate. He looks appalled.

BRECHT

What's this?

HELENE

It's Mexican. We should embrace
what little local culture exists
here.

BRECHT

(pushing the plate away)

No, thank you. Experiments are for
the theater. Not the dinner table.

HELENE

(sternly)

You will eat it and like it.

A tense stand off. The children are scared. Brecht concedes. Setting his gum next to his plate, he pours ketchup on a greasy taco.

STEFAN

Daddy, can we have a dog?

BRECHT

The answer's still no.

BARBARA

I learned a new song today.

Brecht's eyes beam.

BRECHT
 You did? Then you must sing it for
 us.

HELENE
 Yes, please dear.

Barbara takes a deep breath but Brecht stops her.

BRECHT
 Wait-wait-wait. Sitting is not the
 proper position for a singer.

Brecht pushes aside the dishes. Lifting his daughter onto the
 table top.

BRECHT
 There. Much better. Now you may
 proceed.

BARBARA
 (singing)
 Miss Suzy had a sailboat. The
 sailboat had a bell. Miss Suzy went
 to heaven. The sailboat went to.
 Hello operator. Please give me
 number nine. If you disconnect me.
 I'll kick you from. Behind the
 'frigerator. There was a piece of
 glass. Miss Suzy sat upon it and
 broke her little. Ask me no more
 questions. I'll tell you no more
 lies. The boys are in the bathroom.
 Zipping up their. Flies are in the
 city. Bees are in the park. And if
 we go on singing. We'll be here
 after dark.

Helene and Brecht burst into proud APPLAUSE.

BRECHT
 Where did you learn this song?

BARBARA
 At school.

BRECHT
 I'd no idea the elementary school
 system here was so subversive.

There's a knock at the door.

HELENE
 Who can that be at this hour?

Brecht and Helene open the door to find the Fish-Eyed FBI Agent and his partner, the BLURRY-EYED FBI AGENT. They hold up their credentials.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
FBI. We're making sure the alien curfew's properly enforced.

BRECHT
Please, come in.

HELENE
Have we done anything wrong?

BLURRY-EYED FBI AGENT
No ma'am. Just a random check. May we have a look around?

BRECHT
It's your country.

The FBI Agents check on the kids in the kitchen. Barbara's still on the table. Smiling innocently.

They move into the living room. The Fish-Eyed FBI Agent picks a trashy, mystery novel off the coffee table.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
You read this stuff?

Brecht nods. Conceding his love of pulp fiction. Popping a stick of gum in his mouth.

HELENE
(defiantly)
Would you like to sift through our underwear drawer?

BLURRY-EYED FBI AGENT
We're just doing our job, ma'am.

The Fish-Eyed FBI agents notices Brecht's manuscript for Galileo on his desk. He leafs through it. It's in German.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
You a writer?

BRECHT
(cautiously)
Yes.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
I like to scribble a little myself. Written anything I've heard of?

BRECHT
I doubt it.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
Come on try me.

The Fish-Eyed FBI Agent eagerly awaits the titles. Like a game show contestant.

BRECHT
Mahoganny. Caucasian Chalk Circle.
Threepenny Opera.

Nothing registers.

BRECHT
Winnie the Pooh.

Both FBI Agents recognize this title.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT
My kids love that book.
(shaking Brecht's hand)
It's a real honor meetin' you. This
is all we need to see, folks. Sorry
about the intrusion.

The FBI Agents leave. Brecht and Helene share a tense look, then break down LAUGHING.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

The peeing boy statuette sits on Brecht's desk. Everyone methodically chomps on their gum. It's Ash Wednesday. Both Wexley and Alice have gray thumb prints on their foreheads.

Alice's developing a little crush on Brecht. Stealing glances at him and quickly averting her eyes. Wexley notices incredulously. His suit's color-du-jour is plum. Wexley surreptitiously approaches Brecht. Keeping his voice low.

WEXLEY
Bert, can I ask you sort of a
personal question?

Brecht politely endures the interruption.

BRECHT
Yes.

WEXLEY
Well, I can't help but notice how
women look at you and stuff.
(MORE)

WEXLEY (CONT'D)

At the cafeteria. Everywhere.

(beat)

I don't wanna be rude but I don't get it. What's your secret? Do you have a wang the size of Mt. Rushmore or somethin'?

Alice, pretending not to listen, turns beet red.

BRECHT

That has nothing to do with it. In fact, I'm often told my eagerness in bed makes up for my lack of ability.

WEXLEY

Then what is it?

BRECHT

It's quite simple. Would you like me to tell you?

Wexley pulls up a chair. Anxious to learn from the master.

WEXLEY

Hell yeah. Should I write it down or somethin'?

BRECHT

No. That won't be necessary. You see, not all women find me attractive. Only a very particular type.

WEXLEY

Well? What type is that?

Brecht allows a dramatic pause.

BRECHT

(whispering)

Smart ones. I stimulate them intellectually and their bodies follow.

(louder)

And because most men are afraid of intelligent women, it leaves all the more for me.

Wexley's incredulous.

BRECHT

Now, you do pay a personal price for this type of consort.

(MORE)

BRECHT (CONT'D)
 But it always pays the same
 dividend.
 (whispering)
 Again and again.

Wexley is stunned. Alice is intrigued. Brecht wants to write.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Max Reinhardt and his dachshund walk along a dirt trail. A large, German shepherd crosses their path and GROWLS.

Max picks up his dog and looks for shelter. He spies a phone booth and heads for it. The German shepherd gives chase. Max gets inside just in the nick of time. The German shepherd BARKS and bares his teeth. Max dials "0".

MAX REINHARDT
 Hello? Operator? Hello?

A Bell System advertisement reads, *Have you called someone you love today?*

The dachshund goes crazy. BARKING at the German shepherd. Getting so worked up, he attacks Max. Max crumbles to the floor. Suffering a stroke. The phone swings off the hook. He's unable to speak or move.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Hello? Sir, are you all right?
 Hello?

The dachshund bounces off the glass walls. Insanely enraged.

INT. MGM JUNIOR PRODUCER'S OFFICE - CULVER CITY - DAY

Brecht visits a whimpering Gottfried Reinhardt.

BRECHT
 Will he be all right?

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT
 The attack caused a stroke. His
 entire left side's useless.

BRECHT
 That's terrible.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT
 He tried calling. I was in meetings
 all day. Why wasn't I there when he
 needed me?

BRECHT

You can't blame yourself. Blame his
dog but not yourself.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

And Gunther's missing.

BRECHT

Whose Gunther?

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

His dachshund.

BRECHT

Did the doctors say if he'll
recover?

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

(sniffling)

No. It could be months. Or never.

(breaking down)

This will, finally, force him to
retire.

Brecht can't believe the bad news.

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Helene steps outside to hang laundry. Sprinklers monotonously maintain the status quo. She spies Ruth hanging laundry next door. Ruth catches her sour look. Responding with a friendly wave and smile.

RUTH

Hello neighbor!

Helene frowns. Ruth retreats inside.

Helene grabs the lighter fluid off the barbecue and drenches Ruth's clothes. Quickly setting them on fire.

Ruth runs back outside. She grabs the nearby garden hose. Turning it on her clothes, then on Helene. They struggle for control of the hose. Both women get completely soaked.

EXT. HIGH RENT NEIGHBORHOOD - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Brecht drives his brand new car past mansions and castles. Sprinklers water every yard. Forcing him to roll up his window for protection. Galileo appears next to him.

GALILEO

I've not seen such wealth outside
the Vatican.

Brecht ignores Galileo.

GALILEO

Just imagine if this was the
epicenter of a class riot.

A wicked smile creeps across Brecht's face then falls.

BRECHT

It'll never happen. When that time
comes, the poor will victimize
themselves. They always do.

GALILEO

When will you finish this movie
business? There's a whole world
dying to learn how great I am.

BRECHT

You're just jealous because my
script's turning out so well.
Wexley's embraced all my ideas. You
just wait and see. This film will
be unlike anything Hollywood's ever
seen.

Galileo snorts indignantly.

INT. FRITZ LANG'S HOME - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Brecht and Lang go over the 300-page script. Fritz wears a
hybrid pajama/suit. Overly feminine, French furniture's
scattered sparsely through the room.

FRITZ LANG

What are you thinking? This is a
suspense thriller and you're
writing an historical epic. It's
300 pages and you're not even
finished.

BRECHT

(chomping his gum)
Give us a chance. Sure we're taking
the long road but we'll arrive.
Trust me.

FRITZ LANG
(holding up the script)
And you think I'll make this?

BRECHT
No. Once we've reached the end,
we'll tighten it up. It's a rough
draft.

FRITZ LANG
It's not just the length.
(pointing to a scene)
Why should I give a line to an
extra that I'm paying \$150, when I
can give it to Professor Novotny
who's getting \$5000?

BRECHT
Because the rich and educated don't
need a voice.

FRITZ LANG
And all the anti-Semitism must go.
People won't accept that Jews were
forced to wear a Star of David.

BRECHT
But it's all true. You should know.
You're Jewish.

FRITZ LANG
And so's every studio head in this
city but they don't make films
about it. It's not box office.
(beat)
This is one of the most racist
nations in the world. Segregation.
Internment camps. If our skin was
not white, things would be much
differnt.

BRECHT
You're asking me to make lies of
omission.

FRITZ LANG
I'm asking you to make a Hollywood
picture. This is not a play where
you can say anything you like.
There's no room for "truth" here.
Only entertainment.

Brecht's cowed but not happy.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

Brecht and Ruth walk among the amusement rides on a golden afternoon. Scarfing hotdogs with all the toppings. Brecht stains his white shirt with mustard.

VENDERS hawk balloons, stuffed animals and live chameleons. A poster shows the Coppertone Girl getting her pants pulled down by her pet dog.

BRECHT

Things are finally starting to click. MGM may re-make my *Threepenny Opera*.

RUTH

(unenthusiastically)
I'm glad you're happy.

Brecht doesn't notice her listlessness.

BRECHT

We're finally getting somewhere here.

Ruth kisses him. Brecht wants more but she rebuffs him.

RUTH

You're still a little boy. I'm going to miss that.

BRECHT

What are you talking about?

They stop walking and look out over the water.

RUTH

I've been offered a job. As a translator for the defense department. I'm moving to New York.

BRECHT

New York? Why?

RUTH

I must do something to fight the war. They won't let me carry a gun. And there's nothing for me here.

BRECHT

You can't go. Let me make it easier for you.

RUTH

I don't want easy. I need a challenge. Besides, Helene will always be the queen bee. You did marry her.

BRECHT

But I love both of you. Is that so wrong?

RUTH

Yes. As a matter of fact, it is.

Brecht can't believe it. Things were going so well.

BRECHT

Your thinking can be so Victorian.

RUTH

(teasing)

I know. I'm such a horrible prude.

Brecht can't resist smirking.

RUTH

Movies are below you. You're a playwright. That's what you do best. That's what you should be doing now.

BRECHT

I also need to feed my children.

RUTH

Galileo used that same excuse. Choosing to live in a prosperous city full of imbeciles.
(caressing his face)
A decision you will, ultimately, regret.

BRECHT

People are not the problem. It's the system. The idea that art has a price tag. That it can be tailored for general consumption. That's what makes people here act so strange and untrustworthy.

Ruth scoffs. She doesn't buy it.

RUTH

You are an optimist in wolf's clothing.

Brecht grabs her wrists and holds them pleadingly.

BRECHT

I love you, Ruth. If you leave,
I'll make you come back. I'll
produce a play, if only for that
reason.

RUTH

I'd like nothing better.

They kiss tenderly. Another billboard shows Al Jolson in blackface holding a bottle of pancake syrup. *Coloreds love it. So will you.*

INT. LAUGHTON'S HOME - PACIFIC PALISADES - DAY

Elsa Lanchester leads Brecht through their mansion. His cigar annoys her immensely. He carries a portfolio of his work.

EXT. LAUGHTON'S GARDEN - PACIFIC PALISADES - DAY

Elsa leads Brecht into a well manicured, British garden. Laughton reclines in a pool chair. Watching the slim pool boy, ARMANDO, skim leaves from the surface. Elsa COUGHS to get his attention.

ELSA LANCHESTER

Charles? Mr. Brecht is here.

Laughton stands and greets his new friend.

LAUGHTON

Brecht. I'm so glad you could come.
Let me show you the grounds.
They're my pride and joy.

They walk through the intricate, botanical maze.

LAUGHTON

You've been here how long, old boy?
Three years? What do you think of
life in the colonies?

BRECHT

I've learned the most important
verb is "to sell".

LAUGHTON

C'est la vie. Since your call, I've
thought of nothing but theater. I
miss it horribly.

BRECHT

Then you should hear about my Galileo. You'll like him. He's a powerful physicist with an enormous belly, a face like Socrates and a full-blooded sense of humor.

Laughton likes this description.

BRECHT

The story's about the Inquisition forcing him to recant his theories of motion. The Church could not accept the heresy that our earth rotates around the sun.

LAUGHTON

That does make certain implications about God's priorities.

BRECHT

In the end, we learn his recantation was truly heroic. Buying him time to write his Discourses. The foundation of modern physics.

LAUGHTON

That's a box office idea.

BRECHT

Perhaps you'd like to assist me with the translation.

LAUGHTON

That's quite impossible. I've not written a word in my life. And I don't speak German.

BRECHT

You don't need to speak German to write a play in English. And I've found, there are only two types of writers in our world. Only one of which actually writes.

Laughton's encouraged.

BRECHT

Think about Broadway. This challenge could reignite both our careers.

Laughton likes the idea.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

Brecht returns home in a good mood. He gives flowers to Helene and a Basset Hound puppy to his children.

STEFAN

Thank you, daddy. I love him so much.

BRECHT

That's a her, son.

The kids run off to play with their new dog. Helene tries to look cheerful.

BRECHT

I just talked to Laughton. He wants to collaborate on Galileo.
(noticing her mood)
What's wrong?

HELENE

It's on the radio. They've bombed Japan. With something horrible.

They rush into the living room. Brecht turns up the newscast.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The strength of this single weapon equals over 20 thousand tons of TNT. President Truman is demanding an unconditional surrender from the Emperor of Japan. It looks like our boys will, finally, be coming home.

Brecht turns off the radio. Sitting in stunned silence.

BRECHT

It appears our victory has been won with the shame of defeat.

INT. GALILEO'S STUDY - FLORENCE - DAY - 1623

Galileo pretends to sleep on his hard cot. Brecht sits next to him. Gives Galileo a nudge. With his back to Brecht, Galileo refuses to respond.

BRECHT

Quit faking. I know you're awake.

GALILEO

I'm not speaking to you.

BRECHT

Okay, I'll say it. I'm sorry.

Galileo sits up facing away from Brecht. Playing hard to get.

GALILEO

It's not just that. I've seen your changes. I will not be made the scapegoat for this atomic nonsense.

BRECHT

You'll say whatever I tell you to say. And like it.

Galileo scoots down to the end of the cot.

GALILEO

You can't make me.

Brecht explodes.

BRECHT

Just watch.

The two men struggle. Even though Brecht's much smaller, he dominates. Chairs and tables upturn. Brecht beans Galileo with the telescope. The old scientist crumbles to the floor. Brecht grabs Galileo's jaw with both hands. Opening and closing his mouth like a marionette.

BRECHT

You will say what I tell you to say.

Galileo pushes Brecht away. Disgusted.

GALILEO

Who's the fascist here? What ever happened to letting characters breath?

Brecht realizes his error.

BRECHT

I'm sorry. I won't happen again. But science has become a matter of life and death. It can destroy an entire planet.

(beat)

Oppenheimer and Einstein cloak themselves in a moral vacuum. Never thinking how their technology may be applied.

GALILEO

And that's my fault?

BRECHT

If you'd stuck to the truth and
burned at the stake, the atom bomb
might not have happened.

GALILEO

It's easy to appear right and moral
when there's nothing at stake. I'd
like to see how you'd behave in my
situation.

Brecht glares at him with righteous indignation.

INT. MOM & POP GROCERY STORE - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Helene and the kids walk through the aisles. Overwhelmed by the ridiculously, large variety. Take canned corn for instance. There's whole kernel, creamed, cracked, marinated, kosher and consomme. The tomato-based products are even worse.

Through the corner of her eye, Helene glimpses the Blurry-Eyed FBI Agent. In a flash, he's gone. Helene hunts him down. It's a game of cat and mouse. Moving from aisle to aisle. Catching glimpses of his feet and trench coat. The kids scatter to surround him. They converge in the fruit and vegetable section. He's gone. Or maybe he was never here.

EXT. MOM & POP GROCERY STORE - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Helene and the kids exit the store laden with bags of groceries. Helene spies the FBI agent's car. She wraps her knuckles on his window.

HELENE

Excuse me. Hello in there.

The Fish-Eyed FBI Agent reluctantly rolls down the window.

HELENE

Just in case I drive too fast, I'm
going to the dry cleaners on
Wilshire and then back to the house
for an afternoon of bomb-making.

Helene walks away feeling good. The Agents are stunned.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht's alone in the office. Talking to Ruth on the phone. Sloshing Wexley's snowfall dome and chewing gum.

BRECHT

Why did you return the ticket? I'll go to New York, if I have to. I must be with you.

(listening)

It's going well. He really understands Galileo's character. What's that noise? Are you alone?

Alice enters the room and sits at her desk.

BRECHT

(grumpily)

Then I'll call you back. When you don't have company.

Brecht hangs up the phone and smiles at Alice. Her habits continue to annoy him. Alice lights up two cigarettes. Holding them in separate fingers of her left hand. Taking a drag from each before exhaling. Brecht can't believe this strange quirk.

BRECHT

I've never seen anyone smoke like that before.

Alice becomes self-conscious and more tense.

ALICE HARPER

It relaxes me.

BRECHT

I can see that. So how long have you and Wexley worked together?

ALICE HARPER

A couple of years now. I was in the secretarial pool at Warners. They kept shuffling me from writer to writer for the longest time. I couldn't understand why. Then I helped Mr. Wexley with Angels. Worked for him ever since. He says I keep him honest.

Brecht sits on the edge of her desk.

BRECHT

I've never noticed how pretty your eyes are.

Alice shades her eyes with her hand.

ALICE HARPER

Oh, I don't think so.

Brecht touches her chin and lifts up her face.

BRECHT

No, it's true. Where is your family from originally?

ALICE HARPER

Iowa.

BRECHT

Before that. Before they came to America.

ALICE HARPER

Oh, I dunno. Everywhere I guess. Greece. Italy. Lithuania.

BRECHT

I knew it had to be somewhere exotic and beautiful.

He kisses her. Their lips separate. Suddenly, their faces bash together. Kissing passionately. They pull away.

BRECHT

I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

Alice removes her gum and viciously sweeps the desk clean of debris. Loose pages fly everywhere. Brecht swallows his gum in surprise.

Alice throws Brecht on the desk and straddles him. The phone's knocked off the hook. The operator chatters on the phone.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Hello. Is there anyone there? Can I help you? Hello?

Alice grabs the wall sconces next to her. Drilling into Brecht. The lamps rip out of the wall. She finishes the job. Then lights up two cigarettes. Taking a deep drag from each, she triumphantly blows smoke in the air.

CUT TO:

Wexley's back in the office. Something's not quite right. Alice's hair is mussed. The office seems emptier (the damaged goods are gone). There's also a sense of conspiracy between her and Brecht.

WEXLEY

Bert, I've been readin' your
idea'rs and I've got a question
about tone.

Brecht looks up smiling. Contentedly chewing his gum.

BRECHT

Yes?

WEXLEY

Well, you've got some Nazi soldiers
chasin' somethin' in the dark. They
finally corner it and discover it's
a goat. I dunno if that warshes?

BRECHT

I felt we needed a moment of
levity.

WEXLEY

Really? I'd no idea'r Germans had a
sense of humor.

BRECHT

There are many examples of German
humorists. There's, well, besides
me of course...

Wexley tries to suppress his laughter.

BRECHT

What about Billy Wilder? I think
most Americans admire his sense of
humor.

WEXLEY

(smirking)

Okay. That's one.

(beat)

I don't mean to be rude but Germans
just aren't funny people. Unless ya
think polkas are funny.

Wexley bursts into LAUGHTER. Brecht's reached his limit and storms out. Alice chases after him.

EXT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Alice steps out onto the porch. Brecht's gone. A melancholy WHISTLE pierces the silence. Alice looks afraid. Fritz Lang turns the corner. She breathes a sigh of relief. He nods to her politely and enters the building.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS WRITER'S BUILDING - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Wexley's LAUGHTER peters out as Lang enters.

FRITZ LANG

You seem in good spirits for a man trying to ruin me.

WEXLEY

Calm down Fritz. We're almost finished.

FRITZ LANG

I can't shoot 300 pages and Arnold just pushed up the shoot three weeks. If you don't cut this monster down to size, I'll find someone who will.

WEXLEY

Calm down. I'll take care of it. Alone. If you know what I mean.

FRITZ LANG

I'll tell him the script's complete and pay him off. But you don't say a word.

WEXLEY

Righto chief. Last thing I wanna do is stir up trouble.

Fritz leaves as Alice enters. How much did she overhear?

INT. UNITED ARTISTS SOUND STAGE - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

The first shooting day of Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die*. Brecht slowly walks through a flurry of action. Hair/make-up personnel struggle to make the assassin look perfectly dishevelled.

The INDECISIVE DP flashes his contrast viewing glass in front of his right eye. It doesn't seem to work. He tries his left eye then his right again. Unable to make up his mind.

Fritz Lang criss-crosses the set. Putting his finger in everyone's slice of pie. DR SCHMIDT (60), another German emigre, shadows his every move. Pills in hand.

DR SCHMIDT

You need to pace yourself, Fritz.
We'll be at this for weeks.
(handing him a pill)
Take one of these. It'll help you
focus.

Fritz spies Brecht for the first time. Wanting to avoid him.

FRITZ LANG

Hello Brecht.
(speeding away)
Make yourself comfortable. You'll
get the shooting script in the
morning.

The scene up shows the TEMPERAMENTAL ACTRESS trying on her wedding dress. The GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD approaches Brecht.

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

(pronouncing "ch" as "sh")
Excuse me, Mr Brecht?

BRECHT

Yes.

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

I'm the second on this shoot. If
you'll come with me, I'll show you
where you can sit.

BRECHT

(motioning to the set)
What's going on over there?

The Gum-Cracking Second AD checks her notes.

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

Scene seven. Where the professor's
daughter tries on her wedding
dress.

BRECHT

How can that be? I cut that scene.
It's so trivial.

The Temperamental Actress throws a tantrum in the dress.

TEMPERAMENTAL ACTRESS

How can I be expected to remember
all these words. And I hate this
dress. I look like a white buffalo.

Brecht notices the slate near the camera department. Picking
it up, it reads, *Hangmen Also Die*. The CHILDISH FIRST AC
can't believe Brecht has touched his slate.

CHILDISH FIRST AC

What are you doing?

BRECHT

Hangmen Also Die? What's this?

CHILDISH FIRST AC

(grabbing the slate back)
I'll thank you not to touch my
things. Who are you and what are
you doing here?

BRECHT

I'm the writer.

CHILDISH FIRST AC

Let's make a deal. I won't fuck
with your script, if you don't fuck
with my slate.

BRECHT

I didn't mean any disrespect. I
thought it was called *Silent City*.

CHILDISH FIRST AC

Titles aren't my department. I just
do what they tell me.

The Indecisive DP notices Brecht near the camera gear.

INDECISIVE DP

(loudly)
Who is this man? Why is he standing
here?

CHILDISH FIRST AC

I just want a little professional
courtesy. Don't make me call the
shop steward.

The Gum-Cracking Second AD approaches apologetically.

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

(to the Indecisive DP)
I'm sorry. It won't happen again.
(MORE)

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD (CONT'D)

(to Brecht sternly)

I told you where you could sit. You mustn't leave that area. If my First found out about this, I'd be fired. You don't want me to be fired, do you?

BRECHT

No.

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

I don't want that either.

She leads him back to his designated area.

BRECHT

I could use some daylight. May I step outside?

GUM-CRACKING SECOND AD

Okay, but come right back here. Promise?

BRECHT

I promise.

Brecht meanders away.

EXT. UNITED ARTISTS STUDIOS - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht silently explores the sound stages and backlots. His ego's dwarfed by the immensity of the structures.

Brecht walks along New York Street. The sight of Brownstones makes him morose. He should have moved there. Brecht sits on a stoop. Meditating his shoe laces.

Fragile snowflakes start to fall. Brecht hasn't seen snow since coming to LA. He holds out his hand. Catching a few flakes. It's real. He couldn't be happier. The snow falls harder. Brecht gaily strolls down the street. Unnoticed by the busy film crew. Setting their camera and arranging the snow machines in just the right places.

INT. UNITED ARTISTS SOUND STAGE - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht returns to the shoot with snow on his shoulders and a shiny new attitude. Lang shouts at the sound technicians.

FRITZ LANG

Nein. Nein! This is Mit Out Sound!
Do you understand what that is?

The sound men roll their eyes. Brecht wanders over to craft service. Looking for gum. Finding a copy of the script, he reveals the title page. Screenplay by John Wexley. Brecht's name's nowhere to be found. Furious, he spits out his fresh stick of gum.

BRECHT

Lang!

EXT. HIROSHIMA - JAPAN - DAY

B/W newsreel footage of the atomic blast.

INT. LAUGHTON'S STUDY - PACIFIC PALISADES - DAY

The mushroom cloud reflects in Brecht's eye. He slouches sullenly in an overstuffed chair. Laughton sits behind a massive desk. Reading Brecht's re-write.

LAUGHTON

I'm finding your changes a bit troublesome. Condemning atomic energy may ruffle the wrong kind of feathers. And forfeit all sympathy for Galileo. It's all so... political.

Brecht bites his tongue. Laughton reads from a page.

LAUGHTON

"Be careful when you go through Germany, if you're smuggling the truth under your cloak."

(thinking)

Why can't it be more simple like, "Take care of yourself."

BRECHT

Simple's good. If it has an effect.

LAUGHTON

Writing's not my game. I know that. I just want to make the character mine.

BRECHT

(perking up)

You're doing fine. I need all the ideas we can get.

LAUGHTON

(looking guilty)

Unfortunately, we've hit a bit of an impasse, old boy. I've been offered that part in *Captain Kidd* I was telling you about.

BRECHT

And you're taking it?

LAUGHTON

I've no choice. I'm quite unsuccessful at leading a simple life. My expenses are massive. I can't turn down any paying work.

BRECHT

Do what you must. I won't stand in your way of making a living.

Laughton's glad his friend's not upset.

INT. UNITED ARTIST'S STUDIO - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Helene has a day of "extra" work on New York Street. It's as degrading as it sounds.

Matters are made worse by the OVERZEALOUS SECOND AD (25). He wraps his arm around Helene. Giving her a pep talk before her big scene. She's about to cross camera.

OVERZEALOUS SECOND AD

The only thing to remember is to never look in the camera.

HELENE

What happens if I do?

OVERZEALOUS SECOND AD

(freezing in his place)

Whad'ya mean? No one ever looks in the camera. That's the rule.

HELENE

Are you sure? Has anyone ever tried?

OVERZEALOUS SECOND AD

Of course not. That would break the rule. You're not from around here, are you?

Helene smiles innocently. The First AD gets more impatient.

OVERZEALOUS SECOND AD
 I've gotta get goin'. Please do
 what I say. And not do what I say.
 Okay?

The Overzealous Second AD runs off. Helene smiles wickedly.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

It's late morning. Brecht won't get out of bed. Helene opens the curtains. Blinding light fills the room.

BRECHT
 (unhappily)
 Big surprise? Another perfect day.

HELENE
 Come on, lazy bones. The children
 have already left for school.

BRECHT
 I don't wanna get up. I don't wanna
 do anything.

HELENE
 At least, you don't have a day of
 crossing cameras to look forward
 to.

Brecht's thankful for that. Grudgingly, he sits up.

HELENE
 You're going to win today. There's
 no way they can take your writing
 credit from you. It's your day in
 court.

Other writers will be judging you. You're peers. They have nothing to gain from stealing your recognition.

BRECHT
 (ashamed)
 Are you ever wrong about anything?

Helene smiles confidently.

BRECHT
 You're really something. I'm glad I
 let you seduce me back in Munich.

HELENE
 Oh, it was all my idea?

BRECHT

Let's just say you started it.

They kiss and start to make love.

INT. SCREENWRITERS GUILD HEADQUARTERS - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht brings the credit discrepancy to arbitration. JOHN HOWARD LAWSON (55) and RING LARDNER JR (40) arbitrate. Brecht, Wexley, Fritz Lang and Hans Eisler are present to testify.

John Howard Lawson's a sophisticated Easterner who never lets you forget he went to Harvard. He questions Alice Harper who's a wreck. CRYING so uncontrollably she's completely unintelligible.

ALICE HARPER

Gloob damma nutter ob gon under nam.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

I'm sorry, I missed that. Could you please repeat it?

ALICE HARPER

(crying harder)

I canno jum sputter bobby. Manno tib oh button jam.

The arbitrators look at each other and give up.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Thank you, Miss Harper. You may step down.

MUMBLING an apology, she returns to her seat. Glancing at Brecht on the way. He smiles. She CRIES even harder.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

(looking at his notes)

Is Hans Eisler here?

Eisler raises his kerchief-holding hand.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Would you please take the stand?

Eisler steps up to the witness stand. Ravaged by a runny nose and fever.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
 Please raise your right hand. Do
 you swear to tell the truth during
 this investigation with God as your
 witness?

Eisler raises his kerchief holding hand again.

HANS EISLER
 I do.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
 Please tell us the part you played
 in all of this, Mr. Eisler.

HANS EISLER
 (sniffing)
 I composed the music for the film.

This amuses Ring Lardner Jr. A tall, gaunt wiseguy cut from
 the same cloth as Wexley.

RING LARDNER JR.
 (laughing)
 I'm sorry. I guess I don't make the
 connection.

HANS EISLER
 Brecht and I have collaborated on
 many projects in the past. There's
 no way he could take part in any
 project without making significant
 contributions. He's too pigheaded.

Fritz Lang testifies.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
 Do you feel Mr Brecht contributed
 the minimum 25% of the screenplay
 to share that credit?

FRITZ LANG
 I was never present during the
 writing. They would provide me
 working drafts and I would make my
 comments.

RING LARDNER JR.
 So you don't think he contributed
 enough?

FRITZ LANG
 I didn't say that. There are things
 only Brecht could have written.
 (MORE)

FRITZ LANG (CONT'D)

(beat)

In shot #65, Professor Novotny addresses his daughter about the need for secrecy. He says, "You tell it to A. A entrusts B. B confides in C. C reposes the secret in D. It's not very far from E to F. F breathes it to G and G stands for Gestapo."

(beat)

"B" stands for Brecht. No one else could have written this.

Wexley takes his turn. Wearing a mint green suit.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

We've gone through all the evidence you've provided. I guess I'd like to know why you don't want to share this credit?

WEXLEY

Because it wasn't part of the deal. From the start, they promised me sole-writing credit.

Brecht shoots an indignant look at Lang.

WEXLEY

It's his and Fritz's idea'r. I'm not disputin' that. But it's my screenplay.

Brecht testifies. John Howard Lawson holds up scraps of paper and napkins (Brecht's notes).

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Even with my Harvard education, I'm not overwhelmed by your evidence.

BRECHT

It wasn't how we worked. His secretary typed up everything. Of course, his name would only appear at the top.

Alice breaks into tears. Her voice croaks from the exertion.

BRECHT

How can I not get the credit? It's my story.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

The Guild distinguishes a difference between the story and the screenplay. Do you understand that?

BRECHT

(desperately)

But they hired me to write the screenplay. They brought Wexley in later. Everything I wrote was cut at the last minute. Without my knowledge or approval.

(beat)

I've not had much success as a writer here. I need this credit to get a foothold.

The arbitrators share a conspiratorial look.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

Thank you, sir. We'll adjourn this tribunal to discuss the evidence presented. You'll get our answer soon.

Brecht anxiously looks to his friends for support. Things don't look good.

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

The Basset Puppy stretches her chain taught to the curb. BARKING incessantly at the unmarked truck across the street.

Helene walks outside with a plate of cookies. An American flag's posted on the porch. A "For Sale" sign sits in the back window of their new car. She walks past the kids who have set up a lemonade stand. Five cents a glass (20% Discount for Gov't Employees).

Helene approaches the unmarked truck. Knocking on the door. After a long pause, it slowly opens.

HELENE

I thought you might be hungry.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT

(holding up his lunch)

That's okay. We brown-bagged it.

Helene hands him the cookies.

HELENE

Young men must eat. Leave the plate
on the porch, when you're through.

FISH-EYED FBI AGENT

Thank you.

BLURRY-EYED FBI AGENT

Yes, thank you.

They close the door and start to ARGUE. Helene walks back
satisfied. Her Basset keeps BARKING.

EXT. LAUGHTON'S GARDEN - PACIFIC PALISADES - DAY

Part of the garden has eroded down the cliff wall. Brecht and
Laughton take in the damage.

LAUGHTON

If I were a superstitious man, I'd
say this is symbolic of my career.
Don't tell anyone but I originally
came to Hollywood to be an artist.

BRECHT

Your secret's safe with me. At
least, you've earned some
recognition. I'll never write
another film again.

LAUGHTON

Perk up, old boy. You got paid. And
we still have our play.

Skirting the sprinklers, they walk away from the damage.

LAUGHTON

John Houseman has a theater in
town, The Coronet. He's looking
into financing possibilities for
us. We'll make a go of this, old
boy. You'll see.

Brecht's slightly encouraged. Smiling weakly.

INT. GEORGE AUERBACH'S OFFICE - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brecht and Laughton show their final draft of *Galileo* to
producer GEORGE AUERBACH (65). His comb-over hairdo and dark,
baggy eyes reveal a man who hasn't aged well.

His cheap office belies his low position on Hollywood's totem pole. He keeps three, mean-looking Boxers there. Rude crotch-sniffers who roam freely and pee on everything.

GEORGE AUERBACH

(off the script)

I don't get it. Where's the conflict, tension, flesh and blood?

BRECHT

That's the point. The audience needs to be distanced from the subject. To relate to the message.

GEORGE AUERBACH

You're making the audience feel nothing. You think people will want to see this?

BRECHT

It's worked before.

A Boxer throws his forelegs on Brecht's shoulders. Licking off his hair cream. Another grabs the script off the desk and starts shredding it.

LAUGHTON

Theater's far more conducive to experimentation. Brecht's one of the biggest names in Europe. Not to mention my own célébrité du jour. Galileo's guaranteed to pack the house.

The dog mauling Brecht jumps down and pees on a file cabinet. Brecht and Laughton share a nervous look.

GEORGE AUERBACH

Next thing you'll tell me, Charlie's gonna speak his part in tongues.

(beat)

I'm sorry guys. I'm running a business here. There'd have to be a lotta changes. I can't take a risk on any artsy-fartsy crappola.

Brecht leans over to rip him a new butthole.

BRECHT

I've held out Hitler for thirteen years. Why would I give in to you now?

EXT. CITY STREET - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Brecht and Laughton step onto the sidewalk. Down and out men hold signs to oncoming traffic. *Will work for food.* A billboard shows an attractive man lighting two cigarettes. Hollywood Cigarettes. *For the Glamour and Health of It.*

BRECHT

You shouldn't have stopped me in there.

LAUGHTON

We must think in the long-term. You catch more flies with sugar than vinegar, old chum.

BRECHT

Please tell me why anyone would want to catch flies anyway?

INT. MIKE TODD'S MGM OFFICE - CULVER CITY - DAY

Brecht and Laughton approach MIKE TODD (25) with *Galileo*. He's a young, freckle-faced kid just out of college. This is his first real job. Icons from college decorate the room. His fraternity paddle, his school tie framed on the wall, a lacrosse helmet.

MIKE TODD

I like plays. In fact, I helped produce one back at Dartmouth for one of my fraternity brothers. Heady stuff. Really made you think.

LAUGHTON

So you know how important production this production can be.
(beat)
You buy the film rights and we'll use that money to produce the play. This could be the hit of the season. You'll quite simply be the talk of the town.

Mike Todd nods his head in agreement.

BRECHT

Not to mention the possibilities on Broadway. It could be a real boon.

MIKE TODD

I'm in. You know a buddy of mine's in charge of a prop house.

(MORE)

MIKE TODD (CONT'D)
 It's full of Renaissance furniture
 that'd be great for this show.

Brecht LAUGHS and then realizes he's not joking.

MIKE TODD
 We'd only be able to put up half
 the dough. You'll have to come up
 with the rest.

Brecht looks at Laughton unhappily.

LAUGHTON
 Well...

MIKE TODD
 (speaking quickly)
 In return, we'll need international
 rights to the production in
 perpetuity for all media, known and
 unknown, throughout the Universe,
 until the end of time.

Silence.

MIKE TODD
 It's all standard stuff.

Brecht and Laughton share a look of frustration.

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Brecht and his family barbecue in the backyard. A bottle of ketchup sits prominently next to him. Morosely watching Ruth's old house..

HELENE
 How can you say that, even in jest?
 Women are far stronger than men.
 Take childbirth or menstruation.

The wind swirls. He's inundated with grill smoke. The Puppy chases the children in the mud caused by the sprinkler. Helene playfully argues with her husband

BRECHT
 (meekly)
 Men have to shave.

HELENE
 (noting his scruff)
 How would you know?

Helene pulls a crumpled letter from her pocket. It's been there a while.

HELENE

I've been waiting for the right time to show you this.

(handing it to Brecht)

It's from the East German government. The Propaganda Ministry's offering to finance a theater for you. To run as you wish.

Brecht takes the letter.

BRECHT

This is promising. But surely they have other agendas. My view of Marxism does not exactly toe the party line. What prevents them from reneging?

Helene sees movement near the hedge. The dog starts BARKING.

HELENE

Someone's over there.

BRECHT

Are they your policemen?

HELENE

I don't think so. And they don't wear coats on their heads.

Laughton enters the gate. His coat drawn over his head.

LAUGHTON

Please forgive me. I hope I'm not intruding.

(off the coat)

Notoriety is a cruel bitch.

HELENE

Traveling incognito, are we?

The dog climbs all over Laughton. Muddying his pants.

BRECHT

Stefan, call off Hildegarde.

Stefan grabs the dog by the collar and leads her away. Helene puts Laughton in her yard chair.

BRECHT
What brings you here?

The phone rings. Helene exits to answer it.

LAUGHTON
I've been asked to play a Nazi officer in *Arch of Triumph*. We start shooting immediately.

Brecht lets his frustration show.

LAUGHTON
I can't turn down the work. It's quite impossible.

BRECHT
But what about our play? We need to find a producer.

LAUGHTON
Maybe I can get you on as a dialogue writer. Or a dialect coach. I don't know. You mustn't hate me.

BRECHT
I don't hate you. And I don't want any more film work.
(frustrated)
I want to produce this play. It's been nagging me relentlessly.

Helene returns with a sour look on her face.

HELENE
That was the Writer's Guild.
We've lost.

She slumps down on the picnic bench. Brecht's adrift in disbelief. Mindlessly fumbling his letter.

HELENE
Maybe that's our cue to exit. The war's over. What's left for us here?

A desperate look engulfs Laughton.

LAUGHTON
You can't just abandon me. It's madness. This project means too much. For the both of us.
(grabbing his checkbook)
(MORE)

LAUGHTON (CONT'D)

Let me give you some money to tide you over. Is \$5,000 enough?

Brecht doesn't respond. Laughton hands him the check.

LAUGHTON

Please don't run off. We'll produce this play, even if I pay for it myself. Just be a little more patient.

Brecht takes the check. Smiling appreciatively. Looking to Helene for support. Trying to decide.

BRECHT

You're right. We must get this play on Broadway. We're too close to quit now.

INT. GALILEO'S STUDY - FLORENCE - DAY - 1623

Brecht finds Galileo packing his bags. The old scientist's jittery with excitement.

BRECHT

Where's the fire?

GALILEO

What?

BRECHT

Where are you going?

Galileo smiles giddily. Affecting Laughton's accent and mannerisms.

GALILEO

Rome. My good friend, Cardinal Barberini, just became Pope. He's a scientist. He understands my work. I'm going to ask his permission to publish again.

BRECHT

That's excellent.

GALILEO

I plan to prepare a treatise comparing old and new astronomical theories. With a side-by-side comparison, the truth cannot be denied.

BRECHT
Sounds ambitious.

GALILEO
One step at a time, old boy. And
it's not all uphill. They already
admit the earth's round.

Caught up in the excitement, Brecht helps him pack.

EXT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Rehearsals begin for *Galileo* in this gritty, little theater
in West Hollywood.

INT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brecht bullies his young director, JOSEPH LOSEY (35), who
predates the New York beatnik-look of the 50's.

BRECHT
No. That's not right.

JOSEPH LOSEY
(off the actors)
Why don't you tell them what you
want?

BRECHT
That's not my job. You're the
director. You tell them what I
want.

JOSEPH LOSEY
I'm not a mind reader. I should
never have come here.

Losey storms out of the theater. Laughton chases after him. A
pregnant Ruth Berlau enters. Brecht sees her and his mood
brightens. Helene sours.

BRECHT
Ruth?

Brecht runs over and gives her a hug.

BRECHT
I'm so glad you're here. There's so
much to do. I'm working with
children. They want to be helpful
but know nothing of epic theater.

RUTH

I'd never miss working on something so grand.

BRECHT

This is all coming together.
(rubbing Ruth's stomach)
Is this surprise for me?

RUTH

(blushing)
Yes.

Helene watches unhappily.

EXT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Laughton catches up to Joseph Losey.

LAUGHTON

Losey! Steady on there. You'll give me a damn heart attack.

Losey stops and waits. Laughton's huffing and puffing.

LAUGHTON

I'm dying for a fag.

Losey hands him a cigarette and lights it.

LAUGHTON

Brecht wants you back. He even said please. But also says he never apologizes.

JOSEPH LOSEY

I cannot work with that man.

LAUGHTON

This play will knock them dead. Do you really want to miss out? In twenty years, people will still be talking about this production.

(beat)

They may even understand it by then. How many chances like this will you ever get?

Losey reconsiders this golden opportunity.

JOSEPH LOSEY

Okay. Fine.

They exit revealing an advertisement for Brillo Pads. A matronly woman dressed for housecleaning points a sponge at the reader. *Don't do the work alone?*

INT. CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Preliminary interviews for HUAC. Robert Stripling grills a nervously seated Hans Eisler. J. Parnell Thomas watches piously.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Where were you born, Mr Eisler?

HANS EISLER
In Berlin...Germany.

ROBERT STRIPLING
What is your occupation?

HANS EISLER
I am a composer.

Eisler SNEEZES loudly into his handkerchief.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Is it true you are the Karl Marx of
the musical profession?

HANS EISLER
Where would you hear such a thing?
It's quite flattering.

An uneasy silence.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Have you on a number of occasions
said that music is one of the most
powerful weapons for revolution?

Eisler SNEEZES even louder.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Are you all right, sir?

Eisler's caught up in the monumental task of wiping his nose.

HANS EISLER
My doctor says I suffer from
pleurisy. Napoleon the First
said...

J. PARNELL THOMAS
 Never mind Napoleon. Please answer
 the question in your own words.

HANS EISLER
 Music can enlighten people and help
 them fight for their rights. But in
 Germany, we failed. The painful
 truth is songs cannot stop Fascism.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 Have you collaborated with a
 Bertolt Brecht on such radical
 projects as: *The Measures Taken*,
Kuhle Wampe and *Hangmen Also Die*?

HANS EISLER
 (getting suspicious)
 I wrote the music for them.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 Mr. Eisler, are you or have you
 ever been a member of the Communist
 party?

HANS EISLER
 (enraged)
 I would be a swindler to call
 myself Communist. Communist
 underground workers have proven
 repeatedly they're heroes. I'm just
 a composer.

ROBERT STRIPLING
 Are you aware of any affiliations
 Bertolt Brecht has with the
 Communist party?

HANS EISLER
 No. You would have to ask him that
 yourself.

INT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

An American actor playing the LANDLADY (40) has trouble
 understanding her role. She looks very much like Helene.

BRECHT
 Losey, tell her to do it right or
 we'll find someone else.

JOSEPH LOSEY
 (reaching his limit)
 You're fired. Get out.

The Landlady storms off the stage in tears. Helene catches up with her.

HELENE
 Please wait. What do men know about acting? I've worked for those brutes before. Let me help you.

LANDLADY
 (still crying)
 I just don't know what he means by "estrangement of character".

Helene thinks about how to explain this.

HELENE
 Can you do any accents?

LANDLADY
 I dunno? I can sound like a Jew from Brooklyn. I am a Jew from Brooklyn.

Helene hands her a script.

HELENE
 Perfect. Say your line that way.

LANDLADY
 (with a Brooklyn accent)
 Last night, my son told me the earth goes around the sun. Soon, you'll have him saying two and two is five.

HELENE
 (all smiles)
 Do you see?

The Landlady thinks about this distancing effect.

LANDLADY
 Yes, I do. Thank you.

The two women hug.

LANDLADY
 You know you should be playing my part.

HELENE

Not with my accent. And I'll have other opportunities. I learned long ago the most important trait an actor must develop is patience.

INT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Laughton recites a monologue on stage. Ruth slinks around the empty seats taking pictures. Her CLICKING shutter pierces Laughton's booming voice.

LAUGHTON

I am allowed a pen and paper. My superiors are intelligent men. They know the habits of a lifetime cannot be broken abruptly.

The CLICKING CAMERA annoys him.

LAUGHTON

But they protect me from any unpleasant consequences. They lock my pages away as I write them.

Laughton can't stand it anymore. He explodes.

LAUGHTON

Would you, please, stop taking my fucking picture? This is not a bloody zoo and I don't appreciate being ogled me like some damn she-ape.

Scared shitless, Ruth waddles out of the theater. Brecht chases after her. Helene can't suppress a wicked smile.

EXT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brecht catches up with Ruth.

BRECHT

Ruth! Wait! Sometimes people have to blow off steam. It's all part of the creative process. You mustn't take it personally.

RUTH

That's easy for you to say. He didn't shout at you.

Hans Eisler rushes up and interrupts them.

HANS EISLER
 (wheezing asthmatically)
 Brecht. I need to speak to you.
 Immediately.

BRECHT
 Not now Hans.
 (sensing his fear)
 What's wrong?

HANS EISLER
 I just spoke to those government
 men. They asked me a lot of
 questions... about you.

BRECHT
 Me? Why me?

HANS EISLER
 I don't know. They wanted to know
 why you left Germany? Why you came
 here? Your political affiliations.

BRECHT
 How could I be a threat to them?

HANS EISLER
 If you're paranoid, everyone's a
 threat.

Now Brecht's paranoid. Ruth's regained her perspective.
 There's a greater threat to them all.

EXT. GRAUMANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

Opening night for *Hangmen Also Die*. Searchlights cut through
 the night sky. Limos drop off celebrities and Hollywood
 powerbrokers. A crowd of on-lookers take photographs and ask
 for autographs. Brecht and Helene march down the red-carpeted
 aisle. Ignored by the paparazzi. Helene wears a fancy evening
 gown. Brecht sticks to his workman's uniform.

HELENE
 Are you sure you want to do this?

BRECHT
 Absolutely. I find spite to be an
 excellent source of inspiration.

INT. GRAUMANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

The lights dim as Brecht and Helene settle into their seats.

The opening credits scroll past. Story by Bert Brecht & Fritz Lang. Screenplay by John Wexley. Presented by Arnold Pressburger. Produced and Directed by Fritz Lang.

Wexley and Lang sit next to each other. Full of themselves. Wexley catches Brecht's eye and waves in an overly friendly manner.

BRECHT

Maybe we shouldn't have come.

Helene squeezes his arm supportively.

HELENE

Look at the bright side. This could be a really bad movie.

Brecht smiles at his loving wife.

CUT TO:

The final scene plays out to a needlessly melodramatic predictable conclusion. The End. Tepid APPLAUSE sprinkles throughout the audience.

People race to get out of the theater. Lang and Wexley share an uncomfortable look. Wondering what went wrong. Brecht and Helene approach.

BRECHT

I owe you two an apology. Thank you for denying my writing credit.

FRITZ LANG

(defensively)

It's what America wants to see.

WEXLEY

War films will be big this year.

BRECHT

Galileo opens this Saturday. It won't pay for anyone's swimming pool but has a refreshing sense of integrity.

Brecht and Helene walk away triumphantly.

EXT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Ruth knocks on the front door. Supporting her swollen belly with her hands. Helene slowly opens the door.

HELENE
 (frowning)
 What do you want?

RUTH
 I want to make peace.

HELENE
 Brecht needs your help. This play's
 everything to him. But I won't
 condone your presence.

RUTH
 I'm not a bad person. It's just a
 bad situation.

Helene's gypsy blood starts to boil.

HELENE
 I'll give you a bad situation.
 Raising my family in a merciless
 city with perfect weather.
 (beat)
 The climate never matches my bad
 mood. It's like being endlessly
 steeped in a kettle of irony.
 (beat)
 And you waltz in with your youthful
 idealism. Seduce my husband. Which
 is not much of a challenge. Carry
 his baby. And then question my
 resentment?
 (beat)
 Between all the anger and envy I
 feel for you, just be happy I don't
 rip your hair out!

Helene tries to slam the door in Ruth's face. Ruth blocks it
 and follows Helene inside.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Ruth spins Helene around.

RUTH
 If you think I spent my childhood
 dreaming about being someone's
 mistress, you are dead wrong.

HELENE
 What do you want from me?

RUTH

Under different circumstances we could have been such good friends. You're one of the smartest and strongest women I've ever met.

HELENE

Spare me your compliments.

RUTH

Your only failing is a faith and devotion to a man who doesn't deserve you.

This observation amuses Helene. Trying not to show it.

Ruth goes pale.

HELENE

Are you all right?

RUTH

I'm having contractions.

HELENE

Sit here. I'll get the car.

INT. HOSPITAL - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Brecht rushes through the emergency room. Approaching the recovery room door, he's stopped by a YOUNG INTERN.

YOUNG INTERN

Are you Mr. Brecht?

BRECHT

Yes, I'm Brecht. How are they?

YOUNG INTERN

Miss Berlau's going to be fine.
(apologetically)
But the child was stillborn. It was a boy.

Brecht pushes the Young Intern aside and bursts into the room. Ruth's in tears. Helene comforts her. Understanding her grief only like a mother could.

HELENE

It's not your fault. Everything will be fine. You just need time to heal.

The two women, absorbed in their grief, don't notice Brecht. He simply observes this tender moment.

EXT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Opening night. The marquee out front reads: *Galileo by Bertolt Brecht. English version by Charles Laughton.*

EXT. CORONET THEATER ALLEY - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A trailer parked outside serves as Laughton's dressing room.

INT. LAUGHTON'S TRAILER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Laughton nervously paces inside. Brecht and Helene try to comfort him.

LAUGHTON

I haven't been on stage in fifteen years. And all of a sudden, I'm supposed to find the magic.

BRECHT

You'll be just fine.

HELENE

The work is good. You compliment each other nicely.

Laughton has both hands in his pockets. Squeezing his genitals for moral support.

LAUGHTON

Easy for you to say. You won't be made the fool.

INT. CORONET THEATER BACKSTAGE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Laughton waits impatiently. Peeking out at the crowd.

INT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A full house of Hollywood celebrities: Fritz Lang, Wexley, the Feuchtwangers, Ring Lardner Jr. and every other character in the story. Including the FBI Agents and Robert Stripling.

It's hot. Stage hands use contraptions made of electric fans and ice blocks to cool down the place.

INT. CORONET THEATER BACKSTAGE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Laughton sweats profusely. Brecht approaches.

LAUGHTON

God, it's hot. It's too hot for the audience to think.

BRECHT

Don't worry. We've taken measures. Focus on your performance.

LAUGHTON

I wish I was playing *The Death of Marat*. Prone in a bathtub. Bleeding at the wrists. Finding an end to my suffering.

INT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

On stage, Galileo's wayward assistant, ANDREA, returns.

ANDREA

And when you stooped to recant, I should have understood you were again about your business.

GALILEO

My business being?

ANDREA

Science. The study of properties of motion. Mother of the machines which will themselves change the ugly face of the earth.

GALILEO

(disbelieving)

Ah.

ANDREA

You gained time to write a book that only you could write. Had you burned at the stake in a blaze of glory, they would have won.

GALILEO

They have won. And there's no such thing as a scientific work only one man can write.

ANDREA

Then why did you recant? Tell me that.

GALILEO

I was afraid...of physical pain.

ANDREA

No!

GALILEO

They showed me the instruments.

ANDREA

It was not a plan?

GALILEO

No.

The play's over. It's a smash. A STANDING OVATION. Laughton takes his bows. Lang remains seated. CLAPPING half-heartedly.

Brecht steps out onto the stage. The APPLAUSE surges. Lang knows when he's been beat. He stands and APPLAUDS enthusiastically.

Brecht bows to his cast. They grasp hands and bow one last time to the audience. Only Robert Stripling remains unenthusiastic and grim.

EXT. CORONET THEATER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The crowd pours out of the theater. Tittering with excitement and questions. Gottfried Reinhardt confronts Wexley.

GOTTFRIED REINHARDT

Come on. Admit that you liked it.

WEXLEY

Of course, I liked it. I'm not an idiot. I just need somebody to explain it to me.

INT. CORONET THEATER BACKSTAGE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The cast congratulates themselves. the women flock to Brecht and kiss him. Laughton squeezes into his "all girl entourage".

LAUGHTON

Brecht! Brecht, good news!

BRECHT
What is it, my friend?

LAUGHTON
I just spoke to some producers, who
were in the audience. They loved
it. We're off to Broadway!

Brecht SCREAMS victoriously. The men hug.

INT. BRECHT'S HOME - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

Brecht, Helene and Ruth return home. Drunk with excitement.

HELENE
That was stupendous! I've never
seen anything quite like it. It was
pure theater.

RUTH
It was so alive. Real. You've
really outdone yourself, Brecht.

BRECHT
The response was excellent, wasn't
it? Our hard work has finally paid
off. It's time to reap the rewards.

A KNOCK on the door interrupts them. Helene opens it. A
FEDERAL MARSHAL flashes a badge.

FEDERAL MARSHAL
I'm looking for Bertolt Brecht.

HELENE
(defensively)
He's not here.

FEDERAL MARSHAL
We both know that ain't true, lady.

Brecht approaches the door cautiously.

BRECHT
May I help you?

FEDERAL MARSHAL
Mr. Brecht?

BRECHT
Yes.

FEDERAL MARSHAL

I have a subpoena ordering you to stand before the House Un-American Affairs Committee.

Brecht takes the subpoena.

FEDERAL MARSHAL

They've restricted your exit visa until you testify.

BRECHT

They can do that?

FEDERAL MARSHAL

Oh yeah, gettin' outta this country's just as hard as gettin' in. Good luck to you.

Ruth leads the Federal Marshal to the door.

HELENE

What'll we do?

Brecht looks at both the subpoena and the playbill for *Galileo* in his hand.

BRECHT

We'll stay as long as it's safe.

EXT. ASSEMBLY HALL RUINS - LLANO DEL RIO - DAY

Laughton drives Brecht and Helene into the Mojave desert. Arriving at a small ruins. Stone pillars and a fireplace are the only remains.

As they get out of the car, Brecht talks excitedly to a somber Laughton.

BRECHT

Maybe we can work on *Fear and Loathing in the Third Reich* after this. There's an excellent part for you. Even though it's not quite as big as *Galileo*.

Helene's bewitched by the desolate terrain and ruins.

HELENE

Charles, what is this place?

LAUGHTON

This is a political graveyard.

Brecht finally looks around.

LAUGHTON

It was the site of the first
Marxist experiment in America.
Thirty years ago, Llano del Rio was
a self-sufficient commune.

BRECHT

I've heard nothing of this.

LAUGHTON

I didn't know if I should tell you.
As you can see, it did not end in
success.

HELENE

People lived out here?

LAUGHTON

It took only two years to make a
thriving community. Alfalfa fields,
a modern dairy, an irrigation
system. They even had their own
film company. Two years after that,
it looked like this.

BRECHT

What happened? Where are they now?

LAUGHTON

They, ultimately, succumbed to
political in-fighting.

Brecht and Helene try to imagine what it was like.

LAUGHTON

When they left, the local ranchers
razed everything. Erasing every
trace.

(off the pillars)

All except these. The last
remaining evidence of the Red
Desert in Llano.

BRECHT

That's incredible. I had no idea.

Laughton scoops up a handful of dirt.

LAUGHTON

I owe you everything, my dear
Brecht. You gave me the courage to
regain a lost love.

(MORE)

LAUGHTON (CONT'D)

But this soil is not conducive to
Marxism.

(beat)

I wish I could help you. But I'm
scared. Scared of what these
Americans can do.

Laughton chokes up and walks away. Brecht and Helene share a
tender look. The wind stirs the dusty ground.

BRECHT

After our opening on Broadway, I'm
sure...

HELENE

It's taken fifteen years for you to
find your voice again. The only
problem is no one, here, wants to
listen.

Brecht faces this harsh reality. Pulling out a telegram.

BRECHT

Another telegram arrived from East
Berlin. We have no choice but to
accept it. But if we're detained
here...

Helene hugs him hard.

HELENE

What will become of us?

BRECHT

Accusing me of being un-American is
stating the obvious. But if they
accused me of acting un-Communist,
they'd have a much stronger case.

Helene smiles. Brecht's glad he can provide a little comfort
and courage.

INT. US RAILCAR - MIDWEST - DAY

Brecht travels with Hans Eisler. Tension has severely damaged
Eisler's health.

HANS EISLER

Immigration has declined my exit
visa. It appears they don't want
Communists in or out of this
country.

BRECHT

I, originally, fled Berlin to avoid
an Un-German Activities Hearing.

HANS EISLER

No government will push me around.
Principles have to stand for
something.

BRECHT

The other writers have agreed to
avoid all questions regarding party
membership. I don't know what I
should do. It's all so complicated.

HANS EISLER

But isn't this what *Galileo* is all
about? You had no problem
condemning him for his cowardice.

BRECHT

But I have my family to consider.

HANS EISLER

So did he.

This hits Brecht where he lives.

BRECHT

The other writers are all citizens.
I am not. How will that effect my
punishment? My Broadway premiere?

HANS EISLER

That should be the least of your
worries. This is an international
forum. You could severely damage
your reputation back home.

INT. VATICAN CELL - ROME - DAY - 1633

It's almost pitch black in the empty cell. Brecht slowly
navigates the darkness. Sliding his hand down the stone wall.
Scared and alone.

GALILEO

So you've found me.

Galileo leans into a shaft of light.

BRECHT

I wasn't sure you'd be here.

GALILEO

I've nowhere else to go, old boy.
My own fault really. I didn't
exactly write a balanced treatise.

Brecht fumbles to light his cigar. Galileo takes in the smoke.

GALILEO

May I?

Brecht hands him the cigar. Galileo inhales deeply.

GALILEO

That's very good. Is it Cuban?

BRECHT

It says so right on the band.

Brecht notices a milky veil across Galileo's eyes.

GALILEO

I'm afraid that won't help me.

BRECHT

You've gone blind?

GALILEO

My study of sunspots had some
rather permanent implications.

BRECHT

(aghast)
Your work's finished.

GALILEO

It was from the start. The truth's
inconsequential, if the world's not
ready to hear it. I was simply too
vain to believe it.

Brecht morosely soaks in this lesson.

INT. HUAC CONFERENCE ROOM - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

The gavel BANGS. Questioning the "Unfriendly Witnesses" begins. Robert Stripling calls John Howard Lawson to the stand. The hearing has reached a fevered pitch.

Photographers squeeze into crucial vantage points. Flashbulbs ERUPT like lightning.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Please state your name and
occupation for the record.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
John Howard Lawson. I'm a writer.
And I've prepared statement that
I'd like to read into the record.

An EAGER ASSISTANT takes a copy to J. Parnell Thomas. He
immediately frowns.

J. PARNELL THOMAS
I've only read the first sentence
and I don't like it. The statement
will not be read.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Are you a member of the
Screenwriters Guild?

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
(reading his statement)
The raising of any question here in
regard to membership and political
beliefs...

ROBERT STRIPLING
Mr. Chairman.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
...is absolutely beyond the powers
of this committee.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Mr. Chairman.

J. PARNELL THOMAS
Just answer the question.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
It is a matter of public record
that I'm a member of the
Screenwriters Guild.

The crowd APPLAUDS. A fist fight breaks out behind Lawson.

J. PARNELL THOMAS
I must caution the gallery not to
applaud or show demonstration of
any kind.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Are you or have you ever been a
member of the Communist party?

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
I am not on trial here. This
committee's on trial before the
American people.

More APPLAUSE. More fists of fury.

CUT TO:

Robert Stripling questions Ring Lardner Jr.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Have you ever been a member of the
Communist party?

RING LARDNER JR.
I could answer that question but
I'd hate myself in the morning.

LAUGHTER from the gallery. An officer leads Ring Lardner Jr.
away.

RING LARDNER JR.
I think I'm leaving by force.

More LAUGHTER. The Eager Assistant speaks to J. Parnell
Thomas.

J.. PARNELL THOMAS
What is it?

EAGER ASSISTANT
(whispering)
Your office's been getting a lot of
calls. The opposition's crucifying
you in the press. Word is you're
getting closed down.

J.. PARNELL THOMAS
(incredulous)
But we're not even half way. Damn!
I hate Democrats.

INT. HUAC CONFERENCE ROOM - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Brecht plows through the chaotic crowd. Flashbulbs blind him.
Reporters tug at his new suit. He's in a special position.
The only non-American testifying. Brecht takes the stand. His
cigar clenched in his teeth.

BRECHT

May I read the statement I've prepared?

J. Parnell Thomas quickly glances at the document.

J.. PARNELL THOMAS

No, Mr Brecht. There's nothing in this statement that's pertinent to our investigation.

ROBERT STRIPLING

I'm going to read a poem you published in Germany. "You must be ready to take over. Men on the dole, learn it. Men in prison, learn it. Women in the kitchen, learn it."

(removing his glasses)

Did you write this, Mr Brecht?

Stripling gives the "ch" extra emphasis. Nixon's bored and picks at his nose.

BRECHT

I write German poem. This not it.

ROBERT STRIPLING

What part did you write?

Brecht and Baumgardt (the translator) quietly talk.

BRECHT

The translation is no good.

Baumgardt defends Brecht. His heavy accent makes him almost unintelligible.

BAUMGARDT

Fuhrung means to take the lead. Not to take over.

J.. PARNELL THOMAS

(with a Jersey accent)

What was that?

BAUMGARDT

(slowly)

Fuhrung means to take the lead.

J.. PARNELL THOMAS

I can't understand the interpreter any better than the witness.

LAUGHTER from the gallery.

ROBERT STRIPLING

Mr. Brecht, let's cut to the quick.
Are you or have you ever been a
member of the Communist party?

A long pause. Sweat beads along Brecht's brow.

ROBERT STRIPLING

Are you or have you ever been a
member of the Communist party?

(beat)

Will you answer the question?

(beat)

Because if you won't, we'd be happy
to detain you in a correctional
facility, until you change your
mind.

Brecht's smart-aleck veneer breaks down.

BRECHT

No. Never.

The gallery GROANS in amazement. J. Parnell Thomas BANGS his
gavel. Stripling thinks he's lying.

ROBERT STRIPLING

Are you sure about that? Do you
understand the penalty for perjury?

BRECHT

Yes...and no.

ROBERT STRIPLING

Which question were you answering?

Brecht consults with his counsel, Bartley Crum, and
Baumgardt.

BRECHT

Yes, I understand perjury. No, I
never was a member.

ROBERT STRIPLING

Will you admit to using Marxist
principles in your work?

BRECHT

I have knowledge of Marxism. I'm a
historical playwright. I know many
things.

LAUGHTER. Robert Stripling doesn't like Brecht and shows it.

ROBERT STRIPLING
I understand you have a play
opening on Broadway, Mr. BreCHt.

BRECHT
Yes. *Galileo*.

ROBERT STRIPLING
Would you please tell the committee
about this play? And its anti-
nuclear message.

Brecht takes a deep drag from his cigar.

BRECHT
It's about a great man trying to
share the truth with the world. And
the persecution he endures by an
ignorant institution.

J. PARNELL THOMAS
I don't need to hear any more of
this. The witness is dismissed.

Robert Stripling leans over to his Eager Assistant.

ROBERT STRIPLING
This guy lies more than Tokyo Rose.
Call the FBI and Immigration. I'm
sick of these damn writers jerkin'
me around. Let's see what a little
time in jail will do to 'em.

The Eager Assistant winks and runs off.

INT. CAB - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Brecht and Eisler drive away from the hearing.

HANS EISLER
That went well. You really showed
them.

BRECHT
I must leave this country. If they
detain me, we could lose
everything.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

The EAGER ASSISTANT talks on the telephone.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Yes, I'm calling for Congressman
Thomas, the Chairman of the House
Un-American Affairs Committee.

(pause)

Yes, I'll hold.

The Eager Assistant doodles on a note pad while he waits.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Yes. Hello. I'm working for the
House Un-American Affairs
Committee. What's that? I'll still
hold. Thank you.

This is going to be harder than it looks.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN CAR - EAST COAST - DAY

Brecht nervously sits on a train headed for New York. He eyes
several passengers suspiciously. They could be FBI.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

The Eager Assistant tries to complete his mission.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Yeah hi. I'm an aid for Congressman
Thomas. He wants to restrict the
exit visa of a German national.

(pause)

Would you repeat that?

The Eager Assistant jots down another name and number.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Got it. Thanks for your help.

He dials the phone again.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - NEW YORK - DAY

Brecht briskly walks down the city street on a cold, winter
day. He stops to admire a row of billings for Galileo. His
name posted prominently. He can't suppress a proud smile.

Brecht notices a newspaper dispenser. His photo fills the front page. HUAC COMMITTEE EMBARRASSED BY MARXIST PLAYWRIGHT.

Brecht puts his money in the machine and takes all the papers. Throwing them away but one. Brecht quickly heads down a subway entrance.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

The Eager Assistant waits on hold. His feet up on the desk. Throwing pencils at the ceiling. Hearing a voice, he bolts upright.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Hello? Hi, I thought you forgot about me. Yes I know, we're all very busy. I'm calling for the Chairman of the House Un-American Affairs Committee. He wants to restrict the exit visa for one of our witnesses. Do I talk to you about that? Do you have that number? I'd really appreciate it.

The Eager Assistant jots down the new number.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NEW YORK - DAY

Brecht nervously reads his article in the crowded subway car. Galileo stands next to him. Holding the handrail.

BRECHT

What are you doing here?

GALILEO

A character's not complete until the final curtain.

BRECHT

I owe you an apology. I judged you too harshly. I forgot that even great men are just men.

GALILEO

You don't need my forgiveness. But do you have the strength to forgive yourself?

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Some call it purgatory. Others call it hell. Our Eager Assistant calls it hold. His hair's mussed. He needs a shave. He wants someone to pick up but his wish goes unfulfilled.

INT. AIRPORT - NEW YORK - DAY

Brecht talks on a public phone to Helene.

BRECHT

When you get to New York, you can stay with them. I'll have things settled before you arrive in Switzerland.

(exasperated)

Yes, I'll make sure we have a nice yard for Hildy. I love you.

Brecht hangs up. Looking around for trouble.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

The Eager Assistant no longer believes his task is possible.

EAGER ASSISTANT

Yes, Congressman Thomas asked me to call. What's that? Of course, I'll say hello to the Congressman for you.

(listening)

I am calling for a reason though. He'd like to restrict the exit visa of a witness. Do you do that?

(surprised)

You do!

(listening)

He's a German national. His name is Bertolt Brecht.

The Eager Assistant pronounces his name correctly.

EAGER ASSISTANT

That's right, Brecht.

(pause)

B-R-E-C-H-T. You got that. Thanks loads.

The Eager Assistant hangs up. The private sector looks better every day.

INT. AIRPORT - NEW YORK - DAY

Brecht stands in the Immigration line. Looking around nervously. He reaches the IMMIGRATION OFFICER. Calmly, handing over his papers.

Brecht realizes he's holding the New York Times with his picture out. He quickly refolds it.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
You are Mr. Brecht?

BRECHT
Yes.

The Immigration Officer flips through his papers. He takes a long look at Brecht. He doesn't like the cut of his jib.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Excuse me, one moment.

The Immigration Officer makes a call. Brecht can't hear what's said. The line behind him grows. He turns to the GUY NEXT IN LINE.

BRECHT
Red tape. Has anyone ever been served by a massive bureaucracy?

Brecht thinks about bolting. Wondering which way to go. The Immigration Officer returns.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Okay. Mr. Brecht. Everything's in order. Have a nice trip. Are you going home?

He stamps the Swiss passport. Brecht takes it back.

BRECHT
Yes, home. Thank you very much.

Brecht walks down the runway.

INT. AIRPLANE - NEW YORK - DAY

Brecht takes his seat and gets settled. An EXOTIC WOMAN sits down next to him. Brecht flashes a polite smile. She recognizes him. (They speak in German with subtitles).

EXOTIC WOMAN
Aren't you Bertolt Brecht?

BRECHT
Yes. I'm Brecht.

She places her hand on his knee. This trip could be interesting.

EXT. AIRPORT - NEW YORK - DAY

The plane lifts off. Heading over the Atlantic ocean. Brecht continues flirting.

BRECHT (V.O.)
When they accused me of wanting to steal the Empire State Building, I knew I'd worn out my welcome.

She LAUGHS.

FADE UP - INTERTITLE

MUSIC: Harry Connick Jr. covers the Beatles *Revolution*.

Galileo had a short run on Broadway. American theater would not embrace Brecht's message for another 20 years.

Brecht and his family, safely, escaped to Switzerland.

In East Berlin, Brecht established The Berliner Ensemble. Achieving international fame and recognition.

Helene became a star in her own right.

Shortly after the HUAC hearings, J. Parnell Thomas was convicted for embezzling electoral funds. He served time in the same prison with Ring Lardner Jr.

FADE OUT.