Lights up on Albert Einstein and Marian Anderson, who have just entered through the back door. Einstein is hauling Anderson’s luggage—a large suitcase, covered with stickers from around the world. He wears an old overcoat and shoes with no socks. His hair is an unholy mess. It looks like it hasn’t been combed in days—weeks maybe. Anderson, elegantly dressed in a tailored coat, lace gloves and a traveling hat, is carrying a small suitcase and a hatbox. Einstein puts down the trunk and closes the door.

**START:**

Here we are, at last!

**EINSTEIN**

My Lord, what a night!

**ANDERSON**

Are you all right, Miss Anderson?

**EINSTEIN**

I’m still shaking.

**EINSTEIN**

It’s no wonder! That philistine at the Nassau Inn behaved like a brute! Turning you away like that and in such a course manner.

**ANDERSON**

Yes, it was most unpleasant.

**EINSTEIN**

I’m so sorry you had to suffer that indignity.

**ANDERSON**

Unfortunately, I am quite used to it.

**EINSTEIN**

Does this sort of thing happen often?

**ANDERSON**

Often enough. However, I’m more accustomed to receiving rough treatment in the southern states. I didn’t expect to find it quite so pronounced here in the north, and certainly not in such an enlightened community as Princeton.

**EINSTEIN**

Princeton? Enlightened? *(Snorts.)* The people of Princeton are not enlightened!

**ANDERSON**

No?
EINSTEIN
No. They are wealthy. There is a difference. Unfortunately, your country makes the mistake of equating the two. Do you know whom the students at our esteemed university voted as the greatest living person?

Who?

EINSTEIN
Adolph Hitler.

ANDERSON
Good Lord.

EINSTEIN
It’s a sad world in which such people are allowed to play first fiddle. Here. Let me take your coat.

(He helps her off with her coat.)

ANDERSON
It’s so kind of you to invite me to stay here, Professor Einstein. I can’t thank you enough.

EINSTEIN
The pleasure is mine!

ANDERSON
I honestly don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t escorted me to the hotel tonight.

EINSTEIN
I was afraid I was imposing myself on you a bit too forcefully…

ANDERSON
Oh, not at all!

EINSTEIN
But I simply had to meet you after that performance! I am a member of your admiring public, Miss Anderson. The day your concert was announced, I was the first person in Princeton to purchase a ticket!

ANDERSON
Were you?
EINSTEIN
Oh yes. You sing Schubert better than a German!

ANDERSON
That is high praise!

EINSTEIN
I have been an admirer of yours for many years…

ANDERSON
The feeling is mutual. I can’t wait to tell Mother that I met the great Albert Einstein!

EINSTEIN
And I’m going to put up a plaque! “The Great Marian Anderson slept here!” I’m going to give your George Washington a little competition. What do you think? (He laughs like a barking seal.) Ha! Ha! **END**

ANDERSON
(Chuckles.)

EINSTEIN
I’m afraid that my living quarters are as rumpled as I am. (Gestures to the mess in the room.) As you can see, I live like a bear in a cave!

ANDERSON
It’s obvious that a great mind is at work in here!

EINSTEIN
Or a very nutty one! I spend most of my time voyaging through strange seas of thought, Miss Anderson.

ANDERSON
(Referring to the piles of papers.) Are these your equations?

EINSTEIN
They are. And these… (referring to crumpled papers on the floor) …are my mistakes! (He laughs—like a barking seal.) Ha! Ha! As you can see, I make many of them! The Institute at Princeton is gambling on me as they would on a prize-winning hen. But I don’t know if I can still lay eggs! (Barking laugh.) Ha! Ha! (Pause. More seriously.) I find myself in the uncomfortable position of being the world’s leading authority on scientific matters…

ANDERSON
You don’t like it?
FLEXNER

Very well. Miss Anderson, I don’t think you should stay here tonight.

ANDERSON

Why not?

FLEXNER

I think you should stay somewhere else. It would be for the best.

EINSTEIN

(Pointed) “The best?” For whom?

FLEXNER

(Ignores Einstein; to Anderson.) I can rent you a room at the Colored YMCA.

ANDERSON

I’d prefer to stay here, thank you.

FLEXNER

I really think you’d be more comfortable there.

ANDERSON

Actually, I think I’d be more comfortable here.

EINSTEIN

START: What kind of loathsome nonsense are you up to Flexner?

FLEXNER

Have you looked outside? Have you seen the encampment set up on your front lawn?

EINSTEIN

There’s always an encampment on my front lawn!

FLEXNER

Do I have to spell it out for you, Einstein?

EINSTEIN

Please do! I’m a genius, not a mind reader!

Miss Anderson is a single woman.

FLEXNER

So?
She is a single colored woman.

Yes…

(Exasperated.) You are a Jew!

What has that got to do with anything?

I’m trying to avoid a scandal here!

Scandal?

What will people say if it gets out that she stayed in your home un-chaperoned?

If they have any morals they will say it’s a good thing Einstein was on hand to give her a place to sleep so she wouldn’t have to spend the night on the streets!

You don’t understand. That’s not how things work in America!

I understand all too well how things work in America! The treatment of the Negro here differs little from the treatment I received in Germany.

You both need to be mindful of appearances!

Flexner, I’m tired of your constant meddling in my personal affairs!

And I’m tired of having to salvage these predicaments that you are always getting into. You pay no mind to how things are done in this country. It’s outrageous!

Outrageous? I’ll tell you what’s outrageous! The philistine that runs the Nassau Inn! After availing himself of Miss Anderson’s talents tonight at the concert, he thought it was
acceptable to throw her out on the street so that she could sleep in a gutter! If you’re going to be outraged, Flexner, be outraged at that!  

(There is a commotion outside. There is the sound of the reporters peppering someone—a woman— with questions.)

Offstage conversation/overlapping:

REPORTER
(Off.) What’s your name ma’am?

TERRELL
(Off.) Let me through, please.

REPORTER
(Off.) Can you give us a statement?

TERRELL
(Off.) No, I can’t. Excuse me.

Oh no. It’s starting

ANDERSON
What? What’s going on?

REPORTER
(Off.) Let the lady through.

TERRELL
(Off.) Let me through please. Let me pass!

(Suddenly there is a knock on the front door.)

ANDERSON
Oh dear, there’s someone at the front door.

FLEXNER
It’s the reporters!

EINSTEIN
No, it’s not.

FLEXNER
How do you know?
Hello Mr. Flexner. It’s good to see you again.

Mrs. Terrell, I apologize for interrupting like this, but I have a matter I need to discuss with Professor Einstein. Privately.

Mrs. Terrell? If you don’t mind?

Not at all. May I use your phone?

Of course. There’s one in the parlor.

(Terrell exits. As soon as she is gone)

Blast it Einstein!

What are you in such a lather about?

We had a meeting!

We did?

Yes! I’ve been sitting in my office waiting for you—for over an hour!

Oh right, right!

Where in hell have you been?

I’m sorry! I got distracted. A matter came up that needed my immediate attention.

With Mrs. Terrell?
EINSTEIN
No, no, with some Hungarian physicists. And I need to talk to you about it. It’s urgent.

FLEXNER
Well, I have a matter of greater urgency!

EINSTEIN
What is it?

FLEXNER
The blasted faculty, what do you think?

EINSTEIN
Ah, the faculty. (Sighs.) What have they done this time?

FLEXNER
Their damned “talk fests” have escalated. First it was salaries, then pensions, then parking spaces! Now they’re screaming about anti-Semitism!

EINSTEIN
Of course, they are. They’re Jewish scholars from Europe!

FLEXNER
I rescued them so they could be insulated from all of that!

EINSTEIN
You can’t remove scholars from society, Flexner. If you do, they will slip into unrealities! Take a look at me! (Refers to his rumpled appearance.) I am living proof of what can happen if you spend too much time thinking about cosmic weirdness!

FLEXNER
It’s no laughing matter Einstein!

EINSTEIN
But it’s true! I am completely out of touch! I missed our meeting! I don’t even know what day it is!

FLEXNER
Do you know what they are doing now?

EINSTEIN
(Sighs.) No. What?

FLEXNER
Protesting Princeton University’s policy against admitting Jewish students!
Good!

EINSTEIN

Good?!

FLEXNER

It’s a problem, Flexner!

EINSTEIN

We can’t get drawn into these discussions! Or we will compromise the Institute’s standing with the University.

FLEXNER

Nonsense.

EINSTEIN

They have created a maelstrom, Einstein. They’ve succeeded in getting the Institute’s board riled up over the issue too. And now the board is in a rage—at me! They’re calling for my resignation!

END

Why?

EINSTEIN

Because of comments I made at the board meeting last night about Princeton’s admission policy for Jewish students.

FLEXNER

What did you say?

EINSTEIN

I said the policy wasn’t anti-Semitic. The University was simply enforcing high standards.

FLEXNER

Well, that was a desperate calamity of language!

EINSTEIN

I was trying to be diplomatic. I didn’t know that the sons of two Jewish board members had just received rejection letters. They took my comments personally. I need you to talk to them Einstein. Get them to back down.

FLEXNER

Are you asking me to defend anti-Semitism?