

Meet John Doe

by

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Based on the screenplay (shooting draft, 1941) by Robert Riskin

and the story by Richard Connell and Robert Presnell

The original script is in the public domain.

DESCRIPTION

A newspaper wanting to increase its circulation runs a scam when it creates a fictional John Doe, an Everyman who has threatened to jump off the roof of City Hall on Christmas Eve to protest the injustices of the world. They then hire a man needing money to impersonate this John Doe, as they call him, with the stipulation that on Christmas Day, he disappears with his payment in hand. However, his “protest” catches the attention of the nation, and an inadvertent political movement begins, co-opted by the owner of the newspaper for his own political ends. It all concludes on the rooftop of City Hall on Christmas Eve.

MAIN CHARACTERS

- JOHN WILLOUGHBY
- COLONEL
- HENRY CONNELL
- ANN MITCHELL
- D.B. NORTON

UTILITY CHARACTER-FEMALE

- MATTIE (secretary)
- MAYOR's SECRETARY
- EDITH (photographer)
- MOTHER (Ann's mother)
- STORMY (studio manager)
- NORTON's MAID
- MADGE
- VELMA (waitress in bar)

UTILITY CHARACTER-MALE

- OFFICE CLERK
- JOE (composer)
- MAYOR LOVETT
- ANGELFACE
- TED
- EMCEE
- DAN

- CHARLIE
- PILOT's VOICE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Sound and image projections suggested throughout
- Scene changes should be fluid and without delay

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Scene 1

IMAGE: Opening credits to the movie.

IMAGE: Scene in the movie where the logo of the old newspaper is jackhammered off and replaced by the new sign. Loop the clip if necessary.

An OFFICE CLERK, clipboard in hand, has a list, and as he checks it off, he points into the audience at six people. He wears a wicked grin as he does his work.

OFFICE CLERK

You. You. Yeah, you, too. Includes you. You—ya can't hide from me! And you—most definitely you!

OFFICE CLERK drags a finger across his throat—he can make any appropriate sound he wants.

OFFICE CLERK

You all used to work for The Bulletin: "A free press for a free people." You now don't work for The New Bulletin, "A streamlined newspaper for a streamlined age." It is 1941, the world is at war—again—and you have all been streamlined into the great outdoors, care of D.B. Norton, new owner and overlord. Sayonara, you suckers.

* * * * *

Scene 2

OFFICE CLERK pivots, and he is in the office of MANAGING EDITOR HENRY CONNELL, who is on the phone with D.B. NORTON behind a desk piled high with business. ANN MITCHELL fidgets, waiting to say her piece. MATTIE, CONNELL's secretary, has her steno pad and pencil. She waits, the complete opposite of ANN.

OFFICE CLERK hands MATTIE the list, runs his hand across his throat, sneers at ANN, and leaves.

CONNELL

Yes, Mr. Norton, cleaning out the dead-wood—per your first order—and your second order—and now your third order—full steam ahead, as you say.

CONNELL puts down the phone.

CONNELL

Right into the iceberg.

ANN pleads her case at full tilt.

ANN

Look, Mr. Connell—I just can't afford to be without work right now, not even for a day. I've got a mother and two kid sisters to—

CONNELL

She really have a mother and two kid sisters?

MATTIE

Yep.

ANN

Then you know how it is—I've got to keep working.

CONNELL

Sorry, Ann.

ANN

You know me, you know how hard I work.

CONNELL

I was bumped up here to clean house—you knew that the day I had my name painted on the door.

CONNELL hands MATTIE a handful of papers.

CONNELL

Please pass these out.

MATTIE

More cleaning of the house?

CONNELL

Times four. Thanks.

MATTIE

It's not you that takes the looks that kill.

CONNELL

Put in for combat pay.

MATTIE

Honey, you're my witness. Sorry about all this.

MATTIE exits.

CONNELL

Ann, you're right, I do know you—and I can't use what you do anymore. Your kind of column is dead—it's just lavender and silk when D.B. Norton wants gin and nylon.

ANN

I'll tell you what I'll do.

CONNELL

Please don't tell me what you'll do because—

ANN

I get thirty dollars a week. I'll take twenty-five, twenty if necessary. I'll do anything you say.

CONNELL

It isn't the money, Ann, in the end. We're after—Norton is after, let me be clear—is circulation, build up the numbers. What he wants is fireworks. Maybe the readers'll get some news with that—maybe not—doesn't matter. He wants people who can hit with sledge hammers—

ANN

I can sledgehammer with the best [of 'em]—I can start arguments, stir the pot—give me a chance, please, please—

CONNELL

Ann, I do hate to say this but I have to say this: cashier's got your check.

ANN realizes she has no more arrows in the quiver.

CONNELL

And one more thing. Don't forget to get out your last column—you won't get that check without it.

ANN's eyes flash at the last little turn of the knife. She draws her hand across her throat, just like the OFFICE CLERK, then exits.

* * * * *

Scene 3

SOUND: Reverb of a slammed office door.

ANN storms into her office, a desk piled high with business and a typewriter, a piece of paper rolled in the platen.

ANN

Aaaarrrggghhhh!

JOE, the compositor, enters.

JOE

Ann. Ann. You're a few lines shy in your column, Ann.

ANN

A big, rich slob buys a paper and forty heads are chopped off!

JOE

You got it, too.

ANN

Oh, Joe—oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Why don't we tear this mother[fucking]—

JOE

Ah ah ah—

ANN

Tear this goddamn building down, then!

JOE

Before you re-enact the barbarians at the gates of Rome, maybe you'd better finish this column.

ANN

Yeah. Finish off my lavender and silk! Wait, Joe, just wait! Wait!

JOE

What?

ANN flops down in front of her typewriter.

ANN

Heads're rolling, heads're rolling.

JOE

Whatever that means.

ANN

Wants fireworks, huh? Gin and nylon? Okay!

ANN pounds the keys.

SOUND: Keys against platen almost as rhythmic as a music score.

ANN pounds away until—she finishes! Tears the paper from the roller and hands it to JOE.

ANN

Here.

JOE looks the paper over.

JOE

Really?

ANN

Read it and laugh!

JOE

No typos, even.

ANN

I told you I'm good!

JOE

"Below is a letter which reached my desk this morning."

ANN pounds her desk.

ANN

Right here.

JOE

“It’s a commentary on what we laughingly call the civilized world.”

ANN

The barbarians at the gates.

JOE

“Dear Miss Mitchell: Four years ago I was fired from my job. Since then I haven’t been able to get another one. At first I was mad at the state administration and the companies, but I realized it’s bigger than them. It seems the whole world has decided to go to the dogs, and it’s time someone shocked everyone so they can see this and change it. So in protest I’m going to commit suicide by jumping off the City Hall roof on Christmas Eve! Signed, A disgusted American citizen, John Doe.”

ANN

Go on!

JOE

In for a penny—

ANN

In for this pound of baloney.

JOE

“Editor’s note: If you ask this column, the wrong people are being made to jump off roofs.” Ann, Ann—

ANN

Never mind, Joe—I absolve you of all responsibility. You gonna show it to Connell? Remember, they’ve cut both our throats—no need to be saints about anything.

JOE

No, I’m not gonna show it to Connell. Your column’s finished, I’m finished—

ANN

So let’s give ‘em a final finish. Let’s give ‘em some circulation.

JOE

Circulation it is!

ANN and JOE share some “skin” as they slide their palms together. ANN stuffs a few things under her arm, and arm-in-arm they leave.

* * * * *

Scene 4

SOUND: The presses are running hard.

IMAGE: A newspaper with a huge headline: “WHERE’S JOHN DOE?”

In CONNELL’s office, two days later, CONNELL on the phone. He holds a newspaper with a huge headline: WHERE’S JOHN DOE?

CONNELL

Governor—Governor—

SOUND: We can hear the tinny voice in the earpiece.

CONNELL

Governor—Mr. Norton would never do that—he’s an oilman—why would he want to be governor, when you are doing such a splendid job? I’ve spoken with him twice over the last two days, and I assure you he has no interest in you whatsoever. Yes, yes—rest assured, Governor, no interest at all. Not a jot, not a tittle. Yes, yes, have an excellent day of governing.

CONNELL replaces the handset.

SOUND: Phone rings.

CONNELL

Mayor.

CONNELL picks up. Lights up on MAYOR’s office, MAYOR on the phone: a nervous man. MAYOR’S SECRETARY is holding the same newspaper.

CONNELL

Why, hello Mayor Lovett.

MAYOR

Connell—

CONNELL

Yes, Mayor.

MAYOR gestures for the paper, which MAYOR'S SECRETARY holds for him.

MAYOR

Are you trying your best?

CONNELL

Yes, yes, I'm trying my best—did you see the newspaper this morning: "WHERE'S JOHN DOE?"

MAYOR

Couldn't the headline be bigger?

CONNELL

It's the biggest my press room's got. Rest assured, Mayor—

MAYOR

Rest assured? It's my building he's jumping from! And I'm up for reelection, too! Why, he's liable to go right past my window—what was that?!

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

What?

MAYOR

Out the window! Something just flew by!

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

I didn't see anything.

MAYOR

Well, don't stand there, go and look. Open the window. Oh, why did he have to pick my building?

MAYOR'S SECRETARY opens the window, peers out.

MAYOR

Is there a crowd in the street?

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

No, sir.

CONNELL

Mayor—

MAYOR

Then he may be caught on a ledge! Look again!

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

I think it must have been a sea-gull.

CONNELL

Mayor—

MAYOR

A sea-gull? What's a sea-gull doing around the city hall? That's a bad omen, isn't it?

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

No sir. The sea-gull is a lovely bird.

MAYOR

Lovely bird, lovely bird.

MAYOR looks at the phone for a moment, than at MAYOR'S SECRETARY. In a stage whisper.

MAYOR

Who is this?

MAYOR'S SECRETARY whispers back.

MAYOR'S SECRETARY

Mr. Connell

CONNELL

Mayor?

MAYOR

Yes, haven't forgotten you, haven't forgotten you at all, just a sea-gull, wonderful bird.

MAYOR waves off MAYOR'S SECRETARY, who exits.

CONNELL

Mayor Lovett, you don't have to call me again. I've got everybody and his brother and sister out looking for him. You saw the box I'm running?

MAYOR

Yes, but it's my building—and reelection—

CONNELL reads from the newspaper.

CONNELL

“An appeal to John Doe. ‘Think it over, John. Life can be beautiful,’ says Mayor.”

MAYOR

Yes it can.

CONNELL

“If you need a job, apply to the editor of this paper—” and so forth and so forth. I will let you know as soon as I have something!

MAYOR

If he jumps—

CONNELL

Just pull down the blinds, Mayor, and everything'll be fine.

They both hang up. MAYOR exits. MATTIE enters.

MATTIE

I went to Ann Mitchell's house, again, like you wanted me to.

CONNELL

And?

MATTIE

What'd'ya expect? It's in a bad way there. You know she supports a mother and two sisters.

CONNELL

Has she come back yet?

MATTIE

Nope. Her mom's worried about her. When Ann left the house she said she was going on a roaring drunk.

CONNELL

Great—only 2361 bars to check.

MATTIE

And how would you know that number?

CONNELL

I'm the editor of a newspaper.

MATTIE

You know the biggest thing I found out?

CONNELL picks up the phone.

CONNELL

Get me the Commissioner. Yeah?

MATTIE

Remember Dr. John Mitchell?

CONNELL

Indeed I do. Lots of stories about him. He had the gift of the laying on of those doctor hands.

MATTIE

That was her dad.

CONNELL

Didn't know that. I remember running his obit. Top of the page.

VOICE comes in to CONNELL's ear.

CONNELL

Commissioner. It's been almost two days! Do I have to tell you again: She's about five foot five, brown eyes, light chestnut hair and as fine a pair of legs as—

ANN enters.

CONNELL

—as ever just walked into my office. Never mind. Yeah, you have that same kind of day.

MATTIE

You want me in or out?

CONNELL

You've done your job—you can go.

MATTIE

Welcome back, sister—you are one wanted woman.

MATTIE exits.

ANN

Did you want to see me? Because I remember, distinctly, being fired.

CONNELL

Which is still the case. But you have a piece of property that still belongs to this newspaper, and I'd like to have it!

ANN

Which is?

CONNELL

The letter from John Doe.

ANN

Oh.

CONNELL

The whole place is in an uproar. We've got to find him. The letter's our only clue.

ANN

There is no letter.

CONNELL

We'll get a handwriting expert to—what?

ANN

There is no letter. I made it up. You said you wanted fireworks, sledgehammers. Circulation.

CONNELL

I think I just lost all of mine. There are nine jobs waiting for this guy. Twenty-two families want to board him free. Five women want to marry him, and the Mayor's practically ready to adopt him, just so he won't jump off his building. And you—there's only one thing to do—drop the whole business quickly. We'll run a story. Say John Doe was in here, sorry he wrote the letter—that would do it! Came in here and I made him change his mind. "New Bulletin editor saves John Doe's life." That'll work. I'll get it written it up.

ANN

Such a great big wonderful genius of a newspaperman!

CONNELL

I like my job as well as the next guy.

ANN

But you don't mind taking mine away.

CONNELL

Wasn't my call.

ANN

You got bumped up to shoot some life into this dying paper because you've always had those kinds of ideas, just that no one ever listened to you, the lowly copy desk editor, until D.B. Norton needed a hatchet man—

CONNELL

It's "Managing Editor" in gold leaf on the door—

ANN

So do some managing! You get the whole town curious about this man and then, just like that, you're going to play it safe and bury him. There's enough circulation in that man to fill the veins of 10 managing editors.

CONNELL

In what man?

ANN

In our John Doe! The one I made up!

CONNELL

Making him up doesn't make him real.

ANN

We do that all the time. Between now and Christmas Eve, when he's gonna jump, I'd run a daily post starting with his boyhood, his schooling, his first job! A wide-eyed youngster facing a chaotic world. The problem of the average man, of all the John Does in the world. And Jane Does, too—don't forget them. Now, then comes the drama. He meets discouragement. He finds the world has feet of clay. His ideals crumble. So what does he do? He decides to commit suicide in protest against the state of civilization. He thinks of the river! But no, no, he has a better idea.

The City Hall. Why? Because he wants to attract attention, he wants to make a political statement, he wants to get a few things off his chest—who cares what?—and this is the only way he can get himself heard.

CONNELL

So he writes you a letter? I can't believe I'm discussing this like it's an actual—

ANN

Open your mind. Maybe he's written a hundred letters, to all the papers, no one takes him seriously. But he sees my lavender and silk, knows I have a heart—

CONNELL

A steel trap—

ANN

And I go dig him up because I am a kick-ass reporter. He is so grateful, he pours out his soul to me, and from now on we run his quotes: "I protest, by John Doe." He protests against all the evils in the world: the greed, the lust, the hate, the fear, all of humanity's inhumanity to humanity. Arguments will start. Should he commit suicide or should he not! People will write in pleading with him. We keep the question in play, right up to Christmas Eve.

CONNELL

And then?

ANN

Then he has a change of heart—sees the beauty of it all. You can give him that job. No one dies. Christmas comes. The Lord is risen.

CONNELL

That's Easter.

ANN

Doesn't matter—that's how people will feel. See?

ANN is awed by her scheme. CONNELL stares at ANN for a long pause.

CONNELL

Except John Doe isn't real.

ANN

So we hire somebody for the job, you—

CONNELL

Someone to say he's gonna commit suicide on Christmas Eve—
that it?

ANN

Dawn comes late to Marblehead. There's lots of desperate people
out there.

CONNELL

Do me a favor, will you? Go on out and get married and have a lot
of babies—I gotta get my story in so I can repair what you did.

CONNELL picks up the phone.

CONNELL

Mattie!

ANN

You're supposed to be a smart guy! If it was raining hundred dollar
bills, you'd be out looking for a dime you lost some place.

CONNELL

Listening to a mad woman—Mattie!

But MATTIE is already entering the office, a newspaper in hand.

MATTIE

Did you see what the Chronicle is running on John Doe?

CONNELL

No.

MATTIE

They're saying it's a fake. Imagine them accusing us of that!

CONNELL

"John Doe story amateur journalism. It's palpably phony."

MATTIE comments with muted sarcasm.

MATTIE

Palpably phony.

CONNELL

“It’s a wonder anyone is taking it seriously.”

MATTIE

My, my.

ANN

So now go fall right into their laps. Say John Doe walked in and called the whole thing off. You know what that’s going to sound like coming out after this!

CONNELL

Both of you are saying I’m pinned to the wall.

MATTIE

I have something else to tell you both as well. I got a dozen bums standing shoulder to shoulder out there. They all say they wrote the John Doe letter.

ANN

Tell them all to wait.

MATTIE

Should I?

CONNELL

I fired her, but she’s not staying very fired.

MATTIE

Not my fault.

ANN

Look, Mr. Connell, one of those men is your John Doe. They’re desperate and will do anything for a cup of coffee—believe me, I know. Pick one out and you can make the Chronicle eat its words—more circulation, more circulation—

MATTIE

If you ask me, “John Doe” is dynamite down your underwear.

CONNELL

That doesn’t mean she isn’t right. We can’t let the Chronicle know the truth, so we’ve got to produce a John Doe, and it might as well be now. Go tell ’em to wait.

MATTIE exits.

ANN

And there really is no reason for the Chronicle to find out the truth, either.

CONNELL

I take it that's not being said out of the kindness of your heart.

ANN

I'd like to see The New Bulletin and Mr. Norton prosper.

CONNELL

In other words—you get your job back.

ANN

Plus a bonus.

CONNELL

Of?

ANN

A thousand dollars—for keeping me from writing the words “I, Ann Mitchell, hereby certify that the John Doe letter was created by me—”

CONNELL

The going price these days?

ANN

It's the going price for my verified mom and two kid sisters.

CONNELL

Packs everything, including heat.

ANN

What's a poor girl gonna do?

CONNELL

Okay, Miss Mitchell, you've got yourself a deal.

ANN

Do you have to clear it with Norton?

CONNELL

I'll clear it with him—I have a feeling this isn't going to bother him at all. Let's take a look at the candidates. Mattie!

MATTIE comes in to the office.

CONNELL

Tell 'em we're gonna do our interviews, then when I call you, show 'em in, one by one. We are gonna find ourselves a typical average man that can keep his mouth shut.

MATTIE

Show me one of those and I'll eat him.

CONNELL

Get the cattle in line.

MATTIE exits.

CONNELL

You ready?

ANN

A lot readier than I was this morning. You clear this with Mr. Norton—I'm gonna look over our crop of John Does.

* * * * *

Scene 5

In a light by himself stands JOHN WILLOUGHBY, hat in hand, head down. ANN and CONNELL move to him, inspect him. They are impressed. JOHN feels awkward under this scrutiny.

CONNELL

Did you write that letter to Miss Mitchell?

JOHN

No, I didn't.

CONNELL

What are you doing up here then?

JOHN

The paper said there were some jobs around loose because of this John Doe thing. Thought there might be one left over for me.

ANN
Had any schooling?

JOHN
A little.

ANN
What do you do when you work?

JOHN
I used to pitch. Baseball. Till my arm went south.

ANN
Where'd you play?

JOHN
Bush leagues mostly.

CONNELL
Got any family?

JOHN
No I don't.

CONNELL
Just traveling through.

JOHN
Yeah. Me and a friend. He's outside.

CONNELL
What's your name?

JOHN
Willoughby. John Willoughby, Long John Willoughby they called me.

ANN
Would you like to make some money?

JOHN
Does a thirsty man need water?

ANN

Would you be willing to say you wrote that John Doe letter—and stick by saying that no matter what happens?

JOHN

Ah, I get it. If that's what it takes, then I'll take it.

CONNELL pulls ANN into a huddle.

CONNELL

Looks all right—

ANN

He's perfect! Look at that face. It's wonderful. And a baseball player. What could be more American!

MATTIE enters with a plate of sandwiches and puts it on CONNELL's desk. She gives JOHN the once-over, then leaves.

As ANN and CONNELL talk, JOHN edges over to the desk, looks hungrily at the sandwiches. He is one hungry man.

CONNELL

I wish he had a family, though.

ANN

We'll have a hero without a family—something new for the masses to take in. He stands alone. Against the world. People love that fairy tale, and that's what'll make them believe him. Come on. That's our man. He's made to order.

CONNELL

How're you sure he'll fall into line?

ANN

When you're desperate for money, a person can pull that string for a long time. He's our man, I tell you.

JOHN faints, and his fall to the ground gets their attention. ANN moves to him.

CONNELL

Mattie!!

MATTIE appears, takes in the situation.

CONNELL

Water!

MATTIE turns to get some water. Behind her, peeking in, is COLONEL, JOHN's companion.

COLONEL

He all right?

JOHN comes to. MATTIE comes in with a glass of water.

ANN

Are you all right?

JOHN

Yeah, yeah, I'm all right.

MATTIE

Here you go.

COLONEL

He's not all right. He's hungry. He won't say it, but I'll say it. We're hungry in the plural. You have sandwiches on the desk. Any of you mind?

CONNELL

Who are you?

JOHN

He's the Colonel. He's my pal.

COLONEL

And I say again, do any of you mind?

CONNELL gestures. COLONEL helps JOHN get up, and the two of them descend on the sandwiches.

CONNELL

Mattie—think we're gonna need some more.

MATTIE

Yippee—I'll get maid pay and combat pay.

MATTIE exits. ANN leaves to get more water, and CONNELL gets more chairs. JOHN and COLONEL, with as much decorum as their hunger can spare, tuck in. ANN comes back with glasses and a pitcher of water.

ANN and CONNELL sit while JOHN and COLONEL eat.

ANN

How many are you going to go for?

JOHN

It's been a while.

COLONEL

Yeah, well, thanks for all this largesse, but this John Doe business is batty, if you ask me.

ANN

Nobody asked you.

JOHN

That's never stopped him from saying something about anything.

COLONEL

Trying to improve the world by jumping off buildings. You couldn't improve the world if the building jumped on you!

JOHN

Don't mind the Colonel. He hates people.

CONNELL

He likes you well enough to stick around.

JOHN

I met him in a box car a coupla years ago. I was foolin' around with my harmonica and he comes over and joins in. Haven't been able to shake him since.

JOHN pulls out his harmonica and starts to play the overture from "William Tell." The COLONEL whips out an ocarina and joins him. MATTIE enters with more sandwiches, which she places on the desk.

MATTIE

All this, and music, too.

CONNELL

We've gotta get the photographers in here.

ANN

No, no, no! You can't take pictures of him like that—eating a sandwich—and needing a shave! We have to shape this thing carefully.

MATTIE nudges JOHN. JOHN pays attention to her but keeps on eating.

MATTIE

You hear what they're planning for you?

CONNELL

You're right.

MATTIE

You okay with how they're planning your life?

ANN

We'll clean him up and put him in a hotel room—under bodyguards. We'll make a mystery out of him. You spoke with Mr. Norton?

CONNELL

Says to go for the limit. Build a bonfire.

ANN

So, it's time to talk contract.

CONNELL

It's time to talk contract.

MATTIE nudges JOHN one last time.

MATTIE

And that means you're up.

CONNELL indicates COLONEL.

CONNELL

Can we trust him?

JOHN

I trust him.

CONNELL

Can I trust you?

COLONEL

I hate everything you're doing—

JOHN

He hates everything.

COLONEL

But I got his back.

JOHN

And I got his.

ANN

So it'll be all right with the Colonel.

COLONEL

Until it isn't.

CONNELL

Mattie, got your pad?

MATTIE

I always got my pad.

CONNELL sits face to face with JOHN. MATTIE writes.

CONNELL

Now the first thing I'm going to want is an exact copy of the John Doe letter in your own hand.

ANN

We'll get it done.

CONNELL

Okay with you?

JOHN

Okay with me.

CONNELL

Now this is the agreement. We get an exclusive story under your name day by day from now until Christmas Eve. When this is done, on Christmas day you get one railroad ticket out of town.

JOHN

Two.

CONNELL

Two, sorry.

JOHN

And I won't have to jump?

CONNELL

I don't think it'll come to that.

ANN

He's on the level.

JOHN

And what about my arm?

CONNELL

What about your arm?

JOHN

It'd be great if you could throw in there that you'd pay to have Bone-Setter Brown fix my arm, so I could play again.

CONNELL

The New Bulletin will agree to pay to have your arm fixed by Bone-Setter Brown.

JOHN

Okay.

CONNELL

Mattie here is going to type this up, and then you're going to sign up. You still with me on this?

JOHN

Still with you on this.

CONNELL

This okay with you?

COLONEL

If it's okay with him.

CONNELL

Okay all around. Mattie?

MATTIE

Typing away, boss.

MATTIE exits.

CONNELL

Ann, get them a suite at the Imperial, get them a bodyguard. And get John Doe some new clothes—gray suit, simple. From now on, you're John Doe, not Long John Willoughby. That's the name you answer to.

JOHN

All right.

CONNELL

Now, the both of you go find Mattie. John Doe, you sign what she types up. She's got fifty dollars spending money for you. And let the good times roll.

COLONEL does not hide the fact that he takes two sandwiches, wraps them in a napkin, and puts them into a pocket.

CONNELL

We'll make sure he eats.

COLONEL

Nice to know—I'll still take two.

JOHN

"Good faith" is just another dodge to him.

CONNELL

And for you?

JOHN

I'm honest enough for you.

They pick up their stuff and exit.

ANN

Take it easy, John Doe.

CONNELL

Get them set up at the hotel so we can get the rumors started. Then pound the typewriter. We can't let the Chronicle get any traction on what they've said. We need to blast their heads off.

ANN

Before you pop off too many rounds, don't forget that grand check for a grand.

CONNELL

Even in the rush of events, a memory like an elephant.

ANN

And the grace of a gazelle—remember, finest pair of legs—bye.

ANN leaves.

CONNELL

Don't leave out "fierce like a viper" and "foxy like"—a fox, I guess. A viper and a fox.

CONNELL goes to the phone.

CONNELL

Get me Mr. Norton.

While he waits for the connection, CONNELL stares. Only NORTON's voice pulls him back.

CONNELL

Mr. Norton—everything's jake. He's signing, I'll walk it over to Legal, and Ann Mitchell's getting him out for some new clothes and a place to stash him. No, I think she's fine—the money will keep her on the straight track, and she's all ambition, has got a taste for the game—makes handling her easier. I agree, Mr. Norton—it's going to be an interesting Christmas this year.

CONNELL hangs up, picks up a sandwich, munches on it.

* * * * *

Scene 6

MUSIC: “Newspapermen Meet Such Interesting People” by Vern Partlow, performed by Pete Seeger.

Living room of a hotel suite. JOHN, nicely suited, and COLONEL, still in his road clothes, poke their heads in. Behind them is ANGELFACE, their bodyguard, holding a newspaper. Their gear is in a neat pile.

JOHN takes a deep breath, looks pleased.

JOHN

Still smells nice.

COLONEL

You still ain't gonna get me to stay here.

JOHN

Sure you are.

COLONEL

No I'm not. That spot under the bridge where we slept the other night's good enough for me. You remember, don't you, we were headed for the Columbia River country before all this John Doe business came up.

JOHN

Did your ears pop coming up in the elevator?

JOHN looks over at ANGELFACE.

JOHN

Yours? Mine did.

COLONEL

Long John—I'm trying tell you—this is no good. You're gonna get used to a lotta stuff that's gonna wreck you. That fifty bucks in your pocket's already beginning to show up on you.

JOHN

Stop worrying, Colonel. I got things covered for us.

JOHN flops into a chair. ANGELFACE hands him a newspaper.

ANGELFACE

Make yourself comfortable.

ANGELFACE turns to COLONEL.

ANGELFACE

I can get you a paper, too.

COLONEL

I don't read papers and I don't listen to radios. I know the world's been shaved by a drunken barber, and I don't have to read about it.

ANGELFACE

Suit yourself.

COLONEL

I'm trying to.

COLONEL crosses to JOHN.

COLONEL

I've seen guys like you go under before, you know. Guys that never had a worry—

JOHN

Except for my arm—my means of production—

COLONEL

—then they get some money and go screwy.

JOHN gets up and crosses to the window.

JOHN

That's not me, Colonel. Fifty bucks ain't going to ruin me. And I'm getting my arm fixed out of this.

COLONEL

He starts wantin' to go into restaurants—

JOHN

You're not listening to me again.

COLONEL

He wants to sit at a table and eat salads—and cup cakes—and tea—boy, what that food will do to your system!

JOHN looks at ANGELFACE.

JOHN

Sorry—got him wound up—

JOHN opens up the window.

COLONEL

The next thing, he can't sleep unless he has a bed. I seen plenty start out with fifty bucks and wind up with a bank account!

ANGELFACE

What's the matter with a bank account?

COLONEL

Long John, when you become a guy with a bank account, they got you. They got you!

ANGELFACE

Who's got him?

COLONEL

The heelots!

ANGELFACE

Who?

JOHN

Hey. There's the City Hall tower I'm supposed to jump from. It's even higher than this.

ANGELFACE

Who's got him?

COLONEL

The heelots!

JOHN leans out. ANGELFACE makes a beeline to him.

JOHN

Wow!

ANGELFACE yanks him back.

ANGELFACE

You ain't supposed to really jump, you know?! Wanta lose me this job?

JOHN

If it's gonna get you in a jam, then I won't jump, early or late. Say—

JOHN flops back into the chair, picks up the paper.

JOHN

—is this one of those places where you ring if you want something?

COLONEL

See? It's already working its way into your brain!

ANGELFACE

Just dial zero on the phone.

JOHN

I have always wanted to do this!

JOHN picks up the phone, dials "0".

COLONEL

The heelots are goin' to get you!

JOHN

Will you send up three hamburgers with all the trimmings—

COLONEL

Two.

JOHN

—three chocolate ice cream sodas—

COLONEL

Two.

JOHN

—and three pieces of apple pie? No, apple, with cheese.

COLONEL

Two!

JOHN

Yeah. Thank you.

JOHN hangs up and gives COLONEL a big shit-eating grin.

ANGELFACE

Who are the heelots?

COLONEL

Listen, sucker, you ever been broke?

JOHN

You asked for it now.

ANGELFACE

Sure. Mostly often. Which is why I'm doin' this.

COLONEL

All right. You're walking along—not a nickel in your jeans—free as the wind—hundreds pass you by in every line of business—nice, gentle people—and they let you alone. Right? Then you get some money, and what happens? All those nice, sweet, gentle people become heelots. A lotta heels. They begin creeping up on you—trying to sell you something.

JOHN

I told you.

COLONEL

They've got long claws and they get a stranglehold on you—and you squirm and duck and shout and you try to push 'em away—but you haven't got a chance—they've got you! First thing you know, you own things. A car, for instance.

JOHN

He's good.

COLONEL

Now your whole life is messed up with more stuff—license fees—and number plates—and gas and oil—and taxes and insurance—and identification cards—and letters—and bills—and flat tires—and traffic tickets and motorcycle cops and court rooms—and lawyers—and fines—and a million and one other things.

JOHN

Here it comes across the plate.

COLONEL

And what happens? You're not the free and happy guy you used to be. You gotta have money to pay for all those things—so you go after what the other feller's got—and there you are—you're a heelot yourself!

JOHN gets up, pulls the money out of his pants pocket.

JOHN

You win, Colonel. Here's the fifty. Go on out and get rid of it.

COLONEL

You bet I will! As fast as I can! Gonna get some canned goods—a fishing rod—and the rest I'm givin' away.

ANGELFACE

Give away? You can give it to me!

JOHN

No luck—he wants to save your soul!

COLONEL is heading out when he comes across ANN coming in.

COLONEL

And here's the queen of the heelots herself.

JOHN

I've got it covered, Colonel.

ANN ignores COLONEL.

ANN

Hello there. Well, well! If it isn't the man about town!

COLONEL

I'm goin'!

ANN

So go.

JOHN

I'll catch up with you—be sure to give all of it away that you can give.

COLONEL

Columbia River's calling.

ANN

So answer it.

COLONEL leaves. ANN indicates to ANGELFACE.

ANN

Stand outside, okay? I've got a photographer coming, so let me know when she's here.

ANGELFACE touches the brim of his hat and leaves.

JOHN

A photographer?

ANN

It's all in what people see, John Doe—no one reads anymore, so they don't think anymore, they just look, and then they feel, and then they have opinions, and then we print newspapers. The great chain of being. We're gonna need some action in these pictures.

JOHN

Action?

ANN

Can you do it?

JOHN

Like this?

JOHN winds up in pitching pose—his left leg lifted up high.

ANN

No, no, no. Not that, not something so—ordinary. Sit down. Let me comb your hair.

She finger-combs his hair—straightens his tie. He inhales the fragrance of her hair and likes it.

ANN

There. That's better.

She poses JOHN's face and looks it over.

ANN

You know, John Doe's got a nice face. Does he have a serious face?

JOHN

Can't. I'm feeling too good. And don't tell the Colonel that.

ANN

You are supposed to be a man disgusted with all of civilization.

JOHN

All of it?

ANN

Yes, you're sore at the world. Come on, now.

JOHN tries scowling. ANN laughs.

ANN

No! No, look. You don't have to smell the world! All right, stand up. Now let's see what you look like when you protest.

JOHN

Against what?

ANN

Against anything—it doesn't matter to them. Just protest.

JOHN laughs, shrugs.

JOHN

You got me.

ANGELFACE opens the door, and EDITH, the photographer, glides in, equipment in hand. ANN speaks to EDITH.

ANN

Watch him close.

ANN turns back to JOHN.

ANN

I'm the umpire, and you just cut the heart of the plate with your fast one and I call it a ball. Ball! And it ain't the first one I've called like that. Ball! Ball!

JOHN suddenly becomes the angry pitcher advancing on the ump—he's made the shift in a heartbeat.

JOHN

Oh, you did, huh?

ANN

Yeah, I did!

JOHN

Why can't you call right, you bone-headed, pig-eared, pot-bellied—

ANN

Grab it, Edith, grab it!

LIGHT: A big strobe effect as EDITH captures JOHN's mad look.

* * * * *

Scene 7

IMAGE: A PROJECTION of the JOHN DOE "angry man" picture.

SOUND: JOHN's VOICEOVER, loud and with echoes, as if he's in a large stadium.

SUPERIMPOSED over JOHN DOE's picture is a CIRCULATION CHART—showing the circulation of The New Bulletin on a constant rise.

JOHN

"I protest against the collapse of decency in the world." "I protest against corruption in local politics." "I protest against politicians being in league with crime." "I protest against welfare being used as political football." "I protest against County Hospitals shutting out the needy." "I protest against all the brutality and slaughter in the world."

* * * * *

Scene 8

SOUND: The echoing reverb of JOHN DOE's voice fading away.

The study of D.B. NORTON. NORTON, ANN, and CONNELL enter. NORTON is dressed in what can only be called Fashionable Fascist: a black shirt under a military-style jacket, a leather strap across the chest, leather belt—but fashionable, tailored. The look should suggest Mussolini, but only suggest.

ANN

Personally, Mr. Norton, I think it's just plain nuts if you let him drop it now. You should see John Doe's fan mail! He's going over like a house on fire!

CONNELL goes to speak, but NORTON gestures for him to hold.

NORTON

What are you afraid of, Connell? It's doubled our circulation, on the brink of even more.

CONNELL

Because everybody knows, somewhere inside, that this John Doe thing is a phony—and they insist on seeing the John Doe in the flesh.

ANN

So let's make him real. We've spent all this money and time building up the mystery—let's reveal it. Mr. Norton—why not put him on your radio station?

NORTON's reaction shows that he likes the idea.

NORTON

What good's it having a station if I don't use it?

CONNELL

Because we don't know what this bush-league pitcher will do under pressure. I walked in yesterday—he's standing on a table flycasting and looking down in the dumps. He says he misses his Colonel. Get him out of town before this thing explodes in our pants!

ANN

If you do, Mr. Norton, you're just as much of a loser as he is! And excuse me for saying so.

CONNELL

Because you hate thinking you'll lose your meal ticket.

ANN

That meal ticket covers us both, and I like mine!

ANN turns to NORTON.

ANN

But it's also a windfall for you, who's got his own ambitions. It's not a secret, Mr. Norton, about you and politics—why do you think the Governor's more nervous than a cow with a buck-tooth calf? That's why you bought the newspaper, isn't it? And the station? Put John Doe on the air. He can say what we want him to say, and they'll listen to him. We can manage how anyone gets to him—we'll script that, too. He'll have a long leash, but he will have a leash.

The two men's reactions couldn't be more different: CONNELL looks like he needs milk for his upset stomach, NORTON is fascinated.

ANN

Me? I'd forget the Governor, the Mayor and all small fry like that. This can arouse national interest! If he's made a hit around here—he can do it everywhere else in the country! And you'll be pulling the strings, Mr. Norton!

NORTON turns to CONNELL.

NORTON

Go to the office and arrange for some radio time.

CONNELL

D.B., don't fall for—

NORTON

And I want it done as soon as possible.

CONNELL

Okay. Okay. Consider it done. Come on, let's go.

NORTON indicates for ANN to stay.

Miss Mitchell—
NORTON

CONNELL shrugs and goes. ANN waits.

NORTON
Sit down. This John Doe idea—it was yours.

ANN
Yes, sir.

NORTON
How much money do you get?

ANN
How much money do I get?

NORTON
It's a simple question.

ANN
You can round up or round down, but it's still thirty dollars.

NORTON
And what are you after? What do you want? A journalistic career?
Respect for your craft?

ANN realizes that this is a make-or-break answer.

ANN
Money.

NORTON laughs a good hearty laugh.

NORTON
I'm glad to hear somebody admit it. Do you suppose you could
write a radio speech that would put this man across?

ANN
I'm sure I can.

NORTON

Do it, and I'll give you a hundred dollars a week.

ANN

A hundred dollars.

NORTON

A week. That's not enough?

ANN

Don't mistake being dumbfounded, Mr. Norton, for being ungrateful. I've just never had—

NORTON

That's only the beginning. You play your cards right, and you'll never have to worry about money again.

ANN'S eyes brighten. NORTON points at her.

NORTON

Ah, I knew it. I could read it.

NORTON pushes a button on his desk. TED SHELDON, dressed in an actual Fascist-looking uniform, enters.

NORTON

My nephew, Ted Sheldon—he handles my security. This is Ann Mitchell.

ANN

How do you do.

TED

How do you do!

NORTON

See that Miss Mitchell gets a car to take her home.

TED

You always give me the hard work! That pleasure would be all mine.

ANN

Thank you very much for everything.

NORTON

And Miss Mitchell—from now it'd be better if you work directly with me.

ANN

If that's what you want.

NORTON

I always say what I want.

TED offers ANN his arm, which ANN accepts. They exit. With a smile on his face, NORTON gives his suit an extra-smart tug to set it right. And then one more for good measure.

* * * * *

Scene 9

SOUND: The sound of typewriter keys pounding against the platen, paper ripped out and crumpled.

ANN in her living room, at a typewriter, a litter of crumpled paper on the floor. ANN'S MOTHER comes in looking for something on ANN's desk.

ANN

Irene and Ellen in bed?

MOTHER

And sleeping. Though with all this paper thumping around out here—

ANN

Stick a fork through me! I'm done. I'll never get this speech right.

MOTHER

Oh, yes you will, Ann dear—you're very clever.

ANN

Clever as a lead weight. What are you looking for?

MOTHER

Your purse. I need ten dollars.

ANN

I gave you fifty the other day.

MOTHER

Yes, I know, but Mrs. Burke had her baby yesterday. Nine pounds!
And there wasn't a thing in the house—and then this morning the
Community Chest lady came around and—

ANN

And the fifty's all gone. Who's the ten for?

MOTHER

The Websters.

ANN

The Websters.

MOTHER

Those lovely people your father used to—

ANN

I know who they are.

MOTHER

I thought I'd buy them some groceries. It's a shame, those poor—

ANN

You're marvelous, Ma, just like Dad used to be—and look what
that got him.

MOTHER

Don't get upset.

ANN

Do you realize a couple of weeks ago we didn't have enough to
eat ourselves?

MOTHER

But these people are in such need, and we have plenty now.

ANN

That thousand dollars is practically gone because we owed
everybody in town. You've gotta stop giving our money away!

MOTHER

Ann!

ANN

I'm sorry—sorry, sorry. I'm just upset about all—this. I have this great chance to get somewhere, get us some security, and I'm stuck. If I can put this speech over, your Mrs. Burke can have six babies and all the trimmings!

MOTHER

Stuck on what?

ANN

I don't know! I created somebody who says he'll give up his life for a principle, hundreds of thousands of people are gonna listen to him over the radio and, unless he says something that's, well, that's—

ANN gestures to mean the word "sensational."

ANN

There goes the money, there goes—

MOTHER

Well, honey, I don't know what you want to end up with, but if it's like all the others, I don't think anybody'll listen.

ANN

What do they want to hear?

MOTHER

There are so many complaining political speeches—everyone's got a plan to fix how rotten the world is. People are tired of all the doom and despair.

ANN

It's not great out there.

MOTHER

It doesn't need to be in their faces all the time. If you're going to get people to listen to him, have him say something simple and real, something with, I don't know, hope in it. If your father were alive, he'd know what to say.

ANN

The Doctor certainly would have the cure.

MOTHER

Wait a minute—

ANN

What? You've got your "I've decided something" look.

MOTHER crosses to a desk, finds a key and unlocks a compartment. She extracts a diary from the compartment and moves back to ANN.

MOTHER

This is your father's diary.

ANN

I never knew he wrote a diary.

MOTHER

There's enough in it for a hundred speeches, simple things people ought to hear nowadays, be reminded of. Be careful with it.

ANN

You bet I will.

MOTHER

I'll let you work.

MOTHER leaves. ANN turns her attention to the diary. As she opens it, her eyes and face sparkle. She begins to type like a fury.

* * * * *

Scene 10

SOUND: _____ The sound of typewriter keys pounding against the platen.

The hotel suite. JOHN now has a baseball glove, and he's pitching an imaginary baseball to COLONEL, who's wearing a catcher's mitt. ANGELFACE watches.

JOHN pitches. COLONEL smacks the mitt.

ANGELFACE

Ba-ll!

COLONEL

I don't know how you're gonna stand it around here till after Christmas.

JOHN

It's a job, just a job.

COLONEL throws the "ball" back to JOHN.

COLONEL

Job, nothing—I know why you're hangin' around—not the "job"—

COLONEL gives JOHN a signal. JOHN waves it off.

COLONEL

You're stuck on that Ann Mitchell—that's all a guy needs is to get hooked by a woman like her.

JOHN

I am not stuck on her.

COLONEL gives him another sign.

ANGELFACE

You have a lot of opinions.

JOHN nods, winds up, pitches. This is a hit, for his eyes shoot skyward, and he quickly turns—watching the progress of the ball as it is flung to first base. From his frown we know the man is safe.

COLONEL

Not opinions—facts.

ANGELFACE

A single?

JOHN

First baseman dropped the ball.

ANGELFACE

Butterfingers!

JOHN keeps his eye on the man on first.

COLONEL

A woman like her you have to handle at arms-length and welder's gloves—and LJ, your arms are not that long!

JOHN catches the “ball” from his infielder—gets into position—nods to his catcher—raises his hands in the air, takes a peek toward first base—and suddenly wheels around and whips the “ball” toward first base. Almost immediately his face lights up.

ANGELFACE

Get him?

JOHN winks. He tucks the glove under his arm and massages the “ball” with both hands.

ANGELFACE

That makes it three to two—our favor.

JOHN

Seventh inning stretch!

COLONEL flops on his back. JOHN paces, massaging the “ball.”

ANGELFACE

You must’ve been a pretty good pitcher.

JOHN

About ready for the majors when I chipped a bone in my elbow pitchin’ a nineteen-inning game! A major league scout came down after the game with a contract, but I couldn’t lift my arm to sign it. But I’ll be okay again soon.

ANGELFACE

Yeah, well, wish you luck with that, but still—

JOHN

What do you mean?

COLONEL

Uh-oh.

ANGELFACE

Well, you’ll never be able to really play again.

JOHN

What are you talking about? I just told you I’m gonna get—

ANGELFACE

Think baseball’s gonna hire a guy mixed up in a racket?

COLONEL

Columbia River, Long John, I can hear the—

ANGELFACE

Naw, he's gotta hear this. This John Doe business. As soon as it comes out, you'll be washed up in baseball.

JOHN

I never thought about that.

COLONEL

The clear cool river, LJ.

ANGELFACE

And what about all the kids that look up to ball players? What are they gonna think about you?

COLONEL takes out his ocarina and plays.

JOHN

What d'ya think, Colonel?

COLONEL is not interested in the affairs of men.

JOHN

Colonel—

COLONEL

Elevators are still runnin' from here to the ground floor, as I understand it.

COLONEL goes back to playing.

ANGELFACE

I know how you can get something out of this mess.

JOHN

How's that?

ANGELFACE

When you get on that radio, all you have to do is say the whole thing's a frame-up. Makes you a hero for telling the truth.

JOHN

But my arm?

ANGELFACE

You're not being a hero for free. I know somebody that'll give you five thousand dollars to get on that radio and tell the truth.

COLONEL

Five thousand dollars?

ANGELFACE

And you get it right away. You don't have to wait till Christmas—it can be Christmas now.

COLONEL

You have it on you now?

ANGELFACE

The guy paying it needs to know if he's goin' for it.

COLONEL

They're closing in on you!

JOHN

Who's putting this up?

ANGELFACE

Look, I like you. This business just uses people up—get something out of it while you can.

ANGELFACE takes a folded piece of paper out of his jacket pocket.

ANGELFACE

Here's the speech—take it—

JOHN takes it.

COLONEL

Five thousand dollars, Long John, five thousand heelots comin'. A whole army of them! Thirty pieces of silver and all.

ANGELFACE

It's on the level. But it's a one-time offer, limited edition. You read that—car'll be waiting by the side door for you, money inside.

JOHN stares at the paper, at COLONEL, at ANGELFACE.

COLONEL

What's it gonna be, Long John, whose side you gonna be on?

ANGELFACE

Your friend makes some excellent points for once.

* * * * *

Scene 11

SOUND: Voices, moving equipment, phones: the radio station.

IMAGE: A big clock ticking away and an ON AIR sign that is off.

Everything shifts to the radio station. ANGELFACE disappears. JOHN puts on his suitcoat, puts the speech in an inner pocket.

COLONEL sidles in next to JOHN. ANN bustles in, bag slung over her shoulder. With ANN comes STORMY, who's got a clipboard and is all no-nonsense. CONNELL follows a few steps behind.

STORMY

Here he is.

ANN

John, John—all set?

STORMY

We gotta keep it moving—

STORMY points to the big clock.

ANN

Okay, okay, I just need a moment.

STORMY

I can give you half of that.

STORMY steps off to the side. ANN takes papers out of her bag.

ANN

Now, look, John. Here's the speech, in caps and double-spaced so you won't have any trouble reading it. Not nervous, are you?

JOHN
No.

ANN
Of course not. He wouldn't be.

JOHN
Who?

ANN
John Doe. The one in there.

ANN points to the speech.

ANN
Everything in that speech are things a certain man believed in—
my father, John—a kind of John Doe himself, like you.

JOHN
I'm not your—

ANN
And when he talked, people listened, just like they'll listen to you.

JOHN
Why would anyone listen [to me]—

STORMY
Half a moment's coming due.

ANN
Okay! You needn't be nervous, John. Just remember to make it
sound sincere.

JOHN
That's all I gotta remember, huh?

ANN
Yes. Sound sincere, and that'll get you through.

ANN kisses his cheek.

ANN
Good luck.

ANN taps his right shoulder.

ANN

I'll be sitting right there.

STORMY steps back in.

STORMY

I gotta get him up to the mike.

ANN

He's all yours—treat him well.

As STORMY brings JOHN up to the microphone, CONNELL joins ANN.

CONNELL

You aren't going soft on him, are you?

ANN

Not hard-boiled me.

CONNELL

Not hard-boiled you, no.

STORMY brings JOHN to the microphone.

STORMY

In about three-and-a-half seconds a nervous man comes out of that door and rings the bell that gets this train moving. So, to keep it simple.

STORMY points at his mouth.

STORMY

From that.

STORMY points at the microphone.

STORMY

Into that. With sincerity. That's the secret of radio. From that into that. I am now going to abandon you to him. Good luck, bucko.

STORMY walks away. JOHN looks at ANN's speech, puts his hand on the piece of paper that's in his suitcoat pocket. He is very much alone. COLONEL sees this and sidles up to him.

COLONEL

We can still get out of here alive, LJ. The door's right there.

As STORMY predicted, the EMCEE bustles in.

EMCEE

Hey, what are you doing here?

COLONEL

That's what I'd like to know.

EMCEE

Out. Out.

JOHN

He's a friend of mine—I need him here, I need him close by.

EMCEE

Then stand right there and give him your silent support.

COLONEL slaps JOHN's right shoulder.

COLONEL

Long John, I'm right here, I'm right here.

COLONEL steps back. JOHN turns to COLONEL, but EMCEE pulls him back.

EMCEE

Nuh-uh—right here.

STORMY

Stand by, everyone!

EMCEE

Like she said, from here into there.

STORMY

On my count: Three. Two.

STORMY mouths "One."

SOUND: An orchestra fanfare.

The ON AIR sign goes on. The moment the music starts, STORMY's work is done, and she exits. As soon as the music stops, EMCEE speaks dramatically, holding one hand to his ear.

At the same moment, a light comes up on NORTON, listening to the speech on the radio in his study.

EMCEE

And good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Kenneth Frye, speaking for The New Bulletin, "a streamlined newspaper for a streamlined age." Tonight we give you something entirely new and different. Standing beside me is the young man who has declared publicly that on Christmas Eve he intends to commit suicide, giving as his reason, quote: "I protest against the state of civilization." End quote. Ladies and gentlemen, The New Bulletin takes pleasure in presenting the man who is fast becoming the most talked-of person in the whole country, JOHN DOE!

SOUND: There is an outburst of music.

JOHN reaches into his suitcoat pocket as he looks at COLONEL. COLONEL gives him a pitch signal. JOHN nods at COLONEL's sign.

EMCEE nudges him, points to the microphone. JOHN pushes the paper back and starts, haltingly, with ANN's speech.

JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen: I am the man you all know as John Doe. I took that name because it seems to describe—because it seems to describe—the average man, and that's me. Well, it was me—before I said I was gonna jump off City Hall at midnight on Christmas Eve. Now I'm getting all sorts of attention. The Mayor and the Governor, for instance. They don't like those articles that say what I've been talking about.

JOHN pauses—this next part is off-script.

JOHN

And I guess because of all of that, I even got a bribe tonight to come up here and say that I'm not really what people have been saying I am. I don't know who tried it, but I'll tell you it didn't work. I am who I am. I'm still here.

NORTON leans in to the radio. JOHN goes back to his script.

JOHN

Sorry. Those articles that say what I've been talking about—right. Well, people like the Mayor and the Governor—

JOHN suddenly laughs—he's getting into the swing of things. And from here on in, it's not clear if he's reading from the script or ad-libbing the whole thing.

JOHN

Of course people like the Mayor and the Governor—I like the Mayor and the Governor—but they and the others can stop worrying. I'm not gonna talk about them. This is not about them.

ANN, COLONEL, CONNELL, and NORTON: deep into their own thoughts.

JOHN

I'm gonna talk about us, the average guys, the John Does. If anybody should ask you what the average John Doe is like, you couldn't tell him because he—and she—it's John Doe and Jane Doe, really—

ANN gives him a big smile for his on-the-spot invention of "Jane Doe."

JOHN

—they're a million and one things. They're Mr. Big and Mrs. Small. They're simple but with lots of common sense. Honest, but with a bit of larceny in the heart—seldom walk by a public telephone without shoving a finger into the slot to see if somebody left something behind.

JOHN holds up a finger, even though he's on radio.

JOHN

I know—I got the scars on my own finger to prove it!

Even EMCEE chuckles behind his hand.

NORTON is absorbed. Behind him, in the shadows, MAID enters without a sound, listening as well.

JOHN

We're a great family, the John Does and Jane Does. We're the meek who are supposed to inherit the earth. You'll find us everywhere. We raise the crops, dig the mines, work the factories, raise the kids, wash the clothes and cook cook cook till everyone is full and can sleep soundly.

MAID inches in. NORTON doesn't hear anything except JOHN.

JOHN

We've existed since time began. We built the pyramids, we saw Christ crucified, we've been dying in war after war after war after war! In our struggle for freedom we've always bounced back! Because we're the people—and we're tough! And when we all pull in the same direction, nothing can stop us!

MAID and NORTON are both absorbed in the words.

JOHN

I know a lot of you are saying "What can I do? I'm just a little punk. I don't count." Well, you're dead wrong! The little punks have always counted because in the long run the character of a country is the sum total of the character of its little punks.

NORTON turns and sees MAID, who starts to draw back. He motions her closer and nods toward the radio, a question on his face, as if to say, "You like this?" She nods yes. They both listen.

JOHN

But we've all got to get in there and pitch! We can't win the old ball game unless we have team work. And that's where every member of the Doe family comes in! It's up to all of them to get together with all their teammates! And your teammate, my friends, is the person next door to you. Your neighbors! You're gonna need them and they are gonna need you. So check them out! If they're sick, make a call. If they're hungry, feed them! If they're out of work, find 'em a job. Tear down the fences that separate teammates, tear down those hates and prejudices! I know a lot of you are saying to yourselves: "He's asking for a miracle. He's expecting people to change all of a sudden." Well, you're wrong. It's no miracle because I see it happen once every year. And so do you. At Christmas! There's something great about that spirit, to see what it does to people, all kinds of people.

ANN and NORTON connect, though they don't really see each other. Even COLONEL has lost a little of his sour look—but only a little.

JOHN

Now, why can't that spirit last the whole year? If each and every Doe would make that spirit last three hundred and sixty-five days—366 in a leap year—we'd develop such a strength, we'd create such a tidal wave of good will, that no human force could stand against it. Yes, sir, my friends, the meek can inherit the earth, but only when neighbors start loving their neighbors. You'd better start right now. Don't wait till the game is called on account of darkness! Wake up! You are the hope of the world!

JOHN is finished. EMCEE realizes this and that he has to speak.

EMCEE

And that concludes this evening's broadcast by JOHN DOE, hosted by The New Bulletin, "a streamlined newspaper for a streamlined age." Until next time—

EMCEE gestures to the booth.

SOUND: Musical fanfare playing.

IMAGE: ON AIR sign goes off.

IMAGE: Clock runs.

NORTON sits up, turns and looks at MAID. The spell is broken. She melts away. NORTON turns off the radio. Lights out on the study.

ANN hugs him. CONNELL and EMCEE congratulate JOHN. All this overlaps and overwhelms JOHN. [Lines can also be ad-libbed to cover the time.]

ANN

That was wonderful.

CONNELL

Good work, John, good work—you had me by the end.

EMCEE

Well done, Mr. Doe, well done.

JOHN knows one thing: after the "flush," he doesn't know what he's feeling. JOHN turns to COLONEL with a terrified look on this face.

COLONEL catches it. He beelines to JOHN's side.

COLONEL

Excuse me, folks, excuse me, excuse, Long John and I've got a date with clear cold river!

COLONEL pulls JOHN out of their clutches and out of the studio before any of them can react and stop their exit.

COLONEL

Out of my way, out of my way, you heelots!

And off they go, leaving everyone dumbfounded and eating their dust.

* * * * *

Scene 12

SOUND: Sound collage: cacophony of congratulations and other voices, snippets of the speech, then a tailing off into birdsong, water purling, maybe a distant train.

LIGHT: Dawn.

JOHN and COLONEL are in their spot under a bridge. COLONEL stares into the embers of a fire. JOHN sleeps, coat bunched under his head.

JOHN suddenly shakes himself awake.

COLONEL

It's okay. It's okay, Long John.

JOHN

I was just remembering everything—everything coming in like a flood.

COLONEL

Flood's gone.

JOHN

Five thousand bucks sewed up!

COLONEL

You really think there was gonna be a car by the side door with money in the back seat?

JOHN

You're right—

COLONEL

I am right.

JOHN

Such an idiot—

COLONEL

Stop beating yourself up—it's really ugly to watch. You're hungry, you're desperate, the clock feels like it's running out on your arm—enough to make anyone an idiot—it's turned the whole country into an idiot, so why not you, too?

JOHN

What a sucker she played me for!

COLONEL

She's the queen heelot—no matter what you hoped for. You're lucky she proved you wrong.

LIGHT: Getting brighter, though still a shadowy early dawn.

JOHN

And that speech!

COLONEL laughs.

COLONEL

Tear down all the fences. She's obviously never owned a yard. Tear a picket off your neighbor's fence, he'd sue you, maybe shoot you, before he'd give you a handshake and a thanks! Try to put that into a speech.

JOHN pauses, pulls at his lower lip, looks at COLONEL, looks away.

COLONEL

Long John—what'd'ya got goin' on the face of yours?

JOHN

Because something strange also happened while I was standing there—it's got me confused—for a moment in front of that microphone, I wasn't there. I mean it, Colonel, I wasn't there.

COLONEL

Where'd you go?

JOHN

I was inside the words. I knew they were her words—who knows where she stole 'em—

JOHN takes a deep cleansing breath, shakes his body loose.

JOHN

But it was true, Colonel—not her words anymore, no matter where she fingered 'em—I was lifted right down into them.

COLONEL

What did that give you?

JOHN

I don't know if it gave me anything, like a hard fact—more just a release—“John Doe” wasn't like a weight anymore—

COLONEL

You got yourself a God-blast—

LIGHT: A much brighter morning now.

COLONEL gets up, starts pulling things together.

JOHN

What if “true” was what I was feeling, Colonel?

COLONEL

You need to clean that sludge outta your system, toot sweet—no good ever comes from a God-blast.

JOHN

It felt good for as long as it lasted.

COLONEL

And how did coming back to earth feel after that? Gotta keep that in mind, too—God-blasts aren't built to last forever. C'mon.

COLONEL plays his ocarina. JOHN plays his harmonica. They don't play for long, but it re-connects them.

COLONEL

Come on, LJ—we got us a river we gotta get to.

JOHN

You're right—we gotta get away from here so that I can know what I'm thinking.

* * * * *

Scene 13

LIGHT: _____ Lights shift—hot early morning.

JOHN and COLONEL stand at the edge of a town, gear in hand.

JOHN

Your feet hurt?

COLONEL

My feet hurt.

JOHN

My dogs are barking. Close one back there. They looked like they knew me.

COLONEL

Your mug's plastered on a lot of newsprint.

JOHN

They just ran off, like they heard a phone ringing. How much money we got left?

COLONEL

Still four bits.

JOHN

You really did give away the fifty.

COLONEL

All but four bits.

JOHN

Which I guess makes it doughnuts for us, huh?

COLONEL

That's in our ballpark.

JOHN

I wish I could call up room service.

COLONEL

Well, ya can't, ya mug—all's we got now is self-service.

They hesitate, then take a step.

Right into "Dan's Beanery," with DAN at the counter and MADGE, his customer. MADGE she keeps cadging looks between her paper and JOHN.

DAN

Doughnuts, right? I can tell by yer clothes and the dirt under your nails.

MADGE

Psst!

DAN

'Scuse me.

DAN goes to MADGE, who shows him the newspaper. DAN looks from the newspaper to JOHN and COLONEL and back again. COLONEL nudges JOHN.

COLONEL

We should get outta here.

JOHN sees the attention they're getting and nods "yes." But before they can move, MADGE blocks their exit while DAN hustles off.

MADGE

Don't run!

MADGE holds up the newspaper, which shows the John Doe "angry" photo.

MADGE

John Doe! I can't believe you're here. You just don't know how much what you said the other night made such a difference to us.

JOHN

That's nice, but we gotta—

MADGE

Why, I'm head of our town's John Doe Club!

JOHN and COLONEL look at each other like they have no idea what she's talking about—which they don't.

MADGE

Dan, there, the guy who was goin' to give you your food, he's my vice-president. He's my husband, too, which makes the whole thing easier!

COLONEL

Where'd he go?

JOHN

John Doe Club?

COLONEL

Where'd your husband go?

MADGE

Make a phone call. "If you see this man, call," he saw you, and so he's gone off to call.

COLONEL

That's why they were running—

MADGE

A reward, sure, but just seein' you, hearing your voice—it's reward enough.

JOHN

John Doe Clubs?

COLONEL

Better than Colonel Clubs. This is not good.

SOUND: Police siren. Then others getting closer and closer.

COLONEL

You think your feet hurt now.

SOUND: Cars pull up, doors open and close.

DAN comes back, sandwiches in one hand and two coffees in the other.

DAN

You fellas never got your food.

SOUND: Muttering of a gathering crowd, muscular voices saying “Stay back” and “Make room.”

COLONEL and JOHN, cornered, decide to sit down and eat. NORTON and ANN appear. DAN and MADGE back off.

ANN

Hello, John.

NORTON looks over at DAN and MADGE.

NORTON

Sir—

JOHN

His name is Dan. That’s Madge, his wife. They own this place.

NORTON

Dan and Madge—would you mind waiting outside? We need to talk to Mr. Doe alone.

DAN

Sure, of course.

MADGE speaks to JOHN.

MADGE

Would you—do you think you might be able to speak to our John Doe Club?

DAN

Madge.

NORTON

We’ll see, Madge—we’ll have to see.

MADGE

Okay—be great if you could.

DAN and MADGE edge out—but they can eavesdrop.

JOHN

Lot of nerve chasing us down.

ANN

John, people are forming John Doe Clubs.

JOHN

We know—Dan and Madge, they run one here.

ANN

That makes nine! We know of eight already—

JOHN

Why they do something as foolish as that?

ANN

To carry out what you said in your speech.

JOHN

Your speech, not mine. I don't care. We're on our way—and we don't like the idea of being stopped.

ANN

But you don't know about the thousands of telegrams and letters you've received—

JOHN

Not me—this guy you made up got them—

ANN

Are you going to tell me that you didn't feel anything when you gave that speech? That you didn't feel John Doe?

JOHN looks at COLONEL, decides to stay mum about the God-blast.

JOHN

I said I don't care.

ANN

You say those words, but I can hear you don't mean them. John, you are John Doe. Mr. Norton wants to back what you started—John Doe Clubs everywhere. He wants to send you on a lecture tour.

NORTON

This could grow into a powerful movement. It would make a difference in people's lives.

COLONEL

They mean, Long John, pitch you for nineteen innings and then throw you away, just like what happened before—

JOHN

Colonel is right. This thing belongs to the newspaper, it belongs to you—just a bunch of whipped-up egg whites. Baseball is all I want, and I'm sticking to that.

NORTON

Good luck, with that arm of yours. And your reputation.

JOHN

Come on, Colonel, let's get out of here.

ANN

John!

COLONEL, beaming, pockets a few sandwiches. But as they move toward the door, DAN and MADGE slip into the scene. NORTON gets an idea, just as he did with his maid.

NORTON

Dan and Madge—do you have something you would like to say to Mr. Doe before he leaves?

MADGE

You're leaving?

COLONEL

He's leaving.

JOHN

We're leaving.

MADGE

He's leaving, Dan. Dan!

DAN

Okay—okay. We got a bang out of your broadcast. Madge kept saying “That man’s right, honey.” And I kept saying, “Well, that’s fine, but how’s a guy gonna go around loving the kind of neighbors we got?”

MADGE

But we realized there was only one way to do it—and that was to, well, just do it. So we did it. We invited people to come here and talk.

DAN

Over forty people showed up, here. None of us knew what to do at first, then we just sorta did know, and before we got through the first glass of lemonade—

MADGE

We had a John Doe Club.

DAN

A John Doe Club.

MADGE

Because of you, Mr. Doe. We’ve got committees that go find out about people and help them out.

DAN

You never, until you look, know what you’re going to find. And we wouldn’t’ve done it, if you hadn’t said what you said the way you said it.

MADGE

Oh, and another thing—no politicians. The Mayor wanted to join the club—

DAN

Oh, that was funny!

MADGE

And we all said, polite, you know, but firm, that no politicians could join, only John Does, because, well, you know how politicians are.

Everyone laughs except JOHN and COLONEL. JOHN is touched but troubled. COLONEL is, well, COLONEL. The laughter tails off.

MADGE

You're a wonderful man, Mr. Doe, and it strikes me you can be mighty useful walking around for a while.

NORTON

Dan, Madge—thank you. Just—thank you.

ANN

You were great.

ANN walks over to JOHN and gives him a direct look.

COLONEL

I can see she's reeling you in. One last chance, LJ—comin' to the river or not?

JOHN doesn't move. COLONEL opens the door and when he sees the townspeople gathered outside, he yells at them.

COLONEL

Gangway, you heelots!

And away he goes.

JOHN

Hey, Colonel! Wait a minute! Colonel!

But COLONEL doesn't return. There is a trapped, sad look on JOHN's face. ANN lays her hand on his pitching arm.

ANN

It is going to be a wonderful thing, John.

JOHN

Which John are you talking to?

DAN and MADGE shake JOHN's hand. NORTON smiles like the cat with the bird. JOHN looks at the empty door.

INTERMISSION

Scene 14

MUSIC: Brisk, train-traveling kind of music.

A large projection of the United States, over the top of which runs the title "John Doe Clubs." There are nine pegs scattered over the map, indicating where the clubs are.

As the following montage proceeds, pegs begin to appear in abundance on the map.

MUSIC: Still keeping up that brisk, train-traveling kind of music.

- FLASHES of banners reading: "JOHN DOE COMING"—"JOHN DOE TONIGHT"
"GOODBYE JOHN DOE, CALL AGAIN"
- CLOSE-UPS of JOHN speaking—superimposed over long shots of audiences of various types.
- FLASHES of ANN typing.
- FLASHES of sheets of paper being ripped out of a typewriter.
- FLASHES of JOHN on the radio—with ANN by his side.
- FLASHES of people listening.
- FLASHES of people applauding.
- SERIES of SIGNS being nailed up: "JOHN DOE CLUB—BE A BETTER NEIGHBOR."
- SUPERIMPOSED SHOTS of JOHN and ANN riding in trains, planes and automobiles. City names zoom up: Kansas City, Chicago, Buffalo, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York.
- Map being covered with pegs.
- A PICTURE of JOHN DOE on front page of Time magazine, with a caption under it reading: "MAN OF THE HOUR."

As these sights flash by, they are interspersed with VOICES.

VOICE

This has been growing like wildfire! If they only made demands,
but the John Does ask for nothing!

VOICE

People are going off relief! If this keeps up, I'll be the one out of a
job!

VOICE

As soon as he gets strong enough, we'll find out what John Doe wants!

VOICE

I'm sorry, boss. They just won't let anybody talk politics to them. It's—it's crazy.

VOICE

We've got to get to them! They represent millions of voters!

Final image of the map. Nearly every state in the union has pegs in it. The sign over the map changes to "THE JOHN DOE CONVENTION".

NORTON is in a spotlight, speaking to the organizing committee of the John Doe Convention.

NORTON

My road crew has been doing a superb job following John Doe into every town and seeing that the clubs are properly organized and the charters issued. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, we've received so many applications for charters to the John Doe Clubs that we're working faster than a one-armed wallpaper hanger to take care of them.

NORTON indicates the map.

NORTON

Isn't it a wonderful sight? The work you have done as the organizing committee for this John Doe convention will put our city on the map. Twenty-four hundred John Doe clubs are sending delegates! And we will roll out the welcome mat for them and honor John Doe for all his work! My newspapers and radio stations will work tirelessly to promote this convention. The biggest pin on this map up there will be our city! And now, if you will just step into the outer office and look your prettiest because there are photographers there to take pictures of this historic moment.

LIGHTS: A storm of flashing strobes, then shift to NORTON's office.

IMAGE: Map is still visible.

CONNELL in NORTON's office, looking ill at ease. He consults a list.

NORTON

Anything else?

CONNELL

We've covered pretty much everything—the convention's all arranged just like you wanted it. And Ann and John are due to touch down from the western run in about an hour. All the pieces'll be in place.

CONNELL closes the pad of paper, slips it into his pocket, and waits.

NORTON

Forget something?

CONNELL

No.

NORTON

Then what?

CONNELL

You hired me because I'm supposed to know my way around, and so this is what I know: this John Doe movement costs you a fortune.

NORTON

But?

CONNELL

I've got two pieces here and two pieces there—but I'm a sucker if I can make four out of 'em. Other than circulation, what's the pay-off to you?

NORTON

You can know that I will have the satisfaction of knowing that my money has been spent for a worthy cause.

CONNELL stares at NORTON a moment, then picks up his hat.

CONNELL

I see. I'd better stick to running the paper and the station.

NORTON

Wise choice. And Connell—I'd like to have the John Doe contract, all the receipts for the money we have advanced him, and the letter Miss Mitchell wrote, for which I gave her a thousand dollars.

CONNELL

Yes. Sure.

NORTON

Before they touch down tonight.

CONNELL

I'll have it couriered right over when I get back to the office.

NORTON

You do that.

CONNELL

All right.

CONNELL puts on his hat and leaves.

NORTON looks up at the map, letting his eyes roam across it.

SOUND: Sound of an airplane in flight, circa 1941. But not so loud as to drown out the conversation.

LIGHT: Some overhead light.

Two seats, John on the aisle. ANN has a pad of paper out and she's working over some figures. They both look exhausted.

Two seats behind them as well, in one of which sits CHARLIE, no overhead light on.

JOHN

How many people are you figuring there we've talked to already, outside the radio, I mean?

ANN

Looks like about three hundred thousand.

JOHN

Three hundred thousand. What makes 'em do it, what makes them come and then actually do something? I've been trying to figure that out.

ANN sighs, leans her head back.

ANN

I don't know, especially since what we've been handing them—they've heard it a million times, it's nothing new: "Love thy neighbor," "Clouds have silver linings," "Turn the other cheek."

JOHN

You shouldn't be hard on them.

ANN

Just not sure I trust them.

JOHN

Now you're sounding like the Colonel—wherever he is.

ANN

He's not here with you.

JOHN

Don't be hard on him, either—he's been more right about people than I have, lots of times.

They lapse into silence.

JOHN

I never thought much about people before. Always just somebody to fill up the bleachers. The only time I worried about them was when they didn't come see me pitch. So I didn't really see them because I was using them. But now—in their faces—I can see—I can feel that they are hungry for something. Maybe they are just lonely and want somebody to say hello to. I know how they feel. I think I've been lonely and hungry for something practically all my life.

ANN forces a smile. They are saved by PILOT'S VOICE.

PILOT'S VOICE

Okay, folks, about thirty minutes to touch down. I'll let you know when you need to buckle up.

JOHN gets up.

JOHN

One last visit before we pull up to the curb.

JOHN moves into the darkness. CHARLIE scoots out of his seat into JOHN's vacant seat.

ANN

What, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Couldn't help overhearing things.

ANN

Not with those ears.

CHARLIE

I gotta give you credit, Annie-girl. I've handled big promotions in my time, everything from the world's fair to a channel swimmer, but this one has got me and everyone spinning. The guy's on the cover of Time magazine, kudos to you on that, and now a John Doe Convention! If you could get him to jump off the City Hall roof on Christmas Eve, I'd guarantee you half a million people there.

ANN

Charlie!

CHARLIE

Sorry, but business is business! What?

ANN

What do you make of him?

CHARLIE

Johnny-boy? Three things. Number one, he's got great country appeal—you know, the yokel—but he's also actually a smart guy. Number two, he's beginning to believe he really wrote that suicide letter that you made up.

ANN

Yeah, I know.

CHARLIE

Number three, well, you know what number three is. He's nuts about you. It's running out of his ears.

ANN suddenly wheels around to CHARLIE.

ANN

You left out number four. We're all heels, me especially.

CHARLIE

So, you were expecting something different to come out of this business?

JOHN comes back. CHARLIE pops up, grandly gestures for JOHN to sit.

CHARLIE

Just keeping it warm for you.

CHARLIE goes back to his own seat. JOHN sits.

JOHN

Coming in from third to home.

ANN

Yeah.

JOHN

Then it's safe at home.

They settle back into their chairs and face forward as the plane brings them back to whatever fate is they have to face.

SOUND: Airline sound gets louder.

LIGHTS: Start to fade away.

* * * * *

Scene 15

IMAGE: The projection of the map, with dozens of pins all over the United States—and then they all converge on Chicago for the John Doe Club convention.

Shift to NORTON's OFFICE. NORTON stands there, admiring his handiwork as ANN, bag slung over her shoulder, comes in.

NORTON

You must be tired.

ANN

Multiple cities in multiple time zones will do that to a body.

NORTON

And?

ANN

You already know.

NORTON

I always like to hear about a job well-done.

ANN

He's done his job.

NORTON

And you've done yours.

ANN

Your nephew said that you wanted to see me—even drove me from the airport. Reports you can always get from me later, so what's—

ANN notices a fur coat flung over the back of the chair.

ANN

Am I butting in on something?

NORTON

No, no, no—this appointment is all yours. And so is the coat.

ANN

Mine?

NORTON

You sound surprised.

ANN

A fur coat and I have never had a date.

NORTON

A little token of appreciation for a job well-done.

ANN pauses a moment, then shrugs off her bag and her coat. NORTON helps her on with the fur.

ANN

Oh! Oh, it's beautiful. I don't quite know what to say—

NORTON

Don't say anything at all. Just sit down.

ANN sits down—and sees something in front of her that makes her look with surprise at NORTON: a jewel box.

NORTON

Ah, yes—a little something extra.

ANN

Oh.

NORTON

Go ahead, open it, open it.

ANN opens the box and holds up a lovely diamond bracelet. All the tiredness has gone from her face and body.

ANN

Oh! Oh, it's lovely!

NORTON

I hear they are a girl's best friend.

ANN puts it on and admires it.

NORTON

And there's one more thing.

ANN

Well, come on, spring it! You've got something on your mind.

NORTON laughs.

ANN

Must be stupendous.

NORTON roars with laughter.

NORTON

You know, that's what I like about you. Right to the point, just like that! All right, practical Annie, here it is. Tomorrow night, at 9 PM, before a crowd of fifteen thousand people, and talking over a nation-wide radio hook-up, John Doe will announce the formation of a third major political party: The John Doe Party.

ANN, wrapped in fur, leans back in her chair. She rests her head on her hand, the jeweled bracelet hanging down.

NORTON

Devoted entirely to the interests of all the John Does all over the country. Which practically means, ninety per cent of the voters, or more. He will also announce the third party's candidate for the presidency. A man whom he, personally, recommends. A great humanitarian—the best friend the John Does have.

ANN

Mr. D.B. Norton.

NORTON

And the crowd goes, "Yes!"

ANN

So that's the thing Connell couldn't add up.

NORTON gets out of his chair, unable to keep still, and begins to move around the room, performing for his single-person audience. He mimes holding a microphone and speaks like a sports announcer.

SOUND: In the background, on a rising note, are the sounds of enthusiastic crowds.

SOUND: NORTON's voice is miked.

NORTON

Even though the opening of the convention is hours off, the delegates are already pouring into the ball park with lunch baskets, banners, and petitions asking John Doe not to jump off any roof—

NORTON switches hands, and then switches voices.

SOUND: Crowd sounds are now louder.

NORTON

It is phenomenal. The John Does, or the hoi polloi as you've heard people call them, have been laughed at and ridiculed but here they are, energized and happy, having traveled thousands of miles to come here and join their neighbors to pay homage to their hero, John Doe.

NORTON switches hands and voices again.

SOUND: Crowd sounds are now loud.

NORTON

And in these days of wars and bombings, it's a hopeful sign that a simple idea like this can sweep the country, an idea based on friendliness, on giving and not taking, on helping your neighbor and asking nothing in return. And if a thing like this can happen, don't let any of our grumbling friends tell you that humanity is falling apart. This is D.B. Norton signing off.

SOUND: Crowd sounds fade away.

NORTON comes back to earth, and even ANN, tired as she is, finds renewed energy in the picture NORTON paints.

They look at each other directly, as if they have just finished a vigorous dance together.

NORTON collects himself, sits, reaches into his desk drawer and pulls out two documents. The first he slides over to ANN.

NORTON

Good things come in threes. Your new contract.

ANN skims it, and her response shows it is a very generous offer.

ANN

Every word is true?

NORTON

Every word.

NORTON slides her two copies of the second document.

NORTON

And this. This is the speech that John Doe will give tomorrow night. I want to make sure you get it into his hands.

ANN

He never reads the speeches before he gives 'em.

NORTON

Even better. He just needs to give this speech like he's given all his others: sweetly, directly, honestly.

ANN picks up the speech and begins to read it over.

NORTON

And make sure Mr. Connell gets the second copy. He'll need to have it ready for the next day's special edition.

ANN continues to read.

SOUND: Thunderstorms and rain, rain, rain—then rain tapers off, though thunder and lightning continue.

* * * * *

Scene 16

On the sidewalk in front of ANN's apartment, CHARLIE buttonholes JOHN, who's holding a box of flowers.

CHARLIE

C'mon, lover boy, we've got to get you to the stadium.

JOHN

She was supposed to go with us. She told us to pick her up—

JOHN holds up the box.

JOHN

I had—

A shadowy figure passes by, coat collar up, hat pulled down. It's COLONEL, but he doesn't reveal himself. He's doing reconnaissance.

CHARLIE

So Mr. Norton sent another car—so what?

JOHN

Colonel?

CHARLIE

He always changes his plans.

JOHN

Colonel?

CHARLIE

She'll be at the stadium later. Give her the flowers then.

But before JOHN can pursue COLONEL, CONNELL's voice calls from offstage.

CONNELL

Long John Willoughby.

JOHN and CHARLIE turn to see CONNELL walk onstage—unsteadily but still under control: he's had a few.

CONNELL

Wait a minute, John.

CHARLIE

Mr. Connell—

JOHN

Hello, Mr. Connell.

CHARLIE

Mr. Connell, what're you doing here?

CONNELL

Hiyah, John. I took a taxi, followed Norton's car here. Long John, I want to have a little talk with you.

CONNELL lurches—JOHN holds him up.

CONNELL

Safe at first.

CONNELL sees the box of flowers.

CONNELL

For me?

CHARLIE

Mr. C—

CONNELL

Just kidding. Tell me something, Long John Willoughby, did you read that speech you're gonna make tonight?

JOHN

I never read the speeches before I give them. Get more of a kick out of it that way.

CONNELL

I knew that. Charlie, go down to the office, tell Pop to give you the speech. There's a copy on my desk.

CHARLIE

Mr. C., Mr. Norton told me not to leave him, not even for a minute.

CONNELL

Go—go, go. I'll mother the young man, right in to Jim's Bar up the street. We've got time, Charlie, we've got time. Give him the flowers.

JOHN gives CHARLIE the box of flowers as CONNELL takes JOHN's arm and leads him off. CHARLIE exits.

* * * * *

Scene 17

MUSIC: Strains of an old-fashioned torch ballad, coming from an automatic piano.

SOUND: Rain has started again.

Jim's Bar. CONNELL sits the two of them in a corner booth.

A shadowy figure sits off the side—it's COLONEL, but he's hidden out of their line of sight.

CONNELL

Velma!

VELMA appears, tray in hand. She puts down two shots glasses in front of CONNELL, one in front of JOHN.

VELMA

At least you got a buddy this time.

VELMA leaves. CONNELL downs one. JOHN doesn't touch his. CONNELL sips from the second.

JOHN

What d'ya want, Mr. Connell? It's gettin' close to—

CONNELL

You're a nice guy, John. I like you. You're gentle. I like gentle people. Me? I come off hard and tough but I'm not because I got no use for hard people. Gotta be gentle to suit me. Like you, for instance—you suit me.

CONNELL sips.

CONNELL

Under the hard, the tough? I've got a weakness. The national anthem. Play it, and I'm a sucker for anything. It always gets me right here—

CONNELL indicates his throat.

CONNELL

You know what I mean?

JOHN points to back of his neck.

JOHN

Start of every game—gets me right back here.

CONNELL

Well, every man to his own location—as long as he feels something somewhere.

CONNELL sips.

CONNELL

You weren't old enough for the war.

CONNELL finishes his drink, starts on JOHN's drink.

CONNELL

I was. I was ripe. And when I joined up, my old man joined up too. Got to be a sergeant. We were in the same outfit. That's a kick for you, huh?

CONNELL lifts his glass to his lips, and without drinking, lowers it.

CONNELL

He was killed, John. I saw him get it. I was right there and saw it with my own eyes.

CONNELL lifts the glass and drains it.

CONNELL

Me? I came out without a scratch. Except for my ulcers—which I always considered a penance. Should be drinking milk. This stuff's poison.

CONNELL yells to VELMA, the waitress.

CONNELL

Hey, Velma!

VELMA appears, tray in hand.

VELMA

Yes, Mr. Connell?

CONNELL indicates the empty glasses.

CONNELL

I'm looking to renew my subscription.

VELMA

One for him, too?

JOHN

No.

VELMA

Wingin' their way to your table.

VELMA goes to get the drinks.

CONNELL

I'm a sucker for this country. I'm a sucker for the national anthem—I lost a father for it, so I like what we got here! I like it! A guy can say what he wants—and do what he wants—without having a bayonet shoved through his belly. Now, that's all right, isn't it?

JOHN

No argument from me.

VELMA comes in with the drinks.

VELMA

Two for Mr. Connell, none for Mr. Doe. I know who you are, by the way.

CONNELL

Do you like what he is, by the way?

VELMA

I could learn to live with it.

VELMA leaves.

CONNELL

Where was I?

JOHN

No bayonet through the belly.

CONNELL

And we don't want anybody coming around changing it, do we?

JOHN

No, sir.

CONNELL

No, sir. And when they do I get mad, boiling mad. And right now, John, I'm sizzling! I get mad for a lot of other guys besides myself—I get mad for a guy named Washington! And a guy named Jefferson—and Lincoln. Lighthouses, John! Lighthouses in a foggy world! You know what I mean?

JOHN's not sure what he means, but he nods yes. CONNELL takes a drink and looks at JOHN a moment before he speaks.

CONNELL

Betrayal—ain't that the worse sin in the world? Busting up somebody's trust?

JOHN

Yeah. I'd say that's right up there.

CONNELL

And you'd feel like an awful sucker if you found that someone had been doing something like that to you, wouldn't you?

JOHN

Colonel hates liars and cheats more than anything. “Worse than heelots” he calls them, and that’s going some for him. I’m right along with him on that.

CONNELL

It’s because you’re gentle that you can’t see what’s happening. But that’s what’s happening, to you. You’re mixed up with a skunk, my boy, a no-good, dangerous skunk!

JOHN

Who?

CONNELL

Who do you think?

JOHN

You’re not talking about Mr. Norton, are you?

CONNELL

I’m not talking about his grandfather’s pet poodle!

JOHN

That’s wrong, Mr. Connell, just plain wrong. He’s been great about the John Doe Clubs.

CONNELL

You’re sold on this John Doe idea, aren’t you?

JOHN

Sure—I’ve come around to it.

CONNELL

It wasn’t there in you in the beginning, was it?

JOHN

No it wasn’t, I have to admit.

CONNELL

A job, right?

JOHN

A job, yeah.

CONNELL

But it got to you. You believed it. I don't blame you. A lot in it that feels good to believe. But supposing a certain unmentionable worm, whose initials are D.B., was twisting what you believe, what they all believe, into an iron fist and bringing it down hard on those lighthouses. What would you say about that?

JOHN

Nobody can use the John Doe Clubs for politics. That's the main idea.

CONNELL

Really? So why are the big political bosses in town? And the labor leaders? And a lot of other big shots who are up at D.B.'s house right now? Where Ann Mitchell is right now! Heelots, John, heelots waiting to cut up the John Does! Wait till you read that speech you're gonna spit out tonight!

JOHN

You're all wet in five different ways. Miss Mitchell writes those speeches and nobody can make her write what she doesn't believe.

CONNELL barks at JOHN.

CONNELL

She's paid to write them. And bonuses, too—mink coat and a diamond bracelet was the last going price I heard. That vulture would double-cross her own mother for a handful of silver.

JOHN

Shut up! If you weren't drunk I'd—

JOHN grabs CONNELL by his coat, lifting him out of his seat. JOHN towers over CONNELL.

CONNELL reaches into an inner pocket and pulls out the speech. JOHN lowers him to the seat, takes the speech, glaring down at him, enraged. CHARLIE comes into the scene, empty-handed.

CHARLIE

Hey, Mr. Connell! Pops says you have the speech.

CONNELL

Yeah, I have it. I needed to get you out of the way. Read it, John—read it.

JOHN pushes CONNELL back into the seat and exits, speech in hand.

CHARLIE

Wait a minute, Mr. Doe!

CHARLIE chases after him.

CONNELL

Read it, and then you'll know who to hit. Whom. And I should be first in line. Velma?!

VELMA comes into the scene, tray, towel, and attitude. She sits in JOHN's seat.

VELMA

Still warm.

CONNELL

That's the kind of guy he is.

VELMA

Well, what'd'ya got planned next, Mr. Connell, except the breaking of hearts and the dashing of dreams?

CONNELL

Everyone's a writer.

VELMA

So give me a job at The New Bulletin.

CONNELL

Fresh out. You better bring me a glass of milk.

VELMA

Wise choice. At least you'll get your stomach soothed.

VELMA gets up and leaves.

CONNELL

I wish it was as easy as drinking it down.

CONNELL stares into the distance.

* * * * *

Scene 18

SOUND: The sharp crack of thunder, the sharp flash of lightning.

At NORTON's. NORTON is dressed in what can only be called a Fascist-styled tuxedo. TED is dressed in the same fashion; he lounges in a chair. Beside him, on a small table, is a telephone.

ANN, dressed well, wearing her bracelet, paces, a very worried woman.

NORTON

You do not need to pace. Though it is lovely to watch her do that, don't you agree?

TED

I can agree with that.

ANN

I—I—just cannot believe what went on at dinner in there.

NORTON

And what is it that you think "went on"?

ANN

I saw you—

NORTON

You saw me what?

ANN

Well, D.B.—you—you were selling out the John Doe Clubs. I don't know any other way to say it.

NORTON

Was I doing that?

TED

You paid for 'em.

NORTON

I did pay for them. I chartered them and paid their freight here, and I can use them any way I want. After John Doe finishes talking about me tonight, in front of fifteen thousand, and I get up there and say what I have to say to those fifteen thousand, twenty million John Doe votes will come into my pocket—

ANN

Along with the labor votes and corporation votes—I was in there, I heard it all—

TED

She has very good hearing, in addition to everything else.

NORTON

I wanted you to hear it all. I wanted you to know what all your work has accomplished.

ANN

All my work—

Off to the side, trailed by MAID, JOHN enters, hatless and soaking wet—he is exhausted and moves so slowly that ANN, TED, and NORTON don't notice him at first. MAID has a solicitous hand on his arm and a worried look on her face.

NORTON

You know what else you heard in there, Ann? We live in daring times, with a new world order staring us in the face. This new order is vibrant, it's dynamic and electric! Democracy has run its course—it no longer has the answers. It no longer has any light to shed! No voltage! And why? Too many concessions have been made to too many of the wrong people! What America needs is an iron hand and obedience!

ANN

Your hand. And your whip.

NORTON

And why not? Deep down what these John Does really want is safety—they'll sacrifice much for a touch of certainty in uncertain times.

ANN

While you and your buddies get taken care of.

NORTON

Much should be given back to those who risk the most to create the future.

TED

Law of the marketplace, Annie, the marketplace of ideas—no cash value any more for your precious democracy, for the common man.

ANN is not sure whether to laugh, attack NORTON, attack TED, or loathe herself even more than she does.

In her pacing, ANN spots JOHN. NORTON and TED see her see him. MAID, not having been told to leave, stays, a mute witness.

NORTON

The one who is all wet.

TED

What're you doing here?

ANN

I'm so glad to see—

JOHN shoves a clump of crumpled wet paper toward her.

JOHN

Did you write this? Did you write this?

ANN

No, I didn't.

JOHN

But you knew about it.

ANN

Yes.

JOHN

And you let it go out, let it get handed off to me, like it was from you.

ANN

Yes, I did, John.

JOHN

Why didn't you stop it? You should have stopped it! Maybe that bracelet got in your way.

NORTON

John—why hasn't Charlie taken you to the convention?

JOHN

So—a new order of things. Everybody taking a nice, fat slice of the John Does for themselves.

NORTON

John, the beautiful thing about watching you perform has been how easily you swallow everything handed to you. Don't ruin the gig now by thinking that you can think for yourself.

JOHN

You're right—people have been paid a lot to do a lot of thinking for me. Call me the prize stooge. But using the John Doe clubs for what you want? Over my dead body. I can say that and mean that now—I can think that now. Over my dead body.

TED

It could be arranged—

NORTON

I paid for the John Doe clubs and I'll decide how I want to spend them.

JOHN

Not after I go down to that convention and tell them exactly what you and all your "associates" here are trying to cook up for them!

JOHN crumples the papers in his hand and drops them to the floor. MAID picks up the pieces carefully and holds them.

JOHN

And I'll say it in my own words this time.

JOHN starts to leave. NORTON barks out a command in a voice that even stops JOHN in his tracks, a voice laced with ego, hatred, and power.

NORTON

Listen to me, Long John Willoughby! The great John Doe! I own you. I own every particle of you. I own every particle of everyone in this room. And I own every particle of every John Doe out there

tonight because I can give them what they really want: safety and security in return for a little bit of their freedom, which they don't use anyway. You want to tell them that "in your own words"? Go right ahead. And I will lay out for them what a fake you are. I will tell them that you are such a good fake that you even had me fooled, got even me, the great and successful D.B. Norton, to lay my money down on the promise that you were sincere in your beliefs, honest in your dealings. What do you suppose your precious John Does will do when they find out that you took your thirty pieces of silver, that you never intended to jump, that you just wanted to string them along for your own sick satisfaction? You are a free man, John Doe, you can tell them whatever you want. But once you do, and then I ruin you completely—crush you to dust—I will kill off this John Doe movement and lay all the blame for it on your grave. You think this is the only way we've got to get what we want? What is the great and illustrious John Doe gonna do now?

JOHN stares at him.

JOHN

I'm a mug and I know it. You're a mug, and you know it. But we're not the same. I know that the John Doe idea may be the one thing capable of saving this world from you and the dogs like you—that's why I'm going to tell them, because it's bigger than whether I'm a fake, it's got more power than that, it deserves better than me!

NORTON

You are both charming and an idiot.

As JOHN moves for the door, TED slides in to block him.

TED

I always think my uncle's too good to the bums around him—

TED head-butts JOHN and knocks him back. Before JOHN can recover, TED grabs a fistful of his shirt and is ready to cold-cock him. JOHN flexes his own fist, but ANN pulls back on his arm.

ANN

He's not worth it, John. He's nothing to you, to me, to anyone.

TED gives her a look that says, "You fucking bitch." JOHN catches the look. He waits, and the waiting says: either hit me or let me go. ANN slides in between them so that if TED strikes, she may get it.

NORTON

Let him go.

TED doesn't want to at first.

NORTON

Let. Him. Go.

But TED lets him go. JOHN extricates his arm from ANN's hand and pushes past everybody. ANN tears out the door after JOHN. MAID follows her.

TED

You can't let him go like that! They are going to tear you apart!

NORTON

Do you think I've only got one plan, you idiot?! Go get the girl—chasing her seems about the only thing you're good at. Go!

TED leaves. NORTON sits in the chair where TED had been sitting and picks up the telephone, dials a number.

NORTON

Benedict, it's a go—get your newsboys ready to roll.

NORTON hangs up, dials again.

NORTON

Arnold, we're going with the plan from Column B—make sure the crew cuts the cables when Ted or I say "cut."

NORTON hangs up, dials again.

NORTON

Commissioner—pick up Henry Connell, as we had discussed, and detain him until I tell you otherwise. He'll be joined by Ann Mitchell. They'll make a pleasant pair.

NORTON hangs up the phone.

NORTON

A pair of what, I don't know.

NORTON leans back, muses.

* * * * *

Scene 19

SOUND: The rumbling of thunder.

Outside NORTON's house. ANN is trying to catch up with JOHN.

ANN

John! John, please listen to me! Please—I didn't know what they were going to do! Let me go with you, John! John, please!

JOHN turns and faces ANN so abruptly that she almost barrels into him. MAID catches up to them.

JOHN

I'm going to the convention—you don't deserve to go. End of story.

JOHN pivots and disappears.

SOUND: Car door slams, CHARLIE pulls away.

ANN goes to follow, but MAID catches and restrains her. MAID shakes her head "no." TED shows up, shoves MAID to the side, grabs ANN.

ANN

The henchman arrives!

TED

You always miss the important stuff! C'mon!

TED pulls a struggling ANN back to the house. She really, really fights him every step of the way.

MAID takes out the crumpled paper that JOHN had handled. She looks off in the direction JOHN had left with a face of hope and despair.

* * * * *

Scene 20

Outside the stadium where the convention is being held.

IMAGE: A banner which reads WELCOME TO THE JOHN DOE CONVENTION.

SOUND: Muffled but really loud sounds of a crowd cheering and singing and stamping and having a great time.

SOUND: Rain and thunder.

JOHN wanders into the scene, looking lost and desperate. COLONEL emerges from the shadows.

COLONEL

Psst!

JOHN spins, spooked, sees his friend, runs up and hugs him.

JOHN

Man, are you a sight for sore eyes! How'd you know—

COLONEL

I've been having you shadowed, John, ever since you got back. Lotsa poor people on the street with lots of eyes watching out for you.

JOHN

You didn't go up to the river?

COLONEL

Without you?

This touches JOHN, and he gives COLONEL another big hug.

JOHN

We'll go, I promise, just as soon as I get this thing settled. But I can't find my way in—I lost Charlie in the crowd—I'm lost—

COLONEL

You don't want to go in there—the heelots are on the hunt! For you!

JOHN

I don't have a choice—I gotta go in, Colonel—but I don't know where I am—

COLONEL

You can still get out with your skin on.

JOHN

I don't have a choice, Colonel. You hear that? I don't have a choice.

COLONEL

Yeah, that's what you look like and that's what they sound like. C'mon—I got a way to get you in—the brotherhood of the janitors—

They disappear into the shadows—and almost immediately they are on the stage in the midst of the stadium.

SOUND: What had been a dull roar is now full-throated, and now the name of “John Doe” is chanted.

In front of JOHN is a bank of microphones, like a steel bouquet, studded with the names of broadcasting companies.

JOHN takes a step toward the microphones, and the crowd's voice shifts.

SOUND: Cheers, hoots, hollers.

JOHN gestures for them to quiet down. He speaks into the nest of microphones, gets feedback and reverb.

JOHN

Listen, ladies and gentlemen!

Before he can go any further, a band somewhere strikes up of AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL and immediately the large assembly begins singing it.

SOUND: A huge crowd singing AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL with a brass band.

JOHN looks to COLONEL for help, who just shrugs his shoulders: if they want to sing, what're gonna do?

The song comes to an end.

SOUND: An eerie silence falls, with the hiss of rain and the rumble of thunder.

JOHN again goes to speak.

JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, I have something I gotta say to you, something that—

SOUND: From some distance the screeching of brakes as a convoy of trucks breaks to a stop.

JOHN

Something that's gotta be said, by me, about me, about everything we're trying to do here.

SOUND: Unclear voices at first, but then louder and more distinct: "Read all about it: John Doe a Fake!" That phrase rising and rising in volume and power.

JOHN looks around, terror-stricken. COLONEL joins him to cover his back.

IMAGE: The front page of the Chronicle, with the iconic picture of the angry John Doe and the headline "John Doe a Fake!"—cycling through the page from different angles.

SOUND: Voices clearer now, and even more voices: "John Doe a Fake. Read all about it: John Doe a Fake!" Layered in are the crowd's voices, confused, then angry: "John Doe a fake?"

SOUND: Overlaid on this cacophony of "John Doe a Fake!" and "John Doe a fake?" is the shrieking of sirens pulling up the stadium.

NORTON strides onstage, followed by TED now dressed in his Fascist-style uniform.

IMAGE: The front page disappears.

NORTON holds up a copy of the newspaper being distributed among the crowd over his head, showing it to one and all.

TED slaps a copy of the paper against JOHN's chest. JOHN grabs it, reads it, shows it to COLONEL, who reads it.

JOHN moves to the microphones, trying to make himself heard over thousands of voices, all speaking at once.

JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen! This is exactly what I came down here to tell you about tonight—

NORTON bumps JOHN out of the way. TED pulls JOHN back. NORTON signals for silence.

SOUND: Gradual quieting of the crowd. Hiss of rain, rumble of thunder.

NORTON

Don't listen to that man anymore! He's a fake!

SOUND: NORTON's amplified voices rings out over the deafening silence. Only the rain and thunder.

NORTON

My name is D.B. Norton—you all know me! And I accuse this man of being a faker! We've all been taken for a lot of suckers! And I'm the biggest of the lot! I spent a fortune backing this man in what I believed to be a sincere and worthy cause, just as you all did! And now I find out it's nothing but a racket! Cooked up by him and two of my employees for the purpose of collecting dues from John Does all over the country!

JOHN breaks away from TED and gets to the microphone.

JOHN

That's a lie!

NORTON

It's not a lie! You can read all about it in the newspapers there!

JOHN

That's a lie! Don't believe what he says—

NORTON

This man had no intention of jumping off City Hall! He was paid to say so! Do you deny that?

JOHN

That's got nothing to do with it!

NORTON

Were you paid for it—or weren't you?

JOHN

Yes! I was paid! But the—

NORTON

And the suicide note? You didn't write that, either!

JOHN

What difference does that make?

NORTON

Did you write it—or didn't you?

JOHN

No, I didn't write it, but—

NORTON

You bet your life you didn't! You look in your papers, ladies and gentlemen, and you'll find Ann Mitchell's signed confession that she wrote it!

JOHN

It's a fact that I didn't write the letter, but this whole thing started—

NORTON

You see? He admits he's a fake. And for what you've done to all these good people—they ought to run you out of the country—and I hope they do it!

NORTON steps back, gestures for JOHN to speak if he wants to.

SOUND: Rising chorus of voices asking questions: "Is it true?", "Tell us what's the truth", and so on.

JOHN steps to the microphones. COLONEL is right beside him.

JOHN

Now that he's through shooting off his face, I've got a couple of things to tell you about—

TED stamps on the stage, and people hidden under the stage cut the cables. JOHN's voice dies away.

NORTON sneers, TED sneers, and they.

SOUND: Rising chorus of boos and catcalls and then chants of "Fake. Fake."

JOHN keeps speaking but realizes the loud speaker is dead, and looks to the COLONEL, helpless. JOHN turns back to the now-useless microphones and tries to shout over the chants.

JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen! Look—this thing's bigger than whether I'm a fake—

Suddenly, a barrage of balled-up newspapers showers down on them from all sides. COLONEL pulls JOHN away and shouts at him.

COLONEL

John! John! Leave it to the Pontius Pilates. We gotta get outta here!

JOHN pulls away, back to the dead microphones. His voice is hoarse.

JOHN

The idea is still good! Believe me, folks! You are the hope of the world!

COLONEL pulls him away, and they exit from the mob scene.

SOUND: Rage and disappointment at an ear-shattering volume.

And then silence.

* * * * *

Scene 21

SOUND: Road noises.

DAN and MADGE in two seats, on a bus going home, dim overhead lights on. DAN slaps his thigh.

DAN

Walking my legs off digging up five thousand signatures for a phony! Five thousand names asking him not to jump off any roof!

MADGE puts a restraining hand on his arm.

MADGE

Dan—honey—

DAN

I know, I know.

MADGE

We don't really know, do we?

DAN

But the newspaper—

MADGE

And who is this Mr. Norton? He put up the money for this, but, really, Dan—we don't really know, do we? I think we've done a lot of fooling of our own selves.

DAN

Maybe.

MADGE

No "maybe" about it.

They ride in silence. DAN takes MADGE's hand.

MADGE

But we know one thing, don't we? Don't we?

DAN hesitates, knows MADGE is right.

MADGE

The ideas's still good, the John Doe idea. We don't have to give up our club.

DAN hesitates again, then nods in the affirmative.

DAN

It's been good.

MADGE

Better than good. And we've got to get ready to explain why. To everybody.

DAN

Why what?

MADGE

Why we didn't give that man much of a chance. We turned on him just like that.

MADGE snaps her fingers.

DAN

Just like that.

MADGE

I feel it.

DAN

I feel it, too. Ashamed.

MADGE

And we have to own up to that. And we have to tell it to everyone back home.

They hold each other's hands tightly.

DAN

That's what makes the idea still good. That we're going to tell them, admit it to them.

MADGE

And they're going to listen to us.

DAN

And we're gonna make it work. We are.

They lapse into silence.

* * * * *

Scene 22

SOUND: Road noises continue as the scene shifts.

A clearing under the bridge.

JOHN sits before a fire, head bent low, tears streaming down.

COLONEL's gear is there, but COLONEL is off getting more firewood.

JOHN lifts his eyes skyward, stares, his face pained.

IMAGE: A montage of images.

SOUND: A montage of sounds.

[Possibly use clip from the actual movie.]

Faces begin to appear one by one, to taunt him. Their accusing voices are heard.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Faker! | WOMAN'S VOICE |
| Racketeer! | MAN'S VOICE |
| Liar! | 2ND VOICE |
| Cheat! | 3RD VOICE |
| Imposter! | 4TH VOICE |
| Why don't you jump! | 5TH VOICE |
| Christmas Eve at midnight! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!! | GIRL'S VOICE |

Several scenes through which JOHN has lived:

DAN shaking hands with him: "You're a wonderful man, Mr. Doe."

ANN in the station, kissing him: "Now, get in there and pitch!"

NORTON's: "You're a fake, John Doe, and I can prove it!"

Again the GIRL who laughed appears: "Christmas Eve at midnight?"

CONNELL in the saloon: "You're sold on the John Doe idea, aren't you?"

Even the COLONEL: "I can see the heelots comin'. The whole army of them! Thirty pieces of silver and all."

All of the images and sounds die away. There is just JOHN, staring into the fire, the long dark night of his soul.

JOHN stands, looks around: nothing holding him there. He glides away. The fire burns alone.

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Scene 23

SOUND: Rising out of the darkness, a chorus of children's voices singing "Silent Night."

Lights up on CONNELL and COLONEL trying to keep warm as they stand on the 14th floor of City Hall, a light dusting of snow on the ground.

The voices fade away as the carolers move on. Almost immediately, the bells chime the three-quarter hour from over their heads.

SOUND: Bells toll.

CONNELL checks his watch.

CONNELL

11:45. At least something's working right.

COLONEL

He'd have to be a bird to get up here without us seeing him.

CONNELL

You haven't seen him for weeks—maybe he's learned to walk on air.

A door to the area opens, throwing a rectangle of light onto the ground. It is ANN, swathed in winter gear. CONNELL sees who it is, rushes to her.

SOUND: The heavy door slams shut.

CONNELL

You should be home in bed.

ANN stumbles against CONNELL.

ANN

I couldn't stay—I couldn't stay—

CONNELL

You're burning up.

ANN

What does it matter? It doesn't matter.

COLONEL
Looks like we all got ourselves a fever.

If there is any sound at all, it is their breathing, it is the fall of the snow, it is waiting.

The door opens again. The three of them turn. DAN and MADGE enter, hugging each other.

SOUND: The heavy door slams shut.

DAN and MADGE jump, startled.

DAN
It's fourteen floors.

COLONEL
Well, I'll be damned.

COLONEL goes to them and, in a gesture uncharacteristic for him, gives them both a hug—awkward, to be sure, but sincere.

COLONEL
You stuck by him.

DAN
Madge thinks he's going to be here. Me, I'm not so sure, but—

MADGE
That man is gonna be on this roof. Don't ask me how I know. I just know. And you all know it as well as I do.

DAN
I said any guy that's fake isn't gonna jump off any roof.

MADGE
And I said I don't think he could be a fake—not with that face, the one he had at the convention. And, anyway, what he stood for wasn't a fake.

DAN
No.

CONNELL
No.

ANN

No.

COLONEL

No.

CONNELL

You?

COLONEL

Not everybody is a heelot. At least not right here, not right at this moment. That's as far as I'll go.

If there is any sound at all, it is their breathing, it is the fall of the snow, it is waiting.

The door opens again. The five of them turn. NORTON enters.

SOUND: The heavy door slams shut.

No one goes to hug him. In fact, they stand farther apart from him, even deeper into their own shadows.

ANN

You should be ashamed.

NORTON

What makes you think I'm not?

ANN

I've taken money out of your hands. It's not anything I ever noticed.

NORTON

Well, I'm here.

COLONEL

The way a dog buries what it leaves behind.

CONNELL

D.B., you being here isn't right.

NORTON

Don't you think I know that?!

NORTON points at COLONEL.

NORTON

You're not wrong about the dog. But you're not 100% right, either. He may not even come.

COLONEL

You'd like that—one less loose thread.

Without warning, the door opens again—and it's JOHN.

SOUND: The heavy door slams shut.

No one moves. No one speaks. CONNELL is holding up ANN, DAN is holding up MADGE. It's not clear that JOHN sees the five of them or knows that they're there. But he does see NORTON because he's closer. They lock eyes. JOHN moves toward him. NORTON doesn't move.

JOHN veers away from NORTON and moves toward the parapet.

NORTON

I wouldn't do that if I were you, John. It'll do you no good.

JOHN

What do you know about my good? I saw the police all around down there.

NORTON

Why do you think it was so easy to get into the building?

JOHN

Because you need me up here. If I go, they'll clean the street in three minutes after I hit so no one'll ever know, and you'll be rid of me. If I don't go, if I chicken out, slink away—it'll amount to the same thing for you because it'll be as if I never existed.

JOHN takes a letter out of his coat and holds it up in the air.

JOHN

Except for this. Explains everything. Already in the mail to Mr. Connell, even if they pull it out of my pocket. "To The John Does of the World." I had enough money for a pencil, a pad, a stamp, and a title. And time. I had lots of time.

NORTON

You should forget this foolishness—we can work something out.

NORTON steps forward as he speaks.

JOHN

Stop right where you are, Mr. Norton, if you don't want to go overboard with me. You've killed the John Doe movement, but you're going to see it born all over again.

ANN

John!

ANN's voice startles him, and for a moment all of his decisiveness drains away. JOHN notices the others for the first time.

ANN staggers away from CONNELL.

ANN

John!

ANN rushes and throws her arms around him.

ANN

Oh, John, John—no! No!

JOHN doesn't hug her back. He doesn't know what to do with her.

ANN

I won't let you. Please listen to me. We'll start all over again, just you and me. It isn't too late. The John Doe movement isn't dead yet.

ANN gives NORTON a withering look.

ANN

It isn't dead, or he wouldn't be here! It's alive because he's afraid of it. That's why he's up here. Not what we had before—that should have died, it was dishonest. But we can start clean now. It'll grow again, John. It'll grow big. And it'll be strong, because it'll be honest!

ANN's strength is ebbing away. She clings to JOHN even harder.

ANN

If it's worth dying for, it's worth living for. John! You don't have to die to keep the John Doe idea alive! Someone already died for that once, nearly two thousand [years]—

JOHN puts his finger to ANN's lips to keep her quiet.

ANN looks into his eyes, seeking some sign of his relenting—but she finds none. She looks over to the other four.

ANN

Help me!

CONNELL, COLONEL, DAN, and MADGE move forward until JOHN sees them.

COLONEL

What can we say, Long John? What can we do?

DAN

Mr. Doe—you don't have to—we're with you, Mr. Doe. We just lost our heads and acted like a mob. Why, we—

MADGE

What Dan is trying to say is—well—we need you, Mr. Doe. There were a lot of us didn't believe what that man said. We were going to start up our John Doe Club again whether we saw you or not.

DAN

And we have.

MADGE

And there are a lot of others doing the same thing. All of it'd be a lot easier with you than without. Please, please come with us, Mr. Doe!

NORTON

They're right, but I am right, too—we're all right—it's come down to this: What's it going to be, John? What is it going to be for John Doe?

JOHN remains standing, thoughtful. Something of a warm smile appears on his face.

JOHN leans down and picks ANN up in his arms.

The bells ring out midnight.

COLONEL runs to get the door.

COLONEL

We've got a car downstairs! C'mon.

CONNELL

There you are, Norton. The people. Try and lick that. Come on, Colonel.

Strains of Beethoven's Ninth play mixed in with the twelve strokes of the bells. The music suggests emergence from darkness and confusion to light and understanding.

But then JOHN hands ANN to NORTON, who at first refuses to take her, then does.

Then, without warning, JOHN bolts away from them, and by the horrified looks on their faces, we know that JOHN has jumped off the building.

COLONEL heaves himself through the open door.

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Scene 24

A ground-level exit door bursts open, throwing shards of light on the ground as COLONEL falls through, gulping air down, out of breath.

In a pile lies JOHN, crushed.

COLONEL

I wasn't fast enough—I wasn't fast enough to catch—you—

COLONEL approaches him, then falls to his knees—ends up crawling until he reaches JOHN.

He embraces JOHN, rocks him, wails in lamentation.

COLONEL

Long John, Long John, you poor sucker! You poor poor sucker!

COLONEL is inconsolable as he rocks JOHN's body and the world ends in darkness.