

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE
BY SINCLAIR LEWIS

ADAPTED BY
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September 30, 2016
Joyce Ketay @ Gersh
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9/30/16

Adaptors' note:

This play is meant to be performed by an ensemble of 12-14 actors. Every actor plays multiple characters with the exception of the actor playing Doremus Jessup.

All narrated speeches begin with the notation: **

In narrated sections, line breaks and paragraph demarcations indicate a change in speaker (i.e. a different actor assumes the role of Narrator).

Specific crowd responses in certain scenes will be elicited from the audience by the ensemble. This participation will be set up in a prologue not included in this text, during which the actors will "train" the audience. These are meant to be simple and fun, even though audience members will be asked to cheer and applaud characters whose political positions they may loathe.

In Act One, the audience participates actively in two scenes:

- Act One Scene 1, the Rotary Club meeting
- Act Two Scene 2, the rally for Buzz Windrip

We have adapted this novel with enormous respect and admiration for its author, Sinclair Lewis. Even when taking liberties with both content and form, we have tried to retain the intent and ambition of the original text.

Mr. Lewis was a singular artist, and his ability to grasp the complexity and underpinnings of American society and to re-imagine the world continues to be a source of inspiration. With this play, we hope to sustain his artistic legacy and to translate his overreaching vision into a compelling piece of theatre.

Tony Taccone
Bennett Cohen

SET:

PART ONE

Act One

1. Rotary Club, Fort Beulah, Vermont.
2. Rotary Club, continued.
3. Doremus' study.
4. Doremus' study, then outdoors at a picnic.
5. The Jessup family parlor.

Act Two

1. The streets of Fort Beulah.
2. Campaign rally.
3. Auto repair shop.

Act Three

1. A church, then Lorinda Pike's home, and then outside.
2. *The Daily Informer* newspaper office.
3. Newspaper office, then a jail cell, and then a courtroom.

PART TWO

Act Four

1. Jessup family dining room.
2. Dining room, continued.
3. Buck's car.
4. The White House, then the newspaper office, then Buck's basement.
5. Doremus' study, then a courtroom.

Act Five

1. Trianon Concentration Camp – cycles through four settings:
 - Work detail.
 - Cell.
 - Lineup.
 - Yard.
2. Police station.
3. Doremus in jail; Lorinda/Sissy and Buzz elsewhere.
4. Various.
5. Train station, then a farmer's house.

TIME: May 1936 – mid-1938.

NOTES: A slash / indicates a point of interruption. Text in red indicates speech that does not overlap (used only in Act One, Scene 5).

CHARACTERS:

ADELAIDE TARR GIMMITCH
LORINDA PIKE
CROWD MEMBER 1
CROWD MEMBER 2
DOREMUS JESSUP
FRANK TASBROUGH
R.C. CROWLEY
DAVID GREENHILL (o.s.)
EMMA JESSUP
MARY JESSUP GREENHILL
SISSY JESSUP
JULIAN FALCK
PHILIP JESSUP
DR. FOWLER GREENHILL
RADIO ANNOUNCER (o.s.)
BISHOP PRANG
BUCK TITUS
SHAD LEDUE
MAN 1
MAN 2
MAN 3
MAN 4
MAN 5
WOMAN 1
WOMAN 2
MINUTE MEN (multiple; n/s)
PRIVATE WILLIAM DOOLEY (n/s)
EMCEE
BUZZ WINDRIP
HECKLER
KARL PASCAL
JAIME JOHNSON
JOHN POLLIKOP
PRIEST
VOICE (o.s.)
EFFINGHAM SWAN
GUARDS (multiple; n/s)
FIRST MINUTE MAN
SECOND MINUTE MAN
DIMICK/PRESIDENTIAL AIDE
DOCTOR
VOICE 1
VOICE 2
VOICE 3

SERGEANT
PRISON GUARD
WALTER TROWBRIDGE
FARMER
MAN MOVING PRESS 1 (n/s)
MAN MOVING PRESS 2 (n/s)

Prologue.

**Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Berkeley Rep.

The cast all says hi...the audience says hi back.

**A few small things before we begin.

**First, please turn off your cell phones.

**And at the risk of insulting your intelligence, the state of California wants you to know that in case of an emergency, you can use the entrance nearest to you as an exit.

**Next, those of you who go to the theatre have undoubtedly suffered through a lot of crowd scenes. You know, where a few actors are yelling and screaming trying to make up for the absence of a real crowd. Never works, right? So tonight, we're asking you to help us overcome that problem.

All we need from you are a few simple reactions.

Applause... *(an actor shows an 'applause' sign)*

Cheers ... *(an actor shows a 'cheers' sign)*

And Boos. *(an actor shows a 'boos' sign)*

When the time comes, we'll be holding up these signs to signal your cue.

Now I know this is Berkeley so you guys are game. But why don't we give it a quick try....

(he does so)... Okay... applause. Good... Cheers. Excellent. And Boos. Wow! Great boos.

Of course, it's Berkeley...I should have known. Boos are like the native language here, right?

And full disclosure: you may be asked to cheer for a character whose opinions you may disagree with. Wildly disagree with. But we're all in this together, right? Are you with me? *(Audience: Yes!)* I said are you with me?! *(YES!)* ... Beautiful.

**You should also know that the creative team for this play insisted that the racial makeup of the cast reflect the modern world, and so some of the roles tonight are being played by people who would never have played them in 1936. For the few of you who may have a problem with this, we suggest that you talk to those members of the audience who have been to Berkeley Rep before, who will tell you that they have seen a lot worse, and that you'll get used to it.

**And finally, the management of the theatre wants you to know that any resemblance of the events in the play to current events is purely coincidental. It is true that in 1936 there were race riots in our cities, a vast income gap between the rich and the poor,

**A major drought in several states,

**A right-wing extremist running for president,

**Millions of new immigrants,

**And foreign wars creating global terror...

**But that's where the similarities end.

**We urge you to reserve judgment before making any hasty historical parallels.

**And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is our great pleasure to present, Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here*.

PART ONE

ACT ONE

Scene 1.

May 1, 1936. A meeting of the Rotary Club in Fort Beulah, Vermont. A small platform with a podium with chairs on either side. Seated nearby is FRANK TASBROUGH, president of the Rotary Club. Patriotic music.

**May First, 1936. Fort Beulah, Vermont.

**Six months before the presidential election.

**Excitement rippled through Town Hall, the scene of this month's meeting of the Fort Beulah Rotary Club.

**For this evening's featured speaker was that great patriot and proud Daughter of the American Revolution, Mrs. Adelaide Gimmitch.

**Among the audience was Lorinda Pike, whose political views differed from every other member of the Rotary Club, with the sole exception of...

**Doremus Jessup, editor and proprietor of Fort Beulah's only newspaper. There to report on the passionate ejaculations of Mrs. Gimmitch.

GIMMITCH

The truth, my friends, that's what we demand, the unadulterated truth! Now this will shock you but I want you to listen to one woman who won't waste your time with a lot of sentimental taffy. What this country needs is a real war! Because when a country has gone so mad that the thrifty and industrious have to pay for the shiftless ne'er-do-wells, then maybe, to save their lazy souls and get some iron into them, a war might be a good thing. And Senator Buzz Windrip is the only candidate who has the courage to speak the truth about this matter!

(shouts of support and some applause)

LORINDA *(standing, angry)*

Look here, Mrs. Gimmitch, if you think/that—

TASBROUGH

You are out of order Mrs. Pike.

LORINDA

I want to register my/objection—

CROWD MEMBER 1

Sit down, Lorinda!

LORINDA

This woman is using the election to provoke/people—

CROWD MEMBER 2

Save it for your bohemian friends!

LORINDA

She's stigmatizing the poor/ to create a mob

TASBROUGH

We are all familiar with your political opinions, Mrs. Pike. But it is my duty as Chairman to remind you that it's Mrs. Gimmitch who has been invited to address us.

"Here, here!" and "Sit down!"

Please take your seat. Thank you, madam.
I'm so sorry, Mrs. Gimmitch. You were saying?

GIMMITCH

Thank you, Mr. Tasbrough, and to all of you who believe in freedom of speech. Let me leave you now with some very good news. At this moment, Minute Men Marching clubs made up of volunteers are springing up all over this country. Young Christians learning warlike skills, that they may help to rid our country of its undesirable elements. A new generation of American patriots, armed with the Sword and the Gospel, ready to reclaim the future and lead our nation towards its God-given destiny!

Cheering, handshakes, drumming... the meeting breaks up, leaving Lorinda and Doremus on one side. Tasbrough, a businessman, and R.C. CROWLEY, a banker, approach them.

ACT ONE

Scene 2.

Following directly from the previous scene.

CROWLEY

So what did you think of Mrs. Gimmitch, Doremus?

DOREMUS

I confess, R.C, that I will never understand the Daughters of the American Revolution. They spend half their time boasting of being descended from the revolutionaries of 1776, and the other, more ardent half attacking anyone who believes in precisely the principles for which those ancestors struggled.

TASBROUGH

So you learned nothing from her talk?

DOREMUS

On the contrary, Frank, her defense of freedom of speech gave me a whole new understanding of the word “ironic”.

TASBROUGH

Why don't you take a tumble to yourself, Doremus? All these years at the Daily Informer... you've had a lot of fun, haven't you, posing as the Liberal voice of Beulah Valley.

DOREMUS

I hadn't realized I was posing.

TASBROUGH

You're out of touch with your readers.

CROWLEY

These are serious times, Jessup. This next election will be critical to the future of our country. With Buzz Windrip running for president we finally have a real choice.

DOREMUS

I rather think Mr. Windrip should be on the vaudeville circuit than stumping for the nomination.

CROWLEY

How long have we all known each other, Remus? Fifty years? Have you ever seen discontent like this before? Senator Windrip's got a good feel for people and a great head for business. I assure you, he has an excellent chance of taking the Democratic nomination away from Roosevelt.

TASBROUGH

If Bishop Prang and his League of Forgotten Men throw in with him, he'll win. And win by a considerable margin.

LORINDA (*having entered during the above*)

"Cry Havoc and let slip the dogs of war."

TASBROUGH

You can quote Scripture to us all you want, Mrs. Pike. It won't change the outcome.

DOREMUS

I believe that's Shakespeare, Frank, not God.

CROWLEY

You think this a joke?

DOREMUS

You'll forgive me, gentlemen, if I don't believe that Mr. Windrip's campaign has any legitimacy. I think Mrs. Pike and I still have some semblance of faith in the American electorate.

LORINDA

Speak for yourself.

CROWLEY

Roosevelt is through. The economy's in tatters.

TASBROUGH

The New Deal is no deal.

DOREMUS

Is that so.

LORINDA

You're all missing the point. People will vote for Windrip to make themselves feel safe. But they're ignoring what he's actually saying. If he gets into office, he's going to unleash a Reign of Terror.

TASBROUGH

Reign of what?

CROWLEY

Nonsense.

DOREMUS (*"this might not be the time...."*)

Lindy—

LORINDA

And you the Liberal editor, and you the staunch industrialist and you the conservative banker, will be led straight to the firing squad!

CROWLEY

Are you mad,/Mrs. Pike?

TASBROUGH

This is America, for God's sake. It could never happen.

LORINDA

Remember how Huey Long became monarch of Louisiana? Windrip is using the same political strategy: pit everybody against somebody. And then seize the reins of power. Have you read his book? *The Zero Hour*? He's demanding that the President have a "freer hand" and not be tied down by a bunch of "dumb, shyster lawyer Congressmen." His words, gentlemen, not mine. You watch. If he manages to broker this alliance with Bishop Prang, it will obliterate the line between Church and State and create the perfect conditions for fascism. You think it can't happen in America? Let me tell you, it can.

TASBROUGH

Are you done?

LORINDA

If Buzz Windrip gets elected, we'll all be done.

Lorinda exits.

CROWLEY

I think we can officially classify Widow Pike as a hysteric.

TASBROUGH

That woman needs to re-marry as soon as humanly possible.

CROWLEY

The way she shoots off her fat mouth you'd think she was the mayor instead of the owner of a saloon.

DOREMUS

It's not some cheap saloon, gentlemen, and Mrs. Pike is not a crank who needs to be locked up or shut up.

TASBROUGH

Time for you to quit playing tag with Lorinda and her pinko friends, Remus. Stop giving lip service to all these subversive elements. You know how many Jew financiers I got telling me how to run my own textile mill?

CROWLEY

The bank is practically ripe with the stench of Communists.

DOREMUS

The only stench I can smell right now is coming from you two. This political climate is clearly doing wonders for the health of your depravity.

CROWLEY

Fine. You sit up there in your editorial throne and pontificate about the state of democracy while the blood of the country is being sucked out by red radicals and spooks.

DOREMUS

That is a statement born out of either stupidity or hatred, R.C. I would've hoped that both were beneath you.

TASBROUGH

You want to be on the right side of this come November, Doremus.

DOREMUS

A blind mule has a greater chance of being elected President than Buzz Windrip.

CROWLEY

You're underestimating him.

TASBROUGH

You're underestimating the country.

DOREMUS

That would be overestimating, Frank, and no, I don't think I am.

TASBROUGH

You wait and see.

CROWLEY

The White House is there for the taking. As it turns out, there are no blind mules running for President this year.

TASBROUGH

It's a new day in America, Remus.

Crowley and Tasbrough exit. Doremus slightly slumps, sighs, makes his way home.

ACT ONE

Scene 3.

Doremus' study.

**Doremus Jessup went to his home, a white clapboard, square structure of the vintage 1880, which he declared to be ugly

DOREMUS

“but ugly in a nice way.”

**He found refuge in his study

DOREMUS

Which he forbade, under any circumstance, to be cleaned

**and which was filled with an endearing mess of novels

**copies of the Congressional Record

**the *New Yorker*

***Time*

**the *New Republic*

***New Masses*

**Treatises on taxation

**Road maps

**Volumes on exploration in Abyssinia and the Antarctic

**Fishing tackle

**Two comfortable old leather armchairs

**The Bible

**The Koran

**The Book of Mormon

**A shotgun

**Selections from the *Mahabharata*

**A vase from Crete dating from 327 B.C.—very ugly

**Odd pairs of spectacles that no longer suited his eyes

***The Complete Works of Thomas Jefferson*

**a shaky portable typewriter

**a canary in a Bavarian gilded wicker cage

**seven books on Bolshevism, extraordinarily pro and extraordinarily con

**another copy of *The Complete Works of Thomas Jefferson*

**a worn, linen-bound copy of *Old Hearthside Songs for Home and Picnic*

Doremus starts to sing.

**and an old, cast-iron Franklin stove.

**He allowed no one in.
**Not even his family.
**Not his wife, Emma,
**Not his oldest, Philip,
**Not his youngest, Sissy,
**Not his middle child Mary,
**her husband Fowler,
**nor his 8-year-old grandson, David.

**Only did he let in Foolish, the family dog, whose bark awakened the canary, under the absurd old blue sweater that covered its cage.

DOREMUS

What can I do, eh Foolish? Write another editorial expressing “growing alarm?”

**But the presence of Foolish comforted Doremus, made belching politicians seem unimportant, and in the security of his study he fell asleep in his soft, brown leather chair.

He falls asleep.

ACT ONE

Scene 4.

July 4, 1936. Doremus wakes slowly.

Pow! Pow! Pow!
DAVID (*offstage*)

David, not in the house!
MARY (*offstage*)

David charges in and circles around Doremus, who wakes up and holds his hands up...

DOREMUS
Don't shoot! (*sotto voce to David*) They went that-a-way!

David runs off... "pow pow"

Doremus!
EMMA (*offstage*)

Dad! It's time to go!
MARY (*offstage*)

Doremus, the car's already packed!
EMMA (*enters*)

DOREMUS (*shouting to them offstage*)
I can't go on any blame picnic!
I have to stay home and listen to Prang's broadcast!

EMMA
I'll see you in the car. (*As she leaves*) Ten minutes everybody!

FOWLER (*entering*)
Hey Pop. Have you seen my little soldier?

DOREMUS
He was just here shooting up the place.

FOWLER
Hope you weren't in the line of fire.

DOREMUS
Hey, you're the doctor. If I get wounded, you can treat me.

MARY (*entering*)
It's the Fourth of July, Dad. We are going on a family picnic.

DOREMUS

When did you get to be your mother's daughter?

MARY (*with humor*)

Just this morning. Come on, Buck's coming as well. He's even threatening to bring a date.

DOREMUS

We have to be back/in time—

MARY

You'll be back in time for the broadcast.

DAVID (*offstage*)

Pow! Pow!

FOWLER (*he leaves*)

The battle continues.

MARY (*she leaves*)

David!

Transition. A blue sky. A green hill. Doremus stands watching as:

SISSY runs onstage carrying a picnic basket.

JULIAN runs on in pursuit of her. They head offstage.

Doremus takes in the bucolic scene, breathing the fresh air, as various members of his family cross the hillside. Some carry food, some blankets, some games. Some circle toward an area on the side where the picnic is set up, but others go off by themselves, strolling and talking.

DOREMUS

Philip!

PHILIP

Morning, Pater.

DOREMUS

Since when do lawyers not work on holidays?

PHILIP

Look who's talking.

DOREMUS

So where's the family?

PHILIP

Merilla took the kids to Boston to see her folks.

DOREMUS *(with a smile)*

The “favored” grandparents, I see.

PHILIP

It was their turn, Dad. Family roulette. You know how it is.

EMMA

It’s hard having family so far away. We’re lucky he could come at all.
(hands Doremus a sweater) In case you get cold.

DOREMUS

I’m perfectly fine, my dear.

EMMA *(lightly, as someone who knows him very well)*

You don’t know yourself, Dormouse. Trust me on that score. *(Seeing David in the 4th wall)*
David, careful with that sparkler!

Enter Mary and Fowler trailing.

MARY

David, you’re going to burn someone’s eyes out...!

FOWLER

It’s only a sparkler, honey. He’ll be fine.

MARY

My mother is worried.

FOWLER

Your mother’s not worried.

EMMA *(without looking at them, loudly)*

I’m not worried!

FOWLER

It’s part of his American birthright, Mary. A boy gets to set off a few fireworks on
Independence Day.

MARY

Ughhh!

*He grabs her around the waist and kisses her. He smiles at her as Sissy and Julian walk
on again.*

SISSY (*playing with him*)

You've got to listen up, Julian. I didn't say I was going to go for a drive with him, I just said that he wanted me to—

JULIAN

That's not what it sounded like—

SISSY

Though he does have an awfully nice new DeSoto—

JULIAN

See? How can I compete with a brand new DeSoto?!

They run off as Emma and Philip enter. They head to the picnic area as Buck Titus comes on.

EMMA (*seeing Buck*)

There he is. My favorite bachelor. (*She kisses him on the cheek.*) I thought you were bringing a date, Buck?

BUCK

I can't bring a date. Every time I do, you start making wedding plans.

PHILIP (*calling to Emma*)

Should we do the balloons, Mother?

EMMA (*turning to Philip*)

Let's lay out the blanket first. (*Calling to Doremus.*) Doremus, did we remember to call Lorinda?

MARY

I did, Mom!

Buck joins Doremus.

DOREMUS

Will you look at that view.

BUCK

The view. Why are people so obsessed with the view?

DOREMUS

Come on, Buck! Look at that! Have you seen anything more beautiful? The way the hills envelop the lake and the sky floats like a blue canopy over the valley. It's as if God decided to make Fort Beulah, Vermont his personal showcase.

BUCK

Spoken like a man who spends all his time indoors.

DOREMUS

Aren't farmers supposed to be in awe of the splendors of Nature?

BUCK

You need to spend a few weeks on your knees pulling weeds, my friend.

Lorinda enters and joins them.

LORINDA

Look at that view—!

DOREMUS

Ah! A woman after my own heart.

BUCK

God help me. I'm outnumbered.

DOREMUS

I was just re-educating Buck here about the wonders of Nature.

LORINDA (*kissing him on the cheek*)

You love playing the romantic, don't you Doremus?

Sissy runs on, laughing, breathless, chased by Julian.

SISSY

Hi Miss Lindy, Hi Buck... Mom, is there anything to drink yet?

EMMA

Give me a minute!

They run off. Lorinda hands Emma a cake.

LORINDA

German Bundt cake.

EMMA

Ah! You know us too well.
Oh, will you look at that view!

Emma exits with the cake.

LORINDA

And to think, this perfect day will culminate in Buzz Windrip being endorsed by Bishop Peter Prang.

BUCK

You mean "Prophet" Peter Prang.

LORINDA

And his League of Forgotten Crazy Men.

BUCK

When did religious fanatics become the brokers of our political life?

LORINDA

While we were taking in the view.

DOREMUS

Prang will never endorse Windrip.

LORINDA

Who else would he endorse?

BUCK

I agree with Remus. Prang keeps his leverage by not endorsing anyone.

DOREMUS

Besides, Windrip's too much of a loose cannon for someone like Prang.

BUCK

Our man Buzz thinks he can get away with saying anything.

LORINDA

It's working pretty well for him so far.

DOREMUS

It's bound to catch up with him. He seems hell-bent on offending everyone.

BUCK

Including the press.

DOREMUS

Especially the press.

LORINDA

But he loves the publicity. He's got you right where he wants you, Doremus. The more offensive his remarks, the more papers get sold.

DOREMUS

Maybe I should quit while I'm ahead. Sell the *Informer* and move to Tahiti.

LORINDA

You'd die of boredom within two weeks.

DOREMUS (*sweetly; to Lorinda*)

Not if I had the right company.

"Pow! Pow! Pow!" David has run beyond the 4th wall. Fowler runs in.

FOWLER

Not too far, son!

BUCK

Looks like the cavalry's out run the artillery.

FOWLER

I can't keep up.

MARY (*running in*)

Where's David?

BUCK

He's leading the light brigade down the hill.

MARY

Fowler, he can't go down there by himself!

BUCK

I'll get him.

MARY

No Buck, it's too much—

BUCK

It's no trouble, Mary, really. We'll watch the parade from up close.

(Yelling to David) Let's take the hill, General. You take the left flank, I'll take the right!

Buck goes off after David.

LORINDA

Buck will never survive by himself. *(Calling to Buck and David)* Wait up! *(she leaves)*

FOWLER (*to Mary*)

Come on, he's fine. Let's take a walk.

They leave as another man—the unkempt, rough-edged SHAD LEDUE—carries in a massive glass cistern of iced tea.

PHILIP *(to Shad)*

Have you turned the ice cream yet, Shad?

SHAD

If I turned it before I made the tea it would've melted by the time it got here. You people ever thought about gettin' an electric freezer?! Or does me having a broken back not matter? Let me know.

Shad puts down his load and storms off. Philip goes to Doremus.

PHILIP

Why do you keep that fellow on?

DOREMUS

Shad's been with us for so long I've almost grown fond of him.

PHILIP

Have you now.

DOREMUS

I tell myself I'm doing a social experiment—trying to train him to be as gracious as the average Neanderthal man.

PHILIP

Hey, you raised me. Neanderthals are your specialty.

DOREMUS

Honestly I feel bad for him. I'm not even sure he can read.

PHILIP

I'm surprised you didn't take it upon yourself to teach him.

DOREMUS

Told me he greatly admired Buzz Windrip! Can you believe it?

Philip is about to answer—but Emma suddenly declares:

EMMA

What a beautiful day, isn't it boys!

DOREMUS

It is, my dear.

They watch the fireworks.

DOREMUS (*cont.*)

Truly beautiful.

EMMA (*announcing to everyone*)

They're about to start the fireworks. Come on, everybody! Gather round!

Sissy and Julian, Mary and Fowler, Doremus and Emma gather to take in the view as we hear the sound of fireworks and the distant sounds of Sousa's "The Washington Post."

EMMA

Happy Fourth, Remus. Happy Fourth, everybody!

ACT ONE

Scene 5.

Lights change. Static is heard. The scene energetically shifts to the family parlor. There may be set pieces; there may not. But one thing there must be is a large, old-fashioned radio—the kind that stands as high as four feet off the floor.

Doremus adjusts the radio amidst the static, trying to dial in a station. Others enter as he does:

Sissy and Julian, still talking quietly amongst themselves.

Fowler, focused on the radio.

Philip nestles in beside the radio; Buck does the same.

Finally, Doremus gets a clear signal.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

...these little ditties are brought to you by Toily Oily, the Natural Home Cathartic, and performed for your listening pleasure by “The Smoothies”—a trio who makes America proud! Now here they are again: The Smoothies!

Crooning begins.

DOREMUS

'Smoothies!' God! Who listens to this!

Dials in a different broadcast.

PHILIP

You're on the wrong station, Dad. Here, let me get it for you.

The static clears again. A man's voice is heard on the radio.

PRANG (*on radio*)

This is Bishop Peter Prang, speaking to you, my friends of the radio audience, with an announcement pertaining to the upcoming presidential election. An election that will determine the fate of this distraught nation. A single question now hovers over us, whether to endorse any of the candidates who seek the nomination for president.

FOWLER
Amazing, isn't it?
The sound on these new radios.
What did this cost you, Pop?

BUCK
RCA has a new model that's even better.

*Emma arrives with a pitcher of lemonade and a tray of glasses and starts serving.
Mary arrives from putting David down for a nap.*

EMMA (to Mary)
Is David still asleep?

MARY
Yes, thank God. Please everybody,
no yelling. David's taking a nap.

DOREMUS
Shhhhhh.

BUCK
See! He's not doing it.

PRANG
For many months now, I and the League of
Forgotten, have prayed to the Lord for
guidance. Like Joseph in the desert,

PRANG
Our faith has been sorely tested. There are
no easy answers to this complicated
question. As you know, **we have not been
inclined to endorse any candidates.**

PRANG
Our prayers have been directed...

PRANG (continued)
...to ensuring that both the control of credit and the power to issue money be taken away from
the banks.

JULIAN
Sounds like the communist manifesto.

PRANG
that all inheritances be drastically cut and that all swollen incomes be severely limited.

LORINDA
Unlike Windrip, **these people
have ideology.**

PRANG
But Satan is powerful.

PRANG (continued from above)
**The League of Forgotten Men must make a stand, to fight against all subversive organizations,
which, unfortunately, are so largely Jewish.**

LORINDA
Of course!

PRANG
**And which must be driven with whips and
Scorpions, off the face of the earth!**

SISSY

Are these people Christians?

LORINDA

In a diabolical sense.

EMMA

It's not that simple, Sissy.

Everyone does their best.

PRANG (*cont'd*)

And so it is, that after months of prayer, the Directors of the League of Forgotten Men...

...and I myself, announce that in the coming Democratic national convention...

DOREMUS

Quiet!

PRANG

...we shall, without any reservation—

LORINDA

Here it comes.

PRANG (*cont'd*)

—use our strength to secure the Democratic presidential nomination for Senator Berzelius Windrip—and elect him as President of these United States!

May God bless Senator Windrip and may God Bless us all!

LORINDA

God help us all!

DOREMUS (*stunned*)

I can't believe it...

BUCK

You told us, Lorinda.

EMMA

What did she tell you?

Instead of answering, Doremus turns off the radio. Sissy attempts to turn it on but Emma stops her.

LORINDA

I told them that Prang would endorse Windrip but they didn't believe me.

FOWLER

It surprises me too.

MARY

Everything surprises you, Fowler.

DOREMUS

Mark my words. Prang's evangelicals will never stay loyal to Windrip.

BUCK

It may be time for Roosevelt to form a third party.

LORINDA

Which would allow Windrip to win without a majority.

BUCK

The price of democracy.

JULIAN

Sometimes I'm tempted to turn Communist.

SISSY

You've read one book, Julian.

BUCK

Fine idea! Out of the frying pan of Windrip and Hitler into the fire of Uncle Joe Stalin!

PHILIP

Perhaps we should hold off before rushing to judgment.

LORINDA (*taken aback*)

Philip, the man's a racist and a woman hater.

PHILIP

Yes, Lorinda, he's said some terrible and inflammatory things. But why do you think so many people support him?

LORINDA

Well, their collective I.Q. is—

PHILIP

And it's not because they're all stupid and prejudiced and blind. The League of Forgotten Men is aptly named. People want a voice. They want agency over their lives.

DOREMUS

Are you supporting Windrip?

PHILIP

Absolutely not. But if we don't like him we better figure out the reasons behind his popularity.

DOREMUS

There may be a minority of people that—

PHILIP

May be? Listen to yourself, Dad. Your liberal self-righteousness is giving you/away—

DOREMUS

Self-righteousness?

EMMA

Philip you shouldn't speak/to your father—

PHILIP

He never listens to what I have to/say anyway.

DOREMUS

Self-righteousness?!

DAVID (*offstage*)

Mom! Mom! (*cont'd through below*)

MARY

Ughhh. Not ten minutes of peace!

FOWLER (*referring to David*)

I've got him.

SISSY (*to Mary and Fowler*)

Relax, Mary. The young Communist and I will read him a bedtime story.

Sissy leaves and pulls Julian with her. Mary strides off followed by Fowler.

EMMA (*looking at them all*)

Don't make me institute *Robert's Rules of Order* in this house.

Just listen to him, Doremus. That's all he wants.

Buck, Lorinda, would you join me in the kitchen?

Emma exits with Buck and Lorinda.

PHILIP

What I was trying to say, Dad, is that even if it's a minority that's supporting Senator Windrip, you're marginalizing the problem.

DOREMUS

It's about money.

PHILIP

Okay, sure. Yes. And identity. And trust. As in, who can people trust to fight for them?

DOREMUS

Even when that trust comes at the expense of the truth.

PHILIP

The truth for you may not be the same truth for the average man.

Doremus looks at Philip. Shad enters with a load of firewood.

DOREMUS

Ah. Perfect. Shad, I'd like to ask you a question—

SHAD

(Wary.) About what?

DOREMUS

How are you planning to vote?

SHAD *(even more cautious)*

I told you before.

DOREMUS

Humor me, please.

SHAD

Like I said, I'm votin' for Windrip.

DOREMUS

And why is that?

SHAD

He's willing to fight for things. For the working man.

PHILIP

You see!

SHAD

Plus he's going to fix it so everybody will get five thousand bucks, immediate.

DOREMUS

Exactly, it's about money.

SHAD

I figure I can start a chicken farm.

DOREMUS

Chickens? Didn't all our chickens die on your watch last year?

SHAD

With that kinda money I'll be able to buy a couple thousand. Beat the odds this time.

DOREMUS

And so you believe Senator Windrip will fulfill this promise of giving away this money?

PHILIP

It's a monetary incentive.

SHAD

I already started buying some equipment. On credit.

DOREMUS (*shocked*)

Credit? The bank gave you credit on Windrip's campaign promise?

SHAD

Seems good enough for them.

DOREMUS

Really? A five-thousand-dollar credit to buy chickens?

SHAD

People make ten times that on a good farm.
I wouldn't sell low on chickens, if I was you, Mr. Jessup. I been reading up on 'em.

DOREMUS

Is that so.

SHAD

Smarter than they look.

Shad picks up his axe and walks out.

PHILIP

There you have it Dad, the average man incentivized to better himself.

DOREMUS

That's your analysis? This is immoral, Philip. Windrip is literally buying the election.

PHILIP

It's an expedient political promise made by anyone who's ever run for office.

DOREMUS

Five thousand dollars in cash?

PHILIP

And Roosevelt promised to balance the budget, and before him Hoover promised a chicken in every pot. They all lie. All of them. There's not a single politician in this country that can tell the truth and get elected.

DOREMUS

First you say Windrip is motivating people with creative business practice. Then you say he's lying through his teeth. Which is it?

PHILIP

It could be both. I have no idea.

DOREMUS

That's the first thing you've said that makes any sense.

PHILIP

It's a flaw in our system, Dad!
Professional politicians have to rally the troops. By whatever means necessary. But hey, maybe Windrip will do some good and we should all invest in Shad's little enterprise. Who knows, your Neanderthal Man might make a go of it. Take care, Dad.

Philip leaves. As he does, he passes Lorinda, who is entering.

LORINDA

What happened?

(pause)

Are you all right?

ACT TWO

Scene 1.

The streets of Fort Beulah, VT.

**By October, Windrip had secured the Democratic nomination and FDR had indeed formed a third party. Doremus found himself traveling up and down Beulah Valley, getting interviews, trying to find out the secret to Buzz's growing popularity.

A chorus of 2 women and 5 men form a line facing front. Doremus stands to the side, his notebook out and pen at the ready. When the chorus talks, he slowly moves past them, (or among them?) writing and listening. The chorus include M1, an older working class man; W1, an older working class woman, W2, a poor mom on relief; M2, a hardline quasi-thug; M3, a college grad who can't find a job; M4, a working class guy who lost his house, and M5, a middle class Republican who's leaning towards Buzz.

M5

You want to know why I support Buzz?

M1

The man is funny!

W1

He makes me laugh so hard...

M5

He's giving every citizen five thousand dollars!

M2

I got five thousand reasons for you.

M3

I got debts.

W2

I got *kids*.

M4

I hear it's ten thousand dollars.

M3

What's the point of college if you can't get a decent job?

W2

Our relief check goes away in sixty-one days.

M4
You know what a mortgage is mister?

M1
He makes me laugh.

W1
Me too.

M1
I'm telling you. Funny.

W1
What a character.

M5
You wanna talk about lack of character? Let's talk FDR.

M4
Never did like FDR.

M2
"Roosevelt." I heard he changed it from "*Rosenvelt*."

M3
That man doesn't know when to quit.

W2
Look at FDR, starting a 3rd party.

M5
You wanna talk about a demagogue?

M1
What's the alternative? Trowbridge?

W1
Trowbridge! The best the Republicans could come up with is Walter Trowbridge?

M1
You gotta be kidding me. The man's an embarrassment to milk toast.

W1
I listen to Trowbridge when I want to fall asleep.

M2

Rosenvelt and Trowbridge. Professional liars. The both of 'em.

M4

Buzz tells it like it is. You have to respect that.

M5

I'm not saying I agree with all his methods but...

M2

It's time to clean up the garbage.

M3

Maybe it's what we need right now.

W2

I honestly don't care how he does it.

M2

It's the Zero Hour folks. Time to pay the piper.

M5

He was telling this story the other day, you know, like, a regular old story, like a regular guy telling a regular old story.

W1 (*laughing throughout*)

Did you hear the one about how he pretended he was his own publicity man? He phones this big shot journalist—

M1

And he says to this guy, "Hey Al, I got an exclusive for you on Buzz Windrip"

W1

Feeding him all this stuff... about himself!

M1

"Buzz is the greatest," he tells him, "Buzz is the best, Buzz is the smartest man in the world."

W1

And the journalist he buys it, prints the whole thing.

M1

The brass balls on that guy!

W1

He's gotta be president!

The entire chorus laughs and chants "USA! USA!" as they exit. Light change. Doremus is left pacing, looking at his notes. He's at home. Sissy and Julian enter. Doremus is in mid-conversation, describing his experience.

DOREMUS

It was astonishing. Utterly astonishing. Every one of them seemed... entranced by him. When I told them that he schooled the Senate in how to catch catfish while drinking huge amounts of corn whiskey, and that he performed a hornpipe jig in front of the faculty at Yale, their admiration for him only increased!

SISSY

Is that story true? About impersonating his own publicity man?

DOREMUS

That's the thing. It doesn't matter if it's true.

JULIAN

But what about Congress? Where are they in all this?

DOREMUS

Congress is in chaos. It makes no difference if they all hate him. Half of them don't want to be left behind in case he wins. And the other half are trying to figure out which rock to climb under.

SISSY

Can't his party take the nomination away from him?

DOREMUS

They don't have the guts.

JULIAN

And you honestly think he'll be elected?

Pause.

DOREMUS

Julian, six months ago I would have said to you that there was no way on God's green earth that this fellow could be elected. Now, I have no idea.

SISSY

Well it sure sounds like he knows how to put on a show.
What's a hornpipe jig, anyway?

JULIAN

I don't know, but I'd kind of like to see him do one.
You ever seen his act, Mr. Jessup?

Doremus looks at them. He gets an idea.

DOREMUS

I have not, Julian, but you know, there's no time like the present. *(shouts)* Emma! *(to Sissy and Julian, with some excitement)* I have to pack. I have to go to New York. It's time to look the blind mule in the eye.

*Yankee Doodle came to town
Riding on a pony
I am that Yankee Doodle boy!*

BUZZ (over the song, waving to different sections of the audience)

Thank you, thank you so much. Wow! Thank you!
Amazing. Thank you.

BUZZ (sings the last line with the crowd, and then repeats the last line by himself, slowly)

“I am that Yankee Doodle Boy!”

Hey! Isn't this fun!

Roar from the crowd.

I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart, a heart that's about the size of the full moon right about now...

Thanks to Private Dooley, who proudly served our country in the Civil War and who helped to usher in the proceedings here tonight... thanks to our volunteer Minute Men, whose ranks are growing by the day and who do so much to support and protect us... and of course, my friend and spiritual advisor, Bishop Peter Prang, the leader of the League of Forgotten Men. Gentlemen, you are officially forgotten no more!

Applause.

There's also a few people out in the house that I want to especially acknowledge. Betty and Jack Shafer up there in the loge...

Waving to real audience members whose names have been gathered by the house staff before the show.

You guys have given so much to my campaign... I love you guys. That Betty can make some mean barbeque folks!

Laughter and whistles.

And Roger Strauch, is Roger here? There he is. A great patriot and a great businessman, Rog has a great nose, like myself, for smelling deals that other people can't smell! *(he laughs along with the audience)* ...It's an art isn't it, Roger! Whoop!... makes me proud to call you a friend my friend.

And so here we are, all of us, gathered together on this dare-I-say holy night, only two days away from the election, poised for victory. After a tough, hard-fought, free-swinging campaign.

Think of the odds, folks. Think about how we got here. I've had more nasty things said about me than anyone who's ever run for office.

Some boos.

I mean, can you believe these so-called journalists? Have you ever seen a pack of more lying, disgusting people?

They say I want money. Money? I've turned down offers from law firms right here in New York for three times the money I'll get as President.

They say I want power.

It's true, it's absolutely true. I do want power. Great, big imperial power.

But not for me, for YOU!

The power to smash our enemies!

Put God back in the classroom!

Protect our Second Amendment!

To support our boys in uniform! The power to make every single politician work for you!

And the power, my friends, to WIN WIN WIN!

The crowd roars.

Cause let me tell you something, folks. Right now, we're not winning.

We got a whole lotta crooked and lazy and—

A heckler interrupts from the house, shouting "Down with Windrip!

Down with thuggery!" etc. "This man is a liar and hate monger! He's using you! You all better wake up! Don't be fooled by this man!"

BUZZ (to Minutemen, who are already on it)

Get him out...Get him out of here!...

In the good old days we would've known what to do with this boy.

The Minutemen strike the heckler repeatedly while he howls. They shove him out.

See that? We're bringing back the good old days, folks.

The crowd applauds.

But you see, I love that guy. No, really I do, I love that guy. You know why? Cause he's angry. Oh sure he's got it all wrong and he's been brainwashed by all the wrong people but think about it... That anger is the same anger that's fueled our revolution and is at the heart of the discontent that's spread across this country.

But what makes us different is we're harvesting our anger. Cultivating it for a higher purpose.

Growing it into something fierce and beautiful. A force of Nature that's strong enough to beat back our enemies and protect our loved ones, that can defend our liberty and create a safe home, a safe harbor, and a safe haven for every single person living in these United States!

Applause and cheers.

For the last six months I have crisscrossed this great nation of ours. New York to California. Texas to Ohio. Florida, Iowa, Maine, you name it. And everywhere I go I hear the same thing. "Buzz, you gotta fight the good fight."

So that's my pledge to you tonight, my friends. We're not gonna stop talkin' and walkin' 'til we get to the Promised Land.

People ask if I'm afraid and I say No.
I'm not afraid, I tell 'em, because the greatest people in the world are with me!
And that's you!
Are you with me?

"YES!"

I said are you with me?

"YES!"

We're gonna win this election and we're gonna win big. We're gonna win this country back again then we'll march into history.

With our heads held high
We'll illuminate the night
And march straight into the blessed white light!

Thank you all and God Bless America!

Cannons, confetti... the drums give us an intro into "When the Saints Go Marching In," as Buzz's platform recedes. All exit in jubilant glee.

ACT TWO

Scene 3.

As the last of the confetti is coming down and the echoes of the song recede, Doremus enters and stands alone onstage. It's the next day.

Doremus looks around, looks up. Silence. He takes out a small notebook and begins to write some notes.

Several workmen with brooms begin to sweep up the stage. We are in an auto repair shop. One of the men is KARL PASCAL, the "local Communist," a small, intensely passionate man. He knows Jessup and respects him. He whistles while he sweeps.

PASCAL

You still here, Mr. Jessup? Your car's not gonna be ready 'til tomorrow.

DOREMUS

Sorry, Pascal, my mind is elsewhere.

PASCAL

You writin' an article? We heard you were in New York for Windrip's speech last night.

DOREMUS

I keep trying to remember what exactly happened. I was right there, no more than 50 feet away, listened to every word the man said, and I can't remember a single one. I just remember being swept up by this...force.

PASCAL (*amused*)

The Buzzard put a spell on you, huh?

DOREMUS

I started thinking maybe he's not such a bad fella after all. Maybe the act is just that, an act. Maybe it'll all be fine.
But then I started feeling sick that I was feeling good about something that was making me sick.

JAIME JOHNSON, a young worker, comes on with a mop and a bucket. She and Pascal nod to each other. Pascal starts whistling again, which jars Doremus out of his own thoughts.

DOREMUS

You know for someone who claims he hates Windrip you don't seem very distressed, Karl.

PASCAL

You need to brush up on your revolutionary theory, Mr. Jessup. The Windrip campaign is bringing the class struggle front and center. The system's on the verge of collapsing, whether he gets elected or not. You watch, all hell's about to break loose.

DOREMUS

And this is a source of happiness for Communists.

PASCAL

Mr. Marx couldn't have written it up any better. We're gonna have to give Windrip a medal for waking everybody up.

DOREMUS

So let me ask you, Pascal. Tomorrow. Will you be voting?

PASCAL (*shrugging*)

Sure I'll vote.

JOHNSON

But why are you voting if you don't think it matters who wins? 'Scuse me sir. You're always goin' on about how the election's just a sideshow.

PASCAL

Correct. It's an empty, bourgeois ritual. What's the percentage of people who even voted in the last presidential election?

JOHNSON

I have no idea.

DOREMUS.

Just over half.

PASCAL

You see? The system's broken, Johnson. You know it and I know it. Hell, Mr. Jessup here knows it.

DOREMUS

The system is fractured, certainly. But this country is not ready for revolution.

PASCAL

People are never ready for revolution. Look at Johnson, here.

JOHNSON

Look at me what?

PASCAL

You prepared to fight? To take to the streets? No, you're not. But, trust me, if you had to, you would.

DOREMUS

The goal is civil discourse, not civil war. What we need is patience.

PASCAL

No offense, Mr. Jessup, but patience is something that only Petit Bourgeois Liberals can afford. We got one percent of the country owning forty-two percent of the wealth. Forty-two percent! The sidewalks in every city in this country are crammed with homeless people. People are dying, Mr. Jessup. Every minute of every day. So you go talk to them about patience. And civility. And the higher ideals of American democracy. You know what answers they got for you right now? Give me food or give me Buzz Windrip! The only solution is Revolution!

JOHN POLLIKOP enters. An expansive, big personality. An old friend of Jessup and sparring partner with Pascal.

POLLIKOP

Is that a bullhorn I hear before me?
Evening Mr. Jessup.
Is Karl Marx Pascal here bending your ears back?
You wanna be careful with King Karl here. He's one crazy, sectarian dog.
Believes in violence instead of the evolutionary process of building socialism.

PASCAL

It's not about believing in violence. How many times have/we been—

POLLIKOP

If Karl and his comrades had joined me and Norman Thomas and the other *intelligent* socialists in a United Front with Roosevelt, we wouldn't be sitting here wondering if the Buzzard is gonna be our next President.

PASCAL

Windrip's not the point, John,/and you know it.

POLLIKOP

First you guys don't endorse FDR for the nomination so he's gotta go the third party route, and now, when it's down to the wire in a tight race, you and your comrades in the Communist Party are siphoning off votes with your own damn candidate. Earl Browder? Seriously?!

PASCAL

Browder's the only revolutionary on the slate, the only one representing the interests of the working class.

POLLIKOP

So what. Buzzard Windrip, the biggest fascist threat this country has ever seen may become president because you're gonna vote for Earl Browder?

PASCAL

It's too easy to blame everything on Windrip, John! Why don't you *read* Marx instead of always gassing about him! Windrip's just something nasty that we've vomited up. It's the sickness that made us throw him up that we've got to attend to.

POLLIKOP

You and your comrades are handing him the election.

PASCAL

If it hadn't been Windrip it woulda been somebody else! This ain't about a single lunatic. Or a single election in a so-called democracy. It's about a system that creates a permanent underclass. A global underclass that's gonna keep on growing until the whole thing goes bust.

JOHNSON

And you really think that Karl Marx had the dope on this?

PASCAL

Of course I do!

POLLIKOP (*to Johnson*)

The Marxist-Leninists are always right, Johnson. Who cares if it's a close election! Who cares that the Supreme Court will be overrun by fascists.

PASCAL

Forget the election, John, we're in a revolutionary moment.

POLLIKOP

We're not building a vanguard party, Karl, we're building a mass movement. And mass action can only be achieved through a United Front. United. As in uniting a majority of people. Until people like Mr. Jessup here join us we can't have a Party that'll accomplish anything! Am I right, Mr. Jessup.

DOREMUS

I'm afraid I disagree.

JOHNSON

With who?

DOREMUS

Everyone. I prefer mass action by one person.

JOHNSON (*confused*)

Mass action by one person? How does that work?

DOREMUS

It means that change cannot be implemented by any Party or State because everything that is worthwhile in this world has been accomplished by the single, free, inquiring spirit.

Pause.

PASCAL

Well you and Henry David Thoreau better figure out that we're all sharing the same bathtub. Cause John's right about one thing. We're gonna need everybody we can get for the next go round.

POLLIKOP

We gotta be going, Mr. Jessup. Big union meeting tonight. You wanna come? Bound to be some fur flying about tomorrow's election. Might be good for whatever you're writin'.

DOREMUS

Mind if I stay for a few minutes? I need to jot down a couple of things.

POLLIKOP

Lock up after Mr. Jessup, will you Johnson? We'll save a seat for you at the meeting. (*back to Doremus*) And you sir, don't forget to vote. (*Making to go.*) Karl?

They start to walk off. Pascal one way, Pollikop and Johnson another.

POLLIKOP (*yelling to Pascal*)

Where you going? The door's over here.

PASCAL

We can get out this way.

POLLIKOP

It's locked.

PASCAL

Then unlock it. It's a lot shorter than walking all the way around.

POLLIKOP

I'm not unlocking anything! Will you come on!

PASCAL

All right, all right.

POLLIKOP

My god. Always with the shortcuts.

PASCAL

I'm telling you it's quicker to go the other way.

POLLIKOP

You'd argue with your own damn grandmother.

PASCAL

My grandmother's dead.

POLLIKOP

That's probably why.

And they're gone. Johnson looks at Doremus.

JOHNSON.

So what do you think, Mr. Jessup?

DOREMUS

About what?

JOHNSON

Are you ready for a revolution?

ACT THREE

Scene 1.

Doremus stays onstage while others speak the following narration.

“Hail to the Chief” plays quietly underneath.

** On November 3rd, 1936, Mr. Berzelius Windrip was elected the 33rd President of the United States.

DOREMUS

Oh my God, what have we done?

**He wasted no time, quite literally, by giving the shortest inauguration speech in history:

BUZZ

My fellow Americans, as President of the United States of America, I want to inform you that the *real* New Deal has started right this minute, and we’re all going to enjoy the manifold liberties to which our history entitles us—and have a whale of a good time doing it! I thank you.

**All were invited to the inaugural festivities,

**including Mr. Roosevelt

**Who unfortunately had to beg off, claiming he was deathly ill.

**Although that same day he was seen in a New York shop, buying books on gardening and looking abnormally cheerful.

**President Windrip chose the age-old custom of giving his political adversaries diplomatic posts in countries as far away as possible.

**Herbert Hoover was given Brazil

**and Mr. Roosevelt Liberia,

**which he declined.

**Mrs. Adelaide Tarr Gimmitch, after her spirited campaign for Mr. Windrip, was publicly angry that she was offered a position no higher than a post in the customs office in Nome, Alaska.

GIMMITCH

I demand that there immediately be created the cabinet position of Secretaryess of Domestic Science, Child Welfare, and Anti-Vice.

**Her demand being denied, she threatened to turn Republican or Communistic, but in April she was heard of in Hollywood writing the scenario for a giant motion picture to be called,

GIMMITCH

“The Revolt of the Beavers: A Love Story.”

DOREMUS

This is truly absurd!

The music fades out under the following:

**The celebratory mood was suddenly cut short when President Windrip discovered, to the surprise of many

**But not to those in-the-know, that

BUZZ

Mexico, Europe and Russia are colluding to plot our downfall, and for this reason I am placing the entire country on High Alert.

DOREMUS

Emma! *(to himself)* My God.

EMMA

(entering) What is it now?

DOREMUS

Have you heard? Have you heard what he’s doing? He’s building a police state.

EMMA

Oh, you worry too much. I have to go run some errands. It will work out, Doremus.

BUZZ

In addition, I am, by Executive Order, authorizing the Minutemen to serve as an armed militia. These brave men and women, now numbering 500,000 strong, will keep our borders safe and stand at the ready to attack our enemies.

**Doremus Jessup felt himself getting smaller

**felt himself drifting, for what seemed like days on end,

**Until he found himself standing in the nave of a church.

DOREMUS

I’d give anything for a sermon that would restore my faith in humanity.

**But instead he found—

PRIEST

Now, uh, now amidst our, um changing times, what so many of us fail to realize is how, uh, how we sin, how any sin that we, uh, we ourselves may commit, reflects not only on ourselves, but on those that we, uh,

**So he looked for solace elsewhere.

Doremus enters Lorinda's tavern. Shivering and shaking the sleet off his jacket:

** On a sleety night in the middle of winter, Doremus drove through the streets of Fort Beulah, the wind howling with a velocity that felt diabolical. At last, he arrived at his destination. And there he found Lorinda Pike, closing up the Beulah Valley Tavern.

DOREMUS

It's evil out there.

LORINDA

Are we talking about Windrip or the weather?

DOREMUS

There's an unconfirmed report of over a hundred Congressmen being charged with inciting to riot.

LORINDA

That's rich. Accusing others of being thugs. Yesterday I saw a gang of Minute Men beating up a protestor in front of City Hall. He was just a kid with a sign.

DOREMUS

I hear Trowbridge may have fled to Canada.

If I try to get a source to confirm any of it, I have the feeling they'll arrest me too. If I didn't hate Canadian ale so much I'd have half a mind to grab the family and sneak off myself.

Slight pause.

I'd take you too, of course.

LORINDA *(with no agenda)*

Would you now.

DOREMUS *(sincerely)*

I'd have to. I couldn't go on without you.

LORINDA

We'll all go on. One way or another.
But someone has to stay and fight.

DOREMUS

I'm too old to go to jail, Lindy.

Pause.

I went to church this morning of all things.
The parish where my father preached. I was looking for...

LORINDA

What?

DOREMUS

I don't know.

LORINDA

How's your family holding up?

DOREMUS

Philip's virtually disappeared. His practice is booming but he's become impossible to reach.

LORINDA

The price of success?

DOREMUS

I suppose. It's all so strange. Mary and Fowler are consumed by the day-to-day, Sissy is spinning out of control, and Emma, Emma listens to the radio, says "how dreadful!", and then goes off to worry about how the saucepan got burnt!

LORINDA

Home sweet home.

DOREMUS

I spent my entire time in church calculating how many days I've got left in my life. What are we doing, Lorinda? None of this makes sense. Why don't we just get up and get out of here?

LORINDA (*he can't be serious*)

Where exactly would we go?

DOREMUS

I don't know. Anywhere! Tahiti.

LORINDA

What are you pretending at, Doremus? If you're looking for God or your father/or—

DOREMUS

I'm not looking for anything except you.

LORINDA

That's the biggest lie you've ever told me.

DOREMUS

I'm not lying to you—

LORINDA

Then you're lying to yourself.

Pause. Lorinda goes and gives Doremus a small, tender kiss.

DOREMUS

Do you ever stop to think how curious it is that neither of us feels any guilt, or embarrassment? And yet we're reasonably responsible people.

LORINDA

There's nothing reasonable about us.

They go to kiss again but are interrupted by the headlights of a car. Doremus notices something out the window.

LORINDA

What is it?

DOREMUS

There's a fellow watching this place. Do you see him?

LORINDA

Standing behind that big bush across the road.

DOREMUS

I suspect it's my hired man.

LORINDA

Shad?

DOREMUS

He's been lurking in all kinds of places lately. A little blackmail, I suppose.

Sissy enters, drunk.

SISSY

Good evening, Father! *(she does a little bow, staggers a bit)* Whoa!...Hey there, Miss Lindy!

DOREMUS

Are you drunk?

SISSY

Can I have some tea?

LORINDA

Of course.

DOREMUS *(putting on his coat, getting her out of there as quickly as possible)*

We need to be/going—

SISSY

It's cold outside—

DOREMUS

Sissy—

SISSY

I saw your car outside and I thought, what's Dad doing at Lindy's so late?

LORINDA

We were talking.

DOREMUS

About politics.

SISSY *(disappointed)*

Politics?

DOREMUS

Time to get home. Goodnight.

LORINDA

Goodnight.

SISSY

Bye Miss Lindy!

Shift. Doremus assists Sissy who's staggering to the car.

SISSY

So Dad, do you go to Lindy's often?

DOREMUS

No. Not especially.

SISSY

But like, every day, right?

DOREMUS

Get in the car.

She gets in the passenger side. He closes the door. As he's crossing around he shouts rather recklessly into the darkness:

Shouldn't you be home, Shad?! The furnace needs tending!

He gets in the car on the driver's side.

SISSY

Who were you yelling at?

DOREMUS

No one.

SISSY

Okayyy.

Pause. He starts the car. They drive.

SISSY

So Father... You and Lindy... You're these wild-eyed reformers. You belong together.

DOREMUS

What?

SISSY

Why don't you and her—you know—kind of be lovers?

DOREMUS

That's enough, Cecilia.

SISSY

What are you so scared of? It's not like you and Mom have shared a bed in the last ten years...

DOREMUS

That's none of your business.

SISSY

I live in the same house you know. I see what's going on. Or what's not going on.

DOREMUS

This conversation is over.

SISSY

We talk about everything under the sun so I don't know why we can't talk about—

DOREMUS

We are not discussing this...!

SISSY

Watch out!

They swerve dramatically.

DOREMUS

Sorry, sorry.

SISSY

Whoo I'm dizzy!

DOREMUS

Sorry I—

Pause. The car straightens out.

Listen, Sissy... you just... you can't be flip about such serious things.

SISSY

I hate to break it to you Dad, but you got all these ideas of freedom in your head that never make it below your neckline. And if you're going to fight Windrip and his League of Forgodsakers, you've got to get some life back into you—take off the lace mitts and put on the brass knuckles—instead of being wretched all the time.

DOREMUS

I'm not wretched—

SISSY

You're worse than wretched! You're an old sour puss.

DOREMUS

Be serious!

SISSY (*exploding*)

I am being serious! The world's gone upside down crazy. Everything that's right seems wrong and everything that's wrong seems right. And there are men with guns on every street corner, and it's whacky scary but what scares me more is you. The man whose idea of a good bedtime story was Thomas Jefferson! And I liked it, Dad. Heck, you're the one who taught me. "If you want to know who you are, then don't ask, act." So do it! Act! Do something! Anything to stop this moping around like a dog who's lost his bone.

Pause.

Sorry, Dad, but nice young ladies, they're out these days.

Doremus brings the car to a stop. He looks at her. Long pause.

DOREMUS (*she's right*)

Sissy...

SISSY

Love you too, Dad.

DOREMUS

Listen, about your mother.

SISSY

Don't worry about Mom. She's stronger than you.

Sissy starts to head in as Shad pulls up on the bike.

SHAD

Evenin', Miss Sissy.

SISSY (*startled*)

Shad. Where did you come from?

DOREMUS

Get in the house. Tell your mother I'll be right in.

SHAD (*sincere*)

Didn't mean to frighten you. You have a good night.

Sissy goes inside. Doremus gets out of the car.

DOREMUS

What do you think you're doing?

SHAD

Just comin' from work.

DOREMUS

Work. Really. You were supposed to be here.

SHAD

I go wherever you do, Chief.

DOREMUS

So you admit you were spying on me.

SHAD

And Old Mrs. Pike. Lotta honey in that pot, eh?

DOREMUS

You're fired, Ledue.

SHAD

Funny, I was gonna tell you the same.

DOREMUS

You were going to fire me.

SHAD

I would've left you a note but seein' as how you probably don't think I can write I thought it'd be a waste of time, so I skipped the note but if I had written it it would've said that I have a new employer.

He puts on a Minute Man's cap.

DOREMUS

The Minute Men. I see. Well, good luck working for free.

SHAD

Change in policy, Chief. They're paying now. Not much. Just twice what you pay.

(he opens his coat to reveal a gun)

And look what they gave me. Kind of a "welcome aboard" gift.

Lotta room for advancement, too. *(He gets on his bike.)*

So long, Chief.

No need for sad goodbyes.

I'm sure I'll be seeing you around.

SHAD (*cont.*)

It's a small town, Fort Beulah.

Shad rides off.

ACT THREE

Scene 2.

At center stage is a small desk and chair, on top of which is a typewriter. Doremus stands upstage of the desk.

Drums. Over a loudspeaker we hear as Doremus approaches the desk:

ANNOUNCEMENT

This is a state of emergency.

Please return to your homes.

We repeat, a state of emergency.

Those who are found in public without proper credentials will be subject to arrest.

Drums go loud. Searchlights scour the stage. Doremus sits.

He takes a blank white paper from beside his typewriter. Puts it in. Stares at the paper.

As he does so we hear coming through the radio:

BUZZ

My fellow countrymen, as of 9:25 this evening, I have declared a state of martial law.

The proclamation of martial law is not a military takeover. It is a power embedded in the Constitution to protect our republic whenever confronted by the danger of a violent overthrow.

Such a danger now confronts us. New information out of Mexico and from within our own country bears proof of seditious activities that we must move to crush. By implementing martial law we take all necessary steps to protect our streets and every citizen of this great nation.

The speech fades out. The drums continue quietly. We hear the sound of a typewriter as Doremus speaks. During the last portion of his speech, his family and friends gather around him. He never looks at them.

DOREMUS

Mr. President:

As I sit and write this, a darkness like no other descends on my hometown. The air, once light with promise, is now thick with fear. The currency of grace that once moved freely through the daily discourse of our citizenry, has evaporated; replaced by an acrimony so vicious as to destroy our very humanity. There is no peace to soothe our suffering, no trust to restore our faith, no empathy to inspire generosity. There is only the disease of despair and the dull ache of survival. We lie in our beds at night, Mr. President, afraid of sleep, afraid of what our dreams of tomorrow will bring.

You, sir, are to blame for this. You and your ever-growing legion of Minute Men, those mercenary pirates who stand ready for your every new command to terrorize us. They roam the streets like drunken bullies, happy to intimidate anyone unlucky enough to cross their path, and

hungry to beat up anyone who objects. The possibility of murder makes them giddy, and they yearn for the day when that final atrocity becomes legal. They are your henchmen, your hounds, and you bear full responsibility for every action they take and every crime they commit.

I myself have waited far too long to speak out publicly against your assault on our democracy. Whether it be from comfort or apathy or pure cowardice, whether my vision was compromised by class allegiance or intellectual rigidity, I could not see what, in fact, was happening. Like some poor penitent, I kept waiting for some miracle that might restore us to sanity. But as the days have gone by, the memory of our past history, of America's democratic legacy of civility, compromise, and respect for the fundamental rights of every person, has, like my hometown, receded into darkness.

I reject you as my President, Mr. Windrip. I reject you as the man who represents the United States of America. May God look after your soul.

EMMA

Good God in heaven.

PHILIP

Pater.

SISSY

Dad?

PHILIP

As your lawyer, I strongly advise you not to print this.

EMMA

What will become of us?

FOWLER

Go ahead, Pop. Print it!

MARY

Fowler!

FOWLER

They can't touch him.

MARY

Wake up, Fowler!

FOWLER

He's too strong in Beulah Valley for them to dare to lift a hand against him!

PHILIP

You realize that under the new law this is sedition. You'll be incarcerated.

BUCK

You know they'll come for you.

MARY

Is it too late to stop it?

JULIAN

I think it'd be criminal if somebody didn't try to stop these fellows.

SISSY

You're asking my opinion?

BUCK

If you're asking me to vote, I'd have to say...

LORINDA

Yes.

BUCK

I'd have to say yes.

PHILIP

No.

MARY

I don't think so, no.

EMMA

Absolutely not.

LORINDA

You have to run it. Yes.

SISSY

Only you know, Dad. Only you know what to do.

Drums out. Silence. Doremus stands. He looks at his family for some time. He faces front.

DOREMUS

Doremus Jessup.
Editor.
The Daily Informer.

ACT THREE

Scene 3.

Newspaper office.

**Doremus stood at the window the morning his editorial appeared, looking down at the gathering mob.

—“Ought to burn the place!”

—“Lynch the bunch of traitors!”

—“String ‘em up!”

—“Now!”

The mob bursts into Doremus’ office.

DOREMUS

Get out of here!

They grab Doremus. Shad Ledue enters.

DOREMUS

Let me go!

SHAD

(to the others) Jessup deserves lynching, but we got orders.

Lights bump to Doremus in a jail cell. Alone. Worse for wear. But not yet bowed.

**It was before nine in the morning when Doremus reached his cell.

**Which had a cot with a damp straw mattress

**A stool

**A washbasin with one tap for cold water

**Two hooks for clothes

**And a small barred window

**He remained there—

**Without food—

**With only tap water caught in his doubled palm—

Doremus drinks water from his palms. He curls up on the floor.

**Day passed into night

**He stared

**He tried to sleep, but couldn't

**Until finally the dawn came.

Lights up full. Minute Men burst into Doremus' cell and grab him.

VOICE

Next case! D. Jessup! Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Informer.

A courtroom.

Doremus is dragged in. On the judges' bench sits Shad Ledue and another man, tall and handsome.

SWAN

Military Judge Effingham Swan. Sorry to have to trouble you. Just a routine query. Do sit down.

Doremus sits down.

SWAN

Close the doors.

We hear doors slammed shut.

SWAN

Mr. Doremus—

DOREMUS

My name is Jessup. Doremus is my first name.

SWAN

Ah. Very New England. But one's memory is so wretched, I'll just call you 'Doremus' sans the 'Mister.' Now, Doremus, I asked my friends in the Minute Men to invite you here—I do trust they were not too importunate?

DOREMUS

They were all of what you would call importunate.

SWAN

My deepest apologies. But I was in a rush, you see: I need your advice as a journalist. Now, does it seem to you that most of the people are coming to their senses and ready to accept the new order of things?

DOREMUS

I thought I was dragged here because of an editorial I wrote about Windrip.

SWAN

Oh, was that you? You see? One does have such a wretched memory! Yes, I do seem to remember some minor incident of that sort mentioned in the agenda.

DOREMUS

What are your charges against me?

SWAN

Just trifling things—criminal libel and high treason and homicidal incitement to violence—you know, the usual boring things. And all easily gotten rid of if you could just give us a list of every person in this vicinity that you know of who is opposed to the Administration.

DOREMUS

You're not serious.

SWAN

But I assure you sir, I am.

DOREMUS

I insist on having my lawyer—

He tries to stand. Is shoved back down again.

SWAN

You don't understand, my dear Doremus. Habeas corpus, due process, they've been suspended. Just temporarily, of course, during the current crisis, and this unfortunate necessity of martial law is something we'll have to navigate—

DOREMUS

Damn it, Swan! That's a bald lie—

SWAN

Commander, my dear fellow. Commander.

DOREMUS

You know well and good it isn't temporary! It's permanent!

Pause.

SWAN

May I be frank with you, Doremus?

Silence.

SWAN

I already have all I need, both in the reports of Captain Ledue and the actual text of your editorial, to take you out and shoot you—

DOREMUS

What?

SWAN

I assure you that I am quite empowered to do so. But one is really too merciful. So perhaps we can find a better use for you than as fertilizer, don't you agree?

Doremus is shocked into silence.

SWAN

You will be released on parole to assist a new editor for the *Informer* who has been handpicked by the authorities, but who doubtless needs certain points of technical training. And next Monday you will begin publishing articles that fully respect the ideals and intentions of this administration. You'll enjoy that, I think—

There are shouts from unseen guards. Then Fowler Greenhill enters, as two guards try to grab him.

FOWLER

What the hell is going on in here?!

SWAN *(to Shad)*

Who is our impetuous friend?

SHAD

Doc Greenhill—Jessup's son-in-law.

SWAN

Ah, a family gathering. Good-looking young man.

SHAD

A couple days ago I offered him to be in charge of the medical inspection for all the Minute Men in the county and he refused.

SWAN

Did he indeed?

SHAD

Said you and me should be digging ditches in a labor camp.

FOWLER

He's a liar. I never mentioned you. I don't even know who you are.

SWAN

My name is Commander Effingham Swan.

FOWLER

Well, Swan, that still doesn't enlighten me. I've never heard of you.

SHAD

How'd you get past the guards?

FOWLER

They know me. I've treated most of your teenage thugs for various unmentionable diseases.

SWAN

How very kind of you.

FOWLER

I'm here to warn you two bit goons that if—

SHAD

The hell did you call us!

SWAN

Let him finish. I want to listen to this a little longer.

FOWLER

I've come here to tell you that I've had enough! Everybody's had enough! This man is one of the most honest and respected men in Beulah Valley. If you think your toy-soldier uniform gives you some sort of dispensation from the law—

SWAN

Thank you, Doctor! *(To Shad.)* I think we've heard enough from the Comrade, don't you, Commissioner? Take the bastard out and shoot him.

Fowler is stunned.

DOREMUS

You can't!

SWAN *(to Doremus)*

I told you! I am quite empowered to do so.

SHAD *(to the Guards)*

Grab the sonofabitch! And take him outside!

The guards near Fowler grab him and drag him out. Doremus tries to go to Fowler but the guards grab him. Swan leans his elbows on the table and taps his teeth with a pencil.

DOREMUS

No! This is outrageous! You cannot do this, sir. By any law under heaven you have no right! This is the United States, man, the United States of America!

After a moment we hear the sound of a single gunshot.

Blackout.

End of Part One.

PART TWO

ACT FOUR

Scene 1.

A dining room table. Emma is serving, trying to remain upbeat in the face of pervasive gloom. Mary is seated, stone silent, her focus singular and elsewhere. Sissy and Julian talk in the corner.

** It happened so fast.

EMMA (*calling to him to come and eat*)

Doremus!
Sissy, come and sit.

**Unemployment was eliminated by rounding up every person without a job and placing them in labor camps.

EMMA

How's school, Julian?

**Huge State-run universities were opened, free of any taint of "intellectualism."

SISSY

He's not in school anymore Ma.

**Unfortunately, smaller colleges such as Princeton had to be closed.

JULIAN

Back here for good now, Mrs. Jessup. Amherst is a goner.

During the following, Doremus enters slowly and sits at the table.

**And in one single day,
all crime ended in America forever.

EMMA

Who wants gravy?

**Seventy thousand Minute Men, working with town and state police officers, arrested every known or suspected criminal in the country.

**One in ten was shot immediately

**Four in ten were given prison sentences

**Three in ten were released as innocents

**And two in ten were taken in by the Minute Men as inspectors.

EMMA

Oh Mary, you *must* take a little more of the nice chestnut dressing.

**Mary Jessup Greenhill was punished by the seizing of all the property and money her late husband Fowler had left her.

MARY

I'm not hungry, Mother.

EMMA

Just try a little.

MARY

No, mom--

EMMA

Just a small--

DOREMUS

Dammit, Emma! She already said she wasn't hungry.

(pause)

I'm sorry.

**Doremus was miserable from writing propaganda in support of the Windrip Administration.

EMMA

So what will you be doing now, Julian?

JULIAN

I thought I'd marry Sissy as soon as I get a job somewhere.

DOREMUS

Marry?

JULIAN *(trying to make a joke)*

If Shad Ledue doesn't get to her first. He's a battalion commander now, after all.

SISSY

We have to work on your sense of humor, Julian. I can't marry a man with a bad sense of humor.

DOREMUS

Do you really think that now's the time to get married?

Philip enters, jovial, expansive.

PHILIP

Hello all!

They are all pleased to see him:

"Philip!" "Well here's a surprise!" "Big Brother comes home!"

EMMA (*hugging him*)

I'm so glad you came.

I wasn't sure you were going to make it.

DOREMUS

You knew he was coming?

PHILIP

I wasn't sure I could get away, Dad but I decided I just had to see my favorite family.

Mary, how are you? It's a crime what they did with your property. We'll do everything we can to fix it.

EMMA

How's David doing?

PHILIP

He misses his mother terribly, of course, but he's fine. His cousins treat him like a prince.

EMMA

It should only be a few more weeks. Just until our Mary gets her footing.

MARY (*distant*)

Thank you, Philip.

PHILIP

There's no rush. We love having him.

EMMA

Come, eat with us.

PHILIP

Afraid I can't, Mother. Duty still calls. Just wanted to drop by for a hug and have a quick word with Pater here.

EMMA

All right, then. We'll leave you two boys to it but only for five minutes. Do you hear? After that we're going to storm right back in here and devour you. Come on, everyone. Dessert in the kitchen.

Emma, Sissy, and Julian leave one way. Mary another.

PHILIP

How are you, Dad?

DOREMUS

You know what the worst is, Philip? Every day there's some new thing I think will be unbearable. And yet week after week I find myself getting by.

PHILIP

Is there anything I can do to help?

DOREMUS

I wish there were.

PHILIP

I know you're still having some problems with the authorities.

DOREMUS

So has my disgust for these people made it back to you? At least I'm making headlines somewhere.

PHILIP

You've got to get ahold of yourself. You've got to find a way to move forward.

DOREMUS

That's the problem, son. I don't seem to be able to conceive of the future anymore.

PHILIP

I know it's bleak right now, Dad, but there is a future. For all of us. Hoover and Roosevelt put us into this mess and now we have to dig ourselves out.

DOREMUS

By using storm troopers to watch our every move?

PHILIP

The Minute Men are a temporary necessity. And there have been some good things. The crime rate has plummeted and the stock market is the highest it's been in over a decade.

DOREMUS

At the cost of what?

PHILIP

It's the making of a new society. I hate to say it, but you can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs.

DOREMUS

Hell and damnation! If I ever hear that phrase again—

PHILIP

You said it yourself. How many times did I sit in this very room and listen to you talk about how we'd gone soft? Obsessed with our new refrigerators or air conditioners or any newfangled gadget. We needed to remember what you used to call "the sturdiness of our ancestors." To restore toughness. Real toughness.

DOREMUS

There's a difference between toughness and brutality.

PHILIP

But brutality is the way of the world. Do you think the Russians or the Germans don't want us to fail? We have enemies. Real enemies with real weapons. Who won't hesitate to pull the trigger. Who will use every form of brutality they can devise to defeat us. I know you don't like Windrip but at least he's fighting back.

DOREMUS

You do realize you're defending the man who murdered your brother-in-law.

PHILIP

That was Swan. Not Windrip.

DOREMUS

Do you hear yourself, Philip?

PHILIP

Swan will be punished. I promise you.

DOREMUS

You sound like a Bolshevik apologist.

PHILIP

I'm a realist. Windrip and his crew are here to stay. The sooner you accept this, the easier it will be.

DOREMUS

For whom?

PHILIP

You must listen to me, Dad. You must. Why do you suppose I came clear up from Worcester to see you?

DOREMUS

God only knows.

PHILIP

You're going to get into deeper trouble if you don't start supporting the government.

DOREMUS

So. Here it is. The reason why you've traveled all the way from Worcester. It's not enough that I've been stripped of any journalistic integrity. That I have to dictate vast amounts of drivel every day to some stooge in Windrip's Administration. No. I need to embrace Windrip's theology as well.

PHILIP

You need to think of Mother and the girls instead of yourself.

DOREMUS

What are you getting out of this?

PHILIP

Nothing! I'm worried about you and Mother and Sissy and—

DOREMUS

All this sudden concern... What? Is my reputation not playing well with your business associates? Is the embarrassment of being Doremus Jessup's son too much to bear? What are you getting?

Pause.

PHILIP

A future.

DOREMUS

A future.

Pause.

PHILIP

I've been approached in regard to an assistant military judgeship.

Pause.

DOREMUS

I see.

Go to hell, Philip.

Pause.

PHILIP (*goes to leave, then stops*)

I'll let you tell Mother that I won't be able to protect you.

Philip leaves. Pause. Emma enters.

EMMA

Everything all right?

Pause.

DOREMUS

Emma. Do you think I'm selfish?

Emma looks at him. She goes to him. Kisses him on the forehead.

EMMA

Yes. I do.

She leaves.

ACT FOUR

Scene 2.

Buck and Lorinda enter with urgency.

DOREMUS

What's so urgent that you couldn't talk about it on the phone?

BUCK

It's happening. This afternoon they arrested the editor of the *Rutland Herald*—

DOREMUS

That's impossible. I would've heard.

BUCK

No publicity. I got it from an engineer I know who works the Rutland Milk Train.

LORINDA

Have you seen the new "Order of Regulation?" Any person who discredits the State will be executed or interned. And they're targeting journalists.

DOREMUS

But I'm cooperating with them.

BUCK

So was the editor of the *Rutland Herald*.

DOREMUS

You're overreacting—

LORINDA

We're not. You have to leave, Doremus.

Enter Emma and Mary.

EMMA

What's going on?

BUCK

You have to leave. All of you. Right away.

EMMA

Leave? For where?

BUCK

Canada. You'll have to go by car. A week ago you could've flown, but they've stopped the flights.

DOREMUS

This is insane.

LORINDA

Buck will drive you.

BUCK

I've got a Canadian driver's license and Quebec plates. It's snowing too hard for them to care about anyone out on the road tonight.

EMMA

Tonight? That's impossible!

DOREMUS

We need time. Give us 'til tomorrow at least. I have to go to the bank; I have about twenty thousand—

LORINDA

If you wait until tomorrow, it could be too late.

EMMA

Oh my God.

BUCK

I've got fifteen hundred Canadian for you. I'll get the rest to you soon enough.

DOREMUS

But I'm not guilty of anything! Why am I running?!

BUCK

To save your life, my boy. Just your life.

Sissy and Julian enter quickly.

SISSY

We got here as fast as we could.

LORINDA

They're coming for your Dad. No time to explain. You have to pack up and leave right away.

EMMA

But what about the house? What about our things?

BUCK

We can figure all that out later. When you're safe.

JULIAN

(to Sissy) It's okay. It'll be okay.

EMMA

Come, we have to pack.

JULIAN

(still to Sissy) I'll help you. *(to Emma)* I'll help you, Mrs. Jessup.

Emma, Sissy and Julian leave to pack.

MARY

I'm not going.

Buck, Lorinda, and Doremus turn to her.

MARY

I can't. Not without my son.

BUCK

It's not safe to bring him right now.

MARY

I'm not leaving.

BUCK

Mary, listen to me. Philip and his family are taking good care of David. I will bring him to you as soon as humanly possible. When the danger isn't so great. I promise.

Pause. He looks straight into her eyes.

I promise.

Pause.

MARY

I'll go pack.

Mary goes to pack.

BUCK

I'll get the truck.

Buck exits, leaving Doremus and Lorinda alone onstage.

LORINDA

In Canada you'll have time to catch your breath. Join Trowbridge.

DOREMUS

I'll write as soon as we get settled somewhere.

LORINDA

It may not be safe.

DOREMUS

How will I contact you, then?

LORINDA

We'll find a way.

She exits.

ACT FOUR

Scene 3.

Lights up on three rows of chairs, three rows across. Buck's truck. The family piles a layer of suitcases onto the second row, and a bigger stack onto the third row. In the first sit Doremus, Sissy, and Buck, the driver. In the second row, sitting on top of some suitcases, are Mary and Emma. The car engine revs. Buck drives. No one speaks. Then:

EMMA

Does anyone want some coconut layer cake?

DOREMUS

We are fleeing for our lives and you brought coconut layer cake?

EMMA

Well if we're running all over the world I thought we might want something sweet.

BUCK

We're only going to Canada, Emma.
You all right back there, Mary?

EMMA

She's alright. Aren't you.

No reply. Emma reaches over to squeeze Mary's arm. Silence... Passage of time... lights change.

SISSY

I thought trucks had heat in them.

BUCK

We're lucky. The snow's keeping the temperature up.
You should be in this thing when it gets really cold.

EMMA

We should be thankful we even have this truck.

SISSY

It would be easier to be thankful if I could feel my feet.

Silence... lights change again, heavy snow... Buck has to concentrate very hard on the road.

DOREMUS

Can you see anything through this windshield?

BUCK

Enough.

DOREMUS

If I can't see anything how can you?

BUCK (*irritated*)

You prattling on about it doesn't help.

Pause.

SISSY (*to Doremus, quietly*)

Hold my hand, Dad.

DOREMUS

You're scared.

SISSY

Isn't everybody?

Doremus doesn't answer, but clenches Sissy's hand ("yes").

Silence... lights change again.

BUCK

The border's right up ahead.

DOREMUS (*amazed*)

Nobody's stopped us.

BUCK

Nope. We'll make it, all right. We'll make it.

A search light scans the stage, cutting across them.

BUCK

Blast it!

Buck slows to a stop. The group starts to panic.

EMMA

I thought no one was supposed to be here!

What do we say?
SISSY

What's happening?
MARY (*having woken up*)

Quiet! Let Buck do the talking.
DOREMUS (*to the others*)

Two uniformed Minute Men with flashlights approach the car. The first Minute Man looks in on Buck. The second, on Doremus.

Destination?
FIRST MINUTE MAN

Montreal, where we live.
BUCK

Buck hands him his papers.

Goddamn lousy weather to be drivin' in.
SECOND MINUTE MAN

Watch your tongue, sir. There are women present.
DOREMUS

The second Minute Man shines in his light on Sissy.

Ya don't say? How ya doin', honey?
Happy to be headin' home?
SECOND MINUTE MAN

Of course.
SISSY

What part of Montreal you from?
SECOND MINUTE MAN

Sissy hesitates... Buck steps in.

Point Saint-Charles. Near the river.
BUCK

Is that right. (*focused on Sissy still*) Guess you forgot where you live, eh honey?
SECOND MINUTE MAN

FIRST MINUTE MAN

You'll have to wait till the Battalion-Leader comes.

BUCK

When's that?

FIRST MINUTE MAN

Hard to say. Maybe noon. Maybe evening.

BUCK

We can't do that! My mother's sick—

SECOND MINUTE MAN

Another sick mom! That's five this week.

BUCK

It's the truth.

FIRST MINUTE MAN

That may be so, but you still have to wait if you want to get across. New regulations.

DOREMUS

But—

SECOND MINUTE MAN

It does seem funny, you folks taking this back road, when there's a first-rate highway not far from here. *(To First Minute Man.)* Don't it seem funny, Sam?

FIRST MINUTE MAN *(to Buck)*

Listen, mister, if I was you I'd just go back wherever the hell you came from.

SECOND MINUTE MAN

Unless the girls wanna come inside. Warm us up a bit. I'll flip you for the one up front.

DOREMUS

How dare you?

SMM

Shut your damn mouth, grandpa.

FIRST MINUTE MAN *(to Buck)*

You get my point, mister?

BUCK

All right. We'll go back to East Berkshire--

SECOND MINUTE MAN

Then take off! You heard him! Get outta here!

He cocks the gun. Buck starts driving. They all exhale.

EMMA

Oh my god.

DOREMUS (*bitterly*)

You remember the story I told you about John Brown?

SISSY

You start out scared and end up with a gun in your hand?

Slight pause.

Except I thought it was just a story.

ACT FOUR

Scene 4.

The family disperses.

**Late the next day, the would-be refugees arrived back in Fort Beulah.

BUCK

We can try again tomorrow.

EMMA

I'm never doing that again. Come on, girls.

Emma takes a suitcase and exits. Mary and Sissy grab suitcases and follow her. Buck and Doremus unload the remaining bags during the following...

BUCK

We could make another go of it, Remus. The family will come around.

DOREMUS

It's too dangerous. We have to assume we're being watched now and I can't put them at risk.

BUCK

What other option is there?

DOREMUS

We stay. We bide our time. I need to think of an alternate plan.

BUCK

We'll think fast, will you. The wolves are at the gate.

Doremus and Buck exit.

**Across the border in Canada, a group of ex-patriots were being recruited into a small army.

**Teachers and dockworkers,

**nurses and lawyers,

**farmhands and factory workers

**were coming together as secret agents of the New Underground.

**Taking on disguises, they altered their identities, as they prepared to take back their homeland.

DIMICK (*stands, his disguise complete*)

My name? My name is Dimick. I'd like to discuss your life insurance policy.

Dimick exits.

**Inside the White House, a small army of bodyguards stood outside the Oval Office.

**President Windrip's legendarily short speeches were now reduced to a single word.

BUZZ

No! No! No! No! No! No! No!

**He had taken to carrying his own personal firearm.

Buzz brandishes a pistol.

**For as much as he loved the People, he feared and detested actual Persons.

Buzz fires a couple of rounds as he exits.

**It was astonishing how many people were being arrested. There simply wasn't enough room for the flood of new criminals, and so concentration camps were opened. Trianon, a girls' preparatory school just outside of Fort Beulah, was easily converted to this new usage.

**Journalists continued to be targeted as enemies of the State.

**And Doremus Jessup decided to get out of the direct line of fire.

Doremus steps into the scene with Shad, who is seated behind a desk.

SHAD

Where do you think you're going? I didn't give you permission to leave.

DOREMUS

I'm retiring, effective immediately.

SHAD

Get back to work, Jessup. I'm enjoying the view too much, watching you lick Buzz Windrip's boots every day.

DOREMUS

I'm sorry to disappoint you, Shad, but it's still within my rights to retire. Time to enjoy the good life in President Windrip's America.

SHAD

Still full of yourself, aren't you, Jessup?

DOREMUS

Old habit from bygone days.

SHAD

Tell you what. You put in a good word for me with Miss Sissy, I let you walk. She's special, that girl.

DOREMUS

Stay. Away. From my daughter.

SHAD

You don't wanna play ball with me, fine. It's your funeral. Now get back to work before you find yourself in Trianon.

Doremus hands Ledue a piece of paper with the acceptance of his resignation.

DOREMUS

Your superiors don't agree, Commissioner. They've approved my retirement.

SHAD

We'll see about this.
We're not through, Jessup!

Shad storms off as Pascal and Pollikop enter.

** Doremus' retirement wasn't retirement at all. He was desperate to fight against Windrip, and he went to see if he could work with the Democratic Socialists and the Communists.

PASCAL

You act like this is the first time anything like this has ever happened.

POLLIKOP

That's the thing about you, Mr. Jessup. Your capacity to be surprised.

DOREMUS

We've never faced these conditions before.

PASCAL

No, just the preconditions.
Remember during the last war when they renamed sauerkraut Liberty Cabbage?

POLLIKOP

Or when Florida, Oklahoma and Tennessee outlawed the teaching of evolution?

DOREMUS

Yes, of course. We've battled hysteria before. But we've always righted the ship. Come back to some semblance of Reason and Order. And Trowbridge is our best hope of finding a way to do that.

PASCAL

Walter Trowbridge is a social reformer who is doing the work of the capitalists.

DOREMUS

How can you be opposed to social reform, Pascal? It's the bedrock of political progress.

PASCAL

Tell that to the sharecroppers and the migrant workers.

DOREMUS

So you pass laws establishing the right to create unions.

PASCAL

While the unemployment line keeps growin'. The system's broken. Capitalism trumps democracy! When are you gonna see that? Social reform is another way of doling out breadcrumbs to keep the system going.

POLLIKOP

Listen, Mr. Jessup, there's a part of me wants to believe in Trowbridge myself. He's up there in Canada puttin' something together that feels honest and decent. But you gotta look at his political pedigree. Who really got Walter Trowbridge into the Senate? Big business. Big Money. And these guys don't care who's in office or the name of the Party or even the name of the country, as long as they control the show. You don't think they'll come calling if old Walter ever makes it back stateside? Hell, they're probably funding his rebellion while propping up Windrip's fascist state at the same time. Karl's right. We need a new system.

DOREMUS

A new system with new laws. A new state which will make promises and provide a grand solution. The only problem is that there is no solution! There will never be a society that is anything close to perfect because there will always be men who prey on others, who seek enormous power, and who want to control our destiny.

Whether they're called Kings, Comrades, Patriots, or Little Brothers of the Poor. So the sooner we discard this idea of solutions, the sooner we can get on with the messy work of democracy and staying true to our values and our rights.

Slight pause.

PASCAL

I'm not givin' up on you, Mr. Jessup. You watch. At some point you're gonna join us.

They shake his hand.

POLLIKOP

Good luck, Mr. Jessup. And take care.

They leave, and as they do:

PASCAL

Starting to sound like an apologist for Trowbridge, John.

POLLIKOP

Just shut it, Karl!

And they're gone. Dimick enters quickly from the opposite side, surprising Doremus.

DIMICK

Mr. Jessup.

DOREMUS

I don't know your name, sir, but I do know that you've been spying on me all week.

DIMICK

My name is Dimick. I'm here to sell you some life insurance.

DOREMUS

You've been stalking me to/sell—?!

DIMICK (*quickly and directly*)

There isn't much time so listen closely. I represent Walter Trowbridge and the New Underground. We have four divisions: printing propaganda, distributing it, exchanging suppressed news stories, and smuggling suspects into Mexico and Canada. You've been identified as someone who can work with us.

As you don't know me you will suspect I work for the Minute Men. (*Hands him a file.*) Look over these credentials and call the person listed here, who I believe is someone you know and trust. He's one of us. And for God's sake be careful. Assume the phone is tapped. Ask him if my insurance offer is legit. He'll give you his opinion. If you choose to join us, tell him you want to buy a policy. Are we clear?

DOREMUS

I always suspected I was underinsured.

DIMICK

Good luck.

Dimick leaves.

**Doremus bought the policy. He had no skills as a spy and the danger would be great. But he would be working, working in the grand American tradition of writing seditious propaganda.

*Lorinda and Buck enter and assemble a small printing press upstage.
Mary enters holding a large coat. We only see the inside lining. She sits and finishes sewing a pocket. From the other side of the stage, Sissy enters.*

**More than one Jessup was up to a little high treason. Mary threw herself into the work of a courier, taking her favorite gift from Fowler, a mink overcoat, and lining it with pockets that could hide secret pamphlets.

** While Sissy went about trying to win the confidence of Shad Ledue. She found him one evening outside Billy's Bar, a favorite among the Minute Men.

A group of Minute Men and Shad appear, beers in hand. Sissy enters. Shad goes to her.

SHAD

Miss Sissy, what are you doing here?

SISSY

Looking for you, Shad.

SHAD

Get lost, boys. *(They leave. He turns to Sissy.)*
I don't recall you ever glancing in my direction much.

SISSY

Things change. You know that better than anyone.

SHAD

True enough.

SISSY

I have to say I'm impressed. Daddy used to talk like you were barely human. Something Darwin conjured up.

SHAD

I always figured as much. That Darwin's a mean son-of-a-bitch.

SISSY

Too true, Shad. But that's all in the past. Even Dad has to respect you now. The way you've taken over. I've been watching. No one messes with Shad Ledue.

SHAD

You got that right.

SISSY

I want to be on the right side of this thing, Shad.

Pause.

SHAD

How 'bout you come over to my place and we get to know each other a little better.

SISSY (*smiling at him*)

That sounds like a swell idea. I want to hear about everything you're doing.

Shad exits.

**Buck Titus' basement became the headquarters for the Fort Beulah cell of the New Underground.

**The press was stolen, the type smuggled, the paper shipped from Canada.

**Within days, the *Vermont Vigilance*,

**a four page weekly that usually had two pages and came out three times a week,

**began to appear in the oddest places.

** Doremus was back to being a real journalist, investigating leads and digging for the truth.

SISSY

Dad, listen. I've been gettin' chummy with Shad.

DOREMUS

Chummy?

SISSY

He's sweet on me/and I've been sort of letting him, you know—

DOREMUS

Sweet?... What?!

SISSY

Don't bust your gullet, Dad, I know how to protect myself. So listen, he's boasting to me of how he and Frank Tasbrough have jiggered the numbers on all the new construction going on, and he keeps the records in a little red book right there in his house.

DOREMUS

You did not—

SISSY

I did. Photographed the book he keeps—

DOREMUS

Do you know what he'll do to you if he finds out?

SISSY

Relax. That little red book is already back in its place, safe and sound.

DOREMUS

You think you're going to get away with this?

SISSY

Well I already did.

DOREMUS

If you think you can control Shad Ledue you're mistaken.

SISSY

I have the photographs. I'm done with Shad. There's nothing to worry about.

DOREMUS

Until he flies into a violent rage when you reject him. How do you think he's going to react when you tell him the chummy days are over?

SISSY

I know how to control Shad. Do you want the photographs or not?

DOREMUS

Sadly, yes. I do.

Pause. Sissy hands Doremus the envelope. He takes it. Mary stands and puts on the coat: a full-length mink coat with special pockets now sewn into it.

Sissy exits. Lorinda enters. Hands Mary some pamphlets.

LORINDA

Here it is. The latest issue.

Mary takes them, stuffs them in the coat.

DOREMUS

Please be careful, Mary.

MARY

What can they do to me that hasn't already been done?

*Mary exits.
Doremus hands the photographs to Lorinda. She takes them.*

DOREMUS

Photographs of Shad's crooked ledgers.

LORINDA

Sissy?

He nods. Lorinda takes out the photos for a quick look.

DOREMUS

She says it's enough to put him in jail.

LORINDA

That girl is fearless.

DOREMUS

Reckless, too.

LORINDA

I love her. *(she looks up from the photos. Smiles at him.)* Oh, you too. I love you, too.

**It was the strangest thing.

The printing press is now operational. Lorinda, Doremus, and Buck print and stack pamphlets. Simultaneously, several 55-gallon drums are brought onstage, surrounding the press. Minute Men enter with stacks of books and burn them in the steel drums.

**Outside, the world continued to consume itself. *(Minute Men burn books.)* But within the confines of Buck Titus' basement, there was complete freedom.

**It was all happening so fast.

Julian enters in a Minute Man uniform.

JULIAN

Mr. Jessup?

Doremus turns and sees Julian. He is astonished by his dress. He comes closer to where Julian is standing. Buck and Lorinda continue to work.

JULIAN

Sorry to interrupt, sir. I've only got a few minutes.

DOREMUS

What is this, Julian?

JULIAN

Don't be alarmed, Mr. Jessup. This is the best way. For me to fight them.

DOREMUS

You're not equipped for this, son.

JULIAN

With all due respect, sir, I'm not sure if any of us are equipped.

DOREMUS

Does Sissy know about this?

JULIAN

We both had the idea. I think she's jealous of me going undercover.

DOREMUS

That sounds like her.

JULIAN

I've got to get back. Lots of books to burn tonight. I'll try to hide your Thomas Jefferson collection.

Julian exits. Lorinda approaches Doremus.

LORINDA (*quickly and without being sentimental*)

I've been contacted by the New Underground. They're re-assigning me to Beecher Falls, near the Canadian border. I have to leave.

DOREMUS

Leave? But when?

LORINDA

Tonight.

DOREMUS

But—no.

LORINDA

Please, Doremus.

DOREMUS

Tell them you can't go. Tell them you have obligations, or a medical condition or something.

LORINDA

I'm not going to lie.

DOREMUS

Well then tell them the truth. That we've finally figured out a way to be together.

LORINDA

And I've loved it...

DOREMUS

Then stay!

LORINDA

But it's come to an end. This...time together. It was a gift but it was never going to last. You know it. And I know it.

Pause.

DOREMUS

I hate your certainty right now. I hate it.

Pause. She hands him the manuscript.

LORINDA

Your exposé of Swan. Waiting for your final edit.

(He takes it from her.)

Hide it some place safe.

DOREMUS

Right.

LORINDA

I'm serious. This manuscript could get you killed. Take your own advice, Doremus. Be careful, please.

Lorinda exits. Spotlight alone on Doremus. The flames get bigger.

ACT FOUR

Scene 5.

Doremus' study, night.

**The New Underground sent out a warning from headquarters in Montreal about being caught distributing propaganda. Agents were disappearing.

We hear the announcement of a curfew: "The time is now 10pm. All unauthorized personnel need to stay inside their homes until 6am. Those who are found in public without proper credentials will be subject to arrest."

The lights go out. Total darkness. There's the sound of rain. Thunder. The only illumination during the following is intermittent flashes of lightning.

EMMA

Are you awake, Remus? It's so dark! Turn on the lights—

SISSY

I'll get them—

DOREMUS

No! Keep them off!

The sound of a door being broken in.

EMMA

Was that thunder?

DOREMUS

Stay in your rooms!

Footsteps are heard coming upstairs.

SISSY

Someone's inside!

Five Minute Men pour into Doremus' study. The lines come all at once:

SISSY

Daddy!

EMMA

Who is it?!

DOREMUS

You have no right—!

Doremus is grabbed and held.

DOREMUS

I demand—!

Sissy bursts in.

SISSY

Stop it! Stop it!

She grapples with the Minute Men. Gets tossed to floor beside Doremus.

DOREMUS *(to Sissy, a harsh whisper)*

The stove—get to the stove—

Doremus is pulled away from Sissy.

DOREMUS

Damn you—

He's silenced.

SHAD

So, it's the stove, is it? *(to Sissy)* Like you said, Miss Sissy, no one messes with Shad Ledue. *(to Doremus)* Jessup, you're under arrest!

A flash of lightning reveals a terrified Emma looking in at all.

EMMA

Remus...?

Lights up on Swan, sitting before the court, holding typed pages. Shad Ledue is beside him. Doremus stands before them, beaten, bent, and broken.

SWAN

Doremus Jessup, do you plead guilty to seditious activities?

DOREMUS

Absolutely not.

SWAN

County Commissioner Ledue, is it or is it not true that Doremus Jessup tried to persuade you to join a violent plot against my person?

Shad looks Doremus, then turns away.

SHAD

It's true.

DOREMUS

You know it's not, Ledue—

SWAN

I think Commissioner Ledue's testimony, plus this manuscript, which was found in the prisoner's home, is more than sufficient evidence to convict. The standard sentence for seditious activity of this sort is execution. But I believe this case calls for a show of lenience. After all, any publication with the lyrical title of "The Notorious Crimes of Commander Effingham Swan" should be duly celebrated. No, Jessup, I want you alive. It will provide a measure of daily comfort for me to think of you in prison.

So I hereby sentence you, Doremus Jessup, to be held in a concentration camp, at the will of the Court, for a minimum of twenty-five years.

Blackout.

ACT FIVE

Scene 1.

Trianon Concentration Camp.

Doremus stands in a pool of light facing upstage. Neatly folded prison clothes lie on the floor. A Guard holding a billy club stands beside him. A Doctor with a stethoscope and clipboard stands downstage of him.

DOCTOR

Clothes.

Doremus begins to undress. He stops when he has on only his shoes and boxer shorts.

All of them.

Doremus removes his boxers. The Doctor examines him from head to toe.

Deep breath.

Doremus takes a deep breath.

Again.

Doremus takes another deep breath.

Keep your eyes wide open for me.

The Doctor shines a small light into his eyes.

Teeth.

The Doctor shines the same light into his teeth.

Any pain?

DOREMUS

Plenty.

DOCTOR

Can you work?

DOREMUS

At what?

The Guard strikes Doremus with his club. He almost falls over.

GUARD (*screaming*)

Get your clothes on, Jessup! Hurry up! I said hurry up! That's as fast as you can go? The doctor asked you a question? Do you remember the question? I said do you remember the question?! Can you work?

DOREMUS

Yes! Yes! Yes!

DOCTOR

Approved.

Whistle.

The following scene-lets express four aspects of prison life: (1) the Work Detail, which Doremus shares with Pascal and Pollikop, (2) the Cell, which Doremus shares with everyone and which is meant to occur only at night, (3) the Lineup, which introduces us to Buck and then Julian when they enter the prison, and (4) the Yard, during which the prisoners are allowed to mingle in different groups in a small area. The Whistle instantaneously changes location and physical posture.

Work Detail - 1.

The Doctor and the Guard exit, the Doctor writing on his clipboard, the Guard taking Doremus' old clothes with him. Doremus puts on his prison clothes – a loose pullover top, string-tied pants.

Pollikop and Pascal washing floor on hands and knees. Pollikop's head is bandaged. Pascal sees Doremus first.

DOREMUS

Pascal.

PASCAL

Mr. Jessup.
Finally come to join the proletariat I see.

POLLIKOP

Just in time, too. Karl can talk you to death instead of me.

DOREMUS (*referring to the bandage on Pollikop's head*)

What happened to your head?

POLLIKOP

A gift from the Minute Men.
They accused me of being a Communist! You believe that?

PASCAL

Big mouth here decides to school the Minute Men on the difference between socialism and communism.

POLLIKOP

For which they decided to make me a member of the lumpen proletariat.

PASCAL

I told you it was all gonna go to hell, didn't I sir?

DOREMUS

You did Pascal.
I just didn't realize that you were speaking literally.

POLLIKOP

Welcome, Mr. Jessup. Welcome to hell.

Whistle.

They move fast into...

The Lineup - 1.

A muffled announcement plays over a megaphone throughout. Buck joins the line.

DOREMUS

Buck!?

BUCK

Fancy meeting you here.

DOREMUS

What happened?

BUCK

Ledue and his boys found out I was sniffing around town looking for parts for the printing press.
Came in and busted up the place.

DOREMUS

How are you holding up?

BUCK

Better than the printing press.

DOREMUS

What about—

PASCAL

Will you guys shut up you're gonna get us all killed.

They hold... megaphone drones for some time.

Whistle.

The Yard - 1.

DOREMUS

They've frozen the bank accounts of every man in here. I'm sure Emma needs money.

BUCK

Windrip's supposedly getting more paranoid by the day.

DOREMUS

I could use that five thousand dollars he promised.

BUCK

He saw his guards laughing and thought the joke was on him. So he got his pistol out of his desk and started shooting at them!

He can't last much longer.

DOREMUS

We also thought he'd never get elected.

Whistle.

The Cell - 1.

They drop down to the floor... Silence. Pollikop moans

PASCAL

How you doing there, John?

POLLIKOP (*straining*)

Never been better.

PASCAL

Hang in there, man. We gotta a lotta work to do when we get outta this place.

BUCK

You got odds on busting out of here, Pascal?

PASCAL

Gotta be a way. Half the guards are on the take.

DOREMUS

You really think you can buy your way out?

PASCAL

There's always a way, Mr. Jessup. After all, this is America.

Whistle.

The Yard - 2.

Pollikop is walking in the yard. He gets woozy.

PASCAL

You dizzy? Sit down, John. Catch your breath.

Pollikop sits. Two guards drag Julian in and toss him in the yard.

DOREMUS

My god. Julian.

JULIAN

Mr. Jessup.

BUCK

You need to see a doctor. Guard!

JULIAN

No! Please! Don't. Only make it worse. They want to make an example of me.

BUCK

Did somebody rat you out?

JULIAN

Shad Ledue. Caught me red-handed. I was copying the names of people they were about to arrest.

DOREMUS

Was Sissy involved?

JULIAN

Her name's not on anything.

DOREMUS

Julian, I need to ask—the rest of my family?

JULIAN (*knowing what he's about to ask*)

I looked in on Mrs. Jessup a few weeks ago and she seems to be holding up. Mary's moved out of the house, and Sissy was talking about heading to Beecher Falls to work for Mrs. Pike. But no one's hurt; they're all safe.

DOREMUS

Thank God.

Whistle.

Work - 3.

Pascal, Doremus, Buck, Julian, and Pollikop work. Slowly, exhausted.

Pollikop collapses. Pascal moves to him quickly and holds him in his arms. Doremus stands.

PASCAL

John! John! Talk to me. (*to the others*) We're losing him. Talk to me, John!

BUCK

Guard!

Julian and Doremus go to help with Pollikop. Maybe lie him flat on the ground.

PASCAL

Hold on. Hold on, brother!

BUCK

Guard! There's a man down! / Guard!

JULIAN

Help! Guard!

DOREMUS (*with a hand on Pascal's shoulder*)

He's gone, Karl...

PASCAL (*hold Pollikop's head in his arms*)

Stay with me, John. Stay with me.

The Cell - 2.

Silence. The sound of a prisoner entering the block. Shad Ledue is escorted past the cell. One of them notices it's Shad. He alerts the others. They all stare at Shad as he files past. They heckle him.

Well, well, well. PASCAL

How the mighty have fallen. BUCK

Nice to have you with us, Shad! JULIAN

The man responsible for half of us being here! BUCK

That's why they're keeping him away from us. PASCAL

Looks like he's half-dead already. JULIAN

They can't protect him. Soon as we hit the yard we jump him. PASCAL

Pascal, stop. All of you. DOREMUS

My god, Jessup! Are you still a bourgeois pacifist—after all you've been through? PASCAL

We kill him, Pascal, we become just like them. DOREMUS

There's no part of that pig's life worth saving. PASCAL

You don't think I want revenge? I'd like to tear his bones right out of his body. But he's still a human being. DOREMUS

The hell he is! Gave up his rights as a human being a long time ago. PASCAL

Whistle.

(Cell 3, continued.) No one moves.

PASCAL

That's the call for the yard. Let's go.

DOREMUS

I can't be part of this.

PASCAL

No one's asking you to do anything, Mr. Jessup.

He leaves, then Buck. Julian looks at Doremus, then follows the other men out. Doremus stays alone in a corner of his cell. He stays onstage during the entirety of the next scene.

ACT FIVE

Scene 2.

Police station.

MARY (*almost running into the station in an agitated state*)

I need to see Commander Swan. It's a matter of great urgency.

SERGEANT (*unimpressed*)

Your business?

MARY

I have information of seditious activity.

SERGEANT

And what might that be?

MARY

I'm afraid I have to speak with him directly.

SERGEANT

The Commander's not in. You'll have to give your statement/to—

MARY

Sergeant, please! This information is of such a highly sensitive nature that he can only hear it directly from me. It relates specifically to his well-being.

SERGEANT

Lady, I don't care how urgent your business/is—

SWAN (*enters*)

My well-being, is it? I'm flattered that my safety is of such concern to you, Mrs. ...?

MARY

Fowler. Thank God.

SWAN

Please remove your coat, Mrs. Fowler.

She hesitates.

Please.

MARY

Of course.

She hands the coat to the Sergeant. He goes through it. Turns it inside out. No secret pockets.

SERGEANT

Coat's clean.

SWAN

And if you would be so kind to let us conduct a gentle search of your person. I'm sure you understand.

MARY

But sir, I must protest. This is offensive to—

SWAN

Please.

The Sergeant frisks her... gestures to Swan, "She's clean."

Sergeant, would you give us a minute, please?

The Sergeant leaves.

Now then, Mrs. Fowler, your concern for my safety.

MARY

I overheard two men discussing... you, Commander. Saying terrible things.

SWAN

These are turbulent times, Mrs. Fowler.

MARY

Mary.

SWAN

Mary. What exactly were they saying, these men?

MARY

One of them said...

SWAN

Go on.

MARY

I'm ashamed to repeat it.

SWAN

Believe me, Mary; I've heard the most outrageous slander against my good name. Nothing you say can possibly disturb me.

MARY

Well, sir, they said that you had wasted the privilege of your education at Harvard and Oxford. That you had used your training as a lawyer and then as an investment banker only for the purpose of attaining power and subjugating men to your will. And that all your Bostonian manners were, what did they call it?, "a well-oiled façade to cover your nefarious intentions."

SWAN (*slightly amused*)

My nefarious intentions.

MARY (*getting worked up*)

And they called you a, a murderer, sir. Of innocent people!

SWAN

Indeed.

MARY

I defended you, sir, I did. But they laughed at me and called me horrible names.

SWAN

And the names of these men.

MARY

They were planning to kill you, I'm certain. "Wouldn't it be awful if somebody took a shot at Swan?" they said. "Might change history." Their laughter was disgusting. And when I redoubled my efforts on your behalf... one of them spat at me.

She cries.

SWAN

There, there.

MARY

It is too horrible!

She puts her head in her hands. He kneels to offer her his handkerchief.

SWAN

Let's get the names. We will deal with these people, Mary, I assure you.

Before he can finish she takes a hatpin from her hair and plunges it into his neck. She locks in on Swan.

MARY

Jessup. That's the name. Mary. Jessup. Greenhill.

He cries out. The Sergeant re-enters, and shoots Mary dead.

ACT FIVE

Scene 3.

Three scenes, with some overlap: Lorinda/Sissy, Buzz, and Doremus in Trianon concentration camp.

**It was happening so fast.

LORINDA (*entering holding a telegram, shouts*)

Sissy!

**The information came in different ways.

Sissy runs on.

LORINDA

Windrip's been deposed!

SISSY (*shrieks*)

Oh!

LORINDA

All hell's broken loose in Washington!

**Apparently, Buzz Windrip's right hand man, had gotten tired of being an appendage,

**and had been working behind Buzz's back to put himself in office.

**He had Buzz placed under house arrest and made plans for his deportation.

**President Windrip did not take the news well.

BUZZ

You can't do that to me!

Buzz is handed a suitcase.

**But Citizen Windrip was placed on a destroyer and, ten days later, reluctantly arrived in Paris.

BUZZ

It's not so bad once you get used to the lousy cigarettes and shortage of good flapjacks.

He says something in very bad French, then laughs.

BUZZ (*cont.*)

But you know, I did okay. Managed to sock away four million smackers in some bank in a country I don't even know the name of. So you know, life's not bitin' me too bad! (*seeing someone in the audience*) Hey, how you doin' fella!

He exits, waving.

**And so Buzz Windrip passed into history...

**Taking with him his bad French accent and his millions of dollars.

**But he left his iron fist

**that his successor freely used

**to smash all enemies of the State.

**And so there was no liberation,

**no deliverance from the suffering of the past,

**there was only the thought of escaping the present.

PRISON GUARD

Jessup! Into the hallway. Now!

Doremus moves into the light. The Guard approaches him.

LORINDA (*to Sissy*)

I've paid off someone at Trianon. To spring your father. With any luck he might make it out.

PRISON GUARD (*handing Doremus an old M.M. jacket and cap*)

Third alley on the right. Look for a signal.

He holds Doremus back.

SISSY

When?

PRISON GUARD

Wait.

LORINDA

They don't print schedules for prison breaks, Sissy.

PRISON GUARD

Now!

Doremus moves cautiously downstage. He stops. From out in the house someone blinks a flashlight at him. He freezes, arms across his eyes. A siren goes off. He runs out. The sirens die down.

SISSY (*firmly, clearly*)

How did you do it?

How did you make contact with the guards?

LORINDA

Perseverance.

SISSY

Why didn't you tell me?

LORINDA

Why would I do that?

SISSY

Because he's my father. Because I can help.

LORINDA

Unnecessary.

SISSY

Because we should be working together.

LORINDA

Too dangerous.

SISSY

You sound just like my father. Stop protecting me.

What else?

LORINDA

What else what?

SISSY

Is Buck still at Trianon?

LORINDA (*sighs, relents*)

They moved him. Someplace in Massachusetts. I'm trying to find out where.

SISSY

And Julian?

Slight pause.

(demanding) Julian.

LORINDA

He's alive.

But they beat him up pretty badly.

They don't like it when someone infiltrates their ranks.

Pause.

SISSY

Thank you. For telling me.

LORINDA

He's a tough one, Julian.

There's a knocking at the door. Lorinda and Sissy look at each other. Doremus enters. Lorinda runs to him. They embrace. He sees Sissy. He opens his arms. She goes to him. They all embrace. As the following narration happens, Doremus changes clothes. By the end, he looks respectable.

**Only one month after Buzz Windrip was sent packing to France, the man who deposed him was himself deposed. The military had decided to eliminate the middleman known as the president.

**Storm troopers marched directly into the White House, putting a bullet through the head of every resident. Three hours later, the military coup was declared a resounding success.

**The last vestige of democracy had vanished.

**But the machinery of the State rolled on, regardless of who was in charge.

**In the blink of an eye, everything changed. Again.

Philip enters one side of the stage wearing an overcoat and carrying a cardboard box with some family heirlooms inside. On the other side of the stage, Doremus continues to change clothes.

PHILIP

Mother!

Lorinda comes back on, goes to the file cabinet.

Is he all packed?
SISSY

I just need his passport.
LORINDA

Mother, it's time to go!
PHILIP

And everything's arranged?
SISSY

Lorinda nods. Emma enters in a hurry wearing an overcoat.

Have you got everything?
PHILIP

Here it is.
LORINDA (*finding the passport*)

I'm sorry, Philip.
EMMA

It's all right. When you've lived in a house for forty years, it's hard to leave.
PHILIP

Doremus enters.

It's so strange. Seeing it empty.
EMMA

It's so strange. I just got here and I'm leaving.
DOREMUS

Are you ready?
PHILIP

Emma looks around.

You'll make it across this time.
SISSY (*to Doremus, who has finished dressing*)

Are you ready?
LORINDA

DOREMUS

I think so.

He exits, followed by Lorinda and Sissy.

EMMA

I think so. Yes.

Emma leaves with Philip. The narrators come on stage.

** The military quickly established authoritarian rule, which was welcomed by many Americans.

** People simply didn't have the capacity to think about anything that was overly complicated.

**Most people were so consumed with trying to survive, that complicated thinking of any kind was too much to bear.

**And truth be told, they had lost that ability years ago.

**For in a country that had praised itself so widely for free public education, there had been very little actual education.

**There had been plenty of schoolrooms, but not enough literate teachers or eager pupils.

**Not enough school boards who regarded teaching as a profession worthy of as much pay as waiting on tables or selling insurance.

**Many Americans had been taught that God had selected them to supplant the Jews as the Chosen People, the proof of which lay in the fact that America was the richest, kindest, and cleverest nation on earth.

**They'd also been taught that economic depressions were merely passing headaches;

**That labor unions were anti-American, and they must either be eliminated or made powerless.

**That Politics was an activity so simple that any village clerk was quite sufficiently trained to do the job;

**And most of all, they were taught to believe in the fantastical power of money.

**So much so that it was widely accepted that if John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, or any other business magnate set his mind to it, he could become the most distinguished statesman in all the land.

**These beliefs were held by many, many people.

**But not everyone. A rebellion had been brewing since the early days of Buzz Windrip.

**A rebellion that Doremus Jessup now actively joined.

**From their headquarters in Canada,

**And with Walter Trowbridge as their leader,

**the New Underground directed the counter-insurgency. Establishing strongholds that now stretched from San Francisco to Detroit.

**Doremus had found a safe home in Canada. But he wasn't satisfied. Every night he dreamed of being sent to the front lines.

ACT FIVE

Scene 4.

An Aide enters, as does another man, facing upstage.

AIDE

Mr. Jessup. Mr. Trowbridge is ready for you now.

They turn, along with the other man, to all face each other. The other man is Walter Trowbridge.

TROWBRIDGE

Good to meet you, Jessup.
It's been what? Five months since you've been in Montreal?

DOREMUS

Six months, sir.

TROWBRIDGE

Long enough to feel homesick, get over it, and feel homesick again.

DOREMUS

I'm afraid the Canadians are sick to death of us.

TROWBRIDGE

Refugee fatigue. It's a brutal fact that no normal man can endure another man's tragedy for very long.

DOREMUS

There's a limit on human sympathy, sir, and I think we've exceeded it.

They share a mild laugh.

TROWBRIDGE

I see you've applied to be a field agent.

DOREMUS

And been turned down twice before.

TROWBRIDGE

It would not be beneficial for us to trade an effective propagandist for an ineffective field agent. But new circumstances may have thrown a different light on your application.

AIDE

During the last week, there's been a major shift in the movement of government troops towards the south. They're clearly preparing to go to war with Mexico, which has had the effect of loosening security all across the Canadian border.

TROWBRIDGE

Tough to maintain a wall across three thousand miles.

AIDE

We have an opportunity to move a new wave of agents into the U.S. with unusually low risk. But we have to move quickly.

TROWBRIDGE

You've heard the news about our insurgency.

DOREMUS

That we've reached a standstill.

AIDE

In the areas where there was a history of radicalism, we established ourselves with relative ease. But there are vast portions of the country where we've made virtually no headway.

DOREMUS

I know it's heresy, sir, but can I ask if you've considered abandoning those portions of the country?

TROWBRIDGE

Everything's under consideration. But as of this moment, we're committed to the re-establishment of the Cooperative Commonwealth of the United States. The entire United States.

AIDE

We need agents on the ground with sense as well as guts.

DOREMUS

I hope I can provide a bit of both.

TROWBRIDGE

Can you? This is a younger man's game, Jessup. At our age, the highlight of the day is an afternoon nap.

DOREMUS

Forty years of reporting, sir, has endowed me with great skills. I can nap almost anywhere, and I assure you I can do this job.

TROWBRIDGE

You realize you'll be in the trenches. Political grunt work of the most tedious kind.

DOREMUS

I have no illusions, sir. I'll be talking to people who've been terrorized into silence and political complacency. I understand that.

TROWBRIDGE

It goes without saying that you'll be in great danger.

DOREMUS

I accept that risk, sir.

Pause. Trowbridge nods to the Aide, who hands him a file.

TROWBRIDGE

Can I ask, Jessup...what made you volunteer for this assignment? You could stay here in relative security and still make a contribution. I can't imagine you're nursing some lifelong desire to see the backwoods of Minnesota.

DOREMUS

To be honest, sir, I'm not entirely sure. I spent the lion's share of my life in the comfort of a very circumscribed world. That world has been destroyed. Perhaps I want it back. Or maybe I want to prove to myself that I'm more than the person who inhabited that life. We all seem to be carrying an excess of anger and guilt and fear these days, so who can say?

The simple answer is that the times demand it. And I demand something different of myself.

Trowbridge hands Doremus the file.

TROWBRIDGE

You're to report to General Barnes in Minnesota. He'll give you a list of contacts and the lay of the land.

AIDE

You leave from Central Station at 5 p.m. on the 27th. That's three days from now.

TROWBRIDGE (*offering his hand*)

Good luck, Doremus. We will win this thing.

DOREMUS

Hopefully in our lifetime, sir.

ACT FIVE

Scene 5.

The sounds of a busy train station. Jessup waiting with a suitcase.

**His packing was done.

**In his single suitcase, he had only a few items of clothing

** and a copy of Spengler's *Decline of the West*.

**He waited for the next train to Winnipeg.

Train whistle. Lorinda enters in disguise. Approaches Doremus.

LORINDA

Excuse me, but aren't you....?

DOREMUS (*after recognizing her*)

My God.

He kisses her with some fury.

How on Earth?

LORINDA

The New Underground. They sent word you'd be here.

DOREMUS

But I get on a train in—

LORINDA

I know. That's why I had to come.

DOREMUS

And this... costume? (*referring to her hair, etc.*)

LORINDA

For the benefit of the border guards.

DOREMUS

I hope they were suitably impressed.

**And in the short time they had, they spoke of everything except what could not be said.

LORINDA

And Emma?

DOREMUS

Not a word since she sold the house and moved in with Philip. I've tried. Repeatedly.

LORINDA

I trust she's comfortable in Worcester.

DOREMUS

Can you promise me something?

LORINDA

If I can.

DOREMUS

Sissy.

Sissy enters and surveys a space onstage.

LORINDA

I'd tell you that I'll take care of her but honestly, the reverse is more likely. She is your daughter in every way.

You look so well. Are you happy?

*Train announcement in French: "now boarding on track three..."
("Madames et monsieurs, embarquement immédiat, quai trois à Winnipeg")*

Please be happy.

She kisses him on the cheek, and exits. Sissy exits as well. The sound of a train moving.

**And he realized that she didn't even have his address. And that no one who loved him would ever have a stable address for him again.

The train stops.

FARMER

Mr. Dobbs?

Doremus looks at him a bit lost.

Mr. William Barton Dobbs?

DOREMUS

Ah, Dobbs, right. Sorry. Yes. That would be me.

FARMER

Can I show you to your room?

DOREMUS

You're very kind. Thank you.

He leads Doremus to a small room.

FARMER

That was an interesting meeting today.

DOREMUS

How so?

FARMER

I can't remember the last time people around here just sat around and chewed over an idea. Everyone's so busy screamin' about their feelings. Like their feelings are the be-all and end-all, some kinda barometer of the truth. So, you know, when you talked about political theory and group action?

DOREMUS

Taking action as an individual for the benefit of the group.

FARMER

The balance of liberty and democracy. The social contract and such. It was like people were trying to remember how to use their brains again.

DOREMUS

Do you think they got the message?

FARMER

Well it wasn't easy for some of 'em. Most of 'em. You let your brain go slack it hurts when you start using it again.

DOREMUS

Maybe you can follow up for me.

FARMER

Can't say I'm real comfortable in groups.

DOREMUS

We're all out of our comfort zone, my friend. All we can do is try, right?

FARMER

So what do you think the odds are, Mr. Dobbs? Of us winning?

DOREMUS

It's a funny thing. When I sit by myself I feel scared, not very hopeful. But when I get out into the world, talk with people, get past my feelings as you put it, I start to think it's possible.

FARMER

It's not about you any more.

DOREMUS

As you say. It's not about me.

FARMER (*referring to the room*)

Will you be all right here, Mr. Dobbs? I don't want to leave you all alone with those feelings.

DOREMUS (*laughing*)

Yes. I'll be fine.

FARMER

Good night, then.

Doremus sits in a chair and writes some notes. At the same time, along with two men, Sissy pushes a very large object covered in a cloth to another spot. The two men leave.

Sissy removes the cover off the object. It's a printing press.

She works alone.

Julian enters.

JULIAN

Hello, Sissy.

SISSY

Julian.

She smiles.

You're alive.

JULIAN (*he smiles*)

Appears so.

SISSY

I knew that.
I did.

They hold for a beat.

We have so much to do.

JULIAN

I know.

SISSY

Give me a hand, will you?

*She goes to work one side of the press. He goes to the other side. They work together.
The sound of marching in the distance along with humming.*

The farmer enters quickly.

FARMER (*urgently*)

Just had a phone call. There's a posse of Minute Men sniffing around looking for you. Time to go.

DOREMUS

Right.

He moves quickly, grabs his suitcase and hat.

DOREMUS

Which way?

FARMER (*pointing out into the house*)

Straight on through. You'll figure it out.

DOREMUS

Right.

Doremus exits into the house. As he does so, Sissy and Julian move the press to center during the following:

****And so Doremus Jessup disappeared into history**

****But the struggle went on**

****past the span of his life**

**and the lives of his children,

**and his children's children.

**And history marched on,

**and the struggle continued...

**Straight on through to the present.

JULIAN

Are you ready?

SISSY

Yes, I'm ready.

Sissy and Julian start to run the press. The lights go out.

End of play.