

RKO 281

by

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Scott-Free Productions

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FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY

Setting

Primarily Hollywood and San Simeon, 1940-1941

Featured Characters

ORSON WELLES: Boy Genius

Age at opening of the story, January 1940: 24.

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST: Press Baron

Age at opening of the story, January 1940: 76.

MARION DAVIES: Hearst's Mistress

Age at opening of the story, January 1940: 43.

HERMAN MANKIEWICZ ("MANK"): Writer

Age at opening of the story, January 1940: 43.

GEORGE SCHAEFER: RKO Studio Head, 50's.

LOUELLA PARSONS: Hearst Gossip Columnist, 60's.

LOUIS B. MAYER: Head of MGM, 50's.

JOE WILLICOMBE: Hearst Assistant, 60's

Also

Hedda Hopper: Louella's Rival, Gossip Columnist

Gregg Toland: KANE Director of Photography

Carole Lombard: Movie star

David O. Selznick: Independent Producer

Rita Hayworth: Movie star

Jack Warner: Head of Warner Brothers

Walt Disney: Head of Disney

Sam Goldwyn: Independent Producer

Harry Cohn: Head of Columbia

Darryl Zanuck: Head of 20th Century Fox

John Houseman: Theatrical/Radio Producer

Paul Stewart: KANE Actor

Joseph Cotton: KANE Actor

Dorothy Commingore: KANE Actress

Bernard Hermann: KANE Composer

Clark Gable: Movie star

Nelson Rockefeller: Businessman

J. Edgar Hoover: FBI Director

Charlie Chaplin: Movie star

SONGS USED IN RKO 281

"I'LL BE SEEING YOU"

"WHERE OR WHEN"

"SING, SING, SING"

"DISGUSTINGLY RICH"

Music by Richard Rodgers, Lyrics by Lorenz Hart
Copyright 1954 by Chappell and Co., Inc.
[Lyrics adapted by the author.]

"I CAN'T GET STARTED"

Music by Ira Gershwin, Lyrics by Vernon Duke
Copyright 1935 by Chappell and Co., Inc.

Q: "During the shooting of CITIZEN KANE, did you have the sensation of making such an important film?"

A: "I never doubted it for a single instant."

Interview with Orson Welles. 1966.

"Pleasure is worth what you can afford to pay for it."

William Randolph Hearst. 1924.

RKO 281 by John Logan

INT SAN SIMEON, ASSEMBLY ROOM NIGHT

Unreal silence as we see:

Charlie Chaplin smiling, an infectious and insinuating grin. Chaplin is part clown and part satyr, equally innocent and depraved.

Everywhere beyond him we see isolated images of the baroque splendor of San Simon glimmering through the darkness. We see swirling stairways and mammoth fireplaces and cavernous hallways leading to absolute darkness.

It is May 6, 1924 and Chaplin is doing a little magic show. Beside him stands MARION DAVIES.

Marion is a clock-stopping beauty of 27. She is a shimmering and lively presence. In a word that might have been coined for her, she has moxie.

The silence continues as Chaplin flourishes a handkerchief and passes it over Marion's face. He gives her a quick kiss behind the handkerchief. We see the spectators laughing. Chaplin sweeps the handkerchief away and he is now holding a bouquet of flowers before her face. Marion peeks through the flowers and winks.

Across the room, spread out on sofas and chairs, the audience applauds.

Chief among the spectators is The Chief, WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST.

Hearst is 60 years old. He is a fully commanding figure, towering in both height (six foot two) and personality. He is shaped rather like a pear and moves with a delicacy surprising for such a merciless man. Although the word ruthless does not begin to do justice to the press baron's animus, Hearst is endlessly polite and almost painfully soft-spoken.

We are still in silence as Hearst, the delighted with the magic trick, laughs and applauds quickly.

We hear our first sound: a match being struck.

We sweep past Hearst toward a flash of light in an ebony corner of the room, the burning match.

San Simeon fades to darkness as we focus on the new scene; it is the exact same moment on May 6, 1924, two thousand miles away:

A shadowy male figure lights a series of nine candles on a birthday cake. Beyond the cake we can see a bed.

On the bed lies a woman in her early forties. She is ashen and sickly. Dying.

The shadowy male figure finishes lighting the candles, blows out the match and disappears as the woman peers into the darkness.

WOMAN

Come into the light...

Come into the light.

A nine-year-old boy steps into the light.

She pulls him close and whispers:

WOMAN

Never stand in the shadows--

BOY

Mother...

WOMAN

You are made for the light, Orson.

Now you must blow out your candles. But you must always remember, the cake itself is nothing. The flame, the lights, that is where your future lies. You must have a dream. A great dream worthy of you.

The boy immediately spins to the cake and blows out the candles. A moment of darkness. He turns back to the bed. The woman and the bed are gone, faded into darkness.

The solemn young lad stares and stares into the darkness.

And then, magically, the faint glimmer of twinkling stars fill his huge dark eyes.

NEWSREEL

The flickering images of an old newsreel, circa 1940.

Under the MGM logo we see the title: BOY WONDER WOWS HOLLYWOOD!

The first image after the title is the imposing figure of ORSON WELLES, climbing down from an airplane and surveying the world at his feet.

Welles is 24 years old and somewhat handsome. Welles seems rather uncomfortable in his own body, as if it could not possibly contain his vast passions and appetites.

Orson Welles is man who tears his way through life with incendiary energy. He is at once inspiring and ferocious; visionary and coldly ambitious. He is part artist, part fraud and all showman.

A sonorous voice accompanies the newsreel. The voice is always grand, occasionally sardonic.

NEWSREEL VOICE

He came to the town of magic and dreams
a flashing star blazing through the firmament
of illusion. And he promised to devour the
world in a single gulp. He was 24 years old
and his name was George Orson Welles. Sound
the trumpets! Unfurl the banners, Hollywood!
The Boy Wonder has arrived!

Images of Welles as a baby and his early life fill the screen: Welles in a crib; as a pampered schoolboy; at dance class; drama club; dressed up for a magic show. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

He made his debut on the world stage in
Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the 6th of May,
1915. And on the 7th of May he spoke his
first words, and unlike other children who
say commonplace things like "momma" and
"poppa", he proclaimed "I am a genius!"

At three the genius was reciting Shakespeare
and at eight he had taken up cigars and
highballs and was learning magic from the
knee of the great Houdini.

Images of Welles' early theatrical career: the young man playing impossibly old parts; vaudeville magic shows; various regional theaters; endless tawdry rehearsal rooms.

Then images of Welles and John Houseman in New York: the great, bustling city; Welles at work with John Houseman on a script; Welles directing a play. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

So how could the magic of the stage not call to this adventurous lad? Unstoppable and resolute, the Boy Wonder journeyed into the world of the legit theater. After a peripatetic beginning he found himself at last in New York where he joined forces with theatrical producer John Houseman under the august auspices of the WPA Federal Theater.

An interview with John Houseman, who is in his 30's, thin-lipped and prim:

HOUSEMAN

Orson barreled in and took over. Orson's a real barreler.

Images of Welles directing the famous "Voodoo MACBETH": a cattle-call audition; Welles frustrated; Welles and his all black cast. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

And in the year of 1936 George Orson Welles struck with the lightning seemingly so predestined. He chose to direct a production of William Shakespeare's MACBETH. What's so unusual, you ask? Well, Young Master Welles elected to set the play on the island of Haiti -- with an entirely colored cast!

Images of the cast and production of "Voodoo MACBETH": Welles ranging up and down before his cast; perfecting a sword-fight; rejecting costume sketches; supervising set construction. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

Most had never acted before, and the Boy Wonder whipped them into Bard-worthy shape with the "energy" that had become his trademark.

An interview with a black cast member, backstage:

CAST MEMBER

He slapped us around a lot.

Images of the "Voodoo MACBETH" opening night sensation: cars pulling up outside the Lafayette Theater; the huge ORSON WELLES marquee; a crowd lining up around the block; newsreel clips of the performance; the audience going wild; standing ovations; Welles bowing and soaking it all up. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

And on the night of April 14, 1936, the Lafayette Theater in Harlem exploded with the primal jungle drums of the islands and the words of Shakespeare. And it was a sensation! The audience applauded for a solid hour after the opening night!

Images of New York, Welles, Houseman and radio: Welles directing a radio play with sweeping energy; supervising the elaborate sound effects; editing the script; at odds with Houseman. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

After founding the Mercury Players with Houseman, young Mr. Welles set his sights on the airwaves. He quickly became the sonorous voice of "The Shadow."

Newsreel footage of Welles at a standing radio microphone:

WELLES

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows...

Welles laughs his sinister Shadow laugh and we go to more images of radio and the dynamic Welles performing and directing as we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

With Lamont Cranston in one pocket and his own radio show, The Mercury Theater of the Air, in the other, our Boy Wonder filled the night with his resounding tones. He raced in an ambulance from studio to studio, the siren clearing the streets so he could play a Chinaman one hour and Robinson Crusoe the next. And on October 30th of 1938, he became what he felt destined to be: a household name.

What started out as a roguish Halloween prank became the most famous radio show in the history of the galaxy!

Images of the WAR OF THE WORLDS broadcast and panic: listeners huddling next to their radios; telephone switchboards lighting up; panicked farmers with shotguns; New Jersey State Motorcycle Troopers zooming down rural roads; cars clogging the highways. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS sent this nation spinning into a frenzy. Nine million listeners clasped their loved ones close and looked to the skies with horror. Thousands of listeners raced to their telephones to get confirmation of this "alien invasion." Unlucky listeners near the epicenter of the "invasion" -- rural New Jersey -- ran screaming into the night, sure a monstrous alien and a fiery death awaited them around every corner! The mischievous Boy Wonder had fooled us all!

Newsreel footage of a packed press conference with Welles the day following the broadcast:

WELLES

(contritely)

Of course ... of course ... if I had known the panic the broadcast was causing -- well I would have stopped! I never meant for any of this to happen and I feel just horrible!

Quick newsreel clips of Welles leaving the press conference with Houseman. We see them slip into a taxi. Inside the taxi we can just glimpse Welles exploding with laughter.

NEWSREEL VOICE

How long, oh how long could it possibly be before the sunny land of dreams tried to harness the combustible power of this showman, this impresario, this best of all possible Boy Wonders?!

Images of Welles posing and shaking hands with GEORGE SCHAEFER.

Schaefer is an intense, compact man in his early 50's. His nickname in Hollywood is "The Tiger" -- both for his admired tenacity and his feared temper. He is a moral and ethical man; John Adams in a Brooks Brothers suit.

As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

The winner in the Welles derby was George Schaefer, the head of RKO Pictures. With a contract unimaginable before The Days Of Orson, Mr. Schaefer captured the whirlwind, snared the beast, roped the tyrant!

Images of Welles and Schaefer: Welles signing his contract; smiling to Schaefer; Schaefer making a speech; Welles joking with reporters. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

Eyebrows raised and jaws dropped all over Hollywoodland when the terms of the deal that lured The Great Orson came forth: the Boy Wonder could produce, write, direct and star in his own projects with budgets up to \$500,000 a picture! He would have total control over the shooting of the picture and the finished product. The studio, well, they just paid the bills. Meanwhile, the insiders of filmland were skeptical.

An interview with a Hollywood Insider, who looks like a bookie:

HOLLYWOOD INSIDER

John Ford doesn't have a deal like that. Cecil B. DeMille doesn't have a deal like that. No one has a deal like that! If ya ask me, George Schaefer is just plain nuts.

Images of Welles arriving in Hollywood and touring the town: Welles climbing down from a plane; posing with Schaefer before of the RKO gates; touring the studio; leaning over an editing machine; laughing with female extras in the commissary; posing in front of his Brentwood home. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

So Cometh Orson! He toured the RKO studio and met with the biggest of the big! He charmed his way through the town from the Brown Derby to the Copacabana, from the Pacific Palisades to the Hollywood Hills! He moved into a palatial estate in exclusive Brentwood and did conjuring tricks for his next door neighbor, Shirley Temple herself!

Awkward RKO publicity film of Welles and 12-year-old Shirley Temple. Welles does a magic trick.

SHIRLEY TEMPLE

Why, you've made it disappear, Mr. Welles!

More images of Welles in Hollywood: Welles touring the town; visiting all the nightclubs and dancing with beautiful women; he is seen everywhere about the town. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

Yes, the Boy Wonder had arrived! He hit the nightspots and lounged by his pool and dreamed up his movies. He even charmed those rival maidens of Hollywood gossip, those well-coiffured chroniclers of the dream factory: Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons.

Shots of Welles with HEDDA HOPPER and LOUELLA PARSONS.

Hedda is a much-feared gossip columnist in her 50's. She is given to elaborate hats and villainous intrigue. Louella's younger, smarter rival, Hedda probably spends her spare time eating children.

Louella is a gorgon in her 60's. She is Margaret Dumont possessed by the devil and tanked up on gin. Her capricious cruelty is only matched by her fervent loyalty to all things Hearstian.

Then a snippet of an interview with Louella:

LOUELLA

Orson is the sweetest boy. We're both from the midwest, you know. He's just a local fella making good, ya follow?

More shots of Welles just after his arrival in Hollywood, blissfully touring the RKO facilities as:

NEWSREEL VOICE

So today, almost a year after his arrival in Hollywood, we leave the Boy Wonder still hard at work developing his much-anticipated first feature, preparing to dazzle us all again.

We're waiting, Orson!

Welles after his RKO tour, smiling mischievously, stands before a microphone:

WELLES

I'll tell you what, this is the best electric train set a boy ever had!

"The End" and newsreel credits.

The newsreel sputters to a stop in a screening room. A shaft of light shines on a large MGM logo on one wall. Another shaft of light illuminates the sitting figure of LOUIS B. MAYER.

corrosive. He is incomplete without the stub of a cigar clenched in his teeth.

Mank, also dressed in a tuxedo, is looking at himself in the bathroom mirror as he struggles with his bow tie. He occasionally glances in the mirror to Welles.

Title: JANUARY 3, 1940

MANK

I don't know what you expected with Joseph-fucking-Conrad for Chrissake. I mean this is Hollywood, pal.

WELLES

All right! Enough! I've heard this from Schaefer and RKO. I've heard it from everyone--

MANK

But you keep coming up with the same elitist crap -- HEART OF DARKNESS with a million dollar budget?! -- no one wants to see that.

WELLES

I don't believe that.

Welles shuffles the cards again dramatically and practices his trick as:

MANK

What are movies about, Orson?

WELLES

Forget it--

MANK

What are movies about?

WELLES

Telling stories.

MANK

Nope.

WELLES

Showing life.

MANK

Who the hell wants to see life?! People are sick to death of life! They want make-believe, pal. Fantasy. They want Tarzan and Jane, not Tristan and Isolde.

WELLES

I won't talk down to my audience--

MANK

Butts on seats. That's what movies are about. You got one job in Hollywood -- everyone has the same job, in fact -- putting the butts on the seats. You gotta sell 'em popcorn and Pepsi-cola. It's all about popcorn and Pepsi-cola.

WELLES

Not for me.

MANK

For everybody. And you can forget all that condescending theater/art/life baloney cause it don't play so well out in Iowa.

WELLES

I think you're wrong.

MANK

Then you better get ready to be the youngest never-was in Hollywood history.

WELLES

That's better than being the oldest has-been in Hollywood history.

MANK

You're a laugh-riot, kid.

Welles laughs and goes to Mank in the bathroom.

WELLES

Here, turn around.

Welles ties Mank's bow tie for him as:

WELLES

So, we've got to come up with our movie. Our biography.

MANK

Right--

WELLES

We find the man and then we dissect him--

MANK

Like a bug.

WELLES

But with compassion and insight--

MANK

(glancing at his watch)

Christ, we gotta go! The old man doesn't cotton to lateness.

Mank takes a quick swig from a flask of vodka, shoves it into his coat and scurries into the other room as Welles checks himself in the mirror.

A beat. Welles smiles, confident and resplendent.

WELLES

(into the mirror)

How do you do, Mr. Hearst? I'm Orson Welles.

INT

SAN SIMEON. HALLWAY

FOLLOWING

Welles and Mank walk through an impressive upstairs hallway of San Simeon. Quick glimpses of the astounding grandeur everywhere around them as:

MANK

How about Dillinger? We could do Dillinger.

WELLES

Can you really see me clutching a tommygun?

MANK

Maybe not.

WELLES

What about Howard Hughes?

MANK

I'm not fucking with Hughes. That shit-kicker would kill us dead, baby. Just like Jean Harlow.

WELLES

Howard Hughes killed Jean Harlow?

MANK

Sure. Dropped her out of his Lockheed over Utah.

They disappear down a long stairway.

INT SAN SIMEON, DINING HALL EVENING

An explosion of color and an immediate swirl of sound.

We are in the Grand Refectory -- the mammoth dining room -- at San Simeon. Five long tables are placed end to end. There are about fifty sumptuously dressed guests.

The place settings are ornate with two noticeable exceptions: paper napkins and bottle of ketchup for every diner.

Hearst and Marion preside, side by side, at the center table.

Marion is now 43 years old and in the years since our first quick glimpse of her, Marion's looks have settled and hardened. The ravages of alcohol have left their subtle marks on the edges and attitudes of her face. Still, though, she charms and captivates with almost effortless grace.

Hearst, now 76, is almost unchanged. Perhaps a certain nervousness and tension now occasionally sweep across his long, wrinkled face.

Around Hearst's feet sit a collection of his beloved dachshunds.

On the other side of the main table, and down a bit, sit Welles and Mank.

We sweep around the table, hearing bits of overlapping dialogue and finally settle on Marion and Hearst.

Marion is charming Carole Lombard and Clark Gable, who sit beside her. She tenderly rests one hand on Hearst's arm as she speaks. Marion speaks with an occasionally pronounced stutter.

MARION

And we would hear them scuttling around at night with their little red eyes and little yellow t-t-teeth and I'm just imagining plague lice jumpin' all over the damn place. So we set t-t-traps everywhere. And every morning we would find the t-t-traps sprung but no mice!

CAROLE LOMBARD

Houdini mice.

MARION

Just wait. So one night I notice Pops getting outta bed and sneaking away. And he's got this little p-p-paper bag with him, right? Middle of the night. So I figure the old man's really up to no good this time and I follow him. Well I'll be g-g-goddamned if he's not springing all the traps and leaving cheese for the rats!

Laughter.

MARION

You and that freak D-D-Disney, in love with the damn rats!

Laughter, even from Hearst.

HEARST

They really are sweet little things.

Meanwhile, across the table Welles is rapaciously devouring his dinner as:

WELLES

Sigmund Freud?

MANK

I don't wanna write about no goddamn Jew.

WELLES

Aren't you Jewish?

MANK

Your point?

WELLES

Listen, we could--

MANK

Kid, you just got your ass kicked on Joseph Conrad and now you're gonna go to Schaefer and tell him you wanna do the id and the superego? Stop being so goddamn smart.

Meanwhile, across the table:

CLARK GABLE

Mr. Hearst, there's one thing I don't follow. We have this great dinner and this great table. Why the paper napkins and ketchup?

HEARST

I find it humbling, Mr. Gable. Lest I should forget my roots.

MARION

Yeah, like you ever ate off a paper napkin in your whole goddamn life!

Hearst tuts at her language but laughs.

Meanwhile, across the table:

Mank surreptitiously pours some liquor from his flask into his glass as:

WELLES

(suddenly inspired)

Manolete?!

MANK

Who the hell's Manolete?

WELLES

The great Spanish bullfighter!

MANK

I don't wanna write about no spic.

WELLES

No, it's perfect! When in doubt, put on a cape! False noses and faux beards and flowing capes have been the life-blood of the actor's craft since the days of Irving and Booth. (He flourishes his napkin like a bullfighter's cape.) Imagine me in a glittering suit of lights on the dusky Andalusian plains--

MARION

Why Mr. Welles is attempting semaphore!

Welles smiles across the table.

WELLES

Bullfighting, Miss Davies!

MARION

And is dear Mank your b-b-bull?

WELLES

My factotum, ally and comrade-in-arms.

MANK
Writer, flunkie, pimp--

CAROLE LOMBARD
(wry)
You fight many bulls there in New York,
Orson?

WELLES
Ever met Walter Winchell?

Laughter.

WELLES
(expansively, warming into a story)
No, when I was but a tender lad--

CAROLE LOMBARD
Last week would this be?

Laughter. As Welles speaks the whole table gradually stops
eating and listens to his tale:

WELLES
My father and I made a tour of the grand
boulevards of antique Europe. And when we
were in Iberia I had the chance to face the
bulls. At the knee of the great Manolete I
took up the cape and sword -- (he uses his
napkin and knife to demonstrate) -- across
from me stood a mammoth bull reputed to have
gored a full seven men to a grisly demise!
So -- with Manolete shouting encouragement I
flourished ... I flourished again ... and the
bull charged! Across the golden dust it came,
thundering like the great minotaur of legend,
closer, ever closer, its calamitous hooves
pounding into the dirt, shaking the earth as I
held the crimson eye of the bull with my own,
defying it -- it was almost upon me and I
flourished one last time! -- the monster swept
past! -- (he spins his napkin in the air and his
knife is now gone, a magic trick) -- and my
sword was gone -- buried in the bloody eye of
the beast!

Applause and laughter from around the table. Then:

HEARST
(quietly)
You are evidently a man who knows a great deal
about bull.

Some nervous titters. A beat as Welles' smile fades and he stares at Hearst.

HEARST
Of all man's malignity -- of all his
sadism -- none is more depraved than
cruelty to animals.

Silence.

Mank gives Welles a desperate warning look to keep quiet.
Welles cannot resist speaking:

WELLES
In Spain the cruelty would be in denying
the beast a fighting end.

A beat as Hearst rivets Welles with a cold, bland stare.
Deafening silence around the table.

Then:

HEARST
Who are you, sir?

WELLES
My name is Orson Welles.

HEARST
Ah, the actor.

WELLES
And director.

HEARST
I see. And you are in California for
what reason?

WELLES
To make pictures.

HEARST
Which studio?

WELLES
RKO.

HEARST
A very small studio.

WELLES
It suits me.

HEARST

And what pictures have you made?

A beat.

WELLES

None.

A beat. Hearst smiles.

HEARST

Well, I wish you luck. It is a treacherous business.

WELLES

So I've been told.

HEARST

In Hollywood the fiercest bulls are the most brutally killed.

WELLES

I'll remember that.

HEARST

Do.

A tense, unresolved beat as they gaze at each other.

INT\EXT SAN SIMEON, BILLIARD ROOM FOLLOWING

Hearst is playing billiards with some of the guests. Welles and Mank are across the room. Welles cannot keep his eyes off Hearst, the press baron draws him in like a siren.

The harsh lights over the billiard table shine down on Hearst's head as he leans over to line up a shot -- a sudden Kane-like image.

Welles reaches for a cigar. Mank takes his arm and indicates he should stop, nodding his head in Hearst's direction.

WELLES

(quietly)

The man doesn't allow drinking or cigars?
This is monstrous.

Mank pulls Welles through French doors to an outdoor balcony as:

MANK

The old man has his own way of doing things.

WELLES

He's nothing but a hypocrite. He preaches morality every day in his sordid little papers for everyone else in the world but he lives openly with his mistress.

MANK

Buddy, when you own the largest publishing empire in the universe you can do whatever the hell you want. Think about it, pal. Every day one out of five Americans picks up a Hearst publication. 30 newspapers, a dozen magazines, a bunch of radio stations and the grand dragon of them all, Little Miss Louella Parsons. Tends to give you some of that ol' noblesse oblige.

Welles studies Hearst through the glass doors.

WELLES

Look at those hands. Those are the hands of an artist. A modern Caravaggio.

MANK

No, baby, those are the hands of a killer.

Inside, Hearst leans down and gives a treat to his favorite dachshund, Helen. He talks to her gently.

HEARST

There you are, honey. Aren't you a wonderful girl?

INT SAN SIMEON, LADIES LOUNGE FOLLOWING

Marion and Carole Lombard escape into the ornate ladies bathroom.

Marion immediately goes to a cabinet and retrieves a bottle of Scotch hidden under some towels.

She takes a swig and then hands the bottle to Carole Lombard. She drinks.

Marion lights a cigarette.

MARION

God, these parties are the worst.

CAROLE LOMBARD

You need to get outta here, Rapunzel.

MARION

That's why he has the parties, he says it's like bringing the world to me.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Why don't you come down to LA? Stay with us for a while.

MARION

With about twenty of his spies on my tail. No thanks.

Marion hands the cigarette to Carole Lombard.

A beat.

MARION

(somewhat ruefully)

It's not so bad here. After all, what girl doesn't want to live in a castle?

A beat.

MARION

Mr. Welles certainly is a caution.

CAROLE LOMBARD

(smiles)

Yeah, Orson's a real piece of work. But deep down, he's a good kid. Real deep down.

MARION

And attractive in a hammy sort of way.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Mm.

A beat. Carole Lombard hands the cigarette back to Marion.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Listen, you come down and stay with us for a few days. Just tell the old man that--

MARION

I can't.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Sure you can, just--

MARION

He needs me here.

A beat. Carole Lombard does not respond.

INT SAN SIMEON, BALLROOM FOLLOWING

In the cavernous ballroom, a dance band is playing "I'LL BE SEEING YOU".

The guests mingle and dance.

Welles and Mank wander as Welles takes in the impressive surroundings.

WELLES

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately
pleasure dome decree..."

How big is it, all told? The estate?

MANK

The whole joint is half the size of
Rhode Island.

WELLES

You're joking.

MANK

Nope.

WELLES

Jesus.

MANK

Yeah, it's the place God would have built,
if he'd had the money.

Carole Lombard and Marion return, rather giggly.

MARION

Mankie, Mankie d-d-dance with me!

MANK

You've been naughty, haven't you, honey?

MARION

Shit, can you smell it? You got any sen-sen?

MANK

Sorry.

MARION

Mr. Welles, you got any--? Oh fuck it.

She stumbles off in search of Hearst.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Meanwhile, Orson, I thought your bullfighting story was nifty. Let's cut a rug.

She pulls Welles to the dance floor.

Mank wanders away and takes another swig from his flask.

As Welles and Carole Lombard dance, Welles keeps an eye on Hearst and Marion who are dancing nearby.

CAROLE LOMBARD

So you ever gonna do a picture?

WELLES

Not you too!

CAROLE LOMBARD

(smiles)

It's gonna be fine, Orson. You're gonna do great.

WELLES

I wonder sometimes.

CAROLE LOMBARD

You're just scared.

WELLES

Am I?

CAROLE LOMBARD

Sure.

WELLES

And what am I scared of?

CAROLE LOMBARD

Of being found out. Of not being a genius.

WELLES

(smiles)

Oh, but haven't you heard? I'm the Boy Wonder. I've been a genius since the moment I was born.

CAROLE LOMBARD

We've known each other too long, Orson. Sling the bullshit elsewhere.

WELLES

Carole, you wound me! As if I could hope to pacify you with evasions of--

CAROLE LOMBARD

Don't insult me with your cute press quotes. Save it for Louella.

She stops dancing and looks at him firmly.

CAROLE LOMBARD

You make your mark, Orson.

Nearby Marion pulls away from Hearst sharply, drawing Welles' attention. He overhears:

MARION

Goddamn it. I gotta have some kinda life!

HEARST

There's no call for that language--

MARION

There certainly is! There certainly is!
Aw, to hell with you!

She storms off. Welles and Carole Lombard watch her go.

WELLES

That poor woman.

CAROLE LOMBARD

(sadly)

She knew what she was signing on for. After all, she took the money.

Welles watches as Hearst stands alone on the dance floor.

We hear the sound of a lion roaring in the distance...

INT SAN SIMEON, WELLES' SUITE NIGHT

Welles lies, fully clothed and smoking a cigar, on his bed.

Through the open balcony doors he can hear the eerie sound of lions roaring and elephants trumpeting in the night.

He stand and wanders to the balcony. Below him he can see bits and pieces of Hearst's private zoo in the moonlight: a lion pacing relentlessly back and forth; an alligator slipping into the water; a monkey slamming into the bars of its cage.

The disquieting sounds of the menagerie float through the midnight air.

Welles puts out his cigar and leaves his suite...

INT SAN SIMEON. HALLWAYS FOLLOWING

Welles roams the seemingly endless hallways of San Simeon. In the half-light they begin to resemble his own cinematic dream-palace, Xanadu.

He hears the ghostly echo of a song, "WHERE OR WHEN".

He curiously follows the sound, taking in the fabulous castle everywhere around him.

He passes by the door to the Assembly Room. Inside, shafts of light illuminate portions of huge, uncompleted jigsaw puzzles.

INT SAN SIMEON. BALLROOM FOLLOWING

"WHERE OR WHEN" is now clear.

Welles stands in the shadows of a balcony overlooking the great ballroom.

Below him a phonograph record spins lazily on a turntable standing of the floor of the deserted ballroom.

And Hearst and Marion are enjoying a quiet dance together, her head nestled on his shoulder.

Welles stares and stares at them. And slowly smiles.

We linger on Hearst and Marion as they dance...

EXT WELLES' HOUSE. POOL DAY

A sudden burst of blazing sunlight.

Welles, wrapped in a bathrobe, is pacing quickly around the perimeter of his backyard pool. He is puffing on a cigar and grunting to himself as he scribbles down notes.

Welles' butler, Raymond, an insidious looking fellow, brings Mank to the pool. Mank wears sunglasses and a battered fedora and looks decidedly hung-over.

RAYMOND

Mr. Mankiewicz...

Welles roars up to Mank:

WELLES

Mank! You scoundrel! What took you so long?!

MANK

(pained)

Orson, please ... it's too bright.

Welles takes Mank's fedora and flings it away.

WELLES

Sit down! Wait until you hear -- Raymond, bring us something to drink. Something morning-ish. Juice or some such.

Raymond mumbles something surly and strolls away.

WELLES

He's up to something, that one, I tell you. I think he kidnapped the Lindbergh baby. But all's well -- here you are, up with the birds for once, you vampire!

MANK

(settling into a deck chair)

Okay, boy wonder, what?

WELLES

Listen ... I've got it! It came to me like a thief in the night! Pure inspiration! Total magnificence!

MANK

Oh for Christ's sake--

WELLES

I know who we're going to get! The great American biography! A journey into the soul of the beast.

MANK

This better be good.

WELLES

What has been our ambition all along? To go into the blackest soul and find the light. The pulse of the man, the pulse of the country--

MANK

Okay, who?

WELLES

Image a man that has shaped his time. A titanic figure of limitless influence--

Raymond arrives with a tray of juice. He sets it down with a thud and strolls back to the house. Welles pours as:

WELLES

Think about influence and manipulation.
Think about empire. A man with an empire at his feet.

Mank pours vodka from a flask into his juice glass as:

WELLES

A man, like a baron, living in a palace, a glorious palace on a hill, and controlling the permutations of everyone beneath him. Fuedal.

MANK

(realizing)
Oh Christ...

WELLES

Image the possibilities as this man controls the public perception of the nation through his--

MANK

Oh Christ!

A beat as Welles stands in triumph before Mank.

WELLES

Yes.

MANK

(quietly)
Please don't say this.

WELLES

Mank--

MANK

Don't whisper it. Don't even think it.

WELLES

How long have we spent casting our minds about the world when the answer to our prayers was right here under our noses -- every single day in the newspapers and on the radio -- waiting for us in that ridiculous castle! Waiting for--!

MANK

Orson. Stop. Just stop--

Welles quickly sits in a deck chair next to Mank.

WELLES

Now remember he's a public figure who sought out that publicity -- and public figures are public property -- so legally he can't stop us from--

MANK

(laughs coldly)

Listen to you. You child! Men like him don't bother with things like legality. They don't have to. You know why, boy-o?

Power.

Power like you couldn't even begin to imagine.

Beat.

MANK

Howard Hughes, he would just kill us. Hearst, he would kill us and fuck everything we ever loved.

WELLES

We're doing Hearst.

A beat. Mank slowly removes his sunglasses and leans forward, dead serious.

MANK

You may think you know what you're talking about, kid, but believe me, you don't. You're talking about going into a battle you can never win on a battlefield so far above things like movies and Hollywood that Hearst won't even have to glance down when he crushes you. When he flicks you away with one finger. I'm talking about money and influence and evil beyond your capacity to imagine Hell.

MANK (CONT.)

You put one toe on that old spider's web and he will feel it and he will be on you and he will suck you dry so fast you won't even have time to scream.

A pause.

WELLES

So speaks the court jester.

MANK

Fuck you.

WELLES

I expected more from you.

MANK

Sorry to disappoint.

WELLES

(with building venom)

How does it feel, Mank? Going up to the palace and making all the lords and ladies laugh as you tell your little stories and beg for crumbs at the table? As you give them the latest studio gossip like some giggling pander? How does it feel being the ugly little monkey they keep to amuse themselves when they are in the mood--?

Mank leaps to his feet:

MANK

It feels just fine, you pompous fuck--

Welles blocks Mank's way. Mank retreats. Welles pursues him around the pool as:

WELLES

We're you once a man who wrote?! I remember that man. He was a brilliant writer who dazzled me time and time again with his wit and insight--

MANK

Don't do this.

WELLES

Where did he go? He hasn't had a screen credit in four years--

MANK

Don't do this.

WELLES

(savagely)

--Because he has been so furiously busy wasting himself. Amusing his keepers. Because he is a sycophant! Because he is a drunk and no one in Hollywood will hire him--

Mank spins on him:

MANK

And you're a FAKE -- YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A GODDAMN PHONY. What is all this "Orson Welles" bullshit?! This boy genius crap?! What the fuck did you ever CREATE?! You're just another goddamn ACTOR!

Welles shoves Mank violently. Mank goes sailing into the pool.

Mank splashes to the surface and stands for a shocked moment and then wades to the edge of the pool. Miraculously, and like the true drinker he is, Mank is still holding his glass of juice and vodka, now supplemented with pool water.

Welles stands above him, blocking his exit from the pool. From this low angle Welles suddenly looks startlingly Kane-like.

MANK

Let me out.

WELLES

Listen to me--

MANK

Fuck you--

WELLES

I am giving you the last chance you will ever have to be yourself again!

MANK

(suddenly)

I don't have it anymore, okay?!

WELLES

Bullshit--

MANK

I can't do it! I drink too much -- I drink all the fucking time and I don't have it anymore. All that is over for me--

WELLES

(roars)

NOT UNLESS I TELL YOU IT IS!

A tense pause.

Welles kneels by the edge of the pool.

Then:

WELLES

(deeply)

Look, Mank, this is our only chance...

I know this is the story. And now is the time. And I cannot do it without you. Everything in my life -- all the promise and potential and dreams -- have led to this moment right now. To you and me. Right here.

MANK

Why me? You could find a dozen writers better than me, you know it.

WELLES

Because you fight with me! Because you tell me the truth!

Because, as much as you hate it, you are an artist.

A pause. Welles gazes at Mank, imploring.

MANK

He'll destroy us.

WELLES

I don't care!

A long beat.

WELLES

Take my hand, Mank. And we'll dance one last time. We'll dance to the music of the angels. We'll make history you and I. We will ... astonish them all.

Welles leans close to him.

WELLES

(whispers)

And you will leave fear behind. And the angels will kiss you. And they will shower their bounty upon you. And you will be immortal.

Dance with me.

Silence as Welles offers his hand to Mank.

Mank takes a sip from his glass of juice, vodka and pool water.

MANK

Thank God you don't write dialogue.

And we leap into...

MONTAGE -- WELLES AND MANK BRAINSTORM

A rush of jazzy, percussive music as Welles and Mank develop their story.

We see images of feverish creativity. Welles raging, pleading, arguing, pushing. Mank responding, laughing, drinking, writing.

It is a passionate dance of creation.

Welles' tennis court:

Mank and Welles are dressed for tennis, but hard at work.

Mank waits for Welles to serve. Welles bounces the tennis ball, but is too preoccupied to serve as:

WELLES

The key -- the key -- the clue -- what does this man recall on his death bed? Okay, Mank, you're dying. What's the last image that comes to you? Right now.

MANK

This girl on a dock. White dress. Never said a word to her.

WELLES

Why her?

MANK

She was ... innocent.

WELLES

Okay, when was our man innocent? Was there a moment early on -- of innocence and bliss? There must have been.

MANK

You're dying -- what do you think?

Welles does not answer. He continues to bounce the tennis ball, deep in thought.

MANK

Something you lost maybe?

A beat.

MANK

Something you can never get back?

Mank watches as Welles lets the tennis ball drop. It bounces and rolls -- for a fleeting moment in Welles' mind it seems to become the rolling snow globe from KANE -- we hear the sound of sleigh bells and a child's happy voice...

Then more images, mad and outlandish and sedate and solemn; in the kitchen, at the racetrack, in a car, around the pool.

Welles and Mank act out scenes and argue. They leap from character to character fearlessly. Emoting and laughing and writing. We see the twin joy and terror of walking the tightrope, of sheer creation.

We see them having a ferocious argument. Mank storms out and slams the door. Welles stands alone in his living room, he catches a glimpse of his own reflection in a mirror and we hear:

MANK'S VOICE

Men like Hearst don't love...

Welles' living room:

Welles is slowly advancing on Mank.

Mank sits, watching Welles approach. Papers and sketches and gin bottles are discarded everywhere around them, a thick cloud of cigar smoke. It is very late at night and the room is in semi-darkness.

WELLES

All men love. But men like Hearst -- they don't bother with convention because--

MANK

They don't have to.

WELLES

He loves in his own way. On his conditions.
Because those are the only conditions he has
ever known.

Welles is now standing over Mank, a dark figure in
silhouette. Mank soaks in this somewhat ominous image.

More music and images: eating and working; swimming and
working; playing and working simultaneously.

Then:

Beach:

Night. We see them walking along a deserted beach. Welles is
walking in the surf, his trousers rolled.

WELLES

(quietly)

Hearst looks down at the world at his feet.
Everything has always been beneath him.

MANK

And what does he see?

WELLES

The people. When they pay him homage, he
adores them. But when they have the ...
audacity to question him. To doubt him.
Then he despises them. He destroys them.

MANK

And when he looks up? What does he dream
about?

Welles stops and looks up. A thousand stars twinkle above
him. They are reflected in his eyes.

A long pause as he does not answer Mank.

Then:

MANK

I'm ready to write it, Orson.

Welles turns to him.

WELLES

You're sure?

MANK

Yeah.

Mank gazes at Welles.

MANK

I know him.

The clatter of an old typewriter is heard...

EXT/INT BUNGALOW, VICTORVILLE DAY

Victorville is a rural desert community in San Bernadino County about 90 miles from LA.

Mank and John Houseman are ensconced in a bungalow at Campbell's Guest Ranch, writing the movie.

Mank, smoking a cigar, paces around the cacti and shrubs in the backyard reciting to their secretary. She pounds away on a typewriter as he orates. A huge stack of papers lies neatly by her typewriter. This is clearly the longest screenplay in the history of the world.

MANK

Leland: "You talk about the people as if you owned them. As though they belonged to you. But you don't really care about anything except you. You just want to persuade people that you love them so much that they ought to love you back."

Craig: "A toast then, Jedediah, to all those people who didn't vote for me today and to love on my own terms. Those are the only terms anybody ever knows..."

We float into the house as we continue to hear Mank's recitation...

Inside, John Houseman is busy rifling through Mank's room as he listens:

MANK (CONT.)

"...because in the end a man looks into the mirror and sees one face looking back, not humanity -- not "the people" -- one face. And he's got to be able to look at that one face and know he was true."

Houseman uncovers a bottle of gin hidden under Mank's bed. He pours the bottle down a bathroom drain as he calls out the window:

JOHN HOUSEMAN

That's too long. Tighten it up.

Outside, Mank snarls and then revises:

MANK

You're killin' me here, Housey. Okay, make that, Craig: "A toast, Jedediah, to love on my own terms. Those are the only terms anybody ever knows, his own."

Houseman emerges from the house.

JOHN HOUSEMAN

Telegram from The Christ Child.

He tears open the telegram and reads:

JOHN HOUSEMAN

"Schaefer loves the idea. Stop. Start writing. Stop. Stop drinking. Stop. Did you work in the jigsaw puzzles. Question mark. Don't stop. Stop. Love you madly, Orson."

Beat.

MANK

That man makes my brain hurt.

We fade to a beautiful drawing of a dark room and men gathered around a table, perhaps it is a perfect matte painting from KANE. Real or illusion? The image turns into...

INT SAN SIMEON, CONFERENCE ROOM DAY

Hearst sits at the head of an immense conference table. Around the table sit a collection of his editors and minions.

Hearst occasionally sips a glass of water, carefully returning the glass to a coaster after each sip.

The drapes are drawn and the room is swathed in semi-darkness. Dark wood paneling adds to the somber, moribund tone.

JOE WILLICOMBE, Hearst's private secretary, sits at his side taking notes. Willicombe is a serious and sensitive man in his 60's. He is unquestioningly loyal to the old man.

Hearst is currently glowering at Mr. Madden, 50's, an editor from the Hearst Cleveland American. Madden is somewhat nervously in the presence of the press baron.

HEARST

I will not allow a pack of malcontent machinists to close the Cleveland American. Or any Hearst paper.

MADDEN

They walked away from the bargaining table, sir. If we don't make some concession to--

HEARST

(sharply)

Sir, we do not concede, do you understand me?

A pause.

HEARST

The unions were at first a minor annoyance but now they have become a threat. When a mosquito is sucking too much of your blood what do you do, Mr. Madden?

MADDEN

Sir?

HEARST

What do you do?

MADDEN

You crush it.

HEARST

You crush it.

A long beat.

HEARST

We will break the spine of this union and we will meet any further labor challenges or infiltration with steel, sir. We will immediately fire every union member and then they will turn to their unions to feed them and the unions won't be able to. And then they will starve. And if they picket the plant

HEARST (CONT.)

we will push them aside. And if they interfere with the proper running of my newspaper we will crush them.

A pause.

MADDEN

(very nervously)

Sir, um, since the Wagner Act we can't really stop them from organizing. The National Labor Relations Board is getting pretty--

HEARST

That is of no concern.

MADDEN

I just mean the climate in Washington is with them. Roosevelt's crazy for the unions and I don't know if we can--

HEARST

Presidents come and go, Mr. Madden. They come and go.

A long pause, the titanic power of the man sinking in.

MADDEN

Yes, sir.

HEARST

Very well. See to it. And mind, sir, steel.

What's next on the agenda, Mr. Willicombe?

Hearst takes a sip of water.

INT SOUND STAGE, RKO LOT DAY

Welles is standing in the middle of an enormous sound stage, empty but for a table with some elaborate set models. He is slowly walking around the models, studying them, imagining his movie.

The sound stage door opens and a man enters, carrying a small black bag. He is cinematographer GREGG TOLAND.

Toland is a quiet, efficient and slim man of 36. He is brilliant and fearless.

Toland walks to Welles and, without a word, pulls an Oscar statue out of the bag and sets it down in the middle of one of the set models. He looks up at Welles as we hear:

WELLES' VOICE

And Gregg Toland plunks down his Oscar for WUTHERING HEIGHTS and says, "Mr. Welles, I want to shoot your picture..."

INT THE BROWN DERBY DAY\NIGHT

The chic Brown Derby restaurant is the unquestioned palace of Hollywood celebrities. The smug big-wigs and desperate hangers-on circulate and score points in the Great Game of Movie Gossip.

In one corner booth sits Hedda Hopper, phoning in the latest salacious gossip to her newspaper. In the other corner booth Louella Parsons does the same. They occasionally glance back and forth at each other like ravenous hyenas eyeing the last bit of carrion.

Welles circulates between them. In a scene reminiscent of the famous CITIZEN KANE breakfast table scene with Kane and Emily, we shoot back and forth as Welles applies his considerable charm to both women.

Welles is dressed differently with each of them; breakfast with Hedda and dinner with Louella.

With Hedda, morning:

WELLES (CONT.)

... And I said, "Mr. Toland, you are the finest cinematographer in Hollywood, why would you desire to work with a stumbling neophyte?"

With Louella, night:

WELLES

And he replied, "Mr. Welles, the only way to learn anything new is to work with someone who doesn't know a damn thing."

Louella screeches.

LOUELLA

(scribbling on a pad)
Priceless!

With Hedda, morning:

WELLES

Hedda, this movie is going to look like no other picture ever made.

With Louella, night:

WELLES

To me it's a question of truth and illusion. Don't you get tired of the errant falsity in motion pictures?

LOUELLA

Huh?

WELLES

What we are going to do is shoot life -- in all it's joyous complexity.

He takes out a coin and begins a magic trick.

WELLES

Consider this quarter, my dear. You can touch it and feel it and were you to lean forward you could even smell it. Why is it that in the movies a simple bit of reality -- a quarter, a room, a man--

With Hedda, morning:

WELLES

Becomes nothing but a lie? A trick. An illusion.

He makes the quarter completely disappear.

Hedda is charmed.

WELLES

I will show the reality behind the trick.

He makes the quarter appear again and shows the guts of the trick.

WELLES

I will use the illusions of Hollywood to show ... the truth.

HEDDA

What does truth have to do with movies?

With Louella, night:

LOUELLA

(confused)

So, what, it went into your other hand?

With Hedda, morning:

WELLES

And so the dreamer awakens into the realms of reality. He has been given a rendition of the truth. He has been treated with respect.

HEDDA

Orson, that's all terribly interesting but what's all this about you and Dolores Del Rio? Do I hear love birds a'singin'?

Welles sighs.

With Louella, night:

LOUELLA

Now, Orson, you know I'm just dyin' to see your picture and I know it's gonna be boffo, but you're writing about a publisher, right?

WELLES

We're using--

LOUELLA

You're not doin' Hearst, are you?

WELLES

Good God no! The character is a delicious amalgamation of various press barons from Pulitzer to McCormick to--

LOUELLA

A delicious amalgamation, is it?

He leans forward to light her cigarette as:

WELLES

That's right. A symphony of those vaunted and valued tellers-of-truth. Those heroic minutemen standing sentry on our liberties.

LOUELLA

(scribbling madly)

That's great. Could ya say that again?

EXT BUNGALOW, VICTORVILLE DAY

Mank and Houseman watch nervously as Welles reads the last page of their massive screenplay.

The script, almost half a foot high, is piled on a table next to Welles.

He sets down the last page and looks at Mank. A beat.

WELLES

It's 350 pages long.

MANK

Yeah, but the margins are real wide.

WELLES

It is 350 pages of ... ABSOLUTE
INSPIRATION!!

He leaps up and embraces Mank.

WELLES

Housey, get us a drink.

Houseman glances at Welles, surprised, but dutifully scampers inside.

WELLES

I told you you could do this! How could you have ever doubted me? You must never doubt me again! If I tell you that you are a genius then you are a genius!

Mank laughs.

MANK

It's good, huh?

WELLES

Good?! Good?! Words fail you at last! It's terrific! Now I'll have to do some shaping, of course, and some of the scenes aren't exactly ... exactly ...

MANK

What?

WELLES

Short enough. But this is a grand start! And I think we need to change the name.

MANK

The title?

WELLES

No, AMERICAN is a blessed title directly sent from God's soul to your mind. We shall never change that! I mean the name of the publisher. Charles Foster Craig doesn't have the knives-out poetry I need. I was thinking about "Kane" -- you like that?

MANK

Cain -- like the Bible guy?

WELLES

K-A-N-E. One strong syllable. Kane!

MANK

(weakly)

Craig is one syllable.

WELLES

But it's not a great syllable!

Houseman returns with a tray of drinks. Welles hands glasses all around as:

MANK

I -- um -- I don't know if I should. I ain't been drinking since I started on this--

WELLES

(toasting)

To my invaluable comrade! Drink up!

Mank is stunned.

Welles smiles and drinks.

INT CAR, DESERT ROADS DAY

Welles sits in the back of his limo as his chauffeur speeds him back to Los Angeles.

He goes through the script with a fervent intensity. He crosses out huge sections and tosses away entire pages. The floor around his feet is littered with discarded pages.

EXT VICTORVILLE EVENING

Mank sits drinking heavily as the sun sets in the distance.

Houseman is busy packing in the house behind him.

Houseman notices Mank and goes to him.

They stare at the crimson of the setting sun for a moment.

MANK
I'm out, aren't I?

HOUSEMAN
Welcome to the world of Orson Welles.

EXT CLEVELAND AMERICAN BUILDING DAY

It is raining in Cleveland.

Outside the large grey edifice of the Hearst Cleveland American a union action is in progress. Picketers march back and forth carrying signs decrying unfair labor practices and demonizing Hearst. A union organizer drones into a megaphone.

From his window high in the building Editor Madden, who we met earlier with Hearst, watches as several large trucks rumble up to the front gates.

The picketers slam the trucks with their signs and batter them with bricks. A windshield shatters. The trucks are forced to stop. Scab workers leap from the trucks with baseball bats and a violent melee ensues.

The violence escalates as the rain continues to pour down -- Cleveland cops and Hearst goons leap into the battle -- more Hearst trucks arrive--

Several union members and strikers fall -- wounded or dead. Bloody.

INT MADDEN'S OFFICE FOLLOWING

Above, Editor Madden turns away from the window in disgust.

He pulls off his glasses and rubs his eyes as we hear the gruesome sounds of the mayhem below.

The sounds of the battle continue into and gradually fade during...

INT MANK'S CAR NIGHT

Late at night. Mank is sitting in his car, drinking from his flask and listening to period jazz music from the car radio.

He is parked outside Welles' house, waiting and seething and very drunk.

He sees Welles pulling into his driveway and climbing out of his car. Mank takes a final swig and then bolts after him, carrying a script...

EXT WELLES' HOUSE FOLLOWING

Mank roars unsteadily up to Welles:

MANK
YOU FUCK! YOU SELFISH FUCK!

Mank flings the script in Welles' face. Welles recoils:

WELLES
Jesus Christ--!

MANK
YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME -- THIS WAS OUR
STORY, REMEMBER? -- YOU AND ME AND GODDAMN
EVERYONE ELSE -- REMEMBER THAT?!

Mank snatches up the script and thrusts it in Welles' face:

MANK
Pal from the studio sent me this -- you see
that?! What does it say?! WHAT DOES IT SAY,
ORSON?!

Welles bats the script away:

WELLES
Get away from me--

Mank pushes the title page of the script toward Welles as:

MANK
It says AMERICAN by Orson Welles. YOU TOOK MY
NAME OFF THE FUCKING SCRIPT!

WELLES
It's obviously a mistake, Mank! Some steno
girl made a mistake, alright?!

MANK
You can't do this to me--!

Welles spins on him:

WELLES

I fucking well can! I own your script and I can do anything I goddamn want. And don't forget for one minute that I took your 350 pages of drunken rambling and I made a movie out of them -- and now I've got to shoot the bastard. So thank you very much, I have all I need. And you can stop calling me.

He goes into his house and slams the door.

Mank leans against the door in stunned exhaustion. Then he slides down the door and sits leaning against it.

MANK

(quietly)

I hope you choke on it. I hope it kills you.

Inside the darkened house, Welles is leaning against the front door. Silent.

INT SAN SIMEON. ASSEMBLY ROOM NIGHT

Marion is valiantly trying to piece together a huge jigsaw puzzle.

Hearst enters and goes to her. He puts his hand gently on her shoulder.

MARION

This is supposed ta be Siam or some such.
Some kinda lousy B-B-Balinese temple.
This look like a temple to you? I can't
see it myself--

HEARST

(quietly)

Darling, I talked to Millicent.

Marion stops working at the puzzle. She does not look up.

Beat.

HEARST

She said no.

A pause. Then:

Marion slowly reaches out for the puzzle and delicately place a piece in the proper position.

MARION

There. That's right.

HEARST

She's a Catholic. She says it would put her soul in peril. Divorce is a very serious sin, apparently.

MARION

(not looking up)

Nuts. She only cares about the money. She thinks I'll make you cut her out of the w-w-w-w... (she clenches her fists) ... will.

A long, difficult pause.

HEARST

I'm so sorry.

Marion slowly stands and walks to a liquor cabinet and pours a stiff drink.

Hearst watches sadly, but doesn't say a word.

INT SCHAEFER'S OFFICE, RKO LOT DAY

Welles paces before Schaefer's massive desk with typical combustible energy. Behind the desk, huge picture windows show the bustling activities of the RKO lot.

WELLES

It's an awful title, of course, but I can't think of anything better. I came up with A SEA OF UPTURNED FACES -- which has a nice, grand ring to it -- and someone suggested JOHN CITIZEN, USA but that strikes me as a bit Warner Brothers. Or, God forbid, Capraesque. I suppose AMERICAN will do for now but--

SCHAEFER

CITIZEN KANE.

WELLES

Pardon?

SCHAEFER

CITIZEN KANE. There's your title.

Welles muses.

WELLES

A "Z" and a "K" in the title. That would draw the eye. For the poster. I like that. THE PRISONER OF ZENDA had a "Z" and a "P" and that worked--

SCHAEFER

Now look, Orson, let's not get ahead of ourselves. The budget projections on this--

WELLES

(theatrically)

I know, I know! But what more can you expect of me?! I cut the whole Rome sequence and reduced everywhere I could! I have pared this story down to the marrow to save money but to cut more would be to--!

SCHAEFER

Listen, get off your horse with me. You know I've stuck by you since the beginning of time it seems like, while the stockholders in New York were ready to cut and run and everyone else in Hollywood was set to toss me in a rubber room. But your contract stipulates a max budget of 500 thousand. This one's gonna come in at 750 thousand. What do we do about that?

WELLES

You spent a million on GUNGA DIN.

SCHAEFER

Yeah, and GUNGA DIN had Cary Grant and Doug Fairbanks. That's a little more box office magic than you and Joe Cotton.

A beat.

SCHAEFER

Now don't have a fit -- but I want you to think again about doing WAR OF THE WORLDS--

WELLES

Jesus--

SCHAEFER

Do WAR OF THE WORLDS as a feature and everyone's happy. You make some money and New York's happy and you have a track record and then we'll move on to KANE.

WELLES

Please don't ask me to do this.

SCHAEFER

It's the safe bet, Orson. There's nothing wrong with that.

A long pause as Welles leans against a wall, his head down. He does not look at Schaefer as:

WELLES

(simply)

I can speak very well, you know. I always could. I can talk and charm my way into the coldest heart. I could spin a web of words to enchant you right now, and you would be enchanted. I have that ... power.

But I don't want to do that.

I want you to let me make this movie because I need to make it. And I don't really know why. Afterwards there'll be all the time in the world to make money and sell popcorn. And I'll do that for you. For RKO and New York. But for now ... please let me tell this story.

A pause. Welles finally looks at Schaefer:

WELLES

It's your decision, George. If you look into my eyes right now and say, go make WAR OF THE WORLDS, I will. I'll make it. And, yes, it'll make you money.

And I honestly can't think of a reason in the world why you should let me do KANE other than that you should.

A long pause as Schaefer studies Welles. Then:

SCHAEFER

If it'll get you the hell out of my office, go ahead and make the picture.

Welles drops his head, too moved to speak.

Then he nods to Schaefer and begins to leave.

SCHAEFER

Say thank you, Orson. For the title.

WELLES

Thank you.

He goes. Schaefer smiles and shakes his head.

EXT SAN SIMEON. PRIVATE ZOO DAY

Hearst is taking a pleasant walk around his private zoo. A few of his dachshunds accompany him.

He stops before the giraffe enclosure and peers in. He is studying a particular giraffe as Joe Willicombe leads Editor Madden to Hearst.

WILLICOMBE

Sir, Mr. Madden...

HEARST

Thank you, Mr. Willicombe. And would you please tell Dr. Powers that Donna is looking a bit blue today. Ask him to take a look.

WILLICOMBE

Yes, sir.

He goes.

HEARST

Mr. Madden, you have news for me?

MADDEN

The situation is resolved.

HEARST

Very good.

MADDEN

But it was very ... difficult, sir. I--

HEARST

The details are of no concern. My newspaper is operating. Well done.

MADDEN

A striker was killed.

HEARST

Mm.

MADDEN

(with difficulty)
He was beaten to death.

HEARST

This will be a warning to the other unions, will it not?

MADDEN

(deeply)

I don't know, sir, I only know I can't -- I can't do this -- I have a wife and four children and how can I come home every night knowing -- what I did?

HEARST

Don't become sentimental, sir, it doesn't suit you.

Madden looks at him, amazed.

HEARST

Does that giraffe look a bit down in the mouth to you?

MADDEN

A man died in Cleveland!

HEARST

(calmly)

Yes, and the workers in Pittsburgh and Houston and New York know that. We have accomplished our purpose. Again, well done.

MADDEN

You can find another goddamn executioner, I quit.

HEARST

Please don't use that language with me.

MADDEN

I watched from my window as they beat them down like dogs--!

HEARST

You are becoming apoplectic.

MADDEN

There was blood all over your building! Doesn't that bother you at all? There was blood all over your name on your building!

HEARST

Well, I hope you cleaned it off.

Madden is stunned.

Then:

MADDEN

Go to hell.

HEARST

Oh, I assure you, I shall.

A beat as Madden stares at him.

Then Madden walks away.

Hearst returns to gazing at his giraffe.

INT RKO SOUND STAGE DAY

Absolute silence.

The cast and crew of CITIZEN KANE are gathered around Welles.

It is the first day of shooting.

Title: JULY 30, 1940.

Welles looks at them firmly and then speaks.

WELLES

We are going to break every rule in motion picture history. We are going to shatter the hallowed busts of Griffith and DeMille and Ford. We are going to show the world a new way of seeing. Together we will blaze a trail. Together we will throw away all the maps and we will become joyfully lost in the wilderness. And the future cartographers of Hollywood will forever chart our course. Following our lead.

And do you know why we're going to do this?

Because it's going to be fun.

He slowly smiles.

Benny Goodman's immortal "SING, SING, SING" explodes and we are into:

MONTAGE -- THE MAKING OF CITIZEN KANE

A camera crane sweeps dramatically to the ceiling of the sound stage and brilliant white lights flash on.

A film clapper snaps: CITIZEN KANE. RKO PRODUCTION 281.
DIRECTOR: ORSON WELLES.

And we see Welles racing heroically into making his first movie.

He tears through scenes and actors. He speeds from the set to the camera. He shifts lights and the camera and tiny prop pieces. He bullies and screams and pleads and seduces. Like an obsessed artistic tornado he is seemingly everywhere at once.

It is very important in this sequence that we see the pressure building ... building ... building ... on Welles.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

On the Xanadu stairway set:

Welles behind the camera, filming actor Paul Stewart.

PAUL STEWART

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES

Again.

A film clapper: take 162.

PAUL STEWART

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES

Again.

A film clapper: take 163.

PAUL STEWART

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES

Again.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

In a corner of the sound stage:

Welles, in full Kane makeup, studies a miniature model of the Kane Campaign Headquarters set through a tiny periscope

with cinematographer Gregg Toland.

WELLES

It needs a ceiling, Gregg. Real rooms have real ceilings.

GREGG TOLAND

You want a ceiling on this one too?

WELLES

You bet.

GREGG TOLAND

Gonna be tough.

WELLES

(smiles)

No, it's gonna be impossible. That's why we're doing it.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

On the Xanadu Great Hall set:

Welles is setting up one of the Susan Alexander jigsaw scenes with Toland when he notices George Schaefer and some RKO executives entering the sound stage. Welles immediately whistles.

WELLES

Baseball!

The cast and crew divide into teams and begin a game of baseball on the Xanadu set. Welles, in full old Kane regalia, pitches.

Schaefer, not amused, watches for a moment. Then he shakes his head and leaves the sound stage with the rest of the execs.

WELLES

Okay, back to work.

The baseball game immediately breaks up and Welles returns to work.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

Back on the Xanadu stairway set:

Poor Paul Stewart, now at his wit's ends, continues:

PAUL STEWART

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES

Again.

The film clapper: take 212.

PAUL STEWART

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES

Again.

Paul Stewart screams and collapses.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

On the Atlantic City nightclub set:

Welles watches as the camera crane attempts the dizzying and difficult maneuver from the skylight at the top of the set down to Dorothy Commingore as Susan Alexander below. The camera crane goes out of control and crashes through some light fixtures and swings crazily down toward Dorothy Commingore. She yelps and leaps away as the camera barrels through the table and smashes to the floor.

Welles stands next to Toland.

A beat.

WELLES

Well, that didn't really work.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

Back on the Xanadu stairway set:

Paul Stewart, dazed and shattered, is listening intently. Welles stands with his arms around Stewart, embracing him, whispering into his ear.

WELLES

It is the most important line of the picture. You will weave the magic of Rosebud in a single word -- you will say the word in such a way as to impart to us the mystery of it. It is a divine and sinister mystery worthy only of your talent. In this one word the movie soars or falls. Once more, I beg you.

Stewart nods.

The film clapper: take 278.

The cameraman leans into the viewfinder. We see his view of the shot through the lens then:

We see Welles watching the scene, in black and white, on an old editing moviola.

On the moviola we see Paul Stewart taking a deep breath and then, magnificently:

PAUL STEWART

(On moviola)

"Rosebud? I'll tell you about Rosebud."

WELLES' VOICE

(On moviola)

Print.

On the moviola we see Stewart laugh hysterically and dance away.

In the editing room, Welles shakes his head.

WELLES

Actors.

"SING, SING, SING" continues...

On the Campaign Headquarters set:

Welles and Toland lie on the floor of the Campaign Headquarters set and gaze up through viewfinders. They squirm about on the floor and laugh to one another about their newest outlandish idea.

Toland notices something in the rafters high above the set. A redheaded grip.

TOLAND

Orson, you see that grip up there? The redhead. I've seen him before. He's an RKO spy. Reports right back to New York.

Welles slowly stands and THUNDERS:

WELLES

STOP! EVERYBODY STOP!

All the flurried activity on the sound stage immediately stops.

Every eye turns, terrified, to Welles.

Welles glares at the redheaded grip.

WELLES
YOU! COME DOWN HERE!

The grip slowly climbs down from the rafters. Welles rivets him every step of the way.

The grip stops before Welles.

GRIP
Mr. Welles...?

A tense beat and then Welles fiercely and purposefully spits in the grip's face.

The grip recoils, stunned.

WELLES
GET OUT!

Welles returns to Toland as the grip slinks off.

"SING, SING, SING" continues as:

We see the magnificent film emerging. Welles watching scenes in a screening room, his feet up, exhausted...

We see rushes of Welles going through scenes with Dorothy Commingore as Susan Alexander. He is relentless with her off camera, driving her to the harridan outbursts he wants just before he steps into the shot...

We see the crew observing, with great amusement, Welles' stumbling attempts to learn the "Charlie Kane" dance...

We see Toland shifting lights to achieve deep-focus cross-fades. Welles rages as the difficult process eats up time...

And we see Welles growing increasingly manic. The long hours and the pressure are clearly taking a toll...

"SING, SING, SING" finally fades at...

On a Xanadu set:

Filming a scene. Welles, in old-Kane makeup, is sitting with Dorothy Commingore as Susan Alexander. He is curiously distracted. She is pouring tea in the scene:

DOROTHY COMMINGORE

"Charlie, you sure got the funniest ways of looking at things."

Welles does not respond. He breaks character.

WELLES

No -- no -- I'll pour the tea. Sorry.
I should pour the tea. Let's try that again.

Toland stands behind the camera and watches Welles. There is obviously something wrong.

WELLES

Okay, here we go... Set. Action.

Welles pops into character and pours the tea in the scene as:

DOROTHY COMMINGORE

"Charlie, you sure got the funniest ways of looking at things."

Welles stops, breaks character again:

WELLES

No -- that's not right...

He clears his throat, and glances at the enormous crew, all staring back at him expectantly.

WELLES

Um... ah ... yes -- you should definitely pour the tea. Okay, again. Sorry.... Set. Action.

They start the scene again. She pours the tea.

DOROTHY COMMINGORE

"Charlie, you sure got the funniest ways of looking at things."

A pause as she waits for his reply in the scene.

He sits, frozen.

TOLAND
Orson, you wanna take five?

WELLES
Yes. Five. Good.

He quickly walks off the set as he nervously pulls at his tie, tearing it off.

Toland follows.

TOLAND
What's up?

WELLES
Nothing -- I --

TOLAND
Orson?

They have reached a secluded corner of the sound stage.

WELLES
(desperately)
Jesus Christ, I can't see it. I don't know what the hell I'm doing!

TOLAND
You're just beat--

WELLES
(panicked)
I don't know what I was thinking! I can't do this -- I'm blind -- I don't know what I'm doing here and everyone is looking at me and the clock is ticking and the studio is breathing down my neck and I don't know who should pour the tea!

TOLAND
Why don't we call it a day?

WELLES
Yeah, yeah, do that.

He wanders off. Toland watches him go.

INT. WELLES' HOUSE DAY

Welles is standing, absolutely lost, in the middle of his living room. He is still in his old-Kane makeup which is just beginning to peel off his face.

We hear hot jaz music...

INT JAZZ CLUB NIGHT

Toland is pursuing Mank through a crowded black jazz club.

TOLAND
Herman, just listen to me--

MANK
No offense, Gregg. But go to hell.

TOLAND
He needs you.

MANK
I don't care.

TOLAND
He's cracking up, I swear to God.

MANK
(stopping)
He cut me out, okay?! He took my name off
the script. Let him rot.

Toland quickly pulls a folded script from his jacket. He
hands it to Mank. Mank looks at it as:

TOLAND
That was a steno mistake. This is the
shooting script we're using every day.

Sure enough, the title page of the script reads: CITIZEN
KANE by Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles.

Mank hands the script back to Toland.

MANK
No dice.

TOLAND
Just -- just ... will you come with me and
see some of the dailies. Will you just do
that? I mean you've got to be curious! I
swear, he'll never know.

INT SCREENING ROOM DAY

Mank is watching some of the famous breakfast table scene
from CITIZEN KANE.

'And he is dazzled.

His eyes grow wide and his face is bathed in blue light as he watches.

The sequence ends and lights come up around the screening room.

Toland sits near Mank.

Welles, who has also been watching, stands in a doorway behind him.

WELLES

We did that, Mank.

Mank, surprised, turns to him.

Toland quickly vacates the screening room. The projectionist also takes his opportunity to scurry away.

A long beat.

MANK

So you've lost it? Don't know who should pour the tea.

WELLES

Yeah.

Mank stands and looks at Welles.

A beat.

MANK

Orson ... just pour the goddamn tea.

WELLES

Okay.

A beat.

MANK

I been thinking about the beach scene. You done that yet?

WELLES

No.

MANK

Good -- cause I got some ideas.

WELLES

Welcome back.

MANK

Fuck you. I was thinking that we're starting the scene too late, if we don't show Susan watching Kane then we're not building the right tension into...

Welles slowly smiles as Gene Krupa's unmistakable percussion in "SING, SING, SING" eclipses Mank's voice...

And we see Welles everywhere, more energized than ever: perilous on a high crane; stuck in a cramped corner behind the camera; doing magic tricks for the cast; sleeping as makeup is applied to his face...

Mank is always near Welles: supporting; challenging; amusing; inspiring...

We see Welles strutting, raging, boasting, dancing. And again towering.

INT

SOUND STAGE, RKO

NIGHT

We are on the massive Kane Campaign Headquarters set. Welles and Toland are preparing for the seminal Kane/Leland confrontation scene after Kane loses the election.

"SING, SING, SING" continues.

Joseph Cotton stands to one side, waiting in makeup and costume, with Mank. Welles, also in full costume and makeup, again squirms around on the floor with Toland. They are looking up through viewfinders.

WELLES

It's not low enough. This is the scene. We have to look up at these two man as pillars soaring to the sky. As towering virtues in combat--

TOLAND

Orson, we can't get the camera any lower.

Welles thinks for a moment and then bolts up. Toland watches, mystified, as Welles races to a sound stage fire station and grabs a fire axe. Welles storms back to the set and raises the axe high. Toland quickly rolls away. And

Welles slams the axe into the wooden floor of the set. He continues to hack at the floor.

WELLES

Come on, Gregg! We'll tear out the floor!

"SING, SING, SING" continues as Welles and Toland and various grips hack at the floor.

Mank watches, bemused, and checks his watch.

Welles and Toland finally tear away the remnants of the wooden floor. They stare down, defeated. Under the wood is solid concrete.

Welles and Toland stand and stare at the concrete.

TOLAND

It's midnight, why don't we pick it up tomorrow?

Welles does not answer. He continues to eye the concrete. Then:

WELLES

Get me a jackhammer.

"SING, SING, SING" continues as we see a grip pounding away at the concrete with a jackhammer.

Welles, always in motion, sweeps past Mank and Joseph Cotton.

MANK

(wryly, to Cotton)

There, but for the grace of God, goes God.

Welles slams to a halt in front of the unit physician and thrusts out an arm. The physician injects him with a dose of B-12.

Welles can barely wait for the injection before he speeds off.

"SING, SING, SING" continues as we see Welles supervising as Toland lowers the camera into the freshly dug hole in the middle of the sound stage. Mank checks his watch, 3:30 AM.

We see Welles leaping into the trench to check the camera setup. He smiles to Toland.

We see Welles and Joseph Cotton rehearsing and rehearsing and filming and filming the scene. Endlessly.

Finally:

JOSEPH COTTON

"You talk about the people as if you owned them. As though they belonged to you. As long as I can remember, you've talked about--"

Orson, I am so goddamn tired--

WELLES

(to the camera operator)
Keep filming.

JOSEPH COTTON

--I can't remember the lines!

WELLES

Then make them up! You're drunk and you're angry.

He shoves Joseph Cotton brutally.

WELLES

This is the chance you've been waiting for, boy. Tell that sonofabitch just what you think of him!

JOSEPH COTTON

We're not all hopped up on benzedrine, Orson! Some of us humans need sleep!

Welles shoves him again.

WELLES

You're not going to get another chance, boy! Look right at the monster and you tell him--

JOSEPH COTTON

(deeply)

"You don't care about anything except you. You just want to persuade people that you love them so much that they ought to love you back. Only you want love on your own terms."

WELLES

"A toast then, Jedediah, to love on my own terms. Those are the only terms anybody ever knows, his own."

Welles/Kane drinks.

A long pause.

WELLES

Cut. Print.

Joseph Cotton sinks to his knees.

Welles turns to an assistant.

WELLES

How 'bout a real drink?

Welles kneels beside Cotton and puts an arm around him.

WELLES

Wonderful scene, Joe. Really grand. They give little statues for scenes like that.

TOLAND

We done?

WELLES

Yeah.

The crew members exhale and practically collapse.

Welles stands and looks around in satisfaction then walks to the massive doors of the sound stage and pulls them open.

Sunlight floods in.

Outside it is a blazing morning and the dazzling sunlight silhouettes Welles.

Welles squints and steps into the glorious sunlight. Mank and Toland follow.

They stand and watch as RKO extras and crews bustle about on their way to work. The assistant brings a tray of martinis.

They each take a glass. The RKO workers stare at them oddly as they pass.

Welles toasts them.

WELLES

Good morning, good morning...

He grabs a passing extra and dances with her as Mank and Toland laugh and "SING, SING, SING" has its final explosive flourish.

INT HEDDA'S MANSION, BEL AIR MORNING

Hedda Hopper reclines in her bed next to an extremely ugly pug dog. She has green goo all over her face and a cigarette dangling from her lips.

Title: THREE MONTHS LATER. JANUARY 3, 1941.

She is going through the trades. She stops at a particular item. She studies it and then reaches for the phone and dials.

HEDDA

(on phone)

Orson, Hedda here! You naughty boy! You told me that I would be positively the first human soul to see your masterpiece and here I read in the Reporter that there's a screening tonight for the magazines ... yes, advance deadlines, I understand ... (she smiles) ... oh, rough cut, uh-huh ... Been there, Orson, know the drill. See ya tonight!

She hangs up. Her hideous dog leaps on her and starts licking her face goo.

HEDDA

Get offa me, ya little prick.

INT OUTSIDE AN RKO SCREENING ROOM NIGHT

Welles paces nervously outside the doors to the screening room, occasionally glancing in through a window in the screening room doors.

Schaefer stands leaning against a wall.

From inside we can hear some of the final dialogue from CITIZEN KANE.

WELLES

This is an abomination! There's no music and--

SCHAEFER

They've all seen a rough cut.

WELLES

The magazines are one thing -- but Hedda!
Why did we have to let her come?!

SCHAEFER

When Hedda says "I'm coming" you mix a lot
of martinis and you pray.

Silence from inside the screening room. The movie is over.

An agonizing silent pause.

Then the doors swing open and the guests stream out. Totally
neutral expressions.

The bejeweled Valkyrie, Hedda herself, finally emerges. She
stops before Welles.

A beat.

She reaches up and pinches his cheek, a bit too hard. And
then she slaps his cheek, a bit too hard.

And then she goes.

WELLES

What the hell did that mean?!

INT

HEDDA'S MANSION

MORNING

Hedda paces and smokes as she waits on the phone. Finally,
she is connected:

HEDDA

(brightly)

Why hello, Mr. Hearst! I'm so delighted
you could take my call. I just wanted to
let you know -- I saw this Orson Welles
picture last night. First screening ever,
don't you know, and, Mr. Hearst, I don't
understand something ... (she smiles
wickedly) ... I just don't understand
why Louella hasn't told you it's all
about you... Yes, oh yes ... My
pleasure, sir.

She hangs up.

HEDDA
Take that, you old cow.

INT SCHAEFER'S OFFICE DAY

Schaefer sits at his desk, going through some budget sheets.
His intercom buzzes, he presses a button:

SECRETARY'S VOICE
Mr. Schaefer, Miss Parsons is here.

SCHAEFER
(into intercom)
Here? As in right outside the door?

SECRETARY'S VOICE
Yes, sir.

SCHAEFER
(chipper, into intercom)
Well, send her in!

He releases his intercom button.

SCHAEFER
Shit!

He bolts up and races to the liquor cabinet as Louella sweeps in like the Lusitania in fur.

LOUELLA
Schaefer, I gotta see this Welles picture.

SCHAEFER
Louella, hello, I was just fixing a drink,
would you like--?

LOUELLA
(eyeing gossip)
You drink at 10 am, do you?

SCHAEFER
No -- no -- I mean--

LOUELLA
I wanna see the picture today.

SCHAEFER
That might be a tad difficult because the
prints are--

LOUELLA

Cut the malarkey, buddy. The boss himself wants me to see the picture today.

Beat.

SCHAEFER

He personally asked you to?

LOUELLA

That's right.

Beat.

SCHAEFER

Hearst?

LOUELLA

Uh-huh.

Beat.

LOUELLA

I'll be back at noon. Set it up in screening room four.

She sweeps out.

SCHAEFER

Oh god.

INT. RKO SCREENING ROOM DAY

Louella watches CITIZEN KANE.

We watch her enormous face, grim and glowering, bathed in flickering blue light as we hear a bit of the dialogue:

"SUSAN ALEXANDER"

"You're awful funny, aren't you? Well, I can tell you one thing you're not going to keep on being funny about, and that's my singing. I'm through. I never wanted to do it in the first place."

"KANE"

"You'll continue with your singing, Susan. I don't propose to have myself made ridiculous."

"SUSAN ALEXANDER"

"You don't propose to have yourself made ridiculous! What about me?! I'm the one that's got to do the singing! I'm the one who gets the razzberries!"

With that, Louella bolts up and stomps out of the screening room...

INT OUTSIDE THE SCREENING ROOM FOLLOWING

Welles and Schaefer are again nervously waiting in the hallway.

Louella slams out the door and almost crashes into Welles.

A beat as she glares at him. If looks could kill...

She storms off.

Welles and Schaefer are too stunned even to speak as we hear:

LOUELLA'S VOICE

It is ... assassination.

INT SAN SIMEON, GOTHIC SUITE DAY

Hearst sits with one of his dachshunds on his lap. Louella sits across from him.

Hearst does not move a muscle in the entire scene.

LOUELLA (CONT.)

It's all you. It has the political campaigns and the mining fortune and the war with Pulitzer and the castle. And ... Marion.

HEARST

How so?

LOUELLA

The jigsaw puzzles and the, um, career -- the man spending a fortune to make her a star -- only it's opera and not movies. And...

HEARST

Yes?

LOUELLA

(quietly)
The drinking.

A beat.

HEARST
(very controlled)
So my life is a subject for mockery. All of
it. Every detail. Every personal detail.

Louella nods.

HEARST
Miss Parsons, we have worked together for
almost twenty years now. In that time we have
had our adventures together, have we not?

LOUELLA
Yes, sir.

HEARST
Until this moment they have been the
inconsequential making and breaking of
stars -- the manipulation of the public to
our ends -- advancing this career or that.
They have been diverting games.

Now we play for real. Now we play for
reputation and life.

A beat.

HEARST
Thank you for your time.

LOUELLA
Thank you, sir.

She begins to leave.

HEARST
Miss Parsons, I have one additional
question for you.

LOUELLA
(stops)
Sir?

HEARST
Why did we not know about this sooner?

A beat.

LOUELLA
Sir?

HEARST

I pay you a good deal of money to be my eyes and ears in Hollywood, do I not? If you cannot provide this simple service you are of no use to me.

LOUELLA

Sir, I--

HEARST

(lethally)
Please be quiet.

A young man has made a motion picture detailing my life. This motion picture was made at a not insignificant studio. And you knew nothing about it.

LOUELLA

He lied to me.

A pause.

LOUELLA

He looked into my face and told me it wasn't about you.

HEARST

And how do you feel when you are lied to?

A beat.

LOUELLA

I want blood.

HEARST

Good. Retain that feeling. Let it nourish you from this day forth.

Goodbye.

She nods and leaves the room.

We linger on Hearst, his expression dark and dangerous.

INT SCHAEFER'S OFFICE EVENING

Welles reclines on a sofa, smoking a cigar, orating, while Schaefer sits at his desk absently flipping through the evening edition of the LA EXAMINER.

WELLES

Give me one dinner with her and I'll sort it out. Woman of a certain age are woefully susceptible to a younger man's charm. I'll make myself so monumentally attractive that...

He is distracted by Schaefer flipping through the newspaper anxiously. Schaefer tears back and forth in the paper and then swivels around in his chair to grab another newspaper. He flips through it. And then stops.

SCHAEFER

(sickened)

Oh Christ...

Welles leaps up and goes to Schaefer's desk.

Schaefer has placed the two newspapers side by side on his desk.

He points to one:

SCHAEFER

This is the morning edition of the EXAMINER.

He points to the other:

SCHAEFER

And this is the evening edition. Notice anything?

WELLES

The ad...

Indeed, the morning edition contains a large ad for the RKO movie KITTY FOYLE. In the evening edition the ad has been replaced by innocuous copy.

SCHAEFER

They dumped our ad.

He flips through the evening edition and then looks up at Welles.

SCHAEFER

(quietly)

They dumped all our ads.

INT

BROWN DERBY

NIGHT

Schaefer sits with Louella in her corner booth.

LOUELLA

That's right, fella, no Hearst paper will run an RKO ad until you agree that CITIZEN KANE will never see the light of day.

SCHAEFER

But KITTY FOYLE's our big picture this year! We spent a million dollars on it! It has nothing to do with KANE. It stars Ginger Rogers -- you like Ginger Rogers!

LOUELLA

Yeah, well, tough for Ginger. She's nothing without Fred anyway, I don't know what you coulda been thinkin'.

SCHAEFER

Louella, please, be reasonable, I understand you have problems with Orson's picture but maybe we can work something out--

LOUELLA

Nix, sweetie. You shelve it.

SCHAEFER

Oh for God's sake, Louella--

LOUELLA

And Mr. Hearst has authorized me to tell you that you're looking at the most beautiful lawsuit in history if you release this picture. He'll bleed your little studio dry and you can all go on back to New York and do Shakespeare with the Boy Wonder.

SCHAEFER

Can I talk to Hearst?

LOUELLA

You are talking to him.

INT _____ SAN SIMEON, GOTHIC SUITE _____ DAY

The Gothic Suite is Hearst and Marion's private sanctum high in a tower at San Simeon.

Hearst stands with his arms behind his back, very Kane-like, and surveys a collection of about 30 newspapers spread around the floor at his feet. His newspapers.

Marion sits in a corner, doing needlepoint.

HEARST

The Journal was pretty harsh to Roosevelt today.

MARION

You oughta lay off him -- he is the p-p-president, after all.

HEARST

He is a Bolshevik. He will have us at war by the end of the year. I think I'm going to run that wheelchair picture.

MARION

Don't.

Hearst picks up one of his papers.

HEARST

Miss Parsons is certainly earning her money.

MARION

That whole thing is silly.

HEARST

Silly?

MARION

It's a little RKO movie with no stars. Who's gonna see it anyway? Why bother?

HEARST

I will not be made a subject of mockery.

MARION

(playfully)

Oh, come on, Pops, you're a guy who lives in a castle with about a hundred dachshunds. Don't you think that's kinda funny?

He smiles.

HEARST

Perhaps we should actually see the picture.

MARION

Now you're t-t-talking. Who plays me, by the way?

HEARST

I don't know.

MARION

I hope she's pretty. And very, very young.
She holds up her needlepoint.

MARION

Whaddaya think?

It is a sampler reading: BLESS THIS CASTLE.

He laughs.

Joe Willicombe enters quietly.

WILLICOMBE

Sir, we got the call from Washington.

A moment. Hearst looks at him.

Willicombe shakes his head sadly.

HEARST

Thank you, Joseph.

Willicombe glides out.

A long pause as Hearst moves to a window and stares down at his domain. Marion watches him.

MARION

How bad is it?

HEARST

Nothing for you to worry about, darling.

MARION

Pops...

A beat.

HEARST

The S.E.C. has turned down my request for relief on the debts.

MARION

How much?

HEARST

It's not really--

MARION

How much?

A beat.

HEARST

125 million.

She is absolutely stunned. A pause.

MARION

(softly)
We're 125 million dollars in debt?

HEARST

Yes.

A pause.

Hearst continues to gaze out the window. Marion goes to him and holds him tenderly.

They look down at the massive San Simeon estate spreading out like Wonderland below them.

MARION

How does one get 125 million dollars in debt?

HEARST

One ... buys things.

INT

MGM. STEAM ROOM

DAY

MGM titan Louis B. Mayer sits lazing in a foggy steam room. He is covered with a towel and reading the LA EXAMINER as his secretary goes through some notes.

His secretary is female, dressed in a tweed suit and sweating.

SECRETARY

...and Mr. Freed wants a meeting about FOR
ME AND MY GAL re: Miss Garland's "problem"...

Something in the paper catches Mayer's eye. He reads intently. He frowns.

SECRETARY

...and Miss Hepburn would like yet another
meeting re: her contract--

MAYER

Clear my schedule. And get me Jack Warner.

INT CHASEN'S RESTAURANT NIGHT

Welles' face, bewitching, spinning a web:

WELLES

We open on Monument Valley. Those towering stalagmites reaching up like pleading fingers to God. A single figure treads the arid plains. The crimson sun is behind him so his shadow stretches toward us, for miles it seems...

We pull back to see that Welles is talking to Gregg Toland. Welles is so momentarily captivated with his own story that he ignores his dinner.

WELLES

He is a simple man wearing a simple robe. A profoundly quiet and sad man. Who is he?

TOLAND

I have no idea.

WELLES

Who is he, Gregg?

TOLAND

He's ... you?

WELLES

Well, yes, of course he's me. But who is this solitary figure wandering the desert with only the scorpions and the spiders and his own tormented soul for company?

TOLAND

(realizing)

Oh, no--

WELLES

Oh yes!

TOLAND

He's Christ.

WELLES

I'm Christ!

TOLAND

You want to do the life of Jesus?

WELLES

Yes! Vibrant and modern and stark like a Picasso sketch drawn to flashes of lightning! We shoot the whole thing in the gallant American West -- those great prairies and canyons and arroyos become our contemporary Judea--

Mank joins them at the table, carrying a newspaper.

MANK

Hey, kid. Gregg.

WELLES

Mank, sit down. You missed the opening of the new picture but I'll go back--

MANK

You read Louella?

Welles shudders.

WELLES

No, but I can imagine. What am I today? A "puny upstart" or a "spoiled dilettante" -- no, she wouldn't know how to spell that.

MANK

(reads)

"And how is the country to feel when this industry continues to employ bedraggled foreigners and swarthy refugees instead of real Americans? Doesn't Hollywood know there's a Depression on? Don't real Americans deserve work?"

Welles laughs.

WELLES

Well, at least she's off KANE today.

MANK

No she's not. Don't you get it, ya lunk? She's using code language to the studio bosses. "Bedraggled foreigners and swarthy refugees" -- who the hell do you think she's talking about?

WELLES

(playfully)

Hedy Lamarr?

MANK

Jews. She's talking about Jews.

A beat. Welles' smile fades.

MANK

Who owns this town? Who runs every goddamn studio? Mayer and Cohn and Warner and Goldwyn. The tribe, baby. These fuckers hear the word "Jew" and they start sweating. Like Ester Williams' pool they start sweating.

WELLES

(growing tense)

So they're Jews...

MANK

This is just the first shot, Maestro. Sooner or later she's gonna use the word. And all those boys know that there is only one thing this country hates more than the coloreds and that's the Jews.

WELLES

Christ.

MANK

Me, I'm proud to be a Jew, I got no problem. You don't like it, fuck you. But with these guys it's like a dirty word and, believe you me, they're gonna do anything to stop that word from gettin' out.

WELLES

Let them try! We're set to open on March 11th, they can't--!

MANK

(angrily)

Orson -- would you just wake up! You still have no goddamn idea what you're dealing with here! This is a game where no one plays fair and you don't know the rules and you don't get to roll the dice! You're talking about power. And more money than--

WELLES

(sharply)

What?! Are they going to kill me?! Is that what they're going to do?!

A long beat as Mank looks at him.

MANK

(quietly)

Let me tell you a story, son.

So this was 1924, right? Hearst was throwing a birthday party for Thomas Ince, the old movie producer. They were all on the old man's yacht taking a nice jaunt from Pedro down to San Diego. Real foggy night it was. This was Hearst, Marion, Ince, Charlie Chaplin, Louella, the usual gorillas. So Hearst notices Marion slip off with Chaplin -- she was screwing everyone then -- and the old man goes nuts. Grabs his revolver and starts shooting. Just like Tom Mix, standing there blasting away through the fog. Boom -- boom -- boom -- and Thomas Ince takes a bullet through the head. So now there's this dead guy lying on the deck. You'll see how this could be quite an embarrassment. So the empire goes into action. Nice and quiet and Ince was cremated lickety-split. No inquest and no police. It was right after this that Hearst gives Louella her life-time contract. Just to keep her all hush-hush.

A beat as Mank gazes at Welles.

MANK

If he had known about KANE before you made it, you'd be dead already.

A beat.

WELLES

(weakly)

It's too late. The movie's made.

MANK

They won't let it out. Not Hearst. Not the other studio heads--

WELLES

You wrote the damn thing, Mank! Aren't you going to fight for it?!

MANK

I been in this business long enough to know some battles you're never gonna win--

WELLES

So you just want to give up?!

MANK

(bitterly)

I told you this was going to happen! I told you he was going to come after us! So we took the chance anyway and we lost. That's how it goes, okay? I got my check, kid, and so did you -- and that's what it's all about -- so fuck it and move on.

Welles bolts up in a sudden explosion of anger, drawing looks from around the restaurant:

WELLES

I WILL NOT MOVE ON! Let them do their worst! These petty tyrants! These monstrous, small men! Do they think they can stop us?! Who are they?! Who are they?! THEY ARE ... ACCOUNTANTS!

Welles storms out of the restaurant.

Toland and Mank sit in silence. Then:

TOLAND

His next picture ... he wants to play Christ.

MANK

Hope he's planning to start with the crucifixion.

EXT CHASEN'S FOLLOWING

Welles stands outside the restaurant, deep in thought.

VALET:

Mr. Welles, we have your car...

Mr. Welles...?

The screen burns to white...

INT SAN SIMEON. SCREENING ROOM NIGHT

Which burns to black and white images, the opening shots of CITIZEN KANE.

Hearst and Marion are sitting in the plush San Simeon screening room, surrounded by a passel of dachshunds. Five or six friends are also spread around the room. Joe Willicombe, Hearst's private secretary, is also present.

We watch their faces as they watch CITIZEN KANE.

During this sequence we hear bits and pieces of KANE as we watch Hearst and Marion react.

We see Marion's initial amusement give way to a forced neutrality.

We see Hearst becoming increasingly uncomfortable, reacting physically, almost writhing, as his soul is laid bare. Then his face grows cold. Drained.

We see Joe Willicombe, offended.

We see the other guests, horrified and afraid to even so much as glance at Hearst.

Finally, we hear the ending of the movie:

"RAYMOND"

"Throw that junk in, too."

We hear Bernard Hermann's closing music begin to play out.

Hearst abruptly stands, the final images of the film washing over his face.

HEARST

Switch it off! SWITCH IT OFF!

The film suddenly stops and lights come up around the screening room.

Absolute silence.

No one looks at Hearst.

HEARST

(quietly)

Would everyone please leave.

The guests and Joe Willicombe solemnly file out.

A pause.

MARION

(with strained lightness)

Well -- he got us, didn't he?

She stands and goes quickly to pour a drink. A forced laugh.

MARION

Nailed us, huh? The crazy old man and his whore.

HEARST

Marion--

MARION

Bought and p-p-paid for. Just like one of his goddamn statues. Well at least in the movie he married her!

HEARST

This picture--

MARION

I mean is that what I am? I had some talent, didn't I? Way back when in the dark ages--

HEARST

Of course you did--

MARION

(her resolve cracking)

When I met you I was just 20. You remember that? I was 20 and you were 55. And you were gonna put me in the movies and make me famous but that didn't exactly work out, did it? Just like her, in the movie -- I mean you didn't build me an opera house but you put me into those godawful serious pictures all the time -- of course in the movie she finally walked out on the bastard--

HEARST

Darling--

MARION

(deeply)

I am not that woman.

I know what I could have been. I know what I gave up to stay with you.

A beat.

MARION

(pained)

I mean he's even got the g-g-goddamn jigsaw puzzles...

She dissolves into sobs.

He cradles her in the empty screening room.

HEARST

I love you so much.

A beat.

MARION

Why did he do that to us?

INT

GOTHIC SUITE

NIGHT

Hearst is as we have never seen him before. He is in a titanic rage.

He paces back and forth violently like a caged animal, becoming increasingly manic and uncontrolled, clenching his fists and barking to Joe Willicombe:

HEARST

And now of all times -- NOW -- when I am grasping on with my fingernails to live at all this Orson Welles -- this insect -- this reprehensible insect -- has the nerve TO CHALLENGE ME! To show my life as some cheap sideshow -- A FREAK SHOW -- A DYING, IMPOTENT OLD FREAK IN HIS CASTLE!

He smashes a collection of figurines and sends them sailing across the room. Hearst's rage gives way to a darker passion:

HEARST

(intensely)

Mr. Willicombe -- you have seen me in adversity -- you have seen me take on the unions and the Congress and the railroads -- and we have risen above -- we have risen above. And if that dog Welles thinks he can strike at me now -- when he thinks I'm weak -- when he thinks I'm vulnerable -- then he does not fully comprehend the man is facing.

WILLICOMBE

Mr. Welles can't know anything about the difficulties we're--

HEARST

Get me Louella Parsons, now!

Willicombe picks up a phone and begins dialing as Hearst continues:

HEARST

This upstart -- this puny man -- how does he even dare to imagine he could comprehend my life and my world when he crawls with the other insects in the sewer -- in the dung -- when we control every moment of his life from the instant he is born to the instant we decide that he will die! Does he have no idea of the power that controls him?!

WILLICOMBE

Mr. Hearst, I have Miss Par--

Hearst snatches the phone from Willicombe.

HEARST

(on phone)

Miss Parsons, Mr. Hearst. Use the file.

He slams down the phone.

HEARST

Now get me J. Edgar Hoover.

WILLICOMBE

It's very late in Washington--

HEARST

Then wake him up!

Willicombe begins to dial.

HEARST

(fervently)

That insect thinks he knows me! He thinks he knows my capabilities! When his neck is in my teeth and his blood is in my throat then he will know
WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST!

INT

MAYER'S OFFICE, MGM

DAY

Louis B. Mayer's eyes are blinking behind his glasses.

In his glasses we can see vague reflections of a series of grainy photographs showing sex acts and illicit assignments and corpses and mug shots.

We pull back to reveal Mayer flipping through a stack of photos and notes.

Louella sits, smoking and supremely confident, across from him.

Mayer finally closes the file and removes his glasses. He rubs his eyes.

He rises unsteadily and goes to a liquor cabinet and pours himself a stiff drink. He gulps it down and then returns to his desk.

A pause and then he finally looks at Louella.

LOUELLA

So what do we got here, L.B.? We got faggots and commies and junkies. We got movie stars screwing niggers and little girls. We got killers and perverts and whores.

A beat.

LOUELLA

We got MGM and Warner Brothers and Columbia and Disney and Fox.

A beat.

LOUELLA

We got Jews.

A beat.

LOUELLA

We got Hollywood.

A pause.

MAYER

(quietly)

What do you want?

LOUELLA

Kill CITIZEN KANE.

MAYER

How?

LOUELLA

I don't give a shit.

A beat.

LOUELLA

The boss is working on some stuff and I'm working on some stuff. Now I want all you boys working on some stuff. Cause if it looks like this picture's ever gonna come out -- I start running down the street with these pictures like a screaming woman with my throat cut, you follow?

INT J. EDGAR HOOVER'S OFFICE DAY

Bulldog-like FBI Director Hoover sits erect at his desk. Behind him an imposing FBI Seal catches the light.

He presses a button on his intercom.

HOOVER

Agent McCabe, if you please.

His secretary, clean-cut FBI agent McCabe, enters quickly with a note pad. Agent McCabe scribbles as Hoover dictates:

HOOVER

Open a new file. Heading: Welles, Orson.
Native born. Communist.

EXT HILLS AROUND SAN SIMEON DAY

Marion and Joe Willicombe sit in deck chairs under the blazing sun. Marion absently pets a dachshund in her lap. Servants stand behind them with lunch and trays of iced tea.

They watch Hearst riding a horse in the distance.

Beat.

MARION

Joe, you been with Pops since the b-b-beginning. What was he like then?

WILLICOMBE

Oh, he was a grand figure. Revolutionized the industry. Everything they do today, he thought it up. It was ... thrilling.

MARION

Mm.

WILLICOMBE

He would take over a newsroom like nothing you've ever seen. If there wasn't news he would make it. If it was a slow week he'd

WILLICOMBE (CONT.)
 start a war somewhere. The Spanish-American War, that was Mr. Hearst's war. Anything to give the people some entertainment. The poor folks didn't have a paper before the old man. He loved them. They just never loved him back.

A pause.

MARION
 How bad is it?

WILLICOMBE
 Miss Davies--

MARION
 Come on, Joe. How bad is it?

A beat.

WILLICOMBE
 It's finished.

A long beat.

WILLICOMBE
 If anyone knew -- God, they'd cut him to pieces. They will. It has to come out. And they'll be on him like vultures.

Hearst gallops up to them. A servant helps him down from his horse. He strides to Marion and Willicombe as:

HEARST
 I've been thinking about the Tribune in Chicago. The Examiner just can't make any headway. Circulation is still down. I think we should buy the Tribune.

Marion glances to Willicombe and then looks at Hearst with great tenderness.

MARION
 Sure, Pops. That's a swell idea.

INT MANK'S HOUSE. CULVER CITY DAY

Mank is pounding away at a typewriter in his tiny Culver City house.

He grumbles to himself as he types:

MANK

... and Rita Hayworth says: "You see, he truly was the Son of God" ... big Toland lighting effect ... blah, blah, blah ...

A knock at the door. Mank answers it. Clean-cut FBI Agent McCabe stands outside. He flashes his badge.

AGENT McCABE

Mr. Mankiewicz, I'm Special Agent McCabe of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Might I have a moment of your time?

MANK

Sure, kid, come in, I'm writing the crucifixion and it's a bitch. Sit down.

Agent McCabe sits and snaps open a note pad.

AGENT McCABE

I would like to ask you a few questions about Mr. Welles.

MANK

You guys after Orson too?

AGENT McCABE

Mr. Mankiewicz...

MANK

Shoot.

AGENT McCABE

Are you aware of Mr. Welles' Communist affiliations?

MANK

Shit, Orson's no pink. He's everything else under the sun, but he's no pink.

AGENT McCABE

Are you aware of Mr. Welles' Communist affiliations?

MANK

No, I am not.

AGENT McCABE

Do you have any knowledge of Communists working within the motion picture industry?

A pause.

AGENT McCABE

Do you have any knowledge of Communists working within the motion picture industry?

MANK

No.

AGENT McCABE

Are you now or have you ever been a member of, or affiliated with, the Communist Party or any of its front organizations in the United States?

MANK

Stop it.

AGENT McCABE

Are you now or have you ever been a member of--

MANK

I think you better leave.

A beat.

AGENT McCABE

Are you married?

MANK

None of your beeswax.

AGENT McCABE

When Mr. Welles first moved to Los Angeles in July of 1939 he stayed with you, correct?

MANK

Before he got his place in Brentwood, sure.

AGENT McCABE

So the two of you lived together in this house?

MANK

I'm miles ahead of you, pal. I ain't no fruit and Orson ain't no fruit.

AGENT McCABE

How do you know that about Mr. Welles?

MANK

(grim)

Cause he screwed Shirley Temple, now get the fuck outta my house.

Agent McCabe snaps his note pad closed and stands.

AGENT McCABE

(crisply)

Thank you for your time, Mr. Mankiewicz.
We'll be in touch.

Agent McCabe leaves.

MANK

(calling after him)

Don't bother, you low-life prick!

Mank slams the door.

He stands for a moment, pale, and then goes to the bar and pours himself a stiff drink.

INT SAN SIMEON, ASSEMBLY ROOM DAY

Marion is pouring a drink as well. She quickly fills a glass of Scotch and then begins striding back and forth across the enormous Assembly Room.

Hearst sits quietly at one of the jigsaw puzzles. He occasionally and absently puts a piece in place.

She has clearly been at him for some time.

MARION

Then you explain it to me?!

HEARST

There's nothing to explain.

MARION

A million dollars a year on art and
st-st-statues and there's nothing to
explain?!

HEARST

I will not defend my life to you--

MARION

I'm not asking you to defend anything. But we're in a pickle and we gotta talk about it.

HEARST

We are in no "pickle" -- as you would euphemistically have it.

MARION

You gotta wake up now, Pops.

HEARST

There is nothing to discuss--

MARION

You don't have any money left, okay?! That's the truth. I don't wanna say it, nobody else will say it, but it's the truth. You spent it all. You can't buy the Tribune in Chicago -- you can't buy a g-g-goddamn thing. Now you better face up to it--

HEARST

You are being typically theatrical, Marion. I need the Tribune to--

MARION

You don't need it! That's the problem -- you always think you need everything--

Marion spins to a medieval arras cloth hanging from one wall.

MARION

That -- did you need that? How much did that cost?

HEARST

It's 12th Century. From Deauville -- in France.

MARION

I know where Deauville is for C-C-Christ's sake.

HEARST

You needn't use that language with me.

MARION

Did you need it? Did you need any of it?

HEARST

I wanted it.

MARION

There's a different between want and need!

HEARST

(tightly)
Not for me.

MARION

(frustrated)
But why? Just so you can show it all off
-- just so everyone can see what a b-b-big
man you are?!

He stands quickly.

HEARST

(angrily)
That's right. You've captured me exactly.
Goodnight.

MARION

You will not walk out on me!

HEARST

You are repellant when you drink.

MARION

Tough shit. We need to t-t-talk about
this--

HEARST

You are slovenly and unattractive and I
won't (he mercilessly mimics her)
t-t-t-tolerate it.

A cold beat.

MARION

Fuck you, Mr. Kane.

A pause.

HEARST

(darkly)
I will not have this in my home.

MARION

I just want to understand--!

HEARST

(suddenly)

No, you don't. You want to condemn me, like everyone else. You want to point to the pathetic, old man grown lunatic with his spending -- trapped in his ridiculous castle -- still fighting old battles he will never win with Pulitzer and Roosevelt and Hollywood--

MARION

I don't want you to--

HEARST

There is nothing to understand but this:

I am a man who could have been great, but was not.

He leaves.

INT NELSON ROCKEFELLER'S OFFICE, NEW YORK DAY

Nelson Rockefeller, a stocky man of 33, sits in his gigantic office high in Rockefeller Center with Louella. The sweeping skyline of New York can be seen through the many windows.

LOUELLA

So you're set to premiere it across the street on March 11th, right?

NELSON ROCKEFELLER

That's right.

LOUELLA

I wonder, Nelson, do you really think this picture's worth Radio City Music Hall?

NELSON ROCKEFELLER

We have a deal with RKO.

LOUELLA

Mm. Yeah. Ya know Mr. Hearst's magazine Harper's Bazaar?

NELSON ROCKEFELLER

Sure.

LOUELLA

Well, a little bird tells me that they got an article all ready to run. It's all about your grandfather. John D. It's not a very nice article. No givin' dimes to smelly urchins in this one.

A beat.

LOUELLA

In fact, it's a pretty low-down article. It's sewer-time, Nelson.

A beat.

NELSON ROCKEFELLER

On the other hand, we don't have to premiere the film.

LOUELLA

I think that would make Mr. Hearst very happy.

INT SAN SIMEON, MARION'S BEDROOM DAY

A silent scene as we see Marion rummaging through some drawers in her vanity table.

A suitcase can be seen on the bed behind her.

She removes various jewelry cases and pours an astounding array of gems into a black leather pouch.

INT JEWELRY STORE, BEVERLY HILLS DAY

Marion enters a posh Beverly Hills jewelry shop. She is wearing sunglasses.

She nervously goes to the counter and the shop owner glides to her. For Marion, the entire experience is humiliating. This results in her stutter becoming increasingly more pronounced.

SHOP OWNER

May I help you?

MARION

I, um, need an estimate on some jewelry I might wish to sell. But d-d-discretion is very important to me b-b-because I don't want anyone t-t-to, um, know that--

SHOP OWNER

Excuse me, I hope this isn't rude, but aren't you Marion Davies?

MARION

Yes.

SHOP OWNER

Well, this is a great pleasure, Miss Davies! I just saw that ENCHANTMENT is playing at the Tivoli, the revival house in Santa Monica. That was a fine picture!

MARION

Thank you--

SHOP OWNER

That was one of Mr. Hearst's pictures, wasn't it?

MARION

Yes. Now, I'd like--

SHOP OWNER

Not one of them today has what you had, Miss Davies. Not one of them.

MARION

Thank you--

SHOP OWNER

It's all about voices now, isn't it? But you had eyes, and a soul, you didn't need all that noise.

MARION

Thank you -- b-b-but I'd really like t-t-to--

SHOP OWNER

Of course, of course. How can we be of service?

MARION

As I said I have some j-j-j-j- (she simply can't get the word out) that I might wish t-t-to sell and I wanted an estimate--

SHOP OWNER

Surely. My pleasure, Miss Davies...

Marion removes the leather pouch from her purse and pours a stunning collection of jewelry on a black felt tablet on the counter.

SHOP OWNER

(awed)

My Lord...

Marion removes her sunglasses and looks at him. Her eyes are red.

MARION

How much for the lot?

EXT _____ RKO LOT _____ DAY

Welles is pursuing Schaefer as they stride through the bustling RKO backlot.

SCHAEFER

What do you want me to do, Orson? Radio City won't premiere the picture.

WELLES

Then find another theater!

SCHAEFER

You don't think I've tried?! No one is willing to open the picture.

WELLES

Then we'll open it in Detroit or Dallas or Kalamazoo for God's sake! We'll show it in goddamn circus tents and--!

Schaefer stops.

SCHAEFER

Listen to me. The press ban is killing us and the distributors won't book it. And meantime I'm dealing with the stockholders in New York who are scared shitless -- and I'm this far from getting fired myself -- and you don't have a friend in the world but me right now. So you have got to trust that I'll do what I can to--

WELLES

(desperately)

"Do what you can"?! "Do what you can"?!
That's not good enough!

SCHAEFER

Well it's all you've got!

WELLES

(suddenly)

You're with them, aren't you? You're going to bury my movie. They bought you!

SCHAEFER

(turning away)

For Christ's sake, shut up--

WELLES

Why don't you just have the guts to admit it!

SCHAEFER

(spinning on him)

How dare you talk to me like that! Do you think I'm like all the rest of those pirates?! Like Mayer and Warner? Is that what you think--?!

WELLES

It's just that my movie is so--

SCHAEFER

(savagely)

"Your movie" -- "your movie"! I am so sick of that! It's your movie -- but it's his life! Did you ever think about that?! Did you ever think about that old man and Marion having to watch as you tore them apart?!

WELLES

I didn't--

SCHAEFER

Do you every think for one second that you might have some responsibility for what you're doing?! For cutting and slashing everything in your way so you can have your goddamn movie?!

WELLES

That soulless monster gets no tears from me.

SCHAEFER

Who the fuck are you trying to kid? You are that soulless monster.

Schaefer turns and stomps away.

Welles stands, lost for a moment in the dream factory.

In a bit of a daze, Welles slowly begins walking through the backlot. A bustle of loud activity in a corner of the lot draws his attention.

A bulldozer and a dozen workmen are busy tearing down the facade of a large white mansion. They strip the wood off and toss it into an incinerator.

Welles sees Schaefer standing before all this activity, deep in thought.

Welles goes to him and they stand together in silence for a moment as they watch the house being razed.

SCHAEFER

Recognize it?

Welles shakes his head.

SCHAEFER

It's Tara. From GONE WITH THE WIND.

Pause as they watch Scarlett O'Hara's dream mansion being torn apart.

WELLES

It's ... sad.

SCHAEFER

Not really. It's only a set, after all.
Just lumber.

A beat.

SCHAEFER

(quietly)

You know, we make all these pictures, we turn 'em out one after another, without thinking most of the time. Just like making toasters or Packards or toothpaste. But then sometimes ... something amazing happens and you get a GONE WITH THE WIND.

Or a CITIZEN KANE.

And no one can ever take that away from you.

A beat.

WELLES

I'm sorry, George.

SCHAEFER

Forget it.

They gaze at the destruction of Tara for another moment.
Then:

SCHAEFER

I'll tell you something, Orson. When you make your masterpiece at 25, it's a bitch. I mean where the hell do you go from here?

Welles looks at him with a dawning sad realization.

As we hear:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VOICE OVER)

... and in financial news, rumors continue to swirl around the head of publishing baron William Randolph Hearst...

INT

SAN SIMEON, ROMAN POOL

NIGHT

Hearst sits in a wicker chair by the shimmering in-door Roman Pool. But for Hearst and the single chair, the pool is deserted and has no other furniture.

Hearst is staring at the gold and blue mosaic of tiles reflected in the water.

As we hear:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VOICE OVER, CONT.)

... Sources report that the Hearst Empire is facing some rocky times ahead as the press lord is facing mounting debts and shrinking revenues due to overexpansion and fiscal mismanagement that have resulted in...

The radio voice fades to silence.

The silence continues but for the haunting echo of a lion roaring in the distance.

Hearst hears the sound of footsteps echoing on the tile. He looks up. It is Marion. She walks around the pool to him.

Without a word she hands him a check.

It is made out to William Randolph Hearst in the amount of one million dollars and is signed Marion Davies.

A long pause. He looks up at her, profoundly moved.

HEARST

(quietly)
Where?

MARION

I sold my jewels. Never needed them anyway.

Another pause.

MARION

I started out as a gold-digger, ya know. But goddamn if I didn't fall in love with the guy.

INT

MAYER'S OFFICE

DAY

Mayer sits at the head of an immense conference table in his office. Six other men are gathered around the table.

Mayer nods his head to each as we pan around the faces.

MAYER

Mr. Zanuck ... Mr. Warner ... Mr. Cohn ...
Mr. Disney ... Mr. Goldwyn ... Mr.
Selznick.

Thank you all for coming. You got my memo.
What do we do?

A beat.

JACK WARNER

He's a fucking punk, why does Hearst give a shit?

MAYER

It's enough that he does.

A beat.

SAM GOLDWYN

Would Louella really do it?

MAYER

In a New York minute.

DAVID O. SELZNICK

I say to hell with Louella and to hell with Hearst! Bring 'em on. We can take 'em.

HARRY COHN

We all didn't make GONE WITH THE WIND, ya know. Some of us gotta look at this checkbook-wise.

MAYER

Who isn't hurting already? All this Jew talk and these Communist rumors. Look, he's boycotting RKO ads right now -- but how long before he takes on Warners or Fox or Columbia?

HARRY COHN

Goddamn right.

MAYER

And if Hearst goes public with all this filthy private lives stuff, Hollywood's sunk. He's got us nailed. Dates. Times. Photographs for God's sake.

A beat.

WALT DISNEY

I don't mean to be funny, but what could he have on Mickey Mouse?

MAYER

He's got you so tied in with J. Edgar Hoover and America First that you might as well put on a brownshirt and kiss those happy little kiddies so-long.

DAVID O. SELZNICK

(suddenly)

Have any of you actually seen the movie?

A beat.

DAVID O. SELZNICK

I have. It's probably the greatest motion picture ever made. Nothing's going to be the same after this. With this one movie he's changed the way we see--

JACK WARNER

Who the fuck cares?

DAVID O. SELZNICK
I do. And so should all of you--

JACK WARNER
Get off the soapbox--

Selznick stands.

DAVID O. SELZNICK
I want no part of this. We should be
marching into George Schaefer's office and
standing with him. He's one of us!

MAYER
David--

DAVID O. SELZNICK
If I ever got into trouble I'd like to think that
you all would be with me -- not planning to stab
me in the back like a bunch of ... a bunch of ...
producers!

He storms out.

JACK WARNER
(to Mayer)
Your son-in-law -- meshugena.

Laughter around the table.

DISNEY
(nervously)
He's got me and Hoover?

JACK WARNER
Relax, Walt, at least he don't have you
screwing Snow White. I got fucking Errol
Flynn on my payroll!

SAM GOLDWYN
(to Mayer)
You're a smart man, L.B. I suspect you
would not have called us here without a
plan. Give over.

A pause.

MAYER
We will buy the movie and we will
destroy it.

A pause.

MAYER

We will assemble a fund between us -- privately, not studio money -- we will assemble this fund and we will go to George Schaefer and we will buy the negative and every print of CITIZEN KANE and we will burn them.

A long pause.

MAYER

If I do not hear an objection to this agenda in the next five seconds I will assume the motion has carried.

Five seconds tick by as we focus on the titans of Hollywood.

MAYER

Very well, my associates will be in touch to arrange payment. Thank you for your time.

INT RECORDING STAGE DAY

KANE composer Bernard Hermann stands before an orchestra, his arm poised, waiting to begin conducting. He is about to record some new music for the deep-focus Thatcher/Bernstein/Kane scene from CITIZEN KANE.

Welles sits nearby, smoking a cigar, supervising everything. Hermann looks at Welles. Welles nods and on a movie screen the scene from KANE begins and Hermann starts conducting. The orchestra plays.

The music carries into and gradually fades during...

INT SAN SIMEON, GOTHIC SUITE DAY

In a scene eerily reminiscent of the Thatcher/Bernstein/Kane scene, Marion sits in the extreme foreground, a man we do not know sits at middle distance at a desk and Hearst stands far away.

Hearst has his back to them and stares out a window.

The new man is Mr. Lewis, a tight banker from New York, 50's.

He looks over a thick legal document on the desk as he speaks:

LEWIS

You will retain some editorial control over the remaining newspapers but the actual ownership will go to the Conservation Committee and the banks. We will be immediately closing 12 of the papers and the wire services. And we will be liquidating other assets as soon as possible. Most of the land in Mexico as well as your collection of art and antiquities--

MARION

(quietly)

Mr. Hearst spent his life collecting that art.

LEWIS

(ignoring her)

And your living expenses will have to be severely reduced. We have budgeted at 30 percent of your current expenses.

HEARST

(softly, not turning)

I'll have to sell the animals.

LEWIS

And we don't know whether we'll be able to retain the castle. The land has some capital and we might keep it on as an investment. Maybe break it up into smaller units for housing.

A long pause.

Hearst finally turns and walks to them.

HEARST

(to Lewis)

When will it come out? When will the public know?

LEWIS

We can't keep it a secret, sir. Once we start liquidating the assets.

MARION

(pained)

This is your whole life, Pops. Don't do it. We'll find another way...

A long beat as he looks at her.

Then he quickly signs the document on the desk.

He puts down the pen and leaves the room without a word.

INT SAN SIMEON. STAIRWAY NIGHT

Marion sits nestled on a sweeping marble stairway.

Weeping.

INT NIGHTCLUB. HOLLYWOOD NIGHT

A swank benefit dinner is in progress. A band plays.

A banner hangs over the nightclub stage: CHILDREN'S MILK FUND BENEFIT, 1940.

We float through the elegant crowd and spy Louis B. Mayer and Louella; Clark Gable and Carole Lombard; all manner of movie stars and power brokers.

We also spy Schaefer sitting with Mank and Toland and a few other men and women.

The evening's Emcee takes the stage.

EMCEE

Next up we have a real treat. It's Orson Welles. Now, during the rehearsal for the benefit tonight Orson banished everyone from the club so he could proceed in utmost secrecy. But you all know how Orson is!

Laughter from the crowd.

EMCEE

So, lets give a big round of applause for Mr. Orson Welles and Miss Rita Hayworth.

Polite applause as Welles bounds to the stage with Rita Hayworth and the band begins to play a buoyant tune.

Schaefer practically drops his fork.

Welles is dressed in a padded costume and made up in a way that can suggest no one but William Randolph Hearst. Rita Hayworth is dressed in a manner mightily like Marion Davies.

Louella glances to Mayer, daggers.

Some knowing laughter from the audience. Particularly Mank.

A line of chorus girls hoof on and join Welles and Rita Hayworth as a row of harsh footlights snap on, giving the scene a resemblance to the "Charlie Kane" dance in KANE.

And Welles launches into a jaunty song and dance version of "DISGUSTINGLY RICH" an almost unknown Rodgers and Hart song. Welles has wickedly changed some of the lines.

WELLES

"I'll buy everything I wear at Saks.
I'll print gossip and I'll call it facts.

RITA HAYWORTH

"Swear like a trooper,
Live in a stupor--

WELLES AND RITA HAYWORTH

"Just disgustingly rich!

WELLES

"I'll make money and I'll make it quick,
Starting little wars I think are slick.
Smother her in sables,
Like Betty Grable's--
Just disgustingly rich.

"I'll build a castle,
That'll cost a passel.
And as a resident,
I will pan the president.
I'll aspire,
Higher and Higher.

"I'll get married and I'll buy a girl,
So darn pretty that your head will swirl.

RITA HAYWORTH

"Swimming in highballs--
Stewed to the eyeballs--

WELLES AND RITA HAYWORTH

"Just disgustingly rich!

Welles, Rita Hayworth and the chorines do a nifty soft-shoe turn as Schaefer turns to Mank:

SCHAEFER

(seriously)
He truly doesn't care if he ever works
again.

MANK

Yeah, ain't it swell?

Welles and Rita Hayworth conclude their little dance break and Welles resumes the song:

WELLES

"Ev'ry summer I will sail the sea,
On my little yacht the Normandie,
Pet my little dachshund friends,
Kiss Louella's big rear end,
Just disgustingly rich.

About here Louella storms out.

"I'll eat salmon,
I'll play backgammon.
Turn breakfast into brunch,
I'll take Thomas Ince to lunch.
I'll aspire,
Higher and Higher.

About here Louis B. Mayer and a few others storm out.

RITA HAYWORTH

"He'll be photographed with Myrna Loy,
Just to prove he is a glamour boy.

WELLES

"Perfumed and scented,
Slightly demented--
Just disgustingly rich.

RITA HAYWORTH

"I'll get my capers,
Into his papers.
Hoping his folly would
Lead me out to Hollywood.
I'll aspire,
Higher and higher.

About here Schaefer buries his face in his hands.

WELLES AND RITA HAYWORTH

"In the funnies and the valentines,
We'll be pictured drinking Ballantine's.
Dopey and screwy,
Voting for Dewey.

Just disgustingly--
Too, too disgustingly--
Riiiiich!"

Welles and Rita Hayworth conclude the number with a big flourish.

Some applause.

Mank stands and applauds loudly. Laughing.

Welles bows solemnly to Mank.

EXT NIGHTCLUB FOLLOWING

Later that night, Welles is about to climb into his limousine outside the nightclub with Rita Hayworth when Schaefer suddenly appears and grabs his lapel.

WELLES

(happily)
George--!

Without a word, Schaefer pulls Welles roughly into an alley beside the nightclub. He slams Welles into the alley wall.

SCHAEFER

(brutally)
This isn't some kinda fucking game! You know how many people RKO employs?! You know how many people depend on what we do for a living?!

WELLES

I really think you're--

SCHAEFER

You wanna commit suicide, fine! You got some death-wish, fine! But you will not drag this company down with you!

WELLES

It was a joke, George!

Schaefer slaps Welles firmly across the face. Welles is stunned.

SCHAEFER

There are no jokes! There are people making a living. There is food on the table!

Schaefer glares at him and then rages off.

Welles straightens his suit and then, with a shaking hand, reaches for a cigar. He tries to laugh, but cannot.

INT GIMBELS DEPARTMENT STORE, NEW YORK DAY

The entire two-acre fifth floor of Gimbels is in chaos.

All the usual merchandize has been carted away and workers are busy tearing open huge wooden crates and unpacking everything from silverware to statues.

A large banner is being suspended at one end of the floor:
"The Hearst Collection."

Joe Willicombe walks through the flurry of activity with Gimbels manager, John Branson.

BRANSON

We figure the whole sale will run about four years so we gave over the entire floor. Never thought it would be so much stuff!

WILLICOMBE

Mm.

BRANSON

We just got a shipment from some warehouse in Brooklyn. It's a castle. I mean an entire castle. From Scotland. Been sitting in crates in Brooklyn for forty years. The old man didn't even have the time to open it.

WILLICOMBE

St. Donat's, yes. Mr. Hearst was very fond of that castle.

BRANSON

Not even Gimbels has the room to put up an entire castle so we're gonna put up pictures and a few bricks.

Now he understands he's got to come here in person to sign the bill of sale, right?

WILLICOMBE

He understands. He's leaving the castle anyway. It isn't ... what it once was.

Branson stops.

BRANSON

Joe, tell me the truth. Why did he do it? Collect all this stuff he never even looked at?

Beat.

WILLICOMBE
Because he liked beautiful things, Mr.
Branson, that's all.

Willicombe walks away and Branson follows.

We pull up and take in the entire two-acre fifth floor.

It is a startling KANE-like image of rows and rows of crates piled high. Of junk and jewels. Of Charles Foster Kane and William Randolph Hearst.

INT SCHAEFER'S OFFICE, RKO DAY

Schaefer sits at his desk, absolutely dazed. Speechless.

Louis B. Mayer sits across from him.

SCHAEFER
Where did this money come from?

MAYER
It came.

A beat.

MAYER
800,000 dollars fully covers the production budget and a little more. Hell, George, you even make a profit on the deal.

SCHAEFER
Very generous.

A beat.

SCHAEFER
This has nothing to do with Hearst anymore, does it?

MAYER
Not really.

SCHAEFER
Then why?

MAYER
This kid. He's dangerous. To all of us.

SCHAEFER

So you wanna buy his movie?

MAYER

And we gotta be clear here. I need the negative and every existing print.

SCHAEFER

To do what?

MAYER

That's for me to decide.

SCHAEFER

You're going to destroy it.

MAYER

No, maybe put it on the shelf until the old man kicks it.

SCHAEFER

You're lying to me.

Pause.

SCHAEFER

Let me tell you something. As long as I am running this studio this movie will not be buried. Do you know why? Because this movie is the future, Mr. Mayer, and you can't stop it. And you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MAYER

We already made the same offer to the stockholders.

Schaefer is stunned.

SCHAEFER

You talked to New York?

MAYER

Yes.

SCHAEFER

You talked to Mr. Swanbeck?

MAYER

Yes.

Pause.

SCHAEFER

Get out.

MAYER

You're bettin' on an inside straight this time. You'll never pull it off.

SCHAEFER

Get out.

Mayer stands and smiles.

MAYER

This picture, George, it'll just break your heart.

Mayer goes.

Schaefer sits, smelling defeat.

INT

BAR, HOLLYWOOD

NIGHT

Welles and Mank are sitting together in the corner of a dark, deserted bar. They talk quietly.

WELLES

So he's ruined.

MANK

The old man?

WELLES

Yeah.

MANK

Don't kid yourself, Maestro. He's still got teeth. Sure, a lot of statues go on the block but he's still got a hell of a lot of power.

WELLES

But with everything that's going on he's got to be too busy to bother with us. You think he'll leave us alone now?

A beat as Mank looks at him.

MANK

(tenderly)

You never really got it, kid...

MANK (CONT.)

It's not just Hearst. It's everything. The studios. The money. The system. It's the whole system -- from Washington and the banks right on down. Ask yourself, why do they exist? To keep everything running smoothly. And why do you exist? To shake everything up.

You never really stood a chance.

WELLES

I don't believe that.

MANK

And you know something? I'm glad you don't.

Mank takes a drink.

WELLES

I don't understand him. The whole world was given to him on a plate. He could have done so much. And he just ... bought things.

MANK

No, give him his due, he did a lot. Like it or not he revolutionized a whole industry. After Hearst, nothing was ever the same.

WELLES

Then where did he go wrong? How could he waste so much ... potential?

MANK

(looking at Welles deeply)
We don't all live up to our promise, kid.
Sometimes we just ... stumble.

A beat. Mank takes another drink.

MANK

In the end you'll never really understand him. He is like Kane in that. You go into the labyrinth and you search and you search and you get deeper and deeper but there's no end. There's no answer. There's no ... Rosebud.

WELLES

Every man has an answer.

MANK

Do you?

WELLES

Sure.

MANK

And?

Pause.

WELLES

(softly)

I will burn. Burn up. Burn out.

But oh, what a flame.

We linger on Welles as a haunting echo of "I CAN'T GET STARTED" is heard...

INT/EXT

SAN SIMEON

NIGHT

We float through the estate as we hear the ghostly strains of Bunny Berigan's recording of "I CAN'T GET STARTED."

It is a sad journey.

By this time many of the ornate antiquities have been removed from the castle and it resembles Welles' stark and dreary Xanadu all the more.

BUNNY BERIGAN

"I've flown around the world in a plane,
I've settled revolutions in Spain,
And the North Pole I have charted,
Still I can't get started with you..."

We float past the private zoo, now empty, the cages hanging open. We move past the Neptune pool, drained.

BUNNY BERIGAN

"On the golf course I'm under par,
Metro Goldwyn has asked me to star,
I've got a house, a show place,
Still I can't get no place with you..."

We float into the castle itself and through the stripped-down Gothic Suite and the Screening Room and the Assembly Room and the Great Dining Hall.

All are mere shadows of their past glory.

BUNNY BERIGAN

"Cause you're so supreme,
Lyrics I write of you,
I dream, dream day and night of you
And I scheme just for the sight of you,
Baby, what good does it do...?"

We finally float into the ballroom.

A record of "I CAN'T GET STARTED" spins forlornly on a turntable.

And Marion and Hearst are having a quiet, poignant dance together in the middle of the empty ballroom.

BUNNY BERIGAN

"I've been consulted by Franklin D.
Greta Garbo has had me to tea,
Still I'm broken hearted
Cause I can't get started with you..."

They finally stop dancing and stand swaying gently. Then they stop swaying.

HEARST

(gently)

Ah, Miss Davies, the times we have seen.

She holds him closely as "I CAN'T GET STARTED" concludes.

INT CHASEN'S RESTAURANT, PRIVATE ROOM DAY

Welles has booked a private room at Chasen's. A long banquet table contains cans of sterno heating various dishes.

Large photographs of the American West and renderings from THE LIFE OF CHRIST are scattered around other tables.

Welles wanders around the renderings with Gregg Toland and Mank. Welles carries a plate of food and consumes as:

TOLAND

See, this is the Great Salt Lake -- we do the baptism here.

MANK

Great scene where John the Baptist pulls your head out of the water and says, "Look up, and behold your destiny!"

WELLES

Is that from one of the Gospels?

MANK

Kinda.

Schaefer enters.

WELLES

George! Enter! And Behold!

Schaefer blinks at the massive photos and renderings.

WELLES

You're not still mad at me, I hope.

SCHAEFER

No, we're jake. But listen--

WELLES

Look at these pictures! Not a single scene shot in the studio! We've found natural locations for the whole story--

SCHAEFER

Hold on a sec. I got news. We finally found somewhere to premiere 'KANE' but--

WELLES

I told you! Where? Grauman's? El Capitan? Or did Radio City come crawling back?

SCHAEFER

The Palace in New York. But Orson -- there's something else.

Welles stops eating.

SCHAEFER

I think you better sit down.

WELLES

(evenly)

I don't want to sit.

Beat.

SCHAEFER

The bosses -- the other studios -- they want to buy the film and destroy it.

Absolute silence.

SCHAEFER

They came to me with an offer. 800,000
for the negative and all the prints.

Pause.

SCHAEFER

And they went to the stockholders in
New York.

MANK

(quietly)

Oh God.

SCHAEFER

I been talking to Swanbeck in New York
and...

Orson, I think they're gonna take it.

A long pause as Welles looks at Schaefer.

Welles suddenly FLINGS his plate of food in Schaefer's
direction as he ROARS:

WELLES

YOU STUPID, LITTLE MAN! HOW COULD YOU HAVE
LET THIS HAPPEN?! I GAVE YOU MY SOUL AND
NOW YOU'RE GOING TO SELL IT!?

MANK

This ain't George's doing--!

Welles rampages around the room.

WELLES

I PUT MY LIFE INTO THAT PICTURE -- EVERYTHING
I'VE BEEN -- EVERYTHING I COULD BE -- IT'S
CITIZEN KANE! -- IT'S ALL CITIZEN KANE!

And in a screaming, bellowing fury, Welles tears apart the
room.

In a scene sharply reminiscent of Kane destroying Susan's
bedroom, Welles rampages around the room, upsetting tables
and smashing everything in reach.

Welles finally grabs a flaming can of sterno and flings it
at Schaefer, Schaefer knocks it away.

Then Welles stands in spent exhaustion, panting. One of his
hands is bleeding.

He looks at Schaefer.

A pause. Then:

WELLES

Let ... me ... talk to them...

New York ... The stockholders.

Give me one chance. And then you will
never have to see me again.

INT GIMBELS, NEW YORK DAY

Hearst and Marion, alone in a crowd.

It is the first day of the sale of "The Hearst Collection" and Gimbel's fifth floor is mobbed.

Everywhere around them hundreds of eager customers strike like hawks, snatching up useless junk and treasured antiques.

We see bits and pieces of San Simeon in the jumble.

Hearst and Marion walk wordlessly through the mayhem.

They pass a man and his wife, holding up Marion's "BLESS THIS CASTLE" sampler:

MAN

Old man Hearst owned this and I'm gettin'
it for two bucks!

Hearst and Marion continue to walk, finally arriving at the section containing the true, expensive treasures.

Hearst watches as customers pick up and fondle his life.

He glances at a framed front page of the San Francisco Examiner. The date is March 4, 1887. In a large box on the page is: "IT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRESS TO COMFORT THE AFFLICTED AND AFFLICT THE COMFORTABLE. WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST. PUBLISHER."

He stares at the front page for a moment and then moves to a table containing a silver trophy. On the trophy is etched: "To William Randolph Hearst from the staff of the New York Journal. Circulation One Million. December 14, 1901."

HEARST

I can't sell this. How much are they asking?

MARION

(gently)

Pops ... let it go. Just ... let it go.

He looks at her.

A long moment. He tenderly touches her face.

Then:

HEARST

Yes, I think I shall.

He takes her hand and leads her away.

INT HOTEL ROOM, NEW YORK NIGHT

Welles sits brooding in his hotel room. His invincible energy appears gone.

He is deep in thought, listlessly shuffling and reshuffling a deck of cards in one hand.

He aimlessly shuffles through the cards and plucks one out.

WELLES

Six of spades.

He glances at the card. It is the nine of hearts.

He shuffles through the cards again and pulls out another card.

WELLES

Six of spades...

He looks at the card. It is the two of clubs.

His attention is now fully on the cards. He shuffles them dramatically and snatches out a card. He looks at it and then tosses it away. He shuffles again, working the trick, again it fails. He tosses another card away. He continues, more quickly, to attempt the trick. It fails again. And again.

With a frightened moan Welles flings the entire deck away from him and bolts out of the room...

EXT HOTEL ROOFTOP NIGHT

Welles emerges from a stairway on the roof of his hotel.

He marches to the edge of the roof and leans against a railing, gasping for air.

Everywhere below him the shimmering lights of Manhattan twinkle and flash; cabs and neon and noise. The night sky above him is filled with stars.

He looks away from the city and up to the stars -- they captivate him fully. He stares and stares at the impossible chaos of beautiful lights.

A long moment as Welles gazes at the stars. The city below and the noise seem to disappear and Welles stands, safe and at peace under the silent dome of stars.

The stars are reflected in his huge, dark eyes.

INT RKO BOARD ROOM, NEW YORK DAY

Welles stands with his head down. He is at the head of a long conference table.

Title: APRIL 6, 1941.

Around the table are gathered a group of stern businessmen. Schaefer is also present.

A long, silent pause.

Welles finally raises his head and looks at the men. And he speaks. For once, his usual overwrought, theatrical tones are gone.

He speaks simply.

WELLES

Today ... Today a man from Germany invaded Greece. He has already swallowed Poland and Denmark and Norway and Belgium. He is bombing London as I speak. Everywhere this man goes he crushes the life and the freedom of his subjects. He sews yellow stars onto their lapels. He takes their voices.

In this country we still have our voices. And we can sing with them. And we can argue with them. And we can be heard. Because we are ... for the moment ... free. No one can

WELLES (CONT.)

tell us what to say or how to say it, can they? We have no brownshirt thugs here ruling our lives, do we? No one can take our voices, can they? Because we are free.

I am one voice and that is all. My picture is one voice. Men are dying in Europe now -- and Americans soon will be -- so that we can surmount the tyrants and the dictators. Will you send a message across this country that one man can take away our voices?

So ... who is Mr. Hearst and who is Mr. Welles? Mr. Hearst built a palace of brick and mortar and starting little wars and corpses piled high. I built a palace of illusion. My castle Xanadu is a matte painting and camera trick. It's nothing but ... a dream.

Today you have a chance to let the dream triumph. For once.

He gazes at them and then slowly walks out of the room.

INT LONG HALLWAY, NEW YORK DAY

Welles sits quietly on a bench in a long hallway in a tall building.

Schaefer emerges from an office and goes to him. He sits next to him.

Pause.

SCHAEFER

We open on May 1st.

Welles slowly nods.

SCHAEFER

Orson, what you said in there. Did you mean it?

Welles looks at him.

WELLES

Does it matter? They believed it.

He stands and begins walking away.

SCHAEFER

Orson...

Welles stops, not turning.

SCHAEFER

Yes. It matters.

Welles continues down the hall.

INT HOTEL, NEW YORK NIGHT

Title: APRIL 30, 1941.

Welles is rushing to catch an elevator as the doors close.

He nips in at the last minute and punches his button. He turns.

The elevator is deserted but for one other person: William Randolph Hearst.

Welles and Hearst recognize each other instantly. As the elevator ascends the two men look at each other.

A very long pause as we watch their faces -- the young man and the old man -- both men of mad grandeur and malevolent passion and stunning inspiration -- both men of incalculable achievement and measureless poignancy.

Finally:

WELLES

Mr. Hearst, we've met once before, my name is Orson Welles and I've got a movie opening tomorrow night at the Palace. I would be pleased to get you tickets.

A long pause as Hearst regards Welles.

Then Hearst carefully reaches over and presses the stop button on the elevator. The elevator stops.

An exceedingly quiet exchange:

HEARST

I wonder. Do you have any idea what you have done?

WELLES

Do you?

HEARST

Intimately. For every sin you have placed on my head I could give you a hundred others. I have been swimming in blood my entire life. But I retain a belief, perhaps you will think it old fashioned, undoubtedly you will, but I believe that private lives should not be public property.

WELLES

Elegant words, sir, when you have made your name and your fortune on slander and innuendo and gossip. In your papers you taught the world how to look under every rock. I learned at the knee of the master.

A beat.

HEARST

So where does that leave us, Mr. Welles? What kind of sad future are we two making? A future where men will do anything to sell their newspapers and their movies? A future where no price is too high for fame and power? When we will all scratch each other to pieces just to be heard?

Can you truly envision such ... horror.

A pause.

Hearst presses the stop button again and the elevator begins to move.

WELLES

You never really stood a chance against me, you know.

HEARST

Is that so?

WELLES

Well, it's ironic. Mr. Hearst and his power. That's all everyone's been saying. You can't touch him -- he's got too much ... power.

A beat.

WELLES

But who has the real power, sir?

We do. The movies.

We make the dreams of the world.

A beat.

HEARST

So in the end, Mr. Welles, who's really the dangerous one? Me ... or you?

The doors opens on Hearst's floor and he leaves the elevator.

The doors shut on Welles and we remain with Hearst as he slowly walks down the long hotel hallway.

He walks with dignity.

EXT PALACE THEATER. NEW YORK NIGHT

It is the premiere of CITIZEN KANE, at last.

The Palace Theater swarms with tuxedos and dress gowns as the elite of New York and Hollywood descend from limousines and slowly parade into the packed lobby.

On the Palace marquee "ORSON WELLES" is spelled out in enormous six foot tall electric letters. Below that is "CITIZEN KANE" also in electric letters. Above the marquee is a series of towering, flashing neon Charles Foster Kanes and the words "IT'S TERRIFIC."

Title: MAY 1, 1941

We float down and enter the crowded lobby with the patrons...

INT PALACE THEATER. LOBBY FOLLOWING

We swirl with the throng of patrons in the lobby as they file into the theater and finally find Welles and Schaefer huddled together nervously in a corner of the lobby.

They are studiously ignored and snubbed by all the movie people filtering past.

SCHAEFER

They're cutting us dead, every goddamn one.

They are ignored by a few more people.

WELLES

It's my birthday this week. I'll be 26.

Beat.

SCHAEFER

Happy birthday.

Carole Lombard and Clark Gable arrive to a flurry of flashbulbs. She shines for the cameras. They push through the crowd. Lombard spies Welles and Schaefer. Gable does too. He pulls Lombard's arm.

She pulls away from Gable and defiantly crosses the lobby to Welles.

She kisses him full on the lips and then looks at him.

CAROLE LOMBARD

(quietly)

I'm so proud of you, Orson. I knew you wouldn't give in.

WELLES

(moved)

Thank you...

CAROLE LOMBARD

Hey, all us Indiana kids gotta stick together.

WELLES

I'm from Wisconsin.

CAROLE LOMBARD

Yeah, like it makes a difference.

She winks and rejoins Gable and they enter the theater.

Mank fights through the crowd.

MANK

Monstro! Ran into Walter Winchell outside. He wants to play Herod in the picture. Hiya, George.

SCHAEFER

Herman.

MANK

(lighting a cigar)

So ain't this just the bee's knees? The high muckey-mucks dolled up all Aztec-like for the human sacrifice.

WELLES

You gonna watch?

MANK

Hell, I know how it ends. (He calls to a passing stranger) Hey, Rosebud's the sled!

WELLES

Mank!

MANK

Face it, Orson, they're gonna hate it. I told you, not enough closeups and too many scenes with a bunch of New York actors.

SCHAEFER

(pained)

Oh God...

WELLES

Relax, George. I told you I'd give you a masterpiece and that's exactly what I've done. You should have trusted me. Have I ever lied to you?

Schaefer looks at him for a moment.

SCHAEFER

You know something, Orson, you haven't done anything but lie to me from the moment we met. But, ya know, I'd do it again in a second.

WELLES

It was fun, wasn't it?

SCHAEFER

(quietly)

It was the best, kid.

Beat.

WELLES

So, on to the Life Of Christ!

SCHAEFER

Without me, I'm afraid. I got the axe
this morning.

MANK

Shit.

WELLES

George...

SCHAEFER

Forget it. Cause you know something...

When I'm an old coot playing dominoes
down in Miami Beach fifty years from now,
I'll say, "Hey, you kids ever heard of a
guy named Randolph Hearst?" And they'll
say, "Nope. Never heard of him." And
then I'll say, "Hey, you ever heard of
a picture called CITIZEN KANE?"

And they will have.

That's enough for me.

He pats Welles arm and goes into the theater.

WELLES

(softly)

Jesus, what have I done?

MANK

Aw, cheer up, George'll probably be running
Fox by the morning. Let's get a drink.

Mank pulls at Welles' arm.

WELLES

But the picture...

Mank stops and looks at him deeply.

MANK

(quietly)

Kid, you know how it ends too. It ends
sadly.

He pulls Welles away.

INT

PALACE THEATER

NIGHT

We watch the faces.

In the flickering blue light we watch the audience as we hear Bernard Hermann's evocative and haunting opening music, to CITIZEN KANE.

We slowly move across a sea of faces as the music plays. For everyone, especially the movie people, what they are seeing is a revelation and a revolution. It is a whole new way of seeing the world.

We watch their amazement as they are mesmerized -- and their confusion as they are challenged.

We see Carole Lombard, delighted.

We see Louella Parsons, bored.

We see David O. Selznick, inspired.

We see Louis B. Mayer, skeptical.

And we see George Schaefer, proud.

Bernard Hermann's opening music continues to play until we finally hear:

"KANE"

"Rosebud..."

And the world of movies is forever changed.

EXT STREET, NEW YORK NIGHT

Welles and Mank are walking down a New York street.

They are both puffing cigars. Welles is shuffling a deck of cards.

WELLES

You know, all this nightmare we went through with Hearst. The whole thing... And in the end, probably no one will ever remember the picture anyway.

MANK

Yeah, you're probably right.

Welles stops and magically fans the deck of cards wide with a flourish. He looks at Mank with a mischievous glance.

WELLES

Pick a card...

And Orson Welles laughs. Indomitable.

As we pull away...

We float up and lose them on the streets below...

We continue to float up through the towering steel canyons of Manhattan...

We hear a ghostly echo of "I CAN'T GET STARTED" as we ascend...

We pass by a hotel room window and glimpse Hearst and Marion dancing. Together. Content.

We continue floating up to the stars as "I CAN'T GET STARTED" continues.

THE END