

RKO 281

by

John Logan

**Ridley Scott
Scott-Free Productions**

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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.

HEDDA HOPPER: Louella's Rival, 50's.

Also

Gregg Toland: KANE Director of Photography
Joe Willicombe: Hearst Assistant
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
Dolores Del Rio: Movie star
Clark Gable: Movie star
Nelson Rockefeller: Businessman
J. Edgar Hoover: FBI Director
Charlie Chaplin: Movie star

SONGS USED IN RKO 281

"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.

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.

In 1924 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

NEWSREEL VOICE (CONT.)

where he joined forces with theatrical producer John Houseman under the august auspices of the WPA Federal Theater.

A rehearsal room 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 his famous "Voodoo MACBETH" and "Fascist JULIUS CAESAR" productions: auditions; rehearsals; perfecting a sword-fight; rejecting classical costume sketches for JULIUS CAESAR; supervising set construction; ranging before his all-black MACBETH cast. As we hear:

NEWSREEL VOICE

Like Hannibal over the Alps, the Boy Genius invaded the Great White Way. He stunned the sedate elite of New York theatre with production after production from a Mussolini-inspired JULIUS CAESAR to MACBETH with an entirely colored cast!

More 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

NEWSREEL VOICE (CONT.)

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!

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 LOUELLA PARSONS and HEDDA HOPPER.

Louella is a much-feared gossip columnist. She is a gorgon in her 60's; 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.

Hedda is a 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.

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.

Mayer is a short, crafty, bespectacled man in his 50's. His cloying, avuncular exterior only fleetingly disguises the film titan's outrageous barbarism.

Another shadowy figure, a Mayer FLUNKIE, can be just glimpsed sitting elsewhere in the screening room.

Mayer glowers at the darkened screen for a moment.

MAYER

Who does that cocksucker think he is?

A beat.

FLUNKIE

They're laying bets over on the RKO lot that this great deal will end up with him never doing a picture. Back to New York he goes.

MAYER

Serves him right. I mean can you stomach the arrogance?

FLUNKIE

Inside skinny says the glory boy's finished, can't come up with a movie. Wants to do a biography now.

MAYER

After RKO boots him maybe we'll pick him up cheap. Have him do that WAR OF THE WORLDS crap as a feature.

Meantime, shelve the newsreel. No one cares.

INT SAN SIMEON, MANK'S SUITE EVENING

Orson Welles, elegant and impressive, is flourishing a cigarette and a coin in his magnificently expressive hands. He is perfecting a magic trick.

Welles is lounging on the bed of an enormous guest suite at San Simeon. He is wearing a tuxedo.

In the bathroom beyond him we can see the writer HERMAN MANKIEWICZ ("MANK".)

Mank is a wonderful wreck of a human being. 43 years old, but looking considerably older, he is short and squat and bitter. A compulsive gambler and drinker, Mank still glimmers with wry humor that is equally wicked and 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

Nonsense.

Welles dramatically taps the cigarette on the coin, practicing 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 quickly makes the cigarette seem to complete pass through the coin. An astounding bit of slight of hand.

WELLES

(happily)

Magic.

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

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? My name is 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:

WELLES

How about Howard Hughes? We could do 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.

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 in 1924 her 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

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.

Mank surreptitiously pours a huge shot of vodka 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. As Welles speaks the whole table gradually stops eating and listens to his tale:

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

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 at they gaze at each other.

INT SAN SIMEON. BILLIARD ROOM FOLLOWING

Hearst is playing billiards with Clark Gable and some of the guests. The billiard room is typically enormous and home to five flamboyant tables.

Marion and Carole Lombard sit near Hearst, chatting quietly.

Welles and Mank are far across the room, drinking coffee and sitting on stools at a bar. Welles cannot keep his eyes off Hearst, the press baron draws him in like a siren.

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, now very drunk and unsteady and sweating, pours another huge shot from his flask into his coffee 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.

Across the room, Marion takes Carole Lombard's hand and leads her out.

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 across the room.

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.

With that Mank misjudges the angle of the bar they are leaning on and topples off his stool -- he goes crashing to the floor -- just as Hearst is leaning over to line up a shot -- he glances up at Mank -- the harsh lights over the billiard table shine down on Hearst's head -- a sudden flash of a startling Kane-like image.

Mank sits disheveled on the floor.

MANK

Cripes, that's strong coffee.

INT

SAN SIMEON, LADIES LOUNGE

FOLLOWING

Marion and Carole Lombard escape into an 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.

A beat as Marion hands the cigarette to Carole Lombard.

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.

EXT SAN SIMEON, TENNIS COURTS DAY

A sudden burst of blazing sunlight.

From the vantage point of the tennis courts behind San Simeon we get a true sense of the sheer, grandiose enormity of the place. The twisting towers of the Casa Grande stretch to heaven and the rolling hills around the castle cascade to the distant horizon.

The weekend guests, most dressed in scrupulous white, mingle and wander around the landscape.

Welles and Mank stand 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, dressed for tennis and carrying racquets, come up to them, rather giggly.

MARION

Mankie, Mankie p-p-play 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 toward the tennis courts.

JOE WILLICOMBE, Hearst's private secretary, glides up. Willicombe is a serious and sensitive man in his 60's. He is unquestioningly loyal to the old man.

WILLICOMBE

Mr. Mankiewicz, if I might have a word...

He takes Mank aside and speaks quietly.

WILLICOMBE

Mr. Hearst has asked that you leave the house by noon.

MANK

Come again?

WILLICOMBE

Your bags are packed and a car is waiting to take you to the train.

MANK

You're shitting me.

WILLICOMBE

I'm sorry, sir. Thank you for your cooperation.

He glides away.

Mank returns to Welles and Carole Lombard.

MANK

Got the bum's rush, can ya credit that?

WELLES

Why?

MANK

Cause I messed up his pool shot, fuck him.

WELLES

I'll go too--

MANK

No, enjoy the weekend. And if you're a really good boy you might get charades tonight. Gosh, hate to miss that!

He stalks off.

WELLES

I don't follow.

CAROLE LOMBARD

He gets so goddamn drunk every time. The old man hates it.

They watch as Mank, in the distance, defiantly lights up a cigar and calls to Hearst and Marion who are talking together on a tennis court:

MANK

SEE YA IN THE FUNNY PAPERS!

Welles laughs as Mank strolls toward the house.

Carole Lombard takes Welles arm and they wander toward the tennis courts.

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 and looks at him firmly.

CAROLE LOMBARD
You make your mark, Orson.

Near them, on the tennis court, Marion suddenly explodes at
Hearst, drawing Welles' attention:

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 tennis court.

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

INT SAN SIMEON, WELLES' SUITE NIGHT

Welles, again dressed in a tuxedo, lies 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 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

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

(roaring up to Mank)

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

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.
Feudal.

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 as:

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.

A beat.

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? How does it feel being the ugly little monkey they keep to amuse themselves until, of course, they throw you out on your ass--?!

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, effortlessly switching gears.

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.

INT WELLES' LIVING ROOM DAY

Mank is slowly sharpening a series of pencils with a pocket knife, blank pads waiting. Welles is standing across the room from him.

WELLES
So, who is he? We have to know him.

MANK
Everyone sees someone different. That's what we show.

WELLES
How?

MANK
Like a jewel. Turn it in the light and a different facet is illuminated.

Mank finishes sharpening his last pencil and picks up a pad. He smiles to Welles.

MANK
Go.

And we leap into...

MONTAGE -- WELLES AND MANK BRAINSTORM

A rush of jazzy, Gene Krupa percussion 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 on the tennis court, 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.

A beat, Welles deep in thought. Mank watches Welles closely.

MANK

So when was our man innocent? Was there a moment early on -- of innocence and bliss? There must have been. Okay, you're dying -- what do you think?

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

MANK

(probing)

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 -- in the snow globe we seem to see a boy laughing and pelting his father with snowballs...

Then more images, mad and outlandish and sedate and solemn; in the kitchen, at the racetrack, in a car, in a grocery store, 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. The living room is now filthy. 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. To embarrass him. Then he despises 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'S VOICE (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 vodka 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.

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. They must be met with steel, sir. 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 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!

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. The house is dark.

Mank finally starts the car and speeds off...

EXT DOLORES DEL RIO'S HOUSE FOLLOWING

Mank pulls up outside Del Rio's Bel Air mansion, takes a final swig and then bolts out of the car, carrying a script.

He roars unsteadily up to the front door and starts pounding on it viciously.

MANK
I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE, ORSON! LET ME IN
YOU PHILANDERING BASTARD...!

INT DOLORES DEL RIO'S HOUSE, BEDROOM FOLLOWING

As we hear Mank's continued screaming, we see Welles in bed with the gorgeous DOLORES DEL RIO.

Mank's pounding and calling wakes them.

WELLES
Jesus Christ...

DOLORES DEL RIO
(panicked)
Orson, shut him up!

Welles jumps out of bed and throws on a robe...

EXT DOLORES DEL RIO'S HOUSE FOLLOWING

Welles yanks open the door.

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 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!

A light snaps on in the neighboring house.

WELLES

It's obviously a mistake, Mank! Some steno girl made a mistake, alright?! Now would you please shut up!

MANK

'Fraid everyone's gonna find out you're screwing a married woman? 'FRAID OF THE SCANDAL?! WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YOU--

Welles tries to slam the door shut -- Mank throws himself against the door:

MANK

YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME--!

WELLES

(savagely)

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 slams the door in Mank's face.

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. Someone came up with A SEA OF UPTURNED FACES -- which has a nice, grand ring to it -- and I thought of 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 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?

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)

George, 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 beat. Welles finally looks up 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.

WELLES (CONT.)

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.

Welles glances at him.

SCHAEFER

For the title.

WELLES

(smiles)

Ah, it's a grand title.

He sweeps out. Schaefer smiles and shakes his head.

SCHAEFER

Like it would kill him to say thank you.

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.

WILLI COMBE

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.

EXT WELLES' HOUSE BEFORE DAWN

It is still dark as Welles emerges from his house. His driver waits. Welles quickly climbs into his car...

INT CAR FOLLOWING

Welles sits with his shooting script in his lap as the car

speeds him to the studio. Welles gazes out of the window...

The car pulls up to the RKO lot, a sleepy guard waves it through...

The car arrives at a sound stage...

EXT SOUND STAGE, RKO LOT FOLLOWING

The sun is just rising as Welles climbs out of the car and goes toward the sound stage. He stops and glances at a sign on the wall by the sound stage door:

CITIZEN KANE. RKO PRODUCTION #281. DIRECTOR: ORSON WELLES.
ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE.

Welles enters the sound stage...

INT RKO SOUND STAGE FOLLOWING

Absolute silence.

Welles enters the mammoth sound stage and looks around, it is as if he has entered a great cathedral. A few lights illuminate portions of the stage and giant lighting rigs and scaffolding soar to the unseen ceiling miles away.

The Xanadu Great Hall set awaits.

Welles slowly walks to the set and stands, surveying his domain, savoring the moment.

Title: JULY 30, 1940.

He clears his throat and speaks, rehearsing his first day speech to the cast and crew. His voice echoes.

WELLES

Today we--

He stops, surprised by the echo.

WELLES

Today we are going to break every rule in motion picture history...

No ... We are going to shatter every rule in ...

Today 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...

As Welles continues to rehearse we slowly ascend the scaffolding and lighting rigs...

WELLES' VOICE

Together we will throw away all the maps and we will become joyously lost in the wilderness. And the future cartographers of Hollywood will forever chart our course. Following our lead...

We continue to ascend and finally discover two electricians on the upper catwalk, staring down in amusement, much like the two stagehands at the opera in KANE.

WELLES' VOICE

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

Again to Welles on the stage floor:

A beat. Welles slowly smiles.

WELLES

We're going to do this because it's going to be fun.

Above, one of the electrician's throws the switch on a huge spotlight.

Welles is captured in the vibrant white light and Benny Goodman's immortal "SING, SING, SING" immediately 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:

In varying KANE makeups he tears through scenes and actors: laughing with AGNES MOOREHEAD on the cabin set; charming RUTH WARRICK on the breakfast table set; berating DOROTHY COMMINGORE on the Great Hall set...

He speeds back and forth and back and forth from the set to the camera in the Campaign Headquarters set, never happy with the shot...

Gregg Toland watches, bemused, as Welles shifts tiny prop pieces on the set...

Welles bullies and screams and pleads and seduces. Like an obsessed artistic tornado he is seemingly everywhere at once. We see him rejecting matte paintings and in makeup and rewriting the script and trying on costumes and selecting props and leaping into odd positions looking for the perfect camera angle.

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 58.

PAUL STEWART

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

WELLES

Again.

A film clapper: take 59.

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...

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 112.

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 178.

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

In a cramped editing room we see Welles watching the scene 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.

Then Toland notices something in the catwalks high above the set. A redheaded ELECTRICIAN.

TOLAND

Orson, you see that electrician up there? The redhead. He was on GRAPES OF WRATH. He's a freelance studio spy. Probably reports right back to the RKO boys in 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 up at the redheaded electrician.

WELLES

YOU! COME DOWN HERE!

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

The electrician stops before Welles.

ELECTRICIAN

Mr. Welles...?

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

The electrician recoils, stunned.

WELLES

GET OUT!

Welles returns to Toland as the electrician slinks off.

"SING, SING, SING" continues as:

We see the magnificent film emerging. Welles watching scenes in a screening room, his feet up, exhausted, almost asleep, a cigar dangling from his lips...

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...

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

We return to the screening room. Welles is now fully asleep. His cigar falls from his mouth and begins smoldering on his suit.

"SING, SING, SING" 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

Five...? Yes. No. We're done today...

He slowly walks off the set as he nervously pulls at his tie, tearing it 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 a low, insistent drum beat, a Gene Krupa riff.

We hear the sound of an ice pick chipping into a block of ice. Welles glances around. We are no longer in Welles' living room but at...

INT MANK'S HOUSE, CULVER CITY DAY

A turntable spins in a corner, playing a Gene Krupa record. Ashtrays overflow with cigar butts and messy piles of pages are littered around a typewriter.

Mank's Culver City house is tiny and on the edge of squalid.

Welles, still in his peeling old-Kane makeup, is standing in the middle of the living room and Mank is in the small kitchenette, chipping ice for drinks.

A long pause.

WELLES

And I'm looking at them -- and they're all looking at me and I don't know who should pour the tea.

MANK

Uh huh.

WELLES

I just can't ... see it anymore.

Mank returns to the living room and thrusts a drink in Welles hand.

WELLES

I want you back.

MANK

Fuck you. (He sits.) You wanted me out, I'm out.

WELLES

I'm sorry.

MANK

I don't care.

Welles hands Mank a folded script from his jacket. Mank looks at it as:

WELLES

This is the shooting script we've been using every day.

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

WELLES

It's just like we always said it would be.

Mank hands it back.

MANK

Too late, kid.

Welles sits.

WELLES

Did I ever tell you about my father?

MANK

I don't give a shit about--

WELLES

He was a drunk. And he was my father and I was ashamed of him.

A beat. Welles proceeds quietly and with difficulty.

WELLES

He showed me the world, he took me with him everywhere -- Europe, China -- and he was so proud of me. But he would drink and he would get ...embarrassing. And I began to resent him. Because I was so ... sparkling, you see.

So I cut him dead. I turned my back and I walked away because I didn't need him. He was getting in the way of my "genius." And he would write me letters, and I never answered them, and he would call me, and I never took his calls, and he showed up at school and I wouldn't see him.

Tears are beginning to inch down Welles' face.

WELLES

When I finally saw him again, he was in a coffin. I was fifteen. And all of a sudden he wasn't that embarrassing drunk anymore ... he was the man who showed me the world.

Welles looks up at Mank, tears now streaming down his face.

WELLES

Just like you, Mank.

A long beat. Mank, despite himself, is moved.

To cover his emotion Mank rises and goes into the kitchen to freshen his drink. We remain tight on Welles as we hear Mank's voice:

MANK'S VOICE

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

WELLES

Yeah.

A beat.

MANK'S VOICE

Orson ... just cut the goddamn tea.

WELLES

Okay.

A beat. Welles reaches for a cigar, tears still wet on his face.

MANK'S VOICE

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

WELLES

No.

MANK'S VOICE

Good -- cause I was thinking that we're starting the scene too late...

Welles quickly bites off the end of his cigar -- his expression one of "Gotcha!" -- even as his cheeks are still wet with tears.

MANK'S VOICE (CONT.)

'Cause if we don't show Susan watching Kane more then we're not building the right tension into the scene. See, she's gotta know that...

Welles slowly smiles as the record of Gene Krupa's percussion segues into the unmistakable rhythms of "SING, SING, SING" and 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 at Welles' side: supporting; challenging; amusing; inspiring...

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

"SING, SING, SING" finally ends at...

Through the black-and-white viewfinder we see Welles, in full costume and makeup, carefully walking across the massive Kane Campaign Headquarters set toward us. We see the low angle black-and-white camera's perspective.

TOLAND'S VOICE

Closer ... closer ... closer -- stop. We just lost your head.

WELLES

Can you see my shoes?

TOLAND'S VOICE

Yeah, but we lose your head.

WELLES

Goddamn it! Joe -- stand here.

JOSEPH COTTON, also in full costume and makeup, steps into the shot and takes Welles' position as Welles scurries out of the frame....

INT

SOUND STAGE, RKO

NIGHT, FOLLOWING

Welles marches across the set and squirms into position at the camera, which is right on the floor, and peers up through the viewfinder.

Toland lies next to him. Mank stands to one side and watches.

WELLES

It's just 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

Spare me the aria, I know what you want--

WELLES

I need my shoes in total focus right here and also Joe back there--!

TOLAND

I know what you want but it can't be done!

WELLES

Take apart the fucking camera rig -- we could get a few more inches down and then tilt up--

TOLAND

Orson -- we can't get the fucking camera any fucking lower so find another fucking shot!

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!

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.

We see a grip pounding away at the concrete with a jackhammer as 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.

Welles supervises as Toland lowers the camera into the freshly dug hole in the middle of the sound stage. Mank checks his watch, 3:30 AM.

Welles leaps into the trench to check the camera setup.

Again we see the view through the black-and-white viewfinder. Joseph Cotton stands at a distance, at the far wall of the set.

WELLES' VOICE

Okay, Joe ... come closer ... closer ...

We see Cotton approaching. He finally stops inches away from the camera. His shoes and the far wall of the set are both in total focus. It is a breathtaking, vertiginous shot.

Then we see Welles and Joseph Cotton rehearsing and rehearsing and filming and filming the scene. Endlessly.

Finally we seem to be seeing the scene from the movie:

WELLES

"Well, if you got drunk to talk to me about Miss Alexander, don't bother. I'm not interested. I've set back the sacred cause of reform, is that it? All right, if that's the way they want it, the people have made their choice. It's obvious the people prefer Jim Gettys to me."

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--

We continue to watch the scene through the viewfinder:

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.

We jump out of the black-and-white viewfinder and into the
scene as Welles turns to an assistant.

WELLES

How 'bout a real drink?

TOLAND

We done?

WELLES

Yeah.

The crew members exhale and practically collapse.

Welles stands and looks around in satisfaction. He takes in
the empty corners of the sound stage, the sets, the cameras.
Savoring the moment.

WELLES

(quietly)

It's finished.

He 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.

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. 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'tcha 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 Orson
is scoring the picture now and he's very
particular about the music--

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:

"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. On balance I would say this reflects rather badly on you.

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.

LOUELLA

I'll need your help.

HEARST

Anything you need.

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

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 picks up one of his papers.

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.

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.

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

RECORDING STAGE

NIGHT

KANE composer BERNARD HERMANN stands before an orchestra, going over some of the music for KANE. He tries various measures and makes adjustments. A movie screen is ready to run sections of the film.

Welles sits at the back of the room, talking quietly to Gregg Toland. Welles is 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. 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?

Bernard Hermann turns back to Welles and Toland:

BERNARD HERMANN

Orson, please...

WELLES

(whispering, to Toland)

Well, yes, of course he's me. But who is this solitary figure wandering the desert with only 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--

Mank joins them, 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

No, you gotta hear this--

BERNARD HERMANN

(snapping back at them)

I'm trying to work here!

WELLES

Sorry, you keep at it, old boy.

He leads Toland and Mank out of the stage and into the sound proof recording booth...

INT

SOUND BOOTH

FOLLOWING

A few sound engineers and mixers work over recording panels and watch Hermann and the orchestra as Welles, Toland and Mank enter.

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)

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? Mr. Mayer and Mr. Cohn and Mr. Warner
and Mr. 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

(sharply)

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

One of the sound technicians turns to Welles:

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Sorry, Mr. Welles, I can't really hear...

Welles, Mank and Toland quickly decamp to a hallway outside the recording stage...

INT

HALLWAY

FOLLOWING

They emerge into the hallway. Mank lights a cigar.

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

(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 leans forward in a sudden explosion of anger:

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!

Bernard Hermann appears at a doorway from the recording stage.

BERNARD HERMANN

We're ready. You want to hear it?

Welles goes with Hermann into the stage.

Toland and Mank stand in silence. Then:

TOLAND

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

MANK

Hope he's planning to start with the crucifixion.

INT

RECORDING STAGE

FOLLOWING

Welles sits at the back of the stage, deep in thought.

Bernard Hermann raises his baton and prepares to conduct. The opening shots of KANE -- fog shrouded Xanadu -- are projected on the screen. Hermann conducts and the orchestra plays.

We watch the first images of the film with the brilliant music.

We pull back to reveal we are at...

INT SAN SIMEON, SCREENING ROOM NIGHT

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 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.

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 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?

INTGOTHIC SUITENIGHT

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.

A pause. Then:

MARION

How bad is it?

WILLICOMBE

Miss Davies--

MARION

Come on, Joe. How bad is it?

A beat.

WILLICOMBE

It's finished.

Hearst gallops up to them. A servant helps him down from his horse. He strides briskly 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 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.

AGENT McCABE

Are you now or have you--

MANK

(grim)

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 kitchen 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 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.

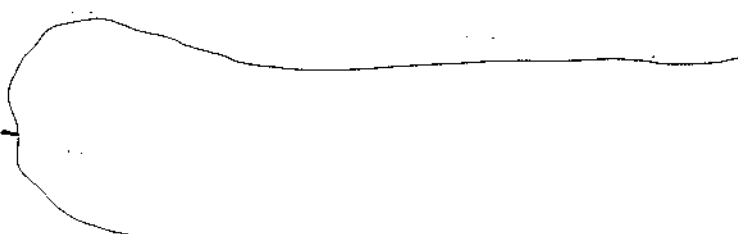
A pause.

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, Mr. Rockefeller, 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.

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

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

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"?! 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" -- 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.

They gaze at the destruction of Tara 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.

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

EXT MAYER'S ESTATE DAY

A row of six shining limousines are lined up in front of
 Mayer's enormous house. The chauffeurs stand together and
 chat.

EXT MAYER'S ESTATE, BACKYARD DAY

Mayer sits in the glorious back garden of his house. Six
 other men are gathered around him.

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 off.

JACK WARNER

(to Mayer)

Your son-in-law -- meshugena.

Laughter.

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.

INTRECORDING STAGEDAY

KANE composer Bernard Hermann again stands before the 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, supervising everything. 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...

INTSAN SIMEON, GOTHIC SUITEDAY

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)

We've been in touch with Gimbels in New York and they've agreed to hold a special sale. They're giving over an entire floor for the merchandise. You'll have to go there in person to sign the bill of sale, by the way.

Also 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 announce the Gimbels sale and 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 CITIZEN
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.

WELLES (CONT.)

"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 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.

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.

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.

We linger on Schaefer as a haunting echo of "I CAN'T GET STARTED" is heard...

INT/EXTSAN SIMEONNIGHT

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 tennis courts, empty.

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, 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

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

A large banner is suspended at one end of the floor: "The Hearst Collection." It is the first day of the sale and it is mobbed.

Hearst and Marion, alone in a crowd, walk wordlessly through the mayhem.

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.

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 bits!

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."

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 as we pull up and take in the entire fifth floor.

It is a stunning KANE-like image of rows and rows of merchandise piled high. Of junk and jewels. Of Charles Foster Kane and William Randolph Hearst.

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.

Magically, the stars in his eyes give way to the vague shapes of men sitting around a table.

Welles looks at the men.

WELLES

Today...

We pull back to see we are at...

INT RKO BOARD ROOM, NEW YORK DAY

Welles stands 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.

Welles looks at the men. And he speaks. For once, his usual overwrought, theatrical tones are gone.

He speaks simply.

WELLES

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 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?

WELLES (CONT.)

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 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.

The doors opens on Hearst's floor and he leaves the elevator.

The doors are about to shut on Welles when he leans forward and roars:

WELLES

CHARLES FOSTER KANE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED!

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.

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. It's gonna go great. Trust 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)

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 see their amazement as they are mesmerized -- and their confusion as they are challenged.

And we see George Schaefer, quietly proud.

Bernard Hermann's opening music continues to play until we finally hear:

"KANE"

"Rosebud..."

And the world of movies is forever changed.

INT DESERTED BAR, NEW YORK NIGHT

Welles and Mank are sitting in a rundown, deserted bar.

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.

A beat. Mank takes a drink.

MANK

- I'll tell ya something, kid. When you make your masterpiece at 26 it's a bitch. I mean, where do you go from here?

A long pause.

Then Welles speaks, softly.

WELLES

I will burn. Burn up. Burn out.

But oh, what a flame.

He looks at Mank and toasts.

WELLES

Cheers.

And Orson Welles smiles. Indominable.

THE END.