

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Members of the Continental Congress

President
JOHN HANCOCK

Secretary
CHARLES THOMSON

New Hampshire
DR. JOSIAH BARTLETT

Custodian
ANDREW McNAIR

Massachusetts
JOHN ADAMS

ABIGAIL ADAMS

Rhode Island
STEPHEN HOPKINS

MARTHA JEFFERSON

Connecticut
ROGER SHERMAN

A LEATHER APRON

New York
LEWIS MORRIS
ROBERT LIVINGSTON

A PAINTER

A COURIER

New Jersey
REV. JONATHAN WITHERSPOON

Pennsylvania
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
JOHN DICKINSON
JAMES WILSON

Delaware
CAESAR RODNEY
COL. THOMAS McKEAN - Scot
GEORGE READ

Maryland
SAMUEL CHASE

Virginia
RICHARD HENRY LEE
THOMAS JEFFERSON

North Carolina
JOSEPH HEWES

South Carolina
EDWARD RUTLEDGE

Georgia
DR. LYDIA HALL

THE PLACE

A single setting representing the Chamber and an Anteroom of the Continental Congress, a Mall, High Street, and Thomas Jefferson's Room, in Philadelphia; and certain reaches of John Adams' mind.

THE TIME

May, June and July, 1776.

THE SCENES

1. The Chamber of the Continental Congress
2. The Mall
3. The Chamber
4. Thomas Jefferson's Room and High Street
5. The Chamber
6. A Congressional Anteroom
7. The Chamber

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NOTE: The action is continuous, without intermission.

(or may be played in Two Acts
as indicated in the script).

THE MUSICAL NUMBERS

Scene 1:

"FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN, SIT DOWN" Adams & The Congress
"PIDDLER, TWIDDLE" Adams
"TILL THEN" Adams & Abigail

Scene 2:

"THE LEES OF OLD VIRGINIA" Lee, Franklin & Adams

Scene 3:

"BUT, MR. ADAMS -- " Adams, Franklin,
Jefferson, Sherman
& Livingston

Scene 4:

"YOURS, YOURS, YOURS" Adams & Abigail
"HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN" Martha, Franklin & Adams

Scene 5:

"COOL, COOL CONSIDERATE MEN" Dickinson & The
Conservatives
"MOMMA LOOK SHARP" Courier

Scene 6:

"THE EGG" Franklin, Adams, Jefferson
& Congress

Scene 7:

"MOLASSES TO RUM" Rutledge
"COMPLIMENTS" Abigail
"IS ANYBODY THERE?" Adams, Franklin,
Jefferson, Thompson

Scene 1

In front of the Curtain:

JOHN

I have come to the conclusion that one useless man is called a disgrace -- that two are called a law-firm -- and that three or more become a Congress. And by God, I have had this Congress! For ten years King George and his Parliament have gulled, cullied and diddled these Colonies with their illegal taxes -- Stamp Acts, Townshend Acts, Sugar Acts, Tea Acts -- and when we dared stand up like men they stopped our trade, seized our ships, blockaded our ports, burned our towns and spilled our blood -- and still this Congress won't grant any of my proposals on Independence even so much as the courtesy of open debate! Good God, what in hell are they waiting for?!

(The Curtain flies up to reveal:

The CHAMBER of the Second
Continental Congress in
Philadelphia.

AT RISE: CONGRESS is in session, sweltering in the heat of a premature summer's evening. A large day-by-day wall calendar reads "MAY 8."

CONGRESS

(Singing)

SIT DOWN, JOHN!
SIT DOWN, JOHN!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN,
SIT DOWN!

SIT DOWN, JOHN!
SIT DOWN, JOHN!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN,
SIT' DOWN!

VOICE

SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

CONGRESS

IT'S NINETY DEGREES!
HAVE MERCY, JOHN, PLEASE!
IT'S HOT AS HELL IN
PHILADEL -- PHIA!

TWO VOICES
SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

JOHN
I SAY "VOTE YES!"
"VOTE YES!"
VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCY!

CONGRESS "A"
SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

JOHN
I SAY VOTE "YES!"

CONGRESS
SIT DOWN, JOHN!

JOHN
VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCY!

VOICE FROM CONGRESS "B"
SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

CONGRESS "B"
NO! NO! NO!
TOO MANY FLIES!
TOO MANY FLIES!

CONGRESS "A"
BUT IT'S HOT AS HELL IN
PHILADEL -- PHIA ... !

VOICES FROM CONGRESS "A"
ARE YOU GOING TO OPEN UP A WINDOW?

CONGRESS "A"
CAN'T WE
COMPROMISE, HERE ... ?

JOHN
VOTE "YES!"

CONGRESS "B"
NO, TOO MANY
FLIES HERE ... !

JOHN
VOTE "YES!"

CONGRESS (FULL)
OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN,
SIT DOWN!

(THEY freeze)

JOHN

(Spoken; roaring)

Good God!! Consider yourselves fortunate that you have
John Adams to abuse for no sane man would tolerate it!

CONGRESS

(Action resumes)

JOHN, YOU'RE A BORE!
 WE'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE!
 NOW, FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN,
 SIT DOWN!!

JOHN

I SAY "VOTE YES!" ...

SOME VOICES

NO!!

JOHN

VOTE "YES!" ...

CONGRESS (FULL)

NO!!

JOHN

VOTE FOR
 INDEPENDENCY ... !

CONGRESS "A"

SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

JOHN

I SAY VOTE "YES!" ...

CONGRESS (FULL)

SIT DOWN, JOHN!

JOHN

VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCY!!!

VOICE

WILL SOMEONE SHUT THAT MAN UP!!

JOHN

(Spoken)

Never! Never!

(HE storms from the Chamber, coming
 downstage, and looks to Heaven for
 guidance)

Dear God! For one solid year they have been sitting there
 -- for one year! Doing nothing!

JOHN (Continued)

(Singing)

I DO BELIEVE YOU'VE LAID A CURSE ON
NORTH AMERICA ... !
A CURSE THAT WE HERE NOW REHEARSE IN
PHILADELPHIA ... !
A SECOND FLOOD, A SIMPLE FAMINE,
PLAGUES OF LOCUSTS EVERYWHERE,
OR A CATAclysmic EARTHQUAKE,
I'D ACCEPT WITH SOME DESPAIR ...
BUT, NO, YOU'VE SENT US CONGRESS --
GOOD GOD, SIR, WAS THAT FAIR?

I SAY THIS WITH HUMILITY IN
PHILADELPHIA ... !
WE'RE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN
PHILADELPHIA ... !
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE US HANGING
ON SOME FAR OFF BRITISH HILL
IF YOU DON'T WANT THE VOICE OF INDEPENDENCY
FOREVER STILL,
THEN, GOD, SIR, GET THEE TO IT ... !
FOR CONGRESS NEVER WILL!

YOU SEE WE
PIDDLE, TWIDDLE, AND RESOLVE.
NOT ONE DAMNED THING DO WE SOLVE.
PIDDLE, TWIDDLE, AND RESOLVE
NOTHING'S EVER SOLVED IN
FOUL, FETID, FUMING, FOGGY, FILTHY ...
PHILADELPEIA!

(From the Chamber, rear, the VOICES
of various CONGRESSMEN can be heard)

VOICE

SOMEONE OUGHT TO OPEN UP A WINDOW!

JOHN

(Spoken)

Oh, shut up!

CONGRESSMAN #1 (HANCOCK)

I now call the Congress' attention to the petition of Mr. Melchior Meng who claims twenty dollars compensation for his dead mule. It seems the animal was employed transporting luggage in the service of the Congress.

CONGRESSMAN #2 (WILSON)

The question, then, would appear to be one of occasion, for if the mule expired, not while carrying, but after being unloaded, then surely the beast dropped dead on its own time!

JOHN

Good God!!

(Singing)

THEY MAY SIT HERE FOR YEARS AND YEARS IN
 PHILADELPHIA ... !
 THESE INDECISIVE GRENADIERS OF
 PHILADELPHIA!
 THEY CAN'T AGREE ON WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG
 OR WHAT IS GOOD OR BAD.
 I'M CONVINCED THE ONLY PURPOSE
 THIS CONGRESS EVER HAD ... WAS TO
 GATHER HERE, SPECIFICALLY,
 TO DRIVE JOHN ADAMS MAD!

YOU SEE ... WE

PIDDLE, TWIDDLE AND RESOLVE.
 NOT ONE DAMNED THING DO WE SOLVE.
 PIDDLE, TWIDDLE AND RESOLVE
 NOTHING'S EVER SOLVED IN
 FOUL, FETID, FUMING, FOGGY, FILTHY ...
 PHILADELPHI --

(ABIGAIL ADAMS, JOHN's wife, a hand-
 some woman of 32, now appears in
 JOHN's imagination and interrupts)

ABIGAIL

JOHN, JOHN!
 IS THAT YOU CARRYING ON, JOHN?

JOHN

(Spoken)

Oh, Abigail! Abigail -- I have such a desire to knock
 heads together!

ABIGAIL

I know, my dearest. I know. But that's because you make
 everything so complicated. It's all quite simple, really:

(Singing)

TELL THE CONGRESS TO DECLARE
 INDEPENDENCY!
 THEN SIGN YOUR NAME, GET OUT OF THERE,
 AND HURRY HOME TO ME!
 OUR CHILDREN ALL HAVE DYSENTERY,
 LITTLE TOM KEEPS TURNING BLUE.
 LITTLE ABBY HAS THE MEASLES
 AND I'M COMING DOWN WITH FLU.
 THEY SAY WE MAY GET SMALLPOX --

JOHN

(Spoken)

Madame, what else is new?

(MUSIC under)

JOHN (Continued)

Abigail, in my last letter I told you that the king has collected twelve thousand German mercenaries to send against us -- I asked you to organize the ladies and make saltpetre for gunpowder -- have you done as I asked?

ABIGAIL

No, John, I have not.

JOHN

Why have you not?

ABIGAIL

Because you neglected to tell us now saltpetre is made.

JOHN

(Impatient)

By treating sodium nitrate with potassium chloride, of course!

ABIGAIL

(A woman)

Oh, yes -- of course.

JOHN

Will it be done, then?

ABIGAIL

I'm afraid we have a more urgent problem, John.

JOHN

More urgent, Madame?

ABIGAIL

(Singing)

THERE'S ONE THING EVERY WOMAN'S MISSED IN
MASSACHUSETTS BAY ...
DON'T SMIRK AT ME, YOU EGOTIST, PAY
HEED TO WHAT I SAY!
WE'VE GONE FROM FRAMINGHAM TO BOSTON
AND CANNOT FIND A PIN.
"DON'T YOU KNOW THERE IS A WAR ON,"
SAYS EACH TRADESMAN WITH A GRIN.
WELL!
WE WILL NOT MAKE SALTPETRE
UNTIL YOU SEND US PINS!

JOHN

PINS, MADAME? SALTPETRE!

ABIGAIL

PINS!

JOHN & ABIGAIL

(Alternating)

SALTPETRE!
 PINS!
 SALTPETRE!
 PINS!
 SALTPETRE!
 PINS!
 'PETRE!
 PINS!
 'PETRE!
 PINS!
 'PETRE!
 PINS!
 'PETRE!
 PINS!

JOHN

(Spoken)

Done, Madame! Done!

ABIGAIL

Done, John.

(Smiling)

Hurry home, John --

JOHN

As soon as I'm able.

ABIGAIL

Don't stop writing -- it's all I have.

JOHN

Every day, my dearest friend.

ABIGAIL

(Singing)

'TIL THEN ...

ABIGAIL & JOHN

'TIL THEN ...

I AM, AS I EVER WAS, AND EVER SHALL BE ...

YOURS ...

YOURS ...

YOURS ...

YOURS ...

YOURS ...

JOHN

SALTPETRE ...

(Throws a kiss)

... JOHN.

ABIGAIL

PINS ...

(Throws a kiss)

... ABIGAIL.

(SHE goes)

CONGRESS

FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOHN ...

SIT DOWN ... !

(JOHN turns, waves them off in
disgust, then crosses)

JOHN

(Calling)

Franklin -- !

Scene 2

The MALL. Sunlight. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN sits on a bench having his portrait painted.

JOHN discovers him.

JOHN

Franklin! Where in God's name were you when I needed you?!

FRANKLIN

Right here, John ... being preserved for posterity. Do y' like it?

JOHN

(HE examines the painting carefully)

It stinks.

(The PAINTER goes)

FRANKLIN

As ever, the soul of tact.

JOHN

The man's no Botticelli.

FRANKLIN

And the subject's no Venus.

JOHN

Franklin! You heard what I suffered in there?

FRANKLIN

Heard? Of course I heard -- along with the rest of Philadelphia. Lord, your voice is piercing, John!

JOHN

I wish to heaven my arguments were. By God, Franklin, when will they make up their minds? With one hand they can raise an army, dispatch one of their own to lead it and cheer the news from Bunker's Hill -- while with the other they wave the olive branch begging the King for a happy and permanent reconciliation. Why damn it, Fat George has declared us in rebellion -- why in Bloody hell can't they?!

FRANKLIN

John, really! You talk as if Independence were the rule! It's never been done before!! No colony has ever broken from the parent stem in the history of the world!

JOHN

Damnit, Franklin, you make us sound treasonous!

FRANKLIN

Do I?

(Thinking)

Treason -- "Treason is a charge invented by winners as an excuse for hanging the losers."

JOHN

I have more to do than stand here listening to you quote yourself.

FRANKLIN

No, that was a new one!

JOHN

Damnit, Franklin, we're at war!

FRANKLIN

To defend ourselves, nothing more. We expressed our displeasure, the English moved against us and we, in turn, have resisted. Now our fellow Congressmen want to effect a reconciliation before it becomes a war.

JOHN

Reconciliation my ass! The People want Independence!

FRANKLIN

The People have read Mr. Paine's "Common Sense." I doubt the Congress has.

(HE studies JOHN)

John -- why don't you give it up? Nobody listens to you -- you're obnoxious and disliked.

JOHN

I'm not promoting John Adams -- I'm promoting Independence.

FRANKLIN

Evidently they cannot help connecting the two.

JOHN

What are you suggesting?

FRANKLIN

Let somebody else in Congress propose.

JOHN

Never!

(FRANKLIN shrugs)

Why? --

Who did you have in mind?

FRANKLIN

I don't know -- I really haven't given it much thought.

(RICHARD HENRY LEE, a tall, loose-jointed Virginian aristocrat of 45, enters)

LEE

You sent for me, Benjamin?

JOHN

(Looking at LEE, then at FRANKLIN)

Never!!

LEE

Halloo, Johnny.

JOHN

(Nodding)

Richard.

FRANKLIN

Richard, John and I need some advice.

LEE

If it's mine t' give it's yours, y' know that.

FRANKLIN

Thank you, Richard. As you know, the cause that we support has come to a complete standstill. Now, why do you suppose that is?

LEE

Simple! Johnny, here, is obnoxious and disliked.

FRANKLIN

Yes, that's true. What's the solution, I wonder?

LEE

(It's obvious)

Get someone else in Congress to propose --

FRANKLIN

Richard, that's brilliant! Wasn't that brilliant, John?

JOHN

(Dully)

Brilliant.

FRANKLIN

Yes. Now the question remains -- who can it be? The man we need must belong to a delegation publicly committed to support Independence and at the present time only Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Delaware have declared our way.

LEE

And Virginia, Benjy -- don't forget Virginia --

FRANKLIN

Oh, I haven't, Richard -- how could I? But strictly speaking, while Virginia's views on Independence are well known, your legislature in Williamsburg has never formally authorized its delegation here in Congress to support the cause. Of course, if we could think of a Virginian with enough influence to go down there and persuade the House of Burgesses --

LEE

Damn me if I haven't thought of someone!

FRANKLIN & ADAMS

(Together)

Who?!

LEE

Me!!

FRANKLIN

Why didn't I think of that!

LEE

I'll leave tonight -- why, hell, right now, if y' like! I'll stop off at Stratford just long enough to refresh the missus and then straight to the matter. Virginia, the land that gave us our glorious Commander-in-Chief --

(A short DRUM ROLL)

-- George Washington -- will now give the continent its proposal on Independence! And when Virginia proposes, the South is bound to follow -- and where the South goes the Middle Colonies go! Gentlemen, a salute! To Virginia, the Mother of American Independence!

JOHN

Incredible! We're free and he hasn't even left yet!

(To LEE)

What makes you so sure you can do it?

(MUSIC begins)

LEE

Hah!!

(Singing)

MY NAME IS RICHARD HENRY LEE!
 VIRGINIA IS MY HOME
 MY NAME IS RICHARD HENRY LEE!
 VIRGINIA IS MY HOME ...

LEE (Continued)

AND MAY MY HORSES TURN TO GLUE
IF I CAN'T DELIVER UP TO YOU
A RESOLUTION -- ON INDEPENDENCY!

FOR I AM F.F.V.
THAT IS, THE FIRST FAMILY
IN THE SOVEREIGN COLONY OF VIRGINIA.
THE F.F.V.
THE OLDEST FAMILY
IN THE OLDEST COLONY IN AMERICA!

AND, MAY THE BRITISH BURN MY LAND
IF I CAN'T DELIVER TO YOUR HAND
A RESOLUTION -- ON INDEPENDENCY!

Y' SEE IT'S -- HERE A LEE
THERE A LEE
EVERYWHERE A LEE, A LEE!

FRANKLUN & LEE

(Alternating)

SOCIAL -- LEE!
POLITICAL -- LEE!
FINANCIAL -- LEE!
NATURAL -- LEE!
INTERNAL -- LEE!
EXTERNAL -- LEE!
FRATERNAL -- LEE!
E-TERNAL -- LEE!

(Together)

THE F.F.V.
THE FIRST FAMILY
IN THE SOVEREIGN COLONY OF VIRGINIA!

LEE

AND MAY MY WIFE REFUSE MY BED
IF I CAN'T DELIVER, AS I SAID,
A RESOLUTION -- ON INDEPENDENCY!

JOHN

(Spoken)

Spoken modest-Lee. God help us!

LEE

He will, John! He will!

LEE (Continued)

(Singing)
 THEY SAY THAT GOD IN HEAVEN
 IS EVERYBODY'S GOD

FRANKLIN

Amen!

LEE

I'LL ADMIT THAT GOD IN HEAVEN
 IS EVERYBODY'S GOD ...
 BUT, I TELL Y', JOHN, WITH PRIDE
 GOD LEANS A LITTLE ON THE SIDE
 OF THE LEES! THE LEES OF OLD VIRGINIA!

Y' SEE IT'S
 HERE A LEE, THERE A LEE
 EVERYWHERE A LEE -- A LEE!

FRANKLIN & LEE

HERE A LEE, THERE A LEE
 EVERYWHERE A LEE --

LEE

LOOK OUT! ... THERE'S
 ARTHUR LEE!
 "BOBBY" LEE! ... AN'
 GENERAL "LIGHTHORSE" HARRY LEE!
 JESSE LEE!
 WILLIE LEE!

FRANKLIN

AND RICHARD H. --

LEE

THAT'S ME!!
 AND MAY MY BLOOD STOP RUNNING BLUE
 IF I CAN'T DELIVER UP TO YOU
 A RESOLUTION -- ON INDEPENDENCY!
 (HE begins strutting, a military
 cakewalk)
 YES SIR, BY GOD, IT'S
 HERE A LEE!
 THERE A LEE!
 COME ON, BOYS, JOIN IN WITH ME!

(THEY do, JOHN reluctantly)

HERE A LEE! THERE A LEE!

FRANKLIN

(Spoken)
 When do y' leave?

LEE

IMMEDIATE-LEE!
HERE A LEE! THERE A LEE!

FRANKLIN

(Spoken)

When will you return?

LEE

SHORT-LEE!
HERE A LEE! THERE A LEE!
AND I'LL COME BACK
TRIUMPHANT-LEE!

FRANKLIN & JOHN

HERE A LEE! THERE A LEE!
(Etc.)

LEE

FORRR-WARRR ...
HO-OOO!

(LEE struts off.)

FRANKLIN and JOHN follow him almost
as far as the wings, then drop out
and return, breathless but relieved)

JOHN

(Spoken)

That was the most revolting display I ever witnessed.

FRANKLIN

They're a warm-blooded people, Virginians!

JOHN

Not him, Franklin -- you! You and your infernal obsession
for deviousness! If you'd come right out and asked him
straight he'd've been gone a half an hour ago!

FRANKLIN

Cheer up, John -- at this very moment our cause is again
riding high -- sitting straight in the saddle and in full
gallop for Virginia!

(LEE suddenly reappears)

LEE

(Singing)

-- AND OUR WOMEN ARE ... SERENE ...
... FULL BOSOMED ...

FRANKLIN

(Perking up)

... FULL BOSOMED ... ?

LEE
FULL BOSOMED! BENJY --
EVERYONE A QUEEN! ... THEY ARE --

(MUSIC IN, at tempo)

LEES! DAMNIT!
THE LEES OF OLD VIRGINIA! YES, SIR! BY GOD!
(Drawing his sword, HE parades around,
followed by FRANKLIN and JOHN)

ALL
IT'S HERE A LEE!
THERE A LEE!

LEE
COME ON, JOHN,
STEP LIVE-A-LEE!

ALL
HERE A LEE!
THERE A LEE!
EVERYWHERE A LEE -- A LEE!
(Etc.)

(Marching, THEY exit, LEE waving his
sword, FRANKLIN lumbering, JOHN
moving like an out-of-step puppet,
looking up to Heaven for the answer)

Scene 3

The CHAMBER.

Featured prominently, rear, is a tally board -- under three main headings ("YEA," "NAY" and "ABSTAIN") are thirteen slots; each with a shuttle containing the name of a single colony. This device, during a vote, is the province of the Secretary of the Congress.

AT RISE:

The Chamber is empty save for its aging custodian, ANDREW McNAIR, who is preparing the room for the day's session with the help of a LEATHER APRON, a working man. The wall calendar now reads: "JUNE 7." Then, as McNAIR sets out quill pens and fills the several inkwells from a large jar, Georgia's DR. LYMAN HALL, 55, enters and looks around, finally clearing his throat. McNAIR looks up.

McNAIR

Yes?

HALL

I'm Dr. Lyman Hall, new delegate from Georgia.

McNAIR

(Going back to work)

I'm Andrew McNair, Congressional Custodian.

(HE turns away)

If you'll be wantin' anything at all just holler out "McNair!" as you'll hear the others do and there won't be too long to wait.

HALL

(Looking around)

Where does the Georgia delegation belong?

McNAIR

Oh, they mill about over in that corner -- near the two Carolinas.

HALL

(Checking his watch)

It's after ten -- I was told the Congress convenes at ten.

McNAIR

They'll be wanderin' in any time now, sir -- with Old Grape 'n Guts leadin' the pack.

HALL

Old who?

HOPKINS' VOICE (O.S.)

McNair -- !!

McNAIR

-- Grape 'n Guts.

(STEPHEN HOPKINS, a thin, round-shouldered man of 70, wearing a black suit, black Quaker hat and his grey hair at shoulder length, enters)

HOPKINS

Fetch me a mug o' rum!

McNAIR

Mr. Hopkins, you'll be pleased to meet Dr. Lyman Hall --

HOPKINS

I don't need a doctor, damnit --

McNAIR

-- new delegate from Georgia --

HOPKINS

-- why didn't you say so?

(To HALL)

I'm Stephen Hopkins, old delegate from Rhode Island.
McNair! Two mugs o' rum!

HALL

I fear it's a little early in the day --

HOPKINS

Nonsense! It's a medicinal fact that rum gets a man's heart started in the morning -- I'm surprised you didn't know it. And speaking as the oldest man in the Congress --

McNAIR

Ben Franklin's older by almost a year --

HOPKINS

Rum!!

(McNAIR scurries off)

HOPKINS (Continued)

Tell me, Dr. Hall -- where does Georgia stand on the question of Independence?

(EDWARD RUTLEDGE, a young, handsome, dandified aristocrat of 26, has entered)

RUTLEDGE

With South Carolina, of course.

HOPKINS

(Laughing)

Good morning, Neddy. Shake the hand of Dr. Lyman Hall from Georgia. Doctor -- this here is Edward Rutledge from whichever Carolina he says he says he's from -- God knows I can't keep 'em straight.

RUTLEDGE

A pleasure, Dr. Hall.

HALL

Your servant, Mr. Rutledge.

HOPKINS

You've met the long and short of it now, doctor -- Neddy, here is only twenty-six -- he's the youngest of us --

RUTLEDGE

Except for Ben Franklin --

HOPKINS

McNair!!

(McNAIR has returned and now stands at HOPKINS' elbow)

McNAIR

Your rum.

HOPKINS

Where do y' go for it, man -- Jamaica?

(RUTLEDGE and HALL walk away)

RUTLEDGE

Where does Georgia stand on Independence at the present time, Dr. Hall?

HALL

I am here without instructions, able to vote my own personal convictions.

RUTLEDGE
And they are -- ?

HALL
Personal.

RUTLEDGE
Dr. Hall -- the deep South speaks with one voice. It is traditional -- even more, it is historical.

(THEY regard one another for a moment.)

Then the Delaware delegation enters:
CAESAR RODNEY, 48, thin and pale,
wears a green scarf tied around his
face, covering some infirmity; GEORGE
READ, 43, small and round, speaks
with a high voice; and COL. THOMAS
McKEAN, 42, tall and florid, has a
booming voice decorated with a
Scottish brogue)

Ah! Enter Delaware -- tria juncta in uno!

McKEAN
Speak plain, Rutledge -- y' know I can't follow none o' y'r
damn French!

RUTLEDGE
Latin, Colonel McKean -- a tribute to the eternal peace and
harmony of the Delaware delegation.

McKEAN
What're y' sayin', man? Y' know perfectly well neither
Rodney nor I can stand this little wart!
(HE indicates READ)

RUTLEDGE
Gentlemen -- Gentlemen -- this is Dr. Lyman Hall of Groegia
-- Caesar Rodney, George Read and Colonel Thomas McKean.

(HALL shakes hands with EACH in turn
and THEY exchange greetings)

RODNEY
Where do you stand on Independence, sir?

HALL
(A look to RUTLEDGE)
With South Carolina, it seems.

RUTLEDGE
I leave the doctor in your excellent company, gentlemen.
(Smiling, HE bows and walks away,
joining another GROUP.)

Slowly the Chamber has begun to fill with CONGRESSMEN: LEWIS MORRIS and ROBERT LIVINGSTON of New York; ROGER SHERMAN of Connecticut, JOSEPH HEWES of North Carolina; the portly SAMUEL CHASE of Maryland; JOSIAH BARTLETT of New Hampshire; and OTHERS: and last to enter, unnoticed, THOMAS JEFFERSON of Virginia, 33, six-three, with copper-colored hair)

RODNEY

(Drawing HALL aside)

Tell me, sir -- would you be a doctor of medicine or theology?

HALL

Both, Mr. Rodney -- which one can be of service?

RODNEY

By all means the physician first! Then we shall see about the other.

HALL

I'll call at your convenience, sir.

(THEY are joined by two members of the Pennsylvania delegation -- JOHN DICKINSON, 44, a thin, hawkish man, not without elegance; and JAMES WILSON, 33, a bespectacled, cautious little sycophant)

DICKINSON

(Good-naturedly)

I trust, Caesar, when you're through converting the poor fellow to Independency that you'll give the opposition a fair crack at him.

RODNEY

You're too late, John -- once I get 'em they're got. Dr. Lyman Hall of Georgia -- Mr. John Dickinson of Pennsylvania.

DICKINSON

An honor, sir.

HALL

Your servant.

WILSON

(Waiting)

Ahem --

RODNEY

Ah, Judge Wilson, forgive me -- but how can anyone see you if you insist on standing in Mr. Dickinson's shadow?

(To HALL)

James Wilson, also of Pennsylvania.

WILSON

Sir.

HALL

An honor, sir.

(FRANKLIN enters, limping on a cane,
one foot bandaged)

FRANKLIN

Will you get out of my way, please? Good morning, all!

HALL

(Recognizing him)

Good Lord -- do you have the honor to be Dr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN

Yes, I have that honor -- unfortunately the gout accompanies the honor.

HOPKINS

Been living too high again, eh, pappy?

FRANKLIN

Stephen, I only wish King George felt like my big toe -- all over!

HOPKINS

McNair!! Fetch a pillo' -- and two more mugs o'rum!

(Now JOHN enters the Chamber and looks around, searching for someone.)

NOTE: It is now evident that the colors and style of the various costumes change gradually from colony to colony -- from the fancy greens and golds of the Deep South to the somber blacks of New England)

JOHN

(Crossing loudly down to FRANKLIN)

Well, Franklin? Where's that idiot Lee? Has he returned yet? I don't see him.

FRANKLIN

Softly, John -- your voice is hurting my foot.

JOHN

One more day, Franklin -- that's how long I'll remain silent and not a minute longer! That strutting popinjay was so damned sure of himself -- he's had time to bring back a dozen proposals by now!

(DICKINSON turns to WILSON and addresses him in a loud voice, for ALL to hear)

DICKINSON

Tell me, James -- how do you explain the strange, monumental quietude that Congress has been treated to these past thirty days?

(EVERYONE, including JOHN, has turned to listen)

Has the ill-wind of Independence finally blown itself out?

WILSON

If you ask me --

DICKINSON

For myself, I must confess that a month free from New England noise is more therapeutic than a month in the country! Don't you agree, James?

WILSON

Well, I --

DICKINSON

(Turning)

Mr. Adams -- pray look for your voice, sir -- it cannot be far and God knows we need the entertainment in this Congress!

(LAUGHTER from his fellow CONSERVATIVES. EVERYONE turns to ADAMS who is trembling with rage)

FRANKLIN

Congratulations, John -- you've just made your greatest contribution to Independence -- you kept your flap shut!

JOHN

One more day ... !

(JOHN HANCOCK, 40, takes his place at the President's desk; HE is followed

by CHARLES THOMSON, 47, the pedantic
Secretary to the Congress. HANCOCK
pounds his GAVEL)

Sit down

HANCOCK

Gentlemen -- the usual morning festivities concluded, I
will now call the Congress to order --

(GAVEL)

Mr. Thomson --

THOMSON

(Rising and ringing a BELL)

The Second Continental Congress, meeting in the city of
Philadelphia, is now in session, 7 June 1776, the 380th
meeting --

McNAIR

Sweet Jesus!

THOMSON

-- The Honorable John Hancock of Massachusetts Bay,
President.

(Rings the BELL and sits)

HANCOCK

Thank you, Mr. Thomson.

(HE swats a fly)

Mr. McNair, the stores of rum and other drinking spirits
are hereby closed to the colony of Rhode Island for a
period of three days.

McNAIR

Yes, sir.

HOPKINS

John -- y' can't do that -- !

HANCOCK

Sit down, Mr. Hopkins -- you've abused the privilege. The
Chair takes this opportunity to welcome Dr. Lyman Hall of
Georgia to this Congress and hopes he will make the best of
it. My God, it's hot! The Secretary will read the roll.

THOMSON

All members present with the following exceptions. Mr.
Charles Carroll of Maryland; Mr. Samuel Adams of
Massachusetts; Mr. Button Gwinnett of Georgia; Mr. George
Wythe and Mr. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia; and the entire
delegation of New Jersey.

HANCOCK

I'm concerned over the continued absence of one-thirteenth
of this Congress. Where is New Jersey?

DICKINSON

Somewhere between New York and Pennsylvania.

HANCOCK

Thank yo very much. Dr. Franklin, have you heard anything?
Your son resides there.

FRANKLIN

Son, sir? What son?

HANCOCK

(Sorry HE brought it up)

The Royal Governor of New Jersey, sir.

FRANKLIN

As that title might suggest, sir, we are not in touch at
the present time.

HANCOCK

Yes. Very well -- uh -- the weather report -- Mr. Jefferson
of Virginia --

(No reaction; JEFFERSON is reading
a book)

Mr. Jefferson!

(JEFFERSON jumps to his feet)

JEFFERSON

Present, sir!

HANCOCK

May we hear about the weather, as if it weren't speaking for
itself.

JEFFERSON

(Going to several gauges at the window)

Eighty-seven degrees of temperature -- thirty-point-aught-
six inches of mercury, wind from the southwest for the rest
of the day -- and tonight --

(HE turns)

-- tonight I'm leaving for home.

HANCOCK

On business?

JEFFERSON

Family business.

HOPKINS

Give her a good one for me, young feller!

JEFFERSON

(Smiling)

Yes, sir -- I will.

(A uniformed COURIER, dusty from his long ride, enters and approaches THOMSON, removing a communique from his pouch. HE tosses it onto the SECRETARY's desk and leaves, wearily)

THOMSON

(Ringing his BELL)

From the Commander, Army of the United Colonies; in New York, dispatch number one thousand one hundred and thirty-seven --

MCNAIR

Sweet Jesus!

THOMSON

(Reading)

-- "To the Honorable Congress, John Hancock, President.
Dear Sir: It is with grave apprehension that I have learned this day of the sailing, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, of a considerable force of British troops in the company of foreign mercenaries and under the command of General Sir William Howe. There can be no doubt that their destination is New York for to take and hold this city and the Hudson Valley beyond would serve to separate New England from the other colonies permitting both sections to be crushed in turn. Sadly, I see no way of stopping them at the present time as my army is absolutely falling apart, my military chest is totally exhausted, my Commissary General has strained his credit to the last, my Quartermaster has no food, no arms, no ammunition, and my troops are in a state of near mutiny! I pray God some relief arrives before the armada but fear it will not. Y'r ob'd't --

(DRUM ROLL)

-- G. Washington."

(During the brief silence that follows,
THOMSON shrugs and files the dispatch)

MCKEAN

Mr. President -- !

HANCOCK

Colonel McKean --

MCKEAN

Surely we've managed to promote the gloomiest man on this continent to the head of our troops. Those dispatches are

the most depressing accumulation of disaster, doom and despair in the entire annals of military history! And furthermore --

HANCOCK

Please, Colonel McKean

McKEAN

What?

HANCOCK

It's too hot.

McKEAN

Oh. Yes. I suppose so.

HANCOCK

General Washington will continue wording his dispatches as he sees fit and I'm sure we all pray that he finds happier thoughts to convey in the near --

(Swats a fly)

-- future. Mr. Thomson -- are there any resolutions?

THOMSON

Dr. Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire.

BARTLETT

(Rising and reading)

"Resolved: that for the duration of the present hostilities the Congress discourage every type of extravagance and dissipation, elaborate funerals and other expensive diversions, especially all horse-racing --

(HE is shouted down by the entire CONGRESS. Then the door bursts open and LEE sweeps in)

LEE

Benjy, I'm back -- I'm back, Johnny -- !

(HE lets out a Southern WAR WHOOP)

McKEAN

Richard, we're pleased t' see y'!

FRANKLIN

What news, Dickie-boy -- what news?

JOHN

Lee! Is it done?

LEE

First things first --

(Looking around)

Tom - where's Tom -- ?

(Turning and seeing JEFFERSON)

Tom! Your little bride wants to know.

JOHN

What?

LEE

"When's he coming home?"

JEFFERSON

I leave tonight!

JOHN
 (Grabbing LEE's shoulders)
 Never mind that -- is it done?

LEE
 Done?

(A pause)
 Why, certain -Lee!!

(CHEERS from THOSE FOR)

Mr. President -- I have returned from Virginia with the followin' resolution --

(Producing a paper and reading)
 "Resolved: that these united colonies are (and of a right ought to be) free and independent states, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is (and ought to be) totally dissolved!"

JOHN
 Mr. President, I second the proposal!

HANCOCK
 The resolution has been proposed and seconded. The Chair will now entertain debate.

DICKINSON
 (Rising, assuming weariness)
 Mr. President, Pennsylvania moves, as always, that the question of Independence be postponed -- indefinitely.

WILSON
I second the motion!

JOHN
 UHHH!

HANCOCK
 Judge Wilson, in your eagerness to be loved you seem to have forgotten that Pennsylvania cannot second its own motion.

READ
 Delaware seconds.

McKEAN
 You would, y' little weasel!

HANCOCK
 The motion to postpone has been moved and seconded. Mr. Thomson --

(THOMSON goes to the tally board.
As each Colony votes HE announces
it and McNAIR, in turn, mechanically
records it on the board.

HOPKINS, during this preparation,
rises and leaves the Chamber)

THOMSON

On the motion to postpone indefinitely the resolution of
Independency or proceed with the debate, all those in favor
of debate say "Yea," all those for postponement say "Nay."
(Intoning)

New Hampshire --

BARTLETT

New Hampshire favors debate and says Yea.

THOMSON

New Hampshire says Yea. Massachusetts --

JOHN

Massachusetts, having borne the brunt of the King's
tyranny --

ALL (THOSE AGAINST)

Shame!! Shame!!

(THOSE FOR)

Sit down, John!

JOHN

-- Yes, I said tyranny! Massachusetts now and for all time
says Yea!

THOMSON

Massachusetts says Yea. Rhode Island -- Mr. Hopkins?
Where's Rhode Island?

McNAIR

Rhode Island is out visitin' the "necessary."

HANCOCK

After what Rhode Island's consumed I can't say I'm
surprised. We'll come back to him, Mr. Thomson.

THOMSON

Rhode Island passes --

(LAUGHTER; THOMSON looks around,
not understanding, then proceeds)

Connecticut --

SHERMAN

(HE holds, as HE will throughout the
entire play, a shallow bowl of coffee;
HE is never without it)

While Connecticut has, 'til now, been against this
proposal, our legislature has instructed me that, in the
event it is introduced by any colony outside of New
England, Connecticut could not any longer withhold its
support. Connecticut says Yea.

(FRANKLIN and JOHN exchange satisfied
looks)

THOMSON

Connecticut says Yea. New York --

MORRIS

Mr. Secretary, New York abstains -- courteously.

THOMSON

New York abstains --

MORRIS

-- courteously.

THOMSON

-- New Jersey --

HANCOCK

Absent, Mr. Secretary.

Oh, yes,

THOMSON

New Jersey is absent. Pennsylvania --

DICKINSON

Pennsylvania, for the twenty-fourth time, says Nay.

THOMSON

Pennsylvania says Nay. Delaware --

RODNEY

Delaware, as ever for Independence, says Yea.

THOMSON

Delaware says Yea. Mary-land --

CHASE

Mary-land would welcome Independence if it were given but
is highly skeptical that it can be taken. Mary-land says
Nay.

THOMSON

Mary-land says Nay. Virginia --

LEE

Virginia, the First Colony, says Yea!

THOMSON

Virginia says Yea. North Carolina --

HEWES

North Carolina respectfully yields to South Carolina.

THOMSON

South Carolina --

RUTLEDGE

Mr. President -- although we in South Carolina have never seriously considered the question of Independence, when a gentleman proposes it, attention must be paid. However -- we in the deep South, unlike our friends in New England, have no cause for impatience at the present time. If, at some future date, it becomes the wish of all our sister colonies to effect a separation we will not stand in the way. But for the time bein' -- South Carolina will wait -- and watch. The vote is Nay.

THOMSON

South Carolina says Nay.

HEWES

(Jumping up)

North Carolina --

THOMSON

-- says Nay -- yes, Mr. Hewes, I know. Georgia --

(HALL rises, looks around, but says nothing, obviously in great uncertainty)

Georgia --

HALL

Mr. Secretary --

(His eyes meet RUTLEDGE's, then quickly look away)

-- Georgia seems to be split right down the middle on this issue -- the People are against it -- and I'm for it.

(Understanding LAUGHTER)

I'm afraid I'm not yet certain whether representing the People means relying on their judgement or on my own. So in all fairness, until I can figure it out, I'd better lean a little toward their side. Georgia says Nay.

THOMSON

Georgia says Nay.

(Checks the board)

Rhode Island --

(Calling off)

-- second call -- Rhode Island -- !

HOPKINS' VOICE (O.S.)

I'm comin! -- I'm comin' -- !

(Entering)

Hold y'r damn horses!

THOMSON

We're waiting on you, Mr. Hopkins.

HOPKINS

It won't kill you. You'd think the Congress would have its own pisser! All right, where does she stand?

THOMSON

Five for debate, five for postponement, one abstention and one absence.

HOPKINS

So it's up to me, is it? Well, I'll tell y' -- in all my years I never heard, seen nor smelled an issue that was so dangerous that it couldn't be talked about. Hell yes, I'm for debatin' anything -- Rhode Island says Yea.

(CHEERS from THOSE FOR, including another WAR WHOOP from LEE, as THEY crowd around HOPKINS)

HANCOCK

McNair -- get Mr. Hopkins a rum!

McNAIR

But you said --

HANCOCK

Get him the whole damn barrel if he wants!

McNAIR

Yes, sir!

HANCOCK

The Chair now declares this Congress a committee-of-the-whole for the purpose of debating Virginia's resolution of Independence. Mr. Dickinson --

DICKINSON

Well, now. You've got your way at last, Mr. Adams -- the matter may now be discussed. I confess I'm almost relieved -- there's a question I've been fairly itching to ask you: Why?

JOHN

Why what, Mr. Dickinson?

DICKINSON

Why Independence, Mr. Adams?

JOHN

For the obvious reason that our continued association with Great Britain has grown intolerable.

DICKINSON

To whom, Mr. Adams? To you? Then I suggest you sever your ties immediately. But please be kind enough to leave the rest of us where we are. Personally, I have no objections at all to being part of the greatest empire on Earth, to enjoying its protection and sharing its benefits --

JOHN

Benefits? What benefits? Crippling taxes? Cruel repressions? Abolished rights?

DICKINSON

Is that all England means to you, sir? Is that all the affection and pride you can muster for the nation that bore you -- for the noblest, most civilized nation on the face of this planet? Would you have us forsake Hastings and Magna Carta, Strongbow and Lionhearted, Drake and Marlborough, Tudors, Stuarts and Plantaganets? For what, sir? Tell me for what? For you?

(HE smiles, then turns)

Some men are patriots -- like General Washington -- and some are anarchists -- like Mr. Paine -- some, even, are internationalists -- like Dr. Franklin. But you, sir -- you are merely an -- a-gi-ta-tor -- disturbing the peace, creating disorder, endangering the public welfare -- and for what? Your petty little personal complaints -- your taxes are too high. Well, sir -- so are mine. Come, come, Mr. Adams -- if you have grievances -- and I'm sure you have -- our present system must provide a gentler means of redressing them short of --

(Suddenly his manner changes as HE brings his fist down on the desk with a CRASH)

-- revolution!!

(Wheeling to the CONGRESS)

That's what he wants -- nothing short of it will satisfy him! Violence! Rebellion! Treason!! Now, Mr. Adams -- are these the acts of Englishmen?

JOHN

Not Englishmen, Dickinson -- Americans!

DICKINSON

(Again, POUNDING the desk)
No, sir! Englishmen!!

FRANKLIN

(HE's been asleep, his chin on his chest; now an eye opens)
Please, Mr. Dickinson -- but must you start banging? How is a man to sleep?

(LAUGHTER)

DICKINSON

Forgive me, Dr. Franklin, but must you start speaking? How is a man to stay awake?

(LAUGHTER)

We'll promise to be quiet, sir -- I'm sure everyone prefers that you remain asleep.

FRANKLIN

If I'm to hear myself called an Englishman, sir, then I assure you I'd prefer I'd remained asleep.

DICKINSON

What's so terrible about being called an Englishman? The English don't seem to mind.

FRANKLIN

Nor would I were I given the full rights of an Englishman. But to call me one without those rights is like calling an ox a bull -- he's thankful for the honor but he'd much rather have restored what's rightfully his.

(LAUGHTER, FRANKLIN laughing the longest)

DICKINSON

(Finally)
When did you first notice they were missing, sir?

(LAUGHTER)

Fortunately, Dr. Franklin, the People of these Colonies maintain a higher regard for their Mother country.

FRANKLIN

Higher, certainly, than she feels for them. Never was such a valuable possession so stupidly and recklessly managed than this entire continent by the British Crown. Our industry discouraged, our resources pillaged -- and worst of all, our very character stifled. We're spawned a new

race here -- rougher, simpler, more violent, more enterprising and less refined -- we're a new nationality, Mr. Dickinson -- we require a new nation.

DICKINSON

That may be your opinion, Dr. Franklin, but as I said, the People feel quite differently --

JOHN

What do you know about the People, Dickinson? You don't speak for the People -- you represent only yourself. And that precious "Status quo" you keep imploring the people to preserve for their good is nothing more than the eternal preservation of your own property!

DICKINSON

Mr. Adams, you have an annoying talent for making such delightful words as "property" sound quite distasteful. In heaven's name, what's wrong with property? Perhaps you've forgotten that many of us first came to these shores in order to secure rights to property -- and that we hold those rights no less dear than the rights you speak of.

JOHN

So safe, so fat, so comfortable in Pennsylvania --

DICKINSON

And what is this Independence of yours except the private grievance of Massachusetts? Why is it always Boston that breaks the King's peace? (To the Congress)
My dear Congress -- you must not adopt this evil measure -- it is the work of the devil. Leave it where it belongs -- in New England.

SHERMAN

Brother Dickinson, New England has been fighting the devil for more than a hundred years.

DICKINSON

And as of now, "Brother" Sherman, the devil has been winning hands down! (Indicating JOHN) Why at this very moment he is sitting here in this Congress! Don't let him deceive you -- this proposal is entirely his doing!

LEE

Just a minute...

DICKINSON

It may bear Virginia's name but it reeks of Adams, Adams and more Adams! Look at him -- ready to lead this continent down the fiery path of total destruction!

JOHN

Good God! Why can't you acknowledge what already exists? It has been more than a year since Concord and Lexington -- damnit, man, we're at war right now!

DICKINSON

You may be at war -- you -- Boston and John Adams -- but you will never speak for Pennsylvania!

READ

Nor for Delaware!

RODNEY

Mr. Read -- you represent only one-third of Delaware!

READ

The sensible third, Mr. Rodney!

McKEAN

Sit down, y' little roach, or I'll knock y' down!

HANCOCK

Sit down, all three of you! McNair!! Do something about these damned flies!

HOPKINS

McNair!! Fetch me a rum!

HANCOCK

Get the flies first!

HOPKINS

A rum!

McNAIR

I've only got two hands --

HANCOCK

(Mopping his brow)

Christ, it's hot! Please do go on, gentlemen -- you're making the only breeze in Philadelphia.

RUTLEDGE

Mr. Adams, perhaps you could clear something up for me: after we have achieved Independence -- who do you propose would govern in South Carolina?

JOHN

The People, of course.

RUTLEDGE

Which people, sir? The people of South Carolina? Or the people of Massachusetts?

HOPKINS

Why don't you admit it, Neddy? You're against Independence now and you always will be.

McKEAN

Ave!

RUTLEDGE

You refuse to understand us, gentlemen! We desire Independence, yes -- for South Carolina. That is our country. And as such we don't wish it to belong to anyone -- not to England -- and not to you.

JOHN

We intend to be one nation, Rutledge.

RUTLEDGE

A nation of sovereign states, Mr. Adams -- united for our mutual protection, but separate for our individual pursuits. That is what we have understood it to be -- and that is what we will support -- as soon as everyone supports it.

WILSON

There you are, Mr. Adams -- you must see that we need time to make certain who we are and where we stand in regard to one another -- for if we do not determine the nature of the beast before we set it free it will end by consuming us all.

JOHN

For once in your life, Wilson -- take a chance. I say the time is now! It may never come again!

HEWES

Your clock is fast, Mr. Adams -- I say we're not yet ripe for Independence.

HOPKINS

Not ripe? Hell, we're rotting for want of it!

CHASE

Gentlemen, please -- what in God's name is the infernal hurry? Why must this question be settled now?

RODNEY

What's wrong with now, Mr. Chase?

CHASE

General Washington is in the field. If he's defeated, as it now appears, we'll be inviting the hangman. But if, by some miracle, he should actually win we can then declare anything we damn please!

HEWES

The sentiments of North Carolina precisely.

JOHN

Has it occurred to either of you that an army needs something to fight for in order to win? -- a cause, a purpose, a flag of its own?!

CHASE

Mr. Adams -- how can a nation of only two million souls stand up to an empire of ten million? Think of it -- ten million! How do we compensate for that shortage?!

FRANKLIN

It's simple, Mr. Chase -- increase and multiply!

CHASE

How's that?

JOHN

We will more than compensate -- with spirit! I tell you there's a spirit out there with the People that's sadly lacking in this Congress!

DICKINSON

Yes, of course -- now it's spirit! Why didn't I think of that? No army, no navy, no arms, no ammunition, no treasury, no friends -- but bless our soul -- spirit!
(Turning)

Mr. Lee -- Mr. Hopkins -- Mr. Rodney -- Colonel McKean -- Dr. Franklin -- why have you joined this incendiary little man? This Boston radical -- this a-gi-ta-tor -- this demagogue -- this madman!

JOHN

Are you calling me a madman, you -- you -- you -- fribble!!

FRANKLIN

Easy, John!

JOHN

You and your Pennsylvania proprietors -- you cool, considerate men! You keep to the rear of every issue so if we should go under you'll still remain afloat!

DICKINSON

Are you calling me a coward?

JOHN

Yes! Coward!!

DICKINSON

Madman!!

JOHN

Landlord!!

DICKINSON

Lawyer!!

HOPKINS

Whack him, John!

FRANKLIN

Ho, Spartacus!

CONGRESS

Stop! Go! For Shame! At last! (Etc.)

(RODNEY now steps forward, between
them, and pushes them apart)

RODNEY

Stop it! Stop it!! This is the Congress! Stop it, I say!
The enemy is out there!

DICKINSON

No, Mr. Rodney -- the enemy is here!

RODNEY

No -- no -- I say he's out there -- England -- England --
closing in -- cutting off our air -- there's no time --
no air --

(HE is stricken)

Thomas -- !

(HE collapses)

McKEAN

Caesar -- Caesar -- !!

(HE looks around as the CONGRESS
falls silent and moves in)

Doctor Hall -- ?

HALL

(Kneeling beside RODNEY and looking
under the green scarf; his expression
reflects what HE finds)

Colonel McKean --

McKEAN

Aye -- it's the cancer.

HALL

He should go home.

RODNEY

(Disgusted with himself)

Yes -- a man should die in his own bed. John --

JOHN

I'm here, Caesar --

RODNEY

I leave you a divided Delaware -- forgive me.

MCKEAN

I'll take y' home, Caesar.

(HE lifts RODNEY and turns to JOHN)

I'll be back within the week.

RUTLEDGE

Mr. President -- South Carolina calls the question.

HANCOCK

(Distracted)

What's that, Mr. Rutledge?

RUTLEDGE

(HE walks to the tally board)

I said, Mr. President, South Carolina desires to end the debate and --

(HE moves the Delaware marker from the "Yea" to the "Nay" column)

-- call the question of Independence.

READ

(Glowing)

Delaware seconds!

(Again, BEDLAM, as EVERYONE understands what has happened)

CONGRESS

No! Yes! You can't do that! Call the question! (Etc.)

HANCOCK

(HE GAVELS for order)

Gentlemen, please! The question has been called and seconded. Mr. Secretary, you will record the vote.

JOHN

Franklin -- do something -- think!

FRANKLIN

I am thinking! Nothing's coming!

All those in favor of the resolution on Independence as proposed by the Colony of Virginia signify by saying --

FRANKLIN

Mr. Secretary, would you read the resolution again ... ?

CONSERVATIVES

Ohh!!

FRANKLIN

I've forgotten it.

RUTLEDGE

Oh, come now!

(Annoyed, THOMSON looks to HANCOCK,
who nods; HE sighs)

THOMSON

"Resolved: That these United Colonies are (and of a right ought to be) free and independent --"

(The REV. JOHN WITHERSPOON, a lean
and ascetic clergyman of 54, enters)

WITHERSPOON

I beg your pardon -- I'm the Reverend John Witherspoon --
new delegate from New Jersey -- ?

(As EVERYONE moves in, expectantly;
HE draws back, then seeks out the only
familiar face)

Dr. Franklin -- I regret I must be the bearer of unhappy tidings but your son, the Royal Governor of New Jersey, is taken prisoner and has been moved under guard to the Colony of Connecticut for safe-keeping.

FRANKLIN

Is he unharmed, sir?

WITHERSPOON

When last I heard, he was, yes, sir.

FRANKLIN

Then why the long face? I hear Connecticut is an excellent location. Tell me, why'd they arrest the little bastard?

WITHERSPOON

Our -- uh -- New Jersey legislature has recalled the old delegation to this Congress and has sent a new one.

JOHN

Quickly, man -- where do y' stand on Independence?

WITHERSPOON

Oh, haven't I made that clear?

JOHN

NO!

WITHERSPOON

No, I s'pose I haven't. But that was the reason for the change -- we've been instructed to vote for Independence.

JOHN

Mr. President -- !

JOHN (Continued)

(HE goes to the tally board)

-- Massachusetts is now ready for the vote on Independence --

(HE records New Jersey under the
"Yea" column)

-- and reminds the Chair of its privilege to decide all
votes that are deadlocked!

HANCOCK

I won't forget, Mr. Adams. The Chair would like to welcome
the Reverend Witherspoon and appoint him Congressional
Chaplain if he will accept the post --

WITHERSPOON

With much pleasure, sir.

HANCOCK

Very well. Mr. Thomson, you may now --

(HE swats a fly)

-- proceed with the vote on Independence.

THOMSON

All in favor of the resolution on Independence as proposed
by the Colony of Virginia signify by saying --

DICKINSON

(Jumping up)

Mr. President -- Pennsylvania moves that any vote in favor
of Independence must be unanimous!

JOHN

What?!

WILSON

I second the motion!

HANCOCK

(Admonishing)

Judge Wilson --

WILSON

(Chagrined)

Oh my God.

READ

Delaware seconds, Mr. President.

JOHN

No vote's ever had to be unanimous, Dickinson, and you know
it!

DICKINSON

Yes, but this one must be.

JOHN

On what grounds?

DICKINSON

That no colony be torn from its mother country without its own consent.

RUTLEDGE

Hear, hear!

JOHN

But it'll never be unanimous, damnit!

DICKINSON

If you say so, Mr. Adams.

THOMSON

It has been moved and seconded that the vote on Independence must be unanimous in order to carry. All those in favor signify by saying "Yea" --

(DICKINSON, CHASE, READ, RUTLEDGE,
HEWES and HALL say "Yea")

Six colonies say "Yea." All those opposed signify by saying "Nay" --

(JOHN, BARTLETT, HOPKINS, SHERMAN,
LEE and WITHERSPOON say "Nay")

Six colonies say "Nay."

MORRIS

Mr. Secretary -- New York abstains - courteously.

HANCOCK

Mr. Morris -- why does New York constantly abstain? Why doesn't New York simply stay in New York? Very well -- the vote is tied.

(HE covers his eyes for a moment)

The principles of Independence have no greater advocate in Congress than its President -- and that's the reason I must join those who vote for unanimity.

JOHN

(As the CONGRESS reacts, stunned,
JOHN jumps up, horrified)

Good God! What're y'doing, John? You've sunk us!

HANCOCK

Hear me out. Don't you see that any colony who opposes Independence will be forced to fight on the side of England -- that we'll be setting brother against brother -- that our new nation will carry as its emblem the mark of Cain?

HANCOCK (Continued)

I can see no other way -- either we walk together or together we must stay where we are.

(JOHN yells AAHHH! and marches D.R.)

Very well. Proceed, Mr. Thomson --

THOMSON

A unanimous vote being necessary to carry, if any be opposed to the resolution on Independence as proposed by the colony of Virginia, signify by saying --

JOHN

Mr. President!!

THOMSON

For heaven's sake, let me get through it once!

JOHN

Mr. President, I move for a postponement!

DICKINSON

Postponement?! Ha! I wish you the same luck I had with it!

FRANKLIN

Mr. Adams is right -- we need a postponement!

DICKINSON

On what grounds?

FRANKLIN

On what grounds?

JOHN

Mr. President -- how can this Congress vote on Independence without -- uh -- a written declaration of some sort defining it?

HANCOCK

What sort of declaration?

JOHN

Well -- you know -- uh -- listing all the reasons for the separation and -- uh -- our goals and aims and so on and so forth, et cetera, et cetera --

FRANKLIN

Ditto, Ditto.

JOHN

Ditto! Ditto!

HANCOCK

We know those, don't we?

JOHN

Well, good God, yes, we know them -- but what about the rest of the world? Certainly we require the aid of a powerful

JOHN (Continued)

nation like France or Spain -- and such a declaration would be consistent with European delicacy.

CHASE

Come, now, Mr. Adams -- you'll have to do better than that! Answer straight -- what would be its purpose?

(A pause; for once JOHN is at a loss for words)

JOHN

Yes, well --

JEFFERSON

(Rising)

To place before mankind the common sense of the subject -- in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent.

(Winking at JOHN, HE sits. A moment of surprise; then DICKINSON laughs)

DICKINSON

Mr. Jefferson -- are you seriously suggesting that we publish a paper declaring to all the world that an illegal rebellion is, in reality, a legal one?

FRANKLIN

Why, Mr. Dickinson, I'm surprised at you! You should know that rebellion is always legal in the first person -- such as "our" rebellion. It is only in the third person -- "their" rebellion -- that it is illegal.

(LAUGHTER)

Mr. President, I second the motion to postpone the vote on Independence for a period of time sufficient for the writing of a declaration.

HANCOCK

It has been moved and seconded. Mr. Secretary --

THOMSON

All those in favor of the motion to postpone signify by saying "Yea" --

(ADAMS, BARTLETT, HOPKINS, SHERMAN, WITHERSPOON and LEE say "Yea")

Six colonies say "Yea." Against -- ?

(DICKINSON, CHASE, READ, RUTLEDGE, HEWES and HALL say "Nay")

Six colonies say "Nay."

MORRIS

Mr. Secretary -- New York abstains -- courteously.

HANCOCK

Mr. Morris! What in hell goes on in New York?!

MORRIS

I'm sorry, Mr. President, but the simple fact is that our legislature has never sent us explicit instructions on anything.

HANCOCK

Never? That's impossible!

MORRIS

Have you ever been present at a meeting of the New York legislature? They speak very fast and very loud and nobody pays any attention to anybody else with the result that nothing ever gets done. I beg the Congress' pardon.

HANCOCK

My sympathies, Mr. Morris. The vote again being tied, the Chair decides in favor of the postponement.

(His GAVEL. ADAMS applauds. THOMSON goes to his desk, sits and writes)

So ruled. A committee will now be formed to manage the declaration, said document to be written, debated and approved by the beginning of July, three weeks hence, at which time Virginia's resolution on Independence will finally be voted. Is that clear?

(Meeting general agreement)

Very well. Will the following gentlemen serve on the Declaration Committee: Dr. Franklin, Mr. John Adams, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Livingston and, of course, Mr. Lee.

LEE

Excuse me, but I must be returnin' to the sovereign country of Virginia as I have been asked to serve as Governor. Therefore I must decline -- respectful-Lee!

HANCOCK

Very well, Mr. Lee -- you're excused. I suppose we could leave it a four-man committee--

JOHN

Just a moment Mr. President -- this business needs a Virginia! Therefore, I propose a replacement -- Mr. Thomas Jefferson!

JEFFERSON

No, Mr. Adams -- no -- !

HANCOCK

Very well, Mr. Adams -- Mr. Jefferson will serve.

JEFFERSON

I'm going home, too -- to my wife -- !

JOHN

Move to adjourn!

JEFFERSON

No, wait -- !

FRANKLIN

Second!!

JEFFERSON

It's been six months since I've seen her -- !

HANCOCK

Moved and seconded -- any objections -- ?

JEFFERSON

Yes!! I have objections! Lots of objections!

HANCOCK

(His GAVEL)

So ruled, Congress stands adjourned!

(EVERYONE rises and goes as JOHN,
FRANKLIN, SHERMAN and LIVINGSTON
move downstage, with JEFFERSON
following, still protesting.
Music begins)

JOHN

(Ignoring him)

All right, gentlemen! Let's get on with it. Which of us
is going to write our Declaration on Independence?

FRANKLIN

(Sings)

MR. ADAMS, I SAY YOU SHOULD WRITE IT
TO YOUR LEGAL MIND AND BRILLIANCE WE DEFER ...

JOHN

IS THAT SO!
WELL, IF I'M THE ONE TO DO IT
THEY'LL RUN THEIR QUILL PENS THROUGH IT
I'M OBNOXIOUS AND DISLIKED, YOU KNOW THAT, SIR!

FRANKLIN

(Spoken)

Yes, I know.

JOHN

THEN, I SAY YOU SHOULD WRITE IT, FRANKLIN, YES, YOU!

FRANKLIN

(Spoken)

Hell, no!

JOHN

YES, YOU, DOCTOR FRANKLIN, YOU!

FRANKLIN

BUT -- !

JOHN

YOU!

FRANKLIN

BUT -- !

JOHN

YOU!

FRANKLIN

MR. ADAMS! --

BUT -- MR. ADAMS!

THE THINGS I WRITE

ARE ONLY LIGHT EXTEMPORANEA ...

I WON'T PUT POLITICS ON PAPER

IT'S A MANIA ...

SO, I REFUSE TO USE THE PEN ... IN PENNSYLVANIA!

(A GLEE CLUB is formed by SHERMAN,
LIVINGSTON and FRANKLIN)

GLEE CLUB

PENNSYLVANIA ... AH

PENNSYLVANIA ... AH

REFUSE

TO USE ... THE PEN!

(JOHN begins to pace, thinking)

JOHN

MR. SHERMAN, I SAY YOU SHOULD WRITE IT
YOU ARE NEVER "CONTROVERSIAL," AS IT WERE.

SHERMAN

(Spoken)

That is true --

JOHN
 WHEREAS, IF I'M THE ONE TO DO IT
 THEY'LL RUN THEIR QUILL PENS THROUGH IT,
 I'M OBNOXIOUS AND DISLIKED, YOU KNOW THAT, SIR ...

SHERMAN
 (Spoken)
 Yes, I do.

JOHN
 THEN, YOU SHOULD WRITE IT, ROGER, YOU ...

SHERMAN
 (Spoken)
 Good heavens, no!

JOHN
 YES ... YOU, MR. SHERMAN, YOU!

SHERMAN
 BUT -- !

JOHN
 YOU!

SHERMAN
 BUT -- !

JOHN
 YOU!

SHERMAN
 MR. ADAMS! --
 BUT -- MR. ADAMS!
 I CANNOT WRITE WITH ANY STYLE
 OR PROPER ETIQUETTE
 I DON'T KNOW A PREPOSITION
 FROM A PREDICATE ...
 I AM JUST A SIMPLE COBBLER
 FROM CONNECTICUT!

GLEE CLUB
 CONNECTICUT ... !
 CONNECTICUT ... !
 A SIMPLE COBBLER ... HE!

(JOHN resumes his pacing)

JOHN
 MR. LIVINGSTON, (MAYBE YOU SHOULD WRITE IT)
 YOU HAVE MANY FRIENDS, AND YOU'RE A DIPLOMAT.

FRANKLIN

(Spoken)
Oh, that word!

JOHN

WHEREAS, IF I'M THE ONE TO DO IT
THEY'LL RUN THEIR QUILL PENS THROUGH IT

GLEE CLUB

HE'S OBNOXIOUS AND DISLIKED ... DID YOU KNOW THAT?

LIVINGSTON

(Spoken)
I hadn't heard --

JOHN

THEN, I SAY, YOU SHOULD WRITE IT, ROBERT! ... YES, YOU!

LIVINGSTON

(Spoken)
Not me, Johnny --

JOHN

YES! YOU, ROBERT LIVINGSTON ... YOU!

LIVINGSTON

BUT -- !

JOHN

YOU!

LIVINGSTON

BUT -- !

JOHN

YOU!

LIVINGSTON

MR. ADAMS! --
BUT -- MR. ADAMS!
I'VE BEEN PRESENTED WITH A NEW SON
BY THE NOBLE STORK ...
SO, I AM GOING HOME TO CELEBRATE
AND POP A CORK
WITH ALL THE LIVINGSTONS' TOGETHER
BACK IN OLD NEW YORK!

GLEE CLUB

NEW YORK!
NEW YORK!
LIVINGSTON'S ...
GOING TO POP ... A CORK!

(Slowly, ALL eyes turn to JEFFERSON)

JEFFERSON

MR. ADAMS!
LEAVE ME ALONE ... !

(The GLEE CLUB sings a "LA-LA" THEME,
under)

JOHN

(Spoken; firmly)
Mr. Jefferson --

JEFFERSON

Mr. Adams, I beg you! I've not seen my wife these six months!

JOHN

(Quoting)
" ... and we solemnly declare we will preserve our liberties, being with one mind resolved to die free men -- rather than to live slaves!"

(The GLEE CLUB stops to listen)

Thomas Jefferson, on the "Necessity of Taking Up Arms," 1775! Magnificent! You write ten times better than any man in the Congress -- including me! For a man of only thirty-three years you possess a happy talent for composition and a remarkable felicity of expression. Now! Will you be a patriot? Or a lover?!

JEFFERSON

A lover!

JOHN

No!

JEFFERSON

BUT I BURN, MISTER "A"!

JOHN

SO DO I, MISTER "J"!

(Everything stops)

JEFFERSON

(Spoken)
You -- ?!

SHERMAN

You do?

John!

FRANKLIN

Who'd'a thought it?

LIVINGSTON

JOHN

MR. JEFFERSON
 DEAR MR. JEFFERSON
 I'M ONLY FORTY-ONE,
 I STILL HAVE MY VIRILITY!
 AND I CAN ROMP THROUGH CUPID'S GROVE
 WITH GREAT AGILITY!
 BUT LIFE IS MORE THAN
 SEXUAL COMBUSTIBILITY!

GLEE CLUB

BUST-A-BILITY!
 BUST-A-BILITY!
 COM-BUST-A-BIL-I --

JOHN

Quiet!

(Spoken)

(Sings)

NOW, YOU'LL WRITE IT, MISTER "J"!

JEFFERSON

(Six-feet-four)

WHO WILL MAKE ME, MISTER "A"?!

JOHN

(Five-feet-eight)

I ... !

JEFFERSON

YOU ... ?!

JOHN

YES ... !

JEFFERSON

HOW? ... ?!

JOHN

(Spoken)
 By ... by physical force if necessary! It's your duty --
your duty, damnit!!

JEFFERSON

MR. ADAMS!
 DAMN YOU, MR. ADAMS!
 YOU'RE OBNOXIOUS AND DISLIKED,
 THAT CANNOT BE DENIED

JEFFERSON

(As this is agreed to by ALL)
ONCE AGAIN YOU STAND BETWEEN ME
AND MY LOVELY BRIDE!

GLEE CLUB

LOVELY BRIDE ... !

JEFFERSON

OH, MR. ADAMS, YOU ARE DRIVING ME ... TO
HOMICIDE!!

GLEE CLUB

HOMICIDE ... !
HOMICIDE ... ! --

JOHN

(Spoken)

Quiet!!

(HE is furious)

The choice is yours, Mr. Jefferson!

(HE thrusts a large quill pen into
JEFFERSON's hand; evenly:)

Do -- as -- you -- like -- with -- it.

GLEE CLUB

(Gleefully)

WE MAY SEE MURDER YET!

(JOHN goes, followed by the OTHERS.

JEFFERSON, alone, studies the pen
for a moment -- then turns and heads
for his lodgings, still regarding
the pen as HE goes)

Scene 4

JEFFERSON'S ROOM -- above High Street. It is spare and unaffected, like the man, with a desk, a cupboard, a chair, a couch, and a music stand; a violin sits on the desk.

JEFFERSON mounts the steps and enters his apartment. HE takes another look at the pen and throws it onto the desk angrily.

JEFFERSON

Damn the man!

(HE removes his coat; then HE sees the pen, stops, goes to the desk and, with one foot on the chair, leans over and writes a few words.

Suddenly HE crumples the page and throws it on the floor. HE writes some more; but again HE crumples the paper and throws it on the floor)

God damn the man!

(Now HE starts crumpling more sheets of paper, one quickly after the other, and throws them all over in a frenzy. Then, exhausted, HE sits back, picks up his violin to play.

Meanwhile, JOHN and FRANKLIN have entered below and now climb the steps. After a perfunctory KNOCK by JOHN, THEY go in. FRANKLIN heads for the couch and stretches out, closing his eyes)

JOHN

Jefferson -- are y'finished, man?

(There is no answer)

You've had a whole week -- is it done? Can I see it?

(JEFFERSON points to all of the crumpled paper on the floor. JOHN picks one at random and, flattening it out, reads it)

"There comes a time in the lives of men when it becomes necessary to advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained -- " -- this is terrible.

JOHN (Continued)

(Looking up)
Where's the rest of it?

(Again JEFFERSON points to the floor)

Do you mean to say it's not finished?

JEFFERSON

No, sir -- I mean to say it's not begun.

JOHN

Good God! A whole week! The entire Earth was created in a week!

JEFFERSON

Some day you must tell me how you did it.

JOHN

Disgusting! Look at him, Franklin -- Virginia's most famous lover --

JEFFERSON

Virginia abstains.

JOHN

Cheer up, Jefferson -- get out of the dumps. It'll come out right, I promise you. Now get back to work. Franklin -- tell him to get to work.

JEFFERSON

He's asleep.

El (Outside, a cloaked WOMAN appears. SHE stops, looks around, then sees the door and enters. It is MARTHA, JEFFERSON's wife, a lovely girl of 27)

Put bag down road down

FRANKLIN

(HE sits bolt upright on the couch)
View-halloo, and whose-little-girl are you?!

hug + hug (But JEFFERSON and MARTHA are suddenly oblivious to everything but each other as THEY meet and embrace. THEY kiss -- and kiss -- and will continue kissing throughout the remainder of the scene)

John -- who is she?

JOHN

His wife --

(HE studies them)

-- I hope.

FRANKLIN

(His eyes never leaving them)
What makes y'think so?

JOHN

Because I sent for her.

FRANKLIN

Y'what?!

JOHN

It simply occurred to me that the sooner his problem was solved, the sooner our problem was solved.

FRANKLIN

Good thinking, John -- good thinking.

JOHN

(Stepping forward)
Madame -- may I present myself. John Adams.

(No reaction)

Adams -- John Adams!

(Nothing)

And Dr. Franklin --

(Nothing)

Inventor of the stove!!

(No luck)

*Roll
apart* Jefferson -- would you kindly present me to your wife?!

(No reaction)

She is your wife, isn't she?

FRANKLIN

Of course she is -- look how they fit!

(Starting for the door)

Come along, John -- come along --

JOHN

Come along where? There's work to be done!

FRANKLIN

(A look back over his shoulder)

Heh! Obviously!!

JOHN

(Pacing around in disbelief)

Good God! Y'mean they -- ? They're going to -- ?

(HE stops)

In the middle of the afternoon?

FRANKLIN

(Flat, as if to a child)

Not everybody's from Boston, John.

JOHN

(Still can't believe it)

Incredible.

FRANKLIN

(Anxious to leave he steps U.L.)

Well -- good night, John.

JOHN

(Following)

Have y'eaten, Franklin?

FRANKLIN

Not yet, but --

JOHN

I hear the turkey's fresh at the Bunch o' Grapes --

FRANKLIN

-- I have a rendezvous, John. I'd ask you along but talking makes her nervous.

(FRANKLIN hastily exits U.L.)

It has grown dark. From inside JEFFERSON'S room, we hear a violin sweetly playing the first strains of "He Plays The Violin". ADAMS turns R. to the lighted window. The light goes out.)

lights off
exit US

JOHN (Continued)

(Turning out)
Incredible.

(MUSIC begins

Stepping D.C.)
Oh, Abigail--

(ABIGAIL appears D.R., as before)

I'm very lonely, Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Are you, John? Then as long as you were sending for wives,
why didn't you send for your own?

JOHN

Don't be unreasonable, Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Now I'm unreasonable -- you must add that to your list.

JOHN

(No earthly idea what she's talking about)
List?

ABIGAIL

The catalogue of my faults you included in your last letter.

JOHN

They were fondly intended, madame!

(HE smiles, figuring he's done with this mysterious "list")

ABIGAIL

That I play at cards badly?

JOHN

A compliment!

ABIGAIL

That my posture is crooked?

JOHN

An endearment!

ABIGAIL

That I read, write and think too much?

JOHN

An irony!

ABIGAIL

That I am pigeon-toed?

JOHN

Ah, well, there you have me, Abby -- I'm afraid you are pigeon-toed.

(Smiling)

Come to Philadelphia, Abigail -- please come.

ABIGAIL

Thank you, John -- I do want to. But you know it's not possible now. The children have the measles.

JOHN

Yes, so you wrote -- Tom and little Abby.

ABIGAIL

Only now it's Quincy and Charles. And it appears the farm here in Braintree is failing, John -- the chickens and geese have all died and the apples never survived the late frost. How do you s'pose she managed to get away?

JOHN

(With a glance to the shuttered window)

The winters are softer in Virginia.

ABIGAIL

And their women, John?

JOHN

Fit for Virginians, madame, but pale, puny things beside New England girls!

ABIGAIL

(Pleased)

John! I thank you for that.

JOHN

(A pause)

How goes it with you, Abigail?

ABIGAIL

Not well, John -- not at all well.

(SHE sings)

I LIVE LIKE A NUN IN A CLOISTER
SOLITARY, CELEBATE, I HATE IT ...

(AND YOU, JOHN?)

JOHN

HM!

I LIVE LIKE A MONK IN AN ABBEY
DITTO, DITTO, I HATE IT.

ABIGAIL
 WRITE TO ME WITH SENTIMENTAL EFFUSION
 LET ME REVEL IN ROMANTIC ILLUSION

JOHN
 DO Y' STILL SMELL OF VANILLA AND SPRING AIR?
 AND IS MY FAV'RITE LOVER'S PILLO' STILL FIRM AND FAIR?

ABIGAIL
 WHAT WAS THERE, JOHN!
 STILL IS THERE, JOHN!

COME SOON AS YOU CAN TO MY CLOISTER
 I'VE FORGOTTEN THE FEEL OF YOUR HAND

JOHN
 SOON, MADAME, WE SHALL WALK IN CUPID'S GROVE
 TOGETHER ...

JOHN & ABIGAIL
 AND WE'LL FONDLY SURVEY THAT PROMISED LAND!

'TIL THEN, 'TIL THEN ...
 I AM, AS I EVER WAS, AND EVER SHALL BE ...
 YOURS ...
 YOURS ...
 YOURS ...
 YOURS ...
 YOURS ...

ABIGAIL
 (Beating him to it)
 SALTPETRE ... JOHN!
 (And SHE goes.)

JOHN smiles. Now the DAYLIGHT returns
 -- it's the next morning. FRANKLIN
 enters)

FRANKLIN
 Sorry to be late, John -- I was up 'til all hours. Have
 y'been here long?

Oh,
 Not long. JOHN

FRANKLIN
 And what're y'doing out here? I expected you'd be up there
 cracking the whip.

JOHN
 The shutters are still closed.

FRANKLIN
My word, so they are. Well, as the French say --

JOHN
Oh, please, Franklin! Spare me your bawdy mind first thing
in the morning!

(THEY regard the closed shutters)

Dare we call?

FRANKLIN
A Congressman dares anything. Go ahead.

JOHN
Me?

FRANKLIN
Your voice is more piercing.

JOHN
(HE starts, then hesitates)
Maybe we'd better come back later.

FRANKLIN
What?

JOHN
Well -- it's positively indecent!

FRANKLIN
Oh, John, -- they're young and they're in love.

JOHN
Not them, Franklin -- us! Standing out here --
(Gesturing vaguely at the shuttered
room)
-- waiting for them to -- I mean, what will people think?

FRANKLIN
Don't worry, John -- the history books will clean it up.

JOHN
It doesn't matter -- I won't appear in the history books,
anyway -- only you.

(Thinks about it)
Franklin did this, Franklin did that, Franklin did some
other damned thing -- Franklin smote the ground and out
sprang George Washington, fully grown and on his horse --
Franklin then electrified him with his miraculous lightning
rod and the three of them -- Franklin, Washington and the
horse -- conducted the entire revolution all by themselves.

FRANKLIN

(A pause)

I like it!

SR

(Now the shutter opens and MARTHA appears, dressed and radiant. SHE is HUMMING a tune)

Look at her, John -- just look at her!

JOHN

(Hypnotized)

I am --

FRANKLIN

She's even more magnificent than I remember! Of course, we didn't see much of her front last night.

(Calling)

Good morrow, madame -- !

(SHE looks down at him blankly)

JOHN

Good morrow!

MARTHA

Is it the habit in Philadelphia for strangers to shout at ladies from the street?

FRANKLIN

Not at all, madame, but we're not --

MARTHA

And from men of your age it is not o.. unseemly -- it's unsightly.

JOHN

Excuse me, madame, but we met last evening.

MARTHA

I spoke to no one last evening.

FRANKLIN

Indeed you did not, madame -- but nevertheless we presented ourselves. This is Mr. John Adams and I am Dr. Franklin.

(As SHE stares at them, dumbfounded)

The inventor of the stove -- ?

MARTHA

Oh, please, I know your names very well. But you say you presented yourselves -- ?

FRANKLIN

(Smiling)

It's of no matter -- your thoughts were well taken elsewhere.

MARTHA

(SHE turns to the room for a moment)

My husband is not yet up.

FRANKLIN

Shall we start over? Please join us, madame.

MARTHA

Yes, of course.

(SHE disappears from the window)

FRANKLIN

No wonder the man couldn't write -- who could think of Independence married to her?

(SHE appears, smiling)

MARTHA

I beg you to forgive me -- it is indeed an honor meeting the two greatest men in America.

FRANKLIN

(Smiling back)

Certainly the greatest within earshot, anyway.

in between them

MARTHA

I am not an idle flatterer, Dr. Franklin -- my husband admires you both greatly.

FRANKLIN

Then we are doubly flattered -- we admire very much that which your husband admires.

(A pause as THEY regard each other warmly -- THEY've hit it off)

JOHN

(Finally; the bull in the china shop)

Did you sleep well, madame?

(FRANKLIN nudges him with his elbow)

I mean, did you lie comfortably? Oh, damn! Y'know what I mean!

FRANKLIN

Yes, John, we do. Tell us about yourself, madame -- we've had precious little information. What's your first name?

MARTHA

Martha.

FRANKLIN

Ah. Martha. He might at least have told us that. I'm afraid your husband doesn't say very much.

JOHN

He's the most silent man in Congress. I've never heard him utter three sentences together.

FRANKLIN

Not everyone's a talker, John --

MARTHA

It's true, you know --

(SHE turns to look at the window)

-- Tom is not -- a talker.

(Singing)

OH, HE NEVER SPEAKS HIS PASSIONS,
HE NEVER SPEAKS HIS VIEWS ...
WHEREAS, OTHER MEN SPEAK VOLUMES ...
THE MAN I LOVE IS MUTE.

IN TRUTH
I CAN'T RECALL
BEING WOO'D WITH WORDS
AT ALL ...

EVEN NOW ...

JOHN

Go on, madame --

FRANKLIN

How did he win you, Martha -- and how does he hold onto a bounty such as you?

MARTHA

Surely you've noticed that Tom is a man of many accomplishments -- author, lawyer, farmer, architect, statesman --
(SHE hesitates)

-- and still one more that I hesitate to mention --

JOHN

Don't hesitate, madame -- don't hesitate!

FRANKLIN

Yes -- what else can that red-headed tombstone do?

MARTHA

(SHE looks at them for a moment, then
leans in and sings, confidentially)

HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN
HE TUCKS IT RIGHT UNDER HIS CHIN ...

MARTHA (Continued)

AND HE BOWS ...
OH, HE BOWS ...
FOR HE KNOWS ...
YES, HE KNOWS ... THAT IT'S ...

HEIGH, HEIGH, HEIGH DIDDLE-DIDDLE ...
'TWIXT MY HEART, TOM, AND HIS FIDDLE ...
MY STRINGS ARE UNSTRUNG ...
HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-IGH-IGH ...
HEIGH ... I AM UNDONE!

(JOHN and FRANKLIN look at one another,
not at all sure if SHE's putting them
on or not)

FRANKLIN

The violin, madame -- ?

MARTHA

I HEAR HIS VIOLIN
AND I GET THAT FEELING WITHIN ...
AND I SIGH ...
I SIGH ...
HE DRAWS NEAR ...
VERY NEAR ... AND IT'S ...

HEIGH, HEIGH, HEIGH DIDDLE-DIDDLE ... AND
"GOOD-BYE" ... TO THE FIDDLE!
MY STRINGS ARE UNSTRUNG ...
HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-ICH-IGH ...
HEIGH ... I'M ALWAYS UNDONE!

FRANKLIN

That settles it, John -- we're taking up the violin!

JOHN

(To MARTHA)

Very well, madame -- you've got us playing the violin!
What happens next?

MARTHA

Next, Mr. Adams?

JOHN

Yes! What does Tom do now?

MARTHA

(Demurely)

Why -- just what you'd expect --

(JOHN and FRANKLIN exchange expectant
looks)

We dance!

JOHN & FRANKLIN

(Together and to each other)

Dance -- ?!

FRANKLIN

Incredible!

(And in an instant SHE has swept
FRANKLIN off into an energetic WALTZ.

JOHN watches them for a moment, still
trying to understand it)

JOHN

Who's playing the violin?

FRANKLIN

Oh, John -- really!

(And MARTHA leaves FRANKLIN to begin
WALTZING with JOHN -- who, to FRANKLIN's
astonishment, turns out to dance
expertly)

John! You can dance!

JOHN

(Executing an intricate step; HE's
having a grand time)

Not everybody's from Philadelphia, Franklin!

(Finally THEY have twirled and spun
and danced themselves out)

MARTHA

(As SHE catches her breath)

WHEN HEAVEN CALLS TO ME
SING ME NO SAD ELEGY ... !
SAY I DIED ...
LOVING BRIDE ...
LOVING WIFE ...
LOVING LIFE ... OH, IT WAS ...

MARTHA, JOHN & FRANKLIN

HEIGH, HEIGH, HEIGH DIDDLE-DIDDLE ...

MARTHA

'TWIXT MY HEART ... TOM, AND HIS
FIDDLE ... AND
EVER 'TWILL BE ...
HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-IGH-IGH ...
HEIGH ... THRU ETERNITY ...

FRANKLIN

(In counterpoint; playing an imaginary violin)
HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN ...

JOHN

(In counterpoint; also bowing an imaginary fiddle)
...HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN ...

MARTHA

(In counterpoint; bowing)
...HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN!!!

(Now, JEFFERSON appears, a fiddle under his arm -- and stuck on the end of his bow is a paper. HE collects his wife and together THEY start back toward the room)

JOHN

Franklin, look! He's written something -- he's done it!
(HE dashes after them, snatches the paper off the bow and comes back to FRANKLIN, delighted, and reads it)

"Dear Mr. Adams: I am taking my wife back to bed. Kindly go away. Y'r ob'd't, T. Jefferson."

(FRANKLIN can't control himself and laughs aloud)

Incredible.

OFF ST

FRANKLIN

Perhaps I'm the one who should've written the Declaration after all. At my age there's little doubt that the pen is mightier than the sword.

(Singing)

FOR ... IT'S ...

HEIGH ... HEIGH ... HEIGH ... DIDDLE ... DIDDLE ...

(Wistfully)

AND .. GOD BLESS THE MAN WHO CAN FIDDLE ...

JOHN

(Ever the old war-horse)

AND INDEPENDENCY! ...

JOHN & FRANKLIN

(Regaining their energy)

HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-HEIGH-IGH-IGH ...

YATA-TA-TA-TAH!

THROUGH ETERNITY!

(And THEY exit arm in arm)

HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN! ... VIOLIN! ... VIOLIN! ...

Scene 5

The CHAMBER, as before.

AT RISE: Congress is now in session, though in an exceedingly loose manner. While Secretary THOMSON delivers a droning report, it is clear that NO ONE is listening. HANCOCK sits at the President's table, but HE is occupied reading the Philadelphia Gazette, his feet up on the desk; one group of Congressmen -- MORRIS, READ, WILSON and DICKINSON -- sit with their heads together, talking; another group -- HOPKINS, BARTLETT and SHERMAN -- stands in the rear, also conversing; RUTLEDGE and HEWES pace back and forth across the length of the Chamber as THEY talk; McKEAN stands by the window cleaning a long rifle; CHASE, a large napkin tied around his neck, sits eating a complete meal; WITHERSPOON is asleep at his desk, his head thrown back, his mouth open and SNORING; and McNAIR is kept hopping from one group to another on this errand and that -- after HE first goes to the wall calendar and tears off another page; it now reads: "JUNE 22".

THOMSON

-- and what follows is a complete and up-to-date list of the committees of this Congress now sitting, about to sit, or just having sat: A committee formed to investigate a complaint made against the quality of yeast manufactured at Mr. Henry Pendleton's mill, designated as the Yeast Committee; a committee formed to consider the most effective method of dealing with spies, designated as the Spies Committee; a committee formed to think, perhaps to do, but in any case to gather, to meet, to confer, to talk and perhaps even to resolve that each rifle regiment be allowed at least one drum and one fife attached to each company, designated as the Drum and Fife Committee; a committee formed to --

(FRANKLIN and DR. HALL have entered and now stand surveying the room)

FRANKLIN

Look at it, doctor -- democracy! What Plato called a "charming form of government, full of variety and disorder." I never knew Plato had been to Philadelphia.

HANCOCK

(As HE reads the newspaper)

McNair! Open that damn window!

HOPKINS

(Joining FRANKLIN and HALL, a mug
of rum in his hand)

Ben -- I want y'to see some cards I've gone 'n had printed up that ought t' save everybody here a whole lot of time'n effort considering the epidemic of bad disposition that's been going around lately.

(HE reads)

"Dear sir: You are without any doubt a rogue, a rascal, a villain, a thief, a scoundrel, and a mean, dirty, stinking, sniveling, sneaking, pimping, pocket-picking, thrice double-damned, no good son-of-a-bitch," and y' sign y'r name. What do y'think?

FRANKLIN

(Delighted)

Stephen, I'll take a dozen right now!

THOMSON

-- a committee formed to answer all Congressional correspondence designated as the Congressional Correspondence Committee --

(JOHN strides in and joins FRANKLIN)

JOHN

All right, Franklin -- enough socializing -- there's work to be done!

FRANKLIN

(Pointedly)

Good morning, John!

JOHN

What? Oh.

(Waving it aside)

Good morning, good morning. Now, then, let's get to it.

FRANKLIN

Let's get to what?

JOHN

(Indicating the tally board)

Unanimity, of course. Look at that board -- six Nays to win over in little more than a week!

THOMSON

-- a committee formed to consider the problem of counterfeit money, designated as the Counterfeit Money Committee --

FRANKLIN

All right, John -- where do we start?

JOHN

How about Delaware? It's a sad thing to find her on the wrong side after all this time -- is there any news of Rodney?

FRANKLIN

(Pointing)

McKean's back.

JOHN

Thomas -- !

(THEY go to him)

THOMSON

-- a committee formed to study the causes of our military defeat in Canada, designated as the Military Defeat Committee --

JOHN

How did you leave Caesar? Is he still alive?

McKEAN

Aye, but the journey to Dover was fearful hard on him. He never complained but I could see the poor man was sufferin'.

FRANKLIN

But you got him safely home.

McKEAN

I did, but I doubt he'll ever set foot out of it again.

JOHN

That leaves you and Read split down the middle. Will he come over?

McKEAN

I don't know -- he's a stubborn little snot!

JOHN

Then work on him -- keep at him 'til you wear him down!

McKEAN

Och, John -- face facts, will y'? If it were just Read standin' in our way it wouldn't be so bad. But look for yourself, man --

(Indicating the tally board)

-- Mary-land, Pennsylvania, the entire South -- it's impossible!

JOHN

It's impossible if we all stand around complaining about it. To work, McKean -- one foot in front of the other.

FRANKLIN

I believe I put it a better way -- "Never leave off till to-morrow that which you can do -- ?

JOHN

Oh, shut up, Franklin!

MCKEAN

But what good will it do? Y' know Dickinson -- he'll never give in! And y' haven't heard the last of Rutledge yet, either.

JOHN

Never mind about them -- your job is George Read. Talk him deaf if you have to but bring us back Delaware!

MCKEAN

There's a simplet way --
 (Holds up his rifle)
 -- this'll break the tie!
 (HE goes U.C. to READ)

FRANKLIN

All right, John -- who's next?

(Again, THEY turn to study the board)

THOMSON

-- a committee formed to keep secrets, designated as the Secrets Committee --

JOHN

Pennsylvania and Mary-land. I suggest you try to put your own house in order while I take a crack at Old Bacon Face -- (look at him stuff himself!) -- Ah, Mr. Chase!

(HE goes to him)

How about it, Chase? When are you coming to your senses?

CHASE

(Sourly)

Please, Mr. Adams -- not while I'm eating!

FRANKLIN

Mr. Wilson, it's time to assert yourself. When you were a judge, how in hell did you ever make a decision?

WILSON

The decisions I made were all based on legality and precedence. But there is no legality here -- and certainly no precedent.

FRANKLIN

Because it's a new idea, you clot! We'll be setting our own precedent!

READ

(Together with MCKEAN)

No, Mr. McKean -- no, no, no!

MCKEAN

Damn y'r eyes, Read -- y' came into this world screamin' "no" and y're determined to leave it the same way!

JOHN

(With CHASE)

The Congress is waiting on you, Chase -- America's waiting -- the whole world is waiting! What's that -- kidney?

(HE takes a morsel of food from CHASE's plate with his fingers but CHASE slaps his hand and HE drops it)

CHASE

Leave me alone, Mr. Adams -- you're wasting your time. If I thought we could win this war I'd be at the front of your ranks. But you must know it's impossible! You've heard General Washington's dispatches -- his army has fallen apart.

JOHN

Washington's exaggerating the situation in order to arouse this torpid Congress into action. Why, as Chairman of the War Committee I can tell you for a fact that the army has never been in better shape! Never have troops been so cheerful! Never have soldiers been more resolute! Never have discipline and training been more spirited! Never ...

(The COURIER enters, dusty as ever.
JOHN winces)

Good God!

(The COURIER deposits his dispatch on THOMSON's desk and goes. HANCOCK puts down his paper and GAVELS)

HANCOCK

May we have your ears, gentlemen -- ? Mr. Thomson has a dispatch.

(EVERYONE turns to listen.
WITHERSPOON is nudged awake)

THOMSON

(Ringing his BELL)

From the Commander, Army of the United Colonies; in New York, dispatch number one thousand one hundred and fifty-seven.

THOMSON (Continued)

"To the honorable Congress, John Hancock, President. Dear Sir: It is with the utmost despair that I must report to you the confusion and disorder that reign in every department. The Continental soldier is as nothing ever seen in this, or any other, century; he is a misfit, ignorant of hygiene, destructive, disorderly and totally disrespectful of rank. Only this last is understandable as there is an incredible reek of stupidity amongst the officers. The situation is most desperate at the New Jersey Training Ground in New Brunswick where every able-bodied whore -- whore in the Colonies has assembled. There are constant reports of drunkenness, desertion, foul language, naked bathing in the Raritan River, and an epidemic of the French disease. I have declared the town 'off-limits' to all military personnel -- with the exception of officers. I beseech the Congress to dispatch the War Committee to this place in the hope of restoring some of the order and discipline we need to survive. Y'r ob'd't --

(DRUM ROLL)

-- G. Washington."

McKEAN

Och! The man would depress a hyena!

HANCOCK

Well, Mr. Adams -- you're Chairman of the War Committee -- do y' feel up to whoring, drinking, deserting and New Brunswick?

WITHERSPOON

There must be some mistake -- I have an aunt who lives in New Brunswick!

(LAUGHTER)

DICKINSON

You must tell her to keep up the good work!

(LAUGHTER)

Come, come, Mr. Adams -- you must see that it's hopeless. Let us recall General Washington and disband the Continental Army before we are overwhelmed.

JOHN

Oh, yes -- the English would like that, wouldn't they?

DICKINSON

Why not ask them yourself? They ought to be here any minute.

(LAUGHTER)

RUTLEDGE

And when they hang you, Mr. Adams, I hope you will put in a good word for the rest of us.

(A distressed silence)

CHASE

Face facts, Mr. Adams -- a handful of drunk and disorderly recruits against the entire British Army, the finest musketeers on earth -- how can we win -- how can we even hope to survive?!

JOHN

Answer me straight, Chase -- if you thought we could beat the redcoats -- would Mary-land say "yea" to Independence?

CHASE

Well -- I suppose --

JOHN

No supposing, Chase -- would you or wouldn't you?

CHASE

Very well, Mr. Adams -- yes, we would.

JOHN

Then come with me to New Brunswick and see for yourself!

McKEAN

John! Are y' mad?!

BARTLETT

Y' heard what Washington said -- it's a shambles up there.

HOPKINS

They're pushin' y' into it, Johnny --

JOHN

What do y' say, Chase?

MORRIS

Go ahead, Sam -- it sounds lively as hell up there.

CHASE

All right -- why not? And maybe it'll be John Adams who comes to his senses.

JOHN

Mr. President -- the War Committee will heed General Washington's request! A party consisting of Mr. Chase, Dr. Franklin and myself will leave immediately.

HANCOCK

Is that satisfactory with you, Dr. Franklin?

(ALL eyes turn to FRANKLIN who is asleep again.)

JOHN

Wake up, Franklin -- you're going to New Brunswick!

FRANKLIN

Like hell I am. What for?

HOPKINS

The whoring and the drinking.

(A pause. FRANKLIN rises energetically. ADAMS turns and prods CHASE out the S.R. doors. FRANKLIN follows)

JOHN

Come on, Chase -- move all that lard! We've no time to lose! Left-right, left-right, left-right --

(And THEY are gone.)

The other LIBERALS then go, leaving only the CONSERVATIVES. DICKINSON looks around, then rises and crosses D.L.)

DICKINSON

Mr. McNair -- all this talk of Independence has left a certain foulness in the air --

(LAUGHTER from the CONSERVATIVES)

-- My friends and I would appreciate it if you could open some windows.

McNAIR

What about the flies?

DICKINSON

(Smiling)

The windows, Mr. McNair.

McNAIR

(Shrugging and crossing R. to the windows)

Open the windows! Close the windows! Sweet Jesus!

(As HE opens the window four bells are heard to chime. HE crosses up to his chair. HANCOCK and THOMSON read at their desks. DICKINSON crosses R. to the open window and sings:)

DICKINSON (Continued)

OH SAY DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?
 CONGRESS SITTING HERE IN SWEET SERENITY
 I COULD CHEER,
 THE REASON'S CLEAR
 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A YEAR
 ADAMS ISN'T HERE ... !
 AND, LOOK!
 THE SUN IS IN THE SKY
 THE BREEZE IS BLOWING BY
 AND THERE'S NOT A SINGLE FLY!

OH SING "HOSANNA," "HOSANNA"

CONSERVATIVES

"HOSANNA," "HOSANNA"

DICKINSON

... AND IT'S COOL!

OH YE COOL COOL CONSERVATIVE MEN
 OUR LIKE MAY NEVER EVER BE ... SEEN AGAIN
 WE HAVE LAND
 CASH IN HAND
 SELF-COMMAND
 FUTURE PLANNED ...
 FORTUNE THRIVES
 SOCIETY SURVIVES
 IN NEATLY ORDER'D LIVES
 WITH WELL-ENDOWER'D WIVES ...

CONSERVATIVES

COME SING "HOSANNA," "HOSANNA"

DICKINSON

IN OUR BREEDING AND OUR MANNER

CONSERVATIVES

... WE ARE COOL!

(The COOL, COOL CONSERVATIVE MEN --
 RUTLEDGE, WILSON, READ, MORRIS, HALL,
 LIVINGSTON and HEWES among them --
 elegantly prepare to dance)

DICKINSON

COME YE COOL COOL CONSIDERATE SET
 WE'LL DANCE TOGETHER TO THE SAME MINUET
 TO THE RIGHT
 EVER TO THE RIGHT
 NEVER TO THE LEFT
 FOREVER TO THE RIGHT

DICKINSON (Continued)

LET OUR CREED
BE NEVER TO EXCEED
REGULATED SPEED
NO MATTER WHAT THE NEED!

CONSERVATIVES
COME SING "HOSANNA" ... "HOSANNA"

DICKINSON
EMBLAZONED ON OUR BANNER
IS "KEEP COOL!"

CONSERVATIVES
(THE MINUET is led by DICKINSON and
RUTLEDGE, as the CONSERVATIVES dance.
During this the COURIER re-enters and
deposits his dispatch as usual, on
THOMSON's desk. McNAIR goes to him
and offers him a rum)
TO THE RIGHT
EVER TO THE RIGHT
NEVER TO THE LEFT
FOREVER TO THE RIGHT

DICKINSON
HANDS ATTACH
TIGHTLY LATCH
EVERYBODY MATCH ...

THOMSON
I HAVE A NEW DISPATCH ...

(The MUSIC stops but the MINUET
continues silently)

From the Commander, Army of the United Colonies; in New York,
dispatch number one thousand one hundred and fifty-eight.
"To the honorable Congress, John Hancock, President. Dear
Sir: I awoke this morning to find that Gen. Howe has
landed twenty-five thousand British regulars and Hessian
mercenaries on Staten Island and that the fleet, under the
command of his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, controls not only
the Hudson and East Rievers, but New York Harbour, which now
looks like all of London afloat. I can no longer, in good
conscience, withhold from the Congress my certainty that the
British military object at this time is Philadelphia.
Happy should I be if I could see the means of preventing
them, but at present I confess I do not. Oh, how I wish I
had never seen the Continental Army. I would have done
better to retire to the back country and live in a wigwam.
Y'r ob'd't --

(DRUM ROLL)

-- G. Washington."

(A short PAUSE, then MUSIC BEGINS again and the SONG continues as if nothing had happened)

CONSERVATIVES

(Singing)

WHAT WE DO WE DO ... RATIONALLY

DICKINSON

WE NEVER EVER GO OFF HALF-COCKED, NOT WE

CONSERVATIVES

WHY BEGIN?

'TIL WE KNOW THAT WE CAN WIN

AND IF WE CANNOT WIN

WHY BOTHER TO BEGIN ... ?

RUTLEDGE

WE SAY THIS GAME'S NOT OF OUR CHOOSING

WHY SHOULD WE RISK LOSING ... ?

CONSERVATIVES

WE COOL ... COOL ... MEN.

DICKINSON

(Spoken; still dancing)

Mr. Hancock -- you're a man of property -- one of us. Why don't you join us in our minuet? Why do you persist in dancing with John Adams? Good Lord, sir, you don't even like him!

HANCOCK

(Singing)

THAT IS TRUE

HE ANNOYS ME QUITE A LOT

BUT STILL I'D RATHER TROT

TO MR. ADAMS' NEW GAVOTTE ...

DICKINSON

(Spoken; HE continues dancing)

But why -- for personal glory? For a place in history? Be careful, sir -- history will brand him and his followers as traitors!

HANCOCK

Traitors to what, Mr. Dickinson -- the British Crown? Or the British half-crown? Fortunately, there are not enough men of property in America to dictate policy.

DICKINSON

Perhaps not -- but don't forget that most men with nothing would rather protect the possibility of becoming rich than face the reality of being poor. And that is why they will follow us --

CONSERVATIVES

-- TO THE RIGHT
 EVER TO THE RIGHT
 NEVER TO THE LEFT
 FOREVER TO THE RIGHT
 WHERE THERE'S GOLD
 A MARKET THAT WILL HOLD
 TRADITION THAT IS OLD
 A RELUCTANCE TO BE BOLD

DICKINSON

I SING "HOSANNA" ... "HOSANNA"
 IN A SANE AND LUCID MANNER ... !

CONSERVATIVES

WE ARE COOL!
 WE'RE THE COOL COOL CONSERVATIVE MEN!
 WHOSE LIKE MAY NEVER EVER BE SEEN AGAIN!
 WITH OUR LAND ...
 CASH IN HAND ...
 SELF-COMMAND ...
 FUTURE PLANNED ...

AND WE'LL HOLD ...
 TO OUR GOLD ...
 TRADITION THAT IS OLD ...
 RELUCTANT TO BE BOLD!

WE SAY THIS GAME'S NOT OF OUR CHOOSING
 WHY SHOULD WE RISK LOSING ...

WE ... COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL,
 COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL, COOL,
 COOL ...
 COOL ...
 MEN ... !!

(THEY turn and go, leaving only McNAIR,
 the LEATHER APRON and the COURIER in
 the Chamber. THEY are silent for a
 moment)

McNAIR

Sweet Jesus, how'd you like to try 'n borrow a dollar from
 one o' them?

(To the COURIER)

Want another rum, Gen'rul?

COURIER

Gen'rul?!

(Grins)

Lord, I ain't even a corp'l.

McNAIR

Yeah, well, what's the army know?

(HE pours the COURIER another drink,
pours himself and the LEATHER APRON
a pair, selects one of HANCOCK's good
clay pipes, lights it, then bangs
with the GAVEL)

Sit down, gentlemen -- the Chair rules it's too damn hot to
work!

(HE occupies one chair, the COURIER
another, and the LEATHER APRON still
a third)

What's it like out there, Gen'rul?

COURIER

You prob'ly know more'n me --

McNAIR

Sittin' in here? Sweet Jesus! This is the last place to
find out what's goin' on!

LEATHER APRON

(To the COURIER)

I'm aimin' t' join up!

McNAIR

What're you talkin' about? You don't have to join up --
you're in the Congress!

LEATHER APRON

What's that got t' do with it?

McNAIR

Y' don't see them rushin' off t' get killed, do you? But
they sure are great ones f'r sendin' others, I'll tell you
that.

COURIER

(Indicating his chair)

Who sets here?

McNAIR

Caesar Rodney of Delaware. Where you from, Gen'rul?

COURIER

Watertown.

McNAIR

Where's that?

COURIER

Massachusset.

MCNAIR

Well, then -- you belong down there. But be careful -- there's somethin' about that chair that makes a man awful noisy.

(The COURIER goes to JOHN's chair and touches it reverently before HE sits)

LEATHER APRON

You see'd any fightin'?

COURIER

(Proudly)

Sure did -- I see'd my two best friends git shot dead on the very same day! Right on the village green it was, too!

(The recollection takes hold)

An' when they didn't come home f'r supper -- their mommas went down the hill lookin' for 'em. Miz Lowell -- she foun' Tim'thy right off -- but Miz Pickett -- she looked near half the night f'r Will'm 'cuz he'd gone 'n crawl'd off the green 'fore he died --

(HE is silent for a moment -- then HE sings:)

MOMMA, HEY MOMMA
 COME LOOKIN' FOR ME.
 I'M HERE IN THE MEADO'
 BY TH' RED MAPLE TREE.
 MOMMA, HEY MOMMA,
 LOOK SHARP -- HERE I BE ...
 HEY, HEY,
 MOMMA, LOOK SHARP!

THEM SO'JURS, THEY FIRED
 OH, MA, AND WE RUN
 BUT THEN WE TURN'D 'ROUND
 AN' TH' BATTLE BEGUN
 THEN I WENT UNDER,
 OH, MA, AM I DONE ... ?
 HEY, HEY,
 MOMMA, LOOK SHARP!

MY EYES ARE WIDE OPEN
 MY FACE TO TH' SKY
 IS THAT YOU I'M HEARIN'
 IN TH' TALL GRASS NEARBY?
 MOMMA, COME FIND ME
 BEFORE I DO DIE ...
 HEY, HEY,
 MOMMA, LOOK SHARP!

I'LL CLOSE Y'R EYES, MY BILLY
 THEM EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

COURIER (Continued)

AN' I'LL BURY YA, MY BILLY
BENEATH TH' MAPLE TREE
AN' -- NEVER AG'IN
WILL Y' WHISPER T' ME ...
"HEY, HEY" --
OH MOMMA -- LOOK SHARP ... !

(The LIGHTS fade)

(END OF ACT ONE if to be
performed in TWO ACTS.)

(At the end of the intermission both the stage and houselights go out while the entracte is heard. The travelers close in. At the conclusion of the music we hear THOMSON's bell, then:)

HANCOCK'S VOICE

The secretary will now read the report of the Declaration Committee. Mr. Thomson --

THOMSON'S VOICE

"A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress assembled -- "

(Lights come up and we are in:)

Scene 6

An anteroom, off the main Congress. JEFFERSON stands S.L. by a door in the traveler, which he holds open. Through this door we hear:

THOMSON'S VOICE

" -- When in the Course of Human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation. We hold these Truths to be self evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights -- "

(JEFFERSON, having heard a SOUND, off, closes the door, silencing THOMSON'S VOICE -- and JOHN and FRANKLIN enter from S.R.)

JOHN

Jefferson -- we're back and we've got Mary-land -- that is, we will, soon as Chase gets through telling the Mary-land Assembly what we saw in New Brunswick!

FRANKLIN

He's in Annapolis right now describing a ragtag collection of provincial militiamen who couldn't train together, drill together or march together -- but when a flock of ducks flew by and they saw their first dinner in three full days, sweet Jesus! Could they shoot together! It was a slaughter!

JEFFERSON

(Not listening)
They're reading the Declaration.

JOHN

What? How far have they got?

JEFFERSON

" -- to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power."

(JOHN opens door to Chamber)

THOMSON'S VOICE

" -- independent of and superior to -- "

(JOHN closes the door. The THREE MEN
pace for a moment)

JOHN

Well, there's nothing to fear -- it's a masterpiece! I'm to be congratulated.

FRANKLIN

You?

JOHN

For making him write it.

FRANKLIN

Ah, yes -- of course.

(THEY are silent for a moment; then ...)

JOHN

(Singing)
IT'S A MASTERPIECE, I SAY ...
THEY WILL CHEER EV'RY WORD,
EV'RY LETTER ... !

JEFFERSON

I WISH I FELT THAT WAY ...

FRANKLIN

I BELIEVE I CAN PUT IT BETTER!

NOW THEN, ATTEND
AS FRIEND TO FRIEND
OUR DECLARATION COMMITTEE ...
FOR US I SEE
IMMORTALITY ...

ALL

IN PHILADELPHIA CITY ...

FRANKLIN

A FARMER ...
 A LAWYER ...
 AND A SAGE!
 A BIT GOUTY IN THE LEG ...
 YOU KNOW IT'S QUITE BIZARRE
 TO THINK THAT HERE WE ARE ...
 PLAYING MIDWIVES TO ...
 AN EGG.

JOHN

Egg? What egg?

FRANKLIN

America -- the birth of a new nation!

JEFFERSON

If only we could be sure of what kind of a bird it's going
 to be.

FRANKLIN

Tom's got a point -- what sort of a bird should we choose
 as the symbol of our new America?

JOHN

The eagle.

JEFFERSON

The dove.

FRANKLIN

The turkey.

(JOHN and JEFFERSON look at FRANKLIN
 in surprise, then at each other)

JOHN

The eagle.

JEFFERSON

The dove.

JOHN

The eagle!

JEFFERSON

(Shrugging)

The eagle.

FRANKLIN

(A pause)

The turkey.

JOHN
The eagle is a majestic bird.

FRANKLIN
The eagle is a scavenger, a thief, a coward and the symbol of more than ten centuries of European mischief.

JOHN
And the turkey -- ?

FRANKLIN
A truly noble bird, a native of America, a source of sustenance to our settlers and an incredibly brave fellow who would not flinch from attacking an entire regiment of Englishmen single-handedly! Therefore the national bird of America is going to be --

JOHN
The eagle.

FRANKLIN & JEFFERSON
(Shrugging)
The eagle.

(A pause. Then:)

JOHN
(Singing)
WE'RE WAITING FOR THE ...

ALL
CHIRP! CHIRP! CHIRP!
OF AN EAGLET BEING BORN
WAITING FOR THE
CHIRP! CHIRP! CHIRP!

ON THIS HUMID MONDAY MORNING
IN THIS -- CONGRESSIONAL INCUBATOR!

FRANKLIN
GOD KNOWS, THE TEMP'ATURE'S HOT ENOUGH
TO HATCH A STONE ...
LET ALONE ...
AN EGG!

JOHN
WE'RE WAITING FOR THE ...

ALL
SCRATCH! SCRATCH! SCRATCH!
OF THAT TINY LITTLE FELLOW
WAITING FOR THE EGG TO HATCH

ON THIS HUMID MONDAY MORNING
IN THIS -- CONGRESSIONAL INCUBATOR!

JOHN
 GOD KNOWS THE TEMP'RATURE'S HOT ENOUGH
 TO HATCH A STONE!

JEFFERSON
 BUT WILL IT HATCH
 AN EGG?

JOHN
 (Spoken)
 The Declaration will be a triumph, I tell you -- a triumph!
 If I was ever sure of anything I'm sure of that -- a triumph!

(A pause)
 And if it isn't, we've still got four days left to think of
 something else.

(Singing)
 THE EAGLE'S GOING TO
 CRACK THE SHELL
 OF THE EGG THAT ENGLAND LAID!

ALL
 YESSIR! WE CAN
 TELL! TELL! TELL!
 ON THIS HUMID MONDAY MORNING
 IN THIS -- CONGRESSIONAL INCUBATOR!

FRANKLIN
 AND JUST AS TOM, HERE, HAS WRITTEN ...
 THO' THE SHELL MAY BELONG TO GREAT BRITAIN ...
 THE EAGLE INSIDE ...
 BELONGS TO US!

ALL
 AND JUST AS TOM, HERE, HAS WRITTEN!
 WE SAY "TO HELL" WITH GREAT BRITAIN!
 THE EAGLE INSIDE ...
 BELONGS TO US!!!
 (THEY turn and go confidently into
 the Chamber)

Scene 7

The CHAMBER.

Congress is in session -- HANCOCK, BARTLETT, HOPKINS, SHERMAN, MORRIS, LIVINGSTON, WITHERSPOON, DICKINSON, WILSON, MCKEAN, READ, HEWES, RUTLEDGE, and HALL being present -- and now JOHN, FRANKLIN, and JEFFERSON take their places -- this action continuing from the previous scene. And THOMSON now completes his reading of the Declaration. The calendar on the wall now reads: "JUNE 28."

THOMSON

" -- and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

(Finished, HE looks up.)

Nobody moves, nobody speaks, nobody reacts; the silence is complete and prolonged)

HANCOCK

(Finally)

Very well. Thank you, Mr. Thomson. The Congress has heard the report of the Declaration Committee. Are there any who wish to offer amendments, deletions or alterations to the Declaration?

(Suddenly, EVERY HAND but JOHN's, FRANKLIN's, JEFFERSON's and HOPKINS', shoots up)

CONGRESS

Mr. President -- !
Hear me, Mr. President -- !
I've got one -- !
Over here -- !
(Etc.)

HANCOCK

(HE GAVELS for order)

Gentlemen, please! McNair -- you'd better open the window. Colonel McKean -- I saw your hand first.

MCKEAN

Tom -- it's a bonny paper y've written -- but somewhere in it y've mentioned "Scottish and foreign mercenaries sent t' destroy us." Scottish, Tom?

JOHN

It's in reference to a Highland regiment which stood against us at Boston.

MCKEAN

Och, it was more likely Germans wearin' kilts to disguise their bein' there. I ask y' to remove the word and avoid givin' offense to a good people.

THOMSON

Mr. Jefferson -- ?

(JEFFERSON nods and THOMSON scratches his quill pen through the word. The many HANDS go up again)

HANCOCK

The Reverend Witherspoon -- ?

WITHERSPOON

Mr. Jefferson -- nowhere do you mention the Supreme Being. Certainly this was an oversight for how could we hope to achieve a victory without his help? Therefore I must humbly suggest the following addition to your final sentence "With a firm alliance on the protection of Divine Providence."

(Again THOMSON looks at JEFFERSON who, in turn looks at JOHN; the two patriots shrug, then JEFFERSON turns back to THOMSON and nods; the phrase is added. More HANDS)

HANCOCK

Mr. Read --

READ

Among your charges against the King, Mr. Jefferson, you accuse him of depriving us of the benefits of trial by jury. This is untrue, sir -- in Delaware we have always had trial by jury.

JOHN

In Massachusetts we have not.

READ

Oh. Then I suggest that the words "In many cases" be added.

THOMSON

Mr. Jefferson -- ?

(And again, JEFFERSON nods; the words are added)

MCKEAN

"In many cases!" -- och, brilliant! I s'pose every time y' see those three words y'r puny little chest'll swell up wi' pride over y'r great historical contribution!

READ

It's more memorable than your unprincipled whitewash of that race of barbarians!

HANCOCK

(GAVELING)

Mr. Read -- Colonel McKean -- that's enough!

(The HANDS are raised, this time HOPKINS' among them)

Mr. Hopkins --

HOPKINS

No objections, Johnny -- I'm just trying to get a drink.

HANCOCK

I should've known. McNair, get him a rum.

(Again, the HANDS go up.

McNAIR crosses to the wall calendar and removes a leaf, uncovering "JUNE 29")

Mr. Bartlett --

BARTLETT

Mr. Jefferson -- I beg you to remember that we still have friends in England. I see no purpose in antagonizing them with such phrases as "unfeeling brethren" and "enemies in war." Our quarrel is with the British King, not the British People.

JOHN

Be sensible, Bartlett -- remove those phrases and the entire paragraph becomes meaningless. And it so happens it's among the most stirring and poetic of any passage in the entire document: --

(HE picks up the Declaration from THOMSON's desk, preparing to read)

BARTLETT

We're a Congress, Mr. Adams, not a literary society. I ask that the entire paragraph be stricken!

THOMSON

Mr. Jefferson -- ?

(And again JEFFERSON nods, this time rather sadly)

JOHN

Good God, Jefferson! Don't you ever intend to speak up for your own work?!

JEFFERSON

I had hoped that the work would speak for itself.

(THOMSON SCRATCHES out the paragraph)

McNAIR

Mr. Hancock --

HANCOCK

What is it, Mr. McNair?

McNAIR

I can't say I'm very fond of the United States of America as a name for a new country --

HANCOCK

I don't care what you're fond of, Mr. McNair -- you're not a member of this Congress! Mr. Sherman --

SHERMAN

(Coffee in hand, as usual)

Brother Jefferson -- I noted at least two distinct and direct references to the British Parliament in your Declaration. Do you think it's wise to alienate that august body in light of our contention that they have never had any direct authority over us, anyway?

JOHN

This is a revolution, damnit! We're going to have to offend somebody!

FRANKLIN

John --

(HE leads JOHN downstage as the debate in the Chamber continues silently behind them)

John, you'll have an attack of apoplexy if you're not careful.

JOHN

Have you heard what they're doing to it? Have you heard?!

FRANKLIN

Yes, John, I've heard, but --

JOHN

And so far it's only been our friends! Can you imagine what our enemies will do?!

HANCOCK

-- The word "Parliament" will be removed wherever it occurs.

JOHN

They won't be satisfied until they remove one of the "F's" from Jefferson's name.

FRANKLIN

Courage, John! It won't last much longer.

(THEY start back toward their seats
as the HANDS go up again.)

And again McNAIR goes to the calendar
and removes another page; it now reads:
"JUNE 30")

HANCOCK

Mr. Dickinson --

DICKINSON

Mr. Jefferson -- I have very little interest in your paper as there is no doubt in my mind that we have all but heard the last of it. But I am curious about one thing -- why do you refer to King George as a tyrant?

JEFFERSON

Because he is a tyrant.

DICKINSON

I remind you, Mr. Jefferson, that this "tyrant" is still your king.

JEFFERSON

When a king becomes a tyrant he thereby breaks the contract binding his subjects to him.

DICKINSON

How so?

JEFFERSON

By taking away their rights.

DICKINSON

Rights that came from him in the first place --

JEFFERSON

All except one -- the right to be free comes from nature.

DICKINSON

Mr. Wilson -- do we in Pennsylvania consider King George a tyrant?

WILSON

Hmm? Well -- I don't know --

(As HE meets DICKINSON's stony stare)

Oh. No -- no, we don't -- he's not a tyrant in -- Pennsylvania --

DICKINSON

There you are, Mr. Jefferson. Your Declaration does not speak for us all. I demand the word "tyrant" be removed!

(THOMSON begins SCRATCHING it out)

JEFFERSON

Just a moment, Mr. Thomson -- I do not consent. The King is a tyrant whether we say so or not. We might as well say so.

THOMSON

But I already scratched it out --

JEFFERSON

(Forcefully)

Then scratch it back in!

(A surprised SILENCE)

HANCOCK

(Finally)

Put it back, Mr. Thomson -- the King will remain a tyrant.

(Once more McNAIR goes to the calendar and changes the date -- to "JULY 1")

Mr. Hewes --

HEWES

Mr. Jefferson -- nowhere do you mention deep-sea fishin' rights. We in North Carolina --

(EVERYONE throws up his hands in disgust and impatience)

JOHN

Good God! Fishing rights! How long is this piddling to go on?! We have been sitting here for three full days -- we have endured, by my count, eighty-five separate changes and the removal of close to four hundred words -- would you whip and beat it 'til you break its spirit? I tell you this document is a masterful expression of the American mind!

(There is a SILENCE)

HANCOCK

If there are no more changes, then, I can assume that the report of the Declaration Committee has been --

RUTLEDGE

(Deliberately)

Just a moment, Mr. President --

FRANKLIN

(To JOHN)

Look out.

RUTLEDGE

I wonder if we could prevail upon Mr. Thomson to read again a small portion of Mr. Jefferson's Declaration -- the one beginnin' "He has waged cruel war -- ?"

HANCOCK

Mr. Thomson -- ?

THOMSON

(Reading back, rapidly, to himself)

" -- He has affected -- He has combined -- He has abdicated -- He has plundered -- He has constrained -- He has excited -- He has incited -- He has waged cruel war!" Ah.

(Looks up)

Here it is.

(Clears his throat and reads)

"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted -- "

RUTLEDGE

That will suffice, Mr. Thomson, I thank you. Mr. Jefferson, I can't quite make out what it is you're talkin' about.

JEFFERSON

Slavery, Mr. Rutledge.

RUTLEDGE

Ah, yes. You're referrin' to us as slaves of the King.

JEFFERSON

No, sir -- I'm referring to our slaves. Black slaves.

RUTLEDGE

Ah! Black slaves. Why didn't you say so, sir? Were you tryin' to hide your meanin'?

JEFFERSON

No, sir.

RUTLEDGE

Just another literary license, then.

JEFFERSON

If you like.

RUTLEDGE

I don't like at all, Mr. Jefferson -- to us in South Carolina, black slavery is our peculiar institution and a cherished way-of-life.

JEFFERSON

Nevertheless, we must abolish it. Nothing is more certainly written in the Book of Fate than that this people shall be free.

RUTLEDGE

I am not concerned with the Book of Fate right now, sir -- I'm more concerned with what's written in your little paper there.

JOHN

That "little" paper there deals with freedom for Americans!

RUTLEDGE

Oh, really! Mr. Adams is now callin' our black slaves Americans -- are-they-now?

JOHN

They are! They're people and they're here -- if there is any other requirement I've never heard of it.

RUTLEDGE

They are here, yes, but they are not people, sir -- they are property.

JEFFERSON

No, sir! They are people who are being treated as property. I tell you the rights of human nature are deeply wounded by this infamous practice!

RUTLEDGE

Then see to your own wounds, Mr. Jefferson, for you are a -- practitioner -- are you not?!

JEFFERSON

I have already resolved to release my slaves.

RUTLEDGE

Then I'm sorry, for you have also resolved the ruination of your personal economy.

JOHN

Economy. Always economy. There's more to this than a filthy purse-string, Rutledge -- it's an offense against man and God.

HOPKINS

It's a stinking business, Mr. Rutledge -- a stinking business!

RUTLEDGE

Is it really, Mr. Hopkins? Then what's that I smell floatin' down from the North -- could it be the aroma of hy-pocrisy? For who holds the other end of that filthy purse-string, Mr. Adams?

(To EVERYONE)

Our northern brethren are feelin' a bit tender toward our slaves -- they don't keep slaves, no-o -- but they're willin' to be considerable carriers of slaves -- to others! They are willin' -- for the shillin' --

(Rubbing his thumb and forefinger together)

-- or haven't y' heard, Mr. Adams? Click! Click!

(Singing)

MOLASSES ... TO
RUM ... TO
SLAVES ... !
OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WALTZ!

YOU DANCE WITH US,
WE DANCE WITH YOU ... IN
MOLASSES ... AND
RUM ... AND
SLAVES ... !

WHO SAIL THE SHIPS OUT OF BOSTON,
LADEN WITH BIBLES AND RUM ...
WHO DRINKS A TOAST
TO THE IVORY COAST,
"HAIL, AFRICA! THE SLAVERS HAVE COME ... "

NEW ENGLAND ... WITH BIBLES AND RUM!

THEN:
IT'S OFF WITH THE RUM ... AND THE BIBLES
TAKE ON THE SLAVES ... CLINK! CLINK!
THEN,
HAIL AND FAREWELL! ...
TO THE SMELL ... OF THE AFRICAN
COAST!

MOLASSES ... TO
RUM ... TO
SLAVES ... !

RUTLEDGE (Continued)

'TISN'T MORALS, 'TIS MONEY THAT SAVES!
 SHALL WE DANCE TO THE SOUND ...
 OF THE PROFITABLE POUND ... IN
 MOLASSES ... AND
 RUM ... AND
 SLAVES ... !

WHO SAIL THE SHIPS OUT OF GUINEA
 LADEN WITH BIBLES AND SLAVES ... ?
 'TIS BOSTON CAN BOAST
 TO THE WEST INDIES COAST:
 "JAMAICA! WE BRUNG WHAT Y' CRAVES!
 ANTIGUA! BARBADOS!
 WE BRUNG BIBLES ...
 AND SLAVES!"

(Spoken)

Gentlemen! You mustn't think our northern friends merely see our slaves as figures on a ledger -- oh, no sir! They see them as figures on the block! Notice the faces at the auctions, gentlemen -- white faces on the African wharves -- "Put them in the ships -- cram them in the ships -- stuff them in the ships!" Hurry, gentlemen -- let the auction begin!

YA-HA ...

YA-HA ... HA-MA-HA-CUNDAH!!

Gentlemen, do y' hear?!
 That's the cry of the auctioneer!
 (BANG!)

YA-HA ...

YA-HA ... HA-MA-HA-CUNDAH!!

Slaves, gentlemen! Black gold -- livin' gold -- gold!
 From:

ANNN-GO-LAAH ... !
 GUINEA-GUINEA-GUINEA ... !
 BLACKBIRDS FOR SALE!
 (BANG!)

AAA-SHAN-TIII ... !
 IBO! IBO! IBO! IBO!
 (BANG!)

BLACKBIRDS FOR SALE!
 (BANG!)

HANDLE THEM ... !
 FONDLE THEM ... !
 BUT ... DON'T FIN-GER THEM ... !
 THEY'RE PRIME ... THEY'RE PRIME ... !
 (BANG!)

YA-HA ...

YA-HA ... HA-MA-HA-CUNDAH ... !!!

BARTLETT

(Pleading)
For the love of God, Mr. Rutledge -- please -- !!

RUTLEDGE

MOLASSES ... TO
RUM ... TO
SLAVES ... !

WHO SAIL THE SHIPS BACK TO BOSTON ...
LADEN WITH GOLD ... SEE IT GLEAM?!
WHOSE FORTUNES ARE MADE
IN THE TRIANGLE TRADE ... ?
HAIL, SLAVERY! THE NEW ENGLAND
DREAM!

MR. ADAMS -- I GIVE YOU A TOAST!
HAIL, BOSTON!
HAIL, CHARLESTON!

-- WHO STINKETH -- THE MOST??!!
(HE turns and walks straight out of
the Chamber.)

HEWES of North Carolina follows and
HALL of Georgia is right behind them)

JOHN

(Desperate).

Mr. Rutledge -- ! Mr. Hewes -- ! Dr. Hall -- !

(HALL, the last, hesitates at the
door as his name is called. HE
turns, looks at JOHN, starts to
say something, then turns and goes
after the OTHERS)

WITHERSPOON

Don't worry -- they'll be back --

MCKEAN

Aye -- t' vote us down.

(There is a SILENCE. Then, CHASE
bursts into the Chamber)

CHASE

(Elated)

It's done! Adams -- Franklin -- I have it! And the
Mary-land Assembly's approved it! I told them about one
of the greatest military engagements in history -- against
a flock of --

(HE runs down as the news is greeted
with less enthusiasm than expected
and HE sees the glum faces)

What's wrong? I thought --

DICKINSON

(Cordially)

You'll have to forgive them, Mr. Chase -- they've just suffered a slight setback. And after all -- "What is a man profited, if he shall gain Mary-land, and lose the entire South?"

(Smiling)

Matthew, chapter sixteen, verse twenty-six.

(HE goes, followed by WILSON, READ, LIVINGSTON and MORRIS.

CHASE joins the ranks of the DEPRESSED as THOMSON moves Maryland into the "Yea" column)

HANCOCK

(Lifelessly)

Mr. McNair --

McNAIR

I know, the flies.

HANCOCK

No -- a rum.

JOHN

(Surveying the sorry sight)

Well -- ? What're you all sitting around for? We're wasting time -- precious time!

(To McKEAN)

Thomas -- ! I want you to ride down into Delaware and fetch back Caesar Rodney!

McKEAN

John! Are y' mad? It's eighty miles on horseback -- an' he's a dyin' man!

JOHN

No! He's a patriot!

McKEAN

Och, John -- what good'll it do? The South's done us in.

JOHN

And suppose they change their minds -- can we get Delaware without Rodney?!

McKEAN

(Shaking his head)

God! What a bastardly bunch we are!
(HE goes)

JOHN
 (Turning to HOPKINS)
 Stephen --

HOPKINS
 I'm goin' to the tavern, Johnny -- if there's anything I can
 do for y' there, let me know.
 (HE goes)

JOHN
 Chase -- Bartlett --

BARTLETT
 What's the use, John? The vote's tomorrow morning.

CHASE
 There's less than a full day left!

(THEY go)

JOHN
 Roger -- !

SHERMAN
 Face facts, John -- it's finished!

WITHERSPOON
 I'm sorry, John --

(And THEY go.

JOHN looks around, stunned by the
 defection. Only FRANKLIN, JEFFERSON,
 HANCOCK and THOMSON remain)

FRANKLIN
 We've no other choice, John -- the slavery clause has to go.

JOHN
 Franklin -- what are y' saying?!

FRANKLIN
 It's a luxury we can't afford.

JOHN
 A luxury?! A half million souls in chains and Dr. Franklin
 calls it a luxury! Maybe you should've walked out with the
 South!

FRANKLIN
 You forget yourself, sir! I founded the first anti-slavery
 society on this Continent!

JOHN

Don't wave your credentials at me! Perhaps it's time you renewed them!

FRANKLIN

The issue here is Independence -- maybe you've lost sight of that fact but I have not! How dare you jeopardize our cause when we've come so far?! These men, no matter how much we disagree with them, are not ribbon clerks to be ordered about -- they're proud, accomplished men, the cream of their colonies -- and whether you like it or not they and the people they represent will be a part of the new country you'd hope to create! Either start learning how to live with them or pack up and go home -- but in any case, stop acting like a Boston fishwife!

(And HE leaves JOHN alone, returning upstage to join JEFFERSON.)

JOHN turns and comes downstage)

JOHN

Good God, what's happened to me? John Adams -- the great John Adams -- the Wise Man of the East -- what have I come to? My law practice down the pipe -- my farm mortgaged to the hilt -- at a stage in life when other men prosper I'm reduced to living in Philadelphia. Philadelphia!

(ABIGAIL appears, as before)

Oh, Abigail -- what am I going to do?

ABIGAIL

Do, John?

JOHN

I need your help.

ABIGAIL

You don't usually ask my advice.

JOHN

Yes, well -- there doesn't appear to be anyone else right now.

ABIGAIL

(Sighing)

Very well, John -- what is it?

JOHN

The entire South has walked out of this Congress -- George Washington is on the verge of total annihilation -- the precious cause for which I've labored these several years has come to nothing -- and it seems --

(A pause)

-- it seems I am obnoxious and disliked --

ABIGAIL

Nonsense, John.

JOHN

-- that I am unwilling to face reality --

ABIGAIL

Foolishness, John.

JOHN

-- that I am pig-headed --

ABIGAIL

(Smiling)

Ah, well, there you have me, John -- I'm afraid you are pig-headed.

JOHN

(HE smiles; a pause)

Has it been any kind of a life for you, Abby? God knows I haven't given you much.

ABIGAIL

I never asked for more -- after all, I am Mrs. John Adams -- that's quite a lot for one life-time.

JOHN

(Bitterly)

Is it, Abby?

ABIGAIL

Think of it, John! To be married to the man who is always first in line to be hanged!

JOHN

Yes. The ag-i-ta-tor.

(Turning to her)

Why, Abby? You must tell me what it is! I've always been dissatisfied, I know that -- but lately -- I find that I reek of discontentment! It fills my throat and floods my brain -- and sometimes -- sometimes I fear that there is no longer a dream -- but only the discontentment.

ABIGAIL

Oh, John -- can you really know so little about yourself? And can you think so little of me that you'd believe I married the man you've described? Have you forgotten what you used to say to me? I haven't. "Commitment, Abby -- commitment! There are only two creatures of value on the face of this earth: those with a commitment -- and those who require the commitment of others."

(A pause)

Do you remember, John?

JOHN

(Nodding)

I remember.

(McNAIR enters carrying two gaily
beribboned kegs and thumps them down
in front of JOHN)

McNAIR

Mr. Adams --

JOHN

What?

McNAIR

These're for you.

JOHN

Just a minute -- what are they? What's in them? Who sent
them?!

ABIGAIL

(Singing)

COMPLIMENTS OF THE CONCORD LADIES COFFEE CLUB
AND THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRURO SYNAGOGUE,
AND THE FRIDAY EVENING BAPTIST SEWING CIRCLE,
AND THE HOLY CHRISTIAN SISTERS OF ST. CLAIRE ...
ALL FOR YOU ... JOHN ... !
I AM, AS I EVER WAS, AND EVER SHALL BE ...
YOURS ...
YOURS ...
YOURS ...
YOURS ...

JOHN

(Spoken)

Just a moment, Abigail -- what's in those kegs?!

ABIGAIL

(Triumphantly)

SALT PETRE ... JOHN!!!

(SHE blows a kiss and goes.)

JOHN turns back to the Chamber)

JOHN

McNair! Go out and buy every damned pin in Philadelphia!

McNAIR

Pin? What sort of pin?

JOHN

I don't know -- whatever ladies use with their sewing!
And take these kegs to the armory -- hurry, man!

JOHN (Continued)

Franklin -- Jefferson -- what are you just sitting around for?

FRANKLIN

John -- didn't you hear a word that I said before?

JOHN

Never mind that -- here's what you've got to do --

FRANKLIN

John! I'm not even speaking to you!

JOHN

It's too late for that, damn it! There's work to be done!

(Singing)

TIME'S RUNNING OUT!

GET UP!

GET OUT OF YOUR CHAIR!

TOMORROW IS HERE ...

TOO LATE,

TOO LATE TO DESPAIR!

(Turning to JEFFERSON)

JEFFERSON! ... TALK TO RUTLEDGE, TALK!

IF IT TAKES ALL NIGHT,

KEEP TALKING ...

JOHN & JEFFERSON

TALK AND TALK AND TALK!

JOHN

(Spoken)

You're both southern aristocrats -- gentlemen -- if he'll listen to anybody he'll listen to you!

(Singing, he turns to FRANKLIN)

FRANKLIN!

TIME'S RUNNING OUT!

FRANKLIN

I KNOW ... GET OUT OF MY CHAIR!

DO I HAVE TO TALK TO WILSON?

JOHN

YES, YOU DO!

IF IT TAKES ALL NIGHT,

KEEP TALKING ...

JOHN, FRANKLIN & JEFFERSON

TALK AND TALK AND TALK!

(JEFFERSON exits. JOHN hustles FRANKLIN to door:)

JOHN

Get him away from Dickinson! That's the only way to do it!

(FRANKLIN exits R. HANCOCK rises)

HANCOCK

(Coming forward)

I'm still from Massachusetts, John -- you know where I stand. I'll do whatever you say.

JOHN

(Considering it)

No -- you're the President of Congress. You're a fair man, Hancock -- stay that way.

(The COURIER enters and stops short as HE comes face to face with JOHN who takes his dispatch and crosses up to THOMSON's desk where HE hands it to the SECRETARY)

Tell me, Mr. Thomson, out of curiosity -- Do you stand with Mr. Dickinson -- or do you stand with me?

THOMSON

(Holding up the dispatch)

I stand with the General. Lately -- I've had the oddest feeling that he's been -- writing to me.

(Singing; HE reads)

"I HAVE BEEN IN EXPECTATION
OF RECEIVING A REPLY
ON THE SUBJECT OF MY LAST FIFTEEN DISPATCHES ... !
IS ANYBODY THERE ... ?!
DOES ANYBODY CARE ... ?!
DOES ANYBODY CARE ... ?

Y'r humble & ob'd't -- "

(DRUM ROLL; then it RUNS DOWN as THOMSON, unable to read the signature, rises and goes, thoroughly discouraged.)

It is growing DARK outside. HANCOCK stands by the door watching JOHN, concerned)

HANCOCK

Are y' hungry, John?

JOHN

No -- I think I'll stay.

HANCOCK

G'night, then --

(HE goes.)

JOHN looks around the Chamber, then goes to THOMSON's desk, and picks up the dispatch)

JOHN

(Singing)

"IS ANYBODY THERE ... ?

DOES ANYBODY CARE ... ?"

(HE drops the dispatch)

DOES ANYBODY SEE ... WHAT I SEE ... ?

THEY WANT ME TO QUIT

THEY SAY "JOHN, GIVE UP THE FIGHT!"

BUT STILL TO ENGLAND I SAY:

"GOOD-NIGHT FOREVER, GOOD-NIGHT!"

FOR I HAVE CROSSED THE RUBICON

LET THE BRIDGE BE BURN'D BEHIND ME

COME WHAT MAY ... COME WHAT MAY ...

COMMITMENT!

THE CROAKERS ALL SAY ...

WE'LL RUE THE DAY,

THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY IN

FIERY PURGATORY!

THROUGH ALL THE GLOOM ...

THROUGH ALL THE GLOOM ... I CAN

SEE THE RAYS OF RAVISHING LIGHT AND ...

GLORY ... !

IS ANYBODY THERE ... ?

DOES ANYBODY CARE ... ?

DOES ANYBODY SEE ...

WHAT I SEE ... ?

I SEE ...

FIREWORKS!

I SEE THE PAGEANT AND POMP AND PARADE!

I HEAR THE BELLS RINGING OUT!

I HEAR THE CANNONS' ROAR!

I SEE AMERICANS ... ALL AMERICANS ...

FREE! ... FOR EVERMORE!

(HE "comes to" and looks around,
realizing that it's DARK and that
HE's alone)

HOW QUIET ...

HOW QUIET THE CHAMBER IS.

HOW SILENT ...

HOW SILENT THE CHAMBER IS ...

IS ANYBODY THERE ... ?

(HE waits for an answer; there is
none)

DOES ANYBODY CARE ... ?

(Again, nothing)

DOES ANYBODY SEE ... WHAT I SEE ... ?

(MUSIC OUT)

HALL

(Spoken)

Yes, Mr. Adams -- I do.

(JOHN turns and discovers the Georgian DELEGATE standing by the door, in the shadows)

JOHN

Dr. Hall -- I didn't know anyone was --

HALL

I'm sorry if I startled you -- I couldn't sleep. In trying to resolve my dilemma I remembered something I'd once read -- that a representative owes the People, not only his industry, but his judgement -- and he betrays them if he sacrifices it to their opinion.

(HE smiles)

It was written by Edmund Burke, a member of the British Parliament.

(HE walks to the tally board and moves the name of Georgia from the "Nay" to the "Yea" column. The TWO MEN regard one another for a moment.

It has been growing LIGHT outside and now the clock, off, CHIMES ten and the MEN of the CONGRESS return, silently, in single file, EACH with his own private thoughts, McKEAN supporting RODNEY at the end.

Then HANCOCK GAVELS)

HANCOCK

Very well. The Congress will now vote on Virginia's resolution on Independence.

(To RODNEY)

Thank you for coming, Caesar -- and God bless you, sir.

(FOOT STAMPING and other signs of approval from ALL)

Call the roll, Mr. Thomson. And I'd remind you, gentlemen, that a single "Nay" vote will defeat the motion. Mr. Thomson --

(THOMSON goes to the tally board. During the following, FRANKLIN will be deeply engaged in silent argument with DICKINSON and WILSON, their heads remaining together)

THOMSON

(Droning)
New Hampshire --

BARTLETT

New Hampshire says "Yea."

THOMSON

New Hampshire says "Yea." Massachusetts --

JOHN

Massachusetts says "Yea."

THOMSON

Massachusetts says "Yea." Rhode Island --

HOPKINS

Rhode Island says "Yea."

THOMSON

Rhode Island says "Yea." Connecticut --

SHERMAN

Connecticut says "Yea."

THOMSON

Connecticut says "Yea." New York --

MORRIS

New York abstains -- courteously.

THOMSON

New York abstains --

MORRIS

(Disgusted and ashamed)
Courteously.

THOMSON

New Jersey --

WITHERSPOON

New Jersey says "Yea."

THOMSON

New Jersey says "Yea." Pennsylvania --

(As no one responds)

Pennsylvania --

FRANKLIN

Mr. Secretary -- Pennsylvania isn't ready yet -- come back
to us later.

(HE returns to the argument)

THOMSON
 Pennsylvania passes. Delaware --

RODNEY
 (As McKEAN helps him to his feet)
 Delaware -- by majority vote --

McKEAN
 Aye!

RODNEY
 -- says "Yea."

FRANKLIN
 Well done, sir.

THOMSON
 Delaware says "Yea."

(And Delaware's marker on the tally
 board is moved into the "Yea" column)

Mary-land --

CHASE
 Mary-land says "Yea."

THOMSON
 Mary-land says "Yea." Virginia --

JEFFERSON
 Virginia says "Yea."

THOMSON
 Virginia says "Yea." North Carolina --

HEWES
 North Carolina yields to South Carolina!

THOMSON
 South Carolina --

RUTLEDGE
 (HE rises, then turns to JOHN)
 Well, Mr. Adams -- ?

JOHN
 (Returning his stare)
 Well, Mr. Rutledge -- ?

RUTLEDGE
 Mr. Adams, you must believe that I will do what I have
 promised to do.

JOHN

(A pause)

What do y' want, Rutledge?

RUTLEDGE

Remove the offendin' passage from your Declaration.

JOHN

If we did that we'd be guilty of what we oureselves are rebelling against.

RUTLEDGE

Nevertheless, remove it or South Carolina will bury now and forever your dream of Independence.

FRANKLIN

(Imploring)

John -- I beg you to consider what you're doing --

JOHN

Mark me, Franklin -- if we give in on this issue, posterity will never forgive us.

FRANKLIN

That's probably true. But we won't hear a thing, John -- we'll be long gone. And besides, what will posterity think we were -- demigods? We're men -- no more, no less -- trying to get a nation started against greater odds than a more generous God would have allowed. John -- first things first! Independence! America! For if we don't secure that what difference will the rest make?

JOHN

(HE looks around, uncertain)

Jefferson -- say something --

JEFFERSON

What else is there to do?

JOHN

Well, man, you're the one who wrote it!

JEFFERSON

I wrote all of it, Mr. Adams!

(HE goes to THOMSON's table and, taking up the quill pen, SCRATCHES the passage from the Declaration. Then HE returns to his seat.)

JOHN snatches up the Declaration and goes to RUTLEDGE, waving it under his nose)

JOHN

There! There it is, Rutledge! You've got your slavery -- and little good may it do you! Now vote, damn you!

RUTLEDGE

(Unruffled)

Mr. Secretary -- the fair Colony of South Carolina says "Yea."

THOMSON

South Carolina says "Yea" --

HEWES

(Jumping up)

North Carolina says "Yea!"

THOMSON

North Carolina says "Yea."

(The two markers on the tally board are moved out of the "Nay" column -- only Pennsylvania remains there)

Georgia --

HALL

Georgia says "Yea."

THOMSON

Georgia says "Yea." Pennsylvania, second call --

DICKINSON

(Rising)

Mr. President, Pennsylvania regrets all of the inconvenience that such distinguished men as Adams, Franklin and Jefferson were put to just now -- they might have kept their document intact for all the difference it will make. Mr. President, Pennsylvania says --

FRANKLIN

Just a moment! I ask that the delegation be polled!

DICKINSON

Dr. Franklin -- don't be absurd!

FRANKLIN

A poll, Mr. President -- it's a proper request.

HANCOCK

Yes, it is. Poll the delegation, Mr. Thomson.

THOMSON

Dr. Benjamin Franklin --

Yea!

FRANKLIN

Mr. John Dickinson --

THOMSON

Nay!

DICKINSON

Mr. James Wilson --

THOMSON

(As there is no response)

Judge Wilson --

(ALL eyes turn to WILSON)

FRANKLIN

There it is, Mr. Wilson -- it's up to you now -- the whole question of American Independence rests squarely on your shoulders. An entirely new nation, Mr. Wilson -- waiting to be born or to die in birth, all on your say-so. Which will it be, Mr. Wilson? Every map-maker in the world is waiting for your decision!

DICKINSON

Come now, James -- nothing has changed. We mustn't let Dr. Franklin create one of his confusions. The question is clear.

FRANKLIN

Most questions are clear when someone else has to decide them.

JOHN

(Quietly; turning the screw)

It would be a pity for a man who handed down hundreds of wise decisions from the bench to be remembered only for the one unwise decision he made in Congress.

DICKINSON

James -- you're keeping everybody waiting. The Secretary has called for your vote.

WILSON

(To DICKINSON)

Please don't push me, John, I know what you want me to do. But Mr. Adams is correct about one thing -- I'm the one who'll be remembered for it.

DICKINSON

What do you mean?

WILSON

I'm different from you, John -- I'm different from most of the men here. I don't want to be remembered! I just don't want the responsibility!

DICKINSON

Yes, well, whether you want it or not, James, there's no way of avoiding it.

WILSON

Not necessarily. If I go with them I'll only be one among dozens' -- no one will ever remember the name of James Wilson. But if I vote with you I'll be the man who prevented American Independence. I'm sorry, John -- I just didn't bargain for that.

DICKINSON

And is that how new nations are formed -- by a nonentity trying to preserve the anonymity he so richly deserves?

FRANKLIN

Revolutions come into this world like bastard children, Mr. Dickinson -- half improvised and half compromised. Our side has provided the compromise -- now Judge Wilson is supplying the rest.

DICKINSON

James ...

WILSON

(Decisively)

I'm sorry, John -- my vote is "Yea".

THOMSON

Pennsylvania says "Yea" --

(There is a stunned silence as ALL eyes go to the tally board and Pennsylvania's marker is moved into the "Yea" column.)

Finally:)

The count being twelve to none with one abstention -- the resolution on Independence --

(Surprised)

-- is adopted.

JOHN

It's done. It's done.

HANCOCK

(A pause, then, rising:)

Mr. Thomson -- is the Declaration ready to be signed?

It is.

THOMSON

HANCOCK

Then I suggest we do so. And the Chair further proposes, for our mutual security and protection, that no man be allowed to sit in this Congress without attaching his name to it.

(ALL eyes now go to DICKINSON)

DICKINSON

I'm sorry, Mr. President -- I cannot, in good conscience, sign such a document -- I will never stop hoping for our eventual reconciliation with England. But because, in my own way, I regard America no less than does Mr. Adams, I will join the Army and fight in her defense -- even though I believe that fight to be hopeless. Goodbye, Gentlemen.
(HE starts out)

JOHN

Gentlemen of the Congress -- I say ye John Dickinson!

(DICKINSON stops as the CONGRESS expresses their admiration for DICKINSON by stamping their feet and banging their walking sticks on the floor. Then HE goes and HANCOCK GAVELS)

HANCOCK

Gentlemen -- are there any objections to the Declaration being approved as it now stands?

JOHN

I have one, Mr. Hancock --

HANCOCK

You, Mr. Adams?

JOHN

Yes. Mr. Jefferson -- it so happens the word is unalienable, not inalienable.

JEFFERSON

I'm sorry, Mr. Adams -- in alienable is correct.

JOHN

(His voice rising)

I happen to be a Harvard graduate, Mr. Jefferson -- !

JEFFERSON

(Likewise)

And I attended William and Mary, Mr. Adams -- !

HANCOCK

(GAVELS)

Gentlemen, please! Mr. Jefferson -- will you yield to Mr. Adams' request?

JEFFERSON

(A pause)

No, sir, I will not.

JOHN

Oh, very well -- I'll withdraw it.

FRANKLIN

(Privately)

Good for you, John.

JOHN

I'll speak to the printer about it later.

HANCOCK

Very well, gentlemen --

(HE goes to THOMSON's desk and
picks up the quill)

-- we are about to brave the storm in a skiff made of paper
-- and how it will end, God only knows.

(HE signs with a flourish)

HOPKINS

That's a pretty large signature, Johnny --

HANCOCK

So Fat George in London can read it without his glasses!

(LAUGHTER)

All right, gentlemen -- step right up -- don't miss your
chance to commit treason!

(LAUGHTER)

FRANKLIN

Hancock's right -- this paper is our passport to the
gallows. But there's no backing out now -- if we don't
hang together we shall most assuredly hang separately.

(LAUGHTER)

MCKEAN

(Patting his ample middle)

In my case hanging won't be so bad -- one snap and it'll
be over --

("Snap!")

-- just like that! But look at Read, there -- he'll be
dancing a jig long after I'm gone!

(LAUGHTER)

HANCOCK

Gentlemen -- forgive me if I don't join in the merriment -- but if we're arrested now my name is still the only one on the damn thing!

(More LAUGHTER -- which subsides slowly as the COURIER enters, deposits his dispatch on THOMSON's desk and departs, turning to look at JOHN as HE goes)

THOMSON

From the Commander, Army of the United Colonies --

(HE stops, looks up)

-- Army of the United States -- in New York, dispatch number one thousand two hundred and nine. "To the Hon. Congress, John Hancock, President. Dear Sir: I can now report with some certainty that the eve of battle in New York is near at hand. Toward this end I have ordered the evacuation of Manhattan and directed our defenses to take up stronger positions on the Brooklyn Heights. At the present time my forces consist entirely of Haslet's Delaware Militia and Smallwood's Mary-landers, a total of five thousand troops to stand against -- "

(HE hesitates in horrified astonishment)

" -- twenty-five thousand of the enemy -- and I begin to notice that many of them are lads under fifteen and old men, none of whom could truly be called soldiers. One personal note to Mr. Lewis Morris of New York -- I must regretfully report that his estates have been totally destroyed but that I have taken the liberty of transporting Mrs. Morris and eight of the children to Connecticut and safety. The four older boys are now enlisted in the Continental Army. As I write these words, the enemy is plainly in sight beyond the river. How it will end only Providence can direct -- but dear God! what brave men -- I shall lose before this business ends. Y'r ob'd't --

(DRUM ROLL)

-- G. Washington."

(There is a silence during which McNAIR goes to the calendar and removes the final leaf, revealing: "JULY 4.")

The LIGHT outside has dimmed; it is becoming evening)

HANCOCK
Very well, Gentlemen. McNair -- go ring the bell.

(McNAIR goes)

MORRIS
Mr. President -- !

HANCOCK
Mr. Morris --

MORRIS
To hell with New York -- I'll sign it anyway.

HANCOCK
Thank you, Mr. Morris. Stephen -- sit down.

HOPKINS
(Who has been standing next to the
Declaration on THOMSON's desk)
No -- I want t' remember each man's face as he signs.

HANCOCK
Very well. Mr. Thomson --

(As each name is called the SIGNER
will rise, come to the SECRETARY's
desk, sign, then stand to one side.
The TOLLING Liberty Bell begins,
off)

THOMSON
New Hampshire -- Dr. Josiah Bartlett --
Massachusetts -- Mr. John Adams --
Rhode Island -- Mr. Stephen Hopkins --
Connecticut -- Mr. Roger Sherman --
New York -- Mr. Lewis Morris --
New Jersey -- the Rev. Jonathan Witherspoon --
Pennsylvania -- Dr. Benjamin Franklin --
Delaware -- Mr. Caesar Rodney --

(HANCOCK takes the Declaration to
RODNEY, then returns it to the table)

Mary-land -- Mr. Samuel Chase --
Virginia -- Mr. Thomas Jefferson --
North Carolina -- Mr. Joseph Hewes --
South Carolina -- Mr. Edward Rutledge --
Georgia -- Dr. Lyman Hall --

(As the last MAN signs, the SOUND of
the TOLLING Liberty Bell in the belfry
above becomes deafening.)

Then, the scene FREEZES for a brief instant -- and the pose of the familiar Trumbull painting of this occasion has been captured.

A scrim CURTAIN falls, the scene visible through it. Then as the back-light DIMS and the CURTAIN is LIT from the front it becomes opaque and reveals the lower half of the DECLARATION, featuring the signatures)

FINAL CURTAIN