

PHILADELPHIA

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Revision: 1.36
ph1.pdf

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a protest play

Characters

DOE — John Doe. Blue hair. Male.

MAZYME — Doe's radical friend. Female.

ORGANIZER-GIRL — Puppetista organizer. Female.

VELVEETA — Puppet maker. Male.

This character list is necessarily incomplete. The play is meant to be performed by a small ensemble cast, each of whom will play multiple roles at different times. I think five or six actors would be sufficient, although an ambitious director could certainly add many people to some of the various “crowd” scenes. However, strict realism of numbers (for example, a bus scene mentions that there are thirty-one people on-board) is *not* the intent. The director should aim at an *abstraction* of the larger scene described on stage with a much smaller number of actors and scenic elements: a steering wheel and empty chairs stands for a full bus, isolated collections of activists presented separately connotes a crowded rally, and so on. Similarly, the actor's job is to *portray*, not to *be* — so certainly some of the “male prisoners” in the later jail scene will be acted by females.

The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons. – F. Dostoyevski

[JOHN DOE is wearing the white face paint of a mime. There is a black bandana on his head and a red one around his neck. He's wearing a mechanic's workshirt and jeans; on his back he has quickly sewn a square of white cheesecloth with the puppetista "flying wrench" logo stencilled on it. On his feet are Army-surplus black combat boots. His hair is blue.]

[At times during the play, DOE steps out of the action to address the audience. There should be an accompanying light shift when this happens; DOE should step into a spot in a pool of darkness. At the top of the play, DOE is "out" of the action. During the first paragraphs, DOE moves "in" to the scene: Philadelphia, in the year 2000.]

DOE: Everything I'm about to tell you is true. It either happened to me or to people around me. I've rearranged some.

The bits that you don't believe would happen in America—

Did.

[The bare spotlight gives way to a space: DOE is alone in a jail cell.]

I am John Doe 907835, called "Flea." I am a political prisoner in America. I have not had a trial. I am not allowed phone calls.

I arrived here, in Philadelphia, on Sunday, July 30, 2000, the day of the opening ceremonies for the Republican National Convention.

[Behind DOE, a projection appears: the Republican National Convention. As he continues speaking, it is followed by one or two more which restate the dolled-up scriptedness of the 2000 convention.]

I came because I was dissatisfied with my world and wanted to make a difference. I didn't have concrete plans. I just wanted to yell and scream in this media-hounded city, to not lie down and be *fucked* by this scripted party, to let others know they didn't have to lie down and be fucked by this insensate GOP convention.

In two weeks there will be more yelling and screaming, at the Democratic National Convention. Maybe then people will finally begin to wake up and realize their democracy has been *stolen* from them. Not by taking your vote, but by taking your *choices*. What does it matter which party you vote for? Only 50% of the population voted at all in the last election, and damn near

all of them voted Republicrat. THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY!! This is a ONE-CENTRIST-PARTY SYSTEM!

Sorry, I got carried away.

[Next projection: A banner for the UNITY2000 rally.]

Around noon on Sunday, I joined UNITY2000, a permitted march through Philadelphia, ending up on Benjamin Franklin Drive. A chance for the non-Republican to show their united strength.

The general sense was that it was a miserable failure. A textbook rally, organized by white armchair liberals, a feeble attempt at inclusiveness that excluded the non-academic, cut the balls off our movement's real strength. Ten thousand white folk wandering around looking for "progressive" white folk like them. The Libertarians were there:

[LIBERTARIANS in green shirts enter and march in a circle.]

LIBERTARIANS: Hands off trade! Keep every dollar you earn! Get government out of our lives! Elect Harry Browne!

DOE: I personally don't see how libertarianism prevents societal evils. Say, tele-marketing.

[Back to the topic.]

Mixed into the UNITY2000 rally were about a dozen different socialist and communist groups, a breed notorious for their dogmatic splits and intolerances. The Revolutionary Young Communist *Bloc* were wearing sharp red shirts *[A RYCB member enters and chants a slogan.]* while the Young Communist *League* was wearing white shirts *[One enters. The two communists shoot dirty looks at each other.]* There were Maoists, Trotskyites, Marxist-Leninist Socialists, World Socialists, Democratic Socialists, Christian Democratic Socialists, and several varieties of Catholic-Jesuit Socialist orders. *[Representatives of all of the above have been entering.]*

SOCIALISTS: Socialism! Our way! *[Look at each other]* MY WAY!

[The SOCIALISTS scatter, except for the ISO CHICK.]

DOE: My friend Jane, Jane Doe—we'll call her Mazyme—got turned on by the ISO—the International Socialist Organization—paid her dues and joined within an hour.

ISO CHICK: See, the problem with most socialist models is that they're not properly *international*. Like Cuba. You have socialism within the state, but its relations with the rest of the world, state-to-state, still remain essentially capitalistic.

MAZYME: Yeah. [*With conviction:*] Yeah!

[*She breaks from ISO CHICK to talk to DOE:*] I really like these guys. I feel like I might finally be able to *belong* to a group again.

DOE: [*Out.*] Mazyme had been burnt by the Young Communist League as a young girl, but had never lost her red streak.

[*To Mazyme.*] I'm going to go wander around by myself for a while then, okay? [*Mazyme nods, rapt on the ISO group discussion.*]

[*DOE moves on.*]

There was an atheist contingent—

ATHEISTS: PRESERVING THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE!

DOE: —and a crazy preacher with John 3:16 block-lettered on a poster, standing still in the middle of the road, forcing the march to split around him.

PREACHER: FORNICATORS AND DRUNKARDS WILL BURN IN HELL LIKE TUPAC!

A COMMUNIST: Jesus was a communist!

PREACHER: HYPOCRITES! You talk tolerance but won't listen to WHAT GOD IS SAYING TO YOU! You are the most intolerant people I know!

DOE: As an opportunity to network, Unity 2000 wasn't that bad. I carried an anti-DMCA, boycott-the-RIAA, boycott-the-MPAA banner. . .

MAZYME: You really should make you poster more *intelligible*.

DOE: People either get it or they don't. [*A marcher walks by, reads the sign, and gives a raised fist salute.*] And if they don't they often ask and I can explain the issues to them. Most people haven't even begun to think of this stuff yet.

MAZYME: I still think it would be better if people could *understand* what the hell your poster meant.

DOE: [*To audience.*] Well? Do *you* know what I'm talking about?

[*Back.*] That night I heard about the Puppetistas for the first time.

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Puppetistas!

DOE: *[Approaching ORGANIZER-GIRL. Nervously:]* I saw the puppets in DC and I've been a big fan of the Bread and Puppet Theater for a long time. I saw them in NY and I've been meaning to visit their commune in Vermont—they give radical political theater shows on Sundays during the summer. . .

ORGANIZER-GIRL: We need lots of people. Like, hundreds. Have you heard of the Shoddy Puppet Company?

DOE: Um. No.

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Oh. Just show up tomorrow and we'll give you something to do. We've got lots of stuff that doesn't require any talent at all. *[Quickly:]* Not that you don't have talent. . .

DOE: *[Out.]* "Tomorrow" was the non-permitted march of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, who have a long history within the city of Philadelphia, working for women and the poor.

[Sunset, sunrise. PUPPETISTAS enter with plastic bucket drums. DOE pushes his way through them, looking for ORGANIZER-GIRL, the puppetista organizer. He finally finds her.]

Hey!

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Hey! *[She gives DOE a hug, somewhat surprising him.]*

DOE: Do you have any cardboard for me?

ORGANIZER-GIRL: No, no we don't. You should have been here earlier.

DOE: But the march doesn't start until noon!

ORGANIZER-GIRL: We were here before eleven.

DOE: Oh. *[He turns to leave. ORGANIZER-GIRL stops him.]*

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Here's a whistle. Why don't you join the drum squad?

[The drum squad enters. They're fucking loud. They stand and drum in place, waiting to march. DOE hesitantly blows his whistle in rhythm, then gains a bit of courage and conviction. The other PUPPETISTAS march, chanting. DOE becomes one with the crowd. Then:]

A PUPPETISTA: I need to get a drink. Do you want to hold this for a while?

DOE: Sure.

[The PUPPETISTAS chant. DOE is silent, then (very gradually) joining in.]

PUPPETISTAS: ELECT THE ELEPHONKY! VOTE REPUBLICRAT IN THE NEXT ELECTION! DEMOCRACY FOR SALE—VOTES SOLD HERE! AT&T GAVE A MILLION DOLLARS TO THE GOP THIS YEAR! FIRST UNION BANK GAVE 250 THOUSAND! THIS ELECTION HAS BEEN SPONSORED BY... MICROSOFT! THIS ELECTION HAS BEEN SPONSORED BY—BOEING!

DOE: BY UNITED AIRLINES!

PUPPETISTAS: BY U.S. AIRWAYS!

DOE: BY GENERAL MOTORS!

PUPPETISTAS: VOTES HAVE BEEN BOUGHT!

DOE: YOUR DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN SOLD!

PUPPETISTAS: VOTE REPUBLICRAT!

DOE: ELECT THE ELEFUNKY!

[The PUPPETISTAS and DOE “do the ele-funky”, chanting and dancing. A man on stilts (VELVEETA) walks through, followed by an army of cockroaches and a banner: “Cockroaches love the dirty secrets of government.”]

[The march winds down; the organizer (ORGANIZER-GIRL) begins collecting cardboard.]

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Stack your cardboard over here.

DOE: How are you getting all of this stuff back?

ORGANIZER-GIRL: That’s a good question. *[To milling PUPPETISTAS:]* Does anybody here have transportation?

DOE: *[Volunteering.]* I’ve got a truck.

[ORGANIZER-GIRL gives DOE a stack of cardboard. He wanders downstage. The Kensington march fades. DOE in his own narrative light.]

I drove to northwest Philly with a pile of cardboard in the back and two beefy guys sandwiched in the front of my little Toyota pickup truck.

[DOE puts down cardboard as we fade to the truck.]

Uh, I gotta shift into reverse.

[Everyone rearranges. DOE shifts.]

BEEFY GUY 1: Whoa, baby.

[The truck gets underway.]

BEEFY GUY 2: So I hear tomorrow's going to be some day.

DOE: That's what they say.

BEEFY GUY 2: I'm just following this guy around. Nobody will tell me anything.

[BEEFY GUY 1 grunts.]

DOE: Where are you going?

BEEFY GUY 1: To the convergence center.

BEEFY GUY 2: Same place as him. You know, Philly's built like 20 feet off the ground.

DOE: Really?

BEEFY GUY 2: Yeah. I sure hope you guys have some people who know Philly. The quickest way somewhere center city is lots of times underground.

DOE: It seems there's a good number of Philly folk. In the group.

BEEFY GUY 1: Yeah.

BEEFY GUY 2: Shame the puppets aren't involved. Tomorrow, I mean.

DOE: Actually, I think they've got quite a big role tomorrow.

BEEFY GUY 2: Really? What?

DOE: I don't think I should say.

BEEFY GUY 1: Here's where we get out.

[Truck fades. DOE in cell alone.]

DOE: I wonder if I should have said—his questions made me nervous. I was thinking I probably shouldn't have said anything at all about any of it. Nothing about the "big role of the puppets." After all, I'd just overheard some people talking about that. I'm not sure even *I* was supposed to hear it.

After dropping the guys off, I arrived with the cardboard at the puppetista warehouse.

[DOE picks up the cardboard. Crossfade: he is in a huge warehouse. It used to be a trolley shed, back when streetcars ran the streets. Paper-maché creatures and painted cardboard cutouts and sandwich boards are everywhere. People are painting, tearing strips of fabric, creating costumes, trying on rainbow clown wigs—a bustle of creative activity.]

Where should I put these?

[VELVEETA walks over. He is the stilt-walker from the previous day's parade, and the "master" puppet-maker.]

VELVEETA: Just pile them over there. We'll put them in the U-HAUL tomorrow.

[DOE puts them down where VELVEETA had pointed.]

DOE: Is there anything I can do?

VELVEETA: Well—I was hoping to have some doves to go with these giant prison heads I'm working on. *[Gestures to paper-maché heads leaning against the wall.]*

DOE: Ok, I can work on those. Can you get me started?

VELVEETA: You basically make it up yourself. But start with a clothes hanger *[Fetches a pile of wire hangers.]*, snip it here and fold it over like this. Then you attach some fabric for the wings—and if you can figure out some way to attach a body in the middle, that would be great too.

[Cross fade to a bank of three payphones outdoors. Big shady folk are claiming the two on the outside; someone is lounging five feet from the center one. DOE approaches the center phone nervously and dials, looking around warily.]

DOE: *[Talking to an answering machine.]* Hey Emily this is... *[Looks askance at guy next to him, who looks away.]* ... me. I'm down in Philly making puppets and it's really great, you should come! Leave a message on Mazyme's machine and I'll call you back with directions. I'm really really excited about

all this. I won't get you into trouble—promise! We're just doing street theater. I've made like five of these coat hanger doves and I'm going to make at least five more before I sleep. Tomorrow's going to be great! *[Noticing shady characters again.]* I shouldn't say anymore, I don't think. Call Mazyme. Tell everyone! Bye.

[DOE hangs up. He looks at the SHADY FELLOWS once more before exiting.]

SHADY 1: *[To SHADY 2.]* Got a light?

SHADY 3: I got a light.

[SHADY 3 crosses to SHADY 1 but everyone keeps walking, clearing the stage as we crossfade to DOE making doves in the warehouse. It gets later and later. DOE falls asleep in the middle of his pile of coat hangers and cloth. Morning. MAZYME enters the warehouse.]

MAZYME: Morning, you.

DOE: *[Groggily.]* Mazyme! This place is great! I called Molly and Emily last night and told them they should come down for this. Did they leave a message on your machine?

MAZYME: No.

DOE: Oh. *[Beat.]*

[A random weird blond bowl-cut kid (WEIRD KID) wanders in.]

WEIRD KID: Hey, where are all the puppets meeting today?

DOE: *[Blurting.]* Right here. At two. That's what they said.

WEIRD KID: Here? I thought—

DOE: No, everyone's meeting right here.

[WEIRD KID disappears.]

Maybe I shouldn't have told him that.

MAZYME: No, it doesn't matter. It's just a warehouse full of cardboard.

DOE: What time is it?

MAZYME: Noon.

DOE: Already? We've got to start loading this stuff up. That's what VELVEETA said. We've got 138 skeletons.

MAZYME: Skeletons?

DOE: Part of an anti-death penalty bit. One for each person George W's sent to the electric chair and killed while governor of Texas.

A PUPPETISTA: Guys? There's a police helicopter hovering right above here.

VELVEETA: Let's get the puppets loaded up and out of here.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: There's a guy outside who says he was to check the water meter.

PUPPETISTAS: Don't let him in!

VELVEETA: Keep the door closed!

MAZYME: The police can search an "open space" without a warrant if doors are open or you let them in.

VELVEETA: Where's the meter guy? What's he doing?

A PUPPETISTA: He's gone.

ORGANIZER-GIRL: Let's load the trucks. Now! I'm going to the the other U-HAUL.

MAZYME: This happened in DC: they shut down the puppet space on "fire code violations". They had paint and extension cords. Big no-no, apparently.

VELVEETA: We want to march today! Let's get the puppets out.

DOE: Wait! Where are my doves? I spent all night making them. I want them to get out too.

[Helicopter noises. The PUPPETISTAS work on loading the U-HAUL.]

VELVEETA: Time check!

DOE: *[Looking at watch.]* 2:05. Where are my doves?!

VELVEETA: Is everyone here? *[General assent.]*

DOE: Here they are!

[Sirens.]

A PUPPETISTA: There are squad cars blocking the garage doors.

DOE: Are we surrounded?

VELVEETA: Check!

A PUPPETISTA: Police on all sides.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: Cop on the roof! *[All look up. He's there in the skylight.]*

DOE: Can we get out?

VELVEETA: Can we get the puppets out?

NOT A PUPPETISTA: Fuck your puppets! I'm not a puppetista! I just want out!

[Fade back to DOE in cell.]

DOE: We were incarcerated in the warehouse for over three hours, surrounded by police. The search warrant was always coming "in five minutes." No negotiations, no explanations. They told us that if we attempted to leave the warehouse we would be "detained until the warrant was served," but they told the press that we were a bunch of Waco-crazies, holed up by our own choice with "weapons and implements of crime." Said that we were free to go at any time.

Inside, we debated sending a pair out to visibly demonstrate to the media that we were *not* in fact "free to go", but our decision-making process broke down.

NOT A PUPPETISTA: Fuck your puppets! I want out!

A PUPPETISTA: The police are saying that the warrant's in a taxi heading over here right now.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: That's what they've been saying for three hours.

NOT A PUPPETISTA: I didn't come to Philadelphia to sit in a room with painted cardboard!

[The sound of a chainsaw being fired up outside.]

A PUPPETISTA: They've brought a chain saw. They say as soon as the warrant gets here they're going to cut through the garage doors. And they're asking about flammables.

NOT A PUPPETISTA: Flammables! Just what the fuck are they planning on doing?! FUCK THIS!
FUCK ALL THIS PUPPET *SHIT!*

[Cross-fade back to DOE in cell.]

DOE: We decided to preempt the warrant and walk out. We thought it would be safer than waiting until some trigger-happy SWAT team cut through the walls. We all remembered what had happened at Waco.

We chose to leave through the garage door, so that the media outside could see inside through the open door. See that our warehouse was harmless. That all we had were stacks of cardboard.

The police took their time individually “detaining” us, so those at the back of the line were able to give a few of the puppets at least a brief glimpse of sunlight, parading them and chanting through the open garage door.

PUPPETISTAS: *[Together, once.]* YOU CAN’T STOP THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE,
,’CUZ THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE DON’T STOP!

DOE: *[Alone.]* ELECT THE ELEFUNKY!

[Beat. Back to DOE, alone in cell.]

DOE: When I finally stepped out—*[Takes a last swig of ginger ale.]*

COP: *[Voice only.]* Put the soda down! Step out, *NOW!*

DOE: —a cop stripped off my handkerchief *[DOE does so himself]*, the flying wrench logo I had sewed to the back of my shirt *[Takes this off]*, and removed my bag *[Drops everything in a pile on the ground]*. They took a polaroid. *[Flash.]* Another cop emptied my pockets. *[DOE drops keys, whistle, pen, and scraps of paper on top of bag.]* They put a red bracelet on my hand with the property tag number, 5100, then handcuffed my hands behind my back so tightly that I would still have scabs on my wrists a week later. *[DOE’s hands behind his back.]*

They lost my bag, my keys, and everything, so I don’t know why they bothered to tag them.

They loaded us into a white maximum-security prisoner transport labelled “Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office.” This was a schoolbus with metal grates everywhere and thick locking plexiglass separating the driver’s area and the emergency exit from the rest of the seats. The windows were bolted open an exact half inch. The temperature outside the bus was in the upper nineties. The temperature inside began to rise higher.

[Cross fade. PRISONERS on the bus. All with hands cuffed behind them. It is very uncomfortable to sit in this position. They fidget. It is hot. They begin to sweat. DOE in front, MAZYME and VELVEETA near by.]

Without warning or explanation, the bus began to move.

[All lurch.]

ALL: Hey! Where are you taking us! Where are we going!? We haven't been arrested! We haven't been read our rights! We're just being *detained*, they said!!

A PUPPETISTA: Hey, there's media!

ALL: THIS IS WHAT A POLICE STATE LOOKS LIKE!
THIS IS WHAT A POLICE STATE LOOKS LIKE!

[Chanting goes on for some time.]

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: Save your energy, guys. There's no one out there to hear us anymore.

[Silence for a moment, then someone starts singing.]

A PUPPETISTA: The wheels on the bus go round and round. . .

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: It's hot.

DOE: How hot do you think it is in here?

VELVEETA: It's got to be over a hundred.

MAZYME: Your face paint is running.

DOE: I'm sweating.

A PUPPETISTA: Where are we?

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: Outside, that's the Roundhouse. They built this for the rioters in the last Republican Convention held in this city. '72.

MAZYME: We're being arrested?!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: *[A little desperately:]* No, we're being *detained*. No one read us our rights, we didn't have an arresting officer.

[Bus starts up again. It keeps getting hotter.]

DOE: Now where are we going?

VELVEETA: This is 95 North.

A PUPPETISTA: DRIVER, WHERE THE FUCK ARE WE GOING?!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: TELL US WHERE WE'RE GOING!

YET ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: LOOSEN OUR CUFFS!

[Narrow to DOE.]

DOE: It got hotter and hotter in the bus as they drove us from the Roundhouse to Holmesburg prison. . .

A PUPPETISTA: We haven't been arrested!

DOE: . . . and back. We had been on the bus two hours when the heat took her first victim.

A PUPPETISTA: SLIM's losing consciousness!

ALL: MEDIC! ME-DIC! ME-DIC! ME-DIC!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: *[Going to the front of the bus.]* We've got a guy losing consciousness back here! Look at him! LOOK AT HIM! He needs help, he needs water! It's over a hundred degrees back here!

ALL: ME-DIC! ME-DIC! ME-DIC!

DOE: The bus didn't stop until a quarter hour later, didn't stop until we'd arrived back at the Roundhouse. Again. Still no one paid attention. SLIM was out cold. It took three of us to hold him upright in his seat, to keep him from collapsing into the aisle. SLIM was no small boy.

A PUPPETISTA: Somebody, help us!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: WE NEED A DOCTOR!

ALL: ME-DIC! ME-DIC!

MAZYME: Why won't anyone pay attention?

DOE: He's passed out in here!

A PUPPETISTA: Loosen his cuffs, take him outside, do SOMETHING!

DOE: *[Back out.]* But they wouldn't do anything "until the Fire Rescue Squad arrives."

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: Where are they!?

DOE: And when the Fire Rescue Squad arrived, the unconscious SLIM was hauled out through the narrow aisle like an insensate *object*, not a man, like an unconscious animal, still handcuffed, arms catching on the seats as he was dragged, cuffs biting into his wrists.

[An OFFICER tugs violently at SLIM (who should be represented by a mass of sheets, pulling, catching, and ripping). The unconscious SLIM gets caught in the aisle and the OFFICER pulls harder to force him free. The PUPPETISTAS swarm to protect SLIM and try to unwedge him.]

A PUPPETISTA: Stop! You're hurting him!

[The OFFICER assaults A PUPPETISTA, sending her flying back into her seat. The PUPPETISTAS are shocked; SLIM is dragged the rest of the way out.]

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: *[Whispered.]* Shame.

ALL: *[Joining one by one.]* Shame. Shame. Shame.

MAZYME: *[Looking out the window.]* They've put him on his back on the pavement without uncuffing him. Don't they know how that hurts? The cuffs are tight enough already!

ALL: Uncuff him! Uncuff him! Uncuff him!

[SLIM is dragged out of sight. Stunned silence.]

VELVEETA: TIMELINE.

[Attention turns to VELVEETA as he recites.]

2:05. Warehouse surrounded.

5, we open garage doors.

6:30, arrive warehouse.

7:05, arrive Holmesburg prison.

7:50, leave Holmesburg prison.

[beat]

8:05. SLIM loses consciousness.

8:15. The incident occurred.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: JOYFUL assaulted.

ALL: JOYFUL assaulted.

[Beat. They repeat, in unison.]

TIMELINE.

2:05. WAREHOUSE SURROUNDED.

5, WE OPEN GARAGE DOORS.

6:30, ARRIVE WAREHOUSE.

7:05, ARRIVE HOLMESBURG PRISON.

7:50, LEAVE HOLMESBURG PRISON.

8:05. SLIM LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS.

8:15. THE INCIDENT OCCURRED.

JOYFUL ASSAULTED.

[A moment of silence.]

MAZYME: We need water. The windows are fogging up. We're losing water.

DOE: My shirts are soaked through.

A PUPPETISTA: What are they doing to us?

VELVEETA: We're puppetistas.

ALL: Puppetistas.

[DOE breaks out.]

DOE: Why were they going this to me? I didn't do anything wrong — I spent the night making *doves*, for chri'sake. What happened to freedom of speech? When did street theater become enough reason to lock us in Philly's own steaming Black Hole of Calcutta? Didn't anyone care? I'd entered Philadelphia disenchanted with the electoral process, with the two-party system, but I still believed in justice, liberty and justice for all, the Criminal Justice System. I was losing that. Fast.

MAZYME: How many are planning on doing jail solidarity?

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: *If* we're arrested.

MAZYME: If we're arrested. Instead of just detained.
How many?

[General murmurs of assent.]

DOE: What's "jail solidarity"?

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: It's a way to maintain the power of the group once in jail. It involves passive non-cooperation and consensus decision making.

A PUPPETISTA: They can't deal with all of us in the jail at once. In DC, they let everyone go after two days with nothing but a \$15 jay-walking ticket, which we didn't even have to pay.

MAZYME: Yeah, I heard some guy paid for all of you.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: And don't forget your fifth amendment right to remain silent. You don't have to tell them *anything*.

A PUPPETISTA: Not even your name.

MAZYME: *Especially* not your name. We'll all be John and Jane Does.

DOE: Does it really work?

A PUPPETISTA: It worked in DC.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: It worked in Seattle.

DOE: Jail Solidarity.

VELVEETA: We are one!

A PUPPETISTA: ¡Puppetistas!

VELVEETA: Timeline.

[The PUPPETISTAS recite the time line in the background and we come out to DOE.]

DOE: Another hour rolled by. The bus continued to grow hotter and hotter, and we sweated off more and more of the moisture we needed. *[Some PUPPETISTAS visibly wilt, put their heads between their knees, close their eyes, etc.]* Around 9:15 an officer got on the bus and informed us that yes, we *had* been actually *arrested*.

ALL: Arrested!?

DOE: For what?

A PUPPETISTA: We haven't been read our rights!

DOE: *[Out.]* It turns out you don't have to be.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: We need WATER!

YET ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: And we need cuffs loosened! His hands are turning blue!

A PUPPETISTA: We've been on this bus for three hours!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: WA-TER!

ALL: WA-TER! WA-TER! WA-TER!

DOE: *[Out.]* At 9:30pm, we finally received water. One 500mL bottle *[He holds it up.]* to split between all 31 of us. It was the driver's personal bottle. "I'm doing this for you guys as a favor."

[Back in.]

VELVEETA: 9:30. 500mL of water.

ALL: *[Repeat.]* 9:30. 500mL of water.

A PUPPETISTA: This isn't enough!

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: We've been sweating in here for hours!

ALL: WA-TER! WA-TER! WA-TER!

DOE: *[Out.]* The driver left the bus.

ALL: LOOSEN THE CUFFS! LOOSEN THE CUFFS! WATER! WATER!

VELVEETA: 9:50pm. 128oz of water. 31 people.

ALL: 9:50. 128oz of water. 31 people.

DOE: *[Out.]* A nurse finally came in to look at our cuffs. *[NURSE enters, is overwhelmed by the heat. Staggered off.]* But she couldn't stand the heat.

A PUPPETISTA: We've been in here four hours! And you couldn't take it for four minutes!

DOE: *[Anguished.]* Do you people have no *SOUL?!!*

MAZYME: I can't believe they'd step in here and see how conditions are and *do* nothing about it!

VELVEETA: We're HUMAN BEINGS in here!

DOE: *[Out.]* Around midnight—six hours on the bus—it began to rain. Perhaps God does have eyes, after all. We were so desperate for water that those who could get their cuffs in front of them reached out the half-inch opening and let the rain pouring off the filthy schoolbus roof run down their arm and off their elbows. The rest of us gathered round to lap at the trickle, hands bound.
12:57am — after seven hours — I was finally allowed off the bus.

OFFICER: Three at a time.

DOE: I was more than a little disillusioned. In my deep heart, I was hoping someone would come out, apologize profusely, and let us all go.

They separated the men from the women. I said good-bye to MAZYME and put on a brave face.

[DOE kisses MAZYME on the cheek.] I've been wanting some quiet time to write for a while anyway. *[Wry grin. MAZYME says nothing.]* See you soon. *[MAZYME is led off.]*

DOE: *[Out.]* Here they took my shoelaces and belt, and took another polaroid. There was paperwork. . .

OFFICER: *[With pen.]* You're another John Doe, right?

DOE: And I was part of jail solidarity without doing a thing. I was John Doe #203 here. Four hundred and ninety people would be arrested.

They brought us downstairs and squeezed six of us into each 6' by 7' holding cell.

[The holding cell. DOE along with six others. A one-piece toilet/sink on the back wall and a bed without mattress on the right. The floors and walls are filthy.]

[The six men in the holding cell are NATHAN, LARRY, ACRO, PORKCHOP, SLIM, and DOE. In the next holding cell are CRAZY and LOONY.]

NATHAN: I can't believe I'm in here. I wasn't supposed to be arrested.

LARRY: I tried to give them my name, man, when I came in. But they put me down as John Doe anyway.

NATHAN: I've got to go to work tomorrow. They can't put me in jail.

[A voice starts singing: the chorus to "Solidarity Forever." The last line is mangled.]

VOICE 1: *[To the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic":]*

Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
The Truth keeps marching on.

VOICE 2: *[Interrupting:]* No, that's not it. "Our union makes us strong."

VOICE 1: Are you sure?

[Trails off. Silence.]

LARRY: How are we supposed to sleep in here? Or piss?

ACRO: I hope nobody has to take a shit.

PORKCHOP: The shitting would be okay. It's wiping I can't imagine.

[All stare at the commode in silence for a few moments. There are two buttons. NATHAN wavers between the two, wondering, then chooses one to push: a long and loud flush.]

CRAZY: *[From adjoining cell.]* Whoa! Monster flush! *[He goes off to flush the toilet in his own cell.]*

DOE: They began. . . *[No one can hear him; the toilet is still flushing. He waits until it is (finally) quiet again.]*

[Out.] They began to come for us one by one to be fingerprinted. The hardcore resisters stripped, on the presumption that—

CRAZY: SOLIDARITY FLUSH!

[CRAZY flushes. NATHAN joins in, in DOE's cellblock; the rest of the cellblock follows suit. For a while, no one can hear anything but the massive flushing.]

DOE: The guards put on latex gloves before touching a prisoner.

[An OFFICER enters, SL, putting on his gloves as he crosses right.]

LARRY: Incoming!

PORKCHOP: Officer on the block!

[OFFICER exits off stage right. Silence. Beat.]

DOE: Report!

[Silence.]

LARRY: What's going on down there?

[Silence. From offstage, the sound of a blow. A struggle. Silence.]

[The OFFICER drags a prisoner, right hand cuffed to left ankle, across the stage. The prisoner's shirt is off and his pants are half-down: he had been trying to strip when taken, but didn't have enough time.]

LARRY: Solidarity!

[Silence.]

CRAZY: More naked boys!

[Beat.]

DOE: *[Out.]* We numbered the cells arbitrarily from some point in the center, using numbers on one side and letters on the other. The cell beside us was 'B' – quickly becoming known as “Banana Block.”

[CRAZY and LOONY launch into a Vanilla Ice tune, with brio. They break off in the middle as another protester is dragged half-clothed SR to SL.]

CRAZY: Naked boys!

LOONY: More naked boys!

[Behind the dragged-out protester is brought one cooperating. He walks meekly between two latex-gloved officers.]

PORKCHOP: We should discuss whether or not we're going to cooperate.

ACRO: Are we all in solidarity?

LARRY: I don't think the question should be asked that way. We *are* all in Solidarity.

NATHAN: I'm not. I need to get out. I've got to work tomorrow.

LARRY: You're not *participating* in certain *tactics* of jail solidarity. But we *are* all in solidarity. With each other, and with the other prisoners in the system, imprisoned justly or not. Our fight is their fight.

PORKCHOP: But we need to know—is anyone other than Nathan not—*participating*?

DOE: Meaning not giving our names? They didn't give me a chance.

LARRY: Not just names. It means you do whatever possible to work together for—

PORKCHOP: As a first step, I think it means resisting fingerprinting. Like those brothers were doing.

DOE: Why?

PORKCHOP: Some people here might have records, or previous arrests, and the police will want to single them out.

LARRY: Jail solidarity means we bargain as a group, we stay together, we all get the same charges. No separating out the “leaders”—

ACRO: Anarchists have no leaders.

NATHAN: That didn't stop them from arresting Sellars.

ACRO: Sellars was arrested for talking on a cell phone.

DOE: *[Out.]* At some point the officers tired of dragging prisoners to the fingerprinting machine, and decided that non-cooperative protesters needed to be *punished*. They “hog-tied” RABBIT, TENNESSEE, BUCKY, and WOLFMAN; cuffed them right hand to left foot, *[DOE illustrates by grabbing his foot in his hand and remaining like this.]* and left them like that for hours, unable to stand up or lie down. Officer Cassady, badge 1976, jokes about WOLFMAN's hands turning “a nice shade of pink” due to the tightness of the cuffs. A heavy-set white-haired diabetic is hog-tied like this, too. Was it the persistent chanting of the cellblock,* for hours—hours!—that finally convinced them to uncuff RABBIT, and TENNESSEE; BUCKY, WOLFMAN, and the old diabetic? Or was it only the change in shifts, bringing in new eyes.

[Starting at the asterisk above, the CELLBLOCK begins chanting. Softly at first, while DOE is speaking, then louder and louder. DOE is finally able to release his foot and stand straight.]

CELLBLOCK: TAKE OFF THE CUFFS! TAKE OFF THE CUFFS! ME-DIC! ME-DIC!

DOE: We stuck together, as best we could. *[He re-enters the scene, rejoins the cellblock.]*

CELLBLOCK: *[The chorus of "Solidarity Forever" is sung through (correctly, this time, lyrics below) at least twice.]*

Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Our union makes us strong.

NATHAN: *[Finally.]* Doesn't anybody know the verse!?!?

[A moment of silence, then Banana Block starts up. CRAZY and LOONY lead a medley of Criss-Cross' "Jump," Twisted Sister's "We're not gonna take it," and the Sesame Street theme song. The CELLBLOCK joins in to various degrees on the different songs.]

DOE: After hiding under the bench twice when they came to fingerprint me, I eventually faced the machine myself.

[The lighting leaves DOE alone on stage. An eerie fluorescent light.]

I'm scared they'll add "resisting arrest" to my charges. I don't want to resist, but I don't want my fingers digitized, forever stored, always on record as having been arrested this day, under suspicion. Identified, tracked, a stream of electrons to follow me forever.

I admired those being dragged and cuffed to protect others. There were three in my cell who'd been through all this before. Who would get singled out, perhaps, held after the rest of us left this place. I wanted to protect them. My friends.

I resisted. Not by struggling with the cops. Passively. I walked slowly. I had to fix my shoe. *[Bends down, unties his shoelace, reties it. Slowly.]*

I ran my fingers through my clown makeup and left a greasy white smear on the machine's eye when they pressed my fingers to the glass. I was told to wash my hands. I was the slowest man alive. I took great care. I cleaned every wrinkle.

[DOE is washing his hands as other actors become the machine. Reach out and grab his hands from under the tap. Fondle them. Pull them into the machine. Grope and grab and leer.]

But they did scan me. Captured me in their machine, eventually, without my consent, without my even knowing what charges attached themselves to that record. I felt violated. My immutable biometrics, mine since birth, had been stolen from me. I could never get them back. I could never change them.

They returned me used, discarded, to my cell.

[Back to the cell. The prisoners whisper:]

CELLBLOCK: They say, “Get back.” We say, “Fight back!” Get back? Fight back. Get back? Fight back!

DOE: *[Out.]* Protesters discarded their ID bracelets, jammed the cell door locks, switched shirts to confound identification. Our treatment became even more harsh. RABBIT is bleeding when his cuffs are finally cut after being hog-tied for two hours. The women’s leaders are being taken away and held in isolation. Eleven from my cellblock are dragged from their cells, chained together, and marched off to the maximum security Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility. We would meet up with them much later.

9:15 am. 32 hours of incarceration inside the roundhouse. 39 hours since I was last free.

[Back in.]

LOONY: Okay, I learned my lesson!

CRAZY: Let me out now!

[LARRY is taking a piss. It is very awkward in the close quarters. He pushes the handle.]

LARRY: *[Quietly.]* They’ve turned off the water.

CRAZY: *[With LOONY, at volume.]* They’ve turned off our WATER!!!

[The CELLBLOCK verifies this for themselves, then:]

CELLBLOCK: WA-TER! WA-TER! WA-TER!

ACRO: We are human beings!

PORKCHOP: We can not survive without water!

NATHAN: Who are you? Who does this to people?

PORKCHOP: Monsters!

NATHAN: Why are you doing this to us?

CELLBLOCK: WA-TER! WA-TER!

[The chanting goes on without noticeable effect. When voices give out, the chant is drummed on every available surface. Walls are pounded, steel beds are banged. The beat is incessant.]

[An OFFICER enters.]

LARRY: *[Quietly, to the OFFICER.]* We've got no water.

DOE: We need *water*.

OFFICER: 907835. That's you, with the blue hair. *[Singling out DOE.]* Come here, John Doe. *[To LARRY.]* There's water in the toilet. Drink that.

LARRY: We are men. We cannot. Sir.

[DOE is manhandled out of the cell, which fades to black, and stood against a wall. One by one others are made to stand along the wall beside him. They are grouping people together by arrest location; DOE gradually realizes the faces are familiar:]

DOE: VELVEETA!

A PUPPETISTA: ¡Puppetistas!

PUPPETISTAS: *[Together, including DOE and VELVEETA.]* ¡PUPPETISTAS!

VELVEETA: They got us all.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: A guy from R2K legal said that everyone who gives their name is being released on their own recognizance.

A PUPPETISTA: That's bullshit, man. Don't believe it. Only people from Philly are being released ROR. The other guy in my cell's been trying to get out. They took him upstairs, he gave his name, and he's right back down here. Five to ten thousand bail.

ANOTHER PUPPETISTA: I don't have that kind of money.

[The OFFICER (Cassady, badge 1976, for what it's worth) pulls WOLFMAN from the cell. WOLFMAN is apparently moving too slowly, so the OFFICER drags his face through the gutter and then slams it into the cell bars before throwing him against the wall with the rest of us. Then he does the same to GOD. DOE and the others watch, horrified.]

OFFICER: Upstairs. Time to see the judge.

[All except DOE fade away. He is alone, with the JUDGE.]

JUDGE: You were arrested at the on-ramp to I-676 at 8th street. You're charged with one count of obstructing a highway and one count of conspiring to obstruct a highway, also—

[This isn't right: DOE shakes his head and looks for help.]

PUBLIC DEFENDER: Our client seems to think this is not correct.

DOE: Who are you?

PUBLIC DEFENDER: I'm your appointed defender.

DOE: Where are the R2K lawyers? I was told—

PUBLIC DEFENDER: You're not allowed to change your representation at your arraignment. This is just a formality. It doesn't matter.

DOE: But I have real lawyers! I'd like to talk to a lawyer.

JUDGE: Clear the court. *[To PUBLIC DEFENDER.]* When he's gone, tell me where he was arrested.

DOE: The puppet space. I'm a puppetista—*[But the lights are fading and DOE is alone again. Looks around. Emptiness.]*

[Plaintively:] I haven't had my phone call—

[And suddenly the court is back.]

PUBLIC DEFENDER: You're not given a phone call until after arraignment.

JUDGE: You were arrested at 4100 Haverford. You're charged with two counts of obstructing a highway.

DOE: But these are the same charges! I wasn't anywhere near a highway!

JUDGE: Don't interrupt. You'll have your turn to speak.

CC5507 Misdemeanor 3: Obstructing a highway, also one count of conspiracy to do the same.

CC5101 Misdemeanor 2: Obstructing Administration of Law or Government Function. One count of conspiracy to do the same.

CC2705 Misdemeanor 2: Recklessly Endangerment. Also conspiracy to.

CC5503 Misdemeanor 3: Disorderly Conduct. Also conspiracy.

CC0907 Misdemeanor 1: Possessing an instrument of crime.

What's your name.

[DOE looks around, any help here? The next happens very quickly:]

PUBLIC DEFENDER: Our client does not wish to speak.

JUDGE: OK, if he doesn't wish to speak we're done here. Bail is set for \$50,000.

PUBLIC DEFENDER: Motion to reduce—

JUDGE: Denied. Bring the next one in.

DOE: But—

[But the court is gone.]

[DOE is alone.]

[Out.] We returned to different cells. WOLFMAN, WISP, BUCKSHOT, RABBIT, and ODB are with me now in cell 5.

CELLBLOCK: *[Offstage voices.]* Police brutality! POLICE BRUTALITY!

DOE: In the next cellblock, protesters have locked arms with each other to prevent themselves from being taken for fingerprinting. The guards beat them with fists while trying to separate them.

[Back in. A moment of silence.]

LOONY: *[To the tune of "Solidarity Forever":]* Cheese sandwiches for-ever, cheese sandwiches forever, cheese sandwiches—

WISP: Shut up! For god's sake.

CRAZY: Love those cheese sandwiches.

[A moment of silence.]

WOLFMAN: Have you had a phone call yet?

DOE: No.

RABBIT: I did. I called R2K legal. I told them the facts: 42 of us here, one in solitary. That we haven't seen R2K lawyers yet.

WOLFMAN: I haven't gotten my fucking phone call.

DOE: *[Out.]* We finalized our demands as a chant.

RABBIT: One! No charges.

DOE: Two! No names.

WOLFMAN: Three! No isolation.

WISP: Four! no return date.

ALL: 1. NO CHARGES 2. NO NAMES. 3. NO I-SO-LA-TION. 4. NO RETURN DATE.

1. NO CHARGES 2. NO NAMES. 3. NO I-SO-LA-TION. 4. NO RETURN DATE.

CRAZY: Hey, look, I found graffiti! "George W. wuz here!"

LOONY: And here's a guy, Carlos Juan Bob!

CRAZY: Cop on the block!

LOONY: "Ice, Ice, baby—"

OFFICER: *[Entering. To DOE's cell:]* OK, let's go. You're going to CFCF. Real prison. With murderers and rapists. Let's see how you like it there. Don't pick up the soap. *[Laughs.]*

[To BUCKSHOT and ODB:] Not you two. Yet.

[Again, the prison fades away. The prisoners regroup.]

DOE: Eleven of us are chained together and taken to CFCF, the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility.

At CFCF we're put into quarantine, and they start our input paperwork. In the prison system, paperwork is cells. They move you from identical cell to identical cell down a long hallway as each step in your paperwork is completed. They don't have to know who you are, or what you'd done, or how

long they'd have you. If you were in the fifth cell from the door, they knew what to do with you.

SWITCHBLADE, WISP, TENNESSEE, BUSTER, JERRY LOVE, RABBIT, WOLFMAN, and GOD. These were the ones I'd be spending my time in CFCF with. But especially RABBIT:

RABBIT: A speedy trial. In Philadelphia "speedy" is 120 days. Four fucking months! And every delay they can pin on you or your lawyers—you filed a motion asking for details of the charges or the evidence against you, say—that time doesn't count. There's a guy in here who's been five years without a trial.

WOLFMAN: I still haven't had my phone call. They never fucking gave me my phone call.

DOE: WOLFMAN still had the cut on his right shoulder Officer Cassady had given him, too.

I'm given a wristband with my number and photo. The face staring out is still in clown makeup. In real life my clown face has long since melted away. *[He wipes his face with his hands, smearing the makeup, rubbing most off.]* A day passes, TB and Syphilis tests. We reach the end of the hallway of cells. My group of 11 enters pod B2. I am placed in a two person cell, cell 30, with RABBIT.

[All leave DOE except RABBIT.]

RABBIT: Breakfast.

DOE: I'm not eating. I haven't eaten anything since being arrested.

RABBIT: I should really have done that. There's never much for a vegan to eat here.

[But he digs into the meager food.]

DOE: Yum, 2% skim milk. Vegan's delight. You're putting apple sauce on your corn flakes?

RABBIT: Yes.

DOE: Oh.

[Out. RABBIT gets up and paces while DOE speaks.] The time in CFCF was a long monotony of sleeping and, for me, not eating. They let us out of our cells initially, but we used the time to talk together and write statements. We found out there were 100-150 people brought here, 16 of whom have been

charged with felonies. Seventeen of us signed a ringing statement written by a guy we called “The Professor.”

They decided to lock us down. We were obviously dangerous.

We were in our cells all but two hours a day.

[Back in the small cell.]

RABBIT: These moon pies are disgusting. I’m sure they’re not vegan.

DOE: They’re really testing my resolve, man. Of all the gross shit they shovel in here... Those look good.

RABBIT: Have one, then.

DOE: No. It’s solidarity. It keeps my strength up. I feel strong when I’m joined with all the others hunger-striking here. You’ve got to eat them all for me. I can’t stand the temptation.

[RABBIT get up and paces the small space like a caged tiger.]

But the moon pies piled up.

On Friday, August 4, with RABBIT asleep, I defecate for the first time since my arrest. Still no privacy, but at least it’s just RABBIT here. I’ve never done it in company before.

At 9 am that same day, after fighting for them since my arrest, I finally obtain a pencil and paper. I began to rewrite my notes. Time lines we’d memorized on the bus and recited in captivity. Phrases, times, and badge numbers scratched on iced tea cartons with the clasp of my watch. After my watch was taken from me, notes I scratched with the tines of a spork.

[Writing.] “Flea of the Puppetistas recorded the following time line of his experience. I am John Doe #5100, inmate 907835. I have been on hunger strike since Wednesday, August 2. My bail is \$50,000. I am in solidarity. I would not wish to be bailed out, even if my family and friends could afford to. I am a puppet maker. I considered myself non-arrestable. . . .”

[RABBIT steps forward in the light and recites, over DOE, who fades into the background. This is from a letter he was writing in the cell. He’s near the edge, he can’t take much more.]

RABBIT: August 7. Monday. 2000.

Been at CFCF for four days and the Roundhouse 48 hours before that. I've got what Bill calls the jail headache. Deep in the middle of my forehead. My patience is being tested. I've been waiting all day to find out if my bail was lowered to SOB or ROR. Then I can get out of here and begin work on the outside. Get back my mind. The stay here hasn't been bad, just boring. After the Roundhouse most everything seems mundane. That experience was super amazing. What else? We are in our cells 23 hours a day. The phone system isn't working. I can't even call to make bail or whatever. Exasperation. This is prison. More than anything boring. We get books tomorrow I think. I'm thinking I should be out tomorrow. I can't imagine being here by myself or for longer than a month, unfortunately some of my activist brothers are facing exactly that. It's heart-breaking. A rumor is going around that general population is considering a hunger strike in solidarity with us. That would be so amazing. Then people would really take notice. (I hope.)

Mostly I eat terrible food and sleep. Past that what is there? I think getting arrested can really work solidarity-wise—if there are numbers. There are about 450-plus. DC, 500. Seattle, 600. I don't know what that means. What is needed is a thousand plus. There is no way the cops could deal with those numbers.

I'm disappointed that I can't take solidarity to the limit, but I know what I can and can't do. Is it strange that this could be the most homesick I have ever been? Probably not.

I'm not so tired of this place, but the 23 hours in lockdown and no phones is the killer. Shit that should not be happening—

[RABBIT looks up, an (unseen) officer has come for him. He puts down his pencil, stands up, and walks straight off stage. He never returns.]

[The lights narrow, a spotlight lingers on DOE, still writing, he continues.]

DOE: *[Writing.]* I am alone now. I apparently have a crash court date at 11am on August 11. The charges are slightly different: the conspiracy charges have changed to second counts of the various offenses. The charges are just as bogus. I was not obstructing a highway, I was not “recklessly endangering”, “obstructing administration of law” or engaging in “disorderly conduct”—I was making doves. *[Out.]* You all saw that yourself.

My “instrument of crime” was my mind, my voice, and a few fabric-covered coat-hangers.

The social worker's computer here now shows my bail at \$25,000 instead of \$50,000. I don't know why. Even at that lower amount, \$760 would be *non-refundable* even if I show up at my court date *and am found innocent*. Almost a thousand dollars.

The presumption of innocence is a myth.

It is now 10:50 pm, Saturday August 5th. I am—

Flea, Prisoner 907835.