

JOHN DOE'S HOME

My name—John Doe. My home—New York City, U.S.A. This giant metropolis houses over seven million tenants. Tenants from every corner of the earth. I came to this vastly inhabited city from a far away Carribean island seeking a heaven and this is my story:

The first time I saw this metropolis was in the summer, that is, the first time I saw it in reality. In my mind I had seen it many times before. As I looked up and saw the huge buildings painted against the sky my neck ached from the strain and my heart pounded heavily as I saw other magnificent sights. The endless rows of tenements; the many different nationalities; the great white way, bedecked in its millions of shining stars flickering on and off spelling out advertisements; news; and even pictures. These were only a few of an endless score of things.

I arrived in front of one of those tall buildings finding it to be my new home. As I entered the building for the first time I knew that I had found contentment—a home that I would leave many times, yet never really leave. I went to the window and looked down upon this strange enchanting town, and from where I stood the buildings stood out like a flame, bright and shining against the sky. The people on the streets below were the people that built that fire and kept it alive—seven million keepers of the flame. The sound of traffic on a New York street creates a strange music. It is an orchestra conducted by the lady with the ever-burning torch that adorns the harbor, with the words engraved forever on her side; it is an organ played upon by Father Knickerbocker, master organist.

Leaving my new house, I went out to wander aimlessly through the streets of this new home of mine, listening to the many different dialects from the many races that populate this city. The strangest one, though, was of the inhabitants of a part of this city that is situated across the East river from Manhattan. One of the street corner conversations went on like this:

Mr. X: "Hey Mac, didja hear of dem wondaful bums today? Dey beat dem jints tree ta nuttin."

Mr. Y: "Aw gowan, dose bums couldn't beat deah way outta a papah bag." Like a mad tiger Mr. X. leaped at Mr. Y. The battle that ensued was furious, and the way I departed was furious, for I was afraid of being Mr. X's second victim. Later I found out

that "dem bums" is the name of the Dodgers, Brooklyn's baseball team, and that it was very improper to talk against them while in Brooklyn.

And so began for me an enchanted interim in which everything took on a rose coloured glow of sheer delight . . . time, space and reality winked at each other forgetting, in happy conspiracy, who they were.

Many years have passed, and at the turn of each friends crowded into my home joyously and boisterously acknowledging the turn of a new year. But there were quieter moments in my new city . . . moments when there was time to gaze out of a window and watch the busses, lumbering up Fifth Avenue . . . time to glimpse a ruddy drop of sunset slipping down the gaunt, gray side of a building . . . time to listen to the taxi horns heckling each other . . . time to notice the pale aura of light hovering wraith-like over Broadway at night . . . time to stare at the concrete poetry of my city's mid-night skyline.

Many more years have sped by; there was talk of a coming war. Then one day sadness found its way into my new home. One of my country's possessions was bombed by an aggressive country. Soon the throngs of happy faces often seen on the streets were now solemn and firm. The casual dress of the men was gradually being replaced by the khaki of the Army and the blue of the Navy. Being a part of this fight, I too donned the uniform and that was when sadness came to me for the first time. Not that I had to go off to fight for my country, but—I was leaving my beloved city. When I departed from my city it was twilight, and as I headed for an unknown destination, I opened the window of my train to let the music of my city in. The music came whirling in, singing a song not of the past, not of despair, but of the days to come—a clean, healthy song with words of hope and promise, a promise that some day this conflict would be over and I would return to my beloved city.

The war was won and has now passed on, and the promise that that song gave, when I was leaving, came through. Once again I am back amongst the endless throngs of happy smiling people. The feeling that I was one of these millions and that my city was one of many throughout our country made me feel as important as any king. I was remembering when I first came to this happy land. I remembered the inscription I read on the base of the Statue of Liberty. It, I think, sums up this city of mine, what it enfolds and what it holds forth to those many thousands of other John Doe's who some day will become a part of it. It read: