



Video Story Transcript

Take Me To Your Leader

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpVq3INiN0Y>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, my name is Yvonne. And I'm seven years old and the Pittsburgh Federal Building reaches right up to the sky, for real! There are bars on the windows. There may be daffodils blooming on the lawn but the entrance looms like a great, big mouth ready to swallow us up. Awe...it looks an awful lot like the wicked fortress of the Wicked Witch of the West. But...really... it's the Pittsburgh Federal Building and this is the Steel City, not the Emerald City of Oz.

"Come on in. Come along," says Mummy. "Let's go." So we go inside. And we're going inside the Federal Building. Now, you see, I may be seven years old but I know what a federal building is. We have a federal building in our own little town in Pennsylvania. We go there, my dad and I, to mail packages back home to Ireland. And our whole family goes there all together once a year for something special. We go and we stand right up to the counter and then we hold our hands up, and out loud, we say the alien promise. And then we sign our names. Mine's in block cursive. And all the other people buying stamps, they're staring at us because we're aliens. Well, that night we go home and watch TV and on the TV, there are the McCarthy Witch Trials. And on that show, there are people who...who are getting yelled at and jailed because they're aliens.

Well, I go to the mirror afterwards and I'm looking through my black hair for my antennae. Because aliens have antenna. I know that because I watch TV. I watched Chiller Science Fiction Theater. And aliens have antennae, Martians have antennae. So I must have antennae. The only time I see aliens is on TV because there are no other aliens in my town. Everybody else is a real American. But, you know, I don't think antennae can come out. They're kind of stuck in there. Because my... my teacher, Sister Camella, she likes to

hit me on the head with the big, thick Geography book. She does that whenever I accidentally use the language that we speak at home, Gaelic Irish. She says, "Blend! Why don't you blend? Why don't you speak like your friend, Star? She's a real American! But you, you're always going to be just alien!" Star is a real American. She speaks nicely. And she has blonde hair and blue eyes. And she doesn't have to go down to the post office. And she doesn't cook funny food. That's what my friends say when they come over.

But anyway, so this is a special day! (I don't want to think about that.) This is a special day. This is the day I'm gonna be naturalized. I didn't know I wasn't natural but now I know. It's going to be ok, 'cause today, I'm going to be naturalized. So... I've been practicing my cursive.

And now Daddy and Mummy and my big sister and I are sitting in a bench right beside these big wooden doors. One after another, our names are called in. They go in separately because Daddy, Daddy thinks that... if Ireland declares war on the United States we're gonna each need our own papers so we don't get deported. Tá mé na hÉireann agus tá mé Meiriceánach. I'm Irish and I'm American. Then they called my name. And there are these black pants and a blue shirt and a yellow badge and a strange face. And my mum pushes me. "Go on, go on." I can't believe that my mum is telling me to go with this stranger after she's always going on about never going with strangers. And now she's making me go off into this big scary building with this scary man that I've never seen before! And he smells bad!

We're walking through those doors and we're in a courtroom. Only... only it's not like the courtroom one on the TV show Perry Mason. It's got all the benches. But this one's dark and empty. And my patent leather shoes are going, "whap, whap, whap," as I go down the aisle following that stranger. We get to the end, he gives me a little push. And in front of me there's this big, black tower of wood... I don't want to go. He says, "Go to the Judge's Bench." ...I don't say it but I'm, like, that's not a bench, that's not a seat, that's not a desk. That's a tower! He gives me another push and I get a little further and I see there are little steps going up the side. So, ok, I go up the steps. And then it turns a corner and now I'm surrounded by black wood. Heavy, thick, black wood. I am all alone. And the black wood just gets closer and closer and the air is getting squeezed out. And I'm alone in this big black tower and then I hear, "Hey!" And there's a man, an old man's face kind of poking out around the corner. Is it the wizard? Or the judge?

He motions to come closer. So, he says, "Don't worry. Don't worry. I'm sure you remember the answers." And he says, "Who's the president of the United States?"

I think to myself, "Oh my gosh, everybody knows that it's the man with the shiny head." But I say, like a lady, I say, "General Eisenhower."

And he says, "Who discovered America?"

And I say, "Christopher Columbus but it was named after the matchmaker, Amerigo Vespucci."

And then he says, "Alright, this is a tricky one but you look like a smart little girl, how many states are there?"

"Forty-nine, Alaska just got in."

"Congratulations," he says. "You are now an American citizen. You may sign the book and repeat after me."

And I hold my hand up like him, and just like you probably remember, I say, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...” I sign my name in big round cursive letters.

Now, I’m an American, a *real* American and I’m Irish too!