

WOODHULL

A Play

By

Shelly R. Boggs

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate Studies Division of
Ohio Dominican University
Columbus, Ohio

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

NOVEMBER 2013

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

WOODHULL

A Play

By

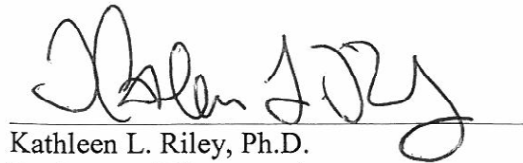
Shelly R. Boggs

Thesis Approved:



Ann C. Hall, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Chair, Liberal Studies Program

11-4-13
Date



Kathleen L. Riley, Ph.D.
Professor of History and
Department Head of History

11-4-13
Date

To all the dreamers.

FOREWORD

Most Americans have never heard of Victoria Woodhull and for good reason. She has been written out of history by men – and women. But her contributions to the American Woman's Suffrage Movement and women's rights should be recognized and celebrated. In 1870, Woodhull was the first woman to open a brokerage firm on Wall Street. In 1871, she was the first woman to address Congress on woman's suffrage, and in 1872, she was the first woman to run for President of the United States of America. Woodhull was "leaning in" long before Facebook CFO Sheryl Sandberg coined the phrase almost 150 years later.

I first heard of Woodhull in the fall of 1979 when I was a sophomore at Washington High School in Massillon, Ohio. While reading my history assignment, I came across a small passage about Woodhull being the first woman to run for president – and that she was from my hometown. What a revelation! I couldn't wait to get to history class the next day to learn more about her. But the teacher barely mentioned Woodhull. I always remembered her name, and later in life, I rediscovered her. As an adult, I wanted to know what gave Woodhull the courage to take such great personal risks at a time when women had almost no rights or protections.

Woodhull is still a puzzle to me, but I hope this play brings context to her tumultuous life. She's a fascinating woman – not perfect by any means, but being perfect isn't the lesson to be gleaned from Woodhull's life. Woodhull challenged the status quo. As a woman, I'm indebted to her for "just doing it," as the Nike advertisement says. I hope you will enjoy reading this play and take away your own lessons from Woodhull's rich and vibrant life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this play was a risk. I had no creative writing experience and hadn't read a play in more than thirty years. But I knew I had a great story to tell about an important – albeit forgotten – figure in American history – and I knew I had a special person to help me bring my ideas to life: my thesis advisor and Master of Liberal Arts program director, Dr. Ann C. Hall. Dr. Hall's careful reading, insightful comments and flat-out brain power were invaluable assets to this project. She took me under her wing and helped me shape and refine Victoria Woodhull's story into a tale everyone may enjoy. This play simply would not have been possible without her.

The creative spark for *Woodhull* was ignited while taking a class offered by Dr. Joanne Vickers, which analyzed the works of Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne. I became fascinated by women's lives in the nineteenth century and recalled Woodhull and her failed bid for the U.S. presidency in 1872. It was a story that needed to be told. I am grateful to Dr. Vickers for helping me rediscover Woodhull and encouraging me to tell her story.

Brad Bradford, Dr. Martin R. Brick, Lindsey Levino, Erin Messerly, Carla Pace, Dr. Kathleen L. Riley, Dr. Valerie W. Staton, Dr. Stephen Thomas and Nick Wood generously contributed their time and talents by giving a dramatic reading of this play. Being able to hear the play out loud – rather than imagining how it sounded – was invaluable to the editing process. I appreciate their good work in helping me fine-tune the dialog and give voice to the words on the paper.

In addition to playing the role of a dramatic reader, Dr. Riley was my second reader. Her knowledge of Woodhull and her era added to the overall authenticity of the play. Dr. Riley was a joy to work with, and I was lucky to have had her expertise.

Dr. Ronald W. Carstens deserves a round of applause for directing the Masters of Liberal Arts program during most of my time at Ohio Dominican University. He encouraged me to pursue this project and has always been in my corner.

Most students never have the opportunity to tell their professors about the impact they've had on their lives. I thank them for all they've done – most of which they'll never know.

Much of the research for *Woodhull* came from the books *Other Powers* by Barbara Goldsmith, *Notorious Victoria* by Mary Gabriel and *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution: Political Theater and the Popular Press in Nineteenth-Century America* by Amanda Frisken. Their works provided me with ample material to tell a compelling story about one of America's most notorious women.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support during the writing of this play. Their enthusiasm and faith in me gave me the confidence to pursue this project.

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Robert Martin	Victoria's father-in-law	65	Male
John Martin	Victoria's third husband	42	Male
Buck Claflin	Victoria's father	52	Male
Victoria Woodhull	Activist/Businesswoman	15-82	Female
Woman	Carnival-goer	30	Female
Roxy Claflin	Victoria's mother	50	Female
Dr. Woodhull	Victoria's first husband	28	Male
Gladys	Neighbor	45	Female
Josie	Prostitute	24	Female
Colonel Blood	Victoria's second husband	29	Male
Cornelius Vanderbilt	Wealthy businessman	74	Male
Tennessee Claflin	Victoria's sister	22	Female
Annie Wood	Brothel owner	35	Female
William Henry Vanderbilt	Cornelius Vanderbilt's son	35	Male
Belle	Prostitute	24	Female
Cong. Benjamin Butler	Congressman	50	Male
Harriet Beecher Stowe	Woman's suffragist	32	Female
Susan B. Anthony	Woman's suffragist	51	Female
Henry Ward Beecher	Minister	40	Male
Zulu	Victoria's daughter	59	Female

Setting: *Woodhull* takes place from 1853 – 1920 in the United States and England. The play opens in London in 1883 and traces Victoria Woodhull's rise and fall as a businesswoman, political activist and newspaper editor.

SCENE ONE.

London, 1883. Lights up to reveal JOHN MARTIN and his father, ROBERT, in the drawing room of an English mansion.

ROBERT

How could you possibly think of marrying that woman? Victoria Woodhull -- Mrs. Satan!

JOHN

Father, you're overreacting.

ROBERT

She's a trollop! Haven't you read all the news accounts from the States?

JOHN

You can't believe everything you read -- especially, in the tabloids.

ROBERT

I would hardly call The New York Times a tabloid.

JOHN

Victoria has been crucified in the press. Wait until you meet her. You'll fall in love with her just like I did.

ROBERT

You mean the American adventuress? That divorcee -- with two kids? Didn't she once call marriage a "hot little hell?" She should know. She's been married at least a half dozen times before!

JOHN

She's only been married twice -- and that was a long time ago.

ROBERT

Isn't she a little bit old for you?

JOHN

By a few years.

ROBERT

Three to be exact.

JOHN

I see you've done your homework.

ROBERT

And maybe you should start! Quite frankly, I expected more from an Oxford man.

JOHN

Like what? To marry some compliant little woman with no opinions of her own? No life? No vitality?

ROBERT

Vitality? I'll say. I just hope you can keep up with her.

JOHN

Father!

ROBERT

For God's sake, start using your brain to pick a wife instead of what's between your legs! You're the heir to a banking fortune. The Martin name has been a staple in British banking for decades. We can't let just anyone join the family -- especially, someone of such dubious character.

JOHN

Victoria is a woman of substance: a politician, newspaper editor, stockbroker. In 1872, she was the first woman to run for President of the United States.

ROBERT

You must be joking! That woman? Why the only thing I would trust her to run is a house of ill repute.

JOHN

Her lineage goes all the way back to King James -- even George Washington.

ROBERT

Good God! I've never heard such poppycock! Where did you meet this woman?

JOHN

At a lecture -- in London. It was love at first sight. She was talking about how the Garden of Eden is really the human body. Victoria says the kingdom of God is within us, and nothing about the human body is obscene. It's her greatest work!

ROBERT

She's just like the serpent -- always tempting a weak man!

JOHN

I'm intoxicated by her ideas.

ROBERT

Oh, you're intoxicated alright!

JOHN

I knew I was going to marry her the first night we met.

ROBERT

Well, since you've announced your engagement, we've received sacks of mail with all sorts of interesting anecdotes about your fiancé.

(ROBERT picks up several letters lying on the desk and reads through them one by one.)

Let's see. She's a blackmailer, prostitute, free lover -- whatever that is; a communist, radical -- women's rights; a jailbird. Oh and here's a good one. She communes with spirits on a daily basis -- and one of her biggest clients was Cornelius Vanderbilt, the richest man in the world! Word is his family paid her off to leave town. That's how she ended up over here. Seems she was very close to ole Vanderbilt, if you know what I mean.

(ROBERT tosses the letters back on the table.)

JOHN

Lies! Damn lies! And once we're married, I'm going to sue all those people who are spreading them.

ROBERT

She's a huckster, son. I don't know why you can't see it. And wasn't she involved in that big scandal over there with that reverend? What's his name?

JOHN

Beecher?

ROBERT

Yes. Beecher. Henry Ward Beecher. The most esteemed preacher in all of America. I remember when he came over here during the Civil War -- very nice man -- talked about the immorality of the slave trade in America. Didn't she try to bring him down?

JOHN

Henry Ward Beecher is a bloody hypocrite!

ROBERT

Henry Ward Beecher was a fine and decent man until Victoria Woodhull got a hold of him! And I'm worried she'll do the same to you. You're being duped.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

ROBERT

John, your mother and I are very concerned. We want you to break off the engagement.

JOHN

I won't hear of it. Victoria is the most thrilling woman I've ever known. I've never felt more alive. Words can't describe her.

ROBERT

Oh, there are lots of words that describe her. Just read these letters.

JOHN

You know, Father, when I'm with Victoria, I see miracles all around me.

ROBERT

You're forty-two. Quit acting like a lovesick schoolboy!

JOHN

I'm in love. How would you expect me to act? Or don't you know what love is?

ROBERT

Look, son, marry a nice girl.

JOHN

Nice girl?

ROBERT

One with social standing who understands the unwritten rules of marriage.

JOHN

Unwritten rules?

ROBERT

Do I have to spell everything out for you?

JOHN

Are you saying you want me to keep Victoria as a mistress?

ROBERT

I'm saying to keep your options open. No need to commit to a woman like that. If you play your cards right, you can have both Victoria and a nice, respectable wife.

JOHN

You hypocrite! Victoria is the only woman for me. I'm not going to have a marriage of convenience with a woman I don't love just so you can save face.

ROBERT

I don't want you to be taken for a fool. It would be bad for the whole family. Think of the publicity, your inheritance!

JOHN

So, it all comes down to money and how things look.

ROBERT

It always does, son. A woman of her class can't possibly --

JOHN

Do I have your blessing to marry Victoria?

(SILENCE.)

Very well then.

(JOHN starts to leave.)

ROBERT

No one in the family will attend the wedding. You'll be shunned. Ostracized from polite society.

(JOHN stops, turns around and looks at
ROBERT.)

JOHN

Polite society! There's nothing polite about it.

ROBERT

You're making a big mistake.

JOHN

I know what I'm doing.

ROBERT

Do you? Do you know she's whitewashing her past? Running around denying everything she's been for the last twenty years. She's even trying to change the spelling of her last name. She seems to think it will be harder for folks to learn the truth about her.

JOHN

The truth? You're not interested in the truth.

ROBERT

Go ahead. Ruin your life. But don't say you were never told.

(ROBERT storms out the door.)

JOHN

Victoria Claflin Woodhull. I've never met a woman like her before -- beautiful, charismatic, independent. Some people question our love. But I've never been so sure of anything in my whole life. So, Reader, I married her -- and this is her story.

SCENE TWO.

Rural Ohio, 1853. BUCK is standing in front of a crowd at a traveling medicine show. In the foreground is a tent with the words, "The Amazing VICTORIA," painted on the front.

BUCK

Step right up to hear the amazing Victoria tell your fortune, contact your dearly departed loved ones and heal your ills! Only one dollar for a reading! That's right! One dollar! Step right up, folks! Gifted reader and advisor! Famous for her accuracy! Your past, present and future revealed! Take control of your destiny! Love, health, family, money! Victoria, why don't you show these nice folks what you can do?

VICTORIA

Oh, spirit guide, come to me now! Let me feel your presence! Who's Maldon? Does anyone here know a Maldon?

WOMAN

My son! My dear, sweet son! Maldon! Where are you?

VICTORIA

He's here. He's with you right now.

WOMAN

What does he say?

VICTORIA

Maldon says he loves you. What's that, Maldon? He doesn't want you to feel guilty. He says it wasn't your fault.

WOMAN

I lost him to typhoid fever. I didn't know he was so sick until it was too late! I'm so sorry, Maldon!

VICTORIA

Maldon says there's nothing you could have done. It was God's will. What's that? He's saying something about a necklace.

WOMAN

Maldon was holding my necklace when he died! It was my grandmother's cross! We buried it with him. I put it in his little hands and kissed his forehead before we closed the lid of the coffin. If I could have changed places with him, I would have!

VICTORIA

What's that, Maldon? Maldon wants you to check your pocket.

WOMAN

Dear Lord. It's a miracle! It's just like the necklace Maldon was holding when we buried him.

VICTORIA

Maldon wants you to wear this necklace every day.

WOMAN

I will!

VICTORIA

And to think of him every time you put it on. Maldon must go now, but he says he'll always be with you.

BUCK

See this child's amazing abilities? And for only one dollar! That's right! One dollar! Now, who wants to go next? One at a time, now ladies! One at a time!

(VICTORIA and the WOMAN go inside the tent. BUCK and ROXY remain outside the tent.)

(To ROXY.)

Boy, that little girl is something else. She could sell ice to an Eskimo.

ROXY

Buck, you're working Victoria too hard. She's only a little girl.

BUCK

Victoria's our gold mine. Have you seen the crowds that line up for her? I never saw nothing like it!

ROXY

She comes by it honestly.

BUCK

I'll say. She played that woman like a fiddle! Knew just what to say and how to say it -- just like I taught her.

ROXY

Sure did.

BUCK

Do you know right before the show, I saw our little Victoria eavesdropping on that woman? She was telling her friend some sob story about her little boy. Victoria slipped that necklace right into that woman's pocket when she wasn't looking.

ROXY

I wonder where she got it from.

BUCK

Who the devil cares!

ROXY

Probably stole it from me.

BUCK

We'll get you a new one. We've got enough money now. Victoria pulls in more money doing readings for these depressed, good-for-nothing women than I do selling cheap elixir to their dern fool husbands!

ROXY

I got to add more kick, more spirits, laudanum. People seem to like that --

BUCK

Especially, Utica. You've got to tell that little girl to stop drinking all of our elixir or I won't have any to sell!

ROXY

Poor Utica. I don't know what we're going to do with her. She's not like Victoria or Tennessee. People don't believe her when she goes into her trances.

BUCK

She couldn't convince a preacher to read the Bible! Just keep her in the backyard mixing up that elixir. It's a big seller.

ROXY

We got to be more careful. You know the trouble we got into in Illinois.

BUCK

We just need to stay one step ahead of the law.

(The WOMAN runs outside the tent
screaming.)

WOMAN

Your little girl is sick! She keeps talking about her two dead sisters -- says she's coming to see them!

BUCK

What?

(BUCK moves toward the tent, but
VICTORIA walks outside listlessly about
ready to collapse.)

VICTORIA

Mama, my head hurts. I'm sick. I want to go to bed.

ROXY

Victoria, what's wrong? You're burning up! And you're so pale! Is there a doctor?

WOMAN

I saw Dr. Woodhull over at the magnetic healer's tent. I'll go get him!

(The WOMAN runs offstage.)

ROXY

Hurry! Oh Buck! What's wrong with her? I can't bear to lose another child.

BUCK

She'll be fine. Victoria is strong as an ox. Aren't you honey?

VICTORIA

Papa, I'll be OK. I just need to sit down for a minute.

BUCK

That's my little girl.

ROXY

Here, honey. Sit on this crate. The doctor will be here in just a minute.

(The WOMAN rushes back with DR.
WOODHULL.)

DR. WOODHULL

I'm Dr. Woodhull -- the town doctor. I heard there's a little girl who's sick.

ROXY

It's Victoria. She's about ready to collapse. It's not cholera, is it?

BUCK

Doc, we need Victoria back on the road. I don't know how we're going to refund all this money.

ROXY

You've starved and almost beaten her to death for what? So she could put on a show for the crowds? She's so exhausted when she comes out of her trances it's a wonder she's still alive!

BUCK

That's enough of your lip! Do you hear?

(BUCK slaps ROXY across the face. ROXY runs offstage.)

Sorry about that, Doc. Now, what's the story with Victoria? Can you fix her up?

DR. WOODHULL

Mr.?

BUCK

Claflin. Buck Claflin.

DR. WOODHULL

Mr. Claflin. Without a full examination it's hard to tell -- could be anything. But, if I had to guess, I'd say Victoria has a case of rheumatism.

BUCK

Rheumatism?

DR. WOODHULL

She has all the signs -- achy joints, fever, exhaustion.

BUCK

What's the cure?

DR. WOODHULL

Rest. Walks in the fresh air --

BUCK

Rest? Ha! She don't need no rest! What she needs is a swift kick in the hindquarters to get back out there and start earning her keep.

DR. WOODHULL

If you keep pushing her --

BUCK

We can't afford for her to be sick. We have to be in Massillon by tomorrow afternoon!

DR. WOODHULL

Why don't you stay over tonight? You can leave first thing in the morning.

BUCK

Overnight? We'll never make it in time! That's money out the door!

DR. WOODHULL

You've heard the story about the goose that laid the golden egg, haven't you?

(ROXY walks onstage.)

ROXY

We're staying!

BUCK

Roxy!

ROXY

The doctor's right. Victoria needs the rest and so do I.

BUCK

But we need to get on the road. We're losing money every second we stay in this dad-blamed town.

ROXY

The road can wait.

BUCK

But I've got things all lined up.

ROXY

We're staying! Doctor?

DR. WOODHULL

I'll come by tomorrow morning -- as soon as the rooster starts to crow -- to see how Victoria is doing.

BUCK

Don't you be getting any ideas, now, you hear?

DR. WOODHULL

Why, Mr. Claflin, my motives are entirely pure. Of that you can be sure.

SCENE THREE.

DR. WOODHULL is walking VICTORIA to her front door after taking her out for a Fourth of July picnic. He is slightly inebriated.

VICTORIA

I had a wonderful time, Dr. Woodhull. I've never had so much fun on the Fourth of July.

DR. WOODHULL

Me neither. And please, call me Doc.

VICTORIA

Alright, Doc. Are you OK?

DR. WOODHULL

I'm fine. Just a little case of arthritis in my knee. Flares up every once in a while.

VICTORIA

I hope it's not serious.

DR. WOODHULL

Nothing for you to worry about.

VICTORIA

Well, you did drink a lot of Papa's elixir.

DR. WOODHULL

I didn't have that much -- just a little nip here and there. You know something? You look so beautiful tonight.

VICTORIA

Aw.

DR. WOODHULL

Your hair. Your eyes. How they shine in the moonlight. You're stunning. But I'm sure you've been told that a million times.

VICTORIA

Not by anyone as handsome as you.

DR. WOODHULL

And you're a great dancer. I could hardly keep up.

VICTORIA

I felt just like Cinderella at the ball. You make me feel like a princess.

DR. WOODHULL

You sure look like one.

VICTORIA

You're so sweet.

DR. WOODHULL

Just being honest.

VICTORIA

How do you like my new shoes?

DR. WOODHULL

I love them.

VICTORIA

I sold apples all week just to buy them.

DR. WOODHULL

Apples? Didn't you make enough money from your readings?

VICTORIA

Mama and Papa keep that money. If I want something for myself, I have to find another way.

DR. WOODHULL

Where did you get the apples from?

VICTORIA

The neighbor's tree. I hope Mrs. Hayes doesn't want to make apple pie anytime soon!

DR. WOODHULL

Oh Victoria.

VICTORIA

I wish the night would never end.

DR. WOODHULL

It doesn't have to.

VICTORIA

I wish... When will I see you again?

DR. WOODHULL

I hope to be seeing quite a bit of you.

VICTORIA

Oh?

DR. WOODHULL

I plan to marry you.

VICTORIA

Doc!

DR. WOODHULL

I'm in love with you. I want you to be my wife.

VICTORIA

I love you, too, but --

DR. WOODHULL

Tell your parents we're getting married. Better yet -- forget about them. Let's elope. Tonight. Right now. Come on.

VICTORIA

Wait. I can't just leave.

DR. WOODHULL

Why not?

VICTORIA

What will I tell Mama and Papa?

DR. WOODHULL

I don't know. Does it matter?

VICTORIA

Well --

DR. WOODHULL

Tell them whatever you want. Tell them you fell in love with a man who loves you and wants to take care of you.

VICTORIA

But we've only known each other a few months.

DR. WOODHULL

What do you need to know? I'm twenty-eight. From New York. The son of a judge. I have a medical practice in town. Steady income. Don't you see, Victoria? I can take you away from all of this. We can leave Homer, Ohio. You won't have to answer to your mother or father anymore. They won't be able to touch you. I can protect you. Just think you'll have your own home. You can fix it up real pretty, too. Let's go.

VICTORIA

I don't know.

DR. WOODHULL

You're a young woman. Fifteen. Old enough to know her own mind. You don't need their permission.

VICTORIA

But I wouldn't know the first thing about being a wife -- or a mother.

DR. WOODHULL

How hard can it be? I'll be right by your side every step of the way. Victoria, will you marry me?

VICTORIA

I --

DR. WOODHULL

Say yes. Make me the happiest man in the whole world.

VICTORIA

Yes! Yes! I'll marry you. Can you imagine the looks on Mama's and Papa's faces when they find out we've eloped?!

DR. WOODHULL

I only wish I could be there to see it!

SCENE FOUR.

Chicago, 1854. VICTORIA is in bed having just given birth at the age of 16 to her first child, Byron. DR. WOODHULL is drunk.

DR. WOODHULL

Victoria, how do you like your new baby boy?

VICTORIA

I love him.

DR. WOODHULL

What are you going to name him?

VICTORIA

Byron -- after the poet.

DR. WOODHULL

Byron Woodhull. Fine name. Well, looks like my work here is finished.

VICTORIA

Where are you going?

DR. WOODHULL

Out.

VICTORIA

What do you mean "out?"

DR. WOODHULL

Just what I said. Out.

VICTORIA

Well, you can't be going to the tavern. You're already drunk. Are you going to the brothel to see your mistress?

DR. WOODHULL

I don't know what you're talking about.

VICTORIA

You think I don't know about her -- and the rest of the whores you sleep with?

DR. WOODHULL

It's better than the company I keep at home.

VICTORIA

You're spending all of our money on booze and women. You make me sick!

DR. WOODHULL

If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't even know how to act! I've taught you manners. Taught you how to act in polite society. You were nothing more than a wild child from the hills of Homer, Ohio when I found you, sick as a dog, worked to death by a con man, thief of a father and a crazy, religious fanatic mother not to mention all of your drunken, maniacal brothers and sisters!

VICTORIA

I found a letter in your coat pocket. Shall I read it?

DR. WOODHULL

Don't bother.

VICTORIA

Your mistress has quite a way with words. It says here you sent her to Indiana, and she's given birth to a baby boy, and that you're sending money to her. Is that why we don't have any money to heat this dump? Answer me!

DR. WOODHULL

You don't deserve an answer.

VICTORIA

I'm your wife.

DR. WOODHULL

Then act like it. Do you think your mother would talk back to your father like this? Why she'd get a backhand across the mouth so fast it would make your head spin. You should be grateful I don't do the same to you!

VICTORIA

I'm not my mother! I'm not grateful!

DR. WOODHULL

I'm sure you'll be fine without me.

VICTORIA

But I need help with the baby. He's bleeding! Don't leave me!

DR. WOODHULL

Ask one of the neighbors to help you.

(DR. WOODHULL walks out the door.
VICTORIA grabs a nearby rung from a
broken chair and bangs on the wall to
summon a neighbor, GLADYS.)

VICTORIA

Help! Gladys, please help me! My baby is bleeding to death.

(GLADYS bursts through the door.)

GLADYS

I heard you banging. Dear Lord, what's happened?

VICTORIA

My baby's dying. Please help me.

GLADYS

The umbilical cord hasn't been tied off. Who did this to you? Where's Doc?

VICTORIA

At his favorite place.

GLADYS

The tavern?

VICTORIA

No. The brothel.

GLADYS

I'll go get him.

VICTORIA

No. Don't. He'll be more trouble than he's worth.

GLADYS

He should be here! What's wrong with that man? Leaving his wife at a time like this!

VICTORIA

It was awful! I was so scared.

GLADYS

You poor child. I wish there was something I could say to make it all better. But there's not much you can do but make the best of it. He's your husband. What did you think you were going to get with marriage anyway?

VICTORIA

I thought I would live happily ever after.

GLADYS

Fairy tales. It's no surprise it's men who write them.

VICTORIA

Is there no way out?

GLADYS

The Church will never stand for a divorce. You know what they say about divorced women. Damaged goods. You just have the baby blues, that's all. Happens to lots of women.

VICTORIA

But I can't live like this.

GLADYS

You'll find a way. We all do.

VICTORIA

But I have a special mission in life. I'm going to lead a revolution.

GLADYS

Sure you are, honey.

VICTORIA

My spirit guide said one day I'll be rich and powerful -- living in a big city. I'm going to be a great ruler.

GLADYS

Oh dear, it's worse than I thought. Must be the blood loss.

(GLADYS gets up to leave.)

VICTORIA

Where are you going?

GLADYS

To get the midwife. She'll give you something to help you sleep. One nip and you'll forget all about this crazy talk of big houses and big cities in no time.

SCENE FIVE.

St. Louis, 1865. VICTORIA puts out a shingle in a hotel that says, "Fortune Teller and Magnetic Healer."

JOSIE

Will Henry Mullen ever ask me to marry him?

VICTORIA

Speaking of Henry, what's he been up to lately?

JOSIE

Nothing much. Just swindling old ladies out of their inheritances.

VICTORIA

Why, I wouldn't think ole Henry would have enough gumption to do that.

JOSIE

Oh, he's got plenty of gumption. He even gave me a case of it. Hey, thanks for getting me my money from that judge. That scoundrel thought he was going to get out of paying me for my services. Guess he found out.

VICTORIA

You should have seen the look on his face when I told him I was going to tell his wife he had a bastard child in Reno.

JOSIE

I'll bet he about died.

VICTORIA

And when I threatened to tell the other deacons in his church, he couldn't get his billfold out fast enough.

JOSIE

I'll bet!

(COLONEL BLOOD enters the room.)

Hey, tall, dark and handsome, why don't you come see me sometime? I'm right down the street.

VICTORIA

What can I do for you? Mister...

COLONEL BLOOD

Colonel. Colonel James Blood. I hear you're the best fortune teller in five states. I wanted to see for myself.

VICTORIA

Well, Colonel, you flatter me. Why don't you have a seat? Josie, I'll catch up with you later.

JOSIE

OK. I've got to get back to my customers anyway. Reverend Hicks gets antsy when I'm late. Says he has a nervous condition.

(JOSIE leaves, and COLONEL BLOOD sits
down at the table in front of VICTORIA.)

VICTORIA

So Colonel, you were in the war?

COLONEL BLOOD

Fought in the Sixth Missouri regiment for the Union -- one of the first to enlist.

VICTORIA

Are those scars?

COLONEL BLOOD

Uh huh.

VICTORIA

How did you get them?

COLONEL BLOOD

I was shot -- those blasted Confederates!

VICTORIA

Oh my.

COLONEL BLOOD

This one here I got down in Mississippi. And these two in my leg at Vicksburg.

VICTORIA

And what about this one?

COLONEL BLOOD

Chickasaw Bluff. If I'd have seen that confounded rebel first, he wouldn't have lived to tell about it.

VICTORIA

That's awful!

COLONEL BLOOD

Vicksburg was the worst. The doctors didn't have any anesthesia so I just poured some whiskey on my leg, took out my hunting knife and cut the bullets out myself.

VICTORIA

Didn't it hurt?

COLONEL BLOOD

Wasn't too bad. It's the wounds you don't see that are the worst.

VICTORIA

What do you mean?

COLONEL BLOOD

War plays with your mind.

VICTORIA

How so?

COLONEL BLOOD

Before I left for the war, I was very successful -- president of the St. Louis Railroad Company; a conservative; made a lot of money. But war changes you. You start seeing things differently. Now, I'm more open-minded. Take politics. I'm what you'd call a radical Republican.

VICTORIA

You are?

COLONEL BLOOD

Yeah. I even think women should have the right to vote.

VICTORIA

We've been trying to get the vote for years, but you, men, don't give up power easily.

COLONEL BLOOD

This man does.

VICTORIA

Why would any man help a woman gain power? Isn't that what you're all afraid of -- a woman's power?

COLONEL BLOOD
I love a strong woman.

VICTORIA
Really?

COLONEL BLOOD
That's why I find you so irresistible. Your strength.

VICTORIA
You find me attractive?

COLONEL BLOOD
Very.

VICTORIA
Well, you're not so bad-looking yourself, handsome.

COLONEL BLOOD
Your husband is a lucky man.

VICTORIA
I could tell you stories about my husband.

COLONEL BLOOD
What's he like?

VICTORIA
He's a drunk. Can't hold a job. I take care of everything. I'm mother, father, breadwinner. Ten years of my life wasted on that poor excuse of a man.

COLONEL BLOOD
A real scalawag, huh? Do you have any kids?

VICTORIA
Two. A boy and a girl.

COLONEL BLOOD
What are their names?

VICTORIA
Byron and Zulu.

COLONEL BLOOD
How old are they?

VICTORIA

Byron is ten, and Zulu is three.

COLONEL BLOOD

Sounds like you have your hands full.

VICTORIA

It's not easy. Byron is feeble-minded -- can't talk. It's my husband's fault -- his drinking. Bad genes.

COLONEL BLOOD

That's too bad. But I'll bet Zulu is just as pretty as her mother.

VICTORIA

Why Colonel, you're such a charmer.

COLONEL BLOOD

I only speak the truth.

VICTORIA

As do I. And I must say you're so big and strong and handsome. I'll bet your wife keeps an eye on you.

COLONEL BLOOD

When she can.

VICTORIA

I'm sure it's a full-time job.

COLONEL BLOOD

She's up to it.

VICTORIA

She is?

COLONEL BLOOD

Yeah. She knows what I'm like.

VICTORIA

Oh?

COLONEL BLOOD

I believe in free love.

VICTORIA

Free love?

COLONEL BLOOD

Yeah. You should be free to love whoever you want whenever you want.

VICTORIA

And she goes along with that?

COLONEL BLOOD

She doesn't have much of a choice.

VICTORIA

So, is she free to take lovers of her own?

COLONEL BLOOD

I don't know why she'd want to when she has me.

VICTORIA

Oh, Colonel! Is she happy?

COLONEL BLOOD

As happy as anyone else who's married.

VICTORIA

You know, I wasn't sure I ever wanted to get married.

COLONEL BLOOD

Why not?

VICTORIA

All the stories from the other women. Telling their fortunes -- they were so miserable.

COLONEL BLOOD

So why'd you get married?

VICTORIA

To escape.

COLONEL BLOOD

Escape what?

VICTORIA

My parents.

COLONEL BLOOD

Pretty bad, huh?

VICTORIA

I've had to support my family my entire life -- still do. But now, my money goes to my husband instead of my father.

COLONEL BLOOD

That's a bunch of bull! Excuse my language.

VICTORIA

It's all about men controlling women. Lord knows what would happen if men had to accept us as equals.

COLONEL BLOOD

We, men, have it pretty good.

VICTORIA

You are open-minded, Colonel. You're not like any man I've ever met.

COLONEL BLOOD

And you're not like any woman I've ever met.

VICTORIA

I guess that makes us even. So, are you ready to channel the spirits?

COLONEL BLOOD

Ready as I'll ever be. So, what do you think the spirits will say about us? Do you think they'll tell us to run off and get married and live happily ever after?

VICTORIA

There's only one way to find out. Now, you know, I have no control over what my spirit guide tells me. I'm just the messenger. Spirit guide, I call upon your great powers. Show me the future.

COLONEL BLOOD

What do you see?

VICTORIA

I see a parlor, stairs, a front entry hall. There's a large black book on a white marble table.

COLONEL BLOOD

What's it say?

VICTORIA

I can't read the title. Wait. My spirit guide's reappearing. Who are you? Tell me your name. He's pointing to the book. He's writing something on its cover.

COLONEL BLOOD

What's it say?

VICTORIA

I don't know. I can't see. Wait. Wait. Now I see it. The words are on fire!

COLONEL BLOOD

For God's sake, what does it say?

VICTORIA

Demosthenes! My spirit guide's name is Demosthenes!

COLONEL BLOOD

The Greek orator?

VICTORIA

Demosthenes has ordered us to get divorces -- right away.

COLONEL BLOOD

Really?

VICTORIA

And get married.

COLONEL BLOOD

When?

VICTORIA

Now. What's that, Demosthenes? And move to New York.

COLONEL BLOOD

New York?

VICTORIA

There's a house in New York waiting for us -- for the work we're destined to do. Demosthenes' word is final. We must be married and leave for New York right away.

SCENE SIX.

New York City, 1868. CORNELIUS VANDERBILT visits VICTORIA at a boardinghouse and asks for a reading.

VANDERBILT

Cornelius Vanderbilt here.

VICTORIA

I was expecting you.

VANDERBILT

You were?

VICTORIA

Why, of course. My spirit guide told me you would be coming. You're quite a businessman. You must own half the country.

VANDERBILT

That's why I'm here.

VICTORIA

Oh?

VANDERBILT

I need to consult the spirits on some stocks I want to pick. You seem to have an inside track.

VICTORIA

The spirits are very accurate when picking stocks. I have nothing to do with it.

(TENNESSEE enters the room.)

TENNESSEE

And who do we have here?

VICTORIA

Mr. Vanderbilt, my sister, Tennessee Claflin.

VANDERBILT

It's always a pleasure to meet a beautiful woman.

TENNESSEE

Why, Mr. Vanderbilt, you're quite the looker yourself.

VANDERBILT

If only I had a little sparrow like you...

TENNESSEE

You make me blush.

VICTORIA

Tennessee is very talented. All the men folk rave about her stunning conversational abilities -- and her home remedies!

TENNESSEE

My prostate manipulation cure is all the rage. Why, I have so many customers I don't know what to do.

VANDERBILT

I've been with over a thousand women, and none of them is quite like you.

TENNESSEE

I'm only half as bad as you then. I've only been with five hundred men -- and that's not counting my customers!

VANDERBILT

My, my, girl. You need to catch up. Why don't you start with me?

TENNESSEE

I'm not sure I could keep up.

VANDERBILT

A young girl like you?

TENNESSEE

Maybe I could stop by sometime and give you a treatment.

VANDERBILT

Why not now?

VICTORIA

Business before health treatments, Mr. Vanderbilt. There will be plenty of time for that later.

VANDERBILT

Oh, alright. If you insist. I've been thinking about buying stock in the Central Pacific Railroad, but I don't know if it's a good deal. After that scoundrel Jim Fisk swindled me out of seven million dollars on that Erie Railroad deal, I'm a little gun-shy. If you can channel the spirits and give me some inside information, there might be a little something in it for you and my little sparrow, Tennessee.

VICTORIA

What do you have in mind?

VANDERBILT

A percentage of the profits.

VICTORIA

I'm listening.

VANDERBILT

If your stock tips pan out, I'm prepared to give you and Tennessee half the profits. I might also see clear to pass along a few stock tips of my own.

VICTORIA

You're very generous.

VANDERBILT

I've made my money. I like to help people who help me. Now, Tennessee, let's see about that treatment.

(VANDERBILT offers his arm to
TENNESSEE, and they walk off the stage.)

SCENE SEVEN.

VICTORIA meets with brothel owner ANNIE WOOD in her exclusive gentlemen's club.

VICTORIA

I need information.

ANNIE

What kind of information?

VICTORIA

The kind I can only get from your girls.

ANNIE

Oh?

VICTORIA

Inside deals on Wall Street. Stuff they hear from their clients -- especially, Jim Fisk.

ANNIE

How much is this information worth to you?

VICTORIA

I'll pay up to a hundred dollars for a good tip.

ANNIE

A hundred dollars? You're talking to Annie Wood -- not some easy mark at a traveling medicine show. I run the most exclusive gentlemen's club in town. My clients are the crème de la crème: politicians, businessmen, financiers -- even the clergy. My girls can get the most powerful men in the country to reveal all of their secrets -- about their business dealings; wives; health. I can't believe you would insult me with such a paltry offer.

VICTORIA

Name your price.

ANNIE

You've always been a good friend to me and my girls. Let's say five hundred dollars a tip.

VICTORIA

Deal.

ANNIE

When do you need this information?

VICTORIA

As soon as possible.

ANNIE

Get out your pocketbook. There's a big deal going down right now. Jim Fisk is at the center of it, as usual. There's going to be a gold swindle.

VICTORIA

Gold swindle?

ANNIE

Fisk is trying to corner the market on gold. He's already bought seven million dollars worth.

VICTORIA

Why?

ANNIE

Easy money. He's manipulating currency the same way he manipulates the stock market.

VICTORIA

What's the plan?

ANNIE

Thursday, he's going to buy even more gold to drive the price up. Then Friday morning, he's going to dump it all when the price hits one hundred fifty dollars.

VICTORIA

Why one-fifty?

ANNIE

Because the market is going to crash once everyone finds out the government is going to flood the market with gold.

VICTORIA

The government's involved?

ANNIE

You should have seen ole Fisk. I thought he was going to wet his pants when he found out Grant was going to sell gold. Fisk has been trying to keep gold off the market for the longest time just to keep the price high. I've got to hand it to him; he always finds a way out.

VICTORIA

Who's pressuring Grant to sell?

ANNIE

Stockbrokers. They're afraid the market is going to collapse. Do you know Fisk even bought President Grant's wife and sister-in-law one and a half million dollars worth of gold? He just sent each of them a check for twenty-five thousand dollars for the profits. What a snake. Fisk made the same deal with a higher-up at the Treasury. There'll be blood on a lot of people's hands when this goes down on Friday.

SCENE EIGHT.

VANDERBILT and VICTORIA are in his mansion celebrating their profits from her gold tip.

VANDERBILT

Well, I must say Victoria. What do you plan to do with that seven hundred thousand dollars you earned from that gold tip?

VICTORIA

I don't know. I haven't had a chance to think about it.

VANDERBILT

What about Wall Street? I always said I could set up a monkey on Wall Street, and he'd make millions. How about I set up you and Tennessee in your own firm?

VICTORIA

I can see it now, "Woodhull, Claflin & Company."

VANDERBILT

You'd be the first female stockbrokers.

VICTORIA

We could help women invest their money.

VANDERBILT

What little money they have.

VICTORIA

You'd be surprised how much money a woman can squirrel away when she needs it.

VANDERBILT

That's what my wife used to say.

VICTORIA

And any extra money I earn I'm going to put toward fighting for women's rights. After all, you've got to have money if you're going to fight.

VANDERBILT

I see you've learned a thing or two from working with me.

VICTORIA

More than you'll ever know.

(WILLIAM HENRY VANDERBILT walks
in the room.)

WILLIAM

What's all the celebrating for?

VANDERBILT

Come on in, son. We're toasting my good luck.

WILLIAM

Good luck? Haven't you heard? The gold market almost collapsed today. They're calling it Black Friday. Some people have lost everything. Gone. Just like that.

VANDERBILT

Not me! I just made another million thanks to my good friend here, Victoria Woodhull.

WILLIAM

How's that?

VANDERBILT

Victoria has powers like I've never seen. Knows just when to buy and just when to sell.

WILLIAM

She does, does she?

VANDERBILT

Victoria has a special connection to the spirit world.

WILLIAM

Or to Jim Fisk.

VANDERBILT

What?

WILLIAM

Nothing, Father. What on earth could this woman possibly know about finance?

VANDERBILT

She knows more than you -- not that you're any genius! I'm going to set her and her sister up in their own brokerage firm.

WILLIAM

Are you out of your mind?

VANDERBILT

Why I've never felt better -- thanks to Tennessee's treatments.

WILLIAM

Setting those two up in finance is the last thing you should do. They're charlatans. Don't waste your money!

VANDERBILT

You let me worry about my money.

WILLIAM

Of course, Father.

VANDERBILT

And what's with this "Father" crap? Call me "Dad" just like I did with my old man.

WILLIAM

Yes, Father. I mean, Dad.

VANDERBILT

Your mother has made a sissy out of you -- filled you full of all these well-bred manners. You should have grown up out on the docks like I did. Worked on a boat. Would've made a man out of you.

(To VICTORIA.)

My sons have been such a disappointment to me. One's so sickly, and this one's not his own man.

VICTORIA

Sounds like William needs some toughening up. William, maybe I can give you a job at my new stock brokerage firm. I hear you're very good at counting money -- especially, your father's!

WILLIAM

Women stockbrokers. That's just what we need! For land's sake, Dad, why do you even associate with such trash?

VANDERBILT

You've got a lot to learn, boy. And someday it'll cost you. I just hope it's not my money you're playing with!

SCENE NINE.

New York City, 1870. VICTORIA, dressed in men's clothing and short hair, is sitting at a desk in her stock brokerage firm on Wall Street.

BELLE

I'm Belle. Annie Wood sent me. I'd like to buy some stock and start making real money -
- just like you, the Queen of Finance.

VICTORIA

Tell me a little bit about yourself, Belle.

BELLE

I'm from Savannah, Georgia. Lived in a mansion on a big plantation. I was what they call a society girl. Learned all the manners of a proper woman. Was used to the finer things in life.

VICTORIA

What brings you to New York?

BELLE

My husband was killed in the Civil War. Daddy, too. Our plantation was burned to the ground by the Yankees. I had no food. No money. No place to live. Lost everything. So I came here to find a job. I ended up at Annie's. It was either that or starve.

VICTORIA

Northern men will say it serves you right. God's retribution. Southern slaveholders raped their female slaves -- and now their own daughters and wives are forced into prostitution.

BELLE

Men! They don't care what it does to us women. We're just property to them.

VICTORIA

Especially, when you get married.

BELLE

The funny thing is all the Northern men are fascinated by Southern women. Annie's place looks just like a Southern mansion on the inside. And she makes us dress in these white silk gowns with pink satin sashes. I look like a princess.

VICTORIA

Men and their fantasies! Now, how much are you making a week?

BELLE

I give Annie forty dollars a week plus twenty percent of my profits. Towels are extra. I pay the patrolman three to ten dollars a week. I do him for free. And I need to keep one hundred dollars on hand to pay the fine in case I get arrested.

VICTORIA

How much money does that leave you with?

BELLE

Sixteen dollars. If only I could find a wealthy man and become his mistress.

VICTORIA

If you had the right to work honestly and earn a living wage, you wouldn't need to rely on a man for money. The woman who marries for money is as much a prostitute as the ones you'll find at Annie Wood's.

BELLE

They don't think so. You should see the looks I get from them on the street.

VICTORIA

Until these wives hold their husbands to the same standard as the prostitutes they visit, society will never change.

BELLE

Hypocrites. All of them. If you could see Annie's big black book. It's filled with the who's who in town.

VICTORIA

Really?

BELLE

I wouldn't want to cross Annie if I were them.

VICTORIA

They would just deny it.

BELLE

Oh, I don't know. She keeps pretty detailed records. Names, professions. It even says what they like in bed.

VICTORIA

Hmm...

BELLE

If it ever got out... A lot of men would be shaking in their boots...

VICTORIA

One day everyone will find out what those men have been up to. Now, how much money do you need to live on in a week?

BELLE

Seven dollars.

VICTORIA

That gives us nine dollars a week to play with. Not much, but I'm going to set you up in a stock that is sure to pay big dividends. One of Mr. Vanderbilt's favorites. You just keep coming back to see me every week. Tell me all about the interesting people you talk to -- especially, those Wall Street financiers in Annie's big black book.

BELLE

I'll be back. And I'll be sure to tell the other working girls about you.

SCENE TEN.

VICTORIA is getting ready to host a dinner party at her home attended by New York's intelligentsia.

VICTORIA

I'm so nervous. Our first big dinner party, and all the who's who in town will be here: politicians, celebrities, writers, actors, thinkers.

COLONEL BLOOD

You'll be fine.

(DR. WOODHULL knocks at the front door.)

VICTORIA

That must be our first guest. How do I look?

COLONEL BLOOD

Pretty as a summer rose.

(VICTORIA opens the door.)

VICTORIA

Doc, what are you doing here? You're trembling. Is everything alright? You look terrible.

DR. WOODHULL

Victoria, can you take me in? I've got nowhere else to go. I've been kicked out of the boardinghouse because I can't pay my rent. I haven't eaten in two days.

VICTORIA

What happened to all your money?

DR. WOODHULL

I can't doctor no more. My hands are shaking so bad I can't hold a syringe. Must be arthritis.

VICTORIA

Or whiskey and morphine.

DR. WOODHULL

I've tried to quit. God knows, I've tried. It has a hold on me. I just can't give it up.

VICTORIA

Oh, Doc.

COLONEL BLOOD

What's this scoundrel doing here?

VICTORIA

Doc, why don't you go in the kitchen and make yourself something to eat? It's right through that door.

(DR. WOODHULL walks to the kitchen.)

(To COLONEL BLOOD.)

He wants me to take him in.

COLONEL BLOOD

Absolutely not!

VICTORIA

But I'm all he has.

COLONEL BLOOD

You mean had.

VICTORIA

What am I supposed to do? Throw my children's father out on the street?

COLONEL BLOOD

Yes.

VICTORIA

I can't do that.

COLONEL BLOOD

Well, I can, and I will.

VICTORIA

But it's my Christian duty to take care of my family.

COLONEL BLOOD

Christian duty? Since when have you been a Christian?

VICTORIA

Since I was born. I was conceived at a religious revival. Methodist. Mama and Papa were so overcome with emotion --

COLONEL BLOOD
Dad-blame it, Victoria!

VICTORIA
Doc can help Byron.

COLONEL BLOOD
Doc can't help himself!

VICTORIA
He's a doctor.

COLONEL BLOOD
Doctor, my eye! He's a drunk!

VICTORIA
I can make sure Doc stays away from the whiskey and morphine.

COLONEL BLOOD
That would take an act of God!

VICTORIA
Byron needs round-the-clock medical care, and Doc has special healing powers.

COLONEL BLOOD
So now he's Jesus? I suppose the next thing you'll tell me is he walks on water.

VICTORIA
Only when he's had a few drinks.

COLONEL BLOOD
Very funny!

VICTORIA
Look honey, you wouldn't want to deny Byron the chance to be cured now would you?

COLONEL BLOOD
Alright. You win. But Doc better have a miracle in his little black bag if he wants to stay in this house! Now, where is that old rascal? I'll bet he's stealing our silver!

(COLONEL BLOOD storms off to the kitchen. CONG. BUTLER knocks at the door. VICTORIA answers it.)

VICTORIA

Why Congressman Butler. It's so nice to see you. Please come in. You have the honor of being our first guest this evening.

CONG. BUTLER

I'm glad we're alone. I've been meaning to talk to you.

VICTORIA

About what?

CONG. BUTLER

Women's right to vote. I've read in the papers you're going to spend a small fortune trying to change the law.

VICTORIA

You heard right. It's a fight I intend to win. No matter the cost.

CONG. BUTLER

I think I can help you.

VICTORIA

You? The rabble-rouser? The most hated man in Washington? At least that's what the papers call you.

CONG. BUTLER

My reputation precedes me. But you've got to admit, I know my way around Congress.

VICTORIA

The article did say your big head contained most of the brains in that chamber.

CONG. BUTLER

Have you ever thought about writing a memorial to Congress? We could make a very persuasive argument for women's rights using the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. I could see that your petition is read in Congress.

VICTORIA

I want to testify. I want Congress to see and hear me. To know who I am.

CONG. BUTLER

With your experience lecturing --

VICTORIA

We could call it The Woodhull Memorial.

CONG. BUTLER

But it might be hard for me to get a hearing for a woman.

VICTORIA

Oh?

CONG. BUTLER

Why don't you come visit me some evening, and we can discuss it.

VICTORIA

Some evening?

CONG. BUTLER

That's when I do my best work.

VICTORIA

You politicians are the same as Wall Street traders: always working at night. Is it so you can keep your bedroom curtains drawn?

CONG. BUTLER

Well, if you want to be the first woman to address Congress, you'll need to cooperate.

VICTORIA

Cooperate?

CONG. BUTLER

You know. Cooperate. It's the way we get things done in Washington.

VICTORIA

So how much will this cooperation cost me?

CONG. BUTLER

Just an hour or so of your time.

VICTORIA

You're incorrigible!

CONG. BUTLER

Just an occupational hazard.

VICTORIA

Well, Congressman, if you're able to help women get the right to vote --

CONG. BUTLER

Just drop by my office anytime tomorrow evening. The door will be unlocked.

(COLONEL BLOOD walks briskly into the room from the kitchen.)

COLONEL BLOOD

That little bugger is going to eat us out of house and home! Oh, excuse me, Congressman. I didn't see you standing there.

VICTORIA

Colonel, I was just telling the Congressman how hard it is to get our voices heard on woman's suffrage.

COLONEL BLOOD

That's right. The dad-blame newspapers in this town are all run by a bunch of ignorant old boat-lickers. We need some radical Republicans like you to --

CONG. BUTLER

What about publishing your own newspaper? You could set the agenda -- frame the argument -- on women's rights.

VICTORIA

We could go on the attack. Labor, politics, free love, spiritualism, women's rights. We could call it Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly. Has a nice ring to it. Don't you think?

(BELLE bursts through the front door.)

BELLE

Victoria, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have to tell you something!

VICTORIA

Belle, calm down. What is it?

BELLE

Annie sent me. I had a terrible vision about you a few minutes ago during a séance at her house.

VICTORIA

What?

BELLE

It came to me clear as day. A family member will betray you. Beware the Judas kiss.

SCENE ELEVEN.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE and SUSAN B.
ANTHONY are sitting in a drawing room drinking tea.

HARRIET
Did you see "the Woodhull" is addressing Congress on women's right to vote tomorrow?

SUSAN
Yes.

HARRIET
What do you make of it?

SUSAN
I'm not sure. "The Woodhull," as you call her, is a very successful businesswoman.

HARRIET
But her background. Good Lord. Free love, prostitution, spiritualism. She's a
backwoods hick from Homer, Ohio with no education and no sense of decency. She's not
one of us.

SUSAN
You've got to take help where you can find it. She certainly has the men's ears.

HARRIET
And other body parts, I hear. I'll bet she slept with that Congressman Butler.

SUSAN
Now, Harriet, you don't know that.

HARRIET
Well, they asked him about it in the paper, and he didn't deny it. What do you think we
should do? Our convention is being held the same day she's giving her speech. Do you
think she's trying to upstage us? You know she's all about publicity.

SUSAN
I'm going to try to get our voices heard before Congress, too. I've got some pull in this
town.

HARRIET
But, Susan, Victoria will go first. You'll be an afterthought. That's hardly befitting the
Grande Dame of woman's suffrage, Susan B. Anthony.

SUSAN

At least our message will be heard -- and by the right people.

HARRIET

She'll set us back fifty years! I noticed you haven't endorsed her.

SUSAN

There's just something about her I'm not sure of. I can't quite put my finger on it.

SCENE TWELVE.

Washington, D.C., 1871. VICTORIA is pacing the floor in a side room at the Capitol waiting to deliver her Woodhull Memorial before Congress.

CONG. BUTLER

Victoria, we're ready for you. Chamber's filling up. Susan B. Anthony is in the front row -- and that Beecher woman. Good God, she's impossible.

VICTORIA

I can't do it.

CONG. BUTLER

What do you mean? I've got the press here. This will be great publicity for the cause. Everyone's waiting to see the fabulous Victoria Woodhull deliver her speech. It's history in the making. By tomorrow morning, you'll be on the front page of every newspaper in the country.

VICTORIA

I can't go out there.

CONG. BUTLER

Why?

VICTORIA

What if I can't deliver?

CONG. BUTLER

Are you kidding? You're the Queen of the Rostrum -- the most dynamic speaker in the country! What passion.

(Under his breath.)

Of that I can personally attest.

VICTORIA

This is different.

CONG. BUTLER

Just cold feet. You'll be fine once you get out there and start talking. Just like those medicine shows. I've seen you read something once and then go out and give a speech like you've known it your whole life.

VICTORIA

There's a lot at stake. If I fail, the hopes and dreams of so many women --

CONG. BUTLER

You're the strongest woman I know. I picked you because you're tough as nails. You're the radical of radicals. Free love and all that. I don't want one of those genteel New Englanders. I want you -- a woman from the great state of Ohio -- just like President Grant. Came up the hard way. Has some dirt under her fingernails -- and in her past. And don't let any of those reformers intimidate you, especially, that Beecher woman. She's the last person to be judging others. For God's sake, Victoria, her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, has bedded half his congregation!

VICTORIA

I don't know if I can do it. This is big -- the women's movement -- our one shot.

CONG. BUTLER

Think of your mission. Call upon that spirit guide of yours. What's his name?

VICTORIA

Demosthenes.

CONG. BUTLER

That's right. What's his name. Ask him for help. Or better yet why don't you read your speech to me?

VICTORIA

Are you sure?

CONG. BUTLER

Just pretend I'm a Congressman.

VICTORIA

You are a Congressman.

CONG. BUTLER

So I have a few faults.

VICTORIA

OK. Here goes. "Congressmen, the great question of our time must be answered -- and it must be answered in the affirmative. Give women the right to vote! No new Constitutional Amendment is needed. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments already give women the right to vote. The Fourteenth Amendment says all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens, and the Fifteenth Amendment gives all citizens the right to vote. Therefore, all citizens, including women, have a constitutional right to vote. I respectfully petition Congress to pass a declaratory act to enforce the rights vested in the Constitution of the United States that give all citizens the right to vote regardless of sex."

CONG. BUTLER

Bravo! Victoria! Bravo! There's not a man alive who can rebut your argument. Now, I'm going to start the proceedings. I'll come get you and bring you out to the floor. Be strong.

SCENE THIRTEEN.

TENNESSEE and VICTORIA are at their stock brokerage firm discussing VICTORIA'S memorial to Congress.

TENNESSEE

Have you seen the rave reviews of your speech to Congress? You've really re-energized the women's movement. It says here so many women showed up at the women's convention they couldn't hold them all. And listen to this, "They all wanted to see the new evangelist of the women's movement, Victoria Woodhull."

VICTORIA

Did you see this letter from President Grant's wife?

TENNESSEE

No!

VICTORIA

Says she loved the Woodhull Memorial and hopes one day I'll be sitting in her husband's chair.

TENNESSEE

Can you believe how Congress chickened out? They want to leave women's right to vote up to the states and courts. Cowards!

VICTORIA

And that group of women didn't help either. Writing a letter to Congress saying they didn't want the right to vote -- that women were meant for a higher calling than public life.

TENNESSEE

Brainwashed!

VICTORIA

Or brain dead! I'm not going to accept defeat. This is just a minor setback. I have bigger plans. The Equal Rights Party has asked me to run for President on their ticket.

TENNESSEE

The Equal Rights Party?

VICTORIA

They believe in equal rights for all -- Blacks and women. I'm nominating Frederick Douglass as my running mate.

TENNESSEE

The former slave? The press will have a field day.

VICTORIA

I told the Equal Rights Party if they want me to run despite my past, I'll carry the banner. My slogan is going to be "Victory for Victoria!"

TENNESSEE

How are you going to raise money?

VICTORIA

Vanderbilt will support me. Annie Wood, too. And if the others don't, they'll find their dirty laundry splashed all over the front page of our weekly.

TENNESSEE

What are you up to?

VICTORIA

I've already paid a visit to some of these so-called respectable citizens who are running to the newspapers criticizing me about free love. I've asked them to donate money to my campaign.

TENNESSEE

And if they don't?

VICTORIA

Then I show them this.

(VICTORIA hands TENNESSEE a mock-up
of Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly.
TENNESSEE reads the newspaper.)

TENNESSEE

"Socialite Laura Curtis Bullard's secret lover exposed! Abby Patton, wife of prominent stockbroker, is having an affair with equal rights advocate Henry Blackwell. Woman suffragists Mary Livermore and Phebe Hanaford are known free lovers. Famed women's rights lecturer Anna Dickinson is sleeping with Whitelaw Reid or is it Congressman Benjamin Butler or Wendell Phillips?" Oh, Victoria.

VICTORIA

I'm calling the issue, "Universal Washing Day."

TENNESSEE

What do they say when you show it to them?

VICTORIA

What can they say? It's the truth. I haven't even gotten to the divorce issue yet.

TENNESSEE

Good lord! With all the secrets you know --

VICTORIA

People in high places have lots to lose. Can you believe one of them actually accused me of blackmail?

TENNESSEE

No!

VICTORIA

I told him when women and the poor play by the same rules as the rich, then we'll talk.

TENNESSEE

But won't it alienate the reformers?

VICTORIA

They're supporting that crook Grant -- as if he's actually going to do anything for women's rights. Do you know Susan B. Anthony wouldn't even sit next to me at last night's convention?

TENNESSEE

She's just jealous. You really upstaged her at the hearing yesterday.

VICTORIA

I think it's something else.

TENNESSEE

Like what?

VICTORIA

My background. Or as the ladies in the women's movement like to call it, my "antecedents."

TENNESSEE

We're never going to be good enough for those people. That's why I always say to live it up. Don't take life too seriously. Let them think what they want.

VICTORIA

Someday I'll show them all. Mama and Papa named me after Queen Victoria for a reason. I'm destined for greatness.

SCENE FOURTEEN.

VICTORIA is waiting backstage at Steinway Hall in New York City to give her speech on free love.

VICTORIA

Henry Ward Beecher! Where have you been? You're supposed to introduce me in fifteen minutes!

HENRY

I can't do it.

VICTORIA

Why not?

HENRY

I'm a preacher for God's sake. Free love? It's against the Church's teachings. I'd be tarred and feathered if I got up on that stage with you.

VICTORIA

You mean you don't practice what you preach?

HENRY

What?

VICTORIA

Don't play dumb with me, Reverend Beecher. I know all about you and Lib Tilton.

HENRY

Lib Tilton?

VICTORIA

Your best friend's wife. Now, do you remember?

HENRY

I'm not sure I understand.

VICTORIA

Well, let me clear things up for you. I heard all about your affair with Lib. Her husband happens to be a very good friend of mine.

HENRY

Theodore?

VICTORIA

He's writing a book about me. We've spent a lot of time together -- talking.

HENRY

About what?

VICTORIA

All kinds of things. Like how you came over to the Tiltons' house under the guise of helping poor, dear Lib while Theodore was away lecturing. Seems you spent most of your time on her couch. You know, the red velvet one in the parlor --

HENRY

She was a lonely woman! I tried to help.

VICTORIA

It all started out innocently, of course. How you asked Lib to read your writings. Give her opinions. Kind of like your editor, wouldn't you say?

HENRY

She's a very intelligent woman.

VICTORIA

I have no doubt. How you told her she was so smart -- way too good for her husband. No one understood her like you. You made Lib feel so good about herself. Intelligent. Needed. That she finally succumbed to that fatal Beecher charm that so many of the women in your church fall for.

HENRY

Theodore had his own women -- including you!

VICTORIA

So we're both free lovers!

HENRY

You can't prove anything.

VICTORIA

And then Lib got pregnant with your child -- and had to confess to Theodore. He knew it wasn't his -- he had been away lecturing all summer. Well, something had to be done. So Lib went to see Madame Restelle. You know Madame Restelle, don't you? Works on Fifth Avenue? The female doctor who makes things go away?

HENRY

God, no. Don't --

VICTORIA

I heard Lib was in terrible pain. Was in bed for a week. Sheets covered in blood.

HENRY

God, stop it.

VICTORIA

I wonder what Mrs. Beecher would say --

HENRY

Leave my wife out of it. She's a God-fearing woman!

VICTORIA

And all those fine, upstanding parishioners at Plymouth Church. If they only knew the real Henry Ward Beecher!

HENRY

You don't know the pressure I'm under. What it's like to be held up as the one closest to God.

VICTORIA

Closest to God? Please!

HENRY

You're just a woman -- from the hills no less. You have no idea what it's like to have to live up to everyone's expectations. To be perfect all the time.

VICTORIA

Perfect. Is that what you call having an affair with your best friend's wife -- and then lying about it?

HENRY

You don't understand.

VICTORIA

Are you going to introduce me? There's a room full of people out there waiting.

HENRY

I can't. I can't do it.

VICTORIA

If you don't introduce me, I'll have to go out there and tell everyone why. Tell them who the real Henry Ward Beecher is: a hypocrite! Practices free love in private -- with a member of his church, no less -- but in public, oh no! Not me!

(HENRY WARD BEECHER falls to his
knees.)

HENRY

Please, Victoria, don't do it. Have mercy on me as God would on you. My wife, my children, my congregation. What will they think?

VICTORIA

After tonight, you'll know exactly what they think. Now, get up off your knees, you coward! Quit acting like a child!

(HENRY WARD BEECHER gets up off his
knees.)

Why can't you just be honest about who you are?

HENRY

I'm not as strong as you, Victoria.

VICTORIA

Are you going to introduce me or do I have to tell everyone the truth about the esteemed Reverend Henry Ward Beecher?

HENRY

If you do, I'll kill myself!

VICTORIA

Such dramatics, Reverend.

HENRY

I can't face the consequences.

VICTORIA

You can't face yourself.

HENRY

That, too.

VICTORIA

A great man once said the truth will set you free.

HENRY

I've said all I'm going to say. I'm leaving.

(HENRY WARD BEECHER walks out the
door.)

SCENE FIFTEEN.

VICTORIA and TENNESSEE are at their brokerage firm
the day after VICTORIA'S Steinway Hall speech.

(VICTORIA slams down the newspaper on
her desk.)

VICTORIA

What a disaster! I can't believe Utica would do that to me. My own flesh and blood. Did you see the papers? It's all over the front page. "Utica Brooker, sister of Victoria Woodhull, caused quite a stir last night during Mrs. Woodhull's speech at Steinway Hall when she accused her sister of sharing the bed of two men: her husband, Colonel James Blood, and her ex-husband, Dr. Canning Woodhull. Mrs. Woodhull was speaking on the subject of free love when Mrs. Brooker interrupted her and began shouting that Mrs. Woodhull should tell the audience about her unconventional living arrangements. When asked later, Mrs. Brooker said Mrs. Woodhull is living in sin and should repent." And look at the picture! The police are hauling Utica out of her seat with billy clubs. The caption says, "Woodhull would, but Brooker wouldn't brook it."

TENNESSEE

I had no idea she'd show up drunk at your speech last night.

VICTORIA

Utica! Of all people. Heckling me from the audience.

TENNESSEE

And she's been arrested how many times for drunkenness and soliciting men?

VICTORIA

I can still hear her. Calling me a free lover. I admitted it though, by God. "Yes, I am a free lover!" But I believe in monogamy -- only loving one person at a time.

TENNESSEE

She left that part out.

VICTORIA

Telling everyone Doc was living with us. Making it look like the Colonel, Doc and I are... For God's sake, I didn't sleep with Doc when I was married to him!

TENNESSEE

She's always been jealous of you.

VICTORIA

And after all I've done for her. Taken in her and her family. Not charging them a cent while they've run up bills all over town.

TENNESSEE

The audience really turned on you.

VICTORIA

Booed me off the stage. Listen to what my Democratic opponent Horace Greeley is saying, "Woodhull shares the couch of one husband and the name of the other. Maybe it's so she can be impartial." And the editorial pages, "Isn't it ironic that the woman who wants to destroy marriage has two husbands? Imagine what she would do as President." And the reformers, "With two husbands at home Mrs. Woodhull hardly has enough time to fight for woman's suffrage. She never has been and never will be a leader in the movement." Do you think Beecher planted these stories?

TENNESSEE

I wouldn't be surprised. He's good at playing politics.

VICTORIA

What about Utica? Do you think he got to her? Put her up to this?

TENNESSEE

All he would have had to do is offer her some whiskey --

VICTORIA

Or morphine!

TENNESSEE

We're already starting to lose business. Here's a stack of letters -- hand-delivered this morning -- from clients saying they don't want to do business with us anymore. They want to close their accounts and withdraw their money immediately. Said they can't trust someone who's so morally depraved to handle their accounts. And Mr. Vanderbilt is pulling his support from us. Too much bad publicity. What are we going to do? If this keeps up, we'll be ruined.

VICTORIA

I'm not going to be the scapegoat. I'm not going to allow myself to be sacrificed -- a victim -- for their moral cowardice. The ones who are crucifying me in public for being a free lover are doing the very same thing behind closed doors. They just don't have the courage to admit it to the world. I'm going to expose those hypocrites for what they are. Like Henry Ward Beecher!

TENNESSEE

He got off scot-free.

VICTORIA

Don't be so sure.

TENNESSEE

What do you mean?

VICTORIA

I think the good Reverend ought to start worrying about what I know about him.

TENNESSEE

Oh?

VICTORIA

When the world finds out about the Reverend's affair with Lib Tilton -- his best friend's wife -- I'll make it hotter than hell for Henry Ward Beecher!

TENNESSEE

What if we get sued for libel?

VICTORIA

Let him sue us! I dare him! Every single word I print will be true -- and he knows it. I would love to take this to trial. Let everyone see what kind of people are running this town.

TENNESSEE

But he's one of the most powerful men in the country. He'll come after us with everything he's got. We could lose everything -- end up in jail.

VICTORIA

I tried to reason with the good reverend, but he wouldn't listen. He was more concerned about protecting his own reputation than doing the right thing. Well, the ball's in his court now. We'll see what his next move is.

SCENE SIXTEEN.

Election Day, 1872. ANNIE WOOD visits VICTORIA in jail carrying a big, black book.

VICTORIA

Obscenity charges! Can you believe the Feds have jailed me on obscenity charges? They say I've sent obscene materials through the mail. Said I violated some federal law - some postal code that's never been enforced. I've been framed! Henry Ward Beecher's behind this!

ANNIE

Of that you can be sure.

VICTORIA

What are you hearing on the street?

ANNIE

Beecher couldn't sue you for libel so he's having his minions from the Plymouth Church do his dirty work. The D.A. and the judge are his parishioners. They have a vested interest in protecting the Reverend's reputation. There's lots of money riding on him -- a new book, stock in Plymouth Church -- they can't let him go down.

VICTORIA

I'm being persecuted for telling the truth.

ANNIE

That's why I'm here. I've brought you my black book. Here. It's got everything. Names, dates, addresses, the girls they like. All the prominent men in town -- New York high society, clergy, politicians, businessmen. Give this to your lawyer, Mr. Howe. Tell him I'll sign an affidavit swearing that everything you've said is true.

VICTORIA

Oh, Annie. You're the only one who's come to my defense.

ANNIE

I'm tired of seeing these men get away with visiting prostitutes while we, women, are persecuted for giving them what they want. As far as I'm concerned, the men are prostitutes, too!

VICTORIA

You're right! But are you OK with this? They'll come after you next.

ANNIE

What's right is right. It's the only way we can fight back. You know, Victoria, it's no coincidence you're in jail on Election Day.

VICTORIA

I know. These men think they can break me, but they're wrong!

ANNIE

How long do you think you can hold out?

VICTORIA

As long as I need to, but I miss the Colonel and the kids.

ANNIE

Speaking of the Colonel, I've been seeing quite a lot of him these days.

VICTORIA

You have?

ANNIE

He's been coming 'round to see my girls.

VICTORIA

Really?

ANNIE

I didn't want to say anything, but I thought you should hear it from me rather than someone else -- or worse yet, read about it in the newspapers.

SCENE SEVENTEEN.

New York City, 1873. COLONEL BLOOD brings VICTORIA home to their new living quarters, a boardinghouse.

COLONEL BLOOD

Welcome home, Victoria! I know it's not the mansion we had in the city, but at least it's better than that jail cell you've been holed up in for the last six months. Thank God the jury found you innocent. That judge was a dad-blamed fool! Said it was the worst verdict he's ever heard.

VICTORIA

How are we going to live? We're broke!

COLONEL BLOOD

I figured it all out. You can give two speeches a night. Your first speech can be about finance and politics --

VICTORIA

Colonel?

COLONEL BLOOD

And then once the audience has warmed up to you and sees you're a respectable woman, you can give your second speech on a real controversial topic like free love. We can start in the Midwest and then go down South. They love you down there.

VICTORIA

Colonel?

COLONEL BLOOD

The papers in the South really supported you during the Beecher trial. Said you were being persecuted by the federal government the same way they'd been. They loved that Beecher was shown to be a fraud.

VICTORIA

Colonel! Stop! You sound just like my father -- putting me out on the road to support the family.

COLONEL BLOOD

I thought you liked giving speeches. Being in front of the crowd. All the excitement.

VICTORIA

I don't want to end up like my mother -- in a traveling road show -- hawking my wares like a charlatan.

COLONEL BLOOD

But you're a great speaker.

VICTORIA

I'm tired of being used.

COLONEL BLOOD

You think I've used you?

VICTORIA

Yes -- and I've suffered for it.

COLONEL BLOOD

I've always supported you -- like when you ran for president even though you couldn't vote!

VICTORIA

I took all the incoming fire --

COLONEL BLOOD

And all the headlines! Are you blaming me for this? For ruining you?

VICTORIA

Let's face it, Colonel. You didn't always have my best interests at heart. I think it's time we took a break.

COLONEL BLOOD

What?

VICTORIA

Colonel, our marriage is over. I want a divorce.

COLONEL BLOOD

It's not that crazy stuff your mother has been saying is it? Filling your head with all sorts of wild ideas while you were in jail. Saying I was possessed by the devil. That's why you've had such bad luck. Or was it that obnoxious Annie Wood? The next time I see her --

VICTORIA

It's not that, Colonel. I've been married since I was fifteen years old -- more than half my life. I've been preaching about women's independence, and yet I've spent my entire life shackled to a man. It's time I ventured out on my own.

COLONEL BLOOD

Why don't I take you upstairs to bed? We can talk about this in the morning after you've had a chance to rest.

VICTORIA

No. My mind's made up. I'm leaving.

SCENE EIGHTEEN.

New York City, 1877. WILLIAM visits VICTORIA and TENNESSEE in their modest room at a boardinghouse.

WILLIAM

I understand you've been subpoenaed to testify at my father's will trial.

VICTORIA

Yes -- and I'm looking forward to it. Sounds like your father cut all his kids out of his will except you. Imagine that.

WILLIAM

My sister says he wasn't of sound mind when he signed his will. You know, my father's belief in spiritualism and his, shall we say, rather healthy sexual appetite made some people nervous.

TENNESSEE

Why, I thought virility was a sign of health. And I was just amazed at the attention your father paid to me -- especially, at his age. Why he was old enough to be my father! Do you know he even asked me to marry him? Just think, William. I could have been your stepmother. Tennessee Claflin Vanderbilt!

WILLIAM

Oh my.

TENNESSEE

Your father always said I was ample: ample hips, ample breasts, ample thighs.

WILLIAM

Dear God.

VICTORIA

And your father was such a brilliant man. It's no wonder he died with more money in his bank account than the U.S. Treasury! Of course, I helped him as much as I could.

TENNESSEE

Oh, Victoria, don't be modest. You helped Mr. Vanderbilt a great deal!

WILLIAM

Oh no.

VICTORIA

We must have contacted his dead mother at least a dozen times. She was just full of advice!

WILLIAM

What kind of advice?

VICTORIA

Business, health, personal matters...

WILLIAM

Personal matters. Like what?

VICTORIA

Oh William, she was very upset with you.

WILLIAM

Oh?

VICTORIA

When you confined your own mother to an insane asylum just so the old man could chase other women...

TENNESSEE

Naughty, naughty boy!

VICTORIA

Of course, your father was very appreciative of that. You were so good at convincing the doctors of your mother's derangement.

WILLIAM

I don't know what you're talking about.

VICTORIA

I'm sure you don't. But maybe a jury would be interested --

WILLIAM

No jury will believe your word over mine.

VICTORIA

They won't have to take my word for it. I have everything in writing -- your father's handwriting.

WILLIAM

My father's handwriting?

VICTORIA

He was quite the letter-writer. His servants must have brought me at least a hundred letters. I wonder what he did with all of mine.

WILLIAM

I've heard enough! I want my father's letters, and I'm willing to pay you good money if you'll part with them -- and if you're out of the country when my sister's attorneys want you to testify at the trial. How does a cozy little house in England sound?

VICTORIA

And?

WILLIAM

And a small fortune in a bank account at Lloyd's Bank in London.

VICTORIA

Now, just when would we get this house and money?

WILLIAM

As soon as you hand over the letters and sign this piece of paper saying you don't have them.

TENNESSEE

William, I seem to recall having a trust account with your father. It had something like seventy thousand dollars in it. Of course, with principal and interest, it comes to one hundred thousand dollars. But I'll settle for the principal. Now, I know you're an honest man --

WILLIAM

I don't know anything about an account.

TENNESSEE

You wouldn't want me to sue you for the money, would you?

WILLIAM

Have you no respect for my father's memory?

VICTORIA

Your father's memory? Hmm... My memory seems to be coming back to me. I'm starting to recall quite a bit more about your father.

WILLIAM

How much would it take to make you forget?

VICTORIA

Now, we're going to need to travel in style if we're going to England. Let's see. We'll be bringing two kids, our mother, father...

TENNESSEE

I've counted six -- we'll need six first-class staterooms for our trip!

VICTORIA

And servants, of course.

WILLIAM

Maybe we should throw in a horse for good measure.

TENNESSEE

Come to think of it --

WILLIAM

Don't be ridiculous!

VICTORIA

Now, now William. You wouldn't want me to --

WILLIAM

Oh alright. A horse it is. Do we have a deal?

VICTORIA

Tennie, what do you think?

TENNESSEE

I think William is going to keel over unless we sign his paper.

VICTORIA

Alright, William. You drive a hard bargain --

WILLIAM

Just sign right here. Now, where are the letters?

VICTORIA

I have them right here. I figured you'd be calling.

WILLIAM

Now, this is all of them, right? There aren't any more lying around somewhere, are there?

VICTORIA

Why William, you seem to doubt my veracity -- as if you had any.

WILLIAM

I just don't want any surprises. Well, enjoy jolly old England.

TENNESSEE

We'll certainly have enough money to!

SCENE NINETEEN.

England, 1920. VICTORIA and her daughter, ZULU, are in the drawing room of her English country manor home. Intertwined British and American flags hang over the doorway. VICTORIA is 82 and ZULU is 59.

ZULU

Mama! Mama! Did you see the news? Women finally got the right to vote in the United States. The 19th Amendment was ratified by the last state -- Tennessee! Here! Look!

VICTORIA

I can't believe it. After all this time. I only wish some of the other woman suffragists were alive to see it.

ZULU

What an historic thing to be a part of. You should feel so proud of the part you played.

VICTORIA

I'm not sure my contributions will be noticed -- or appreciated.

ZULU

I remember all the hard times, all the sacrifices you made.

VICTORIA

You've always been by my side, Zulu. The one thing I could always count on.

ZULU

I looked up to you, Mama, my whole life. And you were an important part of history whether anyone wants to give you credit or not. You should feel proud today. This victory is yours, too!

VICTORIA

I wonder what finally convinced them. We tried so hard during Reconstruction. I thought all hope was lost.

ZULU

Why?

VICTORIA

The women's movement was so divided -- jealousies, petty politics. I didn't think they could ever work together.

ZULU

Well, it looks like they finally did -- fifty years later!

VICTORIA

All the suffragists said I set the movement back fifty years. Maybe if I hadn't gotten involved --

ZULU

No. You did the right thing. Women in America will be indebted to you whether they know it or not.

VICTORIA

The women of today haven't even heard of me. The suffragists downplayed anything I ever did for women. Do you know Susan B. Anthony told some biographer I didn't have anything to do with the woman's suffrage movement?

ZULU

Why?

VICTORIA

She didn't like who I was or where I came from. Lots of lies were spread about me then -
- and now.

ZULU

Why don't you write your memoirs? Tell everyone what really happened. Set the record straight.

VICTORIA

Who? Me? No one would be interested in my life story.

ZULU

Lots of people would be interested -- I know I would. I've seen you writing in your diary late at night. I always wondered what it said. Don't you keep it in this drawer?

VICTORIA

It's for my eyes only.

ZULU

Well, you should use it instead of letting it gather dust. I can only imagine the stories it would tell -- President Grant, Susan B. Anthony, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Henry Ward Beecher --

VICTORIA

It would be too painful. Opening up all those old wounds. Reliving all those memories. Did I ever tell you about the time when Mr. Martin invited your Aunt Tennie and me to the Athletic Club dinner?

ZULU

No. Wasn't he president of the club?

VICTORIA

Yes. Well, when we got there, this huge banquet room was empty. Not a soul in sight.

ZULU

Mama!

VICTORIA

The tables were set with the finest silver and china. The glasses were filled. We waited for an hour, but no one showed up. Turns out one of the members' wives said we weren't proper persons to be associated with.

ZULU

See what I mean! They don't know you! I want people to know the truth!

VICTORIA

I don't even know what the truth is anymore. The gossip, the slander, the hate. I hope you never have to go through anything like that -- and I'm sorry for what you've had to go through as my daughter.

ZULU

I wouldn't want anyone else as my mother. I love you.

VICTORIA

I tried to protect you, but I couldn't.

ZULU

You did the best you could. We got through it -- it's made me a better person. But no one will know that unless you write your story.

VICTORIA

I'm too old. I don't have the strength to relive the past.

ZULU

But all your good works will be forgotten. If you don't tell your story, someone else will. You wouldn't want some man to write it, now would you?

VICTORIA

I don't think I'll have to worry about that.

ZULU

Well, I didn't want to say anything, but there is a man that's going to write a book about you -- and you know what he's calling it? "The Terrible Siren."

VICTORIA

If he prints any lies in it, I'll sue him -- just like Mr. Martin did when he was alive.

ZULU

I heard it's going to be pretty bad. It makes me sick just thinking about it. No man is going to be able to tell your story. He couldn't understand you. And I want history to treat you fairly -- with respect.

VICTORIA

History won't remember me.

ZULU

Not if you don't write it.

VICTORIA

Zulu, we've already been over this. I'm not going to do it.

ZULU

But I just don't want you to --

VICTORIA

What? Die without writing my life story.

ZULU

Mama, don't talk like that.

VICTORIA

When the time comes, and I've passed over to the spirit world, the truth will be told.

ZULU

Here, Mama, let me fix your pillow. I don't know why you like to sit upright all the time -- even to sleep -- it's not good for you.

VICTORIA

Lots of things aren't good for you. Do you know you can get more germs from shaking hands than kissing? That's why I don't do it.

ZULU

What? Kissing or shaking hands?

VICTORIA

Both! So much for free love.

ZULU

Mama, what am I going to do with you?

VICTORIA

You'll miss me when I'm gone.

ZULU

You're not going anywhere. Won't you regret it? Not telling your side?

VICTORIA

People believe what they want to believe. Like I'm a social-climbing harlot who married a wealthy banker who died and left me his fortune -- that I don't deserve, by the way.

ZULU

But you're nothing like that! Your life story would inspire so many women -- telling them to fight for their rights rather than just accepting the crumbs they're given.

VICTORIA

Women today don't even care about the right to vote. They're not serious -- like we were.

ZULU

All the more reason to write it.

VICTORIA

I said no!

ZULU

Well, if you don't write your life's story, I will.

VICTORIA

Zulu!

ZULU

I'm serious, Mama. I'm not going to stand around and watch you be vilified like this -- I'm not going to let some man write a bunch of lies about you. If you don't say something, I will!

VICTORIA

No! Don't!

ZULU

Why not?

VICTORIA

Do you really want to go through all that again? Dredging up the past. I don't have the energy.

ZULU

Mama, what are you afraid of?

VICTORIA

Nothing. I just don't want to --

ZULU

Are you afraid of the truth? Because if you are --

VICTORIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

ZULU

Everyone says you tried to bury your past. Deny everything that made you so special. When you married Mr. Martin your whole world view changed. You used to be a radical -- a fighter! But then you turned into a conservative. What happened?

VICTORIA

Mr. Martin was my one true love. He was the only man that really respected me -- that understood me. Was it so wrong I wanted to make him happy?

ZULU

No. I just don't understand why you would change who you are for a man --

VICTORIA

Don't do it, Zulu. I've spent my entire life trying to defend myself. I want to live out the rest of my days in peace. Someday everyone will know the truth about my life.

ZULU

Mama, only you can tell your story.

VICTORIA

I'm not going to write my life story, and that's that -- and I don't want you writing it either! All this talk has made me tired. I'm going to bed.

(VICTORIA walks off stage. ZULU starts rummaging through the drawers looking for VICTORIA'S diary. She finds a drawer that won't open and tugs at it. ZULU looks around the room for a key. VICTORIA walks back into the room holding up a key.)

Is this what you're looking for? If it means that much to you, go ahead, open the drawer.

(ZULU hesitates, then takes the key from VICTORIA and opens the drawer.)

ZULU

The diary -- it's gone!

VICTORIA

I did it for you.