

WOODHULL

A Play About the First Woman to Run for President

by Liza Lentini

212.592.8960

LizaLentini@yahoo.com

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CHARACTERS

VICTORIA WOODHULL	33 years old, confident and striking.
TENNESSEE CLAFLIN	22 years old. Naïve, bright eyed, beautiful. Woodhull's sister and "running mate."
COMMODORE VANDERBILT	60 plus. Kind-hearted, "big" in stature. Tennessee's lover.
SUSAN B. ANTHONY	Early 40's. Conservative, composed.
ELIZABETH CADY STANTON	Early 40's. Solid, commanding.
ISABELLA BEECHER HOOKER	Early 30's. A sly gossip.
PAULINA WRIGHT DAVIS	Early 30's. A follower.
THEODORE TILTON	Late 30's. Soft-looking face, sexual. Woodhull's lover.
COLONEL JAMES BLOOD	Early 40's. Good looking, military man. Woodhull's "husband."
YELLER	Mid-20's. Precocious, cunning news man.
WAITER	A young man.
CHARLES DELMONICO	Any age, powerful restaurant owner.
REPORTERS	Three men, any ages.
DADDY	30's – 50's. Good-looking swindler, great speaker.
LITTLE GIRL	Voice of a little girl.
LITTLE VICKY	Woodhull as a child.
MEN & WOMEN	Various.

SETTING

The set should be abstract, as time and space wander. Platforms are suggested as a possible set; props and furniture should be kept to a bare minimum. Scene changes and the moving of furniture should occur during the action, and there is no reason, until the end of the play, for the lights to go completely to black. When the script notes at the end of a scene that the “lights fade,” it’s an indication of a cross-fade.

TIME

The Presidential election of 1872.

NOTE TO CASTING

Doubling may occur whenever appropriate.
Preferably the voices of the MEN & WOMEN would be live, but if casting restricts, much can be accomplished with prerecorded sound.

NOTE TO INTERMISSION

An intermission is possible after Act Two.

ACT I
Scene 1

AT RISE: Darkness. A figure can be discerned, standing at a podium. It is so near dark, that we cannot see anything except for the figure itself, which is highlighted with a deep blue light. A man steps out, DADDY, dressed in top hat and tails and holding a cane. He addresses the audience.

DADDY

Ladies and gentlemen...welcome to our show...

(He waves his cane toward the figure, and the lights very slowly rise. We hear the voice of a little girl, presumable about seven years old. The voices may be prerecorded, if necessary. DADDY stands on the side and proudly watches the action.)

LITTLE GIRL

Are you Victoria Woodhull?

WOODHULL

Why, yes. I am Victoria Woodhull.

(Slight pause.)

Well, speak up, darling. Is there something you want to say to me?

LITTLE GIRL

My schoolmaster, Mr. Tilton....well, he says—

WOODHULL

Tell me. Don't be afraid. What does he say?

LITTLE GIRL

He says...you're the devil.

(A furious buzz of gossip explodes.)

MAN

Did you hear—

WOMAN

About the woman—

Who's running for—
MAN
President!
WOMAN
President?
MAN
President!
WOMAN
Against Grant?
MAN
(He lets out a deep, belly laugh.)
WOMAN
I've read her newspaper! Such propaganda!
MAN
Female orgasm? What's this about a female orgasm?
WOMAN
She wears these terrifically short skirts!
MAN
What's a female orgasm?
WOMAN
I think I'm cut my hair, too!
MAN
Oh, no you won't!
WOMAN
She was on Wall Street—
WOMAN
A stockbroker!
WOMAN
"The Vanderbilt Proteges!"

	MAN
The whore!	
	WOMAN
The harlot!	
	MAN
They should lock her up!	
	WOMAN
“Queens of Finance” they called them.	
	WOMAN
We’ll pray for you, Victoria!	
	MAN
Just you hush!	
	WOMAN
She got a colored man for a Vice President!	
	WOMAN
Abominable!	
	MAN
Frederick Douglass is the negro’s name!	
	WOMAN
Despicable!	
	MAN
What’s this about females and orgasms?	
	WOMAN
Free love!	
	MAN
She’s a prostitute!	
	WOMAN
So is her sister!	
	MAN

And they're working—

WOMAN

A Vanderbilt!

MAN

A woman—

WOMAN

Is running—

MAN

For—

WOMAN

President!

MAN

President!

WOMAN

President!

MAN & WOMAN

President!

(VICTORIA WOODHULL's voice can be heard, over the end of the gossip. Her voice is strong, yet distant.)

WOODHULL

While others argued the equality of woman with man, I proved it by successfully engaging in business...I therefore claim the right to speak for the women of America, and believing as I do that the prejudices which still exist in the popular mind against women will soon disappear, I now announce myself for the Presidency.

(With this, a frantic explosion of bright lights—photographers—illuminate the stage. The stage slowly brightens, revealing a well-dressed VICTORIA WOODHULL, standing at the podium. While the lights are coming up, SUSAN B. ANTHONY, ISABELLA BEECHER HOOKER, ELIZABETH CADY STANTON, and PAULINA WRIGHT DAVIS enter, assembling themselves behind WOODHULL. As they come in, COLONEL BLOOD, a strong-looking man in military uniform, announces their entrance.)

BLOOD

May I introduce to you, ladies and gentleman, the founders and leaders of woman suffrage...Susan B. Anthony, Isabella Beecher Hooker, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Paulina Wright Davis...And, candidate for the United States Presidency, Victoria Claflin Woodhull.

WOODHULL

(Coming right in at the end of the introduction, as though in the middle of her speech.)

The right to vote is denied to women of the United States, by the operation of election laws. The continuance of the enforcement of these laws, denying the right of citizens to vote on account of their sex, is grievance to myself and to various other persons, citizens of the United States, being women. Therefore, I would most respectfully petition your Honorable Bodies to make such laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the right vested by the Constitution in the Citizens of the United States to vote, without regard to sex!

(There is a frenzy of cheers from the crowd. Reporters bombard WOODHULL, with their cameras and various "Mrs. Woodhull's and "Victoria's. Finally, one reporter's voice breaks through the crowd.)

YELLER

Mrs. Woodhull, is it true that you are an advocate for free love?

WOODHULL

That would be correct.

REPORTER #1

Is it true that you worked as a courtesan for "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt?

WOODHULL

Courtesan? I am no courtesan, my friend. However, I have been a *stockbroker*, and yes, in that respect, I did business with Commodore Vanderbilt.

REPORTER #2

Then would you kindly explain the rumors, Mrs. Woodhull?

WOODHULL

Gladly.

(She takes a deep breath and steadies herself. She is calm and controlled.)

I know that many of my self-appointed judges and critics are deeply tainted with the vices they condemn...I advocate free love in its highest, purest sense, as the only cure for the immorality, the deep damnation by which men corrupt and disfigure God's most holy institution of sexual relation.

REPORTER #3

Just for the record, Victoria, how old are you?

WOODHULL

Thirty-three. I'll be thirty-four by election day.

REPORTER #2

Were you not brought up in a family of medicine show performers?

WOODHULL

My father...

(DADDY takes a bow, no one notices except for WOODHULL.)

...Was a man of business. Many businesses. Some might say that everything I learned, I learned from him.

YELLER

Is it true, Mrs. Woodhull, that you live with a man, and are not married?

WOODHULL

Yes. I live with a man. So what of it?

REPORTER #1

Who is that man?

WOODHULL

His name is Colonel James H. Blood

REPORTER #2

A military man?

WOODHULL

Unless you know any other Colonels, yes.

YELLER

So, you *are* living in sin with a man?

WOODHULL

I believe that marriage is of the heart and not of the law.

REPORTER #3

But you have been legally married before...?

WOODHULL

Yes. And now I am *legally* divorced. I did keep my husband's name, Woodhull.

YELLER

Are you having sexual relations with Colonel James H. Blood?

WOODHULL

Positively.

(She smiles endearingly at BLOOD, standing in the audience.)

I love this man. And I when I cease to love him, I will leave him, though I trust that will never be.

YELLER

Are you remotely aware of the protocol involved with running for President of the United States?!

WOODHULL

(Cutting him off.)

This sexual intercourse business may as well be discussed now, and discussed until women are so familiar with their sexual organs that a reference to them will no longer make the blush mount to their face any more than a reference to any other part of their body.

REPORTER #1

What exactly are you after, Victoria?

WOODHULL

I'll tell you what I'm after. I am seeking the truth about sexual intercourse, and I will follow it if it lead me either to heaven or to hell!

(A scream of enthusiasm from the crowd.)

REPORTER #2

Will you be in the ballot come May?

WOODHULL

I will be a write-in.

REPORTER #3

Under which party?

WOODHULL

The Equal Rights Party.

YELLER

Is it true that you support Communism?

WOODHULL

Support it? Of course I support it! Christ was a Communist of the strictest sort, and so am I, and of the most extreme kind.

REPORTER #3

What are you doing to support the Communist party right now, Mrs. Woodhull?

WOODHULL

You mean, besides running for President?

(Laughter from the suffragists and the crowd.)

I'll have you on the look out for a new book entitled Manifesto by the German theorist Karl Marx. This will be the first American publication of a revolutionary piece of literature.

REPORTER #2

And you are the one publishing this new book?

WOODHULL

I have initiated its first American publication, yes.

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Woodhull, I was reading your Woodull and Claflin Weekly...could you please explain the headline, as it reads now: "Progress! Free Thought! Untrammelled Lives! Breaking the Way for Future Generations!" Exactly what do you mean by *free thought* and what do you expect to accomplish with headlines such as these?

WOODHULL

Well, sir, it does not surprise me that you have no idea what is meant by free thought, as you have clearly overlooked the rubrics listed in the newspaper itself.

REPORTER #2

Short skirts?

REPORTER #3

Excess profit taxes?

REPORTER #1

Spiritualism?

REPORTER #2

Just what do you mean by *world government*?

REPORTER #3

And how do you expect to come up with all these new forms of birth control?

WOODHULL

I am currently collaborating with a scientist to create a new form of birth control called the diaphragm.

ALL

A what?!!!

WOODHULL

You'll find out soon enough.

YELLER

Is birth control a priority to support your habits of *free love*?

WOODHULL

I'd hardly refer to free love as a habit, my good man. It is a *way of life*. Like vegetarianism.

REPORTER #1

What about better public housing? Don't you think there are more important things for the government to be worried about than better public housing?

WOODHULL

Friend, this is America, 1872. There is no reason everyone cannot get their fair share of the wealth in this prosperous country of ours. That includes better public housing.

YELLER

And you were raised yourself—

WOODHULL

I was raised in a good, safe home with loving parents. Thank you for asking.

REPORTER #2

Abolition of the death penalty...that's outrageous!

WOODHULL

I agree that it is right to punish wrong-doings. But no individual should have the power to take another person's life. The government has no more right to interfere with morals than they do with religion.

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Anthony! What say you about supporting a woman like Victoria Woodhull as a Presidential candidate!

ANTHONY

(Comes forward, only briefly.)

I would welcome all the infamous women of New York if they would make speeches for freedom.

REPORTER #3

Mrs. Stanton! Elizabeth Cady Stanton! How do you feel about the gossip which surrounds your candidate?

STANTON

(Strongly taking a stand.)

I have thought much of Mrs. Woodhull and of all the gossip about her past, and I have come to the conclusion that it is great arrogance in any of us to pry into her personal affairs. To me there is a sacredness in individual experience which it seems like a sin to search into or expose. This woman stands before us today as an able speaker and writer. Her face, manners and conversation, all indicate the triumph of the moral, intellectual and spiritual. The process should be little to us, the result is everything.

(A roar from the crowd.)

REPORTER #2

It is a known fact that Victoria Woodhull has practiced illegal prostitution.

YELLER

This supporter of free love has run her own whorehouse!

STANTON

(With great poise.)

In regard to the gossip about Mrs. Woodhull, I have only one answer to give all my gentleman friends. When the men who make the laws for us in Washington can stand

forth and declare themselves pure and unspotted from all sins mentioned in the ten commandments, then we will demand that every woman who makes a constitutional argument on our platform will be as chaste as Diana.... Women have crucified their own revolutionaries for ages, and now men mock us with the fact, saying that we are ever cruel to each other. Let us end this dishonorable record and from this day on stand by womanhood. If Victoria Woodhull must be crucified, let the men drive the spikes and plait the crown of thorns!

YELLER

Where's your sister Tennessee, Victoria?

WOODHULL

My sister I'm afraid is detained on business.

WOMAN

(From the crowd.)

Are you a free lover?

WOODHULL

(Pumped with enthusiasm.)

Yes! I am a free lover!

(The crowd bursts with support. A few muffled "boo's come out of the men.)

I have an inalienable, constitutional, and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can, to change that love every day if I please! And with that right, neither you nor any law you can name have any right to interfere!

(Lights fade as the crowd sheers and reporters call out to WOODHULL with further questions. Another furious burst of photographers lead us into darkness on and the suffragists. THEODORE TILTON enters a spotlight. He is an attractive, yet modest looking man in his late thirties. He stands addressing the audience as though giving a lecture.)

TILTON

You are all familiar with the prominent Henry Ward Beecher. Reverend Beecher and I are both disturbed by a Presidential candidate who admits to committing acts against the Bible, against what God has intended for His people. You know of whom I speak. It is Victoria Woodhull. I advise all of you to avoid engaging in conversation about this woman, keep your minds away from the sin and evil she preaches. The newspapers are referring to her as Mrs. Satan...And I am here today to tell you exactly why that is.

END OF SCENE 1

ACT I
Scene 2

AT RISE: A hotel room. COMMODORE VANDERBILT, a big, relaxed man of sixty plus years, is laughing wildly, smoking a cigar, reading a newspaper. TENNESSEE, a very pretty twenty-two year old, is at a dressing table pinning flowers in her hair. She wears a long, sheer dressing gown.

TENNESSEE

Read it! Read to me, Commodore!

COMMODORE

And then is says, "The notion prevails amongst the lame ducks of Wall Street that Vanderbilt, the oldest fox of them all, is at the bottom of the experiment."

(He laughs even harder.)

TENNESSEE

Well, now that wasn't funny.

(COMMODORE is still laughing.)

Stop it, Commodore. They're still calling Vicky's campaign an experiment.

COMMODORE

Oh, you're a lovely girl Tennessee, but you have to learn what to take seriously and what not to take seriously.

TENNESSEE

Are you insinuatins' that I need some kinda lesson on seriousness?

COMMODORE

Exactly. For instance, the paper, it's trash. It's a bunch of underpaid hopefuls, writing a whole lot of nothin' about a story they know nothin' about to try and sell some news.

TENNESSEE

That's it?

COMMODORE

Trust me. That's it.

TENNESSEE

Hmmm. I dunno 'bout that, Commodore. The press seem pretty important to me. An I don't like them callin' my sister an experiment, neither. Seems down right disrespectful.

COMMODORE

Forget all that. Come over here and give me a kiss.

TENNESSEE

Only if you try to woo me.

COMMODORE

Oh, Tennessee, you look so beautiful with those roses in your hair and your eyes sparkling in the moonlight...

TENNESSEE

Why, thank you. Some kind, older Vanderbilt-type gentleman gave me these here flowers.

COMMODORE

Not even a rose is as beautiful as you are, my little sparrow.

TENNESSEE

What did you call me?

COMMODORE

My little sparrow.

TENNESSEE

Again!

COMMODORE

My little sparrow!

(TENNESSEE jumps from her seat and pounces on COMMODORE.)

TENNESSEE

All right! I'm wooed!

(The two passionately kiss.)

COMMODORE

There's nothin' in this world I adore more than my Tennessee.

(TENNESSEE smiles.)

You saved my life, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

Get outta here, ya old crony!

COMMODORE

You are my healer.

TENNESSEE

I'm not so sure you needed as much healin' as you thought you did.

COMMODORE

Oh, I needed healin' all right. You have healed my heart.

(They kiss again. COMMODORE becomes very serious.)

Marry me, Tennie.

(TENNESSEE smiles, but doesn't respond. When she takes a breath to speak, COMMODORE stops her.)

Wait. Don't answer right away. Take some time. Just don't turn me down again.

(TENNESSEE gives COMMODORE a hug. After a moment she eases away. Her tone is positive and energetic.)

TENNESSEE

Get up and get dressed, old boy.

COMMODORE

I think I'll go naked.

TENNESSEE

(Fixing her dress.)

I think that's against the law.

COMMODORE

Law? Ha! I laugh in the face of the law!

TENNESSEE

I know you do, honey.

COMMODORE

Tennie, come here a minute.

(TENNESSEE goes to COMMODORE and he hugs her tightly.)

TENNESSEE

What's the matter, darlin'? Huh?

COMMODORE

I'm just old, honey.

TENNESSEE

Oh! You ain't old!

COMMODORE

I'm almost seventy.

TENNESSEE

Hell, seventy ain't old.

COMMODORE

It's old.

TENNESSEE

Not with me it ain't.

(Lights fade as the two lean in for a kiss.)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT I
Scene 3

AT RISE: A meeting room just off the convention hall. Lights rise on WOODHULL and the suffragists, raising their glass in a toast. They are all in especially great spirits. As the lights rise, we hear them engaging in laughter.

ANTHONY

Let us raise our glasses in honor of this joyous day. Here's to woman suffrage!

(They all cheer.)

STANTON

And to Victoria Woodhull, the great leader of this new independent party, which shall meet the issues of the hour and secure equal rights for all!

(Cheers again.)

HOOKER

Thank you for sparing us the disgrace of having to preach this cause ourselves. Here's to a woman with nothing to lose, Victoria!

(Everyone is immediately stunned. DAVIS attempts to hide the smirk on her face. ANTHONY tries to make up for insolence by brushing it off with a laugh.)

ANTHONY

I do fear how that may have been perceived. Isabella is our resident critic. Do not mistake her witty repartee for insult.

WOODHULL

Oh, no matter. I consider myself to also have a keen sense of humor, and would not allow Isabella to think her wit unmatched. As a matter of fact, just the other day I was thinking of how we'd all share a giggle over the new name her uncle is unwittingly donating to prostitutes, since he frequents them so much. Thanks to him, "Hooker" is a name that will never be forgotten.

(WOODHULL laughs alone.)

And on that note, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support. I hope that I may live up to all your greatest expectations. Susan is right. Without the promise of suffrage, we have nothing. I will not let you down.

(There is a roar from the crowd outside.)

ANTHONY

That's our cue. Come along, ladies. We must introduce Caroline Hinckley. Victoria, you've got some time yet if you want to stay.

WOODHULL

Yes. Thank you.

(The suffragists file out. STANTON stay with WOODHULL.)

HOOVER

Aren't you coming, Beth?

STANTON

One minute.

(HOOVER exits. STANTON takes WOODHULL's hand.)

Victoria, it's not easy to be a public woman. You will be required to be strong and unyielding under every circumstance. Remember that. Know that I admire you and support you with everything I have.

WOODHULL

Thank you, Elizabeth. I'm truly touched...and honored that a woman like yourself would address me with such words. Know that I feel the same for you.

(The two exchange a strong, supportive smile, and STANTON begins to exit. On her way out she passes COLONEL BLOOD. He carries an appointment book and pen.)

BLOOD

Mrs. Stanton! You were ravishing out there! Nothing short of brilliant!

STANTON

It's easy to shine with such an illuminating woman by your side.

BLOOD

I should say so.

(WOODHULL greets him with a strong hug and kiss.)

WOODHULL

How did I do?

BLOOD

You, my dear, are a genius!

(WOODHULL smiles enthusiastically. They kiss again.)

WOODHULL

Good. Now we must discuss business. Have you managed to sell anymore of the bonds?

BLOOD

(Sighs.)

They aren't selling.

WOODHULL

Why not?

BLOOD

Nobody wants to buy bonds that are worthless.

WOODHULL

Yes. I know, love, but *they* don't know that. No layman without a seat on Wall Street knows they're junk. Keep trying.

BLOOD

Victoria, no one is buying.

WOODHULL

Then *make* them buy.

(She seductively approaches him.)

You can do it, James, I know you can.

BLOOD

I'll try.

WOODHULL

I hope so.

(Beat.)

What did you gather from the gossip.

BLOOD

Well...

WOODHULL

Anything in my favor?

BLOOD

Of course, darling...this is a suffrage convention after all.

WOODHULL

What's the word on Henry Ward Beecher?

BLOOD

Vicky...it's gotten worse. Normally, I resist speaking about Beecher, because I know it makes you insane, but the word is he's preaching openly and regularly against you. I would not think this problematic except that his followers, mostly women, grow rapidly in number. Something must be done—

WOODHULL

(Interrupting him.)

That's all I needed to know. Know that in my own way I am taking care of the matter.

(WOODHULL is now pacing.)

BLOOD

What exactly are you referring to?

WOODHULL

No matter to you. These things take care of themselves. In due time...and with a bit of persuasion...

BLOOD

Vicky, why don't you settle down for a minute...

WOODHULL

How much longer do I have?

BLOOD

You've got plenty of time. Just relax.

WOODHULL

Where's Tennie?

BLOOD

I don't know.

WOODHULL

She should be here...she should be here...

BLOOD

She'll show. Don't worry.

WOODHULL

What's on the agenda for tomorrow?

BLOOD

Don't think about that now—

WOODHULL

Tomorrow. What's tomorrow?

BLOOD

(Opening a small notebook.)

You have to speak at a suffrage brunch downtown—

WOODHULL

Oh, yes.

BLOOD

And then you have an interview with the New York Daily News.

WOODHULL

Yes. All right.

BLOOD

Vicky, come here.

(He pulls her onto his lap.)

Just relax.

(Pause.)

WOODHULL

Do you know where Tennie is?

BLOOD

I don't know.

WOODHULL

I'm glad you came today.

BLOOD

I know I'm no replacement for Tennessee, but I'll take what I can get.

WOODHULL

That's not what I meant.

BLOOD

I know.

WOODHULL

Do you?

BLOOD

(Playing with her.)

Yes. Sort of.

(Pause. WOODHULL rests her head on BLOOD's chest.)

WOODHULL

Oh, James...I didn't know it was possible to be so completely exhausted.

BLOOD

Having doubts?

WOODHULL

About what?

BLOOD

The campaign...it's not too late to pull out—

WOODHULL

Hush!

(Pause.)

Is that what you want?

BLOOD

No.

(WOODHULL gets up in a huff.)

BLOOD

I'm not stupid. I know I could never compete with the your public.

WOODHULL

I couldn't do it without you. You know that. My world is so heavy when you aren't around.

BLOOD

You take yourself far too seriously.

WOODHULL

Someone has to.

BLOOD

I love you. You know that, don't you?

(WOODHULL is slightly pre-occupied.)

WOODHULL

I wonder where Tennie is.

(She opens a newspaper, and a

REPORTER'S voice comes in
to reflect what she is reading.)

REPORTER

She reminds one of the forces in nature behind the storm, of a small splinter of the indestructible, and if her veins were opened, they would be found to contain ice.

BLOOD

Vicky, I don't know if this is the appropriate time or place...but I never seem to be alone with you lately.

WOODHULL

What is it, darling?

BLOOD

Would you like to get married?

(WOODHULL is instantly stunned, then a smile spreads across her face.)

WOODHULL

Why, Colonel Blood...if I didn't know better I'd think you were trying to turn me into a respectable lady.

(BLOOD is anxiously waiting.)

Married?

BLOOD

I don't care that you have other lovers. Just say you'll marry me.

(WOODHULL throws her arms around BLOOD's neck and he

swings her in a circle. She giggles with glee like a schoolgirl.)

WOODHULL

Oh, James...

BLOOD

There's nobody else like you...thank the Lord...

WOODHULL

You are my springtime.

BLOOD

We were married the first moment we met.

WOODHULL

You are my entire universe.

(They kiss. After a moment, THEODORE TILTON barges into the room. He has a kind face, but at this moment, he seems slightly out of control, panicked. He is instantly fixed on WOODHULL.)

TILTON

I beg your pardon. Victoria...I must have a word.

WOODHULL

James, will you excuse us please?

BLOOD

I'll wait for you outside.

WOODHULL

Yes, darling.

BLOOD

(On his way out. He nods to TILTON.)

Mr. Tilton.

(TILTON doesn't respond. BLOOD exits.)

WOODHULL

Hello, Mr. Tilton.

TILTON

I received your message.

WOODHULL

Good. Can I offer you a drink?

TILTON

Are you trying to threaten me?

WOODHULL

It's just a drink, Teddy.

TILTON

I know nothing of a scandal of any kind!

(WOODHULL laughs.)

Stop it!

WOODHULL

I didn't know hysteria effected men, also. Calm yourself, Teddy. The damage is done.

TILTON

I have done nothing wrong.

WOODHULL

Oh, I remember the first time I saw you. It was at a suffrage convention several months back. You were beautiful, with those dark, brooding eyes and long auburn hair...

TILTON

What is this...?

WOODHULL

When I found out you'd published love poetry I thought I might faint from desire.

(Pause.)

TILTON

Well, then...I suppose threats are an interesting switch in this case.

WOODHULL

I am an honest woman. I make no pardons for that.

TILTON

What do you mean when you say that I live in *concubinage*? That word insinuates there are others involved...

WOODHULL

I mean you, your wife and Reverend Henry Ward Beecher.

(No response.)

What's the matter, Mr. Tilton? You look as though you've suddenly taken ill.

TILTON

What can be the relevance of all this?

WOODHULL

I wish to bring Reverend Beecher's hypocrisies to the knowledge of the world. As you know, my platform advocates free love. And I find this little circus act you conduct daily in your home to be a perfect example of how even the most *respectable* members of society are also free lovers, and still manage to preserve their public integrity.

(Beat.)

Besides, I don't like what you and Reverend Beecher are saying about me. It's not nice.

(WOODHULL moves to exit.)

TILTON

(Suddenly very desperate.)

Mrs. Woodhull...

WOODHULL

Oh! *Now* I'm Mrs. Woodhull!

TILTON

How did you find out?

WOODHULL

Women talk. Including your wife, unfortunately for you.

TILTON

You dared to...

(He stops.)

Do not take any steps now. I have carried my heart like a stone in my breast for months, for the sake of my wife and her honor. For her sake, I have curbed my feelings when every impulse urged me to throttle and strangle Henry Ward Beecher. Let me take you over to my wife...

(WOODHULL chuckles.)

And you will find her in no condition to be dragged before the public. And I know you will have compassion for her.

WOODHULL

I have already seen your wife.

(WOODHULL moves towards him, seductively.)

She's a very pretty lady. Very gentle. Is that true? I can generally sense these things from first glance. Of course, she is so very *little*, like a China doll. Is that what you like? Hmm?

TILTON

She's...she's not well...

WOODHULL

You have the most beautiful eyes. Piercing, yet with almost a dove-like softness...and tenderness...

(She touches his face. His attraction to her overwhelms him.)

You're not exactly a vestal virgin, are you?

TILTON

What do you mean?

WOODHULL

I have heard about your affairs. Don't try to deny them. I know everything.

(WOODHULL begins to remove TILTON's coat.)

How lucky those women were. A woman who does not love you surely must be dead to all the sweeter impulses of nature.

(TILTON is trying to resist her seduction. Suddenly, he pushes her away.)

TILTON

What do you want!

WOODHULL

Come here, Teddy.

TILTON

What do you want!

WOODHULL

Shhhh...come here, Teddy.

TILTON

What do you want?

(WOODHULL holds out her hand.)

WOODHULL

I want *you*.

(TILTON takes a step towards her.)

I want you to be nice to me. Say nice things about me. Then, I can do nice things for you. Wouldn't you like that?

(The lights dim. YELLER steps forward, obviously not associated with the present scene.)

YELLER

Mr. Tilton, have you known Mrs. Woodhull long?

TILTON

Only since the Women's Convention at Apollo Hall. Since then I have sought an intimacy with her and her family. She interests me very much.

(TILTON takes WOODHULL's hand.)

YELLER

Could you elaborate, Mr. Tilton?

WOODHULL

(Moving towards him.)

Oh, yes. I have seen your wife, your little wife. She's a wretched wreck of a woman. Very troubled. Her problems are greater than she can bear. Greater than you can bear, too. Huh, Teddy? Don't you ever get tired of her small bones...her tiny body...her weak spirit...

TILTON

Lord help me...

YELLER

Mr. Tilton? How does Victoria Woodhull interest you?

TILTON

(As WOODHULL is seducing him.)

If the woman's movement has a Joan of Arc, it is this gentle, yet fiery spirit. She is one of the most remarkable women of her time. Little understood by the public...she has been denounced by people who cannot appreciate her moral worth. She is called a free lover owing to her own mistake of the term. She is a purist of the first water. Victoria Woodhull is one of the most upright, truthful, religious, unsullied souls I have ever met.

WOODHULL

I am honored to have such an important and respectable man speak on my behalf.

(There is a faint roar of a crowd. It slowly builds as the scene concludes.)

WOODHULL

I believe I've made you blush...I had no idea you were so...modest...

TILTON

You'll go to hell, Victoria.

LITTLE GIRL

Are you Victoria Woodhull?

WOODHULL

And I'll be smiling the whole way down.

(WOODHULL and TILTON kiss. The crowd screams and applauds. Lights dim on TILTON and WOODHULL. Two other characters enter the scene, DADDY, WOODHULL's father, and LITTLE VICKY, WOODHULL as an eight-year-old girl. They are preceded by Kalliope music, the sounds of a moving carriage, perhaps children's voices. The effect should be like a dream. These characters exist somewhere else in the far past, no particular place. Note that WOODHULL herself may also take the place of LITTLE VICKY.)

DADDY

You see Vicky, the secret to being a successful salesman all relies on your pitch, how you present your product. Get the customer's confidence, that's the key. You can always get someone to trust you, you just gotta smooth talk 'em. Get 'em hooked. If you can do that, they'll come running back to you year after year.

LITTLE VICKY

But what if it doesn't work, Daddy? What if they don't want to buy it?

DADDY

I'll tell you a big secret. There is no great salesman who does not understand human nature. You have to know people better than they know themselves...their weaknesses, their strengths. Study them. Know people, all kinds of people. Then you'll know exactly what you need to say and do to make them believe that you are the one who can fulfill their every need.

LITTLE VICKY

But how do you do *that*?

DADDY

You've got to hypnotize them with your words. Remember that. What you say is *so* powerful. These people want to be cured. And they want you to be the one to save them. Repeat after me...a commodity that will double your money! A cure-all at a closeout cost!

LITTLE VICKY

A commodity that will double your money! A cure-all at a closeout cost!

DADDY

That's good! That's good! Remember, hypnotize them with your words. Confidence, confidence is the key. Believe in every word you say. If you claim to have the power, they will believe. When you're up on that stage it's your special world. Watch me.

(He jumps up on a platform.)

For one dollar, just one dollar folks, Miss Victoria and Miss Tennessee will read your futures, uncover your past, or connect you to that long-lost loved one that's gone to the other side!

LITTLE VICKY

Come try Miss Tennessee's Magnetic Life Elixir! For beautifying the complexion and cleansing the blood! Seeing is believing, folks!

DADDY

(Chuckles as he picks her up.)

That's my girl! That's my little queen! You have a greatness in you, I can feel it.

LITTLE VICKY

How do you know, Daddy?

DADDY

Am I ever wrong?

LITTLE VICKY

You're right about everything.

DADDY

Now, which little girl would like some cream custard?

LITTLE VICKY

Me! Me, Daddy!

DADDY

All right. But first, give your old Daddy a kiss.

(LITTLE VICKY kisses her father on the cheek.)

DADDY

A real kiss...right on the kisser.

(They kiss on the lips. It probably lasts longer than it should.)

DADDY

You're my best girl, you know that? Now, let's go take the world by storm.

(They exit together, hand in hand.)

END OF SCENE 3

ACT I
Scene 4

AT RISE: The hotel room, one hour later. Lights rise on TENNESSEE. Seated at a dressing table, re-adjusting some flowers in her hair. COMMODORE is laying face down on the bed with only a sheet to cover him. He is clearly dozing off.

TENNESSEE

Jus' think of it, Commodore! Jus' close your eyes and think!

(She closes her eyes, stretches out her arms, and takes a deep, cleansing breath.)

Our own little Vicky as President of the United States of America! I think Vicky'll make a great President, don't you? I'm gonna be runnin' with her and everythin'. Like when she takes long trips to promote. You should hear her speeches! Oooh! I get all excited jus' thinking' about 'em! She's not gonna hold back, neither. Now that she got all them great women on her side, don't look like she'll need to. We all had a meetin' the other day. I think it went pretty good. Most of them were real nice. They liked Vicky's ideas, too. There are a few who don't, but that'll always be the way I guess. I don't think that Susan B. Anthony takes to me very well. I always catch her lookin' at me funny. Vicky says they ain't used to bein' with such a free spirit like me. I think that's probably true. Wait'll I tell 'em the big news...that I'm goin' to be a woman of Congress! Isn't that exciting, Commodore?

(She turns and discovers him asleep.)

Commodore?

(She goes over to COMMODORE and tickles his foot.)

COMMODORE

(Mumbling, as though he was listening to her.)

I think that's just great, Tennie.

(He yawns.)

TENNESSEE

You don't even know what I was sayin' on account of your snoozin'.

COMMODORE

I'm beat, honey. I am sorry. Tell me again.

TENNESSEE

Well, I can't tell ya everything. I don't remember it.

COMMODORE

Tell me what you remember then.

TENNESSEE

Well, I wanted to tell you that I'm goin' to be a Congresswoman. That was my big news.

COMMODORE

(A little taken aback.)

Well, that sure is big news, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

Aren't you gonna congratulate me, then?

COMMODORE

Congratulations, Congresswoman Tennessee.

(He kisses her.)

TENNESSEE

See, I got this great thing I'm gonna do with my name. I'm gonna spell it Tennessee, T-E-N-N-I-E, space, "C," period. Isn't that the neatest thing in the whole entire world?

COMMODORE

Sure is, baby!

TENNESSEE

Well, you know, my middle name's Celeste. So it all makes sense.

COMMODORE

And you remain Tennessee Claflin, only spelled in a really clever way.

TENNESSEE

Exactly! You understand me, Commodore.

COMMODORE

That I do, sweetie. It surprises me sometimes.

TENNESSEE

Me, too.

(She sighs deeply.)

We gotta go, old boy.

COMMODORE

Not yet, songbird. Just stay with me a while.

TENNESSEE

I can't, Commodore. I have to see Vicky's speech. Specially if I'm gonna be her Congresswoman, an' all.

COMMODORE

Makes sense to me.

TENNESSEE

Are you comin' to the convention?

COMMODORE

I might make an appearance. I haven't decided if I want to have my picture taken today.

TENNESSEE

So...I won't see you for the rest of the day?

COMMODORE

Probably not for a couple of days.

(He hands her a wad of bills from his pant pocket.)

Bring this to Vicky. Tell her what we discussed.

TENNESSEE

I don't have to tell Vicky what we talked about. What happens when we're alone is between you and me.

(She goes to kiss him and he turns away, making for his clothes to get dressed.)

COMMODORE

What happens here is between you and me and your sister's bankbook. Now, you know that, Tennie. Don't act like you don't.

TENNESSEE

Why don't we just pretend, Commodore! Why don't we pretend that when you and I are alone, you aren't payin' for it!

COMMODORE

Okay! I can pretend that!

TENNESSEE

Good! So neither one of us will ever have to be sad about this again. Okay?

COMMODORE

Okay.

(They kiss endearingly. TENNESSEE breaks away, very suddenly.)

TENNESSEE

Commodore! What time is it?

COMMODORE

I don't know. What's wrong?

TENNESSEE

Look! Look outside! The sun's goin' down!

COMMODORE

So?

TENNESSEE

So? So! So it must be passed four o'clock!

COMMODORE

Well, I should think it is.

TENNESSEE

(Collecting her things and becoming quite hysterical.)

Oh, no!

COMMODORE

Baby, what's wrong! Do you need me to get something for you? Are you sick?

TENNESSEE

I've missed it, Commodore! I've missed it! Vicky's big speech about voting and sex and vegetables...oh, no!

COMMODORE

Well, all hope's not lost, Tennie. I'll have my driver take you over there right away. You can tell the press you'd taken ill for a while.

TENNESSEE

Oh, I don't give a damn about the press! What'll Vicky think?! She depends on me, ya know. And I've let her down! And I'm supposed to be her Congresswoman, to boot! Oh, this ain't good. This ain't good at all!

COMMODORE

What's done is done, Tennie. Vicky'll understand. Hey, you can even rationalize that being here was helping Vicky fund her campaign.

TENNESSEE

(Stopping dead in her tracks.)

Don't you ever say anything like that again.

COMMODORE

I am sorry.

(He gives her a giant, strong hug. She buries her face in his chest. COMMODORE adjusts some flowers in TENNESSEE's hair.)

COMMODORE

Well, there now...don't you look pretty.

(They look at each other for a moment.)

TENNESSEE

I can't marry you, Commodore. Like I told you before, I wouldn't make much of a wife right now. What would Vicky do without me? She needs me, ya know.

COMMODORE

Far be it from me to try and come between two sisters. I understand, Tennie. But you can't blame me for giving you one last try.

TENNESSEE

I will see you in a couple days...won't I, old boy?

COMMODORE

How long could I be without my sparrow? Who else could take the place of my songbird?

(They kiss tenderly as the lights fade to black.)

END OF SCENE 4

ACT I
Scene 5

AT RISE: Lights rise on two separate scenes: WOODHULL and YELLER in one space, HOOKER and DAVIS in another. In the following scene, time is incongruent, space fluctuates. No blackouts, no major scene changes should be necessary until the scene concludes.

YELLER

Thank you for taking the time for this interview, Mrs. Woodhull.

HOOKER

Thanks for coming back here, Paulina.

WOODHULL & DAVIS

The pleasure is all mine.

YELLER

I want you to understand that I mean not to attack you, Mrs. Woodhull.

WOODHULL

Why would I think that, Mr. Yeller?

HOOKER

I'm not trying to attack Victoria, it's just...

DAVIS

No explanation needed, Isabella.

YELLER

You say you come from where, Mrs. Woodhull?

WOODHULL

I was born in Homer, Ohio, but my family moved quite a bit.

YELLER

Your family?

WOODHULL

My father Reuban and my mother Roxanna.

YELLER

Any brothers and sisters?

WOODHULL

Nine of them.

YELLER

What did you father do to support such a large family?

HOOKER

I don't know what to do.

DAVIS

Have you talked to anyone else?

HOOKER

No. And I don't think you should, either. We'll just keep it between us. All right?

DAVIS

All right.

WOODHULL

My father was in business.

YELLER

What kind of home did you have? Were you rich? Poor?

WOODHULL

We were...somewhere in the middle. We lived in a modest, little white house in mid-town America. Pretty storybook, Mr. Yeller.

YELLER

It's rumored that when you were a little girl you thought you were visited by spirits.

WOODHULL

Who told you that?

HOOKER

Tennessee. Have you heard about Tennessee?

DAVIS

She's going to be a Congresswoman now?

HOOKER

She thinks she is.

DAVIS

She didn't come out to support her sister today.

WOODHULL

My sister, I'm sorry to say, had taken ill.

HOOKE

I'll bet she's with Commodore Vanderbilt! Everyone knows how he's funding her campaign.

DAVIS

You know what they say, you can take the girl out of the whorehouse...

WOODHULL

I owe everything to the suffragists and their support. I don't know where I'd be without them.

HOOKE

Let's face it...she'll never be one of us.

DAVIS

I shutter to think of the association.

YELLER

Is it true that you delivered a public address specifically in favor of legalizing woman suffrage under the fourteenth amendment?

WOODHULL

Someone had to.

HOOKE

She's no more than a hillbilly that found a lucky break. That's all.

DAVIS

Just what do you think she's really after?

WOODHULL

I only want the best for women of America. And I feel I may be able to do something for the good of their future.

HOOKE

Power. That's her one and only motive.

DAVIS

You don't think...?

HOOKER

Yes. I do.

DAVIS

You're not saying that she—

YELLER

Your childhood. You were a tad unspecific.

HOOKER

She's supporting *abominable* principles.

DAVIS

I have a feeling we're from very different backgrounds than Victoria Woodhull.

HOOKER

Different is the perfect word for it.

DAVIS

Different is not always good, is it?

HOOKER

I should say not.

YELLER

Somehow, my research is different from what you are telling me, Mrs. Woodhull.

WOODHULL

You asked me a question, Mr. Yeller, and I answered it. I didn't think this was a test.

DAVIS

You really think that's what she's after?

HOOKER

I'm sure of it. Victoria Woodhull wants to head the suffragists!

DAVIS

That's so absurd I can't stand to think of it! What do we do?

HOOKER

We have to get rid of her.

WOODHULL

I don't have to tolerate this, you know.

YELLER

Just answer me this, Mrs. Woodhull—

DAVIS

What are we going to do?

HOOKER

We have to talk to Susan.

DAVIS

Don't. She has Susan hypnotized.

WOODHULL

No further questions, Mr. Yeller. This interview is over.

YELLER

What exactly are you trying to accomplish?

HOOKER

What do you suppose she's really after?

DAVIS

It's not woman suffrage.

YELLER

It's not the money. I know that.

DAVIS

It's the power. Just like you said.

HOOKER

Power. Yes.

YELLER

Power. That's it, isn't it?

DAVIS

She's got to know—

YELLER

I already know—

DAVIS

You have to ask her.

HOOKER

We have to tell her!

DAVIS

What are we going to say?

YELLER

You have to say something!

HOOKER

I just can't let this go on any longer!

DAVIS

We have to do something!

YELLER

Say something!

DAVIS

Say something!

HOOKER

Say something!

HOOKER/DAVIS/YELLER

Say something!

(Blackout on HOOKER, DAVIS, and YELLER.
WOODHULL walks into a spot, downstage.)

WOODHULL

My judges preach against free love openly, practice it secretly. Their outward seeming is fair, inwardly they are full of dead man's bones and all manner of impurity. I know of one man, a public teacher of great importance and respect, who lives in concubinage with the wife of another public teacher, of almost equal eminence. All three concur in denouncing offences against morality. "Hypocrisy is the tribute paid by vice to virtue." So be it. But I refuse to stand up and be the frightful example.

(Blackout.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II
Scene 1

AT RISE: Early evening, Delmonico's restaurant. BLOOD and WOODHULL are in the middle of an intense discussion, both with pads of paper, writing furiously, trying to figure out this weeks' newspaper.

WOODHULL

We have to challenge what that reporter said about me being *ambitious to a fault*. So I say we start with the headline: Ambition, Love of Power and Love of Fame are not necessarily—

(BLOOD joins her as she finishes her last sentence.)

WOODHULL & BLOOD

Evidences of insincerity!

WOODHULL

Yes! Exactly!

BLOOD

Well, are you going to keep the stock listings in?

WOODHULL

“Wall Street Yesterday” stays a regular feature.

BLOOD

Oh! You got a wonderful letter from Anna Dickinson. She says that Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly is, and I quote, “the only pecuniary success of the women's movement.”

WOODHULL

Did she? Well, I'll be sure to say something sweet about her the next chance I get.

BLOOD

What she really meant was that *Victoria Woodhull* is the only real success of the women's movement.

WOODHULL

I want to dedicate this issue to Elizabeth.

BLOOD

Stanton?

WOODHULL

She's been so wonderful to me, she really has. Here's my editor's note.

(She hands him a two page essay.)

BLOOD

This is hardly a *note*.

(He flips through it.)

WOODHULL

(Off the cuff.)

Remind me to give Tennie some copies to bring to Commodore's office.

BLOOD

(Focused on the "note.")

Oh, this is good...social subordination of single women...restriction on property rights.... What's this about Beth's *not unweildly figure*? Is that a complement or an insult?

WOODHULL

(Trying to hold back her laughter, looking around her to see who may have heard.)

Elizabeth is a beautiful women. Now, watch what you say.

BLOOD

Oh, come on Vicky, *not unwiledly figure*? That sounds like a slight euphemism for not quite as big as your fattest cow!

WOODHULL

James!

(WOODHULL and BLOOD share a laugh. TENNESSEE sashays into the scene and drops on BLOOD's lap.)

TENNESSEE

Well, I thought I heard your sweet voice, Jimmy!

(She kisses him.)

BLOOD

Well, Tennessee! As I live and breathe! Where have you been, honey?

TENNESSE

I've been roamin' the whole city of New York lookin' for your precious face!

WOODHULL

(Disgruntled.)

Did you bring any papers by Commodore's office?

BLOOD

I do believe you've donned a beautiful new frock, Miss Tennie!

TENNESSEE

Why, thanks. My Commodore gave it to me.

WOODHULL

(Motioning to TENNESSEE and BLOOD.)

Tennie...we're in a restaurant.

(BLOOD helps TENNESSEE off his lap. He notices that WOODHULL is unimpressed. TENNESSEE begins looking at the newspaper that she's brought in.)

BLOOD

Well, I guess I'll leave the two of you alone. Actually, it's after seven. Did you need me to stay—

TENNESSEE

Yes!

WOODHULL

(Cutting TENNESSEE off.)

That won't be necessary.

(BLOOD kisses WOODHULL on the cheek.)

BLOOD

I'll see you later. I love you. Bye, Tennie.

(TENNESSEE and WOODHULL wave, BLOOD exits. There is a beat before TENNESSEE throws down her paper.)

TENNESSEE

I don't know when I have ever been so hungry in my entire life, Vic!

WOODHULL

(Opening the newspaper.)

You talked to Ma lately?

TENNESSEE

Yeah. She don't want nothin' to do with this whole election business.
(Attempts to raise the attention of a waiter passing by.)
Yoo hoo!

WOODHULL

What'd she say?

TENNESSEE

She said she wants ya to come home 'cause she's got some business for ya to tend to.
(Reluctantly.)
She wants us to do the old cart and tonic act again.

WOODHULL

She wants her under her thumb again. She wants James gone.

TENNESSEE

Prob'ly. Yeah.
(Trying the waiter again.)
Pardon me...waiter!

WOODHULL

I'll pay her bills, no questions asked, but I will not have that woman so obviously trying to make scandals out of me and James for her own benefit.

TENNESSEE

She can't help it, Vic. You know that. That's just the way Ma is. She's got her own problems to deal with. She don't need no world problems.

WOODHULL

Who needs world problems?

TENNESSEE

There are lots of human beings not interested in the weight of the world. *You* need it, Vicky. Not everybody needs it. Waiter!

WOODHULL

You think I need this?

TENNESSEE

Are you tryin' to joke me? Ya need it. Anyone who's gonna run for president needs problems. That's why they kicked ya out of school. You were too worried 'bout the world problems. Couldn't focus on the math.

WOODHULL

That's not why they kicked me out of school—

TENNESSEE

I know, I know. They thought you were so smart that there was nothin' else they could teach ya.

WOODHULL

Who told you that? I never told you that.

TENNESSEE

Ma. She told me that as a sorta warnin'. She said, 'Tennie, honey, I hate to tell ya this, but it looks like all the brains in the family have gone to Vicky. None left for you. But ya sure do have the prettiest eyes. Be certain to use 'em 'cause they're all ya got.'

WOODHULL

Ma's not one for nonsense.

TENNESSEE

No. That's what you got from Ma. No nonsense. I got shiny hair.

(Slight pause.)

Ya know, I do believe that sweet waiter over there with the dimples in avoidin' me.

WOODHULL

Avoiding you?

TENNESSEE

It's after seven. They won't serve us after seven.

WOODHULL

They'll serve us.

TENNESSEE

No they won't. And I'm as hungry as a lost newborn kitten in the wild, stranded from it's mother for days and days. Meowing into the wind—

WOODHULL

Enough. I get it.

(WAITER attempts to cruise by TENNESSEE and WOODHULL's table.)

WOODHULL

Waiter! I demand service!

(WAITER ignores her, and walks off. Without a word, WOODHULL gets up and calmly walks off stage. TENNESSEE begins to flip through the paper. Within moments, WOODHULL comes back with the WAITER on her tail. He is young, about twenty-two, and dressed in a tuxedo-like uniform.)

TENNESSEE

(Not looking up from the paper.)

Wow, this guy Yeller's sure riding' you like a cowboy—

(She looks up to find the WAITER standing there.)

Oh, good! A waiter! I would like the veal fetuccino in a light wine sauce with a side of oysters and a small dish of almonds, since they're my favorite, you see—

WAITER

Please, ma'am. I must ask you never to come into the conference room again. It looks exceptionally bad for our reputation...ladies dining alone so late...

TENNESSEE

Could you run your cute little behind over to the kitchen and grab me some sorta hours d'oeuvres? I'm just as hungry as a fluffily white polar bear, roamin' the lonely Antarctic—

WAITER

(Ignoring TENNESSEE.)

Ma'am, I would not be doing my job is I didn't tell you how criminal it was for you to come into that conference room at that time.

WOODHULL

Well, how do you know I wasn't wanting to have a conference at that time?

(TENNESSEE giggles; the WAITER is not amused.)

WAITER

We have some pretty important people in that conference room.

TENNESSEE

Ha! You got one pretty important person standin' right in front of your face, Mister! You'd better take a bow and make your exit before you say another silly little thing!

WAITER

I'm talking about men of absolute importance. There are senators in the other room.

TENNESSEE

Senators? Them there senators are cow dung compared to an official candidate for the presidency!

WAITER

You think I wouldn't know if Grant was here in our restaurant?

(He looks around.)

He's not here, is he?

TENNESSEE

Who cares if he was? I'm talkin' about a real candidate. One who can actually make a difference in the world! Her name's Victoria Claflin Woodhull and she's standin' right in front of your face.

WAITER

(Laughs.)

There's no such thing as a woman trying to run for president.

WOODHULL

I wouldn't speak so soon.

(The WAITER stops, sees that WOODHULL is serious, and bursts into hysterical laughter.)

WAITER

You...you think that you are going to run for president?

WOODHULL

Think? I don't think I'm going to run, I am running. When you go into that booth in November to decide who you want to run our country, you will have to choose amongst me and three other so-called candidates. I don't have to think about it, because I am living it. Understand?

WAITER

Yes. I understand.

WOODHULL

Good. Now you will serve us.

WAITER

Uh...no I won't.

TENNESSEE

What did you say, boy?

WAITER

I can't serve you without some man...

WOODHULL

You can't serve us without some man...what?

WAITER

I can't serve you without some man...here.

(Slight pause.)

It's after seven, ma'am. They aren't my rules.

WOODHULL

Well, we aren't leaving until we are served. You can tell that to the man who makes the rules.

WAITER

I'll get the owner.

WOODHULL

You do that. Oh, uh...

WAITER

Robert.

WOODHULL

Robert...nothing personal.

(WOODHULL rests back in her seat, awaiting the arrival of the owner. TENNESSEE, who has missed the last part of the argument because she was so engrossed in the newspaper, addresses WOODHULL with great devastation.)

TENNESSEE

Vicky...?

WOODHULL

I know you're hungry. We'll eat soon.

TENNESSEE

Vicky...did ya read the paper?

WOODHULL

Well, I was about to before I was disrupted by this foolish policy.

TENNESSEE

Well, while you were bein' disrupted, I was readin' the paper.

WOODHULL

(Taking a section of the paper and flipping through it, oblivious to TENNESSEE's disturbance.)

So...what does it say?

TENNESSEE

It's about my Commodore.

WOODHULL

Oh, yeah. Hey, where's that Yeller article you were just telling me about?

TENNEESSEE

It's Commodore.

WOODHULL

What about Commodore?

(No response. WOODHULL is suddenly overcome with terror.)

He didn't die, did he?

TENNESSEE

No

(Slight pause.)

Not quite.

WOODHULL

Well, spit it out! Is it his heart! Is he in the hospital? Tell me! What?

TENNESSEE

He...he got married!

WOODHULL

(Letting out a release of nervous laughter.)

Oh, Tennie...you're such a clown sometimes...

TENNESSEE

Frank.

WOODHULL

Who's Frank?

TENNESSEE

His new wife. Frank.

WOODHULL

Frank? Huh. Well, I hope she's more charming than her name. Where is that Yeller article, Tennie? Tennie? The Yeller article?

(TENNESSEE tosses WOODHULL her half of the paper and buries her face in her hands. It takes WOODHULL a brief moment to notice her sister's dismay.)

WOODHULL

Oh...don't worry. Everything will work out. You'll see. Commodore has always taken care of us...just as we have taken care of Commodore.

TENNESSEE

(Raising her voice.)

What are you talkin' about? Money? I'm not talkin' about money!

WOODHULL

Now, Tennessee...Commodore is...what? Tell me what Commodore is.

TENNESSEE

I'm not stupid.

WOODHULL

Good. Tell me what I told you.

TENNESSEE

I know what you told me! Don't treat me like a baby!

WOODHULL

(Slight pause. She silently takes control.)

Tennie. Tennie, look at me. What did I tell you about Commodore?

TENNESSEE

(Wiping her eyes.)

That he's a businessman.

WOODHULL

That's right. He's a businessman. And what do we do with businessmen?

TENNESSEE

We do business.

WOODHULL

Very good. Now, what do we not do with businessmen?

TENNESSEE

Anything else besides business.

WOODHULL

Unless?

TENNESSEE

Unless it can aid us in our business.

WOODHULL

Right.

(As if talking to a child.)

There shouldn't be a problem here. You know better.

TENNESSEE

So what if I know better. That don't mean that I have to be able to shut off my emotions like some damn steam engine!

WOODHULL

Tennie. Keep your voice down. Please.

TENNESSEE

Vicky, don't you see? I can't keep my voice down! I don't want to keep my voice down!

(Notices a woman looking at her.)

And you just turn around you old bag with the ugly feathered hat!

WOODHULL

Tennie!

(Turning to the woman.)

Please accept our greatest apologies. Your hat really is quite lovely.

(Slight pause, then to TENNESSEE.)

Tennessee, don't disappoint me.

TENNESSEE

Vicky—

WOODHULL

(Holding a hand up to stop her from speaking. Her voice is low and controlled.)

Do you know what kind of position we are in right now? Do you? I am running for President of the United States. I need to be respected. We have everything stacked against us right now, Tennie. The last thing I need is some blubbering child embarrassing me and making me look bad in front of prospective voters. Now, are you going to support me or are you going to behave like the simple child the newspapers claim you to be?

TENNESSEE

Let's get out of here, Vicky.

WOODHULL

I want an answer from you.

TENNESSEE

You know I support you.

WOODHULL

Good. Then act like a Congresswoman.

TENNESSEE

Well, I'd like to start by making the motion that we leave this restaurant that won't serve us.

WOODHULL

You *know* we can't do that.

TENNESSEE

I also know I'm starving to death.

WOODHULL

You'll eat. I promise you.

TENNESSEE

Why don't we just go out and get the cab driver to come in. Then they'll serve us. It's as simple as that, Vic. We'll get the cabbie to sit and eat with us!

WOODHULL

And what does that prove, Tennie? That you can lead a man around by the nose? We already knew that.

TENNESSEE

It's called bein' practical. I want to eat. So I will eat. I vote we get the cabbie.

WOODHULL

We should utilize our skill for debate instead of some man's libido.

TENNESSEE

Well, I vote we go somewhere else!

(CHARLES DELMONICO enters, catching the end of the debate.

He is a sleek Italian man with a mustache and conservative suit.)

DELMONICO

(With the WAITER peeking over his shoulder.)

And I second that motion.

(He extends his hand.)

Charles Delmonico. I own this restaurant. You must be Victoria Woodhull.

WOODHULL

(Shaking his hand.)

Mr. Delmonico, you seem like a reasonable man. Could you please tell me on what basis you refuse to serve me and my sister?

TENNESSEE

Let's go, Vicky.

WOODHULL

Quiet, Tennie.

(TENNESSEE exits.)

DELMONICO

How about I answer all of your questions while we walk out the door together.

(He offers her his arm.)

How about that? I offer you my arm like a gentleman and for the first time, you will look like a good, decent, respectable lady. We can walk out this restaurant, arm in arm, and no

one will ever have to know what you really are. And for this favor, I expect nothing in return.

WOODHULL

You may answer my question right here because I am not moving. Why do you refuse me service.

DELMONICO

Well, I don't think I need to answer that, Mrs. Woodhull. You know why.

WOODHULL

Is it because it is a crime for women to dine alone?

DELMONICO

You know it isn't as simple as that. I did not make the rule all by myself. It is a standard rule.

WOODHULL

So, you are saying that even though you do not approve of this rule, you wish to enforce it simply because of a social standard?

DELMONICO

(Thinks for a moment.)

Part of that is true. You are right.

WOODHULL

That's what I thought.

DELMONICO

More obviously, we all want to keep the whores away from the civil folk. Rules were made for a reason.

WOODHULL

I see. Mr. Delmonico...are you proud of yourself for following the restrictions—

MAN

Is that Victoria Woodhull?

WOODHULL

That you haven't the courage to overcome—

WOMAN

She's a prostitute, you know.

MAN

And she's running for president!

WOMAN

Against Grant?

(The WOMAN giggles in mockery.)

MAN

They should lock her up!

DELMONICO

I hope it is worth it to you, Mrs. Woodhull.

WOODHULL

Oh, believe me, Mr. Delmonico...it is.

WOMAN

She had the audacity to introduce a sister—

MAN

Who actually exceeds her in indecencies!

WOMAN

They should lock her up, a woman like that!

(WOODHULL is becoming enraged by the voices.)

DELMONICO

Mrs. Woodhull?

MAN

And she's running for president!

WOMAN

She'll never win!

MAN & WOMAN

President?

WOMAN

President!

MAN

A whore?

WOMAN

President!

MAN

President!

MAN & WOMAN

President!

(The MEN and WOMEN mockingly shout “President!”, louder and louder and there is even some laughter. WOODHULL’s fury grows. Suddenly, TENNESSEE arrives on the arm of a cab driver. Her entrance stops the chanting instantly.)

TENNESSEE

All right everybody! My friend here and I are so hungry we could eat a herd of buffalo with our bare hands. So, we’d like a big bowl of spaghetti to start, two forks. And we’ll have the oysters on the side, please!

(Blackout.)

END OF SCENE 1

ACT II
Scene 2

AT RISE: The suffragists are gathered around a table in the middle of an intense discussion.

ANTHONY

This is unbelievable!

HOOKER

I'm not saying it's what we *want* to do...

ANTHONY

Who is *we*? Do you feel the same, Beth?

(STANTON solemnly turns and shakes her head.)

ANTHONY

I think we're all forgetting why we decided to get involved in this campaign in the first place.

HOOKER

She was never anything more than a mouthpiece.

ANTHONY

Don't you see what Victoria has done? What she could do?

HOOKER

I see what she's done and that's why I think we should drop her.

STANTON

I have to disagree with you there, Isabella. Victoria's done some very good things with her campaign.

HOOKER

Such as?

STANTON

Spreading the word about what we do.

HOOKER

What else?

STANTON

There shouldn't have to be anything else.

(WOODHULL still sits at a table. TILTON enters the scene.
Even with her back to him, WOODHULL knows he's there.)

WOODHULL

I have been faithful to my principles. As a result, I have been condemned and persecuted. Do I not have a right to defend myself against hypocrisy? You think that I am to blame for this scandal?

TILTON

You want to talk to me about hypocrisy?

WOODHULL

I'm tempted to tell them the rest.

TILTON

What more is there?

WOODHULL

Us.

TILTON

For what purpose?

WOODHULL

Then maybe they're realize how serious I am.

TILTON

I hardly think that by exposing innocent men you are being taken more seriously.

WOODHULL

Innocent? I don't see any innocent man here.

TILTON

I was innocent...until I met you.

WOODHULL

None of us are innocent, Teddy.

TILTON

Are you really going to tell?

WOODHULL

Certainly someday. The story's too juicy to keep all to myself.

TILTON

What will you say?

WOODHULL

(Trying to seduce him.)

I will tell them that for three months you never left my arms. I would tell them that any woman would be a fool not to be your lover, considering all that you are capable of.

TILTON

No one will ever believe this.

WOODHULL

They'll believe it.

TILTON

They'll want to know how a man could have so little pride to be the lover of his offender.

WOODHULL

They won't wonder, Teddy.

TILTON

Then why am I wondering now?

(They kiss.)

ANTHONY

I can't express how disappointed I am in all of you. We made a commitment to support Victoria's campaign and we need to stick with it.

(Pause. No one responds.)

Paulina? You've been awfully quiet.

DAVIS

I really don't know what to say. I'm very disappointed in Victoria and the way she's been doing things. That's all.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry, but that's not enough reason to drop her.

HOOVER

At first, I too was wrestling over the idea that we had some sort of moral obligation to Victoria. But with this whole Beecher-Tilton sex scandal.... Susan, we need to get out of this before she makes fools of all of us.

ANTHONY

(Slight pause.)

All politicians make mistakes.

HOOKER

Right. But I thought we recruited her to make us look good. Now she's got us standing in the shadow of one of the biggest sex scandals of our decade.

TILTON

Tell me how James would feel about this.

WOODHULL

James knows how I feel about my lovers.... All of them.

TILTON

I'm sure he assumes, but what does her really know?

WOODHULL

He knows it all.

TILTON

Do you know it all?

(Pause.)

What if I told you that James was loving other women?

WOODHULL

But I know James. He only loves me.

TILTON

What if I told you you were wrong?

WOODHULL

But I'm not wrong.

TILTON

What if you were?

WOODHULL

Impossible.

TILTON

What if I told you that James was loving other women, many women, right under your nose. Perhaps even women you knew—

WOODHULL

Stop it, Teddy.

TILTON

Would you leave him?

WOODHULL

How can you ask me that?

TILTON

After all, you're such a free lover yourself—

WOODHULL

Jimmy doesn't love anyone but me.

TILTON

That's not true.

WOODHULL

You're lying!

TILTON

No.

WOODHULL

You want to ruin me.

TILTON

Just as you have ruined me.

WOODHULL

That's why you're lying to me.

TILTON

You know it's true.

WOODHULL

No.

TILTON

Would you leave him...if you knew you weren't the only one?

WOODHULL

Why would he need anyone else?

ANTHONY

(Looks to STANTON for help.)

Beth...back me up here.

STANTON

I put all of my faith into Victoria and I believe she has done right by us...but it troubles me that any one person could bring us to such discourse.

(Sadly.)

Perhaps it's true...perhaps our time with...this woman has passed.

ANTHONY

We've got to give her another chance.

HOOKER

If we're going to pull out we have to do it now. We're at the tail end of the campaign.

ANTHONY

We're already committed to another—

HOOKER

We need to get out of it—

ANTHONY

The press is out on it and everything—

HOOKER

We've got to do it now!

ANTHONY

We can't! People aren't just coming there to see her, they're coming to see us, too. I don't think you understand how closely associated we've become with Victoria Woodhull. Yes, we have helped her, but she has helped us. Please...try and remember that.

HOOKER

I do remember that. We'll see what happens when we bring it up with the others.

ANTHONY

I'm dreading this...I really am.

HOOKER

You know what they'll want to do.

DAVIS

That whole Frederick Douglass incident is what ruined her. If he had just agreed to play along and be her Vice President she wouldn't have half the problems she has now.

STANTON

I agree about Douglass. But he's not what did it.

HOOKER

It's the Tilton-Beecher scandal.

STANTON

She slit her own throat...

HOOKER

She certainly did.

TILTON

I think what we are witnessing here is a good example of what is referred to as the *double standard*.

WOODHULL

James doesn't need another woman.

TILTON

Obviously he does. He has them

WOODHULL

How do you know all this?

TILTON

Victoria...everybody knows.

WOODHULL

It's not true.

TILTON

A fact's a fact.

WOODHULL

What does it matter to you?

TILTON

He's the only thing you had. And now you don't.

WOODHULL

I'm not bothered by this.

TILTON

No? Your furrowed brow tells another story. See, you are a woman who would like to think that her public and her private are one in the same...when that's not true. You and I both know it.

WOODHULL

You're wrong.

TILTON

You lie, too.

WOODHULL

Never.

TILTON

That was another.

DAVIS

Who are we all kidding, anyway. Woodhull never would have won. What difference does it make if we pull out now or later?

ANTHONY

I can't believe you just said that. I can't believe a spokeswoman for women's rights would say such a thing.

HOOKE

I think was she meant was—

ANTHONY

I know what she meant. And she doesn't need you defending her. You think it's all pointless, don't you Paulina? Paulina?

DAVIS

I don't know what I meant.

HOOKER

There's no need to argue over this. We know what we have to do.

ANTHONY

No. We don't know what we have to do. Actually, I'd say we are in serious disagreement about what we have to do.

STANTON

We must come to some sort of resolution and do what's best for us.

ANTHONY

What about our obligation to—

HOOKER

What about our obligation to ourselves! Victoria Woodhull was never a suffragist of our kind. Never. She never would be, she never will be. She is not like us.

ANTHONY

What do you mean, she's not like us?

HOOKER

You know what I mean. Do you all know what I mean?

(DAVIS and STANTON bow their heads in agreement.)

ANTHONY

Tell me. Tell me what you mean.

DAVIS

Well, Tennessee, for starters.

ANTHONY

I know...having Tennessee as a Congresswoman was not the best campaign strategy, but Vicky insisted—

STANTON

Can we please leave Tennessee out of this? Not only is she irrelevant, but she is a completely harmless young woman. This discussion has gotten totally off the track.

HOOKER

All right, then. Two words. Free love.

ANTHONY

That's ridiculous! Free love is just her way of promoting sexual awareness.

HOOKER

Fine. But then we have to overlook the fact that she was a prostitute. And came from a family of side show performers. And the fact that she's lying to reporters and exploiting another person's private life to heighten her own popularity. Susan, Victoria Woodhull doesn't have a leg to stand on. And I vote that we get out of this election before it blows up in Woodhull's face and we get the aftershock.

ANTHONY

Victoria Woodhull has not done anything any man in her position hasn't done before. Is it that much more offensive because she is a woman?

WOODHULL

You know nothing about me, Tilton.

TILTON

You're not that complicated, Victoria.

WOODHULL

How does it feel to know that you couldn't even keep your wife satisfied. That the woman you loved ran off with another man and made absolutely no effort to conceal it from you.

TILTON

How does it feel not to be able to keep a lover of your own satisfied?

WOODHULL

Well, I'll ask you , Teddy. Were you not satisfied?

TILTON

(Pause.)

No.

WOODHULL

(Lets out a laugh.)

Another lie.

TILTON

Face it, Victoria. You may be a free lover but that doesn't guarantee quality.

WOODHULL

Now you're talking nonsense.

TILTON

You never answered my question. Will you leave James, knowing that he has had other lovers?

WOODHULL

I don't...I do not want James with other women.

TILTON

Then you will leave him.

WOODHULL

(Pause.)

James is the only man I ever loved.

TILTON

I know. You must be dying inside.

(He exits.)

ANTHONY

We will make no further decisions until after the feminist convention—

HOOVER

Susan!

ANTHONY

And there is no changing my mind on that. None.

HOOVER

You make the decisions. And we have to respect them

ANTHONY

We are already committed. We'll schedule a meeting for the day after the conference. That's the best I can do. We'll be sure to inform the others that this meeting will be without Victoria.

(HOOVER smiles.)

It's just a meeting.

HOOVER

We'll feel so much better when this is all over with. You'll see.

STANTON

Let us not forget all the good Woodhull has done. She may not have served our purposes, but she is not without her strengths.

ANTHONY

I agree. And we haven't let go of her yet. Wait until the convention, ladies. I have a feeling we'll all be pleasantly surprised.

HOOVER

Don't get your hopes up.

STANTON

Be careful, Susan. Everything's changed since the scandal came out. You're dealing with a different woman now. Don't expect the same results.

ANTHONY

I have to. I believe in her.

HOOVER

Okay. We'll see.

(HOOVER, STANTON, and DAVIS exit. WOODHULL takes a moment to herself. She does not see DADDY enter.)

WOODHULL

James?

DADDY

Confidence, *confidence* is the key. Believe in every word you say. *Seize* their faith. If you claim to have the power, they will believe.

(A crowd roars from off stage, DADDY makes his exit.)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT II
Scene 3

AT RISE: WOODHULL is now alone, completely engrossed in thought. SUSAN B. ANTHONY approaches her carefully. We begin to hear the faint chanting of supporters, which grow louder throughout the scene, climaxing when WOODHULL begins her speech.

CROWD

Woodhull...Woodhull...Woodhull...

ANTHONY

Victoria?

(No response.)

Vicky?

(WOODHULL turns her head.)

ANTHONY

Are you all right?

WOODHULL

Yes. I'll be right there.

ANTHONY

They're waiting for you.

WOODHULL

I'm just collecting myself.

ANTHONY

Are you sure you're okay?

WOODHULL

Have you let them all in?

ANTHONY

Some.

WOODHULL

(A bit too defensive.)

What do you mean?

ANTHONY

Some. The one's that we are associated with.

WOODHULL

They must still be outside then. Let them in.

ANTHONY

Vicky, you must have misunderstood. This is a private convention.

WOODHULL

I understand just fine. I understand that potential voters deserve to hear me speak.

ANTHONY

I am sorry. Not this time.

WOODHULL

Susan, with all due respect—

ANTHONY

(Interrupting her.)

For your own good, I have to stop you.

WOODHULL

You must let my people in here.

ANTHONY

The restrictions were made very clear to you a long time ago.

WOODHULL

I don't care.

ANTHONY

Let's not argue.

WOODHULL

Fine. Then let them in.

ANTHONY

No.

WOODHULL

I'll do it myself if I have to.

ANTHONY

No you won't. Now, I'll make sure they know it wasn't your decision. It won't hurt your public image—

WOODHULL

I'm not talking politics here. You need to let them in.

ANTHONY

I don't think you understand. This is a members only organization. You let those people in and—

WOODHULL

(Sarcastically.)

The members would run screaming because the new blood around them didn't run blue enough.

(Beat.)

This is absurd.

ANTHONY

Victoria, please! We have a reputation to uphold.

WOODHULL

So do I.

ANTHONY

Very funny.

WOODHULL

Am I a joke to you?

ANTHONY

Like I said, it won't affect you. They're not even voters, they're not citizens—

WOODHULL

Neither am I, Susan! I'm not married so technically I'm not a citizen, either! Or did you forget that way up there in your ivory tower?! I'm not even worthy enough to be someone's property! But I'm good enough to be your beef eater, right? Maybe I wasn't born on Beacon Hill, but at least I have a vision for what—

ANTHONY

That's another thing. I don't think this crowd can really digest any of the prophetic and childhood vision bits. It's too much suspension of belief, if you know what I mean. If you just stick to the current message, I think we'll be fine.

WOODHULL

Don't say another word. Just get out of my way.

ANTHONY

I don't like the look in your eye—

WOODHULL

You're going to like a lot less if you don't get the hell out of my way.

ANTHONY

Don't test me, Vicky. Please. This isn't just about me and you, it's a lot bigger than that.

WOODHULL

Well, as far as I can see, it's only about me.

(WOODHULL goes to exit, ANTHONY grabs her arm as she leaves.)

ANTHONY

You are so arrogant! The others were right. I was a fool to believe in you. You won't listen to anyone except for your ignorant delusion and that dim-witted sister of yours!

(WOODHULL loses control, pulls ANTHONY's arm off of her, and shoves her to the ground.)

WOODHULL

How dare you! After all I have done! After all I have done for you!

ANTHONY

It's over.

(The other three suffragists enter and stand upstage.)

HOOKE

It's over.

DAVIS

It's over.

STANTON

It's over.

(Panicked, WOODHULL runs up to the podium. She is received with only a few feeble cheers and just a couple flashes from photographers.)

DADDY

Believe, Vicky...believe every word you say.

WOODHULL

(Already distraught, trying to keep her cool.)

Men and women tremble on the brink of revolution, and hesitate to voice their convictions, while yet partly aware of their rights and urges by the legitimate impulses of nature, they act upon the new doctrines while they profess obedience to the old...

REPORTER #1

You speak like some strange prophetess, Madam.

WOODHULL

I am your prophetess! I am an evangel, I am a Saviour, if you would see it. I come not to bring peace...but a sword. I am here to speak to you about the—

REPORTER #2

Tell us about the scandal!

REPORTER #3

What do you really think about Henry Beecher!

WOODHULL

That man is a craven...a coward and a sneak. He has failed. Not for his infidelity, but for his fidelity to the old customs and ideas that stifle this society!

CROWD MEMBER

Who are you to speak of infidelity!

CROWD MEMBER

What is your point with exposing Henry Beecher?

CROWD MEMBER

He was a respected man. A man of God!

CROWD MEMBER

A man that had won our faith!

WOODHULL

A man like Reverend Beecher has an impure side just as everyone does, men and women, reverends and prostitutes alike!

CROWD MEMBER

You are saying that everyone is impure?

WOODHULL

I am saying that—

CROWD MEMBER

Not everyone is as lacking in respectability as you would hope, Mrs. Woodhull!

CROWD MEMBER

I hardly see how you can make such a generalization!

CROWD MEMBER

So what you're saying is that even my wife could be impure!

REPORTER #1

Would you consider possibly retracting that statement, Mrs. Woodhull?

WOODHULL

I would like to see one man, just one who thinks that he is pure enough to stand in front of everyone here and claim so. Just one man. One man.

(One man has stood up. WOODHULL spots him in the audience.)

You. You Sir, believe that you are pure. Do you mean to stand in front of everyone, even God, and claim that you have never had an impure thought? Never committed an impure act? Never associated and possibly welcomed the likes of the impure into your being? Is that what you claim?

(Slight pause. She smiles.)

That's right. You sit back down.

(She looks around.)

Anyone else? No one?

(Slight pause.)

You are all like me! You who are so critical and quick to judge.... You who judge me! We are all the same!

(She pauses, but cannot manage to contain herself.)

I have stood by you for so long...sometimes welcoming your applause...sometimes reflecting your insults. But I have always been faithful to my principles. If you can all remember that of me, then I must thank you for showing me that honor. Thank you.

MAN

How can you stand there and defend yourself!

MAN

You should be ashamed!

MAN

And above all...a woman!

WOODHULL

(Pleading.)

Sir...because I am a woman, and because I hold opinions somewhat different from what men usually consider to be orthodox—

MAN

Just stop speaking!

MAN

Get out of the race!

DADDY

(Other voices may overlap.)

Hypnotize them...

MAN

You should be hanged!

REPORTER #2

Mrs. Woodhull, how do you feel about all the opposition towards you in continuing your campaign?

REPORTER #3

Mrs. Woodhull, how does it feel to know that your campaign support is slowly slipping away from you?

DADDY

Confidence, Vicky.

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Woodhull—

WOODHULL

No! Let me speak!

REPORTER #2

How is it that you will continue?

WOODHULL

I do not regret anything! I have done my best and served my duty! It is my right to put forth my opinions!

MAN

It is your unorthodox, immoral opinions that have brought you to ruin!

WOODHULL

It is you! It is your self-righteousness! It is your narrow-minded cope of what moral should be! It is everyone who has tried to over-shadow all my good and cover my life with ridicule and dishonor!

YELLER

Victoria, you're running out of time!

MAN

Good riddance!

(As she begins her speech, and throughout, we hear the sounds of the medicine show: the wagon, the children calling, the Kalliope music. It is distorted, and slowly builds to her collapse.)

WOODHULL

From this convention will go forth a tide of revolution that shall sweep over the whole world. What does freedom mean? The right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These are rights that we are born with. What is equality? It is that every person shall have the same opportunities to exercise the rights belonging to the individual. And what is justice? That the rights belonging to individuals shall be jealously guarded against intrusion. Shall we be slaves to escape revolution? Away with such weak stupidity! A revolution will sweep with restless force, if not fury, over the whole country...to purge it of political trickery, tyrannical assumption, and all injustice. Who will dare to attempt to unlock the luminous doorways of the future with the rusty key to the past? What are we fighting for?!

(With this, WOODHULL faints. The crowd, rather than running to her aid, disperses. TENNESSEE runs to her sister, trying to revive her. ANTHONY steps forward.)

ANTHONY

Nothing this person has said will be recorded in the minutes.

(ANTHONY and the suffragists exit.)

END OF ACT II

ACT III

Scene 1

AT RISE:

Later that evening, WOODHULL and TENNESSEE's apartment. TENNESSEE, wearing a man's military uniform of the period, is sitting, looking out a window. Her military jacket is hung over a chair. She wears an undershirt, over which, an unbuttoned oxford, and remains in a pair of uniform pants. COMMODORE enters timidly, unnoticed, holding the mail. After a moment of watching TENNESSEE, he clears his throat.

TENNESSEE

(Trying to hide her excitement.)

Commodore.

COMMODORE

You should lock your door.

TENNESSEE

You should knock.

COMMODORE

I brought in the mail.

TENNESSEE

(Taking it from him.)

Thank you.

(Awkward pause.)

Can I offer you a drink?

COMMODORE

No, thank you. Frank's got me down to one scotch after dinner and some whiskey before bed.

(He chuckles with nervous modesty. TENNESSEE offers him a gracious smile.)

TENNESSEE

Oh. I see.

(The two stare at one another.)

COMMODORE

Uh...is Vicky around?

TENNESSEE

She's sleeping.

COMMODORE

Oh.

(She unfolds an eviction notice, glances at it, and quickly folds it back up, all the while staying in the conversation.)

TENNESSEE

She's had a rather rough afternoon.

COMMODORE

I know. I heard.

TENNESSEE

Did you?

COMMODORE

Everybody's heard.

TENNESSEE

I suspected so.

COMMODORE

Is she all right?

TENNESSEE

(A bit defensive.)

Yes. Of course she's all right.

COMMODORE

Of course.

(Pause.)

When do you think she'll be up for company?

TENNESSEE

(Pouring herself some wine.)

I don't know. Later.

COMMODORE

How much later?

TENNESSEE

I don't know. A couple of hours.

COMMODORE

A couple of hours...

TENNESSEE

You might as well tell me what this is all about. Vicky'll just tell me anyway.

COMMODORE

It's business.

TENNESSEE

Don't treat me like I'm one of your damn rail workers! Treat me like—

(She stops herself.)

COMMODORE

Don't go on, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

(With the rest of her sentence falling out of her mouth.)

Like you used to.

COMMODORE

Things have changed.

TENNESSEE

I know.

COMMODORE

We have to move on.

TENNESSEE

I know.

COMMODORE

We shouldn't even be talking like this.

TENNESSEE

I know that, too.

COMMODORE

I am a married man.

TENNESSEE

I know. Frank.

COMMODORE

Yes.

TENNESSEE

Do you love...Frank?

COMMODORE

Frank is a good woman.

(TENNESSEE comes closer to COMMODORE.)

And she has forbidden me from this house.

(TENNESSEE looks at COMMODORE with a startled stare.
COLONEL BLOOD unexpectedly enters the room, upsettingly
stuffing his arms into his coat. He is obviously upset and surprised
to see TENNESSEE and COMMODORE.)

BLOOD

Oh...I'm so sorry.

TENNESSEE

Jimmy! I had no idea you were here.

BLOOD

(Anxious to make his exit.)

Yes. Victoria's sleeping now.

(To COMMODORE.)

Good to see you.

COMMODORE

You look a little distressed, Colonel.

BLOOD

Not at all...I...I must be going.

COMMODORE

How is she?

BLOOD

She's asked to be left alone. So, I'm leaving.

TENNESSEE

(Sensing that something has happened.)
Can I offer you a drink?

BLOOD

Not today, Tennie. Thanks.

(BLOOD exits. There is a long pause while TENNESSEE
and COMMODORE search for the right words.)

TENNESSEE

So...

COMMODORE

So...I should be going.

(He begins to leave.)

TENNESSEE

(Adjusting her posture.)
All right, Commodore. I'll tell Vicky you called on her. Good day.

COMMODORE

(Stopping in his tracks.)
What did you say?

TENNESSEE

I said, *good day*, Commodore.

COMMODORE

Yes. You did. Didn't you.

TENNESSEE

What did you expect me to say? Please don't go?

COMMODORE

Yes.

TENNESSEE

I won't.

COMMODORE

I wish you would.

TENNESSEE

I know.

COMMODORE

You're a good girl, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

I don't have time to play games anymore. You tell me the way it is and I accept it.

COMMODORE

That's very...smart.

TENNESSEE

I learn from Vicky.

COMMODORE

I think Vicky could learn a few things from you.

(Slight pause.)

I'm worried about her.

TENNESSEE

Weren't you leaving?

COMMODORE

I have something I have to say to you.

TENNESSEE

(Thinking maybe there's still a chance for them.)

Well, whatever it is just spit it out—

(She realizes.)

You want to withdraw.

COMMODORE

Yes.

TENNESSEE

We'll be just fine without you, Commodore.

COMMODORE

I'm...I'm sorry it has to be this way.

TENNESSEE

Everything happens for a reason.

COMMODORE

(Slight pause.)

I'd still like to explain to Vicky when she gets up—

TENNESSEE

(Cutting him off.)

There's no need. I'll take care of it.

(He starts to leave and notices TENNESSEE's uniform jacket on the chair.)

COMMODORE

This...this doesn't look like you, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

Vicky says we're making a statement. She had some real complicated explanation, but I just think we look kinda sassy.

COMMODORE

You're already so pretty...and strong. You don't need it. You look like you should be romping around Europe with a long flowing dress and flowers in your hair. With someone calling you "Lady."

TENNESSEE

Lady Tennessee. I like that.

COMMODORE

I really must be going. Good luck.

(He starts to leave.)

TENNESSEE

Commodore?

COMMODORE

(He turns to her.)

Tennie?

TENNESSEE

Why...her?

(Pause.)

COMMODORE

She said yes.

(COMMODORE exits, with TENNESSEE staring longingly after him. Within seconds we hear him sweetly whistling off. TENNESSEE cracks a sentimental smile. WOODHULL emerges from her room, warily. She is disheveled and tired.)

WOODHULL

Who was that?

TENNESSEE

Vicky! You scared me.

(WOODHULL sits by the window and stares out.)

TENNESSEE

Don't sit there, Vic. The window's drafty.

(Instantly, we hear the sound of soft voices. In a whisper, calling "Woodhull," with an eager, yet breathy tone. These voices should be erratic and bothersome, like flies, yet not upstaging the existing conversation. They are only audible to WOODHULL.)

WOODHULL

Who was just here, Tennie? James?

TENNESSEE

(Almost apologetic.)

Commodore.

WOODHULL

What did he want?

TENNESSEE

You. He wanted to talk to you. He...

WOODHULL

Don't go on. I know what you're about to say.

TENNESSEE

How do you know?

TENNESSEE

Because I know you.

(Silence.)

TENNESSEE

(Handing WOODHULL some letters.)

You got some mail...a letter from Catherine Beecher, Reverend you-know-who's sister.

(Slight pause.)

Also...uh...we've been evicted.

(WOODHULL hold up a red envelope, letting the rest of the mail drop to the floor. She does not open it. There is a short pause while TENNESSEE thinks.)

TENNESSEE

It's okay, really. We don't need Commodore.

WOODHULL

(Exhausted.)

Right. What's one more.

TENNESSEE

We'll be fine on our own.

WOODHULL

You bet we will.

TENNESSEE

So...where do we go from here?

(BLOOD appears. This is a scene from earlier. TENNESSEE is not aware of him. During this scene, TENNESSEE is helping WOODHULL get changed into her military uniform; the change is complete by the time BLOOD makes his exit. This section is most effective when BLOOD and TENNESSEE's dialogue overlaps.)

BLOOD

Where do we go from here, Victoria?

WOODHULL

What?

TENNESSEE

Where do we go, Vicky? What do we do next?

BLOOD

I'm leaving you.

WOODHULL

Not now. Please.

TENNESSEE

Vicky? Are you sure you're okay?

BLOOD

You expect me to follow your rules. Your hypocritical rules!

WOODHULL

I don't think you understand. Just wait—

TENNESSEE

Wait for what?

BLOOD

I'm tired of waiting around for you.

WOODHULL

This is a very bad time.

BLOOD

Our time is up.

TENNESSEE

I don't think we got much more time, sweetie.

WOODHULL

It's all going so fast...

TENNESSEE

What is it, Vicky?

BLOOD

You made it this way. You wanted it this way!

WOODHULL

What do I have to do to make it right?

TENNESSEE

You're perfect, Vic. You don't have to do a thing.

BLOOD

There isn't anything either of us can do. It's over.

No. WOODHULL

Yes. TENNESSEE

Yes. BLOOD

What have I done? WOODHULL

You've done it all. BLOOD & TENNESSEE

I know. WOODHULL

Without any regrets, I hope. TENNESSEE

Without any regrets, I suppose. BLOOD

I have no time for regrets. WOODHULL

You don't have the heart. BLOOD

Just tell me what you need. TENNESSEE

You'll always have Tennessee. BLOOD

I always have my Tennie. This is true. WOODHULL

(TENNESSEE goes to WOODHULL and puts her head on her lap.)

Always. TENNESSEE

WOODHULL
Would you...

TENNESSEE
Anything.

BLOOD
I'll never come back to you. No.

WOODHULL
I thought so.

TENNESSEE
What's next?

BLOOD
I loved you, Vicky.

WOODHULL
Some things just don't work.

TENNESSEE
Love or business...

WOODHULL
That's always the way.

BLOOD
Everything's business to you.

TENNESSEE
Love.

WOODHULL
Always.

BLOOD
Always the business woman.

WOODHULL
Something has to give.

TENNESSEE
I'd give anything for you, Vicky.

WOODHULL

Something had to give.

BLOOD

You're all alone, Victoria. All alone.

WOODHULL

I know.

(Slight pause.)

I know.

TENNESSEE

What's next.

(BLOOD exits. WOODHULL seems to regain her strength.
By this time, the chanting has completely stopped.)

DADDY

Seeing is believing!

WOODHULL

The newspaper.

TENNESSEE

What about it?

WOODHULL

We'll put everything into the paper.

TENNESSEE

But how will we get it out? If we keep standing on street corners we'll be put in jail.

WOODHULL

We'll do it through the mail. We'll make up a paper tonight. It'll be ready to distribute within the next couple of weeks. We'll mail them out in time for everyone to have one on election day and reinforce them with some personal distribution.

(Slight pause.)

We still might get arrested.

TENNESSEE

I ain't got that much on my schedule.

WOODHULL

That's my girl.

TENNESSEE

How do we start?

WOODHULL

Take down this headline, "Tilton-Beecher Sex Scandal."

TENNESSEE

Whatever you say.

(TENNESSEE exits. While they are setting up for the next scene, a convention hall, WOODHULL opens the envelope and reads the letter aloud.)

WOODHULL

My Dear Victoria...I shall strike you dead...Yours truly, Catherine Beecher.

(With this, WOODHULL strikes a smile. She button up her jacket, fixes her hair, and begins to sing to herself.)

WOODHULL

If you nominate a woman
In the month of May
Dare you face what Mrs. Grundy
And her set will say?
(The soft voices join in.)
How they'll jeer and frown and slander
Chattering night and day!
Oh, did you dream of Mrs. Grundy
In the month of May.

END OF SCENE 1

ACT III

Scene 2

AT RISE:

Time has passed two weeks by the end of the song. WOODHULL finds herself in a convention hall, the aftermath of a Grant rally and all its paraphernalia: signs, streamers, confetti, etc. The scene is barely lit by the streelamps outside. The sight of the room strikes WOODHULL immediately, more than TENNESSEE. The two women are carrying stacks of newspapers.

TENNESSEE

They'll never find us here.

WOODHULL

Tennie, look out that window and see if there's anyone creeping around.

TENNESSEE

Okay.

(TENNESSEE skips off. WOODHULL picks up a "Go Grant!" sign. TENNESSEE shortly scurries back to the scene.)

TENNESSEE

I just saw that big ole policeman peekin' around the alleys with a hunk o' fried bread between his fat fingers. He'll never find us.

WOODHULL

We'll keep the lights out just in case.

TENNESSEE

Don't you worry, Vic. He's too busy lickin' the cream off his paws like a hungry little pussy cat.

WOODHULL

We'll wait a while.

TENNESSEE

Okay.

(Slight pause.)

Well...will you get a good look at this place.

WOODHULL

Yeah. Someone had a good time here tonight.

TENNESSEE

I'm sure it was just a bunch o' those boring Grant supporters. I mean, look at this...

(She picks up a sign.)

"Grant to the Gusto!" What does *that* mean? Does anyone really know what a gusto is, anyway?

WOODHULL

(Looking at some confetti in her hand.)

Gusto means *the end* in this case.

TENNESSEE

Yeah. I still think it sounds pretty silly.

WOODHULL

(Pause.)

Tennie...go see if that fat policeman has finished his pie yet.

TENNESSEE

He wasn't eatin' pie—

WOODHULL

Whatever he was eating, go see if he's around.

TENNESSEE

Alright.

(TENNESSEE exits. WOODHULL is left alone to slip into a dream. Warm light beckons her to the podium. As she slowly approaches, she hears her own voice softly in the background, along with cheering crowd and some quiet kalliope music.)

WOODHULL

While others argued the equality of woman and man, I proved it by successfully engaging in business...Christ was a Communist of the strictest sort, and so am I, and of the most extreme kind.... They say that I have come to break up the family. I say amen to that with all my heart.

(Pause. She addresses her father as a grown woman.)

Daddy, tell me what I should do now.

DADDY

You've got to gamble to be the winner. You've got to have passion, forte, and you must live for what you do. Without conviction to yourself, you've got nothing.

WOODHULL

What if they just won't buy?

DADDY

Hook them with that first small taste.

WOODHULL

What if they refuse?

DADDY

It's your job to convince them that they *need* it. *You* have to believe they need it or else *they* never will. People will be suspicious, and with good reason, but folks need to believe in something and it's your job to convince them that it must be you. The ones that stay with ya until the end are the sure buy.

WOODHULL

What if no one stays?

DADDY

That's when you gotta ask yourself, is the game really worth it? Does this crowd deserve what I have to sell? Do they deserve to be cured? And you make your decision and move on. They may drive you outta town, but the worst insult these people can pay you is if they don't notice you at all.

(TENNESSEE comes sauntering back in, breaking WOODHULL's trance.)

TENNESSEE

Vicky? Vicky? What're you doin'?

WOODHULL

What?

TENNESSEE

You okay?

WOODHULL

Is he gone?

TENNESSEE

Nope. He's chattin' with a buncha other coppers about us. We'll be able to go out soon.

WOODHULL

What did they say?

TENNESSEE

(Hiding something.)

Oh, nothin'.

WOODHULL

Tell me.

TENNESSEE

Nothin' important, Vic. Honest.

WOODHULL

I don't care. I'd like to hear it, please.

TENNESSEE

(Nonchalantly.)

Oh. Well, the fat one, he's talkin' about how he'd been lookin' in the alleys, and the others were sayin' how they'd better run around and try to scrounge up the copies of the newspaper that we had so "illegally" been handin' out. I believe they called it "obscene."

WOODHULL

Obscene, huh?

TENNESSEE

Yeah. Kinda makes ya wanna show 'em what obscene *really* is, don't it?

WOODHULL

What else did they say?

(TENNESSEE does not respond.)

C'mon, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

They said...if you mentioned Tilton in the paper..we'd be arrested for illegal distribution of propaganda.

WOODHULL

(Like a stone.)

That's all of it?

TENNESSEE

They joked about how they'd never be able to find someone with the paper and how it'd be a waste of time to look for them and then they all laughed and talked about baseball.

WOODHULL

(To herself.)

Baseball.

TENNESSEE

I wonder why there ain't no one in this here buildin' tonight? Election day bein' tomorrow an' all.

WOODHULL

It's late. They'll be up all night tomorrow to count the ballots.

TENNESSEE

(Slight pause.)

We should be able to go back out soon. They can't talk baseball all night.

WOODHULL

I bet they can.

TENNESSEE

Maybe. Even so...they gotta leave some time.

WOODHULL

You prepared to go all night, Tennie?

TENNESSEE

You know I am. We'll go straight through election day. And then some.

WOODHULL

That's my girl.

TENNESSEE

You seem kinda tired. You okay?

WOODHULL

Yeah. I'm just thinking.

TENNESSEE

What about? The election?

WOODHULL

Yeah.

TENNESSEE

(Beat.)

I don't think I hear any voices outside. What d'ya say we try and sneak around the police and get goin' on these here papers.

WOODHULL

(Looks to TENNESSEE endearingly.)

Tennie...come here, sweetie. You're hair's all mussed. Come here.

(TENNESSEE sits next to her sister. WOODHULL methodically fixes TENNESSEE's hair. TENNESSEE begins to hum a lullaby.)

TENNESSEE

Some day, Vicky...some day women will be getting' all dolled up for votin' time. Be puttin' flowers in their hair and everythin'.

WOODHULL

I know it, Tennie. I know.

TENNESSEE

And all of 'em will walk into the election box, no matter what they're voting for, and demand that Victoria Woodhull get put on their ballot!

WOODHULL

We'll see.

TENNESSEE

They will.

WOODHULL

What a day that will be, huh?

TENNESSEE

(Smiling.)

Yeah.

(Slight pause.)

Sometimes I can still smell that tiny shack back in Homer. It was just before we joined Daddy on the road. I was just a little bit of a thing, but I remember it. I remember the way Ma used to stay up all night chanting every time one of us got sick. She was so afraid of losin' another baby. Ma's a good woman, but she's never been much for motherin'. You were the one who good at that. Gosh...when I think back. You used to feed us on one single egg you'd stolen from the farm down the road. One single egg for all of us.

WOODHULL

We don't talk about such things, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

Why not? I know it wasn't all great, but what came out of it is what you see now! I mean, who from Homer ever woulda thought that we'd be where we are today? I think people should know about how we grew up. Show 'em that anything can happen! Boy, I remember that day Ma married you off to Canning Woodhull, *the doctor*. You weren't more than a baby yourself. I was so sad when Ma told me that some man was gonna take you away. I felt like I'd be orphaned or somethin'. I remember that day. I cried and cried and cried...

WOODHULL

So did I.

TENNESSEE

But you said you'd come back to me. And you did.

(Slight pause.)

Ma never woulda given you to Canning if she knew he was a drunk, Vic. If only she'd known.

WOODHULL

She knew, Tennie. She knew he was a drunk. She knew he liked women. And she knew he beat me. She also knew he had money and that she could profit from marrying me off.

TENNESSEE

That's Ma for ya. Always the businesswoman.

(Pause.)

You're tired, huh?

WOODHULL

What makes you think I'm tired?

TENNESSEE

'Cause I'm your sister. And I know these things.

WOODHULL

I see. Well, yes, I'm tired. I'm tired in the mind.

TENNESSEE

How so?

WOODHULL

I'm tired of policemen. I'm tired of people joking about us. I'm tired of sneaking around. I'm tired of everything right now.

TENNESSEE

There's a lot to think about , huh?

WOODHULL

Yeah. An awful lot.

TENNESSEE

You don't need to think about nothin'. Just keep your head high.

(TENNESSEE lifts up her sister's chin.)

You need nothin' else.

WOODHULL

Tennessee Claflin...I think you're the smartest woman I know.

(The two hug.)

TENNESSE

I'm gonna see if they're gone.

WOODHULL

Oh, Tennie...

TENNESSEE

Yeah?

WOODHULL

Nevermind, honey. Go ahead.

TENNESSEE

I'll be right back.

(TENNESSEE disappears. WOODHULL, trance-like, walks downstage like a lost child.)

WOODHULL

Tennie?

(The dream takes over. The lights change over to yellows and auburn. WOODHULL discovers that a beacon of light still rests on the podium. While the "Woodhull Victory Song" plays in the background, a crowd of support surrounds WOODHULL. The suffragists are the first to appear, hugging WOODHULL and shaking her hand with wide, unyielding smiles. As WOODHULL approaches the podium, she is blinded by overly zealous photographers. The applause of her supporters is overwhelming. YELLER

comes to shake WOODHULL's hand, as does a laughing COMMODORE. BLOOD runs to her with a huge bunch of flowers and gives her a big kiss. WOODHULL happily breaks away from him, and then proceeds slowly, almost methodically, to the platform, through the bombardment of smiles and applause. Once she is up there, she raises her hands as if to begin to appease the anxious crowd. Then, she notices TILTON. The music begins to change, it becomes slow and distorted. The applause fades. Kalliope music chimes disturbingly over it. WOODHULL begins searching for a way to escape, but the crowd won't let her. Her one-time supporters move in on her, as if for a sacrifice, laughing mockingly. WOODHULL is trapped. As they get closer and closer, WOODHULL's terror grows, until finally she opens her mouth and screams. The crowd quickly disperses and the lights change back to normal. WOODHULL is left, disheveled, kneeling on the floor.)

TENNESSEE

(Desperately runs into the scene.)

Vicky?

(WOODHULL does not respond.)

Vicky?

(WOODHULL turns to TENNESSEE.)

C'mon. They found us.

(TENNESSEE holds out her hand for WOODHULL to take, and the two women walk downstage. They stand together as their sentence is being read. During this time, the set is being changed to the jail cell. The jail itself need only be a lighting change, perhaps the gobo of a cell.)

VOICE OF JUDGE

Not only have the defendants, by circulating an obscene publication through the mails, committed an offense against the law, but they have been guilty of a most abominable and unjust charge against one of the purest and best citizens of the United States, and they have, as far as possible, aggravated the offense by a malicious and gross libel upon the character of a gentleman. I therefore ask that bail be fixed in each case at ten thousand dollars.

(He slams down his gavel.)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT III

Scene 3

AT RISE:

It is dawn, election day. WOODHULL is solemnly looking out the window at the jail cell. TENNESSEE sits with paper in hand, chewing on the end of a pencil. There is the faint murmur of a crowd outside.

TENNESSEE

(Reading from the paper.)

“Sick in body, sick in mind, sick in heart, I write these lines to ask if, because I am a woman, I am to have no justice, no fair play, no chance through the press to reach public opinion. How can anybody know for what I am accused, arrested, imprisoned, unless the public are allowed to see the alleged libel.”

(Slight pause.)

Is this where you want to say somethin’ about the paper? You’ve got to say somethin’ about the paper here, Vic. That’s the injustice you’re talkin’ about. Say somethin’ like—

WOODHULL

(Not looking at TENNESSEE.)

The judge.

TENNESSEE

Right. The judge.

(Writing.)

In what way can I present the truth—

WOODHULL

(Correcting her.)

Sustain.

TENNESSEE

In what way can I present the sustain....

WOODHULL

In what way can I sustain the truth.

TENNESSEE

Okay.

(She corrects it, then continues.)

...When the judge before who...whom?

WOODHULL

Whom.

TENNESSEE

Whom I only appear as witness, presents—

WOODHULL

Constitutes.

TENNESSEE

Constitutes himself as plaintiff, prosecuting attorney, judge, jury and witness!
Exclamation point!

WOODHULL

Question mark, Tennie.

TENNESSEE

Okay. But I'll *feel* the exclamation point.

(Slight pause.)

I keep hearing that judge's voice over and over again in my head.

VOICE OF JUDGE

(Sternly.)

An example is needed and we propose to make it one of these women.

TENNESSEE

I could have just punched him in the nose. And I wouldn't mind being in jail so much. I mean, hey, we've been here before and usually manage to make the most of it. But this time, I just feel like we need to be out there. Don't you? I just wish I could get out and actually deny the things that they're saying about me in the papers. That reporter, you know the one who was badgering me for a statement outside the courthouse, well he and his buddy were laughin' about me. They were sayin' that they were goin' to print stories about me smokin' big cigars and cussin' all the time. Like I have nothin' better to do. Obviously they confused me with Commodore.

(She pauses, taking in her sister's sadness.)

Any news yet?

(WOODHULL slowly shakes her head.)

I'm sure we'll hear it, won't we?

(Another pause. Then, tenderly.)

What're you thinkin' about?

WOODHULL

(Smiles.)

You won't believe it.

TENNESSEE

(Smiling at her sister's delight.)

Tell me.

WOODHULL

Miss Tennessee's Magnetic Life Elixir.

TENNESSEE

(Giggling.)

For beautifying the complexion!

WOODHULL

And cleansing the blood!

(The sisters share a laugh.)

TENNESSEE

Wow. I haven't thought about that in a really long time. Gosh, Vicky...what a strange thing to think about at a time like this.

WOODHULL

(Wisely.)

Not really.

TENNESSEE

No. I guess not.

(Slight pause as they both reflect fondly.)

Why don't we finish the letter, hmmm?

WOODHULL

Where were we?

TENNESSEE

The judge being the only one to sentence us.

WOODHULL

(Taking a deep breath.)

When has it ever been known in this land of so-called religious freedom and civil liberty, that pulpit, press and people tremble before a cowardly opinion?

TENNESSEE

Yeah!

WOODHULL

Is it not astonishing that all Christian law and civilization seem to be scared out of their senses at having two poor women locked up in jail?

(WOODHULL, moved by her own statement, turns her back to TENNESSEE.)

TENNESSEE
You alright, Vicky?

LITTLE GIRL
Are you Victoria Woodhull?

WOODHULL
Yes.

TENNESSEE
What are you thinkin' about?

LITTLE GIRL
Are you Victoria Woodhull?

WOODHULL
The future.

TENNESSEE
(Comes up behind WOODHULL and looks out the window.)
There's quite a crowd out there.

WOODHULL
Uh, huh.

TENNESSEE
Where would you like to go when we get out, Vic?

WOODHULL
(Slight pause.)
We should get out of New York for a while.

TENNESSEE
Take a trip?

WOODHULL
Definitely.

TENNESSEE
Where to?

WOODHULL
I've been thinking about England.

TENNESSEE
Me, too!

WOODHULL
Whereabouts?

TENNESSEE
London! Is there any place else?

WOODHULL
There's the country.

TENNESSEE
We'll vacation in the country and we'll reside in the town!

WOODHULL
Sounds good!

TENNESSEE
We can do those lectures you always wanted to do!

WOODHULL
That's true.

TENNESSEE
I'm gonna get me a fine English gentleman! You want one?

WOODHULL
We'll see, Tennie.

TENNESSEE
Oh! This is going to be great, Vicky! Just picture it! Are you picturin'?

WOODHULL
Uh, huh.

TENNESSEE

No! Close your eyes! Just close your eyes and picture this! You, touring all around Europe with your lecture on the beauty of the female body. And me...a fine English lady!

WOODHULL

You're already a lady, Miss Tennessee.

TENNESSEE

(Bows.)

So are you, Mrs. Woodhull.

(Suddenly, there is a cheer from outside which catches their attention. Reporters scurry enthusiastically around WOODHULL once more.)

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Woodhull, what are your feelings towards Grant's victory?

WOODHULL

(With a grin.)

If Jesus Christ himself had been running against this man he'd have been defeated.

REPORTER #2

Any hopes for a comeback?

WOODHULL

Paradise is lost in Genesis through woman and regained in Revelation through woman. Through woman and not through man will the world be saved.

REPORTER #3

Does that mean you'll run again?

WOODHULL

(Confidently.)

Who knows what great things the future has in store.

(TENNESSEE and WOODHULL look to one another. The "Woodhull Victory Song" begins playing. Over that, the rest of the cast filters back onto the scene, rapidly delivering their news. They may overlap a great deal to build up to a crescendo for WOODHULL's speech. The "news" overlaps HOOKER and DAVIS's gossip.)

HOOKER

Did you hear—

DAVIS

About Victoria!

HOOKER

She's running again!

DAVIS

She's married again!

HOOKER

So has Tennessee!

DAVIS

A knight, I hear!

HOOKER

Can you believe that Victoria—

HOOKER & DAVIS

Is running for—

HOOKER/DAVIS/REPORTER

(This should build until BLOOD is finished speaking. Then, it will
cease to provide WOODHULL focus.)

President! President! President!

(They continue chanting until WOODHULL is ready to speak.)

YELLER

The Claflin sisters reportedly left for England where Victoria will begin touring with her
lecture "The Human Body, The Temple of God."

HOOKER

Victoria Woodhull has reportedly offered a five thousand dollar reward for the first person
to fly across the Atlantic Ocean.

STANTON

In London, Victoria Woodhull opens her own progressive kindergarten.

TILTON

Lady Tennessee personally scolded President Theodore Roosevelt for not doing more for woman suffrage.

COMMODORE

In 1915, Lady Tennessee presents her all female army of 150,000 soldiers.

ANTHONY

In an attempt to write Victoria Woodhull out of history, Susan B. Anthony erased all mention of Woodhull in her feminist bible, *The History of Woman Suffrage*.

BLOOD

In 1882, Victoria Woodhull Martin re-announces herself for the presidency.

(DADDY looks proudly on.)

WOODHULL

I therefore claim the right to speak for the women of America, and believing as I do that the prejudices which still exist in the popular mind against women will soon disappear, I now announce myself for the Presidency!

(Blackout.)

END OF PLAY