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## Two for One: The Story of “Ma and Pa” Ferguson

### SCENE 1: Dr. Paulissen interviews Nola Wood

*Text on Screen: Austin, 1977.*

*Setting: Sitting room of Nola Wood*

*Camera:*

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**Dr. May Paulissen:** *(Enters the room, and while sitting down, begins first line)* You’re Nola Wood?

**Nola:** Just call me Woody, dear.

**Dr. May Paulissen:** I can’t thank you enough for having me today. I’ve had quite an interest in the Ferguson story for a long time. But there really isn’t much information on them except what their daughter, Ouida Nalle, wrote in her book. And to meet you—someone who knew them personally—is an opportunity I never would have imagined.

**Nola:** Don’t get too excited, dear. You might not like what I have to say.

**Dr. Paulissen:** I just want the truth. Let’s get started. Remind me again, what was your role in the Ferguson administration?

**Nola:** I was secretary and clerk.

**Dr. Paulissen:** What was that like?

**Nola:** *(doesn’t respond at first. Her eyes and voice are far away and distant.)* It was so long ago.

**Dr. Paulissen:** Do you remember?

**Nola:** Of course I remember. No one could forget. I feared there were secrets I’d carry to my grave. *(half-laughing)* And since I’m close to dead, sure is providence for me that you showed up.

**Dr. May Paulissen:** *(Sets up recording device)* What secrets?

**Nola:** I remember their daughter, Ouida, being insufferable. It was probably better for everyone that she died of alcoholism in 1952. But alcoholism is only the beginning. (*Pause as she prepares to purge her conscience*) Lord Forgive me, for what I was party to. I fear for my very soul!

**Paulissen:** What do you mean?

**Nola:** Bribes, selling justice, voter intimidation, fraud, theft, even...murder. How could God ever forgive me for this? (tears in her eyes)

**Paulissen:** You mean the Fergusons were caught up in all of these crimes?

**Nola:** (crying) I found myself in a web of deceit and corruption as I worked for the Fergusons. It began with various financial schemes, which were really just fancy forms of theft. Then we sold influence; then we sold votes; then we sold justice; finally...we sold lives. It only got worse and worse!

**Paulissen:** Tell me more.

## **SCENE 2: Miriam's Friend Dissuades Her—For Now.**

*Text on Screen: Belton, Texas 1898*

*Setting: Parlor.*

*Camera:*

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**Friend:** Miriam, can we really trust Jim? You've refused his offer of marriage many times, and he still won't leave you be. Why are you still putting up with him?

**Miriam:** Well, I know Jim's church attendance is spotty. That's because he's busier than a moth in a mitten. But he is the son of a Methodist minister. He probably just needs to settle down. (*A beat*) Don't you think the Lord could be calling me to give him a foundation?

**Friend:** His father was a preacher; but my daddy says he was a rabble rouser. They said he had a Bible in one pocket, and a six shooter in the other. And then Salado College expelled the preacher's son. All Jim had to do was apologize. But instead the boy runs to California, doesn't even have the decency to tell anyone. Now he's back. Look, I know the businessmen of this county say he gained from the experience, that he's audacious, smart. But I don't think you can get him to promise you that he will go to church and raise his family in the fear of the Lord.

**Miriam:** I can try.

**Friend:** I don't know, Miriam. It's something about his eyes; his eyes always seem to give me this hint like he's running from something. Integrity should have nothing to fear; it should have nothing to hide.

**Miriam:** [almost dissuaded from marrying him]

**SCENE 3: Jim's Proposal**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Jim:** My darling, time with you is precious, and I'd like to make the most of it.

**Miriam:** Jim, please don't.

**Jim:** Miriam, will you be my wife?

**Miriam:** Jim Ferguson! You've asked me time and time again. But there are questions . . .

**Jim:** What do you mean, questions?

**Miriam:** Don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about. I know you have a few new clients, but one of my friends said that your oral examination to become a lawyer was, well, staged.

**Jim:** That's what they always say about young men who studied alone. Miriam don't you know how trusted I am around here?

**Miriam:** Trusted by whom? The Wilkinsons said the bridge you made for them sags. Your family didn't even know where you were for two years. You ran off to California without telling a single soul! Can't you see why it might be thought that you're a little, well, unreliable?

**Jim:** Well Miss Wallace, you are now looking at the city of Belton's future town attorney. How's that for reliable?

**Miriam:** You are going to be on the ballot?

**Jim:** Just learned today, and you are the first one I'm telling.

**Miriam:** That's wonderful, I guess. I really am pleased, Jim. But—

**Jim:** But what?

**Miriam:** If we were to get married, would you go to church, and raise our children to be God-fearing Christians?

**Jim:** Now Miriam, I have told you that I haven't prayed much in my life.

**Miriam:** That's exactly why I fear for you. And us.

**Jim:** I want to find the Lord and perhaps someday, with you at my side, I will. But Miriam, don't expect me to become a parlor lizard. Let's just get hitched, and be open to what comes after that.

**Miriam:** No Jim, I'm not going through with it. How could I? You know my father never approved of you. You can't ask me to go against his wishes.

**Jim:** Why don't you trust me, darling? I'll keep asking for your hand till you hand it over. (flirting) And you know how stubborn I am. (A beat as he moves closer) Be kind.

**Miriam:** (Conflicted) Oh Jim! Part of me wants to accept you. I can see the good in you even if my daddy could not. But I... I hardly know what to think.

**Jim:** Then I'll tell you, ma'am. (Places the ring in her hand) Think about it. (He takes her other hand tenderly; Miriam's troubled expression melts into a warm, contented smile.)

**Miriam:** For better or worse?

**Jim:** For better or worse.

#### **SCENE 4: Eliza and Miriam Question the Marriage**

*Text on Screen: The Wallace Home, Belton, Texas, the last day of the nineteenth century.*

*Setting: Sitting room, and parlor.*

*Camera:*

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**Eliza:** What do you mean you're not sure?

**Miriam:** Mama, I don't know if I'm not sure, or if it's just...? Well, I just... I never thought I would feel so...?

**Eliza:** You said "yes;" it was your decision.

**Miriam:** It was really Jim's decision.

**Eliza:** How could it be Jim's decision?

**Miriam:** Mama, it's hard to keep arguing with the City Attorney. It's hard to hold your ground with Jim Ferguson!

**Eliza:** (Half-reassuring half asking) But you don't regret anything?

**Miriam:** Of course not. It's just sometimes I worry. I do love him, but sometimes I feel like he sidesteps around concerns. I never know if they'll be addressed or not.

**Eliza:** What sort of concerns, sweetheart? Can he provide for you?

**Miriam:** Well, in his new position as City Attorney, we're more well-off; but I fear he may struggle with, um, spending beyond his means.

**Eliza:** Know this, Miriam: even though you're no longer living under my roof, I'll ensure Jim takes good care of my girl.

**SCENE 5: Jim advises Eliza on the family fortune.**

*Text on Screen:* 1912. The Wallace Home

*Setting:* Eliza gives much of her estate to children in 1907, she dies in 1915.

*Camera:*

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**Eliza:** I like what you said about the railroad bonds. Now what about this new motoring company, the Studebaker?

**Jim:** I have a better investment for you Ma, the F.W. Woolworth Company. They have 596 stores, and they just started building in New York City, a structure that's going to be the tallest in the world.

**Eliza:** They'll probably go bankrupt.

**Jim:** Oh no. You see Ma, they are selling cheap at five cents and ten cents. Customers actually get to handle the merchandise before buying it. This company has got great fundamentals. Their going public is big . . .

**Eliza:** Well Jim, you may have misled me about your Gusher Oil Company, and the boom in Temple real estate, but your suggestion to invest in cotton futures has done us well.

**Jim:** And I'm going to be right about this. You can trust me.

**Eliza:** Jim, I certainly hope so. You are wonderful son-in-law, which is why I've trusted your input. But understand: I want my girl to be well provided for. I'll give you the means if you continue to be wise with it.

**Jim:** Means?

**Eliza:** Miriam's inheritance will go to the both of you. I'm giving her money and property, in a substantial amount, to insure that she will never be in want. Will you help her manage it well?

**Jim:** Ma, you can always count on me.

**SCENE 6: Jim and Hosea Poe: success of the Temple State Bank.**

*Text on Screen: Temple, Texas 1912.*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Hosea Poe:** James Ferguson, I don't think that anyone has done more for Temple, Texas than when you constructed the State Bank business block.

**Jim:** Thank you kindly, Poe.

**Hosea Poe:** Mr. Ferguson, the State Bank has been maintained with high moral scruples and is the soundest institution in central Texas.

**Jim:** And that will continue with proper management.

**Hosea Poe:** Proper management. Well, sir, if there's anything I can ever do, let me know. It would be an honor to serve this prestigious institution.

**Jim:** 'Prestigious' is not the word that some of your cohorts would use. I hear you've been hanging around with D.R Pendleton, and others who don't understand business.

**Hosea Poe:** Oh, yes. But not after I heard some of the ridiculous things they've said about you.

**Jim:** And what did they say?

**Hosea:** *(Slightly uncomfortable)* Oh, well. I suppose Pendleton had some, uh, sore feelings? He only mentioned something about some issue with a Belton Trust and Loan Company back in February of 1905.

**Jim:** *(With false remorse)* Pendleton and I were business partners, and we were friends. He even preformed the service at my wedding. But he didn't have the vision of a successful businessman and turned against me. That's why, as Temple State Bank grows, I'm searching for a man with vision, someone who can help me uphold high standards I've set.

**Hosea:** If the need should arise, I do believe we share the same vision for this bank.

**Jim:** Poe, sounds to me like you're barking up the right tree.

### **SCENE 7: Jim's plans to run for governor**

*Text on Screen: Temple, Texas 1913*

*Setting:*

*Camera: One shot focused on Ma's face, encompasses the doorway as well, and thus Ouida upon her appearance; opposite shot from outside door, showing Pa's face, and catching Ma's head whip around to chastise Ouida. Dorrace sits sewing or reading.*

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**Miriam:** You stayed longer than I thought during your trip to Dallas. What? Did you introduce yourself to every banker in the city?

**Jim:** *(Smiling)* I suppose I did. How could I pass up a grand opportunity like that?

**Miriam:** Don't give me that Ferguson smirk. A penny for your thoughts, dear.

**Jim:** Miriam, you know I have been helping some of our friends in politics for some time. Now, I'm aiming to run for Governor!

**Miriam:** What?

**Jim:** Aren't you thrilled for me?

**Miriam:** Well I, I suppose. You know good and well that, as your wife, I will support you in anything you choose to do. But why run for Governor of Texas?

**Jim:** Why run? Darling, imagine the good we could do for this state.

**Miriam:** ... We?

**Jim:** Of course 'we'. Behind every strong man is a woman. It's time a governor of Texas stuck up for the voices and interests of the men whose backs Texas was built on. Tenant farmers.

**Miriam:** And what have we to do with the common farmer?

**Jim:** Well, thanks to our 2,000-acre Bell Bosque farm that your sainted mother gave us, we are farmers. Plus, [referring to himself] Farmer Jim's been listening and talking to farmers as a banker every Saturday now for the past fifteen years. I know what they want.

**Miriam:** After fifteen years I think I know what you're after; and I don't think it has much to do with what poor farmers want. What is this really about?

**Jim:** Opportunity. People are crawling over one-another about prohibition. No one's going to catch a weasel asleep in that catfight. Candidates are either prohibitionists or antis, and either way, they've just become targets of ridicule. Politicians are so focused on that squabble, that they are forgetting the needs of a vast majority of the Texas vote. I mean to show the farmers of Texas that someone in Austin is fighting for them.

**Miriam:** "The vast majority!" Dear, how are you so clever?

**Ouida:** Daddy, how are you going to beat Thomas Ball? Doesn't he have a whole town near Houston named after him?—Tomball?

**Miriam:** Ouida Fergusson! What have I told you about listening to other's conversations with which you have no part?

**Ouida:** I could hardly say. (*Ouida flounces in, followed by Dorrace shuffling behind*) I wasn't listening when you told me last. Hello father! Welcome home! Did you have a pleasant time in Dallas? Is it really true that you are the future governor?

**Jim:** Haha! Howdy, princess. I had as pleasant a time as could be expected without my girls. But I'm not governor yet. I have an opponent to beat.

**Miriam:** You ought to be ashamed of yourself for hiding behind the wall so as to eavesdrop. Haven't I taught you better? (*Ouida and Jim exchange glances and laugh*) Your sister would never do such a thing.

**Ouida:** With all the times you've reminded me that 'Dorrace would never do such a thing', I wonder if she does anything at all.

**Miriam:** Ouida!

**Ouida and Miriam:** Daddy?/Jim?

**Jim:** Let her alone, darling. A man doesn't want to come home to house of squabbling women.



**Ouida:** *[sighs]*

**Jim:** Now let me read y'all some of my speech I've been working on and tell me what you think. "My opponent, Thomas Ball, is a member of the Houston Club. Now they say Ole Tom is an ardent prohibitionist, but Mr. Ball's Club, never fails to serve dram whiskey every Sabbath. Ole Tom may enjoy his cards over soda, but his friends figure over gin. His friends say that Tom is drier than tinder, but his own town, Tomball has five saloons!"

**Miriam:** Forgive me, dear, for interrupting. But Jim, that isn't for you to say. Let others criticize the man before you speak shamefully in public.

**Jim:** Miriam, you are always so sensitive and careful with you words; you're wonderful. And what you are saying would be true if my audience was targeted toward, how should I say, educated people? Like yourself! But the farmers I'm talking to enjoy a little harmless name-calling. They enjoy a catyumpus, cause deep-down they're feeling mighty angry.

### **SCENE 8: Governor Jim and Miriam: dinner with Hobby and Hogg**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Hobby:** A toast for our new governor, and his amazing victory. A man of destiny, the first to address the needs of poor tenant farmers in our midst!

**Jim:** Why thank you, Bill, and a toast to you as well. May your term as lieutenant governor be the most successful on record.

**Miriam:** Mr. Hobby, I would like to make some new rules known. I acceded to Jim's request to allow alcohol to be served at this meal, but in the future, the governor's mansion will gain a reputation as a place of virtue and temperance.

**Ouida:** Mother, please don't forget to add that coffee, teas, and sodas will also be added to the governor's menu, along with lemonade, and sarsaparilla.

**Miriam:** Ouida, please!

**Jim:** Miriam if we don't have root beer, instead of beer, and ginger ale instead of ale, you'll never persuade people to take the high road like you do. (Turns to Hobby laughing) Bill, we'll just have to find other stomping grounds if we want something stronger.

**Dorrace:** O Mr. Hobby and Mr. Hogg, we should tell you as well that Mama has no ash trays.

**Miriam:** We women have to endure criticisms these days just to keep our homes pure.

*(awkward silence)*

**William Hogg:** Governor, if you will permit me to change the subject: we Houstonians, Bill and I here, were very impressed that you won our own Harris County. And you even beat Tom Ball in his own backyard. How is it possible that you have come so far so fast, I mean, in your own words?

**Jim:** *(With charm)* You've simply got to dare to seize what others merely covet.

**William:** Really? Is that a philosophy of yours?

**Jim:** You could make the argument.

**William:** I beg your pardon, but that to me sounds like an unstable creed to live by when you're governing a state as large and great as this one.

**Jim:** Thanks for obliging me with your input, but I'll remind you that you're only the *son* of a governor.

**William:** The son of a *great* governor. I doubt even you could do better.

**Jim:** That's the funny thing about partiality. Makes it difficult to take a man seriously. *(Laughter from everyone except Hogg)*

### **SCENE 9: Miriam and the Press: Women's Suffrage.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Reporter A:** What from a woman's perspective what do you think about your husband's performance so far as governor?

**Miriam:** From the time he first courted me, I have felt a growing admiration for his courage. Jim has boldly pursued goals with the legislature that has unnerved others even to contemplate.

Reporter A: Who do you think your husband is really trying to help?

Miriam: There are children in our fair state who don't even know the months of the year. And now my husband's education bill is going to provide better schooling for our state's future.

Reporter B: There are some that say that your husband is being unfair to landlords.

Miriam: Well, I have known families living by the river bottoms in tar-smearred cloth tents to pick cotton, and now my husband is working to lower their rents. The day is coming when young children and mothers of tenant farmers are going to be able to afford a roof over their heads. And I am his biggest admirer for this.

**Reporter C:** One final question. As the first lady of Texas, do you think a victory for women's suffrage would be a blow to your husband, who has stood against it?

**Miriam:** For myself, I have led such a sheltered life and such a contented life that I have not really given any thought to the subject of women's suffrage. My husband has always attended to every business care. I have never had to feel the responsibility of any of that sort of thing, and even if I had the right to vote, I do not think that I would care to use that right.

### **SCENE 10: Temple State Bank's Hosea Poe Sends a Letter Asking for Help**

*Text on Screen: Temple Texas, December 1916.*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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#### **Dear Misters Pendleton and Maedgan:**

There are some problems with the Governor's Bank. More than a few, as a matter of fact. This is a scandal I've long feared. Allow me to explain.

Gentleman, I must begin with saying that I am immensely sorry. I want to apologize for opposing you. You have been right all along: the governor has set me up as a pawn in a larger game. He has used me.

I was young and ambitious. Here was the governor-elect backing me to become the president of his bank—Temple's newest! He set me up as the caretaker of his beautiful 7<sup>th</sup>

Street mansion. My wife was enthralled. It seemed to be the chance of a lifetime; but it is turning out to be something more like a trap. Please don't laugh. I don't want sympathy; and I would prefer not to receive scorn. Gentlemen, previous events have attested to your wisdom, and I now I'm sorely in need of your advice and any help you can spare.

Let me tell you what has been happening at the Governor's bank. From the start, the governor's improvidence and corruption were in evidence, but I was too dazzled by my prospects to see it. The governor has always leaned on this bank, drawing out heavy lines of credit that have been both illegal and downright preposterous. Before he left, he forward-dated more loans that could be drawn on the day of his inauguration. He has encouraged others to borrow audaciously. The bank has awarded generous dividends to the governor and his friends, on deposits drawn from suspect sources. Today, the governor regularly issues overdrafts.

I write with remorse as I pen you these words: until now, I have tried to pay them.

I have taken this matter to the state's Insurance and Banking Commission; and what a story that is! The late John Patterson, a good and loyal Ferguson appointee, had no time for my complaints against the governor. Shortly after, Patterson was shot at point blank by an enraged Texas banker, T. R. Watson, and killed. The Commission fell to pieces, although it now has another Ferguson appointee. My charges are going nowhere.

Gentlemen, this is insanity! I beg of you to help me escape this position. I cannot continue to be a party to Jim Ferguson's schemes. I am willing to testify against the governor, if only you could arrange the details.

Yours Faithfully,

Hosea Poe

### **SCENE 11: Ouida and Miriam rejoice over Jim's second Gubernatorial Campaign win.**

*Text on Screen: Austin January 1917, after Jim Ferguson's Re-Election as Governor*

*Setting:*

*Camera: cameraman in the doorway, as Ouida storms out, he backs up, she leans against the wall outside; the shot encompasses Miriam angry in the room, and Ouida hurting in the hall.*

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**Ouida:** I knew it! I just knew it! I never doubted him for a moment. I knew that if the people of Texas had any sense at all, he couldn't help but be re-elected!

**Miriam:** Your father is the cleverest man I ever knew.

**Ouida:** And I'm particularly glad because some of the girls at school--especially Julia and Deborah--are such snobs.

**Miriam:** They're like that group of University types in Austin that are just insufferable. They hold their noses so high, I think they'd drown in a rainstorm.

**Ouida:** They had the nerve to say that Daddy was going to lose!

**Miriam:** They probably got that impudence from their parents.

**Ouida:** I can relate. Well, Mother, I have to go now. Carrie is having a tea party with some guests on her family's new veranda, and I was invited . . .

**Miriam:** Wait a minute, young lady, I thought you were coming with me this afternoon to our missionary circle.

**Ouida:** Oh there are no young girls that come except Heidi, who has a German accent so strong you could stumble over it, and Hannah (says her name in a derogatory way). Besides, Daddy says that it's better to let people alone so they can come to God in their own way.

**Miriam:** Oh, your Daddy couldn't know about things like that because he never goes to church.

**Ouida:** I thought you said he was the smartest man you ever knew.

**Miriam:** He is. Did it ever occur to you that you ought to ask my permission before attending the tea party? Did you stop to think that I might want you with me?

**Ouida:** No, it didn't. I figured Dorrace was more suited for that type of saintly activity.

**Miriam:** Perhaps you would be, too, if you stepped inside a church every once in a while instead of hanging around with a bunch of boys.

**Ouida:** At least *they* enjoy my company!

**Miriam:** *They* will lead you down the wrong path, Ouida! "Bad company corrupts good morals!"

**Ouida:** So does a condescending mother! [storms out of the room]

**Miriam:** Ouida Ferguson, you get back here!

## SCENE 12: Jim confronts University Official with Charges

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Jim:** If the University of Texas cannot be maintained as a Democratic University, then we ought to have no university. The bats and owls can roost in it for all that I care!

**Dr. Robert Vinson:** Governor, I came to you today, with answers for all of the questions you have had about our spending. I have references for all of the faculty members whose ability you question. On that subject, sir, how can I simply dismiss certain administrators or faculty members without a given reason?

**Jim:** Mr. Vinson, I have told you in a previous letter,

**DR. Vinson:** Excuse me sir. It's *Doctor* Vinson.

**Jim:** (*acknowledges the interruption but not the title*) ...a previous letter which I am sure you have on file, that if you could not abide with the general will of the people, especially as expressed again in my recent re-election, then I do not care to confer any more with you. I will continue to take up the matter with the trustees of the university, as, I am sure, you have done.

**Dr. Robert Vinson:** (long pause) Sir, "The University of Texas" . . .

**Jim:** (*mimics the Doctor's tone*) "The University of Texas?"—remember that title, Mr. Vinson! It is not *your* university, it is not the *faculty's* university, (*slowly and very softly*) it is the University of (*loud and emphatic*) Texas! And I am that state's governor!

## SCENE 13: Jim's UT enemies confer with Hobby.

*Text on Screen: Austin, March 1917*

*Setting:*

*Camera: Begins with static look at UT Austin, the way it was in 1917.*

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**William Hobby:** Gentlemen you have proven to me the guilt of the governor on several counts.

**William Hogg:** As a target, the governor is a bull's-eye as big as the moon. He had a mystery loan for \$156,500, and he won't reveal the source. He has these strange, non-itemized dealings with the Achilles Grocery Store. He has lots of verbal agreements and all sorts of hedging between what is for state-sanctioned purposes and what is for his family. He mortgages real estate, and then asks that the mortgage not be recorded so he can go out and mortgage the same real estate for \$70,000 through another line. There is no limit to the number of his bank notes that raise major questions about graft, questionable consulting deals, overdue payments, neglect, and financial integrity.

**Dr. Robert Vinson:** For uncovering this whole unseemly story, Mr. Hogg, our university cannot thank you enough. Your sainted father was our state's best governor, and now you have rescued the University of Texas. Thank you for taking the initiative to set up a law office in Austin for the sole purpose of fighting Jim Ferguson—the worst philistine our state has ever produced.

**William Hobby:** Of course one problem is that heretofore, Ferguson has turned everything to his advantage.

**Robert Vinson:** We see that as he deals with us. He makes so many mad accusations, he so consistently vetoes every appropriation that we go after all of them, and get lost. We have to hammer the governor on at least one point.

**William Hobby:** Yes, the very magnitude of his bad bank notes raises the question of how it was at all possible.

**Dr. Robert Vinson:** At every turn, we hammer him to pieces, and yet, there, he returns. Why? I fear it is because of our success on other fronts. We have prohibition, we have the university we wanted—and so many uneducated libertines have become victims.

**Hobby:** This could simply be the price of change . . .

**Dr. Vinson:** We go about tarring and feathering Ferguson, making him the biggest victim of all, and he is able to come back and excite the prejudices of all those who feel victimized. It's incredible!

**Hogg:** Incredibly infuriating. You're saying that in all my accusations, all I am doing is giving "poor farmer Jim" more sympathy?

**Dr. Vinson:** O No, Mr. Hogg, not at all. I think you are making progress. I simply think Mr. Hobby is right, and that we should continue to be wary. Remember, he won the election of 1916 with the University and all its friends unanimously against him.

**William Hobby:** Somehow, in some strange way, Ferguson has become immune to criticism.

**William Hogg:** A man may be “immune” to criticism, (*heated*) but no one is immune to justice! He must be removed from office.

**William Hobby:** You realize how difficult that is, right?

**William Hogg:** Why do you think I set up my law office in the first place? Gentleman, I can guarantee that there is more than enough fraud and misdemeanor on the part of our governor to morally compel us to fight for his impeachment.

**SCENE 14: Thunderstorm: Miriam, Dorrace, and Ouida in bed.**

*Text on Screen: April 1917*

*Setting: Thunder in background*

*Camera:*

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**Miriam:** (agitated) Dorrace, Ouida, come to my bed this very minute.

**Ouida:** Mother, its just a storm.

**Miriam:** It’s an electric storm!

**Ouida:** (from another room) Mother! You are being ridiculous. This house has a lightning rod. The governors mansion has survived many a storm.

**Miriam:** That didn’t matter in the case of my brother’s friend, Sam! Come in here quickly!

**Ouida:** I thought happened because he was outside!

**Miriam:** (top of lungs) Get in here!

(girls reluctantly come in and get with their mother in bed.)

(Silence: as Ouida is perturbed and physically distant from the other two, Dorrace submissive and snuggled next to her mother, and Miriam terrified)

**Miriam:** I never thought it would end like this.



**Dorrace:** (lovingly) Mama, just because Daddy had to resign, and we have to move, doesn't mean life is coming to an end.

**Miriam:** We're going to die impoverished as well.

**Dorrace:** Don't say that Mom.

**Miriam:** Daddy just told me for the first time, we have no money (cries). . . . Worse (sobs), we are drowning in debt.

**Ouida:** So the entire inheritance from Grandma Wallace is gone.

**Miriam:** Yes (tears flowing ), it has come to this.

**Dorrace:** O Mom, there there, everything will turn out alright. Remember that the Lord protects those who trust him.

### **SCENE 15: Ouida's parents confront her about her upcoming marriage.**

*Text on Screen: 1917<sup>1</sup>*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Ouida:** You might as well live with it; George and I are getting married. Meeting adjourned.  
*[starts to leave the room]*

**Miriam:** Ouida, you are 17 years old!

**Ouida:** Yes, quite the old maid, I know.

**Miriam:** When you first mentioned this, you entirely misled us; you led us to believe all you needed was permission to go on a picnic. You so mumbled your words that you were hardly intelligible!

**Dorrace:** (*Hurt*) Ouida are you just doing this so you can escape being a Ferguson?

**Ouida:** Oh would you shut up! I know the man of my life when I see him. George is an up and coming businessman, who actually has some money. He likes having me around and doesn't govern my every move from dawn to dusk. Besides, if money were leather, you

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<sup>1</sup> In February of 1918, Ouida marries George Nalle at Christ Church Episcopal in Temple.

wouldn't have enough to saddle a junebug. Why should I be tied to a family who can barely afford oatmeal twice a day?

**Jim:** Ouida, darlin', you do what's best for you.

**Miriam:** Jim Ferguson! How could you say such a thing? She will ruin our reputation.

**Jim:** Ouida, sweetie, it's your bed—make it the way you think is right; but please don't ever say your daddy did not provide for you. *(starts to exit)*

**Miriam:** I cannot believe what I am hearing. *(Jim stops)* Never once have you tried to guide her in the right direction.

**Jim:** *(Turning sharply)* I don't need a woman telling me how to run my household.

**Miriam:** You have indulged her every whim since the day she was born.

**Ouida:** And you've done nothing but dote over Dorrace since the day she born.

**Miriam:** That's not true! She simply never needed as much reprimand.

**Jim:** If you hadn't played favorites, maybe Ouida wouldn't have needed the reprimanding in the first place.

**Miriam:** Oh, *I've* played favorites? Allow me to remind you of the time when *your* daughter stole a hat.

**Jim:** She did no such thing.

**Miriam:** And you let her get away with it. She waltzed into the hat shop, spotted one that struck her fancy, the most expensive, of course. She snatched it up and skipped home, knowing full well that you would agree to go back and pay for it.

**Jim:** She was a child, Miriam.

**Miriam:** Oh I'm just getting started with the way that girl has sullied our good name. What about the time—

**Ouida:** "Love keeps no record of wrongs," but Miriam Ferguson certainly does.

*(Moment of silence)*

**Ouida:** *(Stone)* Wedding's at Christ Church Episcopal. *(Exits, leaving the others stunned)*

**SCENE 16: Letter to the Brewers: Jim Proposes a New Plan.**

*Text on Screen: 1917*

*Setting:*

*Camera: Suggestion open to revision: Film him as he composes his letter on his desk, and have his hand rest on the 'black book'.*

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Mister Brewer:

At your request, I leave your name anonymous. But I can assure you, that our connection is by no means in danger of being made public. You can depend on my word that I can insure your business flourishes under my protection without worry of interference from the law. As you may have heard, I have lost a fight with the University of Texas. However, all is not lost. The seeming defeat has gained me friends and allies all over the state.

These people, coincidentally, are your friends and allies too. These are people who are quickly tiring of these tout-ers of temperance who seem to be under the impression that the sun rises each morning for the sole purpose of hearing them crow. These friends of ours, like you and I, also find another group particularly taxing: the superpatriots—those who are involving our country in useless crusades at the expense of the citizens.

I will presently come to the point: I have a book that I am sure would be of particular interest to you. This book contains an extensive list of not only key supporters you and I have have all over the state, but also lists people chomping at the bit to do us favors.

There are policemen willing to look the other way or keep guard for us; judges who are ready to serve unusually lenient sentences or supply subpoenas; the book shows who would subscribe to a new newspaper (in English, mind you) and with an American editor funded by us so as to avoid worry about it being censored. This book will inform you as to every German-American interest you have: opposing the superpatriots and prohibition at every turn.

There are even some listed in this book who are powerful enough keep your breweries in operation.

Though the leather binding would disagree in color, I refer to this as “my black book.” Mr. Brewer, rest assured that this book stays safe in my possession so that I may tend to it often, adding and revising constantly as we gain new supporters.

But, as I’m sure you were anticipating, this information does not come without a price. Fear not, for I propose no preposterous fee, but a reasonable trade: I desire to publish my own newspaper, and I know you can make this happen for me. The newspaper will accomplish

three purposes: it will tell our story, it will thrill our people without being seen as pro-German or treasonous, and it will identify all who are on our side.

So, Mr. Brewer, what will be your response?

Until we meet again,

Jim Ferguson

### **SCENE 17: Jim giving speeches to gain support**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Mount Pleasant, Texas*

*Camera:*

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**Jim:** My friends here in Mount Pleasant, you too want to know about this loan I am accused of receiving. Very well, I will tell you. I signed my name in blood, in a solemn promise not to reveal the name of a dear friend who made the loan. And then the university people from Austin want to drill me under oath: “Where did you get the loan?!” They have as much stake in a man’s word as a tomcat for a marriage license!

**Jim:** Prohibition has its own color—white, for the whitewashed tombs of the Pharisees. And there is even a new order, the Ku Klux, prowling around in pillowcases if they could fit in the shoes of older order. And these new white-robed priests of devilment aren’t content with the law against alcohol! They want to take away your rights as citizens; they want to invade your convivial lives with friends and family; they want to have influences over your children’s educations, and enroll you in their Sunday Schools!

**Jim:** Let me tell you about the “Kandidate” for the Senate: Earl Mayfield. He is a Klansman. He is also a lowdown stinking, contemptible, pusillanimous, gambling little upstart hypocrite. I would like all of my friends here to sign up for our *Ferguson Forum* newspaper after my talk, and you will learn all you need to know about Mayfield’s scandalous private life, and many more pressing issues.

**Jim:** Friends, I talked to thirty thousand men last week. And when I said that our current governor, William Hobby, is a sissy, every one of them, except for two nodded in agreement. William Hobby has the backbone of a jellyfish, and has become the kept man of the prohibitionists, the Ku Kluxers, and highfalutin professors. As Lieutenant Governor, he was

elected with me in 1914, on my coat-tails, and by my approval, and when trouble came around, he turned traitor to me, seized the office, and helped drive me out.

(break, camera hones back on Jim)

**Jim:** Where in these times is your right to share a festive meal with your friends? Gone! With poll taxes keeping our farmers from votin', where is your right to vote? Gone! With the government running the economy in our recent war, what happened to our business freedom? Gone! What has happened to our Texas leaders in these days when we have Klandidates who have not the pride of a dirty sow, or the decency of a skunk? Gone!

### **SCENE 18: Ouida and Miriam discuss Political Trajectory and Marriage 1919-23**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Temple, October 1923*

*Camera:*

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**Miriam:** So George doesn't like you shopping so much, huh?

**Ouida:** Unlike some husbands, he manages his finances well. (*Changing the subject*) I see your move to Dallas hasn't worked out like were hoping.

**Miriam:** I thought your Daddy was going to back to practicing law, but it fell through, and now he's banging on barn doors, ready to run for governor again.

**Ouida:** Even if he won, he probably wouldn't be seated because of his impeachment. Why does your husband insist on beating a dead horse?

**Miriam:** Well let me just show you something. (Miriam comes back with tan book in which she is enthralled.) Here (lays it out before Ouida).

**Ouida:** What's this?

**Miriam:** This is power, Ouida. This is your daddy's black book.

**Ouida:** It's tan.

**Miriam:** Your Daddy calls it his black book so it's a black book. You ever hear me say, 'its what's on the inside that counts'?

**Ouida:** More often than I'd care to recount.

**Miriam:** It means he keeps tabs on everyone at all times. It shows all his supporters, everyone who subscribes to the *Ferguson Forum* newspaper, all who can get out the vote, his Vest Pocket vote, all to whom he has given favors . . .

**Ouida:** What do you mean by his "vest pocket vote?"

**Miriam:** That's the vote he got in Texas when he ran for United States President. Those are the 60 thousand voters in our state who will support your Daddy through thick and thin.

**Ouida:** Mother, aren't you concerned about the Ku Klux Klan?

**Miriam:** Well . . .

**Ouida:** You shouldn't go out of your way to bait a bear.

**Miriam:** I'm not as worried as most women would be. Your father has a lot of friends who would make life very miserable for the Kluxer who tried to harm us. Between the two of us, your Daddy and I have a lot of sway in this state.

**SCENE 19: Jim goes to Church; but so he can ask Miriam to run.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: They begin sitting at a table.*

*Camera:*

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Jim: Coffee and cake, and the cooing of a morning dove. Ah . . . Miriam, of all the ladies of Texas you are the most practical and most beautiful.

Miriam: Thank you, Jim. It's good to see you up so early on a Sunday morning.

Jim: Miriam, I would like to go to church with you today!

Miriam: Can I believe my ears? My husband is going to join Dorrace and me on the Lord's Day. My prayers have been answered! Jim this is going to be wonderful.

*Later, in the parlor at their home.*

Dorrace: Daddy, I'm so thankful you came to church with us today.

Jim: Darling, sometimes the sun does shine.

(Dorrace exits)

Miriam: I hope you enjoyed the reverend Williamson's preaching today.

Jim: Miriam, I've been doing a lot of thinking lately.

Miriam: Has the Lord been pressing on your spirit?

Jim: Something like that. You see, Miriam, you can't be dealing with polecats all the time without having your own problems.

Miriam. Of course, and that is why Jesus (angling to talk about God etc.). . .

Jim: I've talked close to forty men last week in my run from Galveston to San Antone, and their saying I can't win, upfront. But my closest friends support the view that with women getting the vote, the time has come for a woman governor, especially one who could rely on the experience of a man.

Miriam: What are you saying?

Jim: There's only one woman in the state, Miriam, who is upright, loyal, and sensitive to the needs of all our tenant farmers and their children, and that is . . .

Miriam: Merciful heavens. Me.

Jim: (Smiling) Of course.

Miriam: James Ferguson! Me- a woman- your wife- you are asking me to run for governor.

Jim: No, I'm telling you.

Miriam: Dear, throughout our marriage, I've supported your every decision, but this? This is ludicrous! I have no experience, I don't know the first—

Jim: Weren't you listening? I'll be guiding you every step of the way.

Miriam: Jim, I can't do this.

Jim: We don't have a choice. It's your duty, we have to clear our good name. The honor of our family is at stake.

Miriam: But Jim—

Jim: Don't you understand? There is no other way. Do you want me to go down in history the most corrupt governor of Texas? They think I can't manage money; they think I'm a thief and

that you and I, all along, have been taking money out of the pockets of the good people of Texas. You have to show them that the Fergusons are *for* Texas, not against it! Miriam, you *must* clear our name.

[camera pans backward to show Ouida eavesdropping]

**SCENE 20: “Ma” is coined/named in New York Journal**

*Text on Screen: June 1924*

*Setting: Breakfast Table*

*Camera:*

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Jim: The campaign is going well, don't you think?

Miriam: *(Glances up at him for a moment, then resumes reading)*

Jim: With your qualities as a housewife, and the votes for women, your appeal is even broader. *(Another pause)* Honey, there's no need to be anxious. I'm taking care of everything.

Miriam: I'm not anxious, Jim. There is no way I can win this election.

Jim: But *we* can, together. You have to remember that I'm practically running right alongside you. Everyone knows the people are getting two governors for the price of one.

Miriam: *(Moment of silence as she resumes reading, and then exclaims in shock)* What in Heaven's name?!

Jim: *(Startled, nearly spills his coffee)* What? What is it?

Miriam: I'm in the New York Journal!

Jim: Really? Let me see that. *(Reaches for it but Miriam withholds)*

Miriam: “Ma” Ferguson? *(Frantically skimming)* Where on earth did they get— *(Realizing)* Miriam Amanda.

Jim: *(Testing the sound)* “Ma” Ferguson.

Miriam: *(Outraged)* How dare they take the liberty of labeling me in view of the public eye with a nickname like that?

Jim: *(To himself)* This is brilliant.

Miriam: Can you imagine what this will do to my image?



Jim: (*Elated*) Yes I can! Oh this is wonderful! This will be one of the greatest political slogans in history. “Ma” Ferguson’. It’s catchy, and says everything to do with the backwoods-housewife and mother.

Miriam: ‘Ma’? I have never even allowed my children to call me that. And now the entire state will know me as “Ma”, as if I was some corn-fed hick?

Jim: No, dear. (*Points to the journal*) The whole country will know you as ‘Ma’. Can’t you see the appeal? Farmer Jim and Ma Ferguson... No, even better, Ma and *Pa* Ferguson. I need to make some phone calls. (*Jim exits*)

## **SCENE 22: Ma as Governor Commenting to Reporters**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Reporters had sketch pads.*

*Camera:*

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Reporter A: Madame Governor, we know your husband plans to be an important force in your administration, but are you prepared to represent our state along with national figures, especially with the present Republican administration?

Ma: As they say, “the back is equal to the burden,” and so is the bonnet. I look forward to representing the interests of Texas at the federal level.

Reporter B. Why do you always have that second chair behind your desk?

Miriam: Because a very special person sits there from time to time.

Reporter C. What do you think about the ruling of the State Textbook Commission that has decided to leave the word ‘evolution’ out of biological textbooks in our schools?

Miriam: I support Commission wholeheartedly. I am a Christian mother who believes that Jesus Christ died to save humanity, and I’m not going to let that kind of rot go into our textbooks.”

## **SCENE 23: Ma pardons a citizen**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Miriam at a tea table*

Camera:

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Woman: There is no one else to turn, Madame Governor. Please ma'am, he's my brother. I know he's done wrong, but he's all I've got.

Miriam: You understand this is a serious offence. Not only did he rob a bank, but people died as a result.

Woman: I know, ma'am, but doesn't the good Lord offer mercy? (*After a pause, she breaks down into hysteria*) Please, I'll pay anything.

Miriam: That won't be necessary, if you'll go see my secretary outside, he'll draw up the paperwork.

[Woman thanks Miriam profusely. Exits the room. Jim is waiting outside the door.]

Jim: Afternoon, ma'am.

Woman: Mr. Ferguson, how can I thank you enough for the kindness you have shown my brother and me?

Jim: Well ma'am, there's a *price to pay* for second chances.

### **SCENE 21: Jim Gets Miriam to Stay Home from Church**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Miriam and Jim in bed*

Camera:

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[Jim is sitting up in bed, reading the newspaper.]

**Miriam:** [wakes up, realizes the lateness of the hour] Jim, what time is it? Why didn't you wake me?

**Jim:** You needed your sleep.

**Miriam:** I'll be the judge of that! Oh, I should be at church by now.

**Jim:** [reaches to her] I was hoping you would stay home with me.

**Miriam:** Jim, I can't do that.

**Jim:** Sure you can! You need the rest. And I need some quality time with my dear wife.

**Miriam:** No. No, I can't do this. I need to be at the church.

**Jim:** Why do you want to hear those hypocritical ministers anyway? You know they're just against us. Take a load off. Rest. Stay with me.

**Miriam:** [wilts back into bed] Maybe you're right.

## **SCENE 24: Miriam Dreams**

*Text on Screen*

*Setting*

*Camera*

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**Miriam:**(in bed turning)

[The dream: Miriam is walking on a trail through a forest at night. At first, she is calm and peaceful, but the trail slowly becomes smothered in leaves. Miriam doesn't notice until she is completely lost. She hears frightening noises.]

**Miriam:** (*Panicking*) Where's the path? Where is it?

[As a thunderstorm begins to form, she sees Jim from behind, and calls out to him. Without turning to her, he only wonders further into the darkness, and Miriam, with nowhere else to go, follows him. A lightning crash ends the dream.]

**Miriam** (in bed waking up): Oh God help me! (*Hyperventilating*) Just a dream, just a dream...

## **SCENE 25: Ma and Pa have heartfelt Conversation about bribes**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Miriam:** Jim, why have you been accepting bribes?

**Jim:** Miriam, you know how poor we were after I was impeached, and how our enemies pulled our farm right out from under us. The rich in our state are going to crush the ordinary people unless remarkable measures are taken. No one else will act, so we must. We live in a remarkable time.

**Miriam:** I can't accept this, Jim. You're telling me all these pardons, or at least good bit of them, have involved money?

**Jim:** Darling, only in cases where I knew the family involved deserved a second chance. You believe in mercy, don't you?

**Miriam:** Well of course—the Good Lord calls us to be merciful as He is merciful! But you just took their money like that?

**Jim:** Yes Miriam, I accepted money. It takes time for me to investigate these cases. It takes time to get to know the families. These people come from our people, and I've got to keep our people out of trouble; but that takes time, and time is money.

**Miriam:** I hardly know what to say.

**Jim:** Miriam, honey, you've got to remember: the rich have used prohibition, poll taxes, and the Klan to criminalize the people who weren't criminals to begin with. Miriam, you have to learn to defend the people—just the same way you defend your family. We will all be destroyed, if we waste time and energy worrying about moral scruples.

**Miriam:** Jim, you've all but made a pact with the devil!

**Jim:** No, no. Doesn't the Bible say something about helping those who need help? That's not a pact with the Devil—far from it!

**Miriam:** I just don't know.

**Jim:** Darling, if our enemies win, they will find some way to put us both in jail. We've got to work with our people. We need them; they need us.

**Miriam:** (deep in thought, not allowing Jim access)

**Jim:** We're doing God's work, Miriam.

**SCENE 26: W. Hobby, Dan Moody, and William Hogg discuss Highway Commission.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**William Hogg:** If my father were alive he would be for Dan Moody.

**W. Hobby:** Mr. Moody, it is my personal opinion that you should run for governor. The sentiment in this county alone is overwhelmingly in your favor. In fact, just the other day I heard someone say they would really like to see Dan Moody run for governor. They have lots of confidence in your ability, honesty, and integrity.

**Dan Moody:** I have wanted to do what's right; I strive to continue on that straight and narrow path. Your integrity, gentlemen, is providing the best kind of encouragement to pursue a leadership position of such significance.

**SCENE 27: Houston Women's Circle, Featuring W. Hobby as Speaker**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Minnie Fisher Cunningham:** Ladies, Miriam Ferguson is beginning to remind me of that Chorus Girl who said: "I may not have been a good girl, but I was good company." (laughter in background) Even in Temple, Miriam Wallace Ferguson did not join woman's groups to uplift culture. And now as governor she is befriending convicted felons and ravishers. The message this sends to the world about women with power has left a horrid taste in the mouth of society. Today to deflect that knife that is aimed at the heart of Texas, we have invited former governor, and editor of the Houston Post, William Hobby, to say a few words.

**William Hobby:** First of all Ms. Cunningham, thank you for the invitation to speak. Your work on the part of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association and the National League of Women Voters has been remarkable! And with you being the first Texas woman to run for the United States Senate, I question why you need me here to speak based on your drive

alone! (crowd laughs) But in all seriousness, ladies, today I must address a largely pressing matter-Fergusonism. It has once again reared its ugly head. As a writer, editor and journalist, I do my best to upkeep the Houston Post, one of the greatest papers in Texas. We pride ourselves in respecting the various shades of opinion. However, it is because I believe so strongly that in the coming election, there is only one candidate that can do Texas justice and save our state, I urge you strong women to cast your votes with Dan Moody. He is the one who has uncovered, and discovered a pattern of corruption so vast, that it should make every Texan blush. I am referring to the system of graft, nepotism, blackmailing, and intimidation that has accompanied the Fergusons' hold on power from the day they took office. Their reign of tyranny can end when we seize this opportunity to vote for a man willing to stand firm against ol' Jim.

**SCENE 28: Moody at Huntsville Suggests Jim needs a Prison Term.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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Moody: "During the first year of Ma Ferguson's reign, 1,200 convicted prisoners were pardoned, this brings to almost 4,000 the number of pardons granted by the Fergusons. I have compelling evidence that money has exchanged hands in sordid transactions involving these pardons. In the highway department alone in the last two years, we have seen private companies using expensive state equipment, thirty unnecessary positions being created, roads costing twice as much to build as in other states, major highways, once built, being deemed unusable, family members being hired, and out-of-control graft flowing from contracted companies into the hands of the Ferguson horde. The deeds of the Fergusons have not only been unprofessional, and self-serving, they have been downright illegal. I also believe that for his scandalous actions he should serve time in prison, that right here in Huntsville, in our great state prison, you should await a new detainee, former governor, Jim Ferguson! *(applause)* He is running this great state of ours through the mud and has made it into his own instrument of

profit, as he has done with all things. This 'Ferguson machine' must not just be stopped, it must be torn apart price by piece until nothing is left but rubble. Let us not have our children as they turn the pages of history, say that the Fergusons could do what they have done and still be returned to power in Texas.

### **SCENE 29: Ma, and Pa plan to fight back & discredit Moody.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: The Fergusons all helping to make a quick meal for themselves*

*Camera:*

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**Miriam:** (taking a frying pan, and waving it) I don't care, Moody has crossed the line, I'd like to jerk a knot in his tail! He's talking about making you go to prison just cause he's crossed the big oil companies. Daddy, send someone out to harass him now! (places frying pan on burner, turns up heat)

**Jim:** (sitting down in kitchen with magazine) Now dear, you of all people should know that you don't harass a candidate. You do go after his newspapers, and there's some already like the *Austin-American Statesman* that that are already being hushed by our lawsuits.

**Miriam:** Moody's trying to use his recent marriage as a plus. But between his new wife's odious overuse of lipstick and the smog of cigarette smoke the couple emits at every social occasion, there is something repulsive, disgusting about the whole thing

**Jim:** I still like the religious angle. I can see it now: "Dan Moody is a monkey-faced Baptist! He's trying to say he embraces evolution to please the university, and religion to please the prohibitionists. He's a lying, thieving hypocrite!"

### **SCENE 30: Newspaper Headlines, and Reports about the Election.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera: Focuses on Newspapers circling around, and then the text.*

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(Sound in background: Extra, Extra, read all about it! Dan Moody beats Ma Ferguson for governor)

(Read by Reporters A, B, and C)

New York Times: (the paper's title spins around on screen) "She [lost] her office, not as a woman, but as an inefficient and disappointing Governor."

New York Evening Post: (the paper's title spins around on screen) "Mrs. Ferguson is rejected because she was not governor herself."

Hartford Courant: (the paper's title spins around on screen) "The defeat of Ferguson-ism in Texas will be well-received throughout the country, as the state made a ridiculous exhibition of itself in electing to the governorship the wife of the discredited Jim Ferguson. Her specialty has been giving freedom to prisoners, and her administration has certainly not been without scandal. Clearly incompetent, the Texas governor's terms have undoubtedly been deeply injurious to the cause of women in politics in Texas, and across the country."

### **SCENE 31: Dorrace Praying**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Church bells toll outside*

*Camera:*

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**Dorrace:** O God, I am afraid. Dark deeds have finally come to light and my heart is overwhelmed and aching. What has happened to my family? They have been accused of serving the creature rather than the Creator that— God tell me it is not true! Tell me that my mother at least. (Sobs in a prolonged way that allows for a thought transfer from her mother to herself) The Fergusons have parted from your way for so long. I know I cannot save myself and deserve nothing, but Lord if I need to set myself apart to be brought back into your Heavenly fold, I ask that you give me the strength needed to pull away from such corruption. Have mercy on me, on us! Allow them to one day see the err of their ways.

### **SCENE 32: Ma and Pa move to Austin.**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*



Camera:

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**Jim:** Where would we be, if our friends hadn't gifted us with this (new) (Austin) home?

**Miriam:** We do have good friends. I just wish we hadn't accumulated so many powerful enemies.

**Jim:** Well, Mrs. Ferguson, do I get to carry you across the threshold or not?

**Miriam:** (avoiding the prospect—walking on through) What's our next stop, Jim—prison? Don't put it past that low-life Moody. Oh, our *dear new governor* (shutters). And yes it is wonderful to have friends; but when one's own daughter deserts the cause! (Hurt) I still find it hard to believe Dorrace abandoned us like that. What could she possibly be after that would be better than running Texas with us?

**Jim:** Dorrace just wasn't willing to do the kind of things that had to be done to win an election.

**Miriam:** Speaking about daughters, don't you think Ouida has been having too much alcohol lately?

**Jim:** Oh, that's just nerves, Miriam; and it's perfectly understandable. You know how it goes, the election goes bad, Aunt Kate dies. Dorrace and her husband leave us—what's next?

**Miriam:** As soon as we begin to look bad, the press paints us into a corner, and then all these people start turning against us!

**Jim:** Miriam, we have got to show our friends that we are going to continue to plead for them, and fight for their interests. If we don't continue to fight, and represent our vest-pocket voters, our enemies will waste no time in destroying us.

### **SCENE 33: Democratic Executive Committee Meeting: Moody vs. Jim**

*Text on Screen: Austin, Summer of 1931*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**William Hobby:** I would now like to introduce our governor, who I believe is as wise as a tree full of hoot owls, and as sound as an oak (smiles).

**Dan Moody:** Though I had hoped to run for a third term, my wife and I have decided that it is necessary for us to repair our personal estate. Working full time for the people of Texas should not be a lucrative proposition. (applause) I am happy to report that we have cut the expenditures for the making of highway miles in Texas in half. We have halted the liberal convict pardon policy of the preceding administration. And we have installed a state auditor to monitor future government contracts. It is our view, that the Democratic party of Texas should maintain these reforms, enact a stronger civil service law, and serve the people of Texas with devotion during this disastrous crash of the national economy (applause). Finally, let me say a word about those in our party, still concerned about vindicating a certain disgraced politician. We could no more vindicate Benedict Arnold by a majority vote than exonerate those who have consistently stolen from the people of Texas.

**Hobby:** We will now hear from the former governor, Jim Ferguson.

**Jim:** I would just like to say that Governor Moody is a coward for not running for a third term. (camera shot on Moody shaking his head) Perhaps you have heard of another Moody running for office this time, the man they call Soapy Moody, driving around Austin in a laundry wagon. Soapy has said that there are plenty of good opportunities to see the governor lying—just watch him move his lips! You know Soapy’s antics show how the people are disgusted with politics. They are losing their jobs, and their voice in the government. I think Soapy has more brains and honesty than the governor!

**SCENE 34: Houston Women’s Circle: Fear of the Depression and the Fergusons**

*Text on Screen:*

*Camera:*

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**Oveta Culp Hobby:** Annie Blanton! I am so glad you could drop by. What an honor to have the first woman elected to a state office in Texas here, visiting from the state capital.

**Minnie Cunningham:** It is always pleasant to get together with you. You are a wonderful inspiration, Annie, and we love you dearly (hugs her)

**Annie Blanton:** Oh thank you Minnie, I can concur. I look not to all those pompous males at our university in Austin who think they preside over the indicative sentence; I look to the women who have brought higher civilization to Texas.

*(All three ladies toast in agreement with the statement.)*

**Annie:** (continuing) We have faced numerous trials, with our state overrun with so many male and now female ya-hoos, but we shall overcome. (Segueing new subject) Oveta, I did receive a lot of support from a cultured gentleman I hear you have some acquaintanceship with, former Governor William Hobby of the Houston Post!

**Oveta:** (shows diamond ring) Yes we both have journalism in our veins. You know William thinks that it might take the state's first female leader to rid us of our first female governor.

**Annie Blanton:** Ha. Thanks. (squashing idea---she is now a professor and is comfortable) How dreadful it is that Ma Ferguson is jumping to the head of the line again.

**Minnie Cunningham:** Ross Sterling beat Miriam in the last election; where does she get the audacity to run against him again? I want to believe that the majority of the state is over their Ferguson antics, but with this depression that has hit the states, any leader with a little coin is being eyeballed by the general public. Jim Ferguson is feeding off it. Miriam does not stray from their slogan "two governors for the price of one"; her acting as a puppet for her husband disgraces our goal for Women's Rights.

**Annie Blanton:** Absolutely! For 100 years, the best women in our nation have been pleading for a voice, saying that we, the fairer sex, will raise politics out of the muck! And the women have maintained prohibition, defeated the boss and saloon element, and supported professional government in every state. But now we are treated to this miserable flibbertygibbet, this most wretched testimony of debauched humanity. No matter how thrilling it is to say "we have a woman in high office", we cannot scoop to the lows of accepting it as a triumph when it is but a ruse. Times are hard right now, but they would only worsen if those two return to the capital. The wellbeing of Texas has never been their interest, nor would it be now.

### **SCENE 35: Pa speaks for Ma Against Ross Sterling**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Jim:** Yes, me and Ma are poor—but that is because we are honest! You know the man Dan Moody installed as governor? Ross Sterling is his name. He thinks we'll survive the depression. That's because he's a plump millionaire oilman with more money than all of the farmers of northeast Texas put together! Mr. Sterling worries about raising bonds for state highways, about how he can choke off more of what remains of our economy. He doesn't care about the

small, independent producers of oil. He doesn't care about the low price of cotton, boll weevils eating out your crop! He doesn't care about the children who lack shoes! He doesn't care!

**SCENE 36: Will and Oveta Culp Hobby discuss Miriam's win**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**William:** Well, Oveta, I am afraid our Texas voters of 1932 were about as rational as the mob that stormed the Bastille.

**Oveta:** It is incomprehensible that the Fergusons are back again. How can a couple so vile get themselves elected again and again?

**William:** I think it's the way they use their corruption. If they just robbed from the public till, they wouldn't last. But they pillage the people of Texas *in the name* of the people of Texas. They are charming their way toward criminalizing our entire state!

**SCENE 37: Miriam in Office Accused by the Press of Corruption.<sup>2</sup>**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Reporter B:** There has been a lot of speculation, Madame Governor, that because of the remarkable support you received in Duval, and other South Texas counties in the last election, that the votes were rigged.

**Miriam:** The explanation is simple: the people down there had no sympathy for a rich Houston Oilman.

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<sup>2</sup> How could we make subtle allusions to the fact that Jim and Miriam are like a superannuated Bonne and Clyde?

**Reporter B:** But how can you explain the fact that you won 95 percent of the vote there? Is it not that the Fergusons are allied with the Parr family from Duval who have a questionable reputation?

**Miriam:** Why are you all bent on suspecting foul play? I think it's a wonderful thing when a community meets together before the election, getting the town and country people together to working out their differences!

**Reporter A:** Governor, the issue of Bonnie and Clyde is again and again in the national news. For two years their unchecked bank robberies and holdups have made a mockery of justice in Texas.

**Miriam:** The Barrow Gang is an example of what happens when oblivious rich people, like Herbert Hoover, Dan Moody, and Ross Sterling hold the reins of government: the common people are ignored. Left to fend for themselves, some take extreme measures.

**Reporter B:** I have recently verified the following with the office of the Attorney General of Texas, James Allred. According to him both Buck and Clyde Barrow have received clemency in the past from Texas' highest office, and that you in particular have consistently supported clemency for the Barrow gang.

**Miriam:** How dare you accuse me of abetting crime! If it wasn't for that little Judas attorney general, Jimmy Allred, blowing his horn, we would all be doing a lot better!

### **SCENE 38: Miriam Dreams Again:**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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[Miriam tosses and turns]

[ Miriam, holding her Bible, approaches a chapel. She tries to open the door but it's locked. She knocks persistently until Dorrace peaks through the entryway.]

Miriam: Dorrace?

Dorrace: Mother? What are you doing here?

Miriam: Well I know I haven't been to church in awhile but I thought I might—

Dorrace: I'm sorry but you can't come in.

Miriam: What? This is a church!

Dorrace: Mother, they all know.

Miriam: Know what? What are you talking about?

Dorrace: *(Gesturing behind Miriam) Them. (With that, she shuts the door and locks it.)*

[Miriam bangs on the door and tries to get inside. She looks down at her Bible, but it is no longer there. In its place is the black book. She sees an angry mob shouting 'fraud!' 'lies!' etc. Miriam, with her back to the church doors and terrified, tries to calm the mob but to no avail.]

Miriam: It's not my fault! I can explain!

[The angry shouts get louder as she crouches in fear. She awakes in a scream. She sits up in bed and sees the black book on top of her Bible on her nightstand.]

### **SCENE 39: Ma and Pa during his last lucid moments before his death**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting: Jim Ferguson is on his deathbed. 1944.*

*Camera:*

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Jim: *(He holds the black book in his hands)* Dear, we have fought the good fight. We have served the people of the great state of Texas above all things. God will be proud of us for what we did.

Miriam: *(A beat)* We did what we had to do.

Jim: You're proud of me, too. Aren't you, Miriam?

Miriam: Jim, I fear for you. I fear for us. Maybe it's not too late.

Jim: Miriam, you know I've prayed but little all my life. *(Finally being truly honest)* I'm a dying man. It's too late for me. If there is a God up there, and He knows what I've done, my soul is damned.

Miriam: Jim, no. *(Takes black book away and places her Bible in his hand. After a moment, he pulls it closer.)*

### **SCENE 40: Miriam talks at LBJ**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**Miriam:** *(On the phone)* Lyndon, I'm pleased to hear of your running for president. I know that you and your father were Ferguson men from day one... Yes of course... Anything I can do. In fact, I have with me right now lists of people that can and will help you. *(fetches and holds Black Book)* I'm going to call George Parr right now, and he's going to deliver South Texas to you, mark my word. And he's not the only one who will help... *(Miriam continues to turn the pages).*

#### **SCENE 41: Will and Oveta Hobby discuss Election of 1948 and Note Ma's Vote-Throwing**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

*Camera:*

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**William:** 1948 is going to go down in history as the most sordid election in Texas history.

**Oveta:** What did we come to in this state, dear? In 1942, we had Pappy O'Daniel's shenanigans; and now Lyndon Johnson wins the state by 87 votes, thanks to voter intimidation, fraud, blackmail, and ballot-box stuffing! Bill, do you think the Ferguson Political Machine was involved?

**William:** In an election like this, you could bet your life and the reputation of the *Houston Post*. Oveta, there's no doubt: the Ferguson machine was in high gear again.

#### **SCENE 42: Ouida Clears the Family Name**

*Text on Screen:*

*Setting:*

Camera: Doorstep: profile of Ouida

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**Ouida:** [on the doorstep, a bit hungover, takes deep breath, knocks]

**Miriam:** [opens the door] Ouida.

**Ouida:** Mother.

**Miriam:** It's been a while.

**Ouida:** I've been busy.

**Miriam:** What brings you here?

**Ouida:** There's something I want you to see.

**Miriam:** Well, don't just stand there on the porch like calf looking at a new gate.

[shuts door as Ouida makes her way to the parlor. They sit rigidly across from each other waiting for the other to speak.]

**Miriam:** You've been drinking.

**Ouida:** *(Pauses, unconsciously fixes herself.)* Mother, I brought you this. *(Pulls out book)*

**Miriam:** What is it?

**Ouida:** The truth. Or the truth that should have been.

**Miriam:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Ouida:** Well I— after Daddy passed, people were saying things.

**Miriam:** They always do.

**Ouida:** Things about him...and about you. And I couldn't stand it. [Miriam begins to soften] And I figured, if history's only true as the pen, maybe I could...*(Starting again)* You may not know it, but I remember the stories you told us when we were young; all about your childhood, and how Daddy got you to marry him, *(half laughing)* I even added the part about how I stole that stupid hat. Well, anyway it's all there.

**Miriam:** All of it?

**Ouida:** Everything the world needs to know about Ma and Pa.

**Miriam:** *(Stoically overwhelmed)* I don't know what to say.



**Ouida:** (*Stands and places book in Miriam's hand*) Mama, (*Simultaneously touching the edge of Miriam's hand and the book.*) I've cleared our name.