

# **Ida Tarbell**

Written by

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BASED ON A TRUE STORY

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FADE IN ON:

**AN OIL WELL - AFTERNOON**

A tall wooden OIL DERRICK reaches up into the sky. Stones bounce off the surface of it. WE PAN DOWN TO REVEAL the source. Three young boys using it for target practice. Two brothers MIKE and PAUL WALLACE, 11 and 9, and another more delicate-looking boy about the same age: WILL TARBELL (10). Finally, they pick up their school bags and move on.

Title: **Pennsylvania. 1868**

**EXT. FOOT BRIDGE - AFTERNOON**

We follow the three boys as they walk home from school. They cross a rickety wooden bridge that spans a small stream.

All three are sucking on red "jawbreakers" as they go.

MIKE

Our pop says oil is the future, and everyone in Titusville is gonna be rich cos now we have it.

PAUL

I hope we're gonna be rich. Cos when I'm rich, I know exactly what I'm gonna buy.

MIKE

What are you gonna buy?

PAUL

(big red grin)  
Sixteen gazillion Cherry Bombs.

Will and Paul share a look. Laugh.

MIKE

My brother. Genius.

As the boys reach the far side of the bridge, they are intercepted by another group of boys. Their leader is CHUCKIE PEARL, a husky and freckled 12-year old menace to society.

WILL

(face darkening)  
Oh no, Chuckie Pearl. Keep walking.

CHUCKIE PEARL

(calling out)  
Hey girls! Where ya'll headed?

WILL

Nowhere.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
Whatcha eating there, Tar Barrel?

WILL  
Nothing.

Chuckie rifles his pockets. Finds the red jawbreakers.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
Hoo-whee! Cherry Bombs! Looks like you boys  
been holding out on us again.

WILL  
Hey, come on. Give those back. My dad gave  
those to me.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
And now you've given them to me. New bridge  
toll.

MIKE  
Give 'em back, Chuckie. Those aren't yours!

CHUCKIE PEARL  
And who's gonna make me, you?

The three boys just stand there frozen, until--

YOUNG IDA (O.S.)  
Me.

REVEAL: 12 year-old IDA TARBELL. A tall, gawky, string bean  
of a girl, carrying a big bag of books.

Chuckie and his minions bust out laughing.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
Well, well, well, if it isn't little Miss  
Titty Barrel! Boy, for a second there I  
thought we were in trouble.

Will Shakes his head at his sister, "Please don't."

YOUNG IDA  
They don't belong to you. Now give 'em  
back.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
Or what?

YOUNG IDA  
Or I'll make you do it.

Something about the tone, or the fierce set of her jaw, but  
we know that she means business. And Chuckie knows it too.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
 Why don't you run along home to your momma.  
 I'm sure she's missing ya.

YOUNG IDA  
 I said: Give. Them. Back.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
 Make me.

YOUNG IDA  
 (a sigh)  
 Have it your way.

Ida steps forward, and in one swift motion, she slaps his face, twists his ears and kicks him in the shins. Chuckie becomes enraged. He lunges at her. But Ida just holds her ground, and then pops him right on the nose.

Chuckie goes down like the coward he is. The others laugh.

CHUCKIE PEARL  
 (bawling)  
 Owww! My nose! She done busted my nose! I'm getting my dad. Help!!!

Chuckie stumbles off with his bloodied nose. His cronies soon tuck tail and lope away also.

YOUNG IDA  
 That's right. Run along home to your momma.  
 "I'm sure she's missing ya."

A beat. Will stares at his sister in disbelief.

WILL  
 You just punched Chuckie Pearl in the nose!

YOUNG IDA  
 And do you know why I did that?  
 (Will shakes his head)  
 Cos he's a bully, Will. And once a bully knows you're not afraid of him, he can't bully you anymore.

WILL  
 Weren't you afraid of him?

YOUNG IDA  
 Course I was. But he didn't know that, did he? Come on, I'll race ya home.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN. Over this, our title:

**Ida Tarbell**

**INT. MOVING TRAIN - DAY - 1901**

IDA TARBELL, career woman, 43, rides on a train to New York. She watches a SMALL BOY sitting directly opposite her, his cheeks stuffed to capacity with RED CHERRY BOMBS.

Ida smiles at him. Remembering. Maybe he smiles back at her.

Then, a train conductor marches down the aisle, shouting...

CONDUCTOR

New York! Next and last stop, New York!

**EXT. NEW YORK CITY - SOME TIME LATER**

Ida walks down a crowded Lexington Avenue wearing her Sunday best clothes. Her wholesome, buttoned up appearance belies a range of passions and a fiercely determined will.

She finds the address she is looking for, enters.

**INT. OFFICES OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida walks through a busy office, the place blue with cigarette smoke. Clacking typewriters, whooshing pneumatic tubes, and all the usual paraphernalia of publishing.

Title: **McClure's Magazine, 1901**

She approaches a young staffer (LOWRY, 32), busy typing.

IDA

Hello, I'm looking for Mr. McClure. Is he available?

LOWRY

I doubt it. Mr. McClure is a very busy man.

IDA

No, I have an *appointment* to see him. I'm here about a job.

LOWRY

Too late, I'm afraid. All the secretarial positions have been filled. But if you want to fill out an application--

He hands Ida a job application form. Continues typing.

IDA

(irritated)

I'm not a secretary, I'm a writer. Mr. McClure requested to meet with me.

Just then, another man appears, hands some copy to Lowry. This is PHILLIPS (50, grumpy). Ida turns to him instead.

IDA  
Are you Mr. McClure?

PHILLIPS  
No. Phillips.

IDA  
Where can I find him, please?

PHILLIPS  
(points)  
End of the hallway, on the right.

Ida turns to go, but not before having a little dig at Lowry.

IDA  
You might want to check your spelling.  
"Parallel" is two l's, one r. Even a secretary knows that.

She walks off. Lowry stares at his text, frowns. She's right.

HALLWAY -- FOLLOWING

A stencilled sign on a glass door reads: S.S. McClure.  
Publisher. Ida approaches, gives a timid knock.

SAM MCCLURE (O.S.)  
Not now, Phillips!

Ida knocks again, a little louder this time. Finally, a head pokes out.

SAM MCCLURE  
Oh, for Christ's sake, what is it now?

**SAM MCCLURE** is a compact ball of energy in his early 40's. Of Scots-Irish descent, with the red hair and fiery temperament to match. He is impeccably well-dressed for a publisher. He looks like what he is: a cyclone in a frock coat.

IDA  
Mr. McClure? I'm Ida Tarbell. We had an appointment?

SAM MCCLURE  
(totally forgot)  
Ah, Miss Tarbell! Of course! Welcome.  
Please, come in.

She enters McClure's office.

**INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

The place is a chaos of books, magazines, unread manuscripts. He deftly sweeps a bottle of Scotch under a coat.

SAM MCCLURE

You must pardon our appearance, I'm afraid we're still moving in. Thank you for coming, please have a seat. I trust you had a pleasant journey from...

IDA

Titusville. Pennsylvania.

SAM MCCLURE

Pennsylvania? Good Baptist folk down there, are they?

IDA

Some of them. We're Methodist.  
(drily)  
Less singing. More penance.

SAM MCCLURE

(finding a file)

I read your CV, it's very impressive. First woman to graduate from Allegheny College. Editor of the Chautauquan. Masters in French literature from the Sorbonne.

IDA

Pending...

SAM MCCLURE

I see you've written well-reviewed bios on Madame Roland, Napoleon and Abe Lincoln. You're quite ambitious, aren't you?

IDA

You mean "for a woman"?

SAM MCCLURE

I meant...for a writer.

A beat. Ida takes the compliment as intended.

IDA

Thank you.

SAM MCCLURE

I read your piece in Scribner's on Parisian cobblestones, I thought it was brilliant. Do you know why?

IDA

(smiles)

You have a thing for French limestone?

SAM MCCLURE

I couldn't care less about limestone. But you made me care. And I'm still not sure how you did it.

IDA

Well, sometimes you just have to find the right angle. The right way in.

SAM MCCLURE

Exactly. But not everyone can do that. Smoke?

IDA

No, thank you.

McClure lights up a cheroot. Puffing furiously on it as he paces around the room.

SAM MCCLURE

We're small, but we're growing fast. Our circulation right now is around 175,000. I think we can get up to 250 by next year. Have you read our magazine?

IDA

Yes. I have.

SAM MCCLURE

And..?

IDA

You want my opinion of your magazine?

SAM MCCLURE

That's what I'm asking you.

IDA

May I speak frankly, Mr. McClure?

SAM MCCLURE

Of course. I want you to.

IDA

(thumbing the magazine)  
Well, it's a little thing I know, but the print is too small. I had to squint just to read it, and my eyesight is pretty good. And this paper...it feels cheap to me.

SAM MCCLURE

(proudly)  
That's because it is cheap.

IDA

Is that how you want your readers to feel? Cheap? There are too many advertisements, it's distracting to the eye.

SAM MCCLURE

That's what pays our rent.

IDA

If you get more readers, maybe you can have fewer advertisers, but charge them more.

A long pause as McClure studies Ida. Intrigued.

SAM MCCLURE

Go on.

IDA

Well, the stories...forgive me, but they're a little obvious, don't you think?

SAM MCCLURE

Obvious?

IDA

Now don't get me wrong, it's interesting, but it's the low hanging fruit, isn't it? "The man who captured John Wilkes Booth" "The fat lady who sat on a burglar." Hearst is already doing that, and frankly, he's doing it a lot better.

(a beat)

The reader needs to feel that you care about your subject. I don't get that sense from reading your magazine.

A long beat as McClure digests this stinging critique.

SAM MCCLURE

And how do you propose we do that?

IDA

By showing faith in the intelligence of your readers. By involving them, engaging them. Provoking them if necessary. By telling great stories about great personalities.

SAM MCCLURE

Great personalities shape history, they do not sell magazines.

IDA

I disagree. I mean, why can't a magazine be edifying as well as entertaining? That's what I want when I read one. And I don't think I'm alone in that.

SAM MCCLURE

All right, I'll bite, Ms. Tarbell. Why do you want to work for McClure's?

IDA

I don't want to write "Postcards from Paris" any more than you wish to read them. I want my work to *matter*. With a smaller publication, I might have more creative freedom to choose my own subjects. I think we both know that McClures is capable of so much more. And so am I.

SAM MCCLURE

(considers)

You're passionate, and I admire that. You speak your mind freely. And it's obvious that you care very much about writing.

IDA

It's the only thing I've ever cared about. Do you write, Mr. McClure?

SAM MCCLURE

I write well enough. It's the "sitting still" part that I have trouble with.

IDA

There is usually a price for everything.

SAM MCCLURE

Indeed. And the question I'm asking myself right now is, how much is yours?

IDA

(without missing a beat)

Fifty dollars a week, my own byline, I don't care about title. Contributing editor is fine.

SAM MCCLURE

(laughs out loud)

You don't want much, do you? Fifty dollars is simply out of the question! I've never paid a writer that much before.

IDA

You paid Lincoln Steffens fifty dollars a week when he worked here.

SAM MCCLURE

Who told you that?

IDA

I'm a journalist, Mr. McClure. I believe in doing my research. So should you.

SAM MCCLURE  
Lincoln Steffens is one of the most  
respected writers in New York.

IDA  
Yes, and lucky for him he's also a man. But  
if a woman does the same work as a man,  
shouldn't she be paid the same as him?

SAM MCCLURE  
All right, 45 dollars then. But I'm afraid  
that's the best I can do.

Ida drops her head, then slowly stands.

IDA  
Thank you for your offer, Mr. McClure. But  
I need fifty dollars a week. There are  
plenty of other magazines in New York  
willing to pay for my services.

As Ida goes to leave...

SAM MCCLURE  
All right, all right, Jesus Christ! Fifty  
dollars then. Will that stop you from  
haranguing me?

IDA  
(firm)  
Do we have an agreement, Mr. McClure?

SAM MCCLURE  
Yes! Praise the Lord! We have an agreement!

They shake hands on it, Ida too moved almost to speak.

IDA  
(simply)  
Thank you.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

**JOHN PHILLIPS**, the grouchy editor we met earlier is showing  
Ida around the office. He is 50 but looks 60.

PHILLIPS  
I read your series on Lincoln. Good  
writing. Lively...

IDA  
Thank you.

PHILLIPS  
Something of a history buff myself.  
(indicating)

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

What we do here is file all manuscripts, alphabetical by author's name. The deadline for filing stories is 5pm on Wednesday.

IDA

Do you know who is to be my editor?

PHILLIPS

I'm afraid you're looking at him.

(pointing)

That's my little fiefdom over there.

They come to an old broken down desk. Looks more like a collection of "spare parts" than a writing desk.

PHILLIPS

(apologetic)

And this...this is your desk. Apparently, it belonged to Rudyard Kipling when he lived in New York. Wrote Gunga Din on here.

IDA

(amused)

And without a chair it seems. Impressive.

PHILLIPS

We have to supply our own. Here on the S.S McClure, chairs are considered an "optional" accessory.

They continue on down the hall.

IDA

Does Mr. McClure have a lot of ideas for new stories?

PHILLIPS

Like a dog has fleas. He has 300 new ideas every minute. That's his job.

IDA

Then what's yours?

PHILLIPS

Figuring out which one's don't stink.

#### **INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

It is small and simple. A third-floor walk-up located in Greenwich Village. Ida is unpacking groceries in the kitchen when there is a KNOCK at the door. She goes to answer.

At the door stands MRS. HAMMOND, a middle-aged LANDLADY holding a broom in one hand. She hands Ida a telegram.

LANDLADY  
This came for you earlier.

Ida opens the telegram, reads it in an instant.

LANDLADY  
(nosy)  
Letter from home?

IDA  
Yes. You could say that.

LANDLADY  
Good news, I take it?

IDA  
(smiles)  
Thank you, Mrs. Hammond. Good night.

Ida closes the door on her. Looks again at the telegram.

It reads: "FATHER SICK. COME SOON. LOVE, WILL."

CUT TO:

**EXT. TARBELL HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT**

A simple farmhouse located on the edge of town. The Tarbell family homestead. Title: **Titusville, Pennsylvania.**

IDA (V.O.)  
Good to see you, brother. I got here as soon as I could.

**INT. TARBELL HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Ida enters, is greeted by her brother **WILL TARBELL**. He's now fortyish, bespectacled and balding. Prematurely middle-aged.

WILL  
Good to see you too.

IDA  
Is he really dying?

WILL  
He's been dying for 10 years. I think it's just his way of getting us to visit.

IDA  
Where is he?

WILL  
Upstairs, torturing his doctor. Go on up, see for yourself.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

An old man lies sleeping in a darkened room: **FRANKLIN TARBELL** (78). Ida stands watching him from afar. Finally, the old man stirs, reaching instinctively for his rusty old rifle.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
Who goes there?

Ida steps out of the shadows, hands raised.

IDA  
Don't shoot. It's your only daughter.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
(a weak smile)  
Ida Belle. Come closer. Let me see you.

Ida pulls up a chair next to his bed.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
Now there's a sight for tired eyes.

IDA  
What did the doctor say?

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
(dismissive)  
Doctors, what do they know? One says eat all you can, another says take nothing but milk and honey. So I do the opposite, and drink only whiskey.

Ida smiles. A nice moment between them. He reaches over, taking down a folder containing all of her clippings.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
I've kept all of your articles. They're very good, Ida. Very good!

IDA  
You're my father. You have to say that.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
I say it because it's true.  
(beat)  
What happened with that job in New York?

IDA  
I got it. Mr. McClure hired me.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
A very wise man. What do you say to a little jigger of rye to celebrate?  
(a wink)  
I won't tell if you don't.

TIMECUT -- LATER

Ida and her father quietly sipping whiskey together.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

Remember when you used to come to work with me at the shop? I'd give you the reins, you'd sit up on my lap. You always wanted to drive the wagon, didn't you? Even then.

(Ida smiles)

Ida, there's something else I need you to do for me now.

Ida looks at him. Worried.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

I want to make sure your mother is taken care of after I'm gone.

IDA

Father, please--

FRANKLIN TARBELL

I'm dying, Ida. And when a man knows that, he wants to see that his family is secure. You and your brother must sell the farm. Get a good price for it.

IDA

(shocked)

Sell the farm?! But you said you'd never do that.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

Things change. Times change.

IDA

What about the business?

FRANKLIN TARBELL

The business is gone. We sold it to cover some of our debts.

IDA

Sold it to whom?

FRANKLIN TARBELL

The South Improvement Company. For thirty years, I slaved away in that place, morning noon and night. All to make sure this would never happen. And now it has.

A beat as Ida tries to process all of this.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

Promise me that you will take of your mother. She doesn't have to know all the details.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Late night. Ida and Will together. Voices hushed.

IDA

When did you know about this?

WILL

Six months ago.

IDA

(annoyed)

Six months ago? And nobody thought to tell me about it before now?

WILL

(shrugs)

You were in Paris. What could you do?

Ida looks over a letter in her hand.

IDA

What is the South Improvement Company?

Will hefts a box of files onto the kitchen table.

WILL

*This* is the South Improvement Company. If the cancer doesn't bury him, then all the paperwork probably will.

A VOICE offscreen yells out.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Will! Come to bed!

WILL

Gloria. Light sleeper. I'll see you in the morning. Don't stay up too late.

Will goes, leaving Ida alone with the box of paperwork. She pulls out a file at random, stares at it.

**INT. KITCHEN - LATER STILL**

The wee hours of the morning, and Ida is still at the kitchen table, examining the contents of the box spread before her. She reads a letter from the South Improvement company to Franklin Tarbell. We see the phrases "...purchase of your business" and "assessed at fair market value..."

CLOSE ON ANOTHER DOCUMENT

More words and phrases "...for a settlement payable in cash, or if you choose, in stock of The Standard Oil Company..."

CLOSE ON ANOTHER FILE

It's a company prospectus. Towards the end of the file are two columns of names listing the company's board of directors, none of which mean anything to us.

Except for one name that is crossed out. ~~JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER.~~

Replaced by another name: PETER WATSON. Ida stares at it, confused.

**INT. BEDROOM - MORNING**

Franklin is sitting up eating breakfast, Ida beside him.

IDA

...but you said the company wasn't listed for sale?

FRANKLIN TARBELL

It wasn't. Three men came in one day and said: "Mr. Tarbell, we wish to purchase your company as a going concern." They said they could pay us in cash or in Standard Oil Stock. We took the cash.

IDA

How much did you get?

FRANKLIN TARBELL

Four thousand six hundred and eighty two dollars.

IDA

(stunned)

Four thousand dollars, for 30 years in business?! That's not right.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

Right or wrong, we had no choice. The South Improvement Company owns the railroad, they own the refineries, they own the oil creek. Hell, they probably even own this bed.

Ida looks over some of the documents, troubled.

IDA

The thing that confuses me is: if you were bought out by the South Improvement Company, then why were they offering you stock in The Standard Oil Company?

FRANKLIN TARBELL

I don't know. But I wish now we'd taken it. Might actually be worth something.

IDA

Do you mind if I bring these back to New York? I want to have a closer look at this.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

(shakes his head)

Don't waste your time on that, Ida. It's ancient history now. Nobody wins against the Standard.

IDA

I have to go now or I'll miss my train.

Ida leans over, kisses him on the forehead.

IDA

I'll bring these back in two weeks, promise.

And with that, Ida is gone. The old man sighs.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Back in New York - an editorial meeting in progress. Present are Sam McClure, Phillips, **JACCACI** (30's, art director), and two other junior staff writers **PIERCE** and **LOWRY** (20's)

SAM MCCLURE

So...front cover, what have we got?

PHILLIPS

I like the Yuba Gold Fields story. Life of the miners and the growth of Yuba City. It's a solid piece of American writing.

SAM MCCLURE

Digging. Why is it always about digging? What else have we got, above ground?

Ida sweeps into the room with her notes, finds an open seat next to Phillips.

SAM MCCLURE

(sarcastic)

Ah, Miss Tarbell, good of you to join us!

IDA

Sorry I'm late. Please continue.

JACCACI

The Wright Brothers latest triumph. How the brothers flew an unmanned glider in Kitty Hawk last summer with the new box kite design. We even have diagrams of it.

SAM MCCLURE

Okay, but it's not front cover, is it?  
(beat)  
Mr. Lowry? Any interesting new essays?

LOWRY

Um, "Lions, Tigers and Other Great Cats" by Samuel J. Hopkins. People love to read about animals. Apparently.

SAM MCCLURE

Yes, if they're under twelve. What about for the adults?

PIERCE

"Dewey at Manila" - with the American fleet in the Philippines, by Howard Marks.

SAM MCCLURE

All right, give him 3000 words. It's patriotic, I like it. What else?

PIERCE

"Off the rails" - adventures of a steam train driver. Older piece by Mark Twain.

SAM MCCLURE

Fine, but we're not paying him any more royalties. He should be paying us at this stage.

(then)

Miss Tarbell? Anything you wish to discuss with us today?

All eyes in the room turn expectantly to Ida. A beat, then:

IDA

What about the trusts?

SAM MCCLURE

What about them?

IDA

Well, nobody's writing about that, and yet when you leave the city, it's all anyone talks about. The oil industry, sugar, beef. That's what we should be writing about.

PHILLIPS

(nodding in agreement)

She's right. Nobody's doing it. And it's all Teddy Roosevelt talks about these days.

SAM MCCLURE

Nobody's writing about it because nobody wants to read about it. People don't want anti-trust legislation. They want human interest: captains, kings and pirates.

(a beat)

What else?

CLOSE ON IDA - feeling shot down, suddenly small. The meeting continues on around her.

**INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - SOME TIME LATER**

McClure is packing up his briefcase when there is a soft KNOCK at the door. Ida enters, looking a little unsure.

IDA

Mr. McClure, I've been thinking, and well, I have an idea for a story. Human interest.

SAM MCCLURE

Can it wait till after lunch? I'm late for my wife. She gets terribly vexed when I am late. Which according to her, is often.

IDA

This'll just take a minute.

SAM MCCLURE

(checking his watch)

You've got exactly two.

IDA

Well, this is a story about a man. A man of giant ambition who built a kingdom out of nothing and changed the world we live in.

SAM MCCLURE

Alexander the Great. Did it last year.

McClure grabs his coat and hat, heads out. Ida trails him:

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

IDA

No, this is an American, living. A man who seized control of a new industry that shaped the modern American economy.

SAM MCCLURE  
Vanderbilt, the railroads?

IDA  
(shakes her head)  
What company controls 90% of all the oil  
produced in this country?

SAM MCCLURE  
Standard Oil.

IDA  
And who is the head of Standard Oil?

SAM MCCLURE  
(realizing)  
Oh no...

He steps into an old gurney elevator, Ida follows him in:

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

IDA  
All this time I've been looking for a story  
to come to me, and it's been sitting there  
right under my nose.

SAM MCCLURE  
You want to profile John D. Rockefeller?

IDA  
Not *just* a profile. Tell the entire history  
of the Standard Oil Company and how it  
became the world's biggest monopoly.

SAM MCCLURE  
And how do you propose doing that..?

IDA  
By telling the story of John D.  
Rockefeller. They are one and the same.

SAM MCCLURE  
Rockefeller's one man, the Standard Oil  
Company is huge.

IDA  
"An institution is but the lengthened  
shadow of one man." Emerson said that.

SAM MCCLURE  
"Absolutely not." Sam McClure said that.

**INT. LOBBY - FOLLOWING**

The doors open, and they step out. Ida still pitching him:

IDA  
He's nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing. And I can prove it.

SAM MCCLURE  
Isn't he retired now?

IDA  
Well, effectively, yes. But he still sits on the board of directors, and he is the majority shareholder.

SAM MCCLURE  
I'm sorry, the answer is no.

IDA  
(with rising passion)  
What do people want? They want captains and kings and pirates. You said so yourself. Rockefeller is a captain, a king and a pirate. He is the Napoleon of businessmen.

SAM MCCLURE  
And he could crush you and me like a bug! Do you know how many lawyers a man like Rockefeller has working for him?

IDA  
Lots, I imagine. So he shouldn't have anything to worry about.

SAM MCCLURE  
Very funny!

IDA  
This is a man who has never, and I mean never, had to account for a single thing that Standard Oil has done. He doesn't play by the same rules as you and me, Mr. McClure. And he never has.

SAM MCCLURE  
That's because men like Rockefeller don't have to. They make the bloody rules! Besides, you'll never get near him. He's too private.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

McClure exits onto the street, Ida still trailing him...

IDA

He's a public figure, and public figures are public property. He can't stop us.

SAM MCCLURE

Look, I appreciate your enthusiasm, I really do. But let's learn to walk before we try to run.

IDA

You're scared of him, aren't you?

SAM MCCLURE

(stops; spins on her)

He's the richest most powerful man in the world. Hell yes, I'm scared of him! And you would be too, if you had any sense. Find another story.

IDA

This is the one I want to do. This is a public issue of national interest which our readers need to know about.

A TRAM comes hurtling along, McClure pulls Ida from its path.

SAM MCCLURE

Please, watch yourself, Miss Tarbell!  
You'll get yourself killed.

Ida just stands there, that same fierce determination we saw in her as a girl. McClure is totally exasperated by her.

SAM MCCLURE

Look, you could write about anything, or anyone. Why Rockefeller?

IDA

(simply)

Because he's a bully, and I can't stand bullies.

SAM MCCLURE

You really think this is a story?

IDA

I know it's a story, and now is the time to tell it. Let me do this, and if I'm wrong, I'll pay you 50 dollars a week.

SAM MCCLURE

(weighing it)

All right. Fine. 5000 words. But be careful how you write it. Lawyers are very expensive, and I am very cheap.

McClure looks down, sees he has just stepped in a steaming pile of horse manure.

SAM MCCLURE

Ah, shit. now look what you made me do!

Off Ida's smile, we CUT TO --

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - ANOTHER DAY**

**JOHN SIDDAL**, the new office intern, up to his ears in paper files which he has been tasked with filing.

Siddal is a refined young man of 21, short and squat, with a somewhat nervous disposition. Patrician manners in a too-tight Brooks Brothers suit.

He loads up a batch of files, and as he turns to go...

He crashes right into...Ida.

The files land everywhere. He is woefully embarrassed.

He stands there a moment. Despondent.

SIDDAL

Oh God, I am *so* sorry.

IDA

No, that was entirely my fault. I should learn to look where I'm going. Here, let me help you.

Ida helps him gather up the files. After a moment:

IDA

I'm Ida Tarbell.

SIDDAL

Yes, I know. I read your "Life of Lincoln." In fact, I brought it to our book club at Harvard last year.

IDA

And you are...?

SIDDAL

(extending a hand)  
Sorry. John Siddal. Pleased to meet you.

IDA

What do you do here, John?

SIDDAL

Research assistant, file clerk, general factotum...

The files slip once again. Fall around his feet.

IDA

(wry)

Not a very good file clerk, are you John?

SIDDAL

No, I'm afraid not. I'm terrible, in fact.

Ida smiles. Charmed. Then, an idea...

IDA

I wonder. How are you at research?

And we launch into - IDA AND SIDDAL BEGINNING RESEARCH

**INT. HALL OF RECORDS - NEW YORK - DAY**

Ida and Siddal make their way inside the County Clerk's Business Bureau in Lower Manhattan. Over this, we hear:

SIDDAL (V.O.)

Where do we begin?

IDA (V.O.)

At the beginning. With the South Improvement Company.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

What are we looking for?

IDA (V.O.)

Everything and anything. Tax records, mentions in the press, public reports, lawsuits prior and pending. I want to know who they are and where they came from.

A YOUNG CLERK leads Ida and Siddal into a vast filing room.

CLERK

You want every report since when?

IDA

About 1870. Give or take a few years.

CLERK

I'm not sure we got 'em. But if we did, this is where they'd be.

They stare in awe at a tower of stacked boxes. Literally a "mountain" of paperwork. Their task is staggering.

CUT TO LATER --

We see Ida and Siddal seated at a table, the boxes of files before them as they slowly, methodically begin to sift through the paperwork looking for clues to the SIC.

Hours pass. The light changes. They grow tired. Until:

IDA  
What have you got?

SIDDAL  
Nothing. It's like it never existed. If there were any files in here, they're not here now. Couple of newspaper articles.

Siddal hands one such article to Ida. She reads it.

CLOSE ON: a faded press release for a book entitled "The Rise and Fall of The South Improvement Company."

IDA  
Says it was published in 1873.

SIDDAL  
Think maybe we could get a copy?

IDA  
Only one way to find out.

**INT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY**

Ida and Siddal wait patiently at the check out desk. Finally a librarian returns with a piece of paper in hand.

LIBRARIAN  
Are you the ones looking for this?  
(Ida and Siddal nod)  
I'm sorry, we don't have it.

Ida and Siddal turn to go, deflated, when...

LIBRARIAN  
We had a copy. Just one, mind you. Says here it was checked out over ten years ago. But it was never returned.

IDA  
Any idea who checked it out?

The librarian slides a paper stub at them. On it, a name and address: Henry Demarest Lloyd, Sag Harbor, Long Island.

IDA  
Thank you.

**EXT. SAG HARBOR - DAY**

Middle of winter on Long Island, and it's not pleasant. A horse-drawn carriage deposits Ida and Siddal on the main street of an old whaling village.

We see them canvassing people in the town. Talking with neighbors, merchants. Most shake their heads, walk on.

Finally, they come to...

**EXT. LLOYDS'S HOUSE - DAY**

A crooked old fishing shack on the edge of town. Ida and Siddal approach the front door, give a tentative knock.

The door opens revealing a light-skinned black woman (MISS ROSE). She stares at them, suspicious.

IDA

Hello, I'm Ida Tarbell. This is John Siddal. We work for McClure's Magazine in New York. Does Mr. Lloyd live here?

MISS ROSE

He don't give interviews anymore. Mr. Lloyd is retired now.

A VOICE calls from inside the house.

LLOYD (V.O.)

Who is it? Rose, who's there?

IDA

Please, may we speak to him? This'll only take a few minutes.

MISS ROSE

What's all this about?

IDA

(smiles)

Late fees.

**INT. LLOYDS'S HOUSE - DAY**

**HENRY LLOYD** (76) is a grizzled old salt, retired muckraker. His shock of white hair shows all the signs of a man recently roused from sleep. He takes down a book, hands it to Ida.

LLOYD

There are no copies left because Standard Oil bought them all and destroyed them. I'll need that back.

IDA

What does Standard Oil have to do with the South Improvement Company?

LLOYD

Everything and nothing. But you'll never connect it back to Rockefeller. He's too smart for that.

IDA

Why does he even need it?

Lloyd tosses some logs into a wood stove, before settling comfortably into his armchair.

LLOYD

Jackals prefer to operate under the cover of darkness. So does Rockefeller.

IDA

So it's a shield?

LLOYD

That's one word for it. "License to plunder" is probably more accurate. It gives signatories collective bargaining power against the railroads. Transportation is the key to the oil industry. Whoever controls the "flow" of oil, controls the industry.

SIDDAL

The name "South Improvement Company" - what does it mean?

LLOYD

Absolutely nothing. It says nothing, and it means nothing. That's the whole point.

IDA

You've met Mr. Rockefeller. Tell me, what kind of man is he?

A long beat as Lloyd looks at them both. Then...

LLOYD

Let me tell you a little story.

(pause)

So it's 1878, and there's a young man named Fred Backus, worked as a bookkeeper for Rockefeller. He saves a little stake and with the money buys a small lubricating plant. He slaves over that thing for eight years, turns it into a big success. Two years later, he dies of consumption leaving behind a wife and four kids.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

So Rockefeller goes to meet the Widow Backus to see if she'd be interested in selling to him. Rockefeller, nice guy that he is, says he'll take it off her hands for 60,000 dollars. She balks, telling him it's worth ten times that. He suggests they get down on their knees and "pray for a sign" from God, which they do. Two days later, the widow's house burns to the ground. Widow and four kids are suddenly homeless. But nobody knows how it started. There's no inquest, no police investigation. So what happens? She goes back to Rockefeller begging him to buy the company off her, which he does, for the low low price of 30,000 dollars.

(beat)

That should tell you a lot about what "kind" of man he is.

**EXT. LLOYDS'S HOUSE - LATER**

Ida and Lloyd stand outside the house, saying their goodbye. Siddal moves in and out, carting away boxes of files.

IDA

Do you think he'd meet with me?

LLOYD

(a laugh)

Rockefeller, give an interview? He'd sooner shake hands with the devil. You might have a shot with Rogers, though. He loves to talk. Especially when the subject is himself.

IDA

Rogers..?

LLOYD

Henry "Hellhound" Rogers. As fine a pirate as ever flew a flag on Wall Street. He's the gatekeeper, Rockefeller's right hand. Until Junior wises up.

(beat)

Please don't take this the wrong way, Miss Tarbell. But I believe you're wasting your time.

IDA

What makes you say that?

LLOYD

No man can take on John D. Rockefeller, and certainly no woman. Believe me, I know.

Ida swallows this one. With some difficulty.

IDA

Maybe you underestimate me, Mr. Lloyd, and that's okay. I'm hoping that others will too.

As Ida goes to leave --

LLOYD

You really have no idea what you're up against, do you?

Ida stops. Turns and walks back to him.

IDA

(very controlled)

Maybe I don't. But I know the difference between right and wrong. My father was an oil man, Mr Lloyd. He worked all his life to build his own business, only to see it stolen from him by a gang of corporate thugs answerable to no one, and I want to know why. And as you correctly point out, I am a woman in a man's job, which means I have to be twice as good as you to earn even half the credit you get for free.

(beat)

Thanks for the book. Good day, Mr. Lloyd.

Lloyd smiles to himself. Admires her spunk.

LLOYD

Good. That's the spirit! Now use that, Tarbell. Cherish your contempt. Nurture it. Because in the end, it's all you keep.

Ida walks away from this prickly old rooster.

#### **INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - DAY**

Ida is debriefing McClure after her jaunt out to Long Island.

IDA

It's a Trojan horse. The other refiners are forced to join in, or they quickly get squeezed out. Once he had a monopoly over Cleveland, he marched on to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York.

SAM MCCLURE

Yes, but how do you prove it?

IDA

I don't know. But I'm going to need a full-time research assistant.

SAM MCCLURE  
I'm afraid we don't have one.

IDA  
Then I'll take John Siddal. From now on, he works for me.

Sam looks at her. Amused.

SAM MCCLURE  
Oh. Anything else?

IDA  
Yes. I need you to print this in the next issue. Not too big, not too small.

SAM MCCLURE  
What is it?

IDA  
(smiles)  
Bait.

CLOSE ON A SMALL ADVERTISEMENT:

"Have you worked for The Standard Oil Company? Do you have a story to tell? Please contact: Ida M. Tarbell."

And as we PULL BACK, we are now in --

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - OFFICES OF STANDARD OIL - DAY**

A company secretary (MISS HARRISON, 29) opens up the latest issue of McClure's Magazine, and flipping through the pages, spots Ida's small advertisement.

She rises immediately from her desk and walks the magazine down the hallway to a large ornate wooden door. She knocks.

MISS HARRISON  
Mr. Rogers?

A VOICE booms from the other side.

ROGERS  
Come in!

She enters the office. The door closes softly behind her.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida types at her desk. A mail clerk drops off some letters for her. One letter catches her attention, the return address reads "26 Broadway". She rips it open. Reads:

MISS HARRISON (V.O.)

"Dear Miss Tarbell, Mr. Rogers is available to meet with you on September 27th at 2.00pm. Please make your way to our offices located at 26 Broadway, and come to the 12th floor. When you get there, you will ask for Miss Harrison..."

Ida rises from her desk, taking the letter down the hall to McClure's office. Anxious to share the good news with him.

As she steps into his office unannounced, she finds him in an amorous embrace with a woman, clearly not his wife.

IDA

(surprised)

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know...

They break apart just as Ida barges in.

SAM MCCLURE

No, it's all right. Come in. I was just...talking to Miss Wilkinson. She is one of our featured poets this month.

(introducing)

Florence Wilkinson, Ida Tarbell.

Wilkinson (39) is a glamorous-looking lady, and she gives Ida a quick once over. Smiles a phony smile.

FLORENCE WILKINSON

Ida Tarbell, the writer?

IDA

I'm sure there are others.

FLORENCE WILKINSON

Well now. I've heard a lot about you!

An awkward beat. Sam is dreadfully embarrassed.

SAM MCCLURE

Yes, Miss Tarbell?

Ida smiles, trying to shrug off her momentary unease.

IDA

(holding up the letter)

It worked. I'm in!

#### **EXT. 26 BROADWAY - DAY**

Ida enters the very imposing-looking granite building. Corporate HQ of The Standard Oil Company in New York.

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Inside, the feel is Spartan and purposeful. Gleaming floors, polished brass. Ida is directed to an elevator by a security guard, and whooshed upwards to the 12th floor...

ROGERS (V.O.)

The Good Lord has prospered us, I don't deny it. But it took a lot of work too...

**INT. ROGERS' OFFICE - DAY**

**HENRY "HELLHOUND" ROGERS** stands looking out the window, king of all he surveys. He is 62, tall, fit and good-looking. A charming and loquacious character in a handlebar moustache.

ROGERS

When we came to the business, it was a jungle. Total chaos. What we did was create order out of that chaos. A way of doing things that was streamlined, efficient and above all, safe. We took a second-rate, inefficient petroleum market and created this...the gold standard.

Miss Harrison enters carrying a tray of tea. Places it neatly on a table between them, disappears again.

ROGERS

Tea, Miss Tarbell?

IDA

No thank you.

He pours himself some tea, continues on:

ROGERS

I knew your father back in Titusville.

This surprises Ida. The reason she was invited here, she now realizes.

ROGERS

We were both wildcatters in the early days. Before he got into the barrel business. How is your father by the way?

IDA

Not very well, to say the least.

ROGERS

I'm sorry to hear that.

(beat)

So, what can I do for you?

IDA

Well, I'm writing a story about Standard Oil for our magazine --

ROGERS

(patronizing smile)

A story, eh? Well now, you've come to the right place for stories!

IDA

(playing along)

Yes, I suppose I have.

ROGERS

And what *kind* of story is it that you want to write for your magazine?

IDA

Well, this would be a...portrait. A portrait of a great American company.

ROGERS

I like it already! So, how can I help you?

IDA

I'm trying to gather a little history on the company, and I want to make sure I get all of my facts straight.

ROGERS

Yes, of course. We want the facts to be correct, don't we?

(thinks)

Come with me. I have an idea.

**INT. LIBRARY - 26 BROADWAY - DAY**

Rogers leads Ida inside a beautifully ornate library.

ROGERS

It's not quite finished yet, but this is going to be our new company library. You'll find a lot of our history housed in here.

IDA

Do you mind if I take a look?

ROGERS

Not at all. Miss Harrison can help you find whatever it is you need.

(checks his pocket watch)

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm afraid I have another meeting to attend.

IDA

Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

ROGERS

My pleasure, Miss Tarbell. You let me know if there's anything else you need.

Rogers exits. Leaving Ida momentarily alone in the library.

As he breezes out, he stops by Miss Harrison's desk.

ROGERS

(whispers)

No harm in letting her have a look around. We are a *friendly* company, after all. But keep an eye on her. I don't want her left alone in there.

IDA (V.O.)

The key to it all is facts, John.

And we launch into...

**MONTAGE -- IDA AND SIDDAL DEVELOPING THEIR STORY**

Images of feverish activity as they begin piecing together the first article. CROSSCUT as we see --

**A) IDA'S APARTMENT:**

She paces furiously around the room, pinning notes to a wall: names, letters, dates, questions. Pieces of a puzzle. She fires off a series of notes and memos to Siddal...

IDA (V.O.)

If we can present the facts correctly, the reader will supply his own outrage. But we must present our story plainly, simply. Tell nothing that cannot be proven.

**B) STATE COURTHOUSE IN CLEVELAND:**

Siddal is shown into a massive vault of ancient looking files by a Court Clerk, he looks around, bewildered.

IDA (V.O.)

Begin with State Congressional hearings in Cleveland. I want transcripts of all investigations. They are public record.

Siddal digs and digs through mountains of transcripts...

**C) 26 BROADWAY, STANDARD OIL LIBRARY:**

Ida works in the library at 26 Broadway, carefully supervised by Miss Harrison. She *appears* to looking over a photographic periodical. Inside, we see another file labeled "Interstate Commerce Commission."

IDA

Find out who the presiding judges were. I want names, dates and addresses. Pay close attention to testimony by Henry Rogers and John Rockefeller, where it appears.

**D) A PUBLIC PARK IN CLEVELAND:**

Retired Judge Martin Knapp (78), is out walking his dog when young Siddal approaches. Asks him a question.

IDA (V.O.)

Let's look at banking records. We should also contact Martin Knapp, former Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Find out what he knows. Is he even alive..?

Frightened, the old man hurries off.

**E) THE WIDOW BACKUS' HOUSE:**

Siddal knocks on a shanty house. The Widow Backus (68) opens the door, listens to his pitch. She nods. Letting him inside.

IDA (V.O.)

Can we locate the Widow Backus, corroborate her story with the Henry Lloyd version?

**F) IDA'S APARTMENT:**

The walls are now covered with A CHART OF STANDARD OIL OPERATIONS. A history, a timeline, an investigation...

IDA (V.O.)

Questions we want answered: 1) How and when did Standard Oil acquire the charter to the South Improvement Company?

(another note)

2) If they did, then why is Mr. Rockefeller not listed among its board of directors?

(another note)

3) If the companies acquired by the scheme are *not* owned by Standard, then why were they issued stock in Standard Oil?

Ida takes a step back, gazing up at her shrine.

IDA

Well, Mr. Rockefeller, care to comment?

DR. BIGGAR (V.O.)

God damn and blast it!

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. KYKUIT - PRIVATE GOLF COURSE - DAY**

DR. BIGGAR (65), a portly and ruddy-faced gentleman, has just shanked his golf ball into the woods.

ROCKEFELLER

You're pivoting your left foot again! You must keep it nailed firmly to the ground. Or I shall have to nail it there for you.

Welcome to Kykuit, the Rockefeller country estate located in beautiful Hudson Valley, upstate New York.

Set upon 3000 acres of pristine wilderness with sweeping views of the Catskills and the Hudson River, this is one of the most magnificent landscapes in North America.

**JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER** is 61 years old, and cuts a lean athletic figure in a knickerbocker suit and straw hat. Ruthless and efficient in everything he does, he is one of the greatest tycoons of the 20th Century; the unrivaled titan of American industry, and also its very first billionaire.

Rockefeller lines up his shot. Swings. It sails straight up the middle of the fairway. He watches it land, pleased.

The doctor pulls out a small hip flask, takes a quick nip of brandy from it. Rockefeller frowns with disapproval.

ROCKEFELLER

I have only three rules on my golf course, Dr. Biggar. One, no business discussion. Two, no drinking allowed. And three, no taking of the Lord's name in vain.

(beat)

One more strike and you're out.

Rockefeller strides briskly after his ball, handing off his club to an eager young CADDY (22).

ROCKEFELLER

Which one are you again?

CADDY

I'm Tucker, sir.

ROCKEFELLER

How long have you worked here, Tucker?

CADDY

About 3 months.

ROCKEFELLER

Not a drinker are you?

CADDY

No, sir.

ROCKEFELLER

Stay that way. Alcohol only dulls the wits, weakens the will. Can you believe that he's the doctor and I'm the patient?

Rockefeller arrives at his ball. Lines up another shot. Swings. It lands just on the edge of the green.

He turns to look back at Dr. Biggar, hacking away. Divots flying. Curses streaming.

ROCKEFELLER

He's been playing golf all his life. I taught myself how to play in only six months. Do you know how I did it?

CADDY

No, sir.

ROCKEFELLER

With discipline, focus and practice. With those three things you can accomplish anything. If you remember nothing else from your time here, remember that young man.

The doctor catches up to them, red-faced and puffing.

DR. BIGGAR

Hope we're not keeping score. It's my damned sciatica, playing havoc with my swing.

ROCKEFELLER

Of course we're keeping score, Dr. Biggar! You should know me well enough by now - I only play to win. Why else play the game?  
(to the caddy)  
Get him some water before he passes out.

Rockefeller locates his ball near the green. And when he thinks nobody is looking, he gently kicks his ball onto the green. A small cheat, but a cheat nonetheless.

ROCKEFELLER

The bible says you must look after your body, Dr. Biggar. It is our religious duty, for which the good lord rewards us in health.

He lines up and putts. It rolls sweetly into the hole.

ROCKEFELLER

What do you think about that, doctor?

DR. BIGGAR

I think he's rewarded you very well.

The doctor takes his putt. Misses.

ROCKEFELLER

(delighted)

Noble effort. Call that one in, shall we?

Sound of a spoon tinkling a glass takes us to...

**INT. KYKUIT - DINING ROOM - EVENING**

A long candlelit table, exquisitely set. Twenty or so well-dressed dinner guests. Dr. Biggar introducing their host...

DR. BIGGAR (V.O.)

...he has given so much to our city, our country and our beloved hospital that we may never fully repay his generosity. All that we can do is bask in his reflected glory, and say "Thank You" Mr. Carnegie - I mean Mr. Rockefeller...

Raucous laughter. Rockefeller stands to address his guests, a man confident in his years and elevated social position.

ROCKEFELLER

Thank you, doctor. Nothing ruins a good speech like a great introduction..

Sitting beside Rockefeller is his wife, **CETTIE (60)**. Though petite in stature, she is a fearsome woman.

ROCKEFELLER

We are gathered today in celebration of Thanksgiving, and we have much to be thankful for. For my own retirement which has brought my wife so much pleasure. She now has double the husband and half the income.

Polite laughter. Cettie smiles dutifully.

ROCKEFELLER

And of course, the wonderful news of our son's engagement to the lovely Abigail Greene, which he has just shared with us.

**ANGLE ON: JOHN ROCKEFELLER "JUNIOR" (24)**, son and heir to the Rockefeller family fortune. He is a serious and sensitive young man. At his side, his pretty fiancée, **ABBY (25)**.

Opposite them sit Abby's parents. Stiff and uncomfortable.

ROCKEFELLER

John, having you as my son has been one of my life's greatest joys.

ROCKEFELLER (CONT'D)

And today, that joy is doubled, as we welcome Abigail to our extended family. Her parents' loss will be our gain, and I for one, am delighted.

OTHER VOICES

Just so! Hear hear! Bravo!

ROCKEFELLER

Remember son, all good decisions are the result of proper discussion between you and your wife. You would do well to listen to her. Of course, a fine pair of handcuffs and leg-irons may also come in handy.

Some guffaws from the men. Abby's parents look slightly alarmed. Cettie grins with great forbearance.

ROCKEFELLER

Here's to your joy, and ours, from this day forward. Please raise your glasses now...  
(toasting)  
...to John and Abigail!

ALL

John & Abigail.

Sound of knocking on a door, as we CUT TO --

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

The knocking becomes more insistent. Ida rises from bed, pulling on a cardigan. Open the door to reveal --

SIDDAL

I think I may have found something.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER**

Siddal flips through his notes, excited to share the findings of his recent field trip to Cleveland...

SIDDAL

Listen to this. Testimony of James Alexander before State Congressional investigators. When asked if he had sold his refinery to the South Improvement Company, he replies: "To one of its members, Peter Watson. He is a director of that company. But it was sold in name to Standard Oil, with my understanding that it was to be put into the scheme..."

IDA

That's on the record?

SIDDAL

On the record. Right here. He makes no distinction between the two companies.

IDA

Can we talk to him?

SIDDAL

Small problem there. He's dead.

IDA

What about the company charter, do we know where that came from?

**INT. AUCTION HOUSE - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

A well-dressed MAN (obscured) places a silent bid at an estate auction.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

I checked with the mayor's office, and the charter to the South Improvement Company was purchased for 25 dollars at an estate sale in 1871. Sold to one Peter Watson.

AUCTIONEER

I have twenty-five dollars, do I hear thirty? Going once, going twice, sold! To the gentleman at the back.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

It granted Watson exclusive rights to drill in the state of Pennsylvania, own any drilling lease or transfer any property.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

IDA

But the State legislature would surely have a record of that. All businesses must be registered.

SIDDAL

Yes, but here's where it gets interesting.

**INT. PRIVATE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)**

Ten men are gathered around a conference table. A clandestine meeting of early oil prospectors. We don't see their faces.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

The Pennsylvania legislature never published the charter, never disclosed who proposed it, or who recorded its vote.

CHAIRMAN

All those in favor, raise your right hand.

Ten hands go up.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

It's as if overnight, the company simply *appeared*.

**INT. LAW OFFICES - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

A JUDGE signs and seals the charter into law, presided over by two BUSINESSMEN (faces obscured).

SIDDAL (V.O.)

The charter was signed into law by newly minted 35 year-old Judge, Martin Knapp.

IDA (V.O.)

Wonder how he became Chairman of the ICC?

Handshakes and smiles all round. Very discreetly, Judge Knapp takes delivery of a large bag of cash.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

IDA

What about banking records?

SIDDAL

None available. But curiously, six months after the charter was signed into law, the National Bank of Pennsylvania was sold. Guess who bought it? A new company calling itself the Standard Oil Company of Ohio.

IDA

That's some coincidence.

SIDDAL

I thought so.

**INT. BANK - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

The door opens. Polished shoes walk up to the counter.

BANK TELLER

May I help you?

Tilt up to reveal: a young John D. Rockefeller.

ROCKEFELLER

Yes. My name is Peter Watson. I'd like to see about opening up an account.

BANK TELLER

Certainly, sir. I'll just need you fill out some paperwork.

SIDDAL (V.O.)

But wait - it gets even better.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

SIDDAL

According to the Oil City Derrick, the very same Peter Watson, "director of the South Improvement Company" was killed in a mining accident in 1872, three months *before* he somehow managed to open up a bank account.

IDA

So. A company worth 25 dollars, owned by a dead man, that only exists on paper - somehow managed to acquire 90% of all the oil refineries in the United States?

(beat)

That's some trick, wouldn't you say?

SIDDAL

Magic.

IDA

Good work, John. I'll see you tomorrow.

The clatter of an old typewriter takes us to...

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida's fingers flying over the keys of an old Underwood. These words appearing: "The History of the Standard Oil Company." This is the beginning of what will become her landmark work.

Sam McClure stops by her desk, holding a manuscript.

SAM MCCLURE

Miss Tarbell, a word please?

**INT. SAM'S OFFICE - FOLLOWING**

Ida and Siddal watch nervously as McClure finishes reading her manuscript. John Phillips is also present.

SAM MCCLURE

(reading aloud)

"It was to be the most gigantic and daring conspiracy a free country has ever seen, wrought by the long shadow of one man..."

McClure sets down the last page. Looks at Ida.

IDA  
Too much?

SAM MCCLURE  
How much of this is actually true?

IDA  
Every single word.

SIDDAL  
(helpfully)  
Alexander's testimony was given under oath  
to congressional investigators.

McClure looks to Phillips, who nods.

PHILLIPS  
We have an independent witness  
authenticating the court transcripts.

IDA  
I have a theory on Standard Oil--

SAM MCCLURE  
I'm not interested in theory, Miss Tarbell.  
I'm interested in what we *know*.

IDA  
The Standard Oil company is founded upon a  
lie. The lie that it is any different from  
the South Improvement Scheme. It's not.

PHILLIPS  
This isn't exactly new ground. Henry Lloyd  
was hinting at this for years.

SAM MCCLURE  
This is different. You're going after the  
man himself. You want me to publicly accuse  
the world's greatest tycoon of being the  
linchpin of an illegal ring, whose tactics  
he has secretly transferred to the Standard  
Oil Company?

IDA  
He's also a liar and a tax cheat, but I'd  
need more time for that.

A beat.

SAM MCCLURE  
Is there more?

IDA  
Tons. This is only the beginning.

PHILLIPS

(nervously)

You're talking about one very big gorilla here. One that doesn't like publicity very much.

IDA

My story is accurate. Whether he "likes" it or not.

Silence. The clock ticks by. McClure, slowly:

SAM MCCLURE

(to Phillips)

Let's hold our cover story on Madame Curie for next month. I think some of our readers might be interested in this.

(Ida smiles, relieved)

Let's just hope you're right, Miss Tarbell. Because if you're not, it's my nuts in his vise.

SMASH CUT TO:

**A SERIES OF SHOTS:**

The printing presses roll, spitting out copies of McClure's Magazine.

SUPERIMPOSE: **November 1902.**

On the cover, the title of Ida's story: "UNHOLY ALLIANCE". And the sub head: WHO IS THE SOUTH IMPROVEMENT COMPANY?

All around the country we see people - on buses, trains, in offices - reading Ida's article. And it's a bombshell.

Henry Lloyd, reads with particular interest.

Franklin Tarbell, in his sick bed, reads with interest.

Teddy Roosevelt, in the Oval Office, reading with admiration.

Henry Rogers, reading at 26 Broadway. A dark scowl on his face.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

We follow SACKS OF MAIL as they are wheeled into the office. VOICES OF READERS writing in from around the country.

READER # 1 (V.O.)

"Dear Miss Tarbell, while I am not normally one to write letters to magazines, I feel you are to be congratulated on your excellent story in McClure's Magazine..."

READER #2 (V.O.)

"Mr. Rockefeller and the whole damn lot of 'em ought to be hog-tied and branded, before tossing them over shit creek without an oar..."

Ida at her desk, reading some of her fan mail. Pleased by the response. Her article has perfectly captured the zeitgeist.

READER # 3 (V.O.)

"...I have not the least doubt as to the truthfulness of your article. I thank you for opening my eyes, and showing us the milk inside the coconut..."

READER #4/ FRANKLIN (V.O.)

"...My Dear Ida, on behalf of all Pennsylvanians, I want to thank you for giving us a voice which all too often has been shouted down or drowned out by these greedy oil men in our region.

A smile appears on Ida's face as she recognizes the voice...

FRANKLIN TARBELL (V.O.)

"I feel positively invigorated when I imagine the look of surprise on Mr. Rockefeller's face as he reads your fine article. Glad to see you didn't listen to my advice. Now give 'em hell, Ida Belle, give 'em hell..."

BOOM! A SHOTGUN BLAST TAKES US TO...

**EXT. KYKUIT - SHOOTING RANGE - DAY**

ROCKEFELLER - shooting clay pigeons on the lawn. Seeing HENRY ROGERS arrive, he hands off his gun, goes over to meet him.

They repair to a quiet spot where they can discuss business in private. Rogers pulls some legal documents from his briefcase for Rockefeller to sign.

ROGERS

Sign here and here.

Rockefeller lends his signature to a couple of documents.

ROCKEFELLER

Anything else?

Rogers then pulls out a copy of McClure's Magazine, handing it to Rockefeller.

ROGERS

You might want to have a look at this.

ROCKEFELLER

What is it?

ROGERS

A female journalist named Ida Tarbell. She writes about Standard Oil in this month's McClures Magazine. She came to see me a couple of months ago, asking for my help.

ROCKEFELLER

And did you?

ROGERS

(caught)

Ah, no. I mean, yes, I did meet with her very briefly, but only out of courtesy.

ROCKEFELLER

What is she writing about?

ROGERS

It's the South Improvement Scheme. Since the Sherman Act, there's a whole bunch of them come crawling out of the woodwork.

ROCKEFELLER

I don't see how that concerns us.

ROGERS

Yes sir, I know but...it seems to me the climate in Washington has *changed* somewhat since President McKinley was shot. Teddy Roosevelt has been sounding off in public about the trusts. I fear he's gotten some people riled up, and we don't yet know what his politics are.

ROCKEFELLER

Presidents come and go, Mr. Rogers. We do not.

ROGERS

How would you like me to handle this?

Rockefeller's attention is suddenly drawn to a huge earthworm squirming at his feet. He reaches down and picks it up.

ROCKEFELLER

You see this worm, Mr. Rogers? If I pick this up and show it to you, what do you think about that?

ROGERS

(confused)

Nothing. It's just a worm.

ROCKEFELLER

Exactly. If I crush it, I only draw attention to it. But if I ignore it...

(tosses the worm aside)

...it will burrow a hole and disappear. The world is full of worms, Mr. Rogers.

ROGERS

Worms?

ROCKEFELLER

Anarchists, socialists, malcontents. They hate us because we have been successful, and they have not. And you know what I say, Mr. Rogers? "Let the great world wag."

ROGERS

(forcing a smile)

Yes, sir.

ROCKEFELLER

Very well then. What's next on the agenda?

Rockefeller hands him back the magazine without so much as even a glance.

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - ELEVATOR - DAY**

Ida is whooshed upwards in the elevator. She smooths her hair and skirt before exiting on the 12th floor. She's visibly nervous, as well she might be.

ROGERS (V.O.)

You are to be congratulated, Miss Tarbell, on a marvelous work of fiction.

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - ROGERS' OFFICE - DAY**

Rogers stares out the window, his back turned to Ida.

He turns slowly to face her. No pretense of friendliness or bonhomie today. Just a very grudging kind of respect.

IDA

Then show me where I was wrong?

ROGERS

(angrily)

I don't *have* to show you anything. The fact is, you misrepresented yourself to me.

IDA

Did I, or did you?

ROGERS

Don't play games with me. You deliberately misled me about your intention. Now either you're very smart or you're incredibly stupid, I cannot decide which.

A beat. He fixes her with a cold hard stare.

ROGERS

Miss Tarbell, before you go off on some kind of crusade here, let me remind you who it is you're dealing with. Standard Oil is a legitimate multinational company, the largest in the world. It employs more people than the whole United States Army. Do you *really* mean to go into battle with men who have spent the better part of their lives engaged in making war?

IDA

I mean to tell the truth.

ROGERS

(temper)

But you're not being practical!!

He pounds the desk with his fist. Papers go flying. Rogers quickly composes himself. Smooths back his hair.

ROGERS

You and Mr. McClure are playing a very dangerous game here. And I refuse - I simply refuse - to take any further part in it. Do I make myself clear?

IDA

Perfectly. Now let me be clear, Mr. Rogers. I'm not *asking* for your permission here. I am going to write my articles with or without your help. But...I think it will go a lot better for you personally, should you wish to cooperate with me. How would Mr. Rockefeller feel, knowing that you invited me a second time to your office? Or that you granted me full access to his "private" company library?

Rogers is rendered speechless.

IDA

Here's how it will go: you will share with me all the information that I request, when I request it. In return, you will get to read my drafts before they are published: confirm, deny, clarify any point you feel is necessary. Beyond that, you will have no editorial control.

Rogers looks like he has just swallowed a cup of boric acid.

IDA  
Can I talk to Mr. Rockefeller?

ROGERS  
(grim)  
You are talking to him.

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

The door opens and Ida hurries down the corridor to the elevator. And reaching for the button, we see that her hands are shaking. Adrenaline pumping. Her entire body trembling from the effort of appearing "calm" in front of Rogers.

As Ida leaves, PULL BACK TO REVEAL: MISS HARRISON - tapping out a message on a private telegraph machine.

- At KYKUIT, an OPERATOR takes down the incoming cable, hands it off to a porter...

- Who whisks it away down a hallway -

- Where it lands on the private desk of JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER.

He reads the message: "Ida Tarbell not cooperative. Highly recommend taking action."

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida is working at her desk, when her attention is drawn to John Siddal on the other side of a glass window. He is talking to a MAN IN HIS MID-60'S. His name is HARLAN WHITNEY. More scary looking than actually dangerous.

He walks past Siddal, and right up to Ida at her desk.

HARLAN WHITNEY  
Are you Ida Tarbell?

SIDDAL  
I'm sorry, he just barged right in here.

IDA  
Yes. Who are you?

HARLAN WHITNEY  
My name's Harlan Whitney. I'm a railroad engineer. Or at least I *used* to be. Worked on the Erie Line, up near Buffalo.

He says this like Ida should know what he means.

HARLAN WHITNEY  
*After it got taken over by the South  
 Improvement Company?*

TIMECUT: LATER --

Ida and Siddal sitting with the man, listening to his story.

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 South Improvement scheme was s'posed to  
 make life better for all refiners.

IDA  
 How?

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 Lower shipping rates. That's how they got  
 others to join in. They got sweetheart  
 deals with all the railroads. Pennsylvania,  
 New York, New Haven, even The Central.

IDA  
 Do you know how these deals were made?

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 (nods)  
 Any business they got from Standard, the  
 railroad had to kick back to the company.  
 Usually ten cents on every barrel shipped.

IDA  
 What you're talking about here are rebates?

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 Yeah, rebates. But for them that didn't  
 want to play in the game, they could sure  
 make things hard.

**INT. RAILWAY OFFICE - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

WHITNEY, ten years younger, is holed up in his office when  
 two Standard Oil THUGS enter. He looks up from his paper.

THUG # 1  
 The 4:15 from Buffalo?

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 On time.

THUG # 2  
 Take a hike.

HARLAN WHITNEY  
 But I have to switch signals.

Thug # 2 pulls back his coat, revealing a revolver.

THUG # 2  
I said, take a hike!

Fearing for his life, Whitney quickly disappears.

HARLAN WHITNEY (V.O.)  
More than once, I sent a train down the  
wrong tracks. Accidentally on purpose.

**EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

A train signal is switched, and an approaching FREIGHT TRAIN screeches to a halt. A group of OIL MEN, their faces hidden by handkerchiefs, approach with pickaxes in hand.

HARLAN WHITNEY (V.O.)  
Knowing what they was gonna do to it, it  
never sat well with me. But I had a wife  
and four kids to feed. I needed that job.

They pull back a tarp to reveal: Union Oil, not Standard Oil.  
Their leader nods, giving the signal.

And *thuk, thuk, thuk!* The pickaxes fly into barrels of oil,  
spilling it onto the ground.

BACK TO SCENE --

Harlan Whitney hangs his head, fingering a worn out cap.

HARLAN WHITNEY  
When I read your article and seen how John  
Rockefeller was behind the South  
Improvement Scheme, I just figured you  
might like to know...

**INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - DAY**

Ida paces in McClure's office. Sam sits opposite her, his  
feet up on the desk.

SAM MCCLURE  
This guy Whitney, he just waltzed in here  
off the street?

IDA  
Right off the street.

SAM MCCLURE  
Christ, we'd need to watch that. I'll talk  
to security downstairs.  
(beat)  
How'd it go with Rogers?

IDA

Fraught, to say the least. But he didn't deny any of it.

SAM MCCLURE

When do you think we'll have the next one?

IDA

Soon. I'm working on it.

(thinking)

We need to reshape the public perception of who Rockefeller is. I think people are so dazzled by his "business success", they don't want to believe that he could be corrupt. So we need to unmask him. Take away the silk hat and the leather gloves, and they'll soon begin to see him for what he really is: a petty thug.

A thought suddenly stops Ida in her tracks.

IDA

Have you ever wondered what he looks like?

SAM MCCLURE

Who, Rogers?

IDA

No! Rockefeller.

SAM MCCLURE

(shrugs)

I don't know. I've read some descriptions, but has anyone actually seen him in person?

IDA

Maybe it's time we put a face on the devil.

SAM MCCLURE

How? We can't exactly ask him to sit for a portrait, now can we?

IDA

He still goes out in public, doesn't he?

SAM MCCLURE

Do you know where?

IDA

(nods)

The First Congregation Baptist Church on Euclid Avenue. Every Sunday. Just like clockwork.

CUT TO:

**INT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY**

Siddal sits nervously in a pew. Directly in front of him is John D. Rockefeller, in a prayer cap and shawl. The congregation sings, and Siddal tries gamely to sing along.

IDA (V.O.)

We send Siddal, with a photographer. Only they pretend not to know each other.

Across the aisle is another man, THE PHOTOGRAPHER. Siddal looks over at him. Their eyes briefly meet.

IDA (V.O.)

After the ceremony, Siddal engages him for a brief second or two. Just long enough for the photographer to swoop in.

**EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY**

The service over, Rockefeller and Cettie greet well wishers outside the church. Standing off to one side, and looking conspicuously out of place, are two armed PINKERTON GUARDS (Rockefeller's private security detail).

Siddal falls in line behind some others who wish to shake the great man's hand.

As his turn comes, Siddal steps up to meet Rockefeller.

SIDDAL

Mr. Rockefeller? I'm Henry Stephens, I'm a cousin of your great Aunt Betty.

ROCKEFELLER

(thrown)

Oh. How is she?

SIDDAL

Very well, sir. She sends her kind regards to you and all the family.

ROCKEFELLER

Thank you.

Suddenly they are interrupted by...

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Gentlemen, can you hold still please?

And now Siddal purposely leans out of the way as the photographer isolates Rockefeller. All done in an instant.

And Poof! A magnesium flash explodes.

And almost before the smoke has cleared, they're gone. Leaving Rockefeller slightly dazed and confused.

CETTIE  
Who was that man, dear?

ROCKEFELLER  
(irritated)  
I've no idea. Some cousin or other.

Sensing trouble, Rockefeller nods to his GUARDS. One leads Cettie away while the other gives chase to Siddal.

PINKERTON GUARD  
Mrs. Rockefeller, step this way please.

Siddal and the photog quietly disappear into the crowd. The GUARD gives chase, but there are too many bodies in the way.

In the distance, he sees: a motorcar starting up. Siddal climbs aboard and the car peels away. Mission accomplished.

**INT. DARK ROOM - DAY**

CLOSE ON A PHOTOGRAPH DEVELOPING in a chemical bath. PULL BACK TO REVEAL: McClure and JACCACI (Art Director) gazing at it, waiting for an image to appear.

SAM MCCLURE  
I don't see anything. It's not working.

JACCACI  
Just wait. Give it a minute.

They both stare at it. Waiting. And then slowly, a ghostly image of Rockefeller begins to appear.

JACCACI  
See? There he is.

CLOSE ON: Rockefeller's frozen expression. The dark scowl making him look even more crabby and miserly.

McClure stares at his face, fascinated.

SAM MCCLURE  
There you are you old goat. Good to finally see you.

Jaccaci pulls it dripping from the tray, hangs it on a line.

JACCACI  
What do you want me to do with it?

SAM MCCLURE  
 Bring it down to the printers when you're ready. We're going to pin and mount him. Like a butterfly.

As we CUT TO a series of unhappy RAILROAD EXECUTIVES --

**INT. "ERIE LINE" CORPORATE HEAD OFFICE - DAY**

CLOSE ON: the stony face of JIM TEAGLE, CEO of the ERIE Railway line. Ida sitting opposite him, notebook in hand.

IDA  
 Mr. Teagle, your company paid out over \$3 million in "service fees" to Standard Oil over the last five years you've been in business with them.

Ida hands him a document. He looks at it, impassive.

JIM TEAGLE  
 Yes?

IDA  
 Would that be a part of the special "rebates" that you were forced to give them in exchange for their business?

JIM TEAGLE  
 (a tight smile)  
 All I'll say is this: we are happy to have Standard Oil as our client, Miss Tarbell. Anything else, I'm afraid you will have to discuss with them.

**EXT. "NEW YORK RAILWAYS" CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY**

Ida approaches another man, THOMAS FOWLER, as he tries to exit the building without being seen.

IDA  
 Mr. Fowler? Good Afternoon, sir.

THOMAS FOWLER  
 (caught)  
 Afternoon, Miss Tarbell.

IDA  
 Is now a good time?

THOMAS FOWLER  
 I'm afraid not.

He tries to get around her. Ida follows.

IDA

I was just wondering if you'd like to make any comment about the rebates paid to Standard Oil by your company?

THOMAS FOWLER

(stops; turns on her)

There were no rebates paid to Standard Oil, or anyone else. And I *resent* the implication. Good day, Miss Tarbell.

**INT. OFFICE OF OREN WESTGATE - DAY**

OREN WESTGATE

John Rockefeller is a great American, and we are proud to do business with Standard Oil. But there were no rebates paid to them or anyone else. No way, no how.

**INT. OFFICE OF LYNDON BUTTS - DAY**

LYNDON BUTTS

No. No rebates.

(beat)

Word of advice, Miss Tarbell. Stick to writing about dead presidents. You're good at that.

**EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - DAY**

Ida approaches another man as he exits a building. Retired Judge WILLIE HARKNESS (76), out for a walk with his dog.

IDA

Judge Harkness? I'm Ida Tarbell, I work for McClure's Magazine. I'm sorry to bother you, but I wonder if I could have a quick word with you.

WILLIE HARKNESS

What about?

IDA

You wrote a report on shipping rates for the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1898.

WILLIE HARKNESS

(surprised)

You read that?

IDA

I read everything.

**EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER - DAY**

Ida walks through the park with the retired judge.

WILLIE HARKNESS

That report was commissioned by Martin Knapp, then Chairman of the ICC. Done to appease certain new political appointees.

IDA

Was anything done with it?

WILLIE HARKNESS

No, of course not. Martin Knapp and John Rockefeller are old friends.

They come to a bench by the great lawn. Sit.

IDA

The railway's a public servant. Aren't the shipping rates the same for everyone?

WILLIE HARKNESS

That's what you would think. But Standard Oil *demands* lower shipping rates than the competition, or that railway loses their business. The independents can't compete. They either join up or get squeezed out.

IDA

Isn't that illegal?

WILLIE HARKNESS

Of *course* it's illegal. But you'll never be able to prove it.

IDA

But if there are different rates for different suppliers, surely there must be records of that somewhere?

WILLIE HARKNESS

Standard Oil destroys all of their shipping records, very carefully. You don't think that Johnny D would be associated with anything so unsavory, now do you?

(beat)

The rebates are an open secret in the oil business. The railways don't want to lose his business, and he *knows* that. So he cuts the rates so low it kills the competition. And you know why he gets away with it?

IDA

Because he can?

WILLIE HARKNESS  
You're not allowed to quote me.

**INT. 26 BROADWAY - ROGERS' OFFICE - DAY**

A sour-looking Henry Rogers tosses Ida's manuscript across the desk at her. The mood is tense, confrontational.

ROGERS  
You can't print this because it's not true.  
There were no "rebates" paid to the  
railroads or anyone else.

Ida hands him another document.

IDA  
This is a report published by the ICC five  
years ago. It noted several payments by The  
New York Railways back to Standard Oil.  
What would you call those?

ROGERS  
(reflexively)  
That was an accounting mistake, those  
payments were refunded once the mistake was  
discovered.

IDA  
Yes, but when I checked the court records,  
I discovered that it was you who had  
authorized those payments only two days  
before the state supreme court was to look  
into the case. I just thought the timing of  
it was rather curious, that's all.

A beat. Rogers is growing tense, hot under the collar.

ROGERS  
And what are you suggesting?

IDA  
Nothing. Except that bribery of a public  
official and obstruction of justice are  
criminal offences in the eyes of the law.

ROGERS  
(a dark smile)  
The way that Mr. Rockefeller and I do  
business is very different, I can assure  
you of that.

IDA  
But you've been his partner for 45 years.

ROGERS

And he would do me out of a dollar any day of the week!

(hot, defensive)

Look, our company was built the way it was built because that's what the times and the industry demanded. We didn't do anything that others weren't doing at the same time.

IDA

(fishing)

Like blowing up the Buffalo Oil refinery?

A long beat. Rogers is caught momentarily off guard.

ROGERS

Where did you get that?

IDA

Oh, I don't know. Just a rumor I heard.

ROGERS

And that's all it is: a rumor. We never owned the Buffalo plant, and even if we did, why would we blow up our own plant?

IDA

I don't know. But suppose you were only interested in the patent on their cooling technology. And that once you had acquired it, the plant had no further strategic use for you in the northeast. Boom! Insurance pays out, not your problem anymore.

(showing him a document)

This is your testimony before the Industrial Commerce Commission, denying any involvement in the Buffalo plant explosion.

ROGERS

That's right. Because we never owned it.

Ida then calmly presents him with another document.

IDA

And yet, here you are listed on a "Bill of Sale" - along with John Archbold and Ambrose MacGregor - acting as "agents of the Standard Oil Company" in purchasing the Buffalo Oil Refinery. That is your signature on there, isn't it?

Rogers examines the document. His entire face darkens.

ROGERS

(coldly)

Where the hell did you get this?

IDA

It's a bookkeeping record. I found it.

(beat)

Lying to me in your office is one thing, Mr. Rogers. Lying under oath to the ICC is another.

(beat)

Of course, I don't *have* to write about the Buffalo plant explosion. If you let me see the company shipping records.

Rogers doesn't move a muscle. A silent rage building inside him.

ROGERS

How dare you come in here and call me a liar. You're trying to blackmail me.

IDA

I'm trying to help you.

ROGERS

You help me! Oh, that's rich. From the first moment you walked in here, you have wanted to condemn me, and destroy this company. That's not journalism, that's anarchy. And it stops right here. Get out of my office.

IDA

If I could just ask one more thing...

ROGERS

(explodes)

Get out. Get out! GET OUT!!

IDA

(crisply)

Thank you for your time, Mr. Rogers. I'll be in touch.

Ida leaves. Rogers slams the door on her, seething.

CUT TO:

**THE PRINTING PRESSES ROLLING --**

Ida's latest story coming out. We see the headline:

"CUTTING TO KILL: STANDARD OIL CONTEMPT OF LAW"

SUPERIMPOSE: **February 1903.**

**INT. KYKUIT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Cettie Rockefeller comes into the kitchen, surprising two KITCHEN MAIDS who are reading McClure's Magazine.

She approaches silently, catching them both off guard.

CETTIE

What are you reading?

The maid lowers the magazine, casts her eyes downward.

MAID

I'm sorry, m'am. It was sitting right there.

CETTIE

Haven't you got work to be doing?

MAID

Yes, m'am.

CETTIE

Then I suggest you get to it.

The two maids scuttle away. Cettie picks up the magazine. Looks at it. And seeing her husband's face on the cover, a look of horror washes over her...

**INT. KYKUIT - MASTER SUITE - DAY**

Rockefeller is putting on his shoes, getting dressed for the day. A lazy Irish Wolfhound lounges at his feet. Cettie enters, holding the magazine. Her face drained of color.

CETTIE

Have you read this?

ROCKEFELLER

(not looking up)

No.

CETTIE

Well, your entire staff has. Thought you might like to read it too.

ROCKEFELLER

Why should I?

CETTIE

Perhaps you might learn something about yourself.

ROCKEFELLER

People are free to write whatever they want about me. It doesn't change anything.

CETTIE  
 (sharply)  
 Except...public perception!

Rockefeller stands to his full height. Adjusts his braces.

ROCKEFELLER  
 As long as I've been in business, people have sought to destroy me. But they never could. So some journalist wants to have a go at me, get in line. Half the world wants to lynch me just for being successful, the other half wants a loan. And I say, to hell with them all!

He goes into the bathroom. Cettie looms in the doorway, watching him. Her face and tone softens a little.

CETTIE  
 I know how hard you've worked to build the company, and I know how hard you've tried to protect me from understanding it. But I know this much: the times are changing, John. You lose the public trust, and you may not be able to get it back.  
 (re: the magazine)  
 This...this is only the beginning.

ROCKEFELLER  
 (bitterly)  
 Nobody complained when I brought light into their homes, or provided thousands of men with jobs. Oil is what this country runs on, Cettie, and I gave it to them. I have nobody to answer to but my creator.

CETTIE  
 (quietly)  
 And...Ida Tarbell.

Rockefeller slowly raises one hand to silence her.

ROCKEFELLER  
 I don't want to hear that woman's name mentioned in this house again.

He sweeps past her, pulling on his jacket. Cettie looks at him, something she desperately needs to ask him.

CETTIE  
 Is it true, John?

ROCKEFELLER  
 Is what true?

CETTIE  
 All of this.

His silence fills the room, giving her the answer.

CETTIE

(pained)

It's not just your reputation, you know.  
It's our reputation. Your son's reputation.  
I don't want this going on. I want it  
stopped, John. I want it stopped.

She nods and leaves the room. We hold on Rockefeller's face, his expression dark and dangerous.

**INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - DAY**

McClure is sitting opposite two conservative-looking EXECUTIVES, both of them looking very unhappy.

SAM MCCLURE

I don't understand, why the sudden change of heart?

EXECUTIVE #1

Have you seen the New York Times today?

He slides the newspaper across the table at Sam.

INSERT CARTOON: It shows Ida wielding a huge bow and arrow (in the shape of a pen) trained right at Rockefeller's Heart.

McClure smiles, pretends like he hasn't seen it.

SAM MCCLURE

Isn't that something!

EXECUTIVE #1

I'll be honest with you, Mr. McClure, we just don't like the direction this is going.

SAM MCCLURE

(cheery, upbeat)

Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way, but obviously, I think you're making a big mistake. Our sales are booming. Circulation is up 50% in the last month alone.

The execs are unmoved. Their body language says it all.

EXECUTIVE #2

Look Sam, we sell sheet metal. Standard Oil is our biggest customer. Now what would we do if they were to boycott us?

Sam taps a pencil on his desk. But he has no answer.

**INT. OFFICES OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Elsewhere in the office, PIERCE and LOWRY, (the two junior writers) are reading aloud some of their notices...

LOWRY

Listen to this: "...as racy as any novel, with more romance than the usual business profile, Miss Tarbell has once again beaten upon facts, rather than a gong..."

PIERCE

The New York Times: "Is the Pen mightier than the Moneybag? Ida Tarbell of McClures Magazine seems to think so..."

As if on cue, Ida wanders past, just arriving at the office.

LOWRY

Hey Ida. Congratulations, you're famous! Even got your own cartoon.

But before she can even answer, MCCLURE pokes his head out of his door. He doesn't look happy.

SAM MCCLURE

Miss Tarbell! In my office.

**INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Ida enters, sees: five large sacks of mail on the floor.

IDA

What's all this?

SAM MCCLURE

They're for you. And there's three more of 'em down in basement. The porter refuses to carry any more up here.

A beat. Sam rubs his neck, stressed.

SAM MCCLURE

I've lost three advertisers already this month, another one just now. All of them scared of offending the big tycoon.

IDA

So what? We'll find others.

SAM MCCLURE

Oh, will we now? Just like that? Like pulling apples off a tree.

(beat)

Listen. I have personally invested everything I own into this magazine.

IDA  
And you think I haven't?

SAM MCCLURE  
I'm talking about *business* here. Profit and loss. Even Robin Hood had to pay his merry men. What the hell do you even know about publishing anyway? You're just a writer!

The irony of this comment strikes Ida as funny. She laughs.

SAM MCCLURE  
I'm glad you're so amused. Maybe you'll also find these funny.

He hands Ida a bunch of threatening letters he has received. Ida briefly scans them, totally unfazed.

IDA  
(joking)  
He can't even spell the word "strangle."  
How dangerous could he really be?

SAM MCCLURE  
(serious)  
They're a huge corporation, Ida. I'm just a little guy, trying to sell a few extra magazine subscriptions.

Ida points to the sacks of reader mail filling the office.

IDA  
And who do you think they are? They're the little guy, just like you. And they've had to fight and scrap and starve for every morsel that they get. But they're also tired of being pushed around by these Robber Barons. They're tired of playing with a loaded dice in a rigged game that they can never win.

SAM MCCLURE  
(pause)  
This is insane. I can't believe you ever talked me into this.

IDA  
You're the one who hired me!

SAM MCCLURE  
Jesus Christ. I didn't want to start a revolution. Just a better seat in a restaurant and a couple of extra bucks.

IDA  
(calmly)  
And we'll get it, I promise you.

IDA (CONT'D)

We can bring these people to their knees.  
And then you can own the restaurant.

(beat)

You're doing the right thing here, Mr.  
McClure.

SAM MCCLURE

Great. Remind me of that when I'm filing  
for bankruptcy, will you?

(beat)

Haven't you got some work to do?

He shoos her away like a fly.

SAM MCCLURE

(re: sacks of mail)

And take those bloody things with you!

(calling off)

PHILLIPS!

**EXT. KYKUIT - DAY**

A HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE pulls up at the front door of Kykuit.  
A PORTER stands, waiting to receive HENRY ROGERS as he climbs  
briskly out with his briefcase.

**INT. KYKUIT - PRIVATE DEN - FOLLOWING**

Rogers stands before Rockefeller. Weekly briefing session.

ROCKEFELLER

You're late.

ROGERS

Driver lost a wheel on the way up here.  
Couldn't be helped, I'm afraid.

A beat.

ROCKEFELLER

How many times have you met with that  
woman, Miss Tar-barrel?

ROGERS

(quickly)

We never discussed anything --

ROCKEFELLER

That wasn't the question. How many *times*  
did you meet with her?

ROGERS

A few times. I knew her father back in  
Titusville. She wanted to learn about our  
history, so I...humored her a little.

ROCKEFELLER

I'm told that on three separate occasions, she came to see you at your office. What did you discuss?

ROGERS

This and that. Nothing very important. Look, she was going to write about us anyway, so I thought maybe I could help steer the conversation a little.

ROCKEFELLER

In order to *steer*, Mr. Rogers, one first needs to be able to drive. The trouble with you is, you're much better at talking.

ROGERS

I can assure you, I won't be meeting with her again.

ROCKEFELLER

You know why I'm successful, Mr. Rogers? Because I keep a low profile. I don't seek out attention, and I *certainly* don't go blowing my own trumpet in front of a journalist just to make myself feel more important.

ON ROGERS, embarrassed.

ROCKEFELLER

This whole business with McClure's, it's upsetting to my wife.

ROGERS

Yes, sir. I understand.

ROCKEFELLER

What would you do if someone was upsetting your wife?

ROGERS

Well, I...I'd want it stopped.

A beat.

ROCKEFELLER

Then do it.

**EXT. THE CENTURY CLUB - NIGHT**

A discreet BRASS SIGN lit by two gaslights is all that identifies the entrance to this elite all-male SOCIAL CLUB.

**INT. THE CENTURY CLUB - SMOKING ROOM - NIGHT**

DISCOVER SAM MCCLURE - at a table, playing poker with a half-dozen or so other young New York hotshots. He is looking slightly the worse for drink and a poor run of cards.

SAM MCCLURE  
I'll see your twenty, and I'll raise you fifty.

PLAYER #1  
(uneasy)  
Sam, come on, we're playing for sport.

SAM MCCLURE  
Sport or not, if I'm going to be fleeced by a bandit, I'd rather I see his face.

REVEAL: three other gentlemen at another table paying very close attention to the game. They are watching McClure.

The cards are dealt, and Sam takes his in hand. It's a losing hand, but still he bets more. Tension rising.

SAM MCCLURE  
Fifty.

Sam pushes out his chips, all in. Of the remaining three players, all but one folds. Just him and Sam head to head.

DEALER  
Gentlemen, cards?

Sam reveals his hand: a weak two pairs. The other guy lays down a house. Smiles. He reaches out to claim his winnings.

SAM MCCLURE  
(drunken smile)  
Well, there we are then. If luck be a lady, she can also be a vengeful whore.  
(rising)  
Gentlemen, if you'll excuse me...

McClure rises, staggers off in the direction of the toilets. After a moment, we see the other men get up and follow.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

McClure is at the urinal when three other "gentlemen" enter the bathroom. One of them discreetly locks the door.

McClure zips up, goes to leave. Two men block his path.

GENTLEMAN #1  
Where do you think you're going?

SAM MCCLURE  
Home. Excuse me.

GENTLEMAN #2  
Not so fast, McClure.

In an instant, they're upon him, pinning him roughly up against the wall. The third man approaches, and grabs him violently by the testicles. Squeezing.

GENTLEMAN #3  
Think you're a big man now, do you? Well, you don't seem so big to me.

SAM MCCLURE  
(terrified)  
Hey! What is this? Get offa me! I pay my debts.

GENTLEMAN #3  
Yeah, but you're not so good at minding your own business, are you? You and that nosy little bitch would want to be a bit more careful. Telling lies about people can get you into a whole lot of trouble.

Suddenly, he is sucker punched in the gut. Another glancing blow to the head, and he's down on the floor.

GENTLEMAN #1  
Stay away from Standard Oil, McClure. Or the next time we might not be so friendly.

Before they go, one of them kicks him in the stomach for good measure.

GENTLEMAN #1  
That one's for Ida.

#### **EXT. CENTURY CLUB - NIGHT**

Two beefy SECURITY GUARDS bodily carry McClure out the front door of the club.

SAM MCCLURE  
Hey! I am a member of this club! I know my rights!

And toss him unceremoniously into a fountain...

#### **INT. IDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - THAT SAME NIGHT**

Ida stands in the stairwell of her third floor walk-up, paying the LANDLADY her weekly rent.

IDA

The tap in my bathroom is leaking again.

LANDLADY

I'll send George up to have a look.  
Probably just needs another washer.

The landlady turns to go, then stops, remembering something.

LANDLADY

Oh. There was a gentleman called here for you the other day.

IDA

Did he leave a name?

LANDLADY

No. No name. Tall fellow, skinny. I told him you were at work.

IDA

Thank you, Mrs. Hammond. If he shows up here again, please let me know.

(beat)

Also, I specifically asked you not to put my name on the mailbox outside. Please can you take it down.

LANDLADY

(not remotely interested)

Whatever you say. Good night, Miss Tarbell.

IDA

Goodnight, Mrs. Hammond.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - FOLLOWING**

Ida closes the door, double locking it. She stands there a moment, as a vague unease settles over her.

Whatever the feeling, she quickly shakes off.

ANGLE - LATER

We see where Ida has set up an office in her spare bedroom. Crammed floor to ceiling with her books and typewriter. She is typing up her notes, a cat curled at her feet.

When suddenly, there is a tremendous CRASH!!

Followed by glass spraying across the floor.

The cat darts for cover, and Ida dives onto the floor.

We hear a RUMBLE OF BOOTS in the alleyway outside.

Looking up, she sees a large rock, with a note tied to it.

ON THE NOTE: "STOP NOW BITCH. OR ELSE."

**EXT. GATES OF KYKUIT - DAY**

A group of JOURNALISTS are camped outside the gates of Kykuit. A MOTORCAR approaches, heading into the estate. The men all clamor towards it, hoping for a sighting or a quote.

VOICES (AD-LIB)

Mr. Rockefeller, how do you respond to the allegations in McClure's Magazine...any comment about the secret kickbacks from the railroads...Mr. Rockefeller...?

As the car sweeps past, we see it's not Rockefeller in the back, but his son JOHN JUNIOR and his wife ABBY.

**EXT. KYKUIT - FRONT DOOR - DAY**

The car pulls up and the young couple climb out.

They are greeted by **JOE DEVEREUX** (50's), the father's personal secretary. He is a pinched-looking Irishman, loyal servant to the old man.

DEVEREUX

Welcome home, Mr. Rockefeller. How was the honeymoon, sir?

JUNIOR

Fine, thanks Joe. Is my father here?

DEVEREUX

Yes, but he's in conference with Mr. Rogers. He doesn't wish to be disturbed.

JUNIOR

And my mother?

DEVEREUX

Upstairs. In the library.

JUNIOR

(re: suitcases)

Take these up to the carriage house, will you Joe?

(to Abby)

I'll be up in a few minutes.

Junior strides inside the house.

## INT. KYKUIT - LIBRARY - DAY

Junior paces around the room like a caged animal. Deeply upset. His mother stands before him, trying to placate him.

JUNIOR  
Just let me talk to him.

CETTIE  
You're upset. I understand that. But please, try to calm yourself.

JUNIOR  
Why won't he answer these...these lies! That's what they are. And by saying nothing, it just makes him look worse.

CETTIE  
He will answer. But in his own way, and his own time. Your father will not be told how to conduct his business.

A knock at the door, Devereux entering...

DEVEREUX  
Mr. Rockefeller, sir, your wife is asking--

JUNIOR  
(abrupt)  
Not now, Joe!

CETTIE  
Just give us a moment. Thanks Joseph.

Catching a whiff, Devereux beats a hasty exit.

JUNIOR  
It's an assassination, that's what it is. My God, they're trying to ruin him. And us!

CETTIE  
Nobody is going to ruin us. If we stand together.

JUNIOR  
(a dark laugh)  
Boy, she really nailed him, didn't she? The money mad old fool and his fading empire. Duping widows out of their fortunes, bulldozing the railroads into the ground.

CETTIE  
Stop it.

JUNIOR  
But I'm the one who has to show his face on Wall Street Monday morning.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

It wouldn't be so bad if I didn't share his name. Christ, whose idea of a sick joke was that?

Suddenly, she slaps him across the face. Hard.

It shocks them both.

CETTIE

Stop it. Stop this nonsense! You will not speak that way about my husband.

(fierce)

Your father is the king of kings. And you, are the son of the king of kings. And you must never do or say anything that would tarnish that crown, do you understand me?

Silence. He just nods.

CETTIE

Now go and look after your wife, and I will look after my husband.

JUNIOR

(contrite)

I'm sorry. I spoke out of turn.

CETTIE

Yes you did. You most certainly did.

He leaves the room. HOLD on Cettie, fighting back tears.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida follows Sam McClure through the main office floor.

REVEAL: Sam has a BLACKENED EYE.

IDA

It's a free press and a free country!

SAM MCCLURE

Like hell it is. That shitheel could have us both killed in the morning and the world would simply shrug. That was just a warning shot.

IDA

So what, you're going to just give up now? What kind of a man does that make you?

SAM MCCLURE

A very sensible one!

Sam enters his office; Ida follows him in. Some other faces in the office lean back in their chairs, watching.

## INT. MCCLURE'S OFFICE - FOLLOWING

IDA

Mr. McClure, we have a responsibility--

SAM MCCLURE

(angrily)

And I have a responsibility! To my investors. To my wife. To the fourteen people out there who depend on me for their livelihood. I'm talking about jobs here, food on the table. This is not a game!

A beat, then:

IDA

Why do you think those men attacked you? Why do you think I have not been sued for libel, or kidnapped or even worse?

SAM MCCLURE

Don't hold your breath...

IDA

We've got him. And he knows it.

SAM MCCLURE

Oh, really? What have we got? So he's a rich guy and he likes to win. That still doesn't make him a criminal.

IDA

What about the price fixing, the secret kickbacks from the railroads, the sabotage. That's not illegal?

SAM MCCLURE

Show me the documents that prove it.

She doesn't have them, and she knows it.

SAM MCCLURE

Look, I don't like him any more than you do. But let's be *reasonable* here. If we keep on publishing like this, it starts to look like personal vendetta. Next thing you know, you've got people feeling sorry for him, while we're out of business! You've made your point, now let's move on.

IDA

Move on? He is a liar, a cheat and a hypocrite! Going to church on Sunday just so he can destroy his enemies with impunity on Monday.

SAM MCCLURE

Why are you making this personal? It's not.

IDA

It's always personal...to somebody!

McClure goes to a drinks cabinet, pours himself a stiff one. Ida is silent for a moment, ruminating. And then:

IDA

"Sic Semper Tyrannis."

SAM MCCLURE

What?

IDA

Sic Semper Tyrannis. Death to all tyrants. That's what John Wilkes Booth said when he shot Lincoln. But that never sat well with me, because Lincoln was never a tyrant. He was a liberator.

SAM MCCLURE

Oh, so now you're Abe Lincoln?!

IDA

(deeply)

No, I'm not that smart or that able. But thanks to you, I now have a voice. And I think I speak for a lot of people who are sick and tired of being pushed around by a gang of nameless faceless corporate bullies. Not only does Rockefeller want to win, but he wants everyone else to lose. That's what I call tyranny.

McClure looks at her.

SAM MCCLURE

You're not going to stop this, are you?

IDA

Not when we're this close. We've got him on the run, now let's finish him.

SAM MCCLURE

How?

IDA

(thinks)

Rockefeller controls the oil industry because he bullies the railroads into giving him cheaper shipping rates. Rates that allow him to crush the competition. Now let's assume for a second that somewhere there's a record of those shipping rates.

IDA (CONT'D)

Then all we need to do is find them. There's your direct link to criminal activity. And nobody is above the law, including John D. Rockefeller.

A beat, then:

SAM MCCLURE

Two more months. Then I'm done with Rockefeller, and so are you. In the meantime, we are beefing up security around here. No more random "visitors."

Ida nods. Then she hands McClure her latest article.

IDA

I have a train to catch. Print this, if you want to punch back.

Ida heads out.

SAM MCCLURE

Where the hell are you going?

IDA

Cleveland, to look for proof. And I'm taking Siddal with me.

She's out the door. He knocks back his Scotch, before anxiously looking at Ida's next article.

SAM MCCLURE

(quietly, to himself)  
Sic Semper Tyrannis.

#### **INT. MOVING TRAIN - DAY**

Ida and Siddal ride on a train to Cleveland. Ida is staring absently out the window, Siddal sitting opposite reading the newspaper. After a moment, another PASSENGER approaches.

PASSENGER

I'm sorry to disturb...but are you Ida Tarbell?

IDA

Yes. I am.

PASSENGER

Would you mind? It's for my wife, she's a big fan of yours. We both are.

He hands her a copy of McClure's to sign. Ida is surprised to be recognized in public like this. Uncomfortable with the attention. Nevertheless, she signs, hands back the magazine.

Siddal watches all of this with wry amusement.

IDA

What?

SIDDAL

Nothing.

(then, teasing)

"Miss Tarbell, I am such a big fan of yours.  
Would you mind signing my newspaper?"

IDA

Why, certainly sir.

Ida takes his newspaper and playfully whacks him over the head with it. A beat, then:

IDA

John, I want to thank you.

SIDDAL

What for?

IDA

For being a good friend to me. I couldn't do any of this without you. You know that, don't you?

SIDDAL

(smiles)

I know.

Together, they ride in silence.

**INT. 320 LEXINGTON - LOBBY OF MCCLURES - DAY**

A MAN in a shabby raincoat (we will later come to know him as **BEN LUDLOW**) enters the building. He looks haggard, unkempt. And in this moment, he is also quite obviously intoxicated.

SECURITY GUARD

Can I help you?

BEN LUDLOW

Does Ida Tarbell work here?

SECURITY GUARD

Who?

BEN LUDLOW

Ida Tarbell, she writes for McClure's magazine.

SECURITY GUARD

(suspicious)

I'm sorry, you must have the wrong address.

BEN LUDLOW  
I just want to talk to her.

SECURITY GUARD  
Well, she ain't here. Now go on...  
(nods to the door)  
Get outta here! Before I call the cops.

Ludlow lurches off. The security guard shakes his head.

**INT. KYKUIT - PRIVATE DEN - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON: THE COVER OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE. And the headline:

"THE BUFFALO CASE" by Ida M. Tarbell

**September 1904.**

PULL BACK TO REVEAL...Rockefeller alone in his den, reading. His expression is blank, no emotion readable on his face.

When he is finished reading, he rises from his chair and tosses the magazine into the fire. He watches as it burns, the flame casting an eerie yellow glow over his face.

**INT. KYKUIT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Rockefeller stands at the head of a long mahogany table. Seated around the table is a collection of his minions, including Rogers, Junior, and a new man **MR. GATES** (50's).

The room is cloaked in semi-darkness, reflecting the Oil Baron's blackened mood and somber tone.

ROCKEFELLER  
I will not allow the tedious ramblings of an hysterical petticoat to change the way that we do business at Standard Oil.

JUNIOR  
The stockholders in New York are getting very nervous. If we don't put out a statement right now--

ROCKEFELLER  
(sharply)  
There won't be any statement. We do not comment on the salacious gossip of a third-rate no-name magazine. By engaging with them, we only legitimize them.

JUNIOR  
You're wrong.

A beat. All heads turn to the younger Rockefeller.

JUNIOR

I'm sorry, but this is different. We need to fight back. We need to do something.

ROCKEFELLER

I said...I will handle this.

MR. GATES

(nervously)

Mr. Rockefeller, if I may. A carefully worded press release, or perhaps an op-ed piece in The Times might allay people's fears. If we can't stop the discussion, we can at least try to "manage" its direction.

Rockefeller gazes imperiously at this puny little man.

ROCKEFELLER

Who are you, sir?

MR. GATES

Frederick Gates. Of the Gates-Harriman Public Relations firm in New York.

JUNIOR

I invited him here, for his expertise.

ROCKEFELLER

(a sneer)

Since when did one need to have "relations" with the public? I've been in business for over 40 years without the need for public relations. Forty years! And now these sewer dwellers...these vultures...these PARASITES...want to pick over every detail of my business. How dare they!

Absolute silence. Nobody looks at Rockefeller.

ROCKEFELLER

Everyone please leave.

One by one, the men get up and file solemnly out of the room.

ROCKEFELLER

Not you, John.

Now it's just father and son. Alone together. Finally:

ROCKEFELLER

Don't ever contradict me in public again.

JUNIOR

(anguished)

Why won't you say something? That woman is turning you into a monster, and you just sit there and do nothing!

ROCKEFELLER

I don't see how this concerns you.

JUNIOR

(incredulous)

Does not concern me?! Yesterday, I had a man come up to me in the street because he overhead my name being called by a driver. And do you know what he did? He spat in my face, with hatred. That's what people think of your name. And mine.

Rockefeller gazes at his son, baffled by the raw emotion.

ROCKEFELLER

You have a secure job, an executive title, you have money, and still you're not happy.

JUNIOR

(tortured)

Because it's your money, it's your name! I never asked for any of it, and I didn't earn it. Do you know what I do all day long on Wall Street? I devise clever ways in which to hide money from the government. Your money. And you know what, there's so goddamn much of it, that I can't keep up.

ROCKEFELLER

Don't use that language with me, boy. You know I can't stand that language.

JUNIOR

How much is enough? What *good* is all the money in the world, if people hate us just for having it?

ROCKEFELLER

And what would you have me do instead? Just give it all away?

JUNIOR

Yes! Exactly! Give it away. We don't need it. Why not let somebody else have the use of it for a change?

ROCKEFELLER

You're my son, and when I'm gone, it will all be yours. And when you're gone, it will be the turn of your children, and their children's children.

Rockefeller goes to embrace Junior, but Junior shrugs him off, and walks past him towards the door. Stops, turns.

JUNIOR

But that's just it. I don't want it! I'm not you. And I don't want to be like you.

Junior storms out. Rockefeller watches as he goes, a touch of sadness behind the cold eyes. For the very first time, he appears hurt. Personally affected.

**EXT. CLEVELAND - DAY**

Ida & Siddal are on foot, going door to door in residential neighborhoods.

Door #1: A stately townhouse. Ida knocks, and Judge Martin Knapp answers. (We recognize him from an earlier snatch.)

IDA

Mr. Knapp?

KNAPP

Yes?

IDA

Judge Martin Knapp?

KNAPP

I'm retired now. Who are you?

IDA

Hello sir, I'm Ida Tarbell. This is John Siddal. We work for McClure's magazine in New York.

Knapp stares back at them. Not happy.

IDA

I just wanted to ask you some questions about your role as Chairman of the ICC. When I spoke with Willie Harkness in New York, he said that you had --

KNAPP

You've got some nerve coming here. You people ought to be ashamed of yourselves, destroying a good man's reputation like that. You think you're so smart, but you don't know a goddamn thing about anything.

IDA

Judge Knapp, if I could just ask you about this report you had commissioned --

KNAPP

You're invading my privacy, and the privacy of my family.

KNAPP (CONT'D)

If you don't leave, I'll sue you and that gossip rag of a magazine you work for.

(beat)

Get off my property.

SLAM! Ida and Siddal just stand there. Share a look.

Door #2: Ida knocks. A sweet old lady peers out at them.

IDA

Mrs. Peterson?

OLD LADY

Yes?

IDA

Hello, I'm Ida Tarbell, this is John Siddal. We're from McClure's Magazine in New York. I hate to bother you at home, but is your husband here? Mr. Arnold Peterson?

OLD LADY

My husband is dead. He died five years ago.

IDA

(oops)

I'm terribly sorry.

Slam!

Door #3: A tired middle-aged woman. Angry barking dog.

IDA

Miss Wilkinson?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Yes?

IDA

We're from McClure's magazine, and we're doing a story on Standard Oil. I wonder if we could speak to you for just a minute.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(yanking the dog)

Buster, no!

(to Ida)

I know who you are, and I know what you're doing. But that doesn't mean I'll talk to you. Round here, people have to actually work for a living, and jobs are hard to come by. Standard Oil employs a whole lot of people in Cleveland, and most of them would rather not starve.

IDA  
 You worked in the accounting department, is that correct?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN  
 I'm sorry. Can't help you.

CUT TO: A WHOLE SERIES OF FACES NOW

In quick succession, standing in doorways. Current or former employees of Standard Oil. Nothing in common but their fear.

All shake their heads "no." Not willing to talk on or even off the record about Standard Oil.

Feeling dejected, Ida and Siddal turn to go.

SIDDAL  
 I never knew that being a writer could make you so scary.

IDA  
 But it's not us they're afraid of, is it?

SIDDAL  
 So what do we do now?

IDA  
 I have no idea.

**INT. RESTAURANT - ST. DENIS HOTEL - NEW YORK - DAY**

Sam McClure sits in a private booth, anxiously checking his watch. Finally, Ida plops down opposite, looking exhausted.

SAM MCCLURE  
 You're late. How was Cleveland?

IDA  
 Terrible. A mysterious epidemic of amnesia has broken out. "I don't remember, I can't recall, it was a long time ago..."

SAM MCCLURE  
 Getting tired of it?

A waiter glides in, smiles warmly at Ida (thinking she's one of Sam's mistresses). This is not lost on Ida.

WAITER  
 Something to drink for the lady?

IDA  
 I'll have whatever he's having.

SAM MCCLURE  
Scotch and soda. Easy on the soda.

The waiter disappears. McClure slides a folder across the table at Ida.

SAM MCCLURE (CONT'D)  
Well, this ought to cheer you up.

As Ida flicks through the file.

SAM MCCLURE (CONT'D)  
We received an anonymous "tip" of a William Avery Rockefeller, 93 years of age, living on a chicken farm in Sioux Falls North Dakota. A reporter at the *Plain Dealer* checked it out. It's the real deal.

IDA  
His father? But I thought he was dead?

SAM MCCLURE  
Alive and kicking. Only out there he's known as "Doctor" William Livingston, and guess what?

IDA  
He's not a doctor.

SAM MCCLURE  
(nods)  
It seems Rockefeller Père is a snake-oil salesman, with a criminal record as long as my arm. Guns, liquor, whores. He even killed an Indian. Now how would that go over at the Church picnic, do you think?

Ida thinks on it a second, then closes the file.

IDA  
That's great. But we can't use it.

SAM MCCLURE  
Why not?

IDA  
Because it's gossip. Print that and we'd lose all credibility. The story I'm writing is called a "History of the Standard Oil Company." Not some crazy chicken farmer!

SAM MCCLURE  
Your call. I was only trying to help.

The waiter returns with their drinks. A beat, then:

SAM MCCLURE

You know, my wife thinks we're having an affair.

It hangs there for a moment, like a question mark.

IDA

(arch)

What ever gave her that idea, I wonder. I'm not a poet. Or is it a "poetess"?

SAM MCCLURE

You're referring to Miss Wilkinson I'm sure, but we're not involved any more.

IDA

(mock surprise)

Oh? And whose turn is it this month?

SAM MCCLURE

(chastened)

You don't approve, do you Miss Tarbell. I can feel your reproachful gaze upon me like a cold wind in August.

IDA

I respect a man's wedding vows, even if he does not.

SAM MCCLURE

Are you always this hard on men? I'm beginning to think that you don't like us very much.

IDA

(smiles)

On the contrary. I happen to love men. I prefer their company over women.

SAM MCCLURE

Oh? Why's that?

IDA

Maybe it's because they always appear to have more fun than we do.

A pause. McClure pulls out a letter from his inside pocket, hands it to Ida.

SAM MCCLURE

Well, try this for fun. I received a letter from the Attorney General's Office in Washington D.C. Reminding us of our obligation to the privacy protection act.

IDA

I guess a lot of money will buy you a lot of friends.

SAM MCCLURE

You've got one more month to make your case on Rockefeller. Frankly, I'm amazed that he hasn't sued us already. Do you think he's even reading?

IDA

I don't know. But I can tell you who is.

Ida pulls out a letter of her own, hands it to McClure. Waits for his reaction. He looks up at her, absolutely stunned.

SAM MCCLURE

You're joking me?  
(Ida shakes her head)  
When?

IDA

This Friday.

SAM MCCLURE

Does he mention me in here at all?  
It is my name on the cover after all...

CUT TO:

**INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY**

**TEDDY ROOSEVELT**, striding towards us, big smile. At only 46 years of age, the 26th President of the United States is a vigorous young man, exuding an air of rugged masculinity.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Miss Tarbell, welcome! What an absolute pleasure it is to meet you.

He pumps Ida's hand vigorously, a little too vigorously.

IDA

Mr. President. The pleasure is mine.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Please, call me Colonel, or Theodore. We don't get too hung up on titles around here. Come on in...

(to his butler)

George, have them set up lunch now.

He ushers her inside the Oval Office.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

So, how do you like my little office?

IDA  
 (awed)  
 It's...it's beautiful.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
 And it's even got a view. Not too bad, eh?  
 For a lowly Governor of New York.

Ida's eyes are drawn to the huge portrait of Lincoln on the wall (her idol). She stands in awe before it.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
 How would you like that face looking over  
 your shoulder every day? It's no wonder I  
 have indigestion. Please, have a seat...

Ida sits on the edge of a sofa. She's nervous, but hides it very well. No idea why she's been summoned here.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
 Thank you for coming today. I just thought  
 we should have a chance to meet in private.  
 Before you became *too* famous, that is. You  
 know, you're the first woman I've met with  
 as president.

IDA  
 Thank you, I'm greatly honored.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
 I've been following your series on  
 Rockefeller with great interest. I must  
 confess, I never thought I would live to  
 see the day when a journalist could become  
 more powerful than the richest man in the  
 world. A woman with a typewriter is a very  
 dangerous thing.

IDA  
 (a smile)  
 Imagine what we could do with a vote.

Roosevelt laughs politely. Unsure how to take this.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
 I have written a few books myself, you  
 know, though I don't have your command of  
 the English language. Here, I wanted you to  
 have this. A little souvenir of your visit.

He offers her a signed copy of one of his naval books.

IDA  
 Thank you, Colonel. I will treasure it.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Don't worry, I don't expect you to read it.  
Nobody else has.

A knock at the door, the butler entering--

BUTLER

Mr. President, lunch is served.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

(standing)

Come on, let's have a bite, shall we?

He leads Ida into the presidential dining room, where lunch for two is set up. As "informal" as lunch can be when one is dining alone with the president. A waiter removes the silver domes on their plates, revealing some dark looking meat.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Wild venison. Shot it myself over Christmas in Vermont. Do you like venison?

IDA

(lying)

Love it, thanks.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

So...you've been coming down pretty hard on old Rockefeller.

IDA

Not unfairly, I hope. I try to present the facts as I find them. I want the reader to make up his own mind.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

And he has. Emphatically.

A waiter silently pours Ida some water.

IDA

Thank you.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

As you probably know, Miss Tarbell, this is a very important year for me. I'm up for re-election in eight months, and if I get a second term, I want to set up a new Department of Labor And Commerce. It will give us broader powers to investigate the trusts. But before I do that, I need to get this Elkins bill through congress. Are you familiar with the bill?

IDA

Yes. The anti-trust legislation.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

It's not an easy sell, given that many of my supporters are on Wall Street. But I believe this is a very important piece of legislation. And it will give the average American worker a good square deal: more stability, more prosperity, more growth for everybody.

A beat. Ida looks at him.

IDA

And you want my help with that?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

The better people can *understand* the bill, the more likely they are to support it. You have a particular talent for explaining that which is difficult to understand.

At last. The reason for her summons.

IDA

You want me to publicly endorse the Elkins Bill in our magazine?

Roosevelt smiles, a little embarrassed by the asking.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Well, it doesn't have to be anything explicit. Sometimes a little *push* is all that's required.

Ida stops eating, looks at the president.

IDA

I'm sure it's a fine piece of legislation, but I'm afraid I can't do that.

The droopy moustache twitches with annoyance. This is a man not used to hearing the word "no." Especially from a woman.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Oh. I see.

IDA

I'm a journalist, Mr. President. Not a lobbyist.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

(peevd)

Yes. Yes, of course, I understand.

When his little gambit fails, he tries switching back to more "neutral" topics.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
And do you enjoy writing, Miss Tarbell?

IDA  
I enjoy the process of writing, more than I  
enjoy the end result.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
And how do you *uncover* these things that  
nobody else can seem to uncover?

IDA  
(a shrug)  
I don't know. I suppose I look where other  
people do not. I'm something of a plodder.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
I imagine it must give one a tremendous  
sense of power to shake up an organization  
like Standard Oil.

IDA  
That's the result, over which I have no  
control.

A beat. Roosevelt smiles darkly.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
The important thing to remember about  
power, Miss Tarbell, is that it is very  
fleeting. And just when you think you have  
it...poof! It's gone.

IDA  
I'll try to remember that.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
Do.

A tense unresolved beat as they stare at each other.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY**

Ida approaches the front desk of the hotel for her messages.  
Among them, she finds this unwelcome telegram:

"FATHER FADING. DAYS NOT WEEKS. COME QUICK. WILL"

CUT TO:

**INT. TARBELL HOUSE - DAY**

In the parlor, the Tarbell family has gathered. WILL, GLORIA,  
the kids, ESTHER and various cousins, standing or sitting.

A somber death vigil for Franklin.

Neighbors carry food from the kitchen to the dining room.

**INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

A hollowed-out FRANKLIN TARBELL lies staring up at the ceiling, on the brink of death. His breathing is labored.

A DOCTOR administers another shot of morphine, offering some small relief, then quietly leaves the room.

Ida stands off to one side, watching. A beat, then:

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
Who goes there?

IDA  
(a ritual, this)  
Don't shoot. It's your only daughter.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
Ida Belle. Come closer. Sit.

Ida seats herself next to the bed.

IDA  
Hello Franklin. I came to see you.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
(a smile)  
You came to say goodbye. How was your journey?

IDA  
Long, uncomfortable. I was in Washington. I met with President Roosevelt this week.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
I hope you told him to give up that silly coonskin hat. Man looking like that belongs in the circus, not the White House.  
(growing serious now)  
Ida, I want you to know...that you've made an old man very happy. And proud. Cos when I meet my maker, he'll say to me "What have you done, Franklin?" And I'll tell him...

He coughs. An awful wheezing death rattle.

IDA  
Sssh. Rest now. Don't talk.

FRANKLIN TARBELL  
I'll tell him: "I'm the father of Ida Tarbell."

Ida just nods, too grief-stricken to speak.

FRANKLIN TARBELL

We had fun though, didn't we? You and me?  
You make me very happy, Ida Belle. Very  
happy...

He slowly drifts off as the morphine kicks in. Ida is weeping now. Silently. Fiercely.

And slowly we PULL BACK from this intimate tableaux to...

**EXT. GRAVEYARD - TITUSVILLE - DAY**

A GROUP OF MOURNERS stand together by an open grave as a pine box is lowered into the ground. Franklin Tarbell, returned to the soil he spent his life digging.

A MINISTER intones a few prayers over the nondescript grave.

ANGLE - LATER

Ida and her brother walk a short distance away from the rest of the mourners. Ida looks pale and drawn. Worn out.

WILL

Good of you to come. I'm glad you made it  
on time.

IDA

Me too. Not much of a resting place though,  
is it?

WILL

It's where he'd want to be.

They arrive by the river's edge, staring out together. We watch Ida's face. Clouded. Sad. Deep in thought.

WILL

You were always his favorite, you know. I  
could never compete.

IDA

That's not true!

WILL

Yes it is. You were the son he always  
wanted. Easier on me in a way. Not much was  
expected. He was very proud of you, Ida.

IDA

Then why do I feel like I've failed him?

WILL

Nonsense. You haven't failed anybody. Far from it.

(beat)

Look, why don't you come out to Kansas and visit with us for a little while. You know you're a celebrity out there. I've been trading on your name for months now, just so you know. The kids would love to see you. And I would too.

IDA

Soon. I promise.

(beat)

He deserved so much better than this, Will.

WILL

I know. Hardly seems to matter now though, does it?

Ida gazes out. A steely resolve behind her grief.

IDA

Now is when it matters the most.

**INT. THE MCCLURE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

TWO POLICE INSPECTORS approach a door, giving a loud knock. There's some movement from inside. Motion at the keyhole.

And then the door opens to reveal: **HATTIE MCCLURE**, an attractive woman in her 50's (Sam's wife, older than he is).

INSPECTOR TUNNEY

Mrs. McClure? Hattie McClure?

HATTIE MCCLURE

Yes?

INSPECTOR TUNNEY

(flashing a badge)

I'm Inspector Tunney, this is Inspector Egan. Might we have a moment of your time?

HATTIE MCCLURE

(alarmed)

What's this about?

INSPECTOR TUNNEY

I'm afraid it's about your husband, Sam McClure. May we come in?

**INT. THE MCCLURE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

CLOSE ON A SERIES OF GRAINY PHOTOGRAPHS - detailing lewd sex acts between men and women. Anonymous, explicit, shocking. Sam McClure visible in some of them.

PULL BACK TO - Hattie flicking through them, impassive.

The two cops sit opposite, watching for her reaction.

Hattie hands back the photos, rises unsteadily to her feet. She goes to a drinks cabinet, pouring herself a stiff drink.

A beat, then:

HATTIE MCCLURE

Why are you showing me these?

INSPECTOR TUNNEY

We just need to ah,...correctly identify your husband.

HATTIE MCCLURE

It looks to me like you already have.

(beat)

Get out of my house. Both of you.

INSPECTOR TUNNEY

Thank you for your time, Mrs. McClure. I'm awful sorry for your trouble.

HATTIE MCCLURE

Oh, I'm sure you are. Get out!

The two cops share a look, leave. Hattie slams the door after them. Lowers her head in shame.

**INT. OFFICE OF MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE - DAY**

Ida enters, notices some papers strewn across the floor.

REVEAL: The office has been totally ransacked.

Desks upended, drawers, files, books scattered everywhere.

McClure is talking with TWO UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS. One of them hands him a statement for him to sign.

POLICEMAN # 1

Sign here and here.

Ida approaches, taking it all in:

IDA

What's all this? What's going on?

SAM MCCLURE  
 What's it look like. Somebody broke in last night, stole all our files.

POLICEMAN # 2  
 "Allegedly."

SAM MCCLURE  
 So what's the new theory? That I burgled myself?

POLICEMAN # 2  
 (cryptic)  
 Stranger things have happened.

POLICEMAN # 1  
 We'll look into it, Mr. McClure. We find anything, we'll let you know.

The two cops head out. Ida and McClure stand together in the midst of this wreckage. Some of the other staff (PIERCE, LOWRY, JACCACI) are visible in the b.g., whispering.

A long tense beat.

SAM MCCLURE  
 (bitterly)  
 I told you this was going to happen, didn't I? But you wouldn't listen.

IDA  
 I'll talk to the Police Commissioner, we'll find out--

SAM MCCLURE  
 The Police Commissioner?! Who do you think ordered this? Who do you think owns the Police Department in New York City?

IDA  
 (weakly)  
 We can publish an article--

SAM MCCLURE  
 It's too late for that, okay. We're dead in the water. We're sunk.

IDA  
 What do you mean, we're sunk?

SAM MCCLURE  
 I'm sorry to be the one to inform you, but while you've been gone, they just slapped a gag order on us. They're shutting us down.

IDA  
What..?! They can't do that!

SAM MCCLURE

They can and they did. An injunction,  
signed by the Attorney General himself.

(hands it to her)

It's over, Ida. McClure's is done. And so  
are you.

(re: the others)

Now are you going to be the one to tell  
them they have no jobs, or will I?

A beat as the reality of this sinks in.

IDA

It's your magazine, aren't you even going  
to fight for it?

McClure slumps against the wall, slides down to the floor.

SAM MCCLURE

I did. We lost.

Ida goes to say something, probably something hurtful, but  
thinks better of it, knowing she is complicit. The silence  
between them grows. Until finally, she turns and leaves.

**INT. SIDDAL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

Ida comes to the door of a crummy-looking apartment in the  
Bowery. She KNOCKS, waits for an answer.

SIDDAL answers. He looks extremely tense, upset.

IDA

John, I need to speak to you--

SIDDAL

Now is not a very good time.

REVEAL: someone sitting inside the apartment with him.

IDA

Who is it? Who's there with you?

SIDDAL

It's my father.

IDA

Oh, lovely! Can I say hello?

SIDDAL

I don't think that's a very good idea.

Suddenly, Mr. SIDDAL (56) is standing right there, John's  
unsmiling and very authoritarian father.

IDA  
 (offering a hand)  
 Hello, I'm Ida Tarbell.

He doesn't shake it, nor does he offer a name in return.

MR. SIDDAL  
 John is coming back to Boston with me this evening. He's going to resume his Law studies at Harvard. I'm afraid he won't be working for you or Mr. McClure any more.

IDA  
 That's great. I'm sure he'll do very well there.  
 (beat)  
 But, I'm sure you'll agree that John's work here in New York is also very important...

MR. SIDDAL  
 I think John has given more than enough to McClure's Magazine, don't you?  
 (to his son)  
 Say goodbye. We've a train to catch.

Siddal is absolutely dying. Tries desperately to explain...

SIDDAL  
 It's my father's law firm. Standard Oil is one of their biggest corporate clients. I never told anybody what I was doing here, I knew he wouldn't approve. But somebody found out. Now my father could lose his job, his entire career, everything...  
 (beat)  
 I'm sorry, Ida. I'm really sorry...

He slowly closes the door. HOLD ON Ida. Looking suddenly very lost, and very alone.

**INT. KYKUIT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

At the conference table sit JUNIOR, MR. GATES (PR executive), and a new face we have not seen before, **MR. SELZ** (60s).

Rockefeller stands with his back to all of them, gazing out the window.

SELZ is a very distinguished-looking lawyer from New York. He looks over several legal documents spread before them.

SELZ  
 The holding company we will move to New Jersey, which we incorporate under a different name. Better tax laws, better protection from the courts.

SELZ (CONT'D)

Once that's in place, we will name John Junior as the "new" acting chairman of Standard Oil.

ROCKEFELLER

(quietly, not turning)

That's very convenient.

SELZ

Meanwhile, you will become the chairman of a new private enterprise, which we will call the "Rockefeller Foundation." Now the Foundation affords you very significant tax advantages...

MR. GATES

Not to mention, some good publicity. For a change!

Selz silences this idiot with a glance.

SELZ

You control all philanthropic activities as you see fit. You can choose your interests for charitable or educational purposes.

A long pause. Rockefeller finally turns around to face them.

ROCKEFELLER

You want to banish me from my own company, put me out to pasture. The company I spent 40 years of my life building.

SELZ

(pause)

It's a minor bit of *restructuring*, that's all. But it will protect you personally, protect the family's assets, and hopefully, ensure the continuation of your good name.

Rockefeller looks accusingly at his son. Junior meets his father's gaze confidently this time. We sense a "shift" in the balance of power between father and son.

ROCKEFELLER

Is this what you wanted, John?

JUNIOR

I think it's best for everyone. Yes.

SELZ

Of course, this is entirely your decision, Mr. Rockefeller.

Rockefeller looks contemptuously at the lawyer.

ROCKEFELLER

Is it?

Rockefeller glances briefly over the legal documents spread before him. Then he picks up a pen, quickly signs his name.

He leaves the room without saying another word.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Ida hurries along the street to her apartment. Approaching the mailbox, she notices her name still pasted on there. This annoys her. She rips it off.

ANGLE TO REVEAL: A man (his face obscured) watching her.

Ida is being followed. As she goes to open up the front door, the man looms behind her.

BEN LUDLOW

You're Ida Tarbell, aren't you?

She looks around at him. We recognize him as the man in the shabby raincoat ejected earlier from McClure's lobby.

IDA

(frightened)

I don't think so.

BEN LUDLOW

Sure you are. You're the one writes all them articles about Standard Oil.

Ida fumbles for her keys, tries to unlock the door.

IDA

I think you have the wrong person.

Ida hurries inside, slamming the door abruptly on him. She leans inside the door, breathing heavily. Heart racing.

BEN LUDLOW (O.C.)

Would it interest you to know that I spent 14 years working at the Standard Oil plant in Toledo? You can even check it with my supervisor. He's the one showed me your ad in the magazine.

(beat)

I'd sure be glad to talk to you about it sometime, if you're not too busy.

A long moment passes between them. He begins to walk away.

IDA

Wait!

(opening the door)

What did you say your name was?

BEN LUDLOW

My name is Ben. Ben Ludlow.

IDA

How did you find me here?

BEN LUDLOW

I followed you off the tram. I went to your office but they wouldn't let me up.

(apologetic)

I'm awful sorry if I scared you.

Ida looks at him again, weighing it carefully...

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

They sit together at the kitchen table. Ida taking notes, Ludlow sipping from a hot cup of tea.

Ludlow has a long hangdog look, and a flat mid-western accent. He avoids looking directly at Ida as he speaks.

BEN LUDLOW

I worked in the boiler room, near the incinerator. End of every month, we'd get us a big shipment of boxes come in from the Cleveland plant. Documents and such. We didn't know what they were, we were just told to get rid of 'em. High priority.

IDA

And you put them in the incinerator?

BEN LUDLOW

(nods)

I didn't think nothing of it. Until one day, I look inside and I seen my brother-in-law's name all over some of them documents.

IDA

Your brother-in-law?

BEN LUDLOW

Yes, m'am. He worked as a railway clerk on the Erie Line, up near Meadville. Anyhow, when I looked, I seen they had his whole shipping schedule in there, shipping rates for all the other refineries. Hell, they even knew what he ate for breakfast. I couldn't believe it.

A beat. Ida is stunned.

IDA

And you destroyed all of these documents?  
For Standard Oil?

BEN LUDLOW

Well, not all of 'em. When they let me go,  
I decided I might need some type of  
insurance for my claim. Right about now,  
there's a whole bunch of 'em sitting in the  
basement of my sister's place in Queens.

If he weren't so damn ugly, she might just kiss him.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - DAY**

TWO DELIVERYMEN enter carrying boxes of dusty files, which they deposit in the living room. Ida pays them off.

JUMP CUTS -- OVER SEVERAL DAYS

The clatter of her typewriter is heard as we see Ida at work. She's been at it for days now. Her face set in concentration.

She crosses out sections of her manuscript, tosses away entire pages...

The typewriter continues to clack as day turns to night, and back again.

Finally, she pulls out the last page, stares at it.

**EXT. PARK AVENUE - DAY**

Ida walks down the street, checking for an address against a scrap of paper in her hand. She finds the one she wants. Enters a tall apartment building.

**INT. THE MCCLURE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

Ida knocks at the door. After a moment, McClure peers out.

He appears unshaven and red-eyed, like he's been on a bender for a week. And he's not thrilled to see Ida.

IDA

Can I come in?

After a moment's hesitation, he relents. Leaving the door open for her.

**INT. MCCLURE'S STUDY - SOME TIME LATER**

Sam pours himself another drink. Ida stands.

IDA  
I know how they were doing it.

SAM MCCLURE  
Doing what?

IDA  
The price fixing. The preferential shipping rates. It's all in there.

Ida places a manuscript on his desk. He doesn't look at it.

IDA  
There's a whole army of spies at every level of the organization feeding information directly to Cleveland. They control everything because they *know* everything. The Standard Oil Company is actually 49 corporations, all operating independently of each other. The holding company is run by 9 trustees of which Rockefeller is one. But he owns 90% of the stock. It's the perfect trust.

SAM MCCLURE  
Where did you get all this?

IDA  
Doesn't matter where. The point is, we now have proof that what they were doing is illegal. John Rockefeller belongs in jail.

A pause.

SAM MCCLURE  
My wife is leaving me.

IDA  
Oh Sam...

SAM MCCLURE  
(a sad smile)  
Can't say I blame her. I'm a delinquent father, a lousy husband and a miserable drunk. I'm also broke, as it turns out. It wasn't even my money to begin with. It was my wife's money. And now that's gone.

IDA  
I'm so sorry.

SAM MCCLURE

Don't be. I did this to myself. My father was a drunk and a gambler too. Funny how history has a habit of repeating itself.

Silence. Then:

IDA

We can take down John D. Rockefeller.

He looks at her.

SAM MCCLURE

You don't quit, do you?

IDA

He wants to silence his critics and bend the nation to his will. And the only way he can do that is if people like you and me *allow* him to.

SAM MCCLURE

(growing upset)

I have had my life threatened. My office ransacked. My wife is leaving me. And every single penny I own is tied up in that magazine. What do you want me to do?!

IDA

Help me print this.

SAM MCCLURE

Tell me you're not *actually* serious?

(sees that she is)

Do you have any idea what you're asking me to do?

IDA

Yes. I do.

SAM MCCLURE

And did you ever think for a minute that you might have some responsibility for what you're doing? You are ruining a man's life after all.

IDA

(eyes blazing)

And how many lives has he ruined, and it didn't even cost him a night's sleep.

A beat. This hits home for Sam.

SAM MCCLURE

You know damn well that if I print this, nobody is going to win.

IDA

If you don't print this, everybody loses.

SAM MCCLURE

And what do you think it's going to change?

IDA

Probably nothing. But at least we'll go down swinging.

A long beat.

SAM MCCLURE

How? There's a gag order on us. We could go to jail.

IDA

(thinks)

I think I know somebody who might be able to help us.

**INT. IDA'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Ida types a letter to President Roosevelt.

IDA (V.O.)

"Dear Mr. President, with regard to your Elkins Bill, I have now discussed the matter with my publisher, Mr. McClure. And while we cannot publicly *endorse* any legislation in our magazine, we feel it might best be served..."

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY**

Teddy Roosevelt, in the Oval Office, is being briefed by his PRESS SECRETARY and his CHIEF OF STAFF.

PRESS SECRETARY

(reading aloud)

"...by means of a high profile example to illustrate why it is even necessary..."

CHIEF OF STAFF

(cutting in)

She wants you to come out against Rockefeller. You do that now, you risk alienating all of his supporters on Wall Street, and he still has plenty. Too risky in a year of election, if you ask me.

ROOSEVELT stands, looking out the window.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

(ponders)

Maybe. But on the other hand...if people *understood* what the bill could do for them, then we wouldn't need to sell it in the first place, would we? People always prefer a tool when they can see it in action.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Sir, even if Elkins did pass, we cannot ensure that the ICC would even uphold it.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

(angry)

And I can't ensure a damn thing until this bill passes through congress!

The two presidential advisors are silenced.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

What does she want from us?

PRESS SECRETARY

(skimming the letter)

She wants you to veto an order by the Attorney General, and um...the one time use of our printing press.

Roosevelt smiles to himself. Impressed by the nerve.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Well, if they don't like the carrot, then maybe it's time we show them the stick.

(nods)

Do it.

CUT TO:

**THE PRINTING PRESSES ROLLING --**

The final edition of McClure's Magazine goes to print, Ida's story on the front page.

**"THE SHAME OF CLEVELAND"** By Ida M. Tarbell.

**February 1905.**

**EXT. NEWSSTAND - NEW YORK - DAY**

The magazine is now displayed at a newsstand. Beside it, the New York Dailies trumpet their own catchy headlines:

**"NEW EVIDENCE TIES ROCKEFELLER TO SECRET PRICE FIXING"**

**"NEW TROUBLE FOR ROCKEFELLER"**

"THE TRUST IS BUST!"

Ida approaches, buys a copy of McClure's magazine. She holds it in her hand, marveling at it. Three full years of toil, sacrifice and dogged investigative work have all led up to this. For Ida, a PRIVATE MOMENT of great personal triumph.

She tucks the magazine under arm, walks off smiling.

**INT. BROADWAY THEATER - DAY**

A satirical sketch in a vaudeville show. A man in drag (Ida Tarbell) whacks a cartoon plutocrat (Rockefeller) over the head with her handbag, chasing him across the stage. The audience ROARS with laughter.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: HENRY ROGERS sitting in the audience with his wife, the only person not laughing.

**EXT. 26 BROADWAY - DAY**

A GROUP OF JOURNALISTS jostle outside the entrance to Standard Oil, some of them holding up copies of McClure's Magazine. Mr. Gates caught in the crossfire.

MR. GATES

For the record, let me just state: this story is totally without merit or any basis in fact, and we aim to prove that. John Rockefeller is one of the greatest public servants this country has ever seen. All else is a bunch of lies. Thank you.

He pushes past the journalists' shouted questions, refusing to answer any of them.

**EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY**

We see where HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE have gathered outside the church to catch a glimpse of Rockefeller. A dozen PINKERTON GUARDS loiter. Beefed up security for the Rockefeller family.

**INT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY**

Sunday service on Euclid avenue. A PREACHER is at the lectern reading aloud from the gospel of Mark, 8:36.

PREACHER

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

REVEAL: Rockefeller and Cettie, in their usual pew, looking very pious. Directly behind them sit Junior and Abby.

PREACHER

"For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

CLOSE ON ROCKEFELLER: squirming in his seat. Is the preacher speaking directly to him? Sure feels that way.

**INT. KYKUIT - LIBRARY - DAY**

Rockefeller sits, petting his Wolfhound. He seems oddly detached from what follows. Opposite him are Junior and Mr. Selz (the lawyer), in full-on crisis management mode.

SELZ

For your own comfort and safety, I would recommend leaving New York immediately. Get as far away from here as possible. Florida, Key West, California. Doesn't matter where.

ROCKEFELLER

(playing with the dog)

Look at these teeth. Can you believe he's still a puppy?

JUNIOR

It's only for a short while, until all this blows over.

SELZ

You'll want to avoid any public places, be on the lookout for process servers. You could easily get a subpoena. But if they can't find you, they can't serve you.

ROCKEFELLER

How much am I paying you, Mr. Selz?

A beat.

SELZ

Sir?

ROCKEFELLER

I pay you a not insubstantial amount of money to be my legal counsel, do I not?

SELZ

Yes sir. I'm adequately paid.

ROCKEFELLER

And your job is to protect me from the very situation that I now find myself in, is it not?

SELZ

Yes.

ROCKEFELLER

So if you cannot adequately provide this service, then why are you here?

JUNIOR

Father, I--

ROCKEFELLER

(lethally)

Be quiet.

SELZ

With respect Mr. Rockefeller, I am retained by your son.

ROCKEFELLER

And he is retained by me. Which means that technically you work for me. But since you have failed in your primary duties, I see no reason to retain your services any longer. You are relieved as of today.

A beat.

JUNIOR

No. He stays, or I go. I'm the Chairman of Standard Oil now. Only I get to decide who stays and who goes. Mr. Selz is staying.

The two men just stare at each other. Neither one blinks.

OFF SELZ, caught in the middle.

**INT. KYKUIT - MASTER SUITE - NIGHT**

Rockefeller is quietly packing a shaving kit by his dresser. Cettie paces back and forth across the room. Pale with rage.

CETTIE

You expect me to just pack my bags and leave in the middle of the night for God-knows-where until God-knows-when? Just walk out and leave the house that we built and have lived in for twenty five years? Why?

ROCKEFELLER

(tightly)

I'm afraid we have no other choice.

ROCKEFELLER (CONT'D)

If I stay here, men will come and they will try to arrest me. The only question is when.

CETTIE

If you've done nothing wrong, then what do you have to run from?

ROCKEFELLER

I will not defend my life to you, or anyone else.

CETTIE

Oh no, of course not. But you expect me to defend it for you, don't you? Never question, never ask, never doubt.

ROCKEFELLER

I don't expect anything of you, but it would be nice to have your support.

CETTIE

My support? All I've done for the last 40 years is support you and your ambition. Never once did you ask me about mine.

ROCKEFELLER

You are becoming shrill and hysterical.

CETTIE

You broke the law, John! There, I've said it. That's the truth, isn't it? The truth that nobody has the courage to tell you. No one but Ida Tarbell.

ROCKEFELLER

(darkly)

I said never to mention that woman's name in this house. That woman is trying to destroy me--

CETTIE

But that's just it. Nobody is trying to destroy you! You *imagine* that everyone is out to destroy you. And you want to bury them all in the ground, don't you?

ROCKEFELLER

I won't have this in my house.

CETTIE

I've read Ida Tarbell. And I'd swear to God, she knows my husband better than I do.

ROCKEFELLER

Not another word about that poisonous misguided woman.

CETTIE  
 (scornfully)  
 How *galling* it must be to have your authority questioned in public like that. The great John D. Rockefeller, finally brought to task. And by a woman, if you don't mind. A woman!

A beat.

ROCKEFELLER  
 I see how it is. You want to stand in judgement of me, just like everyone else. Well go ahead, throw your stones at me.

CETTIE  
 I don't want to judge you, I want to understand. How could you do this to us? How could you *not* know that this day would eventually come?

A beat. He stops, turns to face her. Contrite for once.

ROCKEFELLER  
 (quietly)  
 I'm sorry, Cettie. I am sorry if I have let you down. God knows, I've made my share of mistakes. But I have tried, so help me God, I tried to be a good husband and a decent father. And if I have failed in that, then I would ask your forgiveness.

CETTIE  
 (shaking her head)  
 I'm not leaving here, John. Not like this. Kykuit is my home.

ROCKEFELLER  
 It's late now. Let's sleep on it. Maybe you'll feel differently in the morning.

CETTIE  
 I won't.

ROCKEFELLER  
 Then you've already made your decision.

CETTIE  
 Yes, I have. I won't live my life like a fugitive. I won't do it.

A long beat.

ROCKEFELLER  
 Then don't.

He takes his bag and leaves. We HOLD ON Cettie's grief.

**EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAWN**

Rockefeller's car shoots past on an open road. Where he's going we don't know, nor does it matter. The point is this: The richest man in the world is now a fugitive of the law.

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - KANSAS - DAY**

Under clear blue skies, Ida steps off a train in Kansas. She is greeted by her brother Will who wraps her up in a big hug.

WILL

There she is. Welcome to Kansas! I can't believe you actually came.

IDA

Well of course I came. I said I would, didn't I?

Will hands her a copy of the local newspaper. Headlines trumpet "IDA TOPPLES TYCOON" and "ROCKEFELLER ON THE RUN"

WILL

Congratulations, you're more famous than Rockefeller. If you need a good press agent, I'm available. For a small fee, naturally.

IDA

(amused)

Honestly, who writes this stuff?!

WILL

Come on, let me show you the future of the oil business.

He picks up her suitcase, and together they head off.

**EXT. OIL FIELDS - DAY**

Ida and Will travel in an open-topped car, taking in the vast expanse of the new "Indian Territory" Oil fields in Kansas. The latest frontier in the great American quest for oil.

To say it is "breathtaking" does not even begin to do it justice. Vast stretches of wide open fields, dry flat plains, and small rolling hills. Ida drinks it all in. They continue to drive, on and on, eventually arriving at...

**EXT. FRANKLIN OIL REFINERY - DAY**

A crude collection of wooden buildings that make up the offices of "Franklin Oil" where Will Tarbell is now CEO.

The car comes to a stop and Will hops out, gallantly squiring his sister around the new facility. As they walk:

WILL

The new well is flowing at 3000 barrels a day. I've just secured the lease for three others up near Osage County. We hope to begin drilling there first of next month.

Some OIL WORKERS pass by and all nod and tip their hats to him. Out here, he is an important man.

WORKER

Mr. Tarbell...

WILL

Hello Jim.

(introducing)

This is my sister from back East. Ida Tarbell. You may have heard of her.

WORKER

(smiles, shakes her hand)

Miss Tarbell, it's an honor.

IDA

Same here.

They continue on, Will leading her up some rickety stairs to where his office is located on the second floor.

IDA

You've done well, little brother. I have to say, I'm very impressed.

WILL

Don't be. I haven't made a nickel yet. But soon, I hope.

He leads her inside his office.

ANGLE -- SOME TIME LATER

News of the famous visitor has spread throughout the oil fields, and now a group of OIL WORKERS has gathered outside Will's office. All hoping for a glimpse of Ida Tarbell.

When the door reopens and Ida emerges, a spontaneous CHEER goes up. APPLAUSE and WOLF WHISTLES. Ida is caught totally off guard by this.

She looks at Will. He just shrugs. Nothing to do with me!

Cries of "**Speech! Speech!**"

Ida stands before the assembled group, totally unprepared for this or any other speech.

The crowd is hushed. Ida speaks to them very simply:

IDA

Thank you. I'm delighted to be back in oil country. Six weeks ago, my father Franklin Tarbell was buried near the Drake oil well in Pennsylvania where he spent all his life working. The company that he built was bought out by Standard Oil, and it was a shoddy deal. But my father accepted it because he was afraid of what would happen if he didn't.

PANNING THE FACES OF OIL WORKERS IN THE CROWD -

IDA (CONT'D)

I'm not against anyone making money. I want all of you to be millionaires. Including my brother here. But we must be better than Standard Oil. As clever, as ambitious, as ingenious, but do it fairly.

(pause)

I am only one voice, but you have a voice too, and I encourage you to use it. This is your industry, and only you will decide how it is to be run. Not the railroad thugs, not the South Improvement Scheme, not John D. Rockefeller.

Rousing applause and cheering.

Then, a lone male VOICE starts singing: a jaunty song to the tune of "Bedalia" that he cleverly changes the lyrics to...

OIL WORKER # 1

"There's a charming young lady with an awful winning way, who has my heart a thumpin' night and day..."

OIL WORKER # 2

"She's a flower of Pennsylvania with an apple in her cheek, she's the very best thing that ever flowed from this creek..."

The other men all join in on the chorus. Ida is now being serenaded by thirty or forty oily roughnecks.

OIL WORKERS

"Oh oh Ida, I wanna save ya,  
Oh oh Ida, I wanna be ya,  
Oh oh Ida, I love you soooo..."

She is moved to tears by this spontaneous outpouring of affection for her. As she looks out, she sees the sign that bears her father's name: "Franklin Oil Co."

IDA  
 (whispering, to herself)  
 I love you too.

CUT TO:

**EXT. GOLF COURSE - FLORIDA - DAY**

ROCKEFELLER is now living in Florida under an assumed name. We find him finishing up his daily round of golf.

**Title: Florida, Six Months Later**

As he turns to go, he notices two men on the golf course who clearly look out of place: PLAIN CLOTHES POLICE DETECTIVES.

He collects his ball, hurries off toward the clubhouse.

**INT. GOLF CLUBHOUSE - LATER**

Rockefeller is changing in the men's locker room.

REVEAL: Somebody watching him. A young man of about 25, wearing the club uniform of white shirt and trousers. Could be a caddy, pool attendant, waiter. Could be anybody.

As Rockefeller closes up his locker, the YOUNG MAN approaches him. Big friendly smile.

YOUNG MAN  
 Mr. Stevens?

ROCKEFELLER  
 Yes.

YOUNG MAN  
 Forgot your scorecard.

The man hands him an envelope, and instinctively Rockefeller reaches out to take it. Big mistake.

YOUNG MAN  
 Mr. Rockefeller, you've just been served.

The haunted look behind Rockefeller's eyes tells us he has been dreading this moment for some time.

The process server turns and walks away.

HOLD ON ROCKEFELLER -- His invincible power and aura is gone. And there's something unexpectedly touching about it.

**INT. RESTAURANT - ST. DENIS HOTEL - NEW YORK - DAY**

Ida and McClure sit together in their favorite booth at the St. Denis, sharing a drink. The mood is quiet, intimate.

McClure slides a copy of The Times across the table. The headline reads: "ROCKEFELLER ISSUED SUBPOENA IN FLORIDA"

SAM MCCLURE

We got him, didn't we?

IDA

Yes, we did.

(beat)

Look Sam, I'm sorry if I--

SAM MCCLURE

Forget it. Actually, I kind of enjoyed it. So tell me, was it worth it?

IDA

I don't know. I thought I'd feel differently. To be fair to him, he did build an amazing company. He also revolutionized an entire industry.

SAM MCCLURE

Too bad he was also a crook. Minor character flaw.

(beat)

So, what are you going to do now?

IDA

I don't know. Thought I might move to the country for a little while.

SAM MCCLURE

(horrified)

The country?! What are you going to do there?

IDA

I was thinking I might write a book.

SAM MCCLURE

A toast then. To Ida Tarbell, muckraker extraordinaire.

IDA

I prefer "writer." Muckraker always sounds so dirty to me.

SAM MCCLURE

All right. To Ida Tarbell, the writer.

(toasting)

Sic semper tyrannis!

IDA  
Sic semper tyrannis!

Together, they drink. They are battle weary, they are friends, they are triumphant.

Whatever else they might be remains left alone and unspoken.

**INT. ST. DENIS HOTEL - DAY**

Ida hurries toward the elevator just as the doors are about to close. She squeezes in at the last second, punches a button to get downstairs.

And looking around, she sees the elevator is deserted, except for one other person: John D. Rockefeller.

She recognizes him instantly. As the elevator descends, he looks over at her. Something about her looks familiar too.

A very long pause as we watch their faces: hunter and quarry thrown unexpectedly together for the very first time.

Finally:

IDA  
Mr. Rockefeller. We haven't met before, but my name is Ida Tarbell.

Rockefeller turns slowly to inspect her. He looks away again. Totally impassive.

ROCKEFELLER  
I see you're rather plainer than your prose.

IDA  
I'm afraid we all disappoint in person.

Then, Rockefeller reaches over and presses the "Stop" button on the elevator. The elevator stops. He turns to face her.

ROCKEFELLER  
(coldly)  
I wonder. Do you have any idea of the damage that you have done?

IDA  
Do you?

ROCKEFELLER  
You want to condemn me, don't you. Be my judge, jury and executioner. But only God will be my judge.

IDA

Let's just hope he's forgiving.

ROCKEFELLER

You people call it monopoly, but I call it enterprise. Unlike you, I still believe in a country where a man can rise above his station to make something better of himself.

IDA

Except it's very hard to "rise" when that man's boot heel is at your neck.

A pause. Rockefeller pushes the stop button again, and the elevator continues to move.

ROCKEFELLER

(imperious)

Some of us are destined to make history. And then there are others, like you, who can only write about it. A hundred years from now, people will still know my name because of what I built. Tell me, who will remember yours?

The doors open on the lobby, and Rockefeller steps out.

ROCKEFELLER

Good day, Miss Tarbell.

Ida watches as he walks calmly off. Head held high.

IDA

(quietly, to herself)

You will.

**INT. SUPREME COURT OF NEW YORK - DAY**

TRACKING WITH POLISHED SHOES along the corridors of justice.

A defiant JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER walks into court, flanked on either side by the most expensive team of lawyers in the country, and his son John Junior.

Giant oak doors are flung open as he sweeps into the courtroom. The public gallery is packed with over 200 people, all straining for a look at the fallen titan. Ida Tarbell is not among them.

**Title: The Standard Oil Company v The United States,**

**November 1906**

Rockefeller takes the stand in his own defense. The courtroom is hushed as he is sworn in by the COURT BAILIFF.

BAILIFF

Please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

ROCKEFELLER

Yes. I do.

JUDGE

Can you please state your name for the record.

ROCKEFELLER

John Davison Rockefeller.

JUDGE

Mr. Rockefeller, you are here because you are charged with conspiracy against the United States. Do you understand these charges against you?

ROCKEFELLER

I do, your honor.

JUDGE

(to the prosecution)

Very well. You may proceed.

And so begins the "Trial of the Century" with John D. Rockefeller as the chief protagonist. The age of monopoly is now on trial. But that's another story.

The familiar clacking of a typewriter takes us to...

**INT. FARMHOUSE - RURAL CONNECTICUT - DAY**

Where we find Ida at work in her study. A KNOCKING at the door pulls her out of her reverie. She goes to answer it.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

REVEAL: a shy young woman of about 20, clutching a notebook and pen. She smiles nervously up at Ida. Awed.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hello. Are you Ida Tarbell?

IDA

Yes. Who are you?

YOUNG WOMAN

(extending a hand)

Sorry. My name is Penny Miller, from Meadville. I'm studying journalism at Allegheny College.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

I was hoping maybe I could interview you for the school magazine.

IDA

Penny Miller from Meadville?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes, m'am.

Ida smiles fondly at her. She could be looking at the younger version of herself.

IDA

Right. Well, I suppose you'd better come in then.

Ida opens the door, and the girl steps inside.

IDA (V.O.)

So you want to be a journalist?

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

Yes, I'd like to be. I read your series in McClures, and I was greatly inspired by it.

IDA (V.O.)

Really? Tell me more about that.

We float through the house now, as the years fall away in an instant. Visitors long gone. As we hear...

OLD IDA (V.O.)

Here then, is the record of my day's work, still unfinished at 86 years of age.

The walls become more crowded with her books and manuscripts. Framed photographs, magazine covers, awards taking over every inch of space. The collected treasures of a writing life.

We continue floating to where we find Ida...

Now an old woman of 86, hunched over a typewriter. Working on her memoirs.

CLOSE ON: A pair of knobby hands. Less nimble than before. Still pecking away at the keys...

OLD IDA (V.O.)

No one is more surprised than I am to find that I am still here, still able to work. This despite mutinous fingers, tremulous hands and my ever dimming eyesight.

Ida continues to type...

## OLD IDA (V.O.)

But there are small satisfactions too, and I find it a surprising joy to be still at my desk every day, with everything I ever needed: a room to write in, something to write about, and all day to do it.

CAMERA PULLS UP AND BACK

Ida framed at her writing desk, still clacking away.

And there she remains. Working. Content. Indomitable.

FADE OUT:

THE END

**TITLE: In 1911, the Supreme Court of The United States ruled that The Standard Oil Company was an illegal monopoly. It was subsequently broken up into 34 new companies, including Exxon, Mobil and Conoco-Phillips.**

**TITLE: John D. Rockefeller gradually withdrew from business, devoting himself to philanthropy and The Rockefeller Foundation. He died in 1937, two months shy of his 98th birthday. He never spoke in public about Ida Tarbell.**

**TITLE: "The History of the Standard Oil Company" would be hailed as a landmark work in the history of investigative journalism. It is ranked No.5 in the Top 100 greatest works of 20th Century American journalism.**

**TITLE: Ida Tarbell continued writing and publishing up until her death in 1944. She lived to be 86 years of age.**