

A Suffragette Story:  
Minnie Fisher Cunningham  
By Skylar Fondren and Dr. Andrew Yox

**INT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING**

1

Late 1954. We open on a closed door. The door swings open and we see a woman sitting alone, in a sunny room. MINNIE (62), Passionate, never quits the fight. She seems to be reflecting on something, eyes glazed over, just staring out the window. She sits up, having remembered something. There is a desk to her right. She begins writing.

MINNIE (V.O.)

I was born in 1882 as the seventh child of Horatio and Sallie Fisher. My mother taught me all that I needed to know until I was sixteen when I went down to the county seat and got my teaching certificate.

CUT TO:

**INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY**

2

A judge hands a young MINNIE (16) her teaching certificate. She thanks him and begins walking out, looking reflective.

MINNIE (V.O.)

I should have known, having grown up alongside so many siblings, that I did not quite have what it takes to become a teacher. Instead, with the support of my family behind me, I took on what was to be my first battleground:

Pharmacy School.

FADE TO:

**INT/EXT. COLLEGE - DAY**

3

MINNIE (19) is walking into the college. A man sitting on the steps gawks at her. She keeps walking, ignoring stares.

## MINNIE

Being the second woman to receive a degree in pharmacy in the state of Texas was a feat, to be sure. However, I wanted more. I would soon find more in the form of the fight for suffrage. But first, I went and fell in love.

FADE TO:

## EXT. PARK - BENCH - AFTERNOON

4

MINNIE sits on a park bench, alone, reading a book. A man, B.J. (20), walks past her. She can't keep her eyes off of him. She stands, having a sudden urge to speak to him. In silence, we watch as she walks up to him, taps him on the shoulder, and introduces herself. He tips his hat to her and brings her hand up to place a "kiss" on it. They begin walking together down the path. Screen fades.

(V.O) takes place while actions are seen on screen.

## MINNIE (V.O.)

He was the handsomest man I ever saw, and still is, even after all these years. We talked for what felt like ages but was only a few moments.

CUT TO:

## INT. METHODIST CHURCH - DAY

5

MINNIE and her FATHER walk down the aisle of a church. There are not many people. B.J. waits at the end with the minister. They are not fancily dressed, just wearing their Sunday best.

## MINNIE (V.O.)

After one delightful year of courtship, Bill asked for my hand in marriage. We were

wedded soon after. We were not wealthy by any means. My wedding dress was simple, though I still felt like the most beautiful woman alive. I swear that time stopped when I walked into that chapel and locked eyes with him. I'll never forget that day.

MINNIE's father leaves her at the altar and sits. The minister opens his bible and recites a verse before beginning with the vows.

MINISTER

Mark Chapter 10 verses 6 through 9 say this: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

MINISTER

Do you, Beverly Jean Cunningham, take Minnie Fisher to be your lawfully wedded wife?

B.J. grabs MINNIE's hand.

B.J.

I do.

MINISTER

Do you, Minnie Fisher, take this man, Beverly Jean Cunningham, to be your lawfully wedded husband?

MINNIE

I do.

MINISTER

I now pronounce you man and wife.

The couple embraces, opting to save more romance for when they are alone. They are smiling at each other, holding hands as they exit the room. Guests smile, but do not cheer. The couple does not acknowledge the guests as they exit, for it is considered bad luck.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

## INT/EXT. MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

6

Various scenes are shown in quick succession. MINNIE and B.J. going into their first house, the couple moving, and finally, an exterior shot of a drug store that slowly zooms in on the window and finds MINNIE at the register.

MINNIE (V.O.)

After our wedding, we moved into our first house together. This first stay did not last long, as B.J. was looking for more opportunities as an attorney. We lived in Huntsville first. There, I worked at a drugstore as a pharmacist.

She hands a customer their purchase and, having no one else to attend to, walks over to her manager, who is stocking the shelves with goods.

MINNIE

Good afternoon, sir. If I could borrow just a minute of your time, I would be very grateful. There is something I would like to discuss with you.

The manager stands, brushing off his apron, and looks around the store. Seeing no customers, he nods and motions for MINNIE to follow him. They walk behind the counter.

MANAGER

Please, tell me what the matter is.

## MINNIE

After speaking with some of the men I work with, I have determined that I am making less than half of what they make. I simply do not understand the reason behind this, as our responsibilities are the same, and our hours. So, I would like this to be remedied.

## MANAGER

Ah, but that is not so simple, my dear. You are an excellent pharmacist, to be sure, but you are not a man. It is the principle to give men a higher salary. I do not make the rules, therefore I will not be changing them. If your current pay is not satisfactory, I suggest finding a new line of work elsewhere. Otherwise, I am going to have to ask that you drop this matter at once.

MINNIE is fuming but remains polite.

## MINNIE

Thank you for hearing my request, sir. I will take your advice into consideration.

The manager nods and goes back to restocking. Minnie is unable to continue sulking as another customer requires her attention. As the viewer watches Minnie battle through her emotions while helping the customer, Minnie's older voice narrates.

## MINNIE (V.O)

Though I did not let my frustrations out on my manager, I was internally fuming at the injustice done to myself and all women. I knew this was not an isolated happening, and I began

wondering what I could do to change things. This experience started me on my path toward becoming a suffragette. It is frustrating to watch as men disregard your ability, disrespect your time, and treat you as less than when we women are working twice as hard to prove ourselves. I must be honest though, this drugstore job was the beginning, and end, of my medical career. There were simply more pressing matters at hand. It was time to move again.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. TRINITY CHURCH - MORNING**

**7**

(Year and Location on Screen) The year is 1907, Galveston. The scene opens in a church. The camera pans from the audience up to the stage. A woman is singing a hymn, a piano is backing her voice. It is Minnie.

**MINNIE**  
(Singing)

When we've been there ten  
thousand years, Bright  
shining as the sun, We've no  
less days to sing God's  
praise, Than when we first  
began.

The church members applaud MINNIE as she steps down from the stage and goes to sit with her husband and children.

CUT TO:

## EXT. TRINITY CHURCH - AFTERNOON

8

MINNIE exits the church with her husband and two children. B.J. goes to speak with the Minister, leaving MINNIE alone with the children. She watches as a group of women approach her.

GRACE WINCHESTER

My Minnie, your singing was beautiful today! God has truly blessed you with a voice like an angel!

AMARANTHA PARKINGTON

Yes, I must agree. I am so glad that you made time in your schedule to join the Trinity Church Choir. We are certainly glad to have you.

CHARLOTTE SMITH

Minnie, we would love to have your help with an upcoming church gathering, you could even sing something!

MINNIE

Unfortunately, I have other duties that require my attention this week, Charlotte. Sunday choir is wonderful, but I'm afraid I cannot be any more involved.

CHARLOTTE SMITH

What has that husband of yours got you to that you cannot be involved with Church gatherings?

MINNIE

Oh but you misunderstand, Charlotte. My husband would rather I sit at home and sew all day. I simply cannot stay idle. Joining multiple clubs and organizations has reinvigorated my life! I truly do not know what I would do if I had to stay at home all day.



AMARANTHA PARKINGTON

That reminds me, Minnie. I heard a rumor that you were a member of a suffrage club.

I'm sure it is not true, of course, but I must ask nevertheless.

MINNIE

I am in fact a member of the local suffrage club, and I am quite involved. I would dare say that is the organization to which I devote most of my time. Might I suggest you all come to our next meeting, it will surely be the talk of the town!

GRACE WINCHESTER

You cannot be serious! Voting is a task for men, not women. God has ordained us to care for our homes and children.

Politics does not involve us. It is such a nasty, gruesome operation. I cannot believe you would be interested in such things, Minnie.

MINNIE

No, you mustn't think of it like that! When men make choices on things that affect our children and our homes, would you not want to have a say? They know nothing of such things, and yet they make all the decisions. Women need to be involved in such matters, otherwise, our voices shall be ignored and our pleas unanswered. The Bible refers to this in Proverbs 31:20, which says, "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy." We could do this for our entire society

if only we had the right to  
vote!

CHARLOTTE SMITH

Well, I do believe I've heard  
enough of this. Shall we be  
off then, Ladies?

CHARLOTTE SMITH shoots a glare at MINNIE and the  
three women turn and walk away from Minnie, out of  
frame. Minnie looks angry, but straightens herself  
and turns to find her husband.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**EXT. HOUSTON PARK - AFTERNOON**

**9**

Galveston 1912, Two women are strolling together  
through a park. PERLE (31), and ANNETTE (39). They  
stop under a tree with a bench to talk

MINNIE (V.O.)

Though I experienced failure  
often when trying to convince  
others to support our cause, I  
found great joy in attending  
the Galveston Equal Suffrage  
Association, where I found  
women who shared my passion in  
great numbers. One of these  
women was Annette Finnigan.  
She was the current president  
of the Texas Woman Suffrage  
Association, an organization  
of which I was quite fond of  
and helped to create.

ANNETTE

So, Perle, I see your passion  
and desire to make change for  
women. How would you like to  
join the Texas Woman Suffrage  
Association as an intern for  
the summer? Who knows what  
possibilities might arise if

you were to take on this  
role.

PERLE

Oh, I had been hoping for an  
opportunity like this! I will  
not disappoint you, Annette.  
If I could, I would like to  
write some articles telling  
women how important their  
voices are if we want to  
reform housing, education,  
and food safety, all of which  
are a part of a woman's  
world. We could reach so many  
more if only they understood  
why we want the right to  
vote!

ANNETTE

I like your ideas, Perle.  
Please, start writing at  
once!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN

**EXT. AUSTIN STREET CAFE - NOON**

**10**

MINNIE is walking down the street. It is 1914. She is alone.  
While she is walking, the viewer listens to older MINNIE  
narrate.

MINNIE (V.O.)

After Annette recruited  
Perle, she continued her  
recruitment work, until  
finally, she returned to  
visit me.

MINNIE arrives at the cafe. She looks around,  
spotting ANNETTE FINNIGAN sitting at one of the  
tables. She immediately heads towards her.

MINNIE

Annette! How good it is to  
see you! When I received your  
telegram, I feared the worst,

but you look well! What is the nature of the matter you need to discuss with me?

ANNETTE stands to embrace her friend. They sit.

ANNETTE

I sent you the telegram because I wanted to discuss the matter of my upcoming retirement.

MINNIE

Oh, no! What has led you to retire?

ANNETTE

Don't worry about me. As you know, I am the current president of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association, and with my term coming to an end, I am looking to nominate a successor.

ANNETTE takes a sip of her tea

Of course, you would have to run and be voted in, but I believe, with all you have accomplished, this would be quite an easy campaign.

MINNIE

Oh! Are you suggesting that you want me to run for President? Those would be some large shoes to fill, Annette. I am so honored that you would recommend me, though I am not sure if I am truly the best choice.

ANNETTE

Not only do we need someone like you to appeal to a new generation, someone with your energy, and determination, but my abilities are becoming impaired. My sisters are now both married, and I have developed this numbness in my

right arm. The doctors say I need to slow down.

MINNIE

But why? Of all the accomplished ladies you know, why are you picking me for this?

ANNETTE

You have four wonderful qualities, that could mean the salvation of women, and because of what women will bring to politics, the salvation of our nation—tact, freedom, youth, and a professional degree.

MINNIE

Need I remind you that my position with my husband is in doubt, and I may have to return to pharmaceutical work if I am to live without the support of his wages.

ANNETTE

I can assure you, Minnie, that you would not have to do that. As long as you are president of the Association, you will have a living wage to keep you going.

MINNIE

I will certainly accept your nomination, albeit with extreme humility, if that is your desire. Now, on to more pressing matters, tell me about your latest successes within our movement?

They continue chatting as the sound fades out and the camera zooms out.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

## INT. TWSA HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

11

Two women are preparing for a meeting at the current TWSA headquarters. They discuss their life while doing so. It is early 1914.

MINNIE (V.O)

I was shocked to be nominated but honored nonetheless.

Though my mind was always focused on winning the vote, there were other problems at hand. Like I had told Annette, there were concerns with B.J. and me. B.J. was not so supportive of my activism these days, and I was beginning to wonder if it was a logical choice to get a divorce.

PERLE

Tell me everything, Minnie. What's the problem with your husband? Men can be fickle, sure, but from my understanding, he was indifferent to your involvement in the movement.

MINNIE

Well, he was. But, you know, men talk about being open to new ideas, and new relationships, they pretend to be excited for you, but it is like the smile of an alligator. It's all a facade.

PERLE

So he isn't really okay with your work?

MINNIE

Exactly. You know, I heard that Carrie Catt married the ideal man. They worked together, like a team. My husband, on the other hand, is kind, with interesting ideas. But that's all they

are. He cannot get past understanding what must be done to bring those ideas to fruition.

PERLE

I can see why that would become quite frustrating. From what you tell me, I would guess he also does not easily give in to change or compromise.

MINNIE

You would be correct in that guess, Perle. B.J. has certain expectations about how a home should be run. His pride gets the best of him whenever his visions do not go the way he expects. It only got worse with the miscarriages and the loss of our adopted children.

PERLE

Oh, Minnie. It seems like you are unable to reason with him. What happened to the children you adopted? I know it was no fault of yours, dear.

MINNIE

Their family in Illinois claimed them, there wasn't much I could do about it. And with that loss, I tried to soften the pain in my husband with kindness, but because I did not stop my activities, it did very little to soothe him.

They begin to tidy up everything and arrange the cushions on the chairs.

PERLE

It's quite amusing how men attempt to cover us with themselves, their timetables, their expectations. They

speak for us at the polls,  
 they make the laws that we  
 must follow. They represent  
 our voice, and yet they won't  
 even listen to us. But they  
 cannot possibly represent us!  
 They cannot speak for the  
 woman who has gone bankrupt  
 and cannot get a job, or the  
 woman who is widowed with no  
 money to her name, not even a  
 place to own because we  
 cannot have property. They  
 won't speak for the  
 prostitutes or the poor,  
 because those voices don't  
 matter to them, but they  
 matter to us. Minnie, you  
 don't have to listen to  
 anyone, certainly not me, but  
 I think you should take  
 Annette Finnigan's offer to  
 succeed her as president.

Your husband may run the  
 house, but you can run our  
 association! Maybe he'll see  
 how important you are and  
 finally treat you as an  
 equal, who knows?

As Perle speaks, they take their goods and exit the  
 store. Minnie looks thoughtful as she listens to  
 Perle.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. MINNIE'S GALVESTON HOME - NIGHT**

**12**

Two men are sitting in the parlor, drinking coffee  
 and reading the newspaper. They are conversing.

Minnie narrates the scene before sound fades in.

MINNIE (V.O)

After talking to Perle, I  
 felt emboldened. Something  
 needed to change between my  
 husband and me, for better or



worse. Little did I know, my husband was having his own crisis of faith.

Man, JOHN GOODSON, a friend of B.J., has views similar to him.

JOHN GOODSON

B.J., tell me, why do you allow your wife to be so active in politics? I don't know what you were thinking when you married her.

B.J.

Be fair, John. She wasn't quite so feisty when I first met her. I thought she was just independent and a little stubborn. You know, her grandfather had 96 slaves.

She played the part of a Southern lady well.

JOHN GOODSON

What changed then?

B.J.

When we were married, she started joining all these clubs. First, it was the music club and the literary club, but then she joined the suffrage club. I thought, well what's the harm? It's not like some tiny club is going to make any difference.

Then we got our cottage in the Bayou, and she showed a different side. She rode her horse like a man, not side-saddle. She carried a rifle with her that she had on her childhood farm. She even shot an alligator with it!

JOHN GOODSON

Well, why didn't you do something to stop her?

B.J.

I chose to ignore all the signs, I know. Her father, Horace, was a captain in the Confederate army. He was involved in politics after the war ended. I recall Minnie saying he used to take her to the county meetings.

That must've been where all this started. But then, she also seems to resent her father for making her and her siblings run the farm so they could afford to live. I guess she just learned to ignore the men in her life and get what she wanted without their help.

JOHN GOODSON

And you thought you would be the exception. Are you going to divorce?

B.J.

She's still my wife, for now at least. It is hard to let go of the chance for a family. She'll never be a mother, she has no time for it with all her clubs and associations. Those clubs just make these women believe they can achieve rights that they will never get. They all just get together to dissect and condemn men. We'll just have to hope that their little fantasies never become more than that, or we men might be in danger.

JOHN GOODSON

There's little chance of that, friend. I think it's safe to say that women's novel worlds will always remain fiction.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. CUNNINGHAM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING 13**

The scene opens on a quiet evening at the Cunningham household. Minnie is writing letters while B.J. contemplates the photos on the mantle of the fireplace.

MINNIE (V.O)

Things finally came to a head one evening, after dinner. I admit I had been distracted with work, but my nomination to become President of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association was something I could not take lightly, so campaigning and correspondence were of the utmost importance.

B.J. looks agitated. He is smoking a pipe. He glances at Minnie, lost in her writing, and sighs dramatically to get her attention.

MINNIE

What is it, B.J.? Do you need something?

B.J

Yes, I think we need to talk. Could you stop writing for a minute and come sit down, please?

MINNIE stands, looking concerned. She goes to her chair and sits, he follows suit.

MINNIE

Alright, what do we need to discuss?

B.J.

Our marriage, of course. Or lack thereof. I married you so that I would have a wife, not a politician!

MINNIE

So, what is it that you are suggesting? That we separate? My activism is not going to cease because of your discomfort with it. I respect you, Bill, I truly do, but you cannot govern my life. I thought you understood that.

B.J.

I respected your tenacity and desire for change, but it has become too much. You are never home; you attempt to have supper prepared for me but half of the time you get home later than I do. I feel like I'm married to a man, not a woman! I want my wife back, Minnie, and if you cannot be that for me, then we will have to consider divorce.

MINNIE

Society has always worked against me, B.J. I thought that you, out of everyone, understood that. It's why I married you. However, I am not going to change for any man, including you. I wonder, though, if you are ready for the effects of a divorce.

B.J.

What if we simply part ways in every way except for the legal binding? It would keep the both of us in a slightly better societal standing, don't you agree?

MINNIE

Is this something you are doing in your best interest or mine? Either way, I will be a woman on my own, with no support from a man. You will simply be a man. There are few consequences that you will face in comparison to me. Still, I will concede

that separation without legal divorce is acceptable to me, especially given my current campaign for Presidency.

B.J

Then it's settled. I will allow you time to find a new residence and take your things.

They both get up and walk away, B.J. going to the window and Minnie going back to her desk.

MINNIE (V.O)

Our separation was the end of any romantic involvement I ever had. I simply did not have time for it if I was to be fully dedicated to the movement. I quickly made arrangements to live elsewhere and focused again on what was truly important to me.

**INT. TWSA MEMBER HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM**

**14**

Insert year as text on screen. The year is 1915. It is time to nominate and elect the next president of the Texas Woman Suffrage Association. Minnie and several other women, including Annette Finnigan, Helen Moore, and Marie Ames, sit at a large table. The camera pans around, showing all of their faces, before stopping at Annette.

ANNETTE

It is now time to nominate our next President for the association.

HELEN MOORE

I believe the best person for the job is you, Annette. You have the experience, the connections, and the personality. You are simply the most ideal woman for the task.

## ANNETTE

While I appreciate your opinions, let me remind you that I intend to play a less involved role, but you can still expect my financial help. Please, someone, name another worthy to fill my shoes.

## JESSIE AMES

Noting the importance of this association and the importance of gaining the right to vote, I should like to nominate Professor Annie Webb Blanton. She has the education such a position requires, having recently graduated with her Master's, and she has a preeminent position in the state among other educators.

## ANNETTE

Unfortunately, I have already spoken with Annie and she has turned down the nomination.

Her focus, at the moment, is on gaining the presidency of the state teacher's association. She feels that winning this position would also be a victory for women in the state and would be a better position for her talents than our association. Now, we did have one member, Maude Fisher, who was unable to be here today send in a letter of nomination. She wrote the following:

"I would like to nominate our leader of the Galveston Branch of the Texas Woman's Suffrage Association, Minnie Fisher Cunningham, for the state presidency. As a fellow

member with Minnie of the Wednesday Club of Galveston, I can say it was amazing how diligently she did the readings each week, led the discussions, and heightened the intelligence of the women in our group. Cunningham is not only fluent with the works of Charlotte Gilman, and our new national leader Carrie Chapman Catt, but she also knows the opposition, works by Annie Riley Hale, and others. Mrs. Cunningham is polite, hardworking, a friend of all who strive for the great cause, and articulate."

**ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE**

I will second the nomination of Minnie, noting the incredible amount of work she has done with our recent Legislature Project. Her record keeping is also fantastic, and she already has connections among the Texas legislators. She is an excellent motivator, and writer, with a perfect balance of tact and grace.

She would make a wonderful president of our association.

**ANNETTE**

With that second nomination, the Executive Board of the Texas Woman's Suffrage Association recommends Minnie Fisher Cunningham for State President. Are there any objections to this recommendation or any other candidate nominations?

**HELEN MOORE**

I would like to note, Annette, that while Cunningham does lack some of

your connections and prestige, she is a young and passionate advocate of woman's suffrage if I have ever seen one. She will make an excellent candidate for the presidency.

MINNIE (V.O.)

After being officially recommended by the board, I was even more excited to take on the position.

**INT. GALVESTON TWSA CONVENTION - DAY**

**15**

May 1915. Minnie has been named President of the Texas Woman's Suffrage Association and is taking suggestions for ways to get their voices heard by a larger audience.

MINNIE (V.O.)

Upon, being officially inaugurated as President at the May Convention, I immediately began discussing ideas for events that all of Texas could participate in.

MINNIE

Is there anyone here with an idea that they would like to share that would allow all of our smaller clubs and organizations to participate?

HELEN MOORE

What if we delegated a week, and during that week, denied ourselves of something that would normally cost money, and the money saved would finance state work?

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

I am curious, Helen, if the cost of advertising such a campaign will cancel out the resulting funds.



## MINNIE

Eleanor, your concern is understandable. However, I do not feel the funds used to spread this idea will be more than what we stand to gain from it. Shall we vote on it and pass this

Self-Sacrifice Week as one of our first acts of this convention?

Many voices in the crowd shout yes. Some are disgruntled, booing, but mostly good responses.

## MINNIE

All who vote in favor of this act, raise your hand, please.

MINNIE looks around, counts the number, and writes it down.

All right, all those opposed?

There are several hands, but it is clear the act has passed. MINNIE smiles Jubilantly.

Then it's settled! We shall set aside one week wherein we make a financial sacrifice to donate those funds towards our cause. It will be called "Self-Sacrifice Week." I will get a consensus on the dates for this and send them out in letter form to all the clubs.

The women look around at each other, hopeful for this new era of activism and progress.

## MINNIE (V.O.)

I was young, and I knew that alone, I could do very little, but working together, we could sow Woman's Suffrage throughout Texas. However, Texas was not the only place where change needed to be made. Soon, I headed to Washington D.C. to pay a visit to another passionate

force in the National  
Suffrage Movement.

**INT. CATT'S RESIDENCE IN DC - PARLOR -  
AFTERNOON**

16

MINNIE's previous (V.O) carries over as MINNIE enters into the room, and the woman, previously sitting down, stands to greet her. Carrie pours her a cup of tea.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Ah, Minnie! It is so wonderful to finally meet you in person! So young, and already such a wavemaker in Texas. Your generation will be the one to achieve suffrage, I just know it.

MINNIE

I have to deny such a strong compliment, Mrs. Catt. You have been the one to bring about great change on the National level as president of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association. I am honored to have the chance to meet you and your other friends here in our nation's capital.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Well, you must know that your friend Annette has told me all about you, so I knew we must meet. I was just delighted to hear that I would get to meet a woman, who I believe will break the grip which the South has on the rights of women.

MINNIE

I appreciate your confidence and hope it will not be wrongly placed. I am thankful that my position as President of the Texas Association has allowed me to forego other more trivial responsibilities.

## CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

With your talent and lively spirit, we will make great strides, I'm sure. To get our sex added to the constitution has cost us over half a decade of campaigning and protesting. Despite more than 50 referendum campaigns, and 500 legislative campaigns, we still have not arrived. White men can vote regardless of their morals and criminal past, meanwhile every other citizen of America has no voice, even if their morals are sound and their background clean.

## MINNIE

It is simply unjust and illogical. In the south, I think, people only see our agitation as a lot of fuss and sanctimony, which means things don't change. Many southern women cannot fathom why they should want to vote, they don't realize how much their lives would improve.

## CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Funny then, that more than half of the men in America continue to tolerate injustice, prostitution, alcoholism, and corrupt payoffs because they are too lazy to lift a finger to change that. On the other hand, 75% of women know that the patriarchal society on which America is founded is inherently flawed and defected. If all these women might come together, with so many working for good, and voting for good, life would get better.

Minnie, I urge you to keep speaking out. Tell the women in Texas this: "To the wrongs give resistance, to what is right, assistance. To the future in the distance, give yourselves!"

At that, the women pick up their glasses and cheer.

**EXT. GALVESTON TWSA HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

17

1916 Minnie stands outside their headquarters among several women. They are all standing, having just returned from an event, wearing their sashes, and conversing.

**MINNIE**

Ladies, the season is at hand when men who desire to hold office in the state and national legislative bodies are announcing their candidacy and explaining their platform to the people. These candidates must be made to declare their positions on woman's suffrage. We need to make appointments with our local candidates to ensure we are able to discern their position. This is the most important piece of work to be done for suffrage in the near future. Remember, no chain is stronger than its weakest link.

**ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE**

Here here! All of our work is important, and I truly believe that there are no weak links among us today.

Helen, you are doing great things as Vice President, and Jessie, your staunch opposition to lynching has been invaluable to society as

a whole. Not only that, but you have recently organized your own equal suffrage movement of which you are

President, am I correct?

JESSIE AMES

Yes, that is correct. But Eleanor, you mustn't exclude your accomplishments as president of the San Antonio Equal Franchise Society. Your wisdom of years is always most welcome in our discussion and planning. We could all do to learn a thing or two from you.

HELEN MOORE

I must add that your speech today was truly inspirational, Minnie. I can feel great things coming on the horizon. We shall keep up the good fight until all wrongs have been righted!

The ladies collectively nod, then begin to head inside.

**INT. TWSA HEADQUARTERS - SAME DAY**

**18**

The ladies enter the headquarters and begin taking off their coats, hats, and sashes. As they do so, the conversation continues.

MINNIE

Today has been a successful day for the movement, but I must remind you all to stay diligent. We have serious adversaries who wish to see us fail. Pauline Wells and Ida Darden are wholeheartedly making their feelings about our association known, and we cannot take this matter lightly. They are creating

their own association, which is sure to give us trouble, so maintain your spirit and your guard, and always be prepared to tell others why equal suffrage is of the utmost importance.

JESSIE AMES

You are correct Minnie; we will endeavor to remain focused on our cause. It is not just our fellow women who wish to see us fail, but the men in power as well. I heard that they tried to pick a name for their association, but nobody could vote on it! They think that giving us the vote means their livelihoods are at stake. Well, I say they are! We're coming for those next, boys!

Everyone laughs.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. TAOWS HEADQUARTERS HOUSTON - DAY

19

Many women are gathered around a woman, PAULINE WELLS (53), who stands at a podium, getting ready to speak.

MINNIE (V.O.)

Though the men in power were certainly a large and looming threat to the suffrage movement, even some of our own were trying to keep us at home. Pauline Wells was a staunch advocate of anti-suffrage.

## PAULINE WELLS

Good morning to all of you women, who have traveled from all over Texas, leaving your homes and children, to rally against those that wish to see us become involved in matters that we should not be privy to. You are here because you wish to save the citadel of the home. After all, you know that suffrage is the next step towards socialism and complete anarchy. These suffragettes don't want to raise children or marry a man, they wish to go against the natural order of society and take the man's position. It is absurd and outrageous, and I am encouraged to see so many of you that are against this heresy. Now, you know I could stand and speak for hours on this subject, but I have someone else who would like to speak. She is a young, energetic woman who is the most recent addition to our association as publicity director; Miss Ida Darden from Fort Worth!

IDA (30) walks up to Pauline; they shake hands and Pauline goes to stand to the side as IDA takes her spot at the podium.

## IDA DARDEN

Thank you, Pauline, for the introduction. I will get straight to the point. These women are using the cause of equal suffrage as a socialist plot to undermine white supremacy in the state and country. It is no wonder these women look and sound like demons, for they are possessed by the devil to carry out his evil deeds.

Ladies, mothers, and wives, I urge you to notice their foul appearances, their ugly snarls, and the way they disrespect all those who disagree with them. They do not want the right to vote, they want tyranny and anarchy! Women like Minnie Fisher Cunningham and her cronies will not stop at suffrage, I am certain of this. They will not stop until all those who speak against them are stamped out. As proper Christians and humble servants of God and country, we must rise to defend our constitution and what it stands for. Ladies, we know who is God and we will not partake from the table of Jezebel. I say we throw them out to the dogs!!

There is some cheering, some confused looks, and a couple of frowns. Ida exits the stage gleaming viciously.

CUT TO:

**INT. TAOWS HEADQUARTERS HOUSTON - AFTERNOON**

**20**

Pauline and Ida sit at their respective desks. Ida looks full of energy. She is writing vigorously, detailing the earlier event. Pauline looks on worriedly, looking like she has something to say.

**PAULINE WELLS**

Ida, I must say, your speech today was truly inspired. I do worry, though, that you might scare some of our more docile women away from the cause. Your message is a powerful one, to be sure, but attacking certain women might



also put us in a spotlight we ought to avoid. Minnie is a powerful figure in the movement, so let's avoid naming names and focus more on the flaws of the message and cause.

IDA DARDEN

Oh, of course, Pauline. I wonder though, if they will realize how strong our numbers are without my targeted speeches.

PAULINE WELLS

My dear, that's where you are confused. If they do not see us as a threat we can be like the serpent in the garden, leading them to believe that we are of no concern until we lead them to their swift demise.

IDA DARDEN

I see. I like the way you think. We shall work together wonderfully.

The two women smile at each other and return to their work.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION - DAY**

**21**

St. Louis, MO. June 17, 1916. The convention is almost at a close, but there is one more matter to discuss: What will be the party's stance on women's suffrage? A man, James Ferguson, (37) stands at the front to present the minority report on women's suffrage.

JAMES FERGUSON

I stand before you today to represent Southern Chivalry.

I would like to present what is the minority plank on women's suffrage, but ought to be the majority. The Democratic Party has always stood for the sovereignty of the several states in the control and regulation of elections. We reaffirm the historic position of our party and favor the wise provision of the constitution, the power of the states to prescribe the qualifications of their electors.

A pause, murmuring throughout.

Our purpose is to prevent suffrage states from undertaking to tell other states what they should do. Does anyone truly believe that Woodrow Wilson can be intimidated by the swish of the skirts of a few hundred thousand militant suffragists in the United States? I, for one, do not.

There is an uproar of yelling to be heard throughout the room. Ferguson looks red in the face.

E.H. MOORE

I wonder, Ferguson, whether the majority plank does not favor suffrage directly, but your minority plank wants to put it on the states by inaction.

He sits. Ferguson cannot answer. He returns to his seat. Another man, Senator STONE, takes the stand.

SENATOR STONE

The governor makes a man of straw and demolishes it. The question at issue was simply that the party would favor the suffrage right being

conferred on women by the states. Does that interfere with states' rights?

Another man, Senator WALSH of Montana, takes the stand to jab at Ferguson.

SENATOR WALSH

I fail to see anything in the Federal Constitution that is of the sort contained in the minority plank.

Actress for MINNIE says the full name for the association, not the acronyms seen in text.

MINNIE (V.O)

After leading TESA to St. Louis to join NAWSA's demonstration in support of equal suffrage, we were disheartened to learn that it failed to pass. In turn, Ferguson's hostile plank received 181 votes, while 888 voted against it. The position was adopted to the platform despite our Texas Governor's attempts to avoid it. We quickly rallied to protest Ferguson's hostile message.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**EXT. OUTSIDE THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL  
CONVENTION - THE NEXT DAY**

**22**

MINNIE leads the Texas Equal Suffrage Association to the convention, partnering with the NAWSA to protest outside of the convention. At the end of the day, they continue their protest. Minnie holds a Lone Star flag draped with mourning, she stands in front of the crowd of women protesters, to speak.

## MINNIE

Women, we are in mourning for our state. Texas' Governor Ferguson has nothing but ill intentions towards our cause. In an attempt to loosen his hold on our state, I will be going on a tour of South Texas, giving speeches to discourage people from re-electing this man. My dear friend Lavinia Engle will be joining me, and we will endeavor to do and say whatever we must to convince Texans that Ferguson does not deserve their vote!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

## INT. STATE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION HOUSTON - DAY 23

August 1916. Minnie stands in front of the men at the post-primary state convention, speaking out against Ferguson's anti-suffrage rhetoric. The viewer watches as Minnie speaks, not hearing the speech, but hearing Minnie's (V.O.).

## MINNIE (V.O.)

Amid my travels with Lavinia, I managed to secure a hearing before the democratic platform committee at their post-primary state meeting in Houston. I was expecting to be walloped by Ferguson, but I was hopeful that I might find a hero who could head a minority report. I knew these men only allowed us a hearing because it was amusing to hear women plead for rights, but still, I could not pass such an opportunity up. They regarded my impassioned speech with cold hostility, but the

more I abused their ideals,  
 the more amused they became.  
 In the end, they gave us quite  
 an ovation.

Camera switches between Minnie and the men  
 watching, as the men go from bored, to snickering,  
 to interested, to a standing ovation.

**INT. EDINBURG BAR - DAY**

**24**

December 29, 1916. A man sits at a bar, conversing  
 with a reporter for the town newspaper, the  
 Edinburg Review. He holds a newspaper declaring the  
 first woman in Congress. The reporter begins  
 writing down what he says.

**COUNTRY GENTLEMAN**

All it cost Miss Rankin to  
 win immortality as the first  
 woman to snag a seat in  
 Congress was two gowns and a  
 new bonnet. These suffragists  
 promise us new political  
 standards when they are  
 enfranchised in all the  
 states. If there were any way  
 that they could assure us  
 that they could bring down  
 the cost of electing  
 candidates to high office to  
 the level of two gowns and a  
 new bonnet, new opposition to  
 suffrage would melt away like  
 snow under a tropic sun!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. NEW TESA AUSTIN HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

**25**

January 1917. Minnie sits with Jessie Ames, Eleanor  
 Brackenridge, Helen Moore, and Lavinia Engle.

Minnie begins speaking.

## MINNIE

Ladies, I am indebted to all of you that you were willing to meet me here in Austin at our new temporary headquarters while the legislature is convened. Our ultimate goal is to make a slight step forward towards full suffrage by getting a bill passed that would give us the vote for the primaries. Your work here must be persistent if we are to succeed, but I have hope.

## LAVINIA ENGLE

I am so excited to be here, helping you all! I'm sure my youth will be a welcome change to your ranks.

## MINNIE

Thank you, Vinnie. This here keen young lady will be an excellent addition to our association. She is from Maryland and has been quite the speaker for our cause in South Carolina. She has enough spunk and energy for all of us. I have already found a wonderful companion in her, and I hope you all will too.

## ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

I have heard nothing but inspiring things from those that have heard your speeches, Lavinia. Welcome to Austin.

## HELEN MOORE

While your youth can be deceiving, and oftentimes worrying, I trust that Minnie knows best in picking representatives of the cause. Welcome!

## LAVINIA ENGLE

Ah, but what you don't know about me is that my mother was a suffragette as well. I have more experience than you might think, ma'am. Though I am a touch more impulsive than my mother, I have other charms that might prove useful, if you know what I mean. (She winks in a flirtatious manner)

## JESSIE AMES

(Annoyed) It would be a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Lavinia. I wonder, though, if we can return to the matter at hand. Passing this primary suffrage bill will take all of our focus for the next two months. We mustn't waste time on frivolities.

## MINNIE

You are quite right, Jessie. Let's begin.

The sound fades off, we watch the women begin planning. Minnie (V.O) begins.

## MINNIE (V.O)

Though we all worked diligently to garner support for the primary suffrage bill, it ultimately failed to pass. However, we were growing more excited on another front. Governor Ferguson continued to make larger and larger blunders, and it was only a matter of time before he might be removed from office.

CUT TO:

## INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

26

April 1917. Lavinia returns with the paper, it reads: US DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Minnie! Look at this! We're at war! Can you believe it?

MINNIE

Oh, I can certainly believe it, Lavinia. I'll have much more to do now. What with war efforts, getting Ferguson impeached, and still advocating for suffrage bills, there will be little time on hand for anything trivial.

LAVINIA

You know, this paper also mentions Ferguson. He just keeps attacking the University of Texas. He certainly has stuck to his claim of engaging in the biggest bear fight our state has ever seen. It says here that the students at the university have asked that the legislature convene for a special session to consider impeachment charges.

MINNIE

I hope that he realizes he is doomed now. The war will only help to strengthen our voice if my intentions are carried out.

LAVINIA ENGLE

It also says he accepted \$156,00 in loans from German brewers and conveniently hasn't been able to pay it back. He pardons hundreds of criminals every month? He has this big political machine, and people can't understand



how he pays for it, except perhaps through kickbacks?

MINNIE

The big thing is that he opposes suffrage, and the most obnoxious thing he says is that suffragists don't raise children, just poodles. I wonder if he has me in mind. He says the most ignorant things.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Why don't you go after the governor? It's more than just his position on suffrage that frustrates you. He is certainly not going to be supporting any prohibition bills.

MINNIE

We must look at the big picture, Vinnie. The war is now our prime focus. We must show the public that we will support the war effort selflessly and tirelessly, even if Congress continues to withhold the vote.

LAVINIA ENGLE

But Minnie, this could be our ticket to suffrage! Go after this fanciful Farmer pig and his plain ridiculous ideology! If you won't, then I will find my way, through less acceptable means.

MINNIE

Lavinia, I can't tell you how grateful I am that Carrie Catt and Annette Finnigan arranged for us to have you. You have so much life, you are an extremely talented speaker, and one of my closest confidantes. But, we must stay focused. Don't

fret, though, I do intend to do something on the Ferguson front. However, it will be without any frivolity or public advertisement. We must give no publicity to our strategy, which will slowly yet surely build pressure for impeachment. We will send letters to our fellow suffragists of the state to request the legislature go into special session.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I should have known you would have some trick up your sleeve, Minnie! You sure are a sly gal! I do hope all goes according to plan, though.

These men in power will not give us the vote as a kind gesture, but only when they see a use for our voice. The forces for good need our help, and when we give it, they will begin to rely on us for more.

INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

27

May 1917. Multiple women sit together in the parlor, discussing Ferguson. They have tea while doing so.

HELEN MOORE

My foolish brother says that once a week he goes with his friends to a hotel for drinks. He says every week, someone discusses a quote that our governor makes about women, and they all laugh.

A pause.

They don't even like Ferguson, but they think he's funny.

## JESSIE AMES

This is one of the reasons I left Roger. A man can tell you something to your face, and you might believe him.

Maybe he even believes what he says, but then he goes to his friends and starts joking around. The atmosphere changes. Roger was not a drunkard, but maybe there was something in the air that made him different. A new standard of truth arises, a new reality awakens where they begin to believe that any promise given to a woman can be broken.

## MINNIE

Jessie, I believe you're right that Ferguson is a prime example of what we are up against. With his latest attack on the University of Texas, his ties with the brewers, and his pro-German element, we have a chance to get him impeached. But more than that, if we can help bring him down for all his corruption, we will develop allies in the Texas Legislature who will grow to depend on us for support. I propose we form a new organization that brings in the club women to enlarge our group. It would be called the Women's Campaign for Good Government.

## HELEN MOORE

This will be another large undertaking. Are you sure this is worth so much dedication as to form a separate organization?

JESSIE AMES

We wouldn't be taking money out of our treasury to promote this, would we?

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Ladies, I believe that Minnie is onto something. One of my Austin friends is William Hogg, the brother of Ima Hogg, and son of our former governor. He says the case against Ferguson is airtight. All we need is enough public pressure to dramatize the regret of the people that he was even elected in the first place. If we could help topple him, the legislature might learn to respect us.

JESSIE AMES

Where would we get the funds for all of this? We already pay our best speakers and lobbyists less than a livable salary.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Jessie, I believe some men would be willing to pay us to help in this effort.

Ferguson's ties with the German brewers put him in the cross hairs of our war effort. There are new soft drink companies that would love to put the brewers down. The new automobile companies that are springing up feel the same way, as they know alcohol and their machines don't mix. With the war going on, men are in general a little too distracted to attend to Ferguson, but we can.

August 1917. Three men discuss politics at dinner.

MINNIE (V.O.)

Our discreet organizational work managed to go unnoticed in the best way possible.

Ferguson was impeached in July, to our great satisfaction. William Hobby replaced him as Governor. It was a new age for Texas, and thus began our attempts to get Hobby on the side of the suffragists.

WILLARD ARNOLD JOHNSON

The women were quite a factor in awakening Texas against Ferguson. They adamantly lobbied their case with each state senator. I was impressed but also concerned.

CHARLES METCALFE

Arnold, these suffragists have proven themselves! I know you are not strenuously aligned with their favorite causes as I am, but they did on the state level what others are doing in many of our western communities. They are forcing us, men, to clean up our acts! Thank the Lord that Ferguson has been impeached and is, hopefully, gone forever.

WILLARD ARNOLD JOHNSON

Well, as for the new Governor, William, what is all this to you?

WILLIAM HOBBY

Arnold, my friend, I have never embraced Woman's suffrage, nor do I see it as something I need to do. Also, I must disagree with you, about Ferguson. I have heard that he has already announced

to his supporters that he is going to run again for Governor, despite his impeachment. If he wins again, he will not only make our great state a laughingstock, he will throw a wrench into the very legal system of our state.

WILLARD ARNOLD JOHNSON

You don't truly believe he can do that, do you?

WILLIAM HOBBY

All you have to do is follow the money, Arnold. Those German brewers and saloon keepers are not giving up their alcohol, and they know a needy man with a political machine when they see one.

That fool Ferguson has also pardoned so many people that he likely has a small army of people beholden to him. We have to face the fact that he has the charisma to attract the very poor whites who feel they are being crowded out of politics, and he has absolutely no shame in using that for his evil intentions.

WILLARD ARNOLD JOHNSON

Oh God, tell me this is a dream. An illegal governor who pardons criminals, encourages German subversion, and hires conmen onto the roles of state government. It sounds like one of those fiction novels, not a real-life situation.

WILLIAM HOBBY

Gentlemen, we cannot give Ferguson an issue that will allow him to joke his way back into power. This is the

reason, Chuck, that I remain  
opposed to Woman's suffrage.

He sips a drink. Metcalfe looks slightly agitated.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

**29**

First Week of September 1917. Lavinia stands at the door, greeting the women as they enter.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Welcome, welcome! Today we  
celebrate the devil's demise!

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

It is so invigorating to have  
that horrid man out of  
office. And to have a  
supporter in! Has the new  
governor come by yet?

LAVINIA ENGLE

I'm sure he'll be here; he  
knows I'm here. (She winks)

Eleanor winces at the insinuation and continues  
inwards. Jessie Ames enters.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Hola, Amiga!

Lavinia embraces Jessie.

JESSIE AMES

Wow, my dear, you sure are  
dressed to the nines today.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Why, thank ya! It's a  
celebration, I just had to  
throw something special  
together. I call it, "Death  
to the devil."

Jessie looks shocked at this at first but gives her a fake smile before continuing. Helen Moore enters.

HELEN MOORE

How nice to see you, Lavinia!

LAVINIA ENGLE

(In a singsongy voice) Good to see you!

She continues in. Governor Hobby and Willard Johnson enter together.

WILLIAM HOBBY

What a celebration! Where is Mrs. Cunningham?

LAVINIA ENGLE

Slyly

Follow me, right this way!

Lavinia grabs his hand and leads him to where Minnie is sitting. Minnie stands to greet them, shaking the governor's hand, then sits back down. They all take a seat beside her.

MINNIE

Congratulations, Governor Hobby, on your new position.

WILLIAM HOBBY

I think we owe much of our state's liberation from Farmer Jim to your fearless friends, the suffragists, who are working so tirelessly to ensure a better future.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Governor Hobby, I think it is so amazing that at 39 years of age, you are not only Texas' youngest governor of all time, but you are also a writer and a journalist, who, like many of the women here, have chronicled many of the evils of our time. When did you first notice that something was wrong with Ferguson?



WILLIAM HOBBY

Well, he was quite corrupted from the days he owned the bank in the Temple, and people knew it. That's why he got into politics.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I once thought about becoming a bank teller, but then I lost interest!

GOVERNOR HOBBY

Chuckling slightly at the joke.

You know, the toughest part about being addicted to banking is the withdrawals!

Hobby and Lavinia laugh like they are sharing their own inside joke that no one else can hear. The camera switches to the other side of the room, where Eleanor, Helen, and Jessie sit, listening in on Hobby and Lavinia.

HELEN MOORE

I am frankly quite shocked at what Lavinia is wearing over there. She will give the wrong impression to our Governor of who we are and what we represent.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Well, the governor is still unmarried, and Lavinia is talented. I believe she has her heart in the right place.

HELEN MOORE

I think where her heart is located is obviously displayed.

JESSIE AMES

We do not need to sacrifice Esther to the King to get the vote.

The ladies chuckle at the thought.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. GOVERNORS OFFICE - DAY**

**30**

October 1917. There is a knock at the door. Hobby stops his writing and looks up. He is sitting at an ornate desk. The chair in front is simple and plain.

WILLIAM HOBBY

Come in.

MINNIE

Thank you, Governor, for granting me this audience.

WILLIAM HOBBY

I am so pleased to have this chance to get to know you, Minnie. You and your association have made Texas a better place to live.

MINNIE

You know, we could continue to do that as voters. Do you know how hard, Governor, it is to lobby in Austin, when your constituency isn't even a part of the electorate? I know you want a more perfect democracy. Surely you could back women's suffrage, and develop a base of loyal voters at the same time.

WILLIAM HOBBY

Minnie, I don't know if you realize what danger the state of Texas is in. Half of our voters are upset. They don't want to send their boys to the trenches. They resent our poll taxes, and they resent the ascendancy of rich women when poor men appear to be making all the sacrifices.

I urge you to call off the showy involvement for women's suffrage, and keep on working as you are, silently and effectively! If you don't keep doing that, then we are going to have the return of a governor who is illegal. He will cripple our war effort, make any kind of prohibition that does occur a sham, and set back the course of women's suffrage.

MINNIE

You are right, Governor. We are in danger. And that is why you need the women to eternally rectify the terrible course in which our state is headed!

WILLIAM HOBBY

I don't know Minnie. I just don't know if that is the smart choice to make. I'm sorry. If this is what you came here to say, then I ask that you take your leave.

There will be no such change in my beliefs today.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**EXT. MULTIPLE LOCATIONS - DAY**

**31**

December 1917. Minnie narrates the following scenes. She is first seen packing her bags, then the screen cuts to her exiting a car. She is in Washington D.C. She is seen speaking to a group of people, smiling happily. She frowns, stumbling, then the screen cuts to the hospital, where she is looking extremely unwell, but still, she is sitting in her bed, dictating a letter to someone.

## MINNIE

After several months of trying and failing to garner support for suffrage from Hobby, I decided to take a break and leave it up to Lavinia. She would be our best chance with Hobby. He had enjoyed her presence at the impeachment celebration so much that he had employed her to give speeches on his behalf. Meanwhile, I headed to Washington for my first lobbying stint, at the NAWSA annual convention. We were making great progress, but my efforts were interrupted when I fell ill with measles.

Sound fades on to hear the bedside letter.

## MINNIE

My dear Lavinia, I feel that the system is impossibly rigged against us. Who can cover all of Texas with speakers and organizers, and committees? It's just too much. We don't have the funds. We're constantly dependent no matter what we do. My health is at its lowest, I'm afraid. There is very little I can do besides writing letters, and even that is tiring.

The scene cuts to Lavinia, writing back.

## LAVINIA ENGLE

O, Minnie, your work has been so grand! You are going to be the first president from a southern state to succeed.

Rest, recover, and then jump back on the horse, my dear. Do not give up the fight, we need you! You will never guess what I'm doing right now. I am planning my next

dress, Minnie! It is going to be nuts! I will be reminiscent of a vampire, and I will suck the blood of those vile men who work against us! I shall show you as soon as you return. I hope to see you soon.

Ever yours, Vinnie.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. TESA AUSTIN - DAY**

**32**

February 1918. Minnie greets Charles Metcalfe at the door, and they walk inside to the parlor. Minnie offers tea or coffee. Meanwhile, Minnie narrates.

**MINNIE (V.O.)**

I had originally met with Charles Metcalfe earlier alongside Lavinia, and we had attempted to convince him to direct the governor to favor suffrage, and now, he was meeting with me again to give me the summary of events.

**CHARLES METCALFE**

Mrs. Cunningham, I have to hand it to you. You have provided one of the best ideas of my political career, and I believe I can get Hobby to go along with this. The Governor is open to have you help us. He is even excited by the prospects of women's suffrage in the primaries, granted by the legislature.

But Mrs. Cunningham, by God, do not use this as an opportunity for a noisy political campaign. Do not

proclaim this as a Suffragette victory if it happens. We need your help, but the Governor wants this to be seen as a needed effort to save Texas, not as a suffrage maneuver.

MINNIE

You want our work, but you don't want to acknowledge us?

CHARLES METCALFE

Mrs. Cunningham. Consider Mr. Hobby. He is going to become your best friend. Is he going to have much of a future, if he is viewed as the man who allowed women to rule over men?

MINNIE

If he doesn't start supporting suffrage for women, he is not going to have a future.

CHARLES METCALFE

If I could give you a word of advice, Mrs. Cunningham, you would do well to accept any and all who support your cause. You will need all the backing you can get to convince Hobby that he would be making a wise choice in supporting you. At this time, you simply are not the majority, which means Hobby will not gain more support by backing equal suffrage.

MINNIE

I shall not support those that wish to see alcohol control the state legislature. I do not care for their position on suffrage if they will not also support prohibition. Mr. Metcalfe, we may not be the majority, but I believe we

will be when we get the vote.  
Does Hobby want to be on the  
wrong side of history when  
that occurs?

CHARLES METCALFE

You are pursuing too  
vindictive of a policy, my  
dear. If you continue failing  
to defer to the advice and  
expertise of the men in your  
life, then you will not get  
very far.

MINNIE

I got here, didn't I? Need I  
remind you; the deal remains  
the same: Woman's right to  
vote for women votes in the  
primary. Without our votes  
this July, Ferguson will defy  
all the odds and regain his  
office. With the support of  
hundreds of thousands of  
women by Hobby's side, he is  
just as good as elected.

CHARLES METCALFE

Yes, I have not forgotten.  
All I request is that you  
quietly determine how many  
legislators would support the  
bill if it was introduced. I  
will not introduce suffrage  
unless that is the case.

MINNIE

Do not worry, you will get  
the numbers you need. Just  
wait and see.

We watch as they stand, shake hands, and Metcalfe  
leaves. Minnie (V.O) speaks over these actions. We  
see Minnie hand Metcalfe a paper with a smug smile  
on her face. The scene cuts to Minnie meeting with  
Annie Webb Blanton. As Minnie explains, we see  
Annie nod in agreement to run for office alongside  
Hobby.

MINNIE (V.O.)

I did exactly as promised.  
Presented with the

signatures, Metcalfe introduced a primary suffrage bill, and it miraculously passed both houses by a large majority. The bill passed in March of 1917. Then, it was time to convince every woman in the state of Texas to go out and vote for Hobby. I met with Professor Annie Webb Blanton, and after some persuading, she agreed to run for the position of state superintendent of public instruction. Having a woman on Hobby's ticket was exactly what some women needed to be convinced to vote.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - EVENING**

**33**

March 1918. Minnie, Eleanor, Helen, Jessie, and Lavinia are seated at a table.

**MINNIE**

(To the waiter) Please, bring us some grape juice for everyone! We are celebrating another victory for the suffrage movement! (To the women) I know you all may be wondering how much I leaned on Jessie to deplete our treasury for this one. But our victory meal tonight is courtesy of Annette Finnigan, who knew we would be exhausted. And ecstatic.

**ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE**

I have something to add to this celebration of winning the primary vote in July. We



must give a toast to our founder, Annette, to Governor Hobby's support, and to the passing of the 18th amendment which supported the national ban on alcohol. I also would like to add a special toast to you ladies, your sacrifices have made this possible.

HELEN MOORE

I will toast to that, Eleanor. Here here!

LAVINIA ENGLE

Now, on to the real matter at hand, how can we further our mission? I propose something like Alice Paul has been doing. A hunger strike!

HELEN MOORE

How can you identify with someone like that? Alice Paul is nothing less than a female thug!

LAVINIA ENGLE

Alice Paul, Mrs. Moore, knows that 20 million American women are going to be ignored politically, until they learn to fight politically. She knows, Mrs. Moore, that the world would not be in the mess it is, with millions dying in the trenches every month, if the women had simply demanded and received their rights earlier.

MINNIE

Enough, you two, I beg you. Lavinia, you know what I told you about how Texas is different and will be different. Please keep your promise to me.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Alright, I shall concede, for now.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. MINNIES RESIDENCE - EVENING**

**34**

April 1918. Lavinia opens her closet and takes out some of her clothes, putting them in a bag. She looks flustered. There is a knock on the door, and then Minnie enters.

MINNIE

Why, Vinnie, what are you doing?

LAVINIA ENGLE

I think I should leave. My thoughts and ideas are not well-received here.

MINNIE

But, my dear, you are more essential to the cause than anyone! You are young and brilliant. We need your outlandish ideas to help our Southern cause. Even if we do not go on a hunger strike, you help us recognize that more action can always be taken if necessary.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I'm not sure the other suffragists would agree with you.

MINNIE

Forget them. You motivate me more than you know, you have become my best friend. You managed to enchant Governor

Hobby and Morris Sheppard,  
which lead to gaining their  
support.

LAVINIA ENGLE

To be honest, I am beginning  
to tire of your constant  
companionship. Your friends  
are becoming utterly  
insufferable.

MINNIE

We are only five miles from a  
military base, Vinnie. If you  
leave, you could get into a  
lot of trouble. If they even  
suspect that you are a loose  
woman, they will lock you up.  
You could be hit by one of  
those automobiles, or worse,  
snatched up and never see  
again. Could you endeavor to  
stay with me until Christmas?  
You have become my dearest  
friend in a life whose  
demands are driving me to the  
brink.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Alright, I'll stay. I'm sorry,  
Minnie. I was just feeling  
flustered from our dinner.  
Mrs. Moore and I do not often  
see eye to eye.

MINNIE

That is precisely why I need  
you. No one else can give  
Helen such stress. Her looks  
of shock amuse me every time!

They laugh together and hug.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

July 1918. Lavinia walks, hand in hand with a man.  
They are talking.

WADE HAMPTON

You know, snookum's, I didn't think that being drafted into trench warfare could be so wonderful.

LAVINIA ENGLE

(Feigning interest by flirting.) I do love the way you talk so sweetly to me, but I feel like you have not proven worthy of my trust.

WADE HAMPTON

I have already broken ties with my old flame because of you, and because I'm going to write you letters, and we're going to have a wonderful life together.

Lavinia scoffs slightly. She doesn't believe his commitment.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Wade, I'm just a little concerned. Have you been reading the papers?

WADE HAMPTON

You mean about our latest victory with the Brits in the Battle of Hamel?

LAVINIA ENGLE

No, about the Chamberlain Khan Act that passed last week in DC, where a young woman, like myself could be arrested and detained indefinitely if she is found alone with a soldier. They're trying to prevent the spread of certain diseases. If you truly want to continue this, we are going to have to find another means of correspondence, and a more discreet meeting place.

As they walk, they near a park. Lavinia can see a police officer smoking a cigarette in the distance.

LAVINIA ENGLE

(Whispering nervously) Wait, I see a policeman up ahead. This is exactly what I feared would happen. What should we do?

WADE HAMPTON

First of all, calm down. If he stops us, we'll just say you're my sister, and I'm walking you home.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Look at us, Wade, that is not going to work.

WADE HAMPTON

Alright, come with me. Hurry!

Wade stops, pretends to see something in the direction they came from, and directs Lavinia to turn around. They begin walking at a faster pace. There is another officer up ahead.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Oh, not another one! Nuts!

WADE HAMPTON

Look, through that hedge. Go through. Quickly!

LAVINIA ENGLE

But that will ruin my dress?

WADE HAMPTON

Do you want to be imprisoned? Forget about your dress!

CUT TO:

**INT. MINNIE'S HOUSE - SAME EVENING**

**36**

A loud bang erupts in the house. Camera is focused on Minnie, asleep in bed. The noise awakens her.

She hurriedly wraps a shawl around her shoulders and exits the room. Camera cuts to her walking down the stairs. She sees a very dirty Lavinia before she runs up the stairs.

MINNIE

Vinnie, is that you? What in the world have you been up to?

A knock sounds on the door. Minnie frowns, opens the door.

POLICE OFFICER

Good Evening, Ma'am. I'm Officer McPharlin. I was just wondering if you saw a younger woman, likely covered in dirt, running through your yard?

MINNIE

Good evening, Officer McPharlin. It is good to see that you are staying diligent on the job. There is no concern to be had at my residence. No one gets through Minnie Fisher Cunningham without facing the wrath of a disenfranchised woman.

POLICE OFFICER

(Laughing) Ah, I see. Please, ma'am, if you do see anyone, get an officer. We are working very hard to enforce the latest purity laws, and anyone who gets away will be a stain on our reputation.

MINNIE

But of course, Officer. Thank you for your efforts to keep our community pure. Have a good evening.

She does not wait for his reply before shutting the door in his face.

INT. PARK - MORNING

37

Late September 1918. Minnie and Lavinia are taking a morning stroll through the park. With the rise of influenza, they are wearing cloth masks to stay safe.

MINNIE (V.O.)

In the months following our first success with the primary suffrage bill, some issues arose that were extremely worrying. The most concerning, and debilitating, was the outbreak of the Spanish Flu.

MINNIE

It sure is a beautiful day today, Lavinia. I am hoping to receive word today that my executive committee is still well and has not fallen victim of this dreadful influenza.

Lavinia is struggling to keep up with Minnie's pace of walking. She reaches Minnie, out of breath, to reply.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Yes, it will be a miracle if we all make it through, (She stops, to catch her breath, then coughs) with no major losses.

MINNIE

Vinnie, you sound tired. How are you feeling? You know it is not wise to conceal any illness right now.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Minnie, I'm not feeling well all of a sudden.

She stumbles. Minnie catches her and guides her to a bench. She places her hand on Lavinia's forehead.

MINNIE

Oh dear, you're burning up. We need to get you to bed right now!

CUT TO:

**INT. MINNIE'S RESIDENCE - LAVINIA'S BEDROOM - 38 AFTERNOON**

October 1918. Lavinia lays in bed, Minnie comes in wearing a mask and carrying a pitcher of water. She sets it by Lavinia's bedside and sits on the bed, feeling her temperature.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I knew I should have left a long time ago. Now I'm going to give you this horrible disease and bring down the whole effort in Texas.

MINNIE

Vinnie, Vinnie, I would not do this, if I did not love you as my dearest sister. I give my life to the cause, but now you are more important. Are you feeling any better?

LAVINIA ENGLE

The paper said this was just the ordinary grippe. But why is this terrible influenza of 1918 attacking only young people, and (she pauses, having been crying, she wipes at her eyes). Why are my eyes bleeding?

MINNIE

O God!

CUT TO:

**INT. MINNIE'S RESIDENCE - DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS 39 LATER**

Minnie is speaking on the phone. The sound fades in. Switches viewpoint from Eleanor to Minnie.

MINNIE

She can't breathe, and now she says her eyes are



bleeding. I can't get a physician. The newspapers in Austin are lying about this. I saw a horse-drawn wagon collecting bodies yesterday! They say this is an ordinary flu, and they are even going forward with an America First parade. But I don't know of an unaffected family in our whole neighborhood. And the symptoms are terrible!

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Don't worry about the eyes. We have had that here too. Make sure she gets plenty of tea and walks around frequently. They are lying to us to as well here in San Antonio. They went ahead with a Liberty Loan parade even though they knew people were dying. It seems that no one wants to impair our economy or the war effort. Don't you worry about things. Send troublesome mail my way.

Helen can work on it as well. Try to keep her spirits up!

She may be at a very crucial phase of the influenza!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. MINNIE'S RESIDENCE - MORNING**

**40**

Minnie and Lavinia sit in the parlor, drinking tea. Lavinia still looks a little unwell but is doing better.

## LAVINIA ENGLE

Minnie, I think you saved my life. The bleeding has stopped, and even the color of my arms looks a little better.

## MINNIE

God be praised. I think it will be the best Christmas ever. Revolutionaries have taken over Germany; the armistice is holding and the flu I think is running its course. Plus, it is so great to see my Lavinia looking well again.

## LAVINIA ENGLE

Minnie, I want to stay with you now for the rest of the fight. Thank you for your advice and help. But Minnie, a few things. I don't want to lose my health like this again. I am not going to do any more organizing at the grass roots level, or bum up meetings. If you got a crowd, fine, but I'm not going to get on my hands and knees and beg every matron I see.

## MINNIE

Lavinia, I care about you very deeply, and I want you to be happy and healthy here. I can easily grant you your demands, for you are the hope of all. I am sorry that I cannot detach myself more from you, but I worry about your escapades.

FADE OUT.

FADEIN:

## INT. RESTUARANT IN DC - AFTERNOON

41

January 1919. Minnie and Carrie Chapman Catt are seen conversing. Minnie's voice over speaks over them.

MINNIE (V.O.)

In the months that followed our hopeful Christmas, I was called again to Washington and other states where I attempted to convince other congressmen to support the amendment that had been introduced to the Senate, which would give us suffrage. Though it failed, I returned again to Washington, despite having conflicting issues within Texas.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

How has your latest stay been at the Suffrage House?

MINNIE

You know Mrs. Catt, the house is alive with passionate ideas, gossip about the legislators. For some there is no rest.

But I feel so alive and vital. At the end of a long day, I don't mind undoing my corset and shoes and talking on into the night.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

It is going to be a terrible tragedy to lose you here in Washington as a lobbyist. We know that Texas was set to approve the nineteenth amendment as it is only up to the state legislature to approve an amendment. But now people in your state are complicating the issue?

Minnie, please tell me you have a plan of action.

MINNIE

Unfortunately, I feel I am stuck. If I return to Austin, our efforts on the federal amendment might fail, but if I stay, I fear that Governor Hobby will pass the amendment on the state level very soon. I have attempted to imply that the national amendment is our new focus, but he wants women voters for his reelection, and he wants them now.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

This is such a waste of resources. We cannot be embarrassed in Texas! But to cover Texas in a referendum of all voters, we will need

50 speakers, speakers we actually need right now in other states. Certainly you will need at least \$100,000 to blanket the whole state with literature. This is going to be ten times more expensive than a campaign in Austin with the legislature, and one we don't even need.

MINNIE

Mrs. Catt, believe me, I am as upset as you are. This is a tactical blunder of the greatest magnitude. Governor Hobby gives us this . . . alligator smile. He says he is fighting for us. He has never fought for us. He is merely using us. As are those anti-suffragists who voted in support of the state amendment because they realize our strategy.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Then, I am loathe to say it, but I believe we need you back in Texas. If this amendment is added to the state constitution after the referendum in May, we are at risk to lose votes for the national cause. That loss would throw us out of suffrage for years to come.

MINNIE

I understand. Jane McCallum has done my job as well as she could have, given the circumstances, but by going back, I will be able to bring our "Winning Plan" to Texas. I will feign happiness over this amendment, lest we are seen as ungrateful, and continue lobbying for national support. Thank you, Carrie, for all of your support and wisdom on this matter.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Of course. We will not succeed without Texas on our side. I have complete faith in you, Mrs. Cunningham. I wish you luck.

They stand, embracing, and part ways.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNT PLEASANT - MOVIE THEATER - NOON

42

We see a woman preparing to speak, shuffling papers, etc. Minnie explains the situation in voice over.

## MINNIE (V.O.)

As the movement began to reach a head, I sent out as many delegates as I could throughout Texas, to all the counties, to speak on NAWSA's behalf. Jessie Ames's daughter, Marie, had opted to go to Mount Pleasant and other Northeastern counties.

## MARIE AMES

Listen, you women here in Mount Pleasant just do not realize all that is going on in Austin and Houston. My organization has telephone committees, automobile committees, Ways and Means Committees, anything you can think of, we have a committee. Don't become distracted by other matters, suffrage is almost at hand. Wives, mothers, be encouraged, these saloons that wish to tear your families apart will be forced to shut down or stop selling alcohol. However, prohibition will not remain unless we stay diligent. Ladies, we have to fight for what we believe in. Y'all need meetings every week! Y'all need to raise money. We can make an amazing difference!

## MINNIE (V.O.)

Marie wrote to me often, to voice her irritations. She asked for more literature, a larger hotel, and money from her mother. Though she could be a thorn in my side often, and was not a great public speaker, her passion made her useful in smaller towns like Mount Pleasant. She was the best we could afford to send, our strong speakers were

needed in the larger  
counties.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - AUSTIN - EVENING**

**43**

March 1919. A man stands in an auditorium, two women, Minnie and Pauline Wells, stand on either side of him.

**MODERATOR**

Here at the University tonight we have a rare opportunity to hear two viewpoints on a public issue that has awakened Texas voters across the state. This May 8th voters will decide on

an amendment to the state constitution that could give women the vote. You might recall that two years ago, the legislature gave women the vote in the primaries.

But now it is up to the men to decide whether women will become an interwoven part of our democracy or remain in their own domestic sphere. We are honored to have leaders from both sides of the debate which has excited our electorate. Please welcome our first speaker, Pauline Wells, from Brownsville, and Minnie Fisher Cunningham, originally from New Waverly, Texas.

**PAULINE WELLS**

Ladies and gentlemen, Good Evening. The whole purpose of

the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, whose representative we see beside me, is to extend the electorate once again. They pretend that this is a celebration of democracy, but underneath it is actually a savage repudiation of Texas voters. The Texas Equal Suffrage Association bemoans the entry of tramps, aliens, and saloon keepers into the ballot box, and now they want to offset this previous extension of democracy by bringing in a deluge of progressive women. They wish to be a political disinfectant. Those behind this are the most privileged of women from the most privileged of states and countries. They are women whose boredom and ennui with modern life has led them to admit that the home has lost its charm. They are the women who would rather raise trouble than raise a family. They don't admire great motherly heroes of Texas such as Catharine Ross, who gave us our great Governor, Sul, or a great wife, Orline Sayers, who was a masterful painter, and who made the gubernatorial years of her husband Joseph first-rate in class and refinement. O to be a wife or mother is passé.

They must do something else. But in an age of specialization, and diversification, where progress depends on individuals gaining a discrete knowledge over a discrete role, they want everyone to do everything.



The crime in our streets attests to the way in which many women have fumbled their role as mothers, and men, in many instances, have been abysmal failures as fathers. Yet, their solution is to take the women who have failed to keep up as mothers, and have them do yet another job, to gain a working knowledge of public life as citizens. The suffragists in short are angry revolutionaries who hate the state of Texas and want to tamper with our society.

#### MINNIE

My opponent believes that we are privileged women. I don't mean to get personal, but it is such a blatant untruth that it needs correcting. I came from a family in New Waverly that was barely able to afford shoes because my mother and siblings launched the family into our own dairy business. My opponent, for the record, is the wife of a very wealthy lawyer and political boss, who at the moment controls the vote of South Texas. It is true, we represent women who have already crossed the line from necessity into the public sphere. We are talking about telephone operators, teachers, farmer's wives who must earn money to keep their families afloat from losing their land. But, as my opponent is so concerned, let the record note that we also represent famous Texas women who have not crossed into the public sphere. May I remind everyone here of the great

sculptor, Elizabeth Ney, the pioneer of our state's first orchestra, of Ima Hogg, or the savior of The Alamo, Clara Driscoll. We represent hard working women who work jobs and pay taxes. They deserve a public voice. But we also represent the mothers who have struggled to have better milk, and better conditions for their children, the mothers who have struggled with drunken husbands, and disease, because the men as a group have failed to deal with the saloon, and it's horrible consequences in our society.

Applause is heard. Pauline looks annoyed at Minnie.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**EXT. SOMEWHERE IN SAN ANTONIO - AFTERNOON**

**44**

April 1919. Lavinia is speaking to a group of women. She is very excited and passionate. Minnie's voice overlaps her speaking.

MINNIE (V.O.)

While I was fostering debates in Austin, Lavinia was on a statewide crusade for the cause. She stopped in every town she could, speaking to whoever would listen.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Ladies, your energy attests to your conviction. We are not seeking honors, or busy work. We did not launch ourselves into the public sphere for the sake of it.

But the German vote, the  
 brewery vote, the Ferguson  
 vote, the saloon vote, those  
 opposed to our universities,  
 those opposed to our way of  
 life--have threatened the  
 very civilization that we  
 have worked so hard to imbue  
 upon our children. Mothers,  
 you now need the vote. Farm  
 women, your vote is sacred!  
 Working women, you deserve a  
 voice in government!

FADE OUT.

MEANWHILE...

**INT. AUSTIN TESA LOCATION - AFTERNOON**

**45**

April 1919. Minnie and Edna Beveridge are seen walking through a park.

**MINNIE**

Edna, you are a treasure. I  
 have gotten rave reviews  
 about you. And I so  
 appreciate your work with the  
 more wide-awake German women  
 of central Texas. How is it  
 that a New Yorker like you  
 can do so well in our fair  
 state?

**EDNA BEVERIDGE**

Well, I have the speeches  
 down, after a certain point it  
 becomes a little mindless. As  
 you note, we don't have a two-  
 party tradition down here in  
 the South, so I have found a  
 way to work with conservative  
 Democrats. I am a bit like a  
 mockingbird, because I appear  
 to be picking up the accent!

## MINNIE

Your analysis is also excellent, in comparison to some of our other speakers. Working with Jessie's daughter, Marie, is like trying to milk a goat. I ask her about her travels, and all she can do is complain. (Mockingly) "I need more literature, I need more money, It's too hot." You, on the other hand, give me wonderful reports, with not a personal complaint to be found. I know it can be tiring, but we must put the good of the movement before our individual needs.

## EDNA BEVERIDGE

I'm glad you enjoy my reports, Minnie. I understand the sacrifices required and I am not afraid to make them, like others.

## MINNIE

I am so worried that we are going to lose the vote in the northeastern part of our state. Red River County is a disgrace. Titus, Franklin, and Bowie are not too far behind. That is a lot of voters that we would be losing. It seems like they support the war, but nothing else. After your trip through the district, what did you determine?

## EDNA BEVERIDGE

Well, unfortunately, you're right. There are hardly any Germans or Mexicans up there. The all-white primaries and poll taxes have taken the heart out of the Black vote in Camp and Marion counties. But the woman of those counties seems more Southern

to me than the rest of Texas. There are also a lot of tenant families that support the likes of Ferguson. The public libraries up there, if they have one at all, are rather weak. The wealthy, if they make their money there, don't seem to stay around during the summer.

MINNIE

Were you able to speak with any of our leaders?

EDNA BEVERIDGE

Well Mrs. Polk, as you know, of Sulphur Springs, is a live wire. I did not visit Clarksville, because there is no one to visit in Clarksville, and as for the women in charge in Paris and Mount Pleasant, they gave me an uncomfortable feeling.

They seem knowledgeable, but I don't think they are actually getting anything done. For example, Mrs.

Lindsey of Mount Pleasant. She had more excuses than names in her county wide suffrage association. I just can't quite put my finger on it. It's not that they lack public spirit, it's just that they are stuck in their Southern roots.

FADE OUT.

INT. SOMEWHERE IN SAN ANTONIO - DAY

46

May 1919. Minnie voice over while Lavinia and Eleanor discuss things.

MINNIE (V.O.)

Lavinia, having finished up her latest speech, met with Eleanor in San Antonio. There was only one day until the men of Texas would vote on passing the amendment to the state constitution to give women the vote.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Lavinia, we so appreciate your work in San Antonio. I think this city has been our biggest challenge.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I have to agree with you. There are a lot of Germans and Spanish people here, as well as a Daughters of the Confederacy Chapter. Their differences cause infighting, which makes it difficult to appeal to all of them.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Well, how is our friend, Minnie?

LAVINIA ENGLE

She is exhausted. Tomorrow will be the culmination of a very long campaign. I'm sure she is filled with anxiety.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

She has been working around the clock for the cause. I hope it proves to be worth it in the end.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I do too, but I feel her optimism is wearing down. She senses failure everywhere.

The State Association was supposed to put out a free newspaper, and hasn't done that. We have maintained only one suffrage school instead

of three, and in many areas the antis have distributed more literature than we can possibly match. Ferguson is of course helping their cause.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**EXT. SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS - MORNING**

**47**

A newspaper boy stands at a street corner, shouting at a passerby. A woman hears his shout of the headline, and frowns.

**NEWSPAPER BOY**

Extra, extra, read all about it! Texas voters renounce Women's Suffrage! All-male suffrage maintained by 25,000 votes. Extra, Extra!

The boy continues his hawking while Minnie voice over plays.

**MINNIE (V.O.)**

We had failed suffrage in Texas, but this could turn in our favor. Carrie Catt's winning plan was still in motion, and now there was a chance to maintain support for suffrage on the national level. The smaller associations and groups, however, were feeling loss, and wrote to me in protest.

CUT TO:

**INT. TITUS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON**

**48**

A woman sits at a desk. Minnie's (V.O) finishes playing while she appears to finish counting voter cards. She finds a piece of paper and begins writing. Her voice over begins.

MRS. JONATHAN RUSSELL

My dear Mrs. Cunningham,  
Since writing to you on Sunday, the count has been completed for Titus County. It appears we have lost by a much greater majority than we at first thought. Those for suffrage 420, against 774. We had a hard fight but were placed at a great disadvantage. In the first place our chairman, Mrs. R. F. Lindsey, was not strong for the amendment, and did not do a single thing. The ladies met and elected me chairman, but it was late, and we didn't get literature out till late, and there was not a speech made by a man in the county. You promised to send a Mr. Larry Westbrook, but he never showed up. This has always been a county in need of more modernized schools. We cannot even support a traveling Chautauqua. If there is anything we can do in the future let me know. Yours for service, Mrs. Jonathan Russell.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. SCHOLZ GARTEN RESTAURANT - AUSTIN -  
EVENING**

**49**



Pauline Wells and Ida Darden sit at a table, they are celebrating the failure of the Texas suffrage amendment. A woman, Minnie, along with Eleanor Brackenridge, enter the restaurant.

PAULINE WELLS

(Whispering) Ida, look to your right. No, don't look now, they might see you!

Ida groans at Pauline, but carefully looks to see who is there. She frowns.

IDA DARDEN

I'm sorry, Mrs. Pauline, but as a good woman I must say, that learning is more important than earning. This experience is simply too wonderful to pass up.

She stands waving her hand to Minnie and Eleanor, who are now seated at a nearby table.

O, Minnie, hello! Sorry to hear about the election, dear. It's truly saddening that you didn't win. There's always next year, right? I'm sure you will have nothing else to do, now that your husband has abandoned you and you live as a nun. Why, they ought to call you Minnie Minimal!

MINNIE

Good evening, Ida. I see that you and Pauline are celebrating your victory this evening. Well, so am I.

Ida scoffs, she is confused.

IDA DARDEN

I'm not surprised your husband has deserted you since you cannot even look him in the eye and prove your sinful actions have had any influence on society.

Pauline grabs Ida's hand and pulls her to sit down. She looks embarrassed.

PAULINE WELLS

Please excuse her, she is a little too overworked from all our successful campaigning.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Mrs. Darden, the things you have said are some of the most despicable, unchristian things I have ever heard. Of course, you would be a member of an organization that hates their own sex and wishes to remain enslaved to men.

IDA DARDEN

That is where you are mistaken, Eleanor. I am a humble servant of the Lord, but I love my nation and my husband, and we wish to see this country restored to its biblical standards.

MINNIE

Ida, I am not fearful of your words. They are merely the shield which you hide behind because nothing else will work to justify your cause.

Will you still love your country when men and women are able to vote? Though Texas has had a setback, it is inevitable that the day will come, and you will have to face the consequences of being a voice against equality.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

Minnie, you are getting worked up. I feel we should find another place to dine tonight. Don't you agree?

MINNIE

Yes, you are correct. Let's  
leave before this becomes  
uncivilized.

They stand, push their chairs in, and leave.  
Pauline shushes Ida before she can respond, but she  
looks like she is infuriated.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

50

We see Helen Moore walking up to a door, carrying a  
cake, and knocking. Lavinia opens the door, and they  
go inside.

HELEN MOORE

Are you working alone today,  
Lavinia?

LAVINIA ENGLE

Yes, what with the election  
outcome and an encounter with  
some anti-suffragists at  
dinner last night, Minnie's  
spirit needed some time to  
recover. When I told her she  
could not come into the office  
for two days, she could not  
come up with any argument to  
convince me otherwise. She  
will be fine if she rests.

HELEN MOORE

I stopped by today to deliver this sponge cake,  
I know she has a sweet tooth, and I wanted to  
lift her spirits.

LAVINIA ENGLE

That's so kind, Helen! She  
won't be able to eat it all  
though, I hope you don't mind  
if I help eat it, so your work  
is not wasted.

HELEN MOORE

I certainly don't mind,  
Vinnie. You have been a great  
help to our President. Tell  
me, what happened last night?

Lavinia starts to cut into the cake.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Ida Darden, and Pauline Wells  
were dining at the same  
restaurant. Darden was the one  
who acted like a fool in her  
effort to disgrace Minnie  
publicly.

HELEN MOORE

My, she has worked so  
tirelessly, only to be  
publicly insulted. This must  
be rough for you as well,  
living so precariously, away  
from your home state, all for  
our efforts to fail.

LAVINIA ENGLE

I have felt very useless to  
the movement as of late. Even  
with my work for Hobby, I am  
doing very little. I have not  
lost faith, though. Despite  
Hobby's untrustworthy nature,  
he has the idea that  
Washington will soon pass the  
nineteenth amendment, and all  
Texas will have to do is  
ratify it.

HELEN MOORE

I thought he did not truly  
care about women's suffrage.

LAVINIA ENGLE

He does, Helen, he does. The  
thing is, the male vote on  
suffrage in Texas has helped  
convince him that he needs  
our vote if he wants to stay  
in power. I get the sense  
that however terrible the  
election was, that the Hobby

crowd have finally converted to the cause. Meanwhile it is the national government that will lead the way.

Helen nods, deep in thought.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

**51**

Minnie sits with her executive committee.

**MINNIE**

Ladies, the historic vote of the U.S. Congress one week ago, has sent the 19th amendment out to the states.

Because their legislatures were already in session, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan have ratified the right of women to vote.

Governor Hobby and members of the Texas legislature have also pushed for an early resolution in the legislature, and I believe we will have a vote by the third week in June.

**HELEN MOORE**

How exciting!

**JESSIE AMES**

But what is the danger that the vote on the Constitutional amendment in Texas which we just lost with the voters will induce the legislature to change their position?

MINNIE

There is no doubt that our legislative friends have now become shaky. The antis are going to make a lot of noise about that election. I think our plan should be to blame the vote on the unpatriotic Germans of central Texas.

Now, we need to get Hortense Ward, and Nellie Robertson going on the legal issues.

Offer them huge stipends, whatever it takes. I just know the antis are going to come up with some kind of maneuver in the Senate, especially, that will woo away our pledged representatives.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

I can do that.

JESSIE AMES

You do realize, Minnie, that calling out the legal team again, could deplete you of your salary.

MINNIE

That is a risk I am willing to take.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

I can help you risk that.

MINNIE

I appreciate your support, Eleanor. We also need to get a contingent of women to hold a vigil at the Austin Train station, in case any legislators try to sneak off and cripple the quorum.

HELEN MOORE

I can see to that. Jane McCallum's Austin Chapter is one of our best.

MINNIE

Finally, we will need to interview and repledge the legislators. Lavinia and I can start the ball rolling on that. We will have every volunteer at the state level we can get for that. And we can let the out-of-staters go to the dubious districts.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

So, Minnie, what do you think? Could we become the first Southern State to ratify the right of Women to vote?

MINNIE

I so believe it is possible, Eleanor, as long as the antis don't pull off some trick with the Senate. This is the time we have been waiting for. The next six weeks I believe will constitute the supreme moment of our movement, and of our lives.

JESSIE AMES

Is the National organization going to give us any help?

MINNIE

I don't foresee that happening, Jessie. They have a hundred fires to put out. It's going to be up to us.

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS - MORNING

52

June 28, 1919. Newspaper boy again hawks the latest headline to passerby.

## NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra, extra, read all about it! Texas becomes tenth state to embrace Women's suffrage. The Texas Senate seconds the decision to adopt the 19th Amendment in the House by a narrow margin.

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

## INT. SUFFRAGE HOUSE - DC - SAME TIME

53

Minnie and Carrie dine together in DC.

## CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Mrs. Cunningham, I am so pleased to spend this time with you! I must give you my congratulations, too. You have broken the solid South, which was something we had to do to win. I regard last week's victory in Texas as the most precious win of all. In Mississippi, we have a so-called leader who is more of a problem than an asset. But with you in Texas we had a round-the-clock organizer, who kept the factions of her organization motivated, kept the treasury solvent, and outmaneuvered her own state's Governor. You were savvy, friendly, and always helpful.

## MINNIE

Thank you, Mrs. Catt. And I thank all of the women in the National for the fine gifts that were given me last night at the Suffrage House.



CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

So, how do you feel now that the ordeal of your state is finished?

MINNIE

I am completely, and utterly exhausted. I am sure there will be those that want me to enlist in new ventures, but I must say, the sacrifice is starting to feel not worth such small victories. I recall Ida Darden, an anti-suffragette, deriding me because I am separated from my husband. I don't see myself ever re-uniting with him, though my life now has been more equivalent to a Catholic nun, and I am not in the least satisfied with that. At least I have friendships that sustain me, even when coming home to an empty house can be very depressing for the soul.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Well, you know, I was married to two men. But after they both died, I found lifelong companion in Mollie Hay. We share the fight, and we share our passions, and happiness. Her love really has been more precious to me than any man's. In fact-

MINNIE

What are you implying?

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Mollie and I share each other's hearts. I cannot explain any further than this. Our feelings defy the norm, I know, but I have never been one to let society tell me what to do. Consider your happiness in friendship,

that is similar to how I  
feel.

MINNIE

I don't think I could accept  
that kind of happiness. My  
faith taught me that it is  
not my place to judge another  
human, and I know that I have  
too many faults and sins to  
worry about someone else. It  
is just not the right thing  
for me. I am humbled though,  
that you felt comfortable to  
tell me this, and I will  
endeavor to prove your choice  
worthy by not speaking on  
this matter to anyone else.

Carrie smiles, they hug.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. TESA HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

**54**

August 18, 1920. Suffrage has finally been ratified  
by all the states. Minnie's executive committee is  
celebrating, along with Hobby. We see them laughing  
and talking while Minnie voice over.

MINNIE (V.O.)

After many years of  
protesting, lobbying, and  
working as President of TESA,  
our ultimate goal was  
achieved. Tennessee was the  
last state needed to ratify  
the nineteenth amendment in  
August of 1920. It will  
remain one of the best days  
of my entire life.

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE

I hope everyone appreciates  
this Apricot Bellini

Mocktail! (Holds up glass) It is a gift from the ladies on San Antonio! To commemorate the fact that the nineteenth amendment will now become part of the U.S. Constitution!

JESSIE AMES

Cheers! Thanks to San Antonio!

HELEN MOORE

Cheers for all women of the United States!

LAVINIA ENGLE

A toast is not satisfactory, we need to have a victory parade!

MARIE AMES

Come on everyone, grab some noise makers! Hooray!

The women dance in a circle, banging the pots and pans.

WILLIAM HOBBY

Ahem, excuse me. Ladies! We are pleased to be here, but we will need to move on. I would like to do one more thing before we go.

LAVINIA ENGLE

Speech! Speech!

WILLIAM HOBBY

When we look back on the Suffrage campaign, I think there was a golden moment three years ago when your fearless leader, Minnie Fish, led us to win the primary vote for women in this state. And with that moment, there was a golden pen used to sign the bill into law. In commemoration of this woman's golden accomplishments, I would like to present that

pen to Minnie Fisher  
Cunningham!

William hands the pen to Minnie. She smiles  
exuberantly.

**MINNIE**

Thank you, Governor Hobby. We  
are indebted to you for your  
support in our campaign.

Through the efforts of women,  
and men, alike, we have  
succeeded in gaining the  
right to vote. But this is  
merely the beginning. We must  
now exercise our rights in  
the upcoming elections and we  
must show the nation that we  
did not fight for nothing.

None of you here today shied  
away from the sacrifices  
necessary to the cause, and I  
want to personally thank you  
for that sacrifice. Without  
it, we would not have made it  
this far. Now, enough talk,  
let's celebrate!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

**INT. MINNIE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

**55**

Minnie sits at her desk, still writing. Her (V.O.)  
continues.

**MINNIE (V.O.)**

Though I have continued to  
work in Politics, even  
running for U.S Senator and  
Governor of Texas, I did not  
win, but it was because of my  
earlier success in suffrage  
that I was able to do so much  
more afterwards. I am forever  
grateful to Annette Finnigan,

for her faith to name me as  
her successor, which  
catapulted me into the role I  
was meant to fill.

She sits back, finished writing. We watch as she  
gathers the papers, folds them up, puts them in an  
envelope, and writes an address on them. She smiles  
softly at her accomplishment and returns to looking  
outside.

**EXT. ROOSEVELT HOME**

**56**

The year is 1960. Eleanor Roosevelt is in her home.  
She is being interviewed by a reporter on TV.

**REPORTER**

I'm sure a woman such as  
yourself has had an abundance  
of inspirational figures who  
have helped you become who  
you are. Is there anyone in  
particular who comes to mind,  
who you know, as of late?

**ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**

Well, that honor could go to  
a plethora of people, but I  
must say that one name stands  
out among the rest.

**REPORTER**

And who might that be?

**ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**

Minnie Fisher Cunningham, or  
Minnie Fish, as we call her.  
When women first gained the  
right to vote in 1919, Minnie  
helped to organize the League  
of Women Voters. When she  
spoke at the second annual  
convention, I was in awe. She  
made me feel like I had no  
right to be a slacker as a  
citizen, like I had no right  
not to take an active part in  
what was happening to my

country as a whole. I am truly grateful to have gotten to know her on a more personal level as well.

REPORTER

That is a powerful story. I'm sure Minnie is honored to receive such recognition.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

She changed the world with her leadership in Texas for the suffrage movement. We might not have the vote if she hadn't been a part of the movement.

REPORTER

Well, there you have it folks, Minnie Fish is just one of the people Eleanor Roosevelt respects as an activist. Minnie is still involved in politics today. I'm sure she will be excited to know you take inspiration from her.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

