

EMPIRES OF LIGHT

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - NIGHT - 1884

Ships sway rhythmically in the harbor. PADDLE WHEELS, CLIPPERS SHIPS, and shining brightly in the foreground, the new SCREW STEAMER - SS CITY OF MANCHESTER. The only ship with electric lighting.

We'll PUSH THROUGH THE SHIP'S WALL to --

INT. SHIPS GENERATOR ROOM - SAME

The sounds of the crew still finishing their evening affairs carry's over as an ENGINEER makes his rounds. Polished brass valves, solid mahogany paneling on the generators. He trips a switch and...

BOOM! An explosion. The Engineer is thrown clear across the room. The steamer goes DARK.

EXT. SS CITY OF MANCHESTER - SAME

Staying wide on the ship we see a candle being lit. Then another. Voices, hurried, as the ship slowly comes back to life.

Coming down the gang plank find a young CABIN BOY. He runs down the docks and into the streets. CLOSE ON the letter he carries: **MENLO PARK.**

FADE TO:

INT. EDISON HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - A LITTLE LATER

TOM (39) face red and twisted, stands over the sink in his night shirt. Below the sink he's trying to remedy a serious case of whiskey dick. He's trying too hard.

TOM

Function...

MINA (O.S.)

Tom?

TOM

Still need a minute.

She opens the door a crack. MINA (19) is a quietly beautiful girl in a silk night gown. While always reserved, she is still warm and genuine.

MINA
(with affection)
Husband, stop this. It's enough
that you're home. Now come to bed
before you make me an office widow
for another month.

They hold each other's gaze. Tom's is blood shot. Mina's
is knowing.

TOM
I patented the light bulb.

MINA
I know. Come along, impressive man.

SOFT KNOCKING at the door as CHARLES BATCHELOR (30s) enters.
He is the manager of Edison Machine Works and a trusted
friend.

BATCHELOR
Hello, Tom? My apologies for the
interruption at this hour.

Tom and Mina cover themselves with dressing robes. Batchelor
hands him the "MENLO PARK" telegram. As Tom reads --

BATCHELOR (CONT'D)
Both generators on the Manchester
have blown out. It sails in the
morning.

TOM
Get your tools. It's too late for
the train, we'll have to ride into
the city.

MINA
That will take hours.

TOM
What else am I to do?

He looks back and forth between Mina and Batchelor.

MINA
You have over two hundred engineers
in New York City.

TOM
Mina, this is big, if they were to
make a mistake...

BATCHELOR

Time is of the essence, sir. If there's someone you trust we can send over now, that may be the difference between success and failure.

Tom takes a moment. Gathers his thoughts.

TOM

Find me Nick Tesla.

Batchelor sets to task, Tom puts on pants, tectonic plates shift in Mina. From her face we --

SMASH TO:

INT. LOWER EAST SIDE - NICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Sparks fly from a rudimentary GENERATOR splayed out on a desk. Wires of all sorts connected to small METAL DISCS. We see them briefly touch, a large spark, and --

NICK (O.S.)

Thirty-four this time!

Reveal NICK TESLA (29) excitedly testing his latest breakthrough, ready to try it again. Next to him sits the sour looking TONY SZIGETY (27), a devil-may-care lady's man.

NICK (CONT'D)

Fifteen volts more than before.

TONY

MacQuarrie won his last three bouts with a knockout. We're going to miss the whole--

NICK

Morning papers put the odds at seven to six. You've plenty of time to watch a large Irishman attempt to pummel an equally large Scotsman.

TONY

I think you're missing the point of *going to* the fight.

Nick touches the discs together again. A larger spark. The VOLTMETER momentarily spins to 35.

NICK

And you're not grasping the significance of what I'm doing *here*.

TONY

When I require someone to wait for me, I at least have the manners to offer a drink.

NICK

(as he works)

The significance is a world powered solely by electricity. Alternating current may still be beyond our grasp but if I can just get this right, high voltage transmissions will not. Then gone are the days of muscle powered labor. Someday there will be a society where ditches are dug by electric machines. We'll replace horses with engines to pull our carriages and electrical wires will do the work equal to hundreds of men...

(then)

Pitcher of water on the table.

TONY

I shouldn't have bought the sixty cent tickets.

SFX: KNOCK at the door. Nick goes to answer it, and we stay with Tony as he walks to the back table. Pouring himself a glass of water, he spills a bit onto a copy of the EVENING PAPER. Headline: "**SARAH BERNHARDT RETURNS TO BROADWAY**"

NICK

Tony, I do apologize, but I must return to Edison.

TONY

Now?

NICK

The SS City of Manchester is set to depart in a few hours and their generator's blown. Tom personally asked if I could repair it in time.

TONY

Can you?

NICK

I must. If not, I may very well be required to sail with the ship.

Nick begins packing his tools.

TONY

You didn't install the Manchester's generator. Why should you be solely responsible for its repair?

NICK

Because if the almighty Tom Edison were to do it himself, the repair might be complete by the time the ship passed through the Azores.

TONY

You used to call him a genius.

NICK

I used to think he was.
(picking up his bag)
Never work for your idols, Tony.
People who seem too good to be true usually are.

TONY

We purchased the sixty cent tickets...

NICK

I will make this up to you.

TONY

You do not possess female anatomy.
Therefore, you cannot.

NICK

I shall think of something.

As Nick drags Tony out the door, we stay in the apartment, focusing on the two CHARGED DISCS ... Still connected to the generator. In an instant they touch, producing a HUGE SPARK sending both pieces flying in opposite directions. One lands on a GREASE RAG. At over 500 degrees, it IGNITES INSTANTLY. And as the FIRE starts to build FADE TO --

TITLE CARD: EMPIRES OF LIGHT

And as the opening credits roll, the main theme plays as we see:

INT. SHIPS GENERATOR ROOM - LATE NIGHT

A crowd of ENGINEERS pouring through diagrams by candle light. They part as Nick enters. Walking past the diagrams, he turns his attention towards the machine. We look through his eyes as --

VFX: The generator turns to LINE ART. As he focuses on a broken gear, we see it highlighted with the rest of the machine fading away behind. And then, it slowly turns. More gears coming into view as this image expands, belts connecting it to the armature coils. With each component being added, we see the damage marked as if it was on a diagram.

Pulling out of his head, in quick cuts, we see Nick directing the engineers on what to do. And as repairs are being made, we'll hear the loud, low rumble of a SHIP'S HORN.

NEWSPAPER BOY (PRELAP)
Morning Tribune! Read all about it!

AND WE FADE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - MORNING

A NEWSPAPER BOY waves his wares in the street as we push past the line of ships to the SS City of Manchester towering over her neighbors.

NEWSPAPER BOY
George Westinghouse to start Electric
Company. Railroad king takes over
again!

The CAPTAIN calling DOCK HANDS below. Just behind the pilothouse, find a table where Tom's breakfasting with --

EXT. S.S. CITY OF MANCHESTER - BEHIND THE PILOTHOUSE

The pompous shipping executive T.H. ISMAY (50s.)

TOM
Thank you for the hospitality, Mr.
Ismay.

ISMAY
It is I who need to thank you, Mr.
Edison. Nine runs on time, with a
full complement of passengers. Now
we shall make that ten, thanks to
you.

As they continue to self-congratulate we shift focus to: An exhausted, grease covered Nick, tool kit in hand, emerging from the ship's belly. He didn't sleep at all and it shows.

TOM
And you simply must let me know when
your next ship is commissioned.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

We could have all your electric lighting prefitted. I've already put Henry Byllesby to work integrating a generator in a central engine plant. He's one of our best engineers ... like yourself, a Harvard man.

ISMAY

Let us not get ahead of ourselves. The Majestic is still two years away, and I am certain there will be multiple bids.

TOM

Surely you won't forget our support, even after the installation is complete.

ISMAY

I shall not, but any such electrical decision is for the board of directors, of which I am only one member in twelve.

CAPTAIN

(approaching)

Gentlemen, may I suggest you take your leave, or risk a voyage to Liverpool.

ISMAY

(joking)

My cabin is empty, Tom. And I have never known you to refuse a free offer.

TOM

Thank you, but the most compelling reason I once had to travel has already arrived in New York.

Laughing, Tom and Ismay stand. We look below to see --

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Nick, slowly walking down the pier, crossing the newspaper boy as he starts his long walk home.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Westinghouse taking over electric future!

Not far from the pier, Nick is ankle deep in the sludge covered streets. This is 1884 New York.

The CRACK of a whip startles him. A TEAMSTER attempts to free his cart from a large POTHOLE. Nick stares with heavy heart as the HORSE bucks and whinnies in pain, panicking.

NICK

Sir! Please, your horse's fear is working against your goal of freeing the cart.

Nick tries to coax the horse into taking a step forward. She's locked up. Eyes wide.

TEAMSTER

Mind your business, stranger. I'm late enough.

The Teamster CRACKS his whip and Nick shoots back, dodging the lash. We push in on Nick's eyes as he continues to watch, upset at the situation, his own powerlessness in it. And then, we see what he sees....

VFX: The horse and cart turn to LINE ART, a virtual drawing board which reveals the way Nick views the city. Vectors show the forces exerted when suddenly --

The TEAMSTER'S WHIP forms a COPPER WIRE COIL. Snapping around the horse and cart, the wire is stationary while the horse and cart inch forward only to slip back. The cart now blurring, coming to form a giant MAGNET being pulled by the horse. The Teamster attempts to whip the horse again, but the electric coil simply begins to spin around the horse pulled magnet. Spinning faster and faster until it catches fire and --

LANDLORD (O.S.)

If I ever find out who did this...

SMASH TO:

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nick stands in the open doorway to what was once his apartment. He lost time. The price of living in your head. Next to him, his LANDLORD.

LANDLORD

Thank your saints you weren't around when it happened, Mr. T.

NICK

Ah.

He looks around. The door is gone. Fire damaged the whole floor.

LANDLORD

14 apartments. Up in smoke. I hope
you didn't keep your savings here.

As the Landlord drones on, Nick walks to the pitcher of water. The one thing that survived the fire. Below it, the wet, fire damaged **SARAH BERNHARDT newspaper Tony spilled on.** Nick picks it up, begins to read as we...

FADE TO:

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - SALON

With Mina, reading the same headline. She takes a deep breath and puts the paper down.

MINA

(to maid)

Ruth, only four tonight at dinner.
Mr. Edison has to work late.

SARAH (PREPLAP)

(singing)

Vissi d'arte...

INT. BROADWAY THEATRE - SAME

SARAH BERNHARDT (35) rehearses on stage for *La Tosca*. Her crystalline voice reverberates through the dark, empty house of the theatre. No costume or stage make up, she still fills the room. This woman has presence.

SARAH

(singing)

*Vissi d'amore, Non feci ma male ad
anima viva...*

In the back corner of the wings, we see Tom slip in holding flowers. He maneuvers past assorted CAST and CREW to get a better view. He finds a place beside a STAGE HAND leaning against a curtain rope, mesmerized by Sarah.

TOM

(sotto)

I lived for my art, I lived for love,
I never did harm to a living soul...

The strings swell as she takes a moment, looking over her shoulder, for a second catching Tom's eye.

She then abruptly turns away delivering the aria's passionate crescendo as we --

FADE TO:

EXT. MENLO PARK - LATER

See TOURIST FAMILIES, dressed in their formal attire in a covered cart, pulled along a train track by an electrically powered wagon. The driver SLOWS THE TRAIN as Mina passes in front.

DRIVER

Good morning, Mrs. Edison!

The tourists wave. Mina's a celebrity here.

MINA

Good morning! Enjoy your visit to Menlo Park...

We stay with Mina as she crosses a building with a sign stating "**ELECTRIC RAILROAD**" with an arrow pointing in the WRONG DIRECTION. It's been turned backwards.

Mina smiles. Her eyes light up. This is insider baseball.

As Sarah's song ends, Mina flips the sign and with new determination walks BACK UP THE HILL --

INT. EDISON MACHINE SHOP - NEW JERSEY - CONTINUOUS

A busy eclectic factory. Machines humming. Engineers tinker. Charles Batchelor overseeing. Today Nick is just one of the men on the line, cutting metal discs identical to the ones we saw in his apartment earlier. Mina enters.

MINA

Good morning, Mr. Batchelor.

BATCHELOR

(a little off guard)

Mrs. Edison! Good morning. I'm sorry, but your husband left on the first train to the city.

MINA

I know. But Agnes made apple dumplings, and I couldn't let them go to waste.

She produces a basket of tasty treats.

BATCHELOR

The boys thank you, ma'am. You're far too kind.

MINA

It's no trouble at all. They're doing a fine job for my husband.

Briefly catching Nick's eye.

MINA (CONT'D)

(still to Charles)

Don't work them too hard today.

INT. BROADWAY THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - SARAH'S DRESSING ROOM

Tom and his bouquet are the least grand things in the room.

SARAH

Thomas. Alva. Edison. Get over here, you.

(re: flowers)

For me? You shouldn't have!

She rushes him with an embrace.

TOM

I couldn't let you come to town without stopping by.

SARAH

I'm thrilled that you did, would have been devastated if you didn't. You know you're my favorite American inventor. How are you? How's your wife? How are your children?

TOM

I work. They resent me. The usual.

SARAH

They aren't like us. They don't understand who we are to the world. What we *have* to do. At least *yours* try to understand that.

TOM

I heard about Jacques. I'm so sorry.

SARAH

Apparently being married to "The Great Sarah Bernhardt" will spread many cheap legs.

TOM
I followed it all in the papers. I
am appalled on your behalf.

SARAH
Never give men an inch. They just
become their vices.

TOM
Sarah.

SARAH
Thomas.

TOM
Not every man is like that.

SARAH
(pointed)
... Aren't they?

TOM
J.P. Morgan is hosting a dinner for
my new power plant opening. Will
you do me the honor?

SARAH
What about Mina?

TOM
She's otherwise occupied.

Sarah shoots him a look. Bullshit.

TOM (CONT'D)
They're not like us, Sarah... You
said it yourself. Now.
(playfully)
Great diva of the stage, Divine Sarah,
world's greatest living actress,
will you please do this mere mortal
the honor of being his esteemed guest
at the home of his humble business
colleague for dinner tomorrow night?

SARAH
I love a man who is always to the
point. What time should I arrive?

INT. MENLO PARK - BIRD SANCTUARY - A LITTLE LATER

Sunbeams cut through the thick, lush air. Exotic imported
flora and fauna fill the glassed-in structure. This is Mina's
passion project.

She places small bowls of honey out for her birds.

NICK (O.S.)
You wanted to see me?

She turns to see him in the doorway.

MINA
You wanted to see me first.

They take each other in at a distance. It's been a while.

NICK
I saw the evening paper...

MINA
As did I.

NICK
And I always want to see you.

MINA
Mr. Tesla.

NICK
Mrs. Edison.

And then, like magnets pulled together without choice or fair warning, they KISS.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. MORGAN'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Close on CROSSED ELEPHANT TUSKS mounted on the wall. Panning across the room, we see exotic, expensive trinkets from travels to every continent. A collection meant to impress and intimidate.

On the far end of it all we find JP MORGAN (50s). A man who needs no introduction. He sits across the desk from Tom.

TOM

I gave Byllesby his first engineering job.

MORGAN

And Westinghouse gave him more money. You are no longer the "boy genius" light bulb inventor, Tom. You run one of the largest companies in the nation. You must behave in a manner consummate to your level of responsibility.

TOM

My responsibility is to science.

MORGAN

Your responsibility is to your investors. Me.

TOM

And what do you wish me to do?

MORGAN

There are people who fix *labor problems* like yours.

TOM

... The Pinkertons? JP. They're thugs.

MORGAN

Your competitors are learning your trade secrets through hiring your employees. You need to strike back.

TOM

I will not resort to violence in handling my business affairs.

MORGAN

(taken aback)

The Pinkerton Detective Agency started as the intelligence service for the Union Army during the war. Now, they catch thieves and con artists. They even saved the life of a sitting president.

(then)

You are scheduled to meet with them after lunch.

TOM

And you didn't think to ask me?

MORGAN

When news broke about Mr. Westinghouse, I determined you did not have a choice. They will help you, Tom.

TOM

I don't know how I feel about this.

MORGAN

It is not your feelings; it is your actions that matter. These are cruel times, and certain adverse actions are necessary to stay relevant.

TOM

We open the Pearl Street Power station in two days, and my boys are already swamped with long lead time work for Boston and Hartford.

MORGAN

And yet orders are down for next year.

TOM

I can fix that.

MORGAN

You couldn't even fix the Manchester. Pure luck that found that Serbian immigrant.

(pointed)

I know it was him. The repairs were completed on time.

TOM

Nevertheless, come backs can be made.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Even Sarah Bernhardt is returning to Broadway, seventeen years after her first role.

MORGAN

Fairly bumptious to compare yourself to Ms. Bernhardt.

TOM

Perhaps not. She'll be accompanying me tomorrow to your dinner.

MORGAN

Not Mina?

TOM

My wife is feeling a little under the weather.

(off his look)

She will be fine. She simply requires a couple of days' rest.

MORGAN

Take care of her, Tom. You are a lucky man to have such a lady beside you.

TOM

I did not come here to discuss my domestic life.

MORGAN

Meet with the Pinkerton.

INT. MENLO PARK - BIRD SANCTUARY - LATER

Nick and Mina lie hidden in the gardens, curled into each other. Post sex bliss. In the distance, we see the crack of lightning, thunder following several seconds later.

NICK

It's raining in New York.

(off her look)

Lightning is always a precursor to rain.

MINA

... You needn't still prove your genius to me.

NICK

Hardly. I still cannot find a means to run away with you.

MINA
Because it's impossible.

NICK
Yet to keep doing this...

MINA
... Is too painful.

Mina sits up. The weight of her own loneliness too much.

NICK
Then we must solve the impossible.
The financial, the legal and the
ethical --

MINA
Shhhh.
(pointing to a bird)
Do you see that?

It's a WHITE DOVE. She retrieves a PENNY WHISTLE from her skirt pocket.

MINA (CONT'D)
(watch)
Watch.

She blows the whistle, slowly pushing on the inner tube, watching the dove's reaction as she changes pitch. After a moment, the bird suddenly stops, looks to them. Mina takes a pencil and marks the spot on the whistle.

NICK
You have genius too.

MINA
With birds and whistles.

NICK
With all the things that cannot be
seen, measured or monetized.

A smile.

MINA
... So what do we do, Nick? Because
it can't continue as this.

NICK
We'll think of something.

She looks at him, eyes full of so much hope and hurt. He takes her hand.

NICK (CONT'D)

After we met in Strasbourg, I thought I would never see you again. And a year later I find you living here.

MINA

And on the arm of your esteemed employer.

NICK

A minor detail.

MINA

Of course.

NICK

It won't be like this forever, Mina. You'll see.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - TOM'S LAB - LATER

Tom's at his desk with Morgan as his nervous ASSISTANT enters.

TOM'S ASSISTANT

Mr. Edison, the Pinkerton is here.

TOM

Show him in.

As the Assistant apologetically holds the door open, Tom stares quizzically at the oddity that enters: a WOMAN. This is JANE DAWSON (25) wearing lady's sports fashion.

JANE

Gentlemen, Senior Agent Jane Dawson, Pinkerton Detective Agency. I've been briefed on your situation.

TOM

I'm sorry, I do not wish to interrupt good lady, but --

JANE

And I do not wish to be interrupted, good sir.

(then)

Mr. Morgan, Mr. Edison, we sent our men scouring the pubs, laundries and homes around the major Westinghouse corporate offices. So far, we've come up with nothing. Westinghouse runs a tight ship and his employees are very loyal. They respect his wishes of keeping what happens in the company, within the company.

MORGAN

Information we have known for some time.

JANE

My agency would like to infiltrate the design works by placing myself within their clerical staff.

TOM

(to Morgan)

Are you suggesting that we wager the future of this company, and potential serious personal embarrassment, on a woman?

JANE

Exactly, sir. May I compliment your keen observation skills. Being a woman, I believe I can find employment in their typing staff by the end of the week. And do so without raising suspicions. They have stringent checks with their skilled employees. It could take us over a month to have a male agent in place.

TOM

This is absurd. Any organization that even thinks this way --

MORGAN

My bank thinks this way. And courtesy of Ms. Dawson, two clerks who thought they could embezzle from me are spending the next five years in Sing Sing Prison. I can assure you Tom, Westinghouse will never see it coming.

Tom nods, conceding.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - THAT EVENING

On Nick, delicately unpacking a voltmeter. Nearby are several more boxes of singed scientific equipment. Tony watches, more than a little upset.

TONY

When I said bring what you need, I meant clothes, razors, tooth powder...

NICK

A good laundry can clean any damaged personal affects. They cannot remove corroded water from a voltmeter.

Nick carefully connects wire that leads to a water pipe. This is the ground wire. Literally.

TONY

I notice you don't either.

NICK

I'm constructing an electrical resonant transformer circuit to produce high voltage, low current, high frequency AC electricity from a DC battery power source.

TONY

A capacitor attached to a coil?

NICK

You're a master of the obvious.

TONY

And you can't think of a better name?

NICK

Science isn't about catchy names, it's about function.

TONY

Then why did your boss call it "the light bulb" instead of "the light producing high temperature wire filament protected from oxidation by means of a glass bulb containing inert gas"?

NICK

You wish to offer me an alternative?

TONY

You are Nikola Tesla. It is a coil that makes gigantic sparks. How about... The Tesla Coil?

NICK

Do you think I would be as vain to use such a self-aggrandizing name?

TONY

You work at a company founded by
Thomas Edison. It's called the Edison
Electric Company.

NICK

Arrogant and obvious.

TONY

The two biggest requirements for
success.

NICK

I'll take your suggestion under
advisement.

TONY

Very well. And while we're at it,
how do you wish to make up for the
one dollar and twenty cents I paid
for the fight?

NICK

Once I no longer fear for my
equipment's safety, I will gladly
purchase tickets for us to attend a
concert saloon, vaudeville, or fight
of your choosing.

TONY

Lydia Thompson's performing at the
14th Street Theater.

(off his look)

I just happened to pass by earlier
today.

NICK

Very well.

Tony eyes the exposed ground wire.

TONY

Don't blow up or burn down this
apartment.

NICK

Wouldn't dream of it.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - PARLOR - LATER

Mina enters to a child's HYSTERICAL CRYING as Ruth the maid
ineffectively tries to calm him.

RUTH

Mrs. Edison. Thank the Lord.

Find on the floor, TOMMY (7), one of Tom's children from his first marriage, having a high holy fit. Mina rushes to him.

MINA

Tommy... Tommy, what's all this fuss?

She pulls him close. Holds on tight. He rails against her, but slowly starts to calm down.

MINA (CONT'D)

Easy... It's alright. I'm here now.
What's the cause of this?

TOMMY

I miss mother.

MINA

I know... She misses you too. She tells God and the angels how much she misses you every day. But they watch you together. And they are all so proud...

He buries his face in her shoulder.

MINA (CONT'D)

Now. How about you and I go upstairs and get you washed up for supper?

The little boy nods, face still smashed into her. Mina stands with him still attached to her.

MINA (CONT'D)

Oh goodness... you're getting too big for this.

TOMMY

I love you, Mina.

MINA

I love you, Tommy.

INT. JP MORGAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

An elaborate meal. Dozens of dignitaries. At the front, four settings. JP Morgan. His elegant wife FRANCES (40s). Tom Edison. And an empty chair.

FRANCES

If we wait any longer I dare say our guests might take offense.

Morgan eyes Tom. His call.

TOM

Perhaps Ms. Bernhardt has been delayed
in rehearsals.

MORGAN

Such a shame Mina was feeling under
the weather. It is my sincerest
hope she recovers soon.

TOM

Of course. Perhaps we should start.
I'll make the appropriate apologies
when she arrives.

Morgan gestures to the staff to serve the first course.

FRANCES

Hopefully she can at least join us
for dessert. We hired the pastry
chef from Delmonico's tonight. I
read in the papers she enjoys Baked
Alaska.

Off Tom. He could just die...

INT. DANCE HALL - SAME

Nick sits at a table beside a shy girl, EILEEN (20s). They
are surrounded by couples dancing before a LIVE BAND. Tony
and his lady, BRIDGETTE (20s) return to the table, winded.

TONY

Another drink? I could use one.

Nick looks at his untouched drink. Eileen's is empty.

BRIDGETTE

Perhaps another time. I have to
open the bank tomorrow.

TONY

You have time for another round or
two. Not to mention if you stay
with me this evening, you'd cut down
your transportation time by a lot.

BRIDGETTE

A generous offer. I appreciate a
man with your resourcefulness...

TONY
Nick, did you not promise Miss Eileen
a dance?

EILEEN
I'd hate to be a burden.

Tony kicks Nick under the table. Nick stands, puts on his manners.

NICK
Please, I insist.

Tony continues to peruse Bridgette as we follow Nick and Eileen onto the dance floor. Rackus instrumental music plays as Nick and Eileen begin to dance.

EILEEN
Such a lovely song...

But Nick is already mentally miles away as we hear the shrill sound of a PICCOLO, soon joined by a second, and then a third.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
Do you not enjoy Verdi?

The music, Eileen and indeed the whole room's chatter softens to a low murmur as --

VFX: An opaque drawing board over the scene. On it, the piccolo enlarges and becomes Mina's PENNY WHISTLE. Then a second, and a third. Moving. Each a third of a phase off, getting longer and shorter, much like the cylinders of an engine.

Now pushed to one side, to reveal a graph, the iconic SIN FUNCTION WAVE. Two identical waves overlapping, again a third of a phase off each other. A line forming between the continuous peaks.

Now the whistles turn sideways, the inner tubing morphing into bar magnets inside a casing of coiled wire. The sin wave continuing, an uninterrupted source of power. Wires appear, connections between generators as --

TONY (O.S.)
Nick?

Real time: Nick looks around. The song is long over. He stands alone as STAGE HANDS wait to reset the floor for the next act. Tony and the girls stare at him like a zoo animal.

NICK
I've solved it.

TONY
Solved what?

NICK
Multiple generators in phases! No
down swing, no flickering.
(then)
I'm sorry. I have to go.

TONY
Back to Edison Labs? At this hour?

NICK
Of course not. Everything I need is
in your apartment.

Bridget looks at Tony. *Your apartment?* No way will she go
back with him.

NICK (CONT'D)
I solved it. Ha!

Nick all but runs out of the dance hall.

TONY
Solved... what?

NICK
(yelling back)
Alternating current!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. PITTSBURGH - EARLY MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Establish the skyline and smog.

INT. PITTSBURGH - PINKERTON OFFICE - SAME

Men in suits. Busy. Professional. Jane enters, cutting through, not walking around anyone. She plants herself before the FRONT DESK AGENT.

JANE

Agent Dawson, reporting in.

The Desk Agent cocks his eyebrow at her.

DESK AGENT

You Pete's girl? He's always sayin' you're a real kidder.

JANE

I'm Agent Jane Dawson, from the New York office.

DESK AGENT

Lady, this is the Pinkerton Agency not the Salvation Army.

JANE

Having been an agent for the last two years, I find myself well aware of that fact.

DESK AGENT

There are no female agents.

JANE

You're looking at one.

(then)

Check your records.

With chagrin, he pulls out a thick RECORD BOOK and flips through.

DESK AGENT

I got a "J. Dawson" out of Manhattan.

(then)

How do I know you're not impersonating him?

JANE

Look at my lineal number. If I were to impersonate an agent, it would be someone with the seniority to fire you.

(then)

Now, if you please, sir. I have an important case to begin.

DESK AGENT

Not until we verify this with New York.

JANE

Oh for heaven's sake.

DESK AGENT

You're welcome to leave. This may take a while.

JANE

And miss the pleasure of your company? I'll wait here, thank you.

She sits in a lobby chair near his desk.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KIDS ROOM - SAME

Mina finishes dressing Tom's sons Tommy (we met earlier) and WILLY (5) in their formal finest. MARION (15), his pensive daughter with no filter, watches from the doorway.

MINA

Children, this power plant opening is a big day for your father. It's important we all be our best for him.

MARION

Isn't it always?

MINA

I suppose so, Marion.

MARION

Or just when the newspapermen want a family photo? Dress up someone else's kids, he won't know the difference.

MINA

That's a sour way to look at things. Your father works a lot to give us a life we should all be grateful for.

Marion rolls her eyes as Mina straightens Willy's tie.

MINA (CONT'D)

There now. That's a dapper young man.

INT. TOM'S LAB - LATER

Nick paces around the office, excited. He's trying to sell Tom on his idea from last night.

TOM

I understand your enthusiasm but now might --

NICK

But you can see it? For years, we were forced to use unreliable DC brushes and fixtures --

TOM

Unreliable? My direct current generators?

NICK

Not yours specifically sir, but the overarching technology on which they're based. And yet because alternating current by definition could not produce a steady stream of power, we had no other choice. Until now.

TOM

Your insinuation can only work if you could perfectly synchronize two or more generators.

NICK

Which I did last night.

Tom looks somewhere between impressed and horrified.

TOM

How long did you test it?

NICK

A quarter-hour, maybe more.

TOM

You have proven yourself to have good fortune, Mr. Tesla. Nothing more.

Nick gives momentary pause as Tom's Assistant enters carrying a PRESSED MORNING COAT.

TOM'S ASSISTANT

Sir, the ceremony begins in under an hour. Your carriage is outside.

Tom nods and his assistant begins swapping out Tom's coat, bow tie, cuff links. Nick ramps back up for a second try.

NICK

It is a start. Future testing will lead to improvements. Soon, the ability to transmit power not merely within a city center, but hundreds of miles, to towns and rural areas. Someday, even the farm will glow with electrically powered light.

(then)

All of it bearing your name.

Tom sighs, walks to an easel and pulls down a LARGE MAP of the EASTERN UNITED STATES. Colored dots clustered around the big cities. The Assistant keeps dressing him.

TOM

Nick, each red dot represents a Direct Current Central Station we've constructed. Each blue dot represents one on order. And the greens dots are isolated plants in shops, homes and factories.

NICK

But that technology is quickly becoming --

TOM

Millions have been invested in Direct Current. We've done research, we own our patents. Do you understand?

Nick's heart breaks a little. He understands, alright.

TOM (CONT'D)

(still to Nick)

Ten years ago, maybe this could have helped. But the money's already been spent and the groundwork's in place. America will be powered by Direct Current.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

(then)

It's not that yours is a bad idea
Nikola, it isn't. We're just already
working on a good idea. Mine.

INT. EDISON PLANT #3 - A LITTLE LATER

A band plays patriotic music. Behind it, a LARGE GENERATOR.
At the podium, JP Morgan gives a speech.

MORGAN

... With the capabilities to add
increased capacity as demand rises,
for a total power output for over
two thousand lights.

Applause. Off to the side of the platform Tom stands with
Mina and the kids. She adjusts his tie.

MINA

There now.

TOM

Thank you.

MORGAN (O.S.)

... And now it now gives me great
pleasure to present to you the founder
and chief of Edison Electric, Mr.
Thomas Edison.

More applause from the guests. Mina gives Tom a pat on the
back as he walks to the podium. Her eyes wander to the row
of ENGINEERS standing by the machinery... where she finds
Nick.

TOM

This morning, I asked JP Morgan if
he had any advice for what I should
say. He told me it didn't matter as
long as the generator worked.

(audience laughter)

But I do want to thank you all, and
my loyal staff and family, for helping
us get this far...

As Tom drones on to the approval of a happy audience, Nick
returns eye contact with Mina...

INT. EDISON PLANT #3 - RECEPTION - A LITTLE LATER

Nick and Mina walk with champagne flutes in hand through a
labyrinth of machinery.

In the distance they still hear the muffled sounds of the opening's reception.

NICK

He ignored the benefits of my idea simply because he didn't come up with it himself.

MINA

Sounds like my husband.

NICK

I don't know if there remains a place for a man like me at Edison Electric. I wrote a letter of resignation, but haven't the courage to submit it.

MINA

You can't. Not without another offer in hand.

NICK

Mina? I thought this is what you wanted. Me starting a life for us independent of Tom. There must be a place for my alternating current idea, perhaps at Westinghouse or even on the open market.

MINA

Westinghouse specifically offered Mr. Byllesby \$10 more than he was making with Tom. His value was tied to being a part of Edison Electric. You must do the same. A good idea today will be a good idea tomorrow. Wait it out... Let someone poach you so they can brag about the big catch they got of an "Edison Engineer."

NICK

Has anyone ever said you're a genius?

MINA

Only some engineer that works for my husband.

They stop at a work table. Various pieces from Nick's work at Tony's apartment are neatly arranged: a TESLA COIL, four small generators, a few lights, etc.

MINA (CONT'D)

This is what Tom passed on?

NICK

I hoped he'd have the courtesy to at least listen, especially after the Manchester.

(then)

He didn't even want to see it.

MINA

I do. Show me.

NICK

I wasn't asking for pity, Mina.

MINA

Sincerely, I want to see your work.

NICK

... Really?

MINA

Really.

Nick, now almost boyish, spins up the FIRST GENERATOR.

NICK

The system surrounding us is the most advanced Direct Current generator in human history. But it is limited in both the voltages it provides and the distance the electricity can travel.

(then)

My first solution? An electrical resonant transformer that... that I call the Tesla Coil.

He looks to Mina for approval, she smiles.

NICK (CONT'D)

Watch.

He waits one last moment before discharging the machine. A small BOLT OF LIGHTNING bursts out, skimming Nick, but not hurting him. Mina jumps back, surprised but not afraid.

MINA

Wonderful!

NICK

The problem with a system like this is the energy only exists for an instant. It is but a first step towards long distance high power transmission. Now watch.

He spins up one of the OTHER GENERATORS. It powers a small light that cycles on and off repeatedly.

NICK (CONT'D)
This electricity travels through a mile of copper wires, but sadly it's not continuous energy. Now see what happens as we include two other off cycle sources of power...

He spins the FINAL TWO GENERATORS. Once moving, he CONNECTS them to the first with wires. The light STAYS ON CONTINUOUSLY.

NICK (CONT'D)
The electricity in these wires can travel hundreds of miles. They can light cities, towns, farms...

He is about to continue when Mina cuts him off with a KISS.

INT. PITTSBURGH - PINKERTON OFFICE

Jane's slumped, eyes half closed, in the lobby chair. She's been here a while.

DESK AGENT
Agent Dawson?

She shoots up in her chair.

JANE
Present!

DESK AGENT
The telegraph arrived from New York. Here's your hotel key and suite number.

JANE
I'm not an impostor? Such a relief.

DESK AGENT
We have an understanding with the staff at Rittenhouse. Keep the hours you need, they don't ask questions or go through your things. I also saw this if your first corporate on corporate case. Good luck.

JANE
Can't be harder than putting away criminals.

DESK AGENT
Criminals? They really keep your
gloves white, don't they? ... You
ever worked a labor riot?

JANE
No.

DESK AGENT
Union strike?

JANE
No.

DESK AGENT
Broken a man's bones?

JANE
I resent the accusation. I am a
detective.

DESK AGENT
You're a Pinkerton, lady. Just like
the rest of us...

JANE
I help when and where I'm needed.
Nothing more.

DESK AGENT
Whatever lets you sleep at night.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - KIDS' ROOM - SAME

Mina reads next to the beds of Tommy and Willy.

MINA
*"Then they fell asleep and evening
came and went, but no one came to
the poor children. They did not
awake until it was dark night and
Hansel comforted his sister saying,
'Just wait, Grethel, until the moon
rises...'"*

Tommy snores. Willy drools. Mina closes the book, stands
and turns off the light. As she's almost out the door.

WILLY
Mina?

She turns back...

MINA
Go to sleep, Willy.

WILLY
What if daddy runs away?

MINA
No one's running away.

WILLY
Like Hansel. What if he gets lost
in the woods?

MINA
No one is getting lost.

WILLY
Mommy did.

MINA
No, Willy. God loved your mommy so
much he wanted her back, all to
himself. But now I'm here... and
we're a family. We stay together.

WILLY
Promise?

MINA
Promise.

She pets his hair, willing him to fall back asleep.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. MORGAN'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

With Tom and JP Morgan, a silver coffee tray between them.

TOM

The opening went well, did it not?
Two new factory orders. That's
something to be proud of.

MORGAN

Have you heard from Ms. Bernhardt?

TOM

(no)

Yes... She sends her sincerest
apologies, but unfortunately rehearsal
ran late.

(sips coffee)

It's been two days, and we have still
heard nothing from the Pinkerton
agent.

MORGAN

These things take time.

TOM

And yet their accountants waste none
in sending me piles of expenses and
charges.

MORGAN

You are not simply buying
intelligence. We have already sent
a message indicating how future acts
of disloyalty will be dealt with.

TOM

What did they do to Byllesby?

MORGAN

There is no need to concern yourself
with that as it has been taken care
of appropriately.

TOM

Is it not my duty to determine what
is appropriate? Yesterday, Nick
Tesla, one of my smartest engineers-

MORGAN

--I know who the man is, Tom.

TOM

He had a proposal to redo our entire system. Perhaps I shall have him hanged, drawn and quartered instead or do you feel that tar and feathers will suffice?

MORGAN

What was his idea?

TOM

That is irrelevant, sir. It's based on alternating current.

MORGAN

Does it work?

TOM

I suppose it can, but an alternating current system would put all we've achieved to waste.

MORGAN

Dangerous. However, in the wrong hands, such as those of Mr. Westinghouse, that idea could be even more dangerous. You can only control that which you own. And you, Tom, need to stay in control.

Off Tom... realizing what he must do.

INT. WESTINGHOUSE CORPORATE OFFICES - PITTSBURGH - AFTERNOON

Busy corporate headquarters. Jane, dressed as a mousy secretary, walks before a WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER. As they walk, he gives direction to employees as people hand him papers to sign. This is a busy man.

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER

I have to be honest, Miss McCullen, we were not expecting you today.

JANE

I am Mr. Gaulard's new secretary. Did he not write?

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER

We received a telegram but it was truncated.

(MORE)

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER (CONT'D)

We attempted to wire him, but he had already left the country.

JANE

Yes, the S.S. Germanic. He should arrive in England in the next week. You can of course reach him by sending a message to the Royal Thames.

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER

I see. Now I think for the time being, I may have some good news. We haven't an assignment, or with expansion as it is, even a desk for you. So it may be better for all parties concerned for you to have the next several days on holiday.

(off her look)

With pay, of course.

JANE

I wouldn't feel right taking your money without putting in an honest day's work. Thank you all the same, sir.

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER

That is a trait I admire, but at the moment... I suppose we may find a space for you among our secretarial pool. You will be working with a lot of sensitive information, so I need not remind you the importance of being discreet. Have you found a place to live?

They stop walking.

JANE

Yes, sir. With my cousin.

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER

Very good. I'll turn you loose to meet the other secretaries.

(then)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I must attend to a situation. One of our engineers was robbed today.

JANE

I'm so sorry. Will he be alright?

WESTINGHOUSE MANAGER
I don't know. We are waiting to hear from the hospital. Poor Mr. Byllesby... we're taking up a collection for his family should you like to contribute.

The sticks with Jane. She knows what happened.

INT. SHARED LAB - EDISON HQ NYC

All the other engineers long gone, Nick stands alone at the long work table disassembling a more completed version of the TESLA COIL. He carefully places the pieces into a leather bag.

TOM (O.S.)
You're not abandoning me?

Nick turns to see Tom, standing in the door.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I didn't hear you out earlier. It's been a difficult few weeks.

NICK
No apology is necessary sir. You were doing what you thought best for your company.

TOM
Your idea... It's good.

This catches Nick off guard.

TOM (CONT'D)
While I may be attached to my own inventions, I've learned there are many useful means for your concept. I wish to patent it.

NICK
You wish to patent my work?

TOM
Of course I understand why it seems like it may hurt your bottom line, but believe me when I say the attorneys will make it infinitely easier for us to move forward if the patent is in the company name. And we will be happy to draw up papers guaranteeing you a percentage of the profits.

NICK

The profits are not my concern. I only hope mankind will benefit from electricity.

TOM

As do I Nick, as do I.

They shake.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now about your work space...

NICK

I can assure you sir, I was --

TOM

No, no. We must find you a private laboratory. Keep packing, I know just the space. It's in the basement near the generator so you may have an uninterrupted supply of power.

(turns to go)

I'll expect detailed designs on my desk first thing tomorrow.

Nick turns to him and smiles. As Tom exits, Nick pulls out some sketches - he's been working on this already.

INT. MENLO PARK - UPSTAIRS HALL - LATER

Ruth, the maid, knocks on the bedroom door.

RUTH

Mrs. Edison? Everything alright, ma'am? Will you be taking your breakfast in bed?

She places her ear on the door. Hears light sobbing. Marion walks up behind her --

MARION

It's alright Ruth, thank you.

INT. MENLO PARK - MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Mina's balled up, still in bed. Hot tears on her cheeks, she weeps silently.

MARION (O.S.)

Mina?

MINA

I'm fine, you don't need to --

She stops short as the door opens revealing Marion.

MINA (CONT'D)
Marion! Can I help you?

She stands, collecting herself.

MARION
It's that actress, isn't it? She's
back in town.
(then)
Does Mr. Tesla know?
(then)
I'm four years younger than you, not
blind.

MINA
I am sorry Marion, but I don't have
the pleasure of understanding you.

MARION
I'm not going to say anything.
(then)
I'm not on father's side. He's the
reason my mother died.

MINA
She died of brain congesti--

MARION
You're smarter than what the papers
print, Mina. She was sad... She was
sad all the time.

MINA
... I'm so sorry to hear that.

MARION
I've seen how you are around Mr.
Tesla. The two of you were speaking
yesterday when father was attached
to the grand posterior of Mr. Morgan.

MINA
(taken back)
Marion.

MARION
You don't have to pretend to be happy
here. No one is actually.

Mina just sits in stunned silence. Off that -

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - MAIN LAB - A LITTLE LATER

The public face of Edison Electric. While still a functioning lab, gone are the simple workbenches, replaced with the finest oak, brass fittings etc. All the ENGINEERS wear suits under their aprons.

SARAH (O.S.)
(singing)
*Poor wand'ring one! Though thou
hast surely strayed, Take heart of
grace...*

The Engineers share confused looks just as --WHAM! Sarah throws open the lab doors, revealing herself in all her glory.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(singing)
*Thy steps retrace, Poor wand'ring
one...*

The Engineers go WILD. They are used to visiting dignitaries, but never a celebrity like this.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Hello boys.
(singing)
*Poor wand'ring one! If such poor
love as mine - Can help thee find
True peace of mind- Why, take it, it
is thine!*

She plays to the crowd, they hoot, holler and scream.

TOM (O.S.)
What the devil is causing this
commotion?!

All the fun stops. Tom stands in the doorway.

ENGINEER #1
It's Sarah Bernhardt!
(then)
Sir.

TOM
So I see.

She saunters to him.

SARAH
Hello, Thomas Alva... What's a girl
got to do to hear her own voice on
your electric recording machine?
(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
Does it work for singing? Or just
dictation?

TOM
Perhaps we ought to speak in my
office.

SARAH
(to the engineers)
Don't miss me too much, boys.

They drool as she follows Tom out. We walk and talk with
Tom and Sarah, down the EDISON HQ HALLS to Tom's Office:

TOM
It was a terrible embarrassment for
me. You could have written.

SARAH
I sent a note.

TOM
It was not received.

SARAH
Well now you can hardly blame me for
that, darling. I feel terrible, but
we had to stay late at the theatre.
Let me make it up to you.

TOM
Make it up to Mr. Morgan.

SARAH
He's not the one I'm trying to
impress.

TOM
As is evidenced.

SARAH
Be my guest at *La Tosca*'s opening?
The rest of the cast is bringing
their husbands and wives. I have no
one.

TOM
Sarah.

SARAH
You accept?

They arrive at Tom's office door. He's still contemplating.
It's a bold offer...

SARAH (CONT'D)
Nod 'yes' Thomas.

He does.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Good. Now I meant what I said about the talking machine.

TOM
Do you wish to try it? It will only take an hour and after, you may take the recording to your hotel. They have purchased a machine and we expect to deliver it in just a couple of weeks.

SARAH
Sadly I do not have an hour to give, but perhaps after the show, you will allow me the pleasure? Then I can be yours all night.

TOM
I've heard that before.

SARAH
Good. Lucky for you, I never lie about the same thing twice.

She winks, spins on her heel, and leaves him standing there ... just staring after her.

INT. BIRD SANCTUARY - A LITTLE LATER

Mina stands alone under the trees. Nick follows Ruth into the bird sanctuary.

RUTH
Mr. Tesla to see you, Ma'am.

MINA
Oh, Mr. Tesla. My husband is at the New York office today.

Ruth exits.

NICK
A fact I am well aware. He is moving forward with my patent --

MINA
Tom is? My Tom?

NICK

I came here to draw supplies. The Menlo Park labs are superior to Manhattan's for what I require.

MINA

Well... It's a smart business move for him.

NICK

Did you have anything to do with it?

MINA

My husband, listen to me? Perish the thought. I suppose even on occasion he can detect a good idea that was not his own.

NICK

With any luck, this will cause me to be noticed and receive a better offer.

MINA

I'm happy for you...

NICK

Happy for us. This is all for us.

MINA

Nick...

(then)

We have to end it. For good this time.

This hits Nick in the gut. Mina can't meet his eyes.

MINA (CONT'D)

The children, Nikola.

NICK

They're practically your peers. What he did to you was unfair. You don't have to be a mother like this--

MINA

But it's not their fault.

NICK

Don't let him define you like this, Mina Miller.

MINA

Mina Edison.

He levels her with a look.

NICK
That's your choice.
(then)
Mrs. Edison.

He takes his leave. She watches him go.

MINA
Mr. Tesla.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. MENLO PARK LABS - A LITTLE LATER - AFTERNOON

The idyllic rural labs.

INT. EDISON MENLO PARK LABS

Nick drawing materials from the Menlo Park supply department. A CLERK behind the desk keeps tally. Nick already has dozens of wires of varying thickness, meters, gauges, etc.

NICK
Quarter inch zinc --

Batchelor enters.

BATCHELOR
Quite the shopping list, Tesla.

NICK
We need to order more chromium wires. I believe we should have a sufficient supply of zinc unless another project comes up.

BATCHELOR
May I ask what this is for?

NICK
Tom didn't tell you, sir? He is patenting my Alternating Current generation system. Now we need to design the transformers, motors, power distribution --

BATCHELOR
Right...
(to clerk)
I think you need a coffee.
(as clerk leaves)
Sit down, Nick.

Nick stands motionless a moment. Slowly, sits down.

BATCHELOR (CONT'D)
Tom does want to help you, son. Nothing would make him happier than for you to mirror his success in electricity.

NICK

Then why are we having this conversation...?

BATCHELOR

Because before the world will accept alternating current it must grow to be confident in the safety and reliability of what's already in place.

NICK

Direct Current. A system you're saying Edison Company intends to fully build only to immediately rip out and replace?

BATCHELOR

Alternating Current will succeed someday. But we only have one chance to make it work in the public eye. If we introduce your AC prematurely and something goes wrong, America will say no to it for decades.

NICK

And Mr. Edison patented my idea not to use it but to prevent it from being actualized elsewhere...?

BATCHELOR

For Edison Company to succeed, Tom has to give his investors - Mr. Morgan - a short-term return on their money. If he fails to do that, there will be no second chance, regardless of how good a new idea may be.

That hits Nick like a ton of bricks. After a moment...

NICK

Will that be all, sir?

BATCHELOR

Nick, you are very intelligent. Perhaps more so than any man I've met. But you need to understand the probable and possible consequences of being right in a world that's used to being wrong.

Close on Nick's face as we hear the familiar "Vissi d'arte"

SARAH (PRELAP)
*Vissi d'arte... Vissi d'amore, Non
feci ma male ad anima viva...*

INT. BROADWAY THEATRE - EVENING

Opening night. Sarah performs *La Tosca* to a packed house. She is phenomenal. Her voice carries through...

INT. MENLO PARK HOUSE - KITCHEN - SIMULTANEOUS

...And continues over: the Edison COOK and a few KITCHEN STAFF prepare dinner. An APPLE PIE coming out of the oven. Mina enters the doorway. Seeing her, the staff stands straighter, looks more busy...

MINA
Please wrap that up for my husband.
I'll be delivering it to the office
tonight.

Sarah keeps singing as we find...

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - BASEMENT LAB

Nick, sad, depressed, going back to his capacitor experiments to power the Tesla Coil. Again, he starts it up... small, little lightning. More power. It gets bigger...

SFX: WILD APPLAUSE...

INT. BROADWAY THEATRE

Which is for Sarah. She's now taking her curtain call. Roses thrown at her feet.

On the front row: Tom. A huge smile. He's with her. She catches his eye from the stage. She smiles back...

INT. WESTINGHOUSE CORPORATE OFFICES - PITTSBURGH

Jane packs her things, getting ready to leave. In her desk drawer, a small book labeled **PENDING PATENTS**.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)
Miss McCullen?

She slams the drawer shut as she notices the rest of the SECRETARIES stand grinning behind her.

JANE
Can I help you?

A long beat. One of them, VIRGINIA, steps forward.

VIRGINIA

I know it isn't much, but we pooled
up from our lunches and --

She hands Jane a small BASKET OF FOOD: Bits of bread, cake,
meat, etc. Just a few bites each.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

The markets are all closed, and we
heard you just arrived. We couldn't
let you go to bed hungry tonight.

Silence. Jane doesn't know how to handle this kindness.

JANE

I can pay you. I have some cash --

She goes to her bag as Virginia stops her with a hand.

VIRGINIA

Don't be silly. All we ask is you
help out the next new girl.

SECRETARY #1

Working ladies got to stick together.
Right?

JANE

Of course.

SECRETARY #2

Pittsburgh is no New York, but there's
a little fun for the single gals.
Sometimes the engineers take us to
the symphony.

VIRGINIA

Welcome to Westinghouse. We hope
you feel at home here.

JANE

(nodding at each woman)
Thank you. Thank you...

Once the other secretaries leave, Jane walks back to her
desk. Opens the drawer. The "**PENDING PATENTS**" book stares
at her.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - UPSTAIRS LAB

Sarah takes in the spectacle of Tom's lab. Stage presence
gone, she's dwarfed in the gigantic room. He flips on the
lights.

TOM

And the lord said, let there be light!

He continues through the lab, turning on every light both practical and experimental.

SARAH

The *lord* said... ?

TOM

He may have made the sun. But I brought light the other half of the day.

He takes her to a PHONOGRAPH. It's about the size of a dresser. Plugs it in, and takes a LARGE CYLINDER from a pile, careful to only handle it by the edges.

TOM (CONT'D)

My first invention recorded voice on a sheet of metal foil, but we have discovered you can get a wider range of sounds using a zinc cylinder covered in a layer of beeswax.

He places the record in the machine and turns it on. For a moment, Sarah just stares at it.

SARAH

What do I say?

TOM

Anything. You may speak, you may sing. The first sound ever recorded was my voice saying "Mary had a little lamb."

They laugh. She leans into the recorder.

SARAH

Mary had a little lamb...

TOM

You can do better than that.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - BASEMENT LAB

With Nick. His anger and passion externalized in creation. Turning up the VOLTAGE. Sparks are flying. Machines cooking.

The faintest haunting echo of Sarah's voice carries through the vents.

SARAH (O.S.)
(singing)
*Vissi d'arte... Vissi d'amore, Non
feci ma male ad anima viva...*

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - GENERATOR ROOM

With the GENERATOR. It struggles to keep up with Nick's high demand --

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - UPSTAIRS LAB

Tom and Sarah as we left them.

TOM
Are you ready to hear yourself?
(leading her)
We'll place this in a bath of chromic acid for about ten minutes. That hardens the wax, leaving a groove. A needle will play it all back.

SARAH
Now what to do for those ten minutes?

Tom brushes a stray curl behind Sarah's ear. This moment is his to lose...

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - BASEMENT LAB

Nick is the master of his personal universe. Bigger and bigger voltages through the capacitors. Lighting cracks. Electricity runs wild across the room.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - TOM'S LAB

Tom and Sarah are inches apart.

SARAH
You're a married man, Thomas Alva.

THOMAS
I'm not like your husband. This is different.

SARAH
Doesn't make you any better. Doesn't make this right--

He cuts her off in a violent kiss. She leans into him with equal force as he lifts her onto the desk. This is happening. Right now. Right here. Sarah gasps.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - BASEMENT LAB

With Nick, more sparks, more lightning.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - GENERATOR ROOM

The generator struggles to keep up with the load Nick's placing on it. Vibrating, coughing up thick smoke...

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - TOM'S OFFICE - LOBBY

Mina enters with her boxed-up apple pie. She hears the unmistakable sounds...

SARAH (O.S.)
Oh Tom...

TOM (O.S.)
Sarah...

Mina turns pale. Backs away from the door. Close her on her face ... Nothing.

INT. EDISON COMPANY - BASEMENT LAB

Close on Nick's face. Everything. He is in the eye of the storm. A large crack of LIGHTING--

And then BOOM! BLACK OUT.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - UPSTAIRS LAB

An eerie silence. Tom and Sarah hold each other awkwardly in the dark. Still entangled. Moment ruined. He lights a candle.

TOM
Fuse must have blown. I'll investigate.

SARAH
I should go.

She breaks away from him, demurely smoothing her skirts.

TOM
No, no. I have can everything back online momentarily.

SARAH
Your sweet, Thomas. You really are.

TOM
But your recording --

SARAH
Keep it. That way you can always
hear me.

She kisses his cheek. A consolation prize. She's gone.
Tom sits with this.

INT. EDISON COMPANY HQ - GENERATOR ROOM

A candle flickers next to the generator as Nick pulls fuses.
Despite his belief that DC is obsolete, he cares for this
machine. As Tom enters --

NICK (SOTTO)
Three burned fuses. I'm sorry.

TOM
You didn't think to ask me if I was
running anything?

NICK
My capacitors barely use half of
what this machine can produce. What
possible use do you have for the
remaining capacity at this hour?

TOM
I don't need to answer that. And
you're in violation of company policy.

NICK
I am?
(walks to log)
Only one of us logged our usage!

TOM
I do not need to log myself turning
on the lights!

NICK
And you needed the whole room
illuminated to work...? How many
lights were you running?
(then)
You weren't alone.

TOM
How dare you!

NICK
Remarkable... In marriage and in
business, your word means little.

TOM

My marriage is none of your concern.
And my business? You should be
grateful, you arrogant immigrant. I
have given you status, power, access--

NICK

You patented my idea to willfully
prevent the world from benefiting by
it! Tell me that isn't true.

(then)

Now that you own Alternating Current
it will be at least *two decades* before
your fellow man can be unburden from
their labors. And for what? So you
can earn another damned dollar?
What are you, Tom? Another JP Morgan?
Because you sure as hell are not a
scientist. That much I do know.

A long pause.

TOM

I think you should leave.

Nick straightens out his suit.

TOM (CONT'D)

And take your voodoo experiments
with you.

MUSIC UP: **Ed Sheeran's "I See Fire"** plays over...

EXT. NEW YORK - STREETS - NIGHT

Mina wanders. Guilt, betrayal, hypocrisy, confusion... It
all plays across her face like a silent film. She's alone.
Nowhere to go...

INT. TONY'S APT - SIMULTANEOUS

Nick enters, two boxes and a leather bag just outside the
door. He moves them inside.

On the table, a note from Tony. We hear it as Nick reads...

TONY (V.O.)

"Sorry buddy, can't allow your
inventions to scare off another lady
friend. At the Fifth Ave Park Hotel
for the night. I hope this evening
finds you well. Your most obedient
servant, Tony. PS, Can I borrow a
dollar for the stay? Thanks!"

Nick puts the note down and begins unpacking his experiments.

EXT. STREET - SIMULTANEOUS

Suddenly Mina's eyes narrow. She's got an idea. Mina runs through the streets... With every block the neighborhood gets worse. She doesn't care. She picks up her skirt, cutting straight through the mud.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nick's lost in thought working on his Tesla Coil. She softly knocks and enters.

MINA

Nick...?

He looks up. Dumbfounded. So many questions.

MINA (CONT'D)

It wasn't locked.

NICK

Mrs. Edison.

(then)

I shall call you a carriage.

Mina can't take it anymore and cuts him off with a KISS. One clearly asking for more...

NICK (CONT'D)

Mina... Mina, we can't.

He wrestles his way out of her embrace. Hating himself.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's not right.

MINA

Being right is exhausting. I can't...

Nick --

NICK

Not like this.

MINA

I won't change my mind again.

NICK

You might.

Mina holds his gaze long and hard, making a study of him... Then she shifts her focus to the TESLA COIL on the table.

MINA

Show me...

NICK
(realizing)
The lighting? No, Mina. I've never
tested it on another person. I have
no idea how you would --

MINA
Feel what you feel? I want to know.
She puts her hand on the machine. She's not backing down.

NICK
Stand here. Make no sudden movements.
A moment of fear crosses Mina's brow. This is actually
happening.

"**I See Fire**" swells loudly as Nick turns on the ELECTRIC
COIL.

He gets the power flowing and then passes electricity through
his body. HE GLOWS.

He holds up his hand, beckoning her to do the same. She
mirrors him. They stand almost palm to palm... getting closer
until... HE TAKES HER HAND. Electricity passes into her
body. She steadies herself, unharmed but forever changed.
The glow extends from her hand to her whole body...

Slowly we pull out of the window, out the flat, into the New
York cityscape. But we never lose sight of the TWO
SILHOUETTES playing with this dangerous new current ...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE ONE