

BLACK SCREEN, TITLE OVER:

Action is the test of character.

AN AMERICAN FLAG fills the frame, gently undulating...
If you are counting, there's only 45 stars.

MUSIC - BACH, cheerfully played on the organ...

TITLE OVER THE FLAG:

THE RISE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT

WIDEN TO REVEAL - the flag is atop one of many elaborate but temporary buildings, made of painted lathe and plaster at the

EXT. PAN AMERICAN EXPOSITION - DAY

TITLE OVER:

PAN AMERICAN EXPOSITION, BUFFALO, NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 6, 1901

GLIMPSES OF SEVERAL BUILDINGS of the "Rainbow City",
structures devoted to horticulture or ethnology... the
biggest building is the 400 foot tall Electric Tower...

The organ music of Bach getting LOUDER as we approach -

EXT. "THE TEMPLE OF MUSIC" BLDG. - CONTINUOUS

where FOLKS are lined up to go inside...

INT. TEMPLE OF MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

AN ORGANIST pounds out the Bach amid palm fronds and bunting
as we REVEAL PEOPLE in line, waiting to shake hands with -

PRESIDENT WILLIAM MCKINLEY (58), prosperous and imposing, who
is pumping hands and kissing BABIES as the music reverberates-

FACES of the hand-shakers, MEN AND WOMEN of all classes,
eager, tentative, smiling, nervous, excited, voices
murmuring, "Mr. President", who has a friendly word for each.

MCKINLEY

How do you do? A pleasure... How
do you- Oh, I beg your pardon...

This to a SMALL FELLOW extending a handkerchief-bandaged hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Smiling, McKinley offers to shake with his left but the fellow *FIRES* through the bandage, aiming point-blank at McKinley's torso, the handkerchief bursting into *FLAMES* as he shoots -!

Chaos as McKinley staggers, hit twice. JAMES PARKER, a black waiter in line behind the assassin, tackles him before he can shoot again as FRANCIS O'BRIEN, the President's guard, flings himself forward and wrestles the gun from the shooter, who never says a word.

MCKINLEY, bloody on the floor as his killer is pummeled by what is now a MOB to cries of, "Lynch him!" In a faint voice:

MCKINLEY (cont'd)
Don't hurt him...

PEOPLE running and screaming as they race out. It takes a few seconds before the organ music stops -

VOICES
The President's been shot...!
Help!/ McKinley's killed...!

EXT. PAN AMERICAN EXPOSITION, BUFFALO, NEW YORK - 4:15 PM

People milling all over the place like panicked ants...

CLOSE ON HANDS yanking up old-fashioned TELEPHONES, frantically turning the cranks, MOUTHS yelling into the mouthpieces...

VOICES
Hello-/ hello...! get me-

CLOSE ON A HAND expertly keying a TELEGRAPH... *dit-dit-dah...*

PAN UP the 400 foot ELECTRIC TOWER as the news goes out, CLOSING IN on the WIRES as a babble of Morse DASHES and VOICES overlap contradictory reports... *McKinley's dead! He's wounded! President is unharmed! He's- dit-dit...*

SOUND OVER: **BRINNNGGGG!** - startlingly loud electronic buzzer -

CLOSE ON THE BUZZER AND THE SIGN BELOW IT: **STOP PRESSES** - WHIP DOWN TO REVEAL -

INT. **NEW YORK JOURNAL** PRESSROOM, NYC, 1901 - 5PM

The vast, roaring machinery, rolling out tomorrow's paper when the buzzer brings the entire technological apparatus to a grinding halt, allowing us a snap glimpse of headlines - **CORONATION OF EDWARD VII, SUFFRAGETTES ARRESTED and PIRATES WHIP GIANTS**, along with the publisher's name: **Hearst**.

INT. EDITORIAL OFFICES, *NEW YORK JOURNAL* - CONTINUOUS

bedlam as REPORTERS yell into rows of phones protruding from wooden boxes lining one wall, calling out the latest to REWRITE MEN at desks as COPY BOYS run in and out. Everyone is yelling, overlapping, typing with clattering keys-

REPORTER #1

He's dead...! Murphy, talk to me-

REPORTER #2

He's gonna make it! One.. no two slugs!... an anarchist-!

REWRITE MAN

(bangs a desk bell)

Copy -!

REPORTER #3

...they took him where? LOUDER!

REPORTER#4

Spell it! CZOLG... Christ, the chief's here... hang on...

Citizen HEARST walks past them, keeping his hat. He's forty, big, with a pear-shaped body. He puts his feet on somebody's desk, locking his fingers behind his head, elbows out...

HEARST

Talk to me, Jedediah.

CITY EDITOR

The President is stable. The bullet in the chest is a scratch. The one in the gut's the problem.

REPORTER #1

Chief, if McKinley dies, we have a problem...

CITY EDITOR

They're gonna say our editorials incited that anarchist- (fumbles over the name he's jotted down) Czolgosz to go out and shoot the-

REPORTER #2

...it won't come to that-

REPORTER #1

Who's the vice-president, again..?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Silence in the room as everyone realizes. The Editor unfurls a huge Conde Nast cartoon, one picture worth a 1,000 words:

A savage caricature: Theodore Roosevelt in Rough Rider gear, enormous head, bull neck and barrel chest, flashing glasses and humongous teeth in a terrifying grin. The caption: **"Bully!"** It's the cliché TR we all know. Subdued shock... then a flurry of overlapping talk -

REPORTER #1 (cont'd)

Oh, no...

REPORTER #3

Not Teddy...

REPORTER #2

Hey, they nominated the guy for the medal of honor -

REPORTER #4

Yeah but they didn't give it to him.

REPORTER #3

(alarmed)

He's *crazy*. (to the room) You can't have a president who's crazy. When he was governor, he tried to go after Rockefeller - and J.P. Morgan!

REPORTER #1

What's wrong with that? This paper-

REPORTER #3

We're Democrats! Roosevelt's supposed to be a Republican, not a socialist!

CITY EDITOR

Chief, what happens if McKinley croaks?

Pause. Hearst, who has remained silent until now, takes the cartoon and scowls at it -

HEARST

I'll run against Roosevelt in '06.

He looks up.

HEARST (cont'd)

Find out everything about him. (before they can speak) Not just the boy wonder stuff. The works.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEARST (cont'd)
If he's crazy, find out how crazy.
(pause) Bring me the dirt.

EXT. BAD LANDS, NORTH DAKOTA, 1901 - DAY

a steam-driven TRAIN twists through the barren landscape...

TITLE OVER: OUTDOOR MAN

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

a REPORTER - one we've seen in Hearst's newsroom - stares at the forbidding buttes... Startled by a tap on his shoulder -

CONDUCTOR
You said Medora..? Comin' up...

EXT. MEDORA TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

as the train squeals in and The Reporter, clutching a carpet bag, gingerly alights, looks around, squinting in the light -

REPORTER
Shit.

Medora's a virtual ghost town, dusty shutters flapping idly.

CONDUCTOR
'Board!

Behind him, the damn train starts up. The Reporter moves off -

EXT. MEDORA MAIN STREET, 1901 - DAY

deserted. The Reporter walks down the middle, a contemptuous city slicker, who reacts when he spies -

FOUR CHARACTERS motionless in chairs beneath a shaded sidewalk, spurred boots resting on railings. One of them is whittling. The Reporter takes a breath, heads over-

REPORTER
Uh... howdy. (silence) Any of
you gentlemen know Teddy
Roosevelt? Personally, I mean...

Another silence. Has he come all this way for nothing?
Finally a COWPOKE removes a toothpick -

COWPOKE
He don't 'preciate folks calling
him Teddy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER
...you DO know him.

Pause. The man spits in the dust, acknowledging. As he spits -
CLOSE ON WHISKEY POURED - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. MEDORA SALOON, 1901 - DAY

At one time this joint was jumping. Now there's just the two men at a rickety table with a bottle and two dirty glasses. The Cowpoke watches with interest as the Reporter pours, his NOTEBOOK open on the table...

REPORTER
Now then, Mr. uh, Ferris...

PUSH IN ON FERRIS, he's 42 but looks older - hoists a glass.

FERRIS
Cheers. I met Theodore Roosevelt when he was twenty-five years old and skinny as a post. Got off that train by himself, just like you - only was the middle of the night.

EXT. MEDORA TRAIN DEPOT, 1884 - NIGHT

sign: **MEDORA**, as the train pulls in beneath a full moon. JOE FERRIS, now 25 himself, is waiting for it. No one gets off. Ferris frowns, confused. The train chuffs into the night...

REPORTER'S VOICE OVER
Now why would a dude from New York City come all the way by himself to this Godforsaken place?

REVEALING THEODORE ROOSEVELT on the far side of the tracks. He can't weigh 130 pounds and wears **thick** glasses...

And the dude is presently coughing up his guts, bent over double into a handkerchief... he can't seem to breathe...

FERRIS' VOICE OVER
If you're asking me, he came here to die.

TR sports full Western regalia, buckskin fringe shirt, cowboy hat, holstered COLT .45 and beside him on the ground, a huge western SADDLE, enormous SHARP'S RIFLE in a saddle holster, PLUS BEDROLL and bulging SADDLEBAGS...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TR finally straightens up, mouth bloody, eyes watering... The moment he spots Ferris, a ferocious smile, almost a snarl, crosses his features as he wipes his blood-stained mustache with the back of his gloved left hand.

ROOSEVELT
Mr. Ferris..?

TR steps briskly forward, right hand out-stretched. Up close, his snapping TEETH are the size of tombstones...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Theodore Roosevelt. Dee-lighted!
You received my wire? I'm here to
kill something.

Seeing Ferris' reaction, he laughs -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Preferably buffalo!

The voice high-pitched, but not unpleasant, the accent, lock-jawed, blue-blood, New York. TR starts hacking again, not as bad as before...

Ferris shakes hands uneasily - something wrong here...

FERRIS
You alright, Mister-?

ROOSEVELT
Splendid! Shall we be off?

He struggles to hoist his huge saddle. Ferris hastily helps with the rest of the gear - there's a lot.

FERRIS
Well, I booked you a room at the-

ROOSEVELT
Nonsense, there's a full moon.

He staggers off with his saddle, leaving Ferris, bewildered.

FERRIS' VOICE OVER
He wasn't joking, neither.

EXT. MEDORA MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Ferris drives TR in a buckboard, their saddles and gear in back. Lit by moonlight, we get Medora is no ghost town. There's 84 buildings, lit windows and SOUNDS everywhere...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

This is splendid! (sniffs) I say,
what is that singular odor?

Ferris points to an enormous, belching chimney ahead -

FERRIS

Slaughterhouse. The Marquis built
it so's he could ship his beef East
in refrigerator cars.

ROOSEVELT

The Marquis..?

FERRIS

Marquis de Mores. Built the town,
too. Says he's first in line to be
the next king of France.

ROOSEVELT

Is that so? Well, I don't believe
in kings. We fought a revolution
to be rid of them in the United
States, didn't we, Mr. Ferris?

FERRIS

You ain't IN the United States, Mr.
Roosevelt. This here's just a
territory. Anything goes out here.

This notion pleases TR mightily and he grins/snarls again -

ROOSEVELT

Does it? That's bully!

As they drive by the noisy SALOON, hearing LAUGHTER, PIANO
MUSIC, etc. SEVERAL HORSES are tied to the hitching posts...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Hang on. Perhaps I can persuade one
of the patrons to sell me a horse.

Before Ferris can object, TR has leapt from the buckboard.

INT. MEDORA SALON - CONTINUOUS

it's the same joint, only now it's jumping as the ultimate
dude pushes open the swinging doors and makes his way to the
bar in his Stetson, buckskins, gloves, glasses, spurs, etc.
Need we stipulate the place goes quiet?

HARD-BITTEN FACES watching, the occasional nudge between CARD
PLAYERS... DANCE GIRLS wondering at a sagebrush Don Quixote.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARTENDER
What'll it be?

ROOSEVELT
A glass of milk, please.

A SHOT rings out, the bullet whizzing past TR and shattering the clock-face behind him. Uh oh.

VOICE
Milk...

Silence. From the end of the bar, a drunken, REDHEADED BLUTTO drifts towards Roosevelt, who turns and faces him -

ROOSEVELT
I beg your pardon?

REDHEAD
And you're buyin' for the rest of us, ain't that right, four-eyes?

He sets his PISTOL on the bar between them, daring TR to go for it. TR looks up, appraising the man: it's his move.

Ferris, having tied up the buckboard arrives in time to hear:

ROOSEVELT
Is that your best? "Four eyes?"
Everyone says four-eyes.

REDHEAD
Why you fucking little-

ROOSEVELT
(scornful and speeding)
Obscenity? Obscenity's lazy! It means you can't think of anything to say. Besides, it's overused. If everybody goes around saying fuck this and fuck that, the word rather loses it's power, don't you find?
(before he can reply) What you suffer from, my friend, is a lack of imagination, possibly fatal. For example, if I wished to provoke you, I might find you to be (with relish) a rancid, putrid, flaccid, piece of pusillanimous excrescence, descended - on your mother's side - from primordial ooze, whence you are doubtless destined shortly to return-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Each word bitten off with tooth-clicking precision - the saloon crowd awestruck by the performance.

Redhead stares - what else can he do but go for the GUN when -

BAM! TR's RIGHT FIST explodes into his jaw first, cold-cocking the big man, who goes down like a sack of meal.

Ferris' reaction. Turned to stone. Like everyone else.

TR flexing his gloved fingers, marches out past Ferris -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Perhaps this isn't the place...

Behind, guys squat around Red as Ferris remembers to scat -

VOICE
...broke his goddamn jaw...

EXT. MEDORA MAIN STREET - LATER

As the buckboard makes its way out of town...

ROOSEVELT
Where AM I going to find a horse?

FERRIS
You know who that was? That was
Redhead Finnegan.

ROOSEVELT
You don't say.

FERRIS
I do say and he'll shoot you in the
back first chance he gets. There
ain't no law this side of Dickinson
and he won't forget what you -
(realizes) how'd you do that, anyway?

Their VOICES FADING as the wagon gets smaller...

ROOSEVELT
I did a bit of boxing at Harvard.

FERRIS
Oh, well... (i.e. that explains it)

EXT. CAMPFIRE, BAD LANDS - NIGHT

Ferris and TR setting up camp. The moon is down and only the FIRE illumines their efforts. TR is adept at the work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He lugs his bulky saddlebags over to his bed-roll... he's checking his weapons, clicking the chambers expertly -

FERRIS

You seem to know your way around guns, Mr. Roosevelt...

ROOSEVELT

I did a fair amount of hunting in Maine, as a boy. How far are we from the buffalo? As a matter of fact they're not really buffalo, they're bison. Were you aware of that? (again, before Ferris can reply) Listen!

FERRIS

I don't hear any-

ROOSEVELT

Meadowlark! (bird call) No, *Eastern* Meadowlark. And a Hermit Thrush! *Catharus Guttatus!*

Ferris studies TR as he listens to the sounds -

FERRIS

...and you know all about birds too.

ROOSEVELT

I trained as an ornithologist but my wife objected to the smell of taxidermy so I was obliged to choose a different profession.

FERRIS

Is she happy now?

TR appears not to have heard the question -

ROOSEVELT

Screech owl...! Mr. Ferris-

FERRIS

You can call me Joe...

ROOSEVELT

Joe, tell me-

FERRIS

And I reckon you go by Teddy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
(smiling)
I go by Mr. Roosevelt.

FERRIS
(rebuffed)
Suit yourself.

They're bedding down, climbing into bed rolls... Ferris is on the point of going to sleep when he realizes:

TR has pulled a BOOK out of his saddlebags. As a matter of fact, he can now see the bags are filled with nothing BUT books... Ferris squints at the title -

FERRIS (cont'd)
"Anna Ka-

ROOSEVELT
Anna Karenina; have you read it?

FERRIS
Mr. Roosevelt, aincha ever gonna sleep?

ROOSEVELT
Listen! *Gallinula Chloropus*. Did you ever hear anything so plaintive? So full of melancholy and longing?

Ferris is astonished to see TR stealthily pull forth his RIFLE, cock and aim in the direction of the bird-song...

And FIRE! A flapping of wings overhead tells us he missed-

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Rats...

Ferris' shock: the man shot at the bird he was raving about.

FERRIS
You say you do a lot of hunting?

ROOSEVELT
Quite a lot, though with my eyesight I'm no great shot. Do you hunt, Joe?

FERRIS
Me? Nope; never had the urge to kill anything...

TR's face and glasses gleam with animation in the firelight -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

You don't know what you're missing.
Killing or being killed. Those are
the elemental components...

FERRIS

Of what?

ROOSEVELT

Of life! (dreamy) Some day I'd like
to kill a man. (shrugs) Or have a
man kill me. Doesn't matter which.

Ferris stares at him -

FERRIS' VOICE OVER

That's when I realized: TR was
crazy as a bed-bug.

Exhausted, Ferris rolls over. PUSH IN ON TR, looking up at
the vast, starry sky. You'd think the sight would calm him,
but it doesn't. He's not eager to be alone with his thoughts.
Or for sleep. He determinedly resumes his book by firelight.
Why does he look so anxious?

A WOMAN SCREAMS. TR blinks in response -

FLASHBACK INT. TR'S ROOM, ROOSEVELT HOME, NYC, 1868 - EVENING

MARIA, the Roosevelts' freckle-faced Irish maid, has screamed
at the sight of -

A CUT UP PIGEON, spread with pins in the bedroom sink...

MARIA

That's it. I'm givin' notice. The
mice were bad enough.

TR, aged 10, but impossibly small and thin - without glasses -
comes over and gently extracts the bird carcass... he is
disheveled and unclean. For some reason, he's wearing a CAP.

TEEDIE

Now, Maria, the pigeon must be
cured before I can mount it...

REVEAL TR's extensive taxidermy table, equipment, microscope
and magnifying glass as he myopically peers at his work. He
has expertly stuffed several birds and small animals,
carefully annotating and sketching each in his notebooks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Teedie, you're a wonder - but the
stench. At least let me open the-

There's fluttering BUTTERFLIES in a cage - plus some dead
ones, pinned to white cardboard, each neatly labeled...

TEEDIE

(doesn't look up)
It's only arsenic and formaldehyde.
But if you open the window, the
cold will kill my butterflies.

TR's handsome, BIGGER, younger (9) brother, ELLIOT, appears,
irate from under his bed on the far side of the room they
share. He's clutching a wriggling garter SNAKE...

ELLIOT

Teedie, I believe this is yours.
Maria, please open the window, the
smell is killing me- yeech...

TEEDIE

Esme, where have you been?

Putting the snake around his neck, TR returns to his labors,
delicately inserting false eyes into the bird with tweezers.

ELLIOT

Kindly keep the rest of your
odiferous collection on your side
of the room. I'm drawing a line
between our beds, between my order
and your chaos. Traverse this
frontier at your peril.

Elliot is lining up chairs and furniture as a barrier. Indeed
the contrast could not be greater.

TR's side of the room is jammed with stuffed, small animals and
books on every possible subject, piled higgledy-piggledy. TR
still doesn't look up -

TEEDIE

In that case, you will no longer
be admitted to the Roosevelt
Museum of Natural History...

A DINNER GONG SOUNDS BELOW - both boys react...

TEEDIE & ELLIOT

Father!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Right, dinner in ten minutes and
master Teedie, don't you be
forgettin' to wash...

But the boys are frantically scampering past her...

INT. STAIRCASE, ROOSEVELT HOME, NYC - CONTINUOUS

as they race each other downstairs, they are joined on the
next landing by their sisters, CORINNE and BAMIE, all
tumbling down to...

EXT. THE FOYER, ROOSEVELT HOUSE, NYC - CONTINUOUS

to greet THEODORE SENIOR, as the BUTLER helps remove his coat-

CHILDREN

Father -!

They are unceremoniously rifling every pocket they can find.
TR, SR (35) is tall, strong, handsome and amused...

MITTIE, the children's MOTHER, appears from the parlour - a
ravishing Southern Belle with raven hair and porcelain skin.
She drawls like a fluttery Blanche DuBois...

MITTIE

Children, is that any way to greet
your-

BAMIE

Look, Mama - kittens!

And so they are, two, pulled from his pockets... Mittie
groans in affected distress, (which conceals REAL distress) -

MITTIE

Theodore what *have* you gone and
done?

TR, SR

What *could* I do, dearest? They were
abandoned on the corner of 22nd
street- Teedie, you're not to stuff
them -! Good evening, Edie...

This to a dark, solemn GIRL Corinne's age (7), who hangs
shyly back -

INT. DINING ROOM, ROOSEVELT HOME, NYC - LATER

dinner is a riotous affair... The Roosevelts are well-to-do, but hyper-active and eccentric as well as emphatically warm-hearted and humorous. EDITH is Corinne's best friend...

TR, SR

Teedie, put Esme away, if you please.

Teedie smiles complicitly at Edith - Edie and Teedie - as he hands off the snake from his neck to the white-gloved Butler, who takes it out. KIDS are chowing down while playing with the kittens, feeding them nibbles from the rich fare...

CORINNE

Look, Edie, they're starving...
poor things-

Edie has silent eyes only for Teedie. Mittie is despairing -

MITTIE

Hush, children... And how was the
orphanage committee, dearest?

TR, SR

I think we are making splendid
progress... Teedie, a gentleman
does not wear his cap indoors...

TEEDIE

My head's... cold...

Elliot sniggers...

MITTIE

Teedie, your father has spoken.

Making a face, TR removes the cap - and SIX FROGS jump all over the place, causing more confusion and hilarity - the children are convulsed with laughter -

MITTIE (cont'd)

Oh, my lord...

TEEDIE

They're part of my-

TR, SR

(tries for a straight face)
Albert, kindly evacuate the fourth
plague of Egypt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They're all chasing after the leaping things now. As happy chaos envelopes her, Mittie, seated, flutters her hands -

MITTIE

In Georgia, dinner was always a
calm, dignified-

TR, Sr. nabs a frog off her plate and hands it to Albert -

TR, SR

Tomorrow perhaps we can have frogs'
legs...

TEEDIE

But Father, the loss to science! We-

Suddenly, he chokes, staggers, gasping, turns red... he can't breathe... his mouth opening soundlessly...

MITTIE

Teedie -!

As the frogs continue to croak and leap about, the family freezes as TR crumples, turning blue, eyes bulging... Maria enters, sees Teedie doubled on the floor and crosses herself.

TR, Sr. leaps into action, picking up his dying child...

He looks about, then races from the room, carrying his son - Mittie sits there, helpless, tears streaming...

Edie's hands clamped across her mouth to muffle her screams.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - NIGHT

TR, Sr. runs through the streets, CARRYING HIS UNDERSIZED TEN YEAR OLD SON UP OVER HIS HEAD, STRONG HANDS UNDER HIS ARMPITS, LITERALLY TRYING TO FORCE AIR INTO HIS LUNGS as he races...

TR, SR

Breathe, Teedie! Breathe!

CLOSE ON TR'S LOLLING HEAD - as he's carried down the middle of Fifth Avenue...

PEOPLE ON FOOT or in CARRIAGES or PUSHCARTS jump aside, reacting. TR, Sr.'s dinner napkin is still tucked in...

TR, Sr. stops running, lowers the boy and cradles him in his arms amid traffic. He is covered with sweat and panting from his exertions... try it sometime. He leans down, his handsome face filling the frame... the face the boy will never forget.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TR, SR (cont'd)
Teedie... you've got to fight! Can
you hear me, son? You must fight..!

TR gasping in his father's embrace. The attack is over.

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER
My father gave me breath. He gave me life.

Carrying him tenderly, TR, Sr. starts to walk slowly home...

EXT. BAD LANDS CAMP - NIGHT

CLOSE ON 25 YEAR OLD TR, smiling in his sleep in his bed-roll
as the SUN peeps over the buttes...

LATER - Ferris stirs, awakened by grunting SOUNDS... He rolls
over, squinting awake to see -

TR, on his back, naked to the waist, using his rifle to lift
his huge saddle like a bench press, grunting as he pushes it
up, the dangling wooden stirrups banging him in the face...
Ferris stares... up, down, up...

ROOSEVELT
88,89,90...

EXT. BAD LANDS - DAY

SKY that goes on forever. The winding Little Missouri River
with TR and Joe in the buckboard as TR looks around, amazed.

ROOSEVELT
Isn't this bully! When it joins the
Union, it'll be bigger than Texas.

FERRIS
IF it joins...

ROOSEVELT
It must! Look at a map, Joe - it's
inevitable - from the Atlantic to
the Pacific, it'll all be the USA.
Where are we headed?

FERRIS
My brother has a spread a mile
yonder. Maybe he'll sell you a
horse - if you don't kill him.

ROOSEVELT
I don't see any buffalo...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERRIS
Bison. Fact is-

Ferris abruptly reins in, looking at something. TR follows his look to the ridge opposite -

FOUR INDIANS sit motionless on painted ponies, hair and feathers blowing in the wind... TR is enrapt -

ROOSEVELT
Magnificent! Will we have to fight?

Ferris doesn't answer. After several moments, the Indians disappear behind the ridge.

FERRIS
That fight's over.

He flicks the reins and the buckboard trundles forward...

EXT. SYLVANE FERRIS' RANCH - DAY

Known as THE MALTESE CROSS. TR examining the CATTLE with great interest, taking in every detail of the spread as -

INT. MALTESE CROSS CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Tiny. Joe and his tough-as-leather brother, SYLVANE (30) observe the dude through the pane-less window...

SYLVANE'S WIFE works silently behind them as they whisper -

SYLVANE
You told him WHAT?

FERRIS
...I'd take him to hunt buffalo.

SYLVANE
Why'd you tell him that? Ain't no more buffalo. Buffalo's wiped out.

FERRIS
Sssh. I'll tell him - but I gotta work up to it. I need the money. Listen, he's nothin' but a high-falutin' knowitall. Just play along.

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE
I say...

SYLVANE
Hold on...

EXT. MALTESE CROSS CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The brothers join TR outside as he gestures -

ROOSEVELT
This cattle business intrigues me,
Mr. Ferris. Could I invest in a few
hundred head with you?

SYLVANE
Well, uh, to tell the truth...

ROOSEVELT
(grins)
Always a wise policy...

SYLVANE
I couldn't recommend it. It's awful
hard work and the winters are
something fierce. Takes a lot of
grit for a man to stick it out.

Uh huh. TR turns and studies a big brown HORSE in the corral.

ROOSEVELT
(pulls out a checkbook)
And what'll you take for that fine
sorrel stallion? I'll include him
in the purchase price.

Sylvane and Joe stand behind TR as he watches the horse -

SYLVANE
You ride, Mr. Roosevelt?

FERRIS
Mr. Roosevelt's a hunter, boxer,
bird-watcher... bet he rides too...

TR's explosive laughter turns into a cough; rueful amusement -

ROOSEVELT
Don't forget to include asthma
among my credentials!

SYLVANE
Well, I can't sell you Manitou, Mr.
R. on account he ain't broke.

When TR turns around, he's waving a check dry...

ROOSEVELT
I'll buy him. Then I'll break him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE AS TR'S SADDLE GIRTH IS TIGHTENED - WIDEN

EXT. MALTESE CROSS CORRAL - LATER

Joe holds the bridle as the stallion dances around while Sylvane manages to tie off the girth. When he lets go, Manitou immediately lunges out with his hind legs. Joe has to struggle to keep hold of the reins -

FERRIS

Jesus... Mr. R, are you absolutely -

ROOSEVELT

Don't worry about me, Joe. (to Sylvane) Western bridle is a neck rein, am I right? See if you can bring him to the rail.

With some difficulty, the horse is led to the fence which TR has climbed. Joe holds the bridle by the bit, so TR can seize the reins as he drops onto the horse's back... It lasts seconds before TR is on the ground. Ferris runs up -

FERRIS

You okay? Oh, my, you broke your spectacles...

ROOSEVELT

(rising, grinning)
That's alright, I've plenty more.
He's got spirit, hasn't he?

TIME CUTS - he's on again... and off again...

BAM!

...BAM!

...BAM!

...BAM!

...BAM!

To the consternation of the Ferris brothers. But no matter how many times TR hits the ground, he dusts himself off and resumes the battle. The SUN getting lower...

On one occasion, he takes a really bad spill. Ferris runs up.

FERRIS

Mr. Roosevelt, you've gone and broke your arm -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sylvane mumbles under his breath -

SYLVANE
Broke everything 'cept the horse.

ROOSEVELT
(through grinning teeth)
It's alright - it's not my shooting
arm. Come on, come on...

As he staggers towards the horse, the brothers whisper -

SYLVANE
He's out of his-

FERRIS
(yeah but) He's paying...

TR's on again and this time, riding with only his right hand -
(his left arm flaps uselessly) - Manitou is unable to throw
him. He bucks, he dodges, he feints... he gives up and lets TR
trot him around, following the neck rein. The brothers stare.

ROOSEVELT
Now isn't this grand?

INT. MALTESE CROSS CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE: TR's BUSTED ARM on the table, sleeve rolled up as
Sylvane gingerly examines it. Sure looks weird. Ferris,
pacing, looks down, repulsed by the sight.

SYLVANE
Better get this to Doc Stickney in
Dickinson...

TR stares at him feverishly -

ROOSEVELT
Nonsense, man. Pull it straight,
wrap it up.

FERRIS
But-

ROOSEVELT
Do you know your Hamlet? *"Nothing
good or bad, but thinking makes it
so."*

FERRIS
(can't resist)
Whatcha thinkin' right now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
"Survival of the Fittest" - Darwin.
 Get on with it, man...

The brothers exchange looks, then lean forward as we PUSH IN ON TR, who grimaces - those big teeth - gives a *yelp*, then a satisfied TR snarl...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
 Now where're those buffalo?

Ferris' defeated look - SOUND OVER: THUNDER, as we -

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAD LANDS, NORTH DAKOTA - DAY

PISSING RAIN as we PAN DOWN FROM THE CLOUDY SKY TO REVEAL

TR, arm in a sling, and Ferris on another horse, making their way gingerly through the tricky terrain. They're soaked.

FERRIS
 (sarcastic)
 Good thing we didn't wait any on
 your arm...

ROOSEVELT
 Waiting's not my specialty...

FERRIS
 I've noticed. What's so important
 about killing a buffalo, anyway?

ROOSEVELT
 My father used to say: nothing's
 important - unless you SAY it's
 important.

Ferris starts to make a snappy come-back but realizes: The remark is actually worth pondering...

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

THUNDER and LIGHTNING. Rain coming down in sheets as Ferris finishes putting up the tent and ducks inside to find -

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

TR, employs his saddle as a pillow, reading. A LARIAT around the saddle horn leads outside to Manitou, chewing grass...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
Isn't this bully?

FERRIS
Oh, bully. Very bully.

ROOSEVELT
I'm killing 3 birds with one stone -

FERRIS
... 'long as you're killing...

ROOSEVELT
My saddle stays dry, I've a reading
pillow and I've secured my horse.

FERRIS
Social Structure of the Aborigi-
Mr. Roosevelt, you mind me asking
something? (TR closes the book and
smiles) How come you never stop?

ROOSEVELT
Joe, if you knew the next breath
you took might be your last, would
you want to take that breath while
you were asleep?

FERRIS
Well... I guess I understand that,
seein' as how you have asthma and-

TR laughs -

ROOSEVELT
Asthma? Who said anything about
asthma? Any man's next breath might
be his last. I'm talking about YOUR
next breath! (intense) Joe, are you
alive? Or are you just paying rent?

FERRIS
With all respect, Mr. R. What do
you know about paying rent?

ROOSEVELT
I know enough to know it's not the
same as living!

He blows out the lantern. **WHAM! ROARING CROWD SOUNDS OVER!**

FLASHBACK INT. HARVARD GYMNASIUM - DAY

A BOXING MATCH in progress between a skinny TR (21) and...
A wiry but LARGER OPPONENT beneath a banner:

HARVARD CLASS OF 1880 BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINALS

TR giving as good as he gets, but bruised and bloody...

When we see from his POV, his Opponent's image is blurry.

Watching the match, a COUPLE OF HUNDRED WELL-HEELED YOUNG MEN
AND WOMEN... Among them, pay particular attention to two:

A 17 year old BLONDE kewpie-doll, sitting between two avid
MALE ESCORTS and chatting animatedly as she enjoys the bout-

And: A Solemn-eyed 17 year old BRUNETTE, who sits alone and
has eyes only for TR. She seems familiar.

Amid the hub-bub of crowd NOISE, the BELL ends the round..!

TR immediately turns to grin at the Blonde when -

WHAM! He is sent reeling to the dismay of the crowd, also of
the Blonde and Brunette. All react with BOOS and HISSES...

The WIRY OPPONENT is himself appalled, realizing his blunder -
TR meantime gets off the floor, bloody, holding up his gloves-

ROOSEVELT

It's alright! He didn't hear the
bell! HE DIDN'T HEAR THE BELL!

He turns to his opponent and makes a show of shaking hands
with his boxing gloves to the guy's astonishment and gratitude.
The crowd's roar of delight at such sportsmanship...

The Blonde cheering with the rest...

The Brunette, still seated, eyeing TR, then casts an anxious
glance over in the direction of the Blonde, her merry rival.

ALICE'S VOICE OVER

It was such a spirited match, Teedie-

EXT. GAZEBO, CHESTNUT HILL, MASSACHUSETTS, 1880 - DAY

TR (21) his face black and blue from combat, faces ALICE LEE,
(the Blonde), who listens very prettily to TR's pacing rant as
we CIRCLE the lovers-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

Hang it, Alice, I don't wish to speak of boxing! You've kept me dangling almost two years! You've made me as miserable as a man can be ...it's as if my father died all over again and... (starts over) See here, Alice, you know I adore you. I worship the ground you walk on! And I've kept myself pure. I haven't succumbed to any - you know what I mean. And for your sake I've abandoned zoology and all the chemical odors you so detest. After Harvard, I'll study law - *anything* to please you - but Alice, in the name of all that's holy, take me off the rack!

He pauses, out of breath, standing before her - It's hard to tell anything from her expression...

ALICE

Teedie... I can't possibly keep calling you Teedie. Teedie is not a man's name. It's the name of a boy. Ted is a man's name. I must call you Ted. Or Teddy...

TR is on the verge of an asthmatic attack - she's right before him, a luscious piece of Victorian erotica...

ROOSEVELT

Alice... my own... does this mean-?

ALICE

It's Valentine's Day. Of course that's what it means - *Teddy*.

TR kisses her with explosive passion. When they part -

ROOSEVELT

I swear no one else shall ever use that name but you.

They kiss again, alone in the gazebo...

INCONGRUOUS RAIN & THUNDER OVER, then a HORSE WHINNYING...!

INT. TR'S TENT, BAD LANDS - NIGHT

TR fast asleep when his saddle/pillow is jerked from under him as Manitou, spooked by a brilliant flash of LIGHTNING and immediate clap of THUNDER, takes off, dragging...

EXT. BAD LANDS - CONTINUOUS

the saddle and TR, who has sufficient reflexes to grab it and its attached rifle holster as they're yanked across mud, rocks, brush and briar, through pelting rain, puddles...

Naturally, being TR, he won't let go...

FERRIS' VOICE
Mr. Roosevelt..!?

...the saddle finally catches on a fallen tree and Manitou is stopped, rearing a few more times, then just standing there.

TR lies panting... clothes torn, face bruised, covered with mud and blood. God knows what's become of his arm.

That's when he hears a LOW GROWL. Manitou neighs in terror, desperately trying to pull free of the lariat...

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BRUSH - Ferris stumbles about -

FERRIS
Mr. R?

AS TR rolls over and pulls forth his glasses - one frame is shattered - to see through its wet, one good lens...

A GRIZZLY BEAR, standing at its full eight - 8 feet.

The HORSE whinnying with panic as the bear growls again and lowers on all fours to charge...

TR struggling to get his rifle unholstered and aim -

As the bear races forward, TR gets off a shot - misses...

Manitou keeps yanking on the saddle, jostling TR's one-armed aim... The bear closer, another shot... hit...

But that doesn't stop him..!

TR squinting away water on the lens as the bear is almost on top of him and the snorting horse when finally -

RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES. The bear goes down, its bloody snout plowing inches from TR's own. He lies there, staring at it as-

Ferris approaches - it's almost DAWN - and looks down to see-

TR, bathing himself in the bear's BLOOD, smearing it over his face and naked torso. He squints up at Ferris in the rain-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
God, I love this place!

FERRIS
What're you trying to do, kill
yourself?

They look at each other as Ferris realizes -

FERRIS (cont'd)
That's it, isn't it? This whole
wild goose chase. Why? What's
your wife gonna say if I have to
send you home in a casket?

TR has his back to Ferris - doesn't answer. Ferris loses it.

FERRIS (cont'd)
Hey! I'm talkin' to you! I've
tagged along, watched you get into
a bar fight, break your arm bronco
bustin', almost catch pneumonia and
now you damn near get us killed by
a bear! I've put up with all your
nonsense and chatter and I think
I'm entitled to the courtesy of an
answer. What's she gonna say?

TR turns and looks at him - strangely.

ROOSEVELT
She won't say a thing.

FLASHBACK - BLACK SCREEN. A DOOR OPENS, REVEALING TR,
backlit in the doorway, motionless. REVEAL

INT. TR & ALICE'S ROOM, ROOSEVELT HOME, NYC, 1883 - NIGHT

TR enters, quietly closing the door behind him... Abruptly, a
small LIGHT switched on, REVEALING -

ALICE, sitting up in bed. Her eyes are red from crying...

ROOSEVELT
Alice..?

TR (24) is in *pince-nez* and formal dress. There couldn't be
a greater contrast to his look from the previous scene.

ALICE
Teddy, I need to ask you a most
important question.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (cont'd)
And I hope you will show your
respect by giving me a
straightforward answer...

He sits next to her on the bed -

ROOSEVELT
My dear what on earth is the matter?

ALICE
...are you having an affair?

ROOSEVELT
An affair...!?

ALICE
We haven't been married a year and
I've no idea where you go every
Tuesday night so I'm asking if-

TR laughing and holding her close... hands her a hanky -

ROOSEVELT
Sweetheart, this is priceless.

ALICE
(blows her nose)
I'm glad you think so...

ROOSEVELT
I am not having an affair. (a
breath) I've been attending weekly
meetings of the Republican Club. I
am thinking of standing for office.

Alice is now appalled all over again -

ALICE
Teddy, what're you saying? No
gentleman has anything to do with
politics. Politicians are saloon-
keepers and Irishmen, vulgar,
cigar-chewing trash...

ROOSEVELT
Precisely. But if we leave government
to beer drinkers, we can hardly
complain about the government we get.
My father believed it was a
gentleman's civic duty-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

And look what those "gentlemen" did
to your poor father. Teddy-

ROOSEVELT

Alice, I've tried law school, but
it won't do. If I want to continue
father's work, I need to become
part of the governing class.
(intimate) And as for you, missy...

He starts to make love to her -

ALICE

Teddy... you have to be gentle.

ROOSEVELT

Alice-? Are you..? (she nods) A
baby..? (she smiles) A baby!
Well, isn't that just... bully!
(laughs) We'll bring him to Albany-

Alice smiles, puts her arms languidly around his neck -

ALICE

Thank heaven you haven't a prayer
of being elected...

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER

Mr. Speak-ar!

INT. NY STATE LEGISLATURE, ALBANY, 1884 - DAY

Gilded Age rococo opulence par excellence, but... A WAD OF
TOBACCO JUICE LANDS NEAR BUT NOT IN A SPITTOON -

SPEAKER

...will continue the budget-

ROOSEVELT

Mr. Speak-ar!

TR, 24, wearing his pince-nez, is, as always, splendidly
attired, his dress in marked contrast to the SLOBS and HICKS
that populate the NY State Assembly. The place is a sty...

SPEAKER

(weary of this man)
Mr. Roosevelt, we are endeavoring
to discuss the budget...

ROOSEVELT

Mr. Speak-ar, I must insist -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

Jaysus, put a cork in it, will ya?

ROOSEVELT

As a member of the Cities' Committee,
I have been frustrated for months-

ANOTHER VOICE

Whyn't you run home and get laid?

ROOSEVELT

...by the Committee's inability to
report out its findings to this
august body - until I realized that
those findings might disrupt business
as usual: proposing progressive
legislation - such as an 8 hour work
day for those locked into sweatshops
for 16 hours! - and then taking
bribes from the bosses NOT to pass
such legislation.

BIG JIM McMANUS, a pock-marked, beer-bellied leviathan in a
checked coat and mismatched vest, starts wading across the
assembly.

He's carrying a glass with WHISKEY in it -

McMANUS

Will the over-educated Assemblyman
from the 21st district yield..?

ROOSEVELT

Yield..?

He glances up the ornate CLOCK: 11:45, then hastily consults
his copy of Roberts' Rules of Order -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

If I yield, I lose the floor and
you run out the clock til the noon
adjournment, correct, Big Jim?

Laughter from the Assembly - "He's learning-!"

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

I will yield for a question only;
otherwise I will delve into the
Cities' Committee report...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
which finds along with the
aforementioned bribery, that big
business, such as Jay Gould's
ownership of the Manhattan Elevated
Transit Company - you see, I am
willing to name names, gentlemen...

MCMANUS
I believe I'm gonna punch you in
the gut, four eyes-

ROOSEVELT
You do and I'll kick you in the
balls, sir! I am a trained pugilist
but I can fight as dirty as you.
(to the chamber) Gentlemen, we are
public servants! It is our job to
serve the people honestly! Boss
Tweed or Boss Platt, the time has
come to chase the money-changers
from the temple!

VOICES
Hosanna and Amen...! / Hey dude,
let's have a sermon! / Drop dead..!

YOUNG ASSEMBLYMAN
Let him speak..!

PAN TO THE VISITORS' GALLERY -

where TOM PLATT, 50 and elegantly dressed, is watching...

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE
I'll speak truth to power for a
change! Democrat or Republican, it
makes no difference - corruption
must give way to reform!

Platt gestures to his crony and hatchet man, "SMOOTH ED"
LAUTERBACH, (47) who leans down... they rise and leave...

INT. ALBANY CAPITOL CORRIDORS - MOMENTS LATER

Platt and Smooth Ed walk together through halls of power -

SMOOTH ED
Who is he?

PLATT
Theodore Roosevelt - the family
made a fortune selling window glass-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMOOTH ED
Roose- didn't we hang him out to dry?

PLATT
This is the son.

SMOOTH ED
...knew he was rich...

PLATT
He isn't. The old man was a do-gooder, gave all his money to the Museum of Art, Museum of Natural History and a lot of orphanages. Now the boy has to work for a living...

SMOOTH ED
If he's not on the take, how's he pay for them suits?

PLATT
(throws him a look)
He writes books.

INT. PLATT'S ALBANY OFFICE - DAY

lavish as befits the age and Platt, seated amid shelves of books and papers with Smooth Ed. An ASSISTANT knocks; enters -

ASSISTANT
Assemblyman Roosevelt.

He stands aside, admitting TR, dressed as before. From behind his desk, Platt rises and motions Smooth Ed to do the same -

PLATT
Assemblyman, thank you for stopping by. You know my associate, Mr. Lauterbach?

SMOOTH ED
My pleasure, Assemblyman...

Smooth Ed offers to shake but TR manages to turn away in search of a chair. He knows he's in the lion's den -

ROOSEVELT
Gentlemen...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLATT

First of all, my congratulations;
I understand you are shortly to
become a father.

ROOSEVELT

Any day now; thank you.

Silence. Platt groping a bit - always courteous...

PLATT

And permit me to tell you how much
I enjoyed your recent book (picks
it up), "*The History of the Naval
War of 1812*". Most informative -
and to have written the definitive
work on the subject at the tender
age of twenty-three-

ROOSEVELT

Senator, why have you asked me here?

Smooth Ed and Platt exchange looks - brass tacks time.

PLATT

You know who I am, Mr. Roosevelt?

ROOSEVELT

You are Thomas Platt. You are the
boss of the Republican machine in
New York state.

PLATT

(charming smile)

I AM known as "the easy boss"...

ROOSEVELT

Let me make this "easy" for you.
You've asked me here because you
wish to know if I will play ball.

PLATT

You are the youngest member of the
State Assembly, Mr. Roosevelt. You
have a brilliant career before you.

ROOSEVELT

IF..?

PLATT

Ed, would you excuse us, please?

Ed shrugs, leaves. When he's gone TR jumps to his feet -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

Every time a new administration takes power, they hand out jobs and offices to party hacks, some of whom can't even read! I can't speak for the Democrats and Boss Tweed but as a Republican I do not propose to countenance such corruption and I-

PLATT

That's the third time you've used "I" in one sentence. Perhaps you ought to become a preacher...

ROOSEVELT

Are you threatening me, Senator?

PLATT

(reasonably)

I don't understand you, sir. Why bite the hand that feeds you? Why be a traitor to your own class? Perhaps you'd best join the Democrats and have done with it...

ROOSEVELT

You'd like that, wouldn't you? But I will not abandon my principles or my party to the likes of you and your "associates". (before Platt's reply) The Republican Party is the *radical* party! The party that freed the slaves! The party of Lincoln!! We are NOT the party of the wealthy criminal class...

Platt is furious, but sits there, concealing his rage -

PLATT

"The wealthy criminal class"- you can certainly turn a phrase, my boy. Your father would've been-

ROOSEVELT

I would hope you have more tact than to raise the subject of my father-

PLATT

A wonderful man, in the wrong place at the wrong time - a victim of political circumstance-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
(apoplectic)
Do not soil his name with your lips!

He starts out, turns at the door -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
And do not mistake me for any kind
of victim!

He slams out. Platt sits there. TR has made an enemy.

EXT. PLATT'S OFFICE, CAPITOL, ALBANY - DAY

FREEZING. TR emerges, catching his breath; the excitement has brought on a touch of asthma as a MESSENGER runs up to him -

MESSENGER
Mr. Roosevelt -? This wire came for
you at the Capitol. Marked Urgent.

TR breaks into an expression of happy anticipation -

ROOSEVELT
The baby -!

TR tears it open and reads, turning slowly to stone...

MESSENGER
Any reply..?

TR walks away like a jerky automaton, holding the paper; he starts to run... SOUNDS OVER - A TRAIN...

INT. ALBANY-NYC TRAIN, TRAVELING - NIGHT

TR sitting in shock, staring at the telegram -

**Come to New York at once. Mother is
dying and Alice is dying too. Elliot**

TR stares at the words, looks out the window at the Hudson river. He's at the mercy of the train... he's wheezing...

EXT. ROOSEVELTS' HOUSE, NYC - NIGHT

as TR's hansom pulls up before the opulent residence in thick fog at midnight. ELLIOT, 23, opens the door as TR rushes past him up the steps...

ELLIOT
The baby's fine...! It's a girl!

INT. ROOSEVELTS' HOUSE, NYC - CONTINUOUS

TR races in, followed by Elliot, who is trembling -

ROOSEVELT
...Alice..?

ELLIOT
Bright's disease - kidney failure.
She's in a coma...

Elliot leans to hug his brother - who recoils.

ROOSEVELT
You've been drinking.

Still in his coat, TR starts upstairs, then remembers -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
And mother?

Elliot can hardly say it -

ELLIOT
...typhoid fever.

PUSH IN ON TR'S FACE...

INT. TR & ALICE'S ROOM, ROOSEVELTS' HOUSE, NYC - MOMENTS LATER

as TR enters, Corinne, who was sitting with Alice, stands.
Ignoring her, TR goes right to Alice on the bed, comatose...
Corinne withdraws quickly...

ROOSEVELT
Alice...

TR catches his wife up in his arms like a rag doll -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
ALICE! My darling! Don't leave
me, I beg you! Oh Alice, please
don't go...

Her eyes are rolled up in their sockets; she's breathing but
that's it. A gentle KNOCK, then Corinne at the door -

CORINNE
Teedie, if you wish to see mother -

Baffled, TR looks at the woman in his arms; will she die
while he's one flight down?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Will his mother die without seeing him if he stays here?
Gently TR sets Alice down on the bed, looking over his
shoulder as he tears himself...

INT. MITTIE'S BEDROOM, ROOSEVELTS' HOUSE, NYC - NIGHT

Mittie is also unconscious, wracked with fever, her lustrous
black hair spread out in a tangle... her breathing a rattle.
Corinne, Elliot and Bamie are with her as TR enters... The
DOCTOR is just leaving as TR enters... he won't look at TR.

ROOSEVELT
Mother? It's Teedie...

He kneels by the bed and takes one of her hands. Her glassy
eyes are open. Is she seeing him? Silence except for her
stertorous breathing. Then it stops. The clock strikes 3.

BAMIE
There's a curse on this house.

TR, walking like an old man, must go back to -

INT. TR & ALICE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

sits ramrod straight, Alice's hand in his. Corinne looks in -

CORINNE
Would you like some tea..?

ROOSEVELT
...what day is it?

CORINNE
Uh, February 14th...

ROOSEVELT
The day I proposed...

She leaves. When TR turns back to Alice, she's dead...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Valentine's Day...

Somewhere a CRYING BABY. TR doesn't react to it. The only
other sound is TR's asthma, as he sits there, WHEEZING...

INT. ALICE & TR'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

TR, shirt open exposing his throat, collar removed, stares at
himself in the MIRROR. Stuck into its edges are NOTES and
INVITATIONS to dinners, opera galas, etc. - his busy society
life with Alice. In the reflection, she lies dead on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TR unfolds a lethal-looking straight RAZOR. He contemplates the gleaming blade. No indeed, she won't say a word...

PUSH IN ON TR, *pince-nez* glittering... The baby's CRIES still audible as TR raises the razor - when one of those notes stuck in the mirror catches his eye. He blinks, focuses at -

"A pleasure meeting you last night. Great buffalo hunting near Medora in the Dakotas, though dangerous." The signature is illegible.

CLOSE AS A CALF IS BRANDED WITH **"TR"** - cauterizing TR's memory-

FERRIS' VOICE OVER
He never mentioned her name again.

WIDEN TO REVEAL

EXT. PASTURE-LAND - DAY

as the CALF is released into the herd. A COWPOKE looks up -

COWPOKE
... 'last one!

TR rides up on Manitou; he's confident, seasoned and his arm has healed. He's put on weight and his blue-blood, lock-jawed New York accent is almost gone. He's a cowboy.

ROOSEVELT
Move 'em out!

TR now has a BOX CAMERA strapped over his shoulder and he snaps PHOTOS now and again throughout the following -

As the cowpunchers Yip and yodel... FIVE HUNDRED HEAD OF TEXAS LONGHORNS shuffled along by TR and his men, including the Ferris brothers and several others...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Hasten forward there!

2 COWBOYS look at each other mystified as Sylvane gallops up -

SYLVANE
You heard him - hasten forward!

MONTAGE of the CATTLE DRIVE ...in all manner of wind and weather, day and night...

TR gallops, inexhaustible; he and Manitou function as one... He clearly drives himself harder than any of the others -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...TR chases after a stray CALF, stuck in quicksand.

TR gets sucked into the muck as Manitou, with the lariat on his saddle horn tugs them out, the calf in TR's arms...

...At NIGHT, TR chowing down with the boys, laughing with those enormous choppers while shoveling down tons of food... One of them playing a FIDDLE... others singing along...

...A LIGHTNING STRIKE amid a downpour provokes a stampede. All hell breaks lose as the Cowboys try to regain control of the herd amid the storm... men and cows hurt...

One YOUNG COWBOY who can't be more than 16 falls when his horse shies. He's about to be trampled by the herd when -

ROOSEVELT

Jonesy!

TR and Manitou gallop right through the rampaging steers -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Jump for it -!

And yanks the terrified boy up behind him on Manitou's back!

The look on JONESY'S kid face: he'll follow TR to Hell.

And the look on Ferris' and the other men's faces; impressed.

SNOW FLURRIES... TR looks up, anxious...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

SEVERAL ANGLES of the herd's frigid progress as the SNOW THICKENS. The COWPUNCHERS huddled in their thick coats...

CLOSE ON A THERMOMETER - 10 degrees below zero...

EXT. ELKHORN RANCH - DAY

TR's spread next to the Little Missouri, completely covered in snow as TR and his cattle arrive, splashing across the half frozen water... That's when TR looks around, frowns -

ROOSEVELT

Where's my boat?

He rides down the bank, leaving Jonesy and Sylvane, mounted. Jonesy turns to Sylvane -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONESY

What boat?

SYLVANE

He brung a scow up here when he
bought the place.

MOMENTS LATER, TR, dismounted, examines the ROPE which once
held the boat: it's been CUT. Ferris and Sylvane approach -

ROOSEVELT

Stolen. (stands; looks around)
Where could they have taken her?

SYLVANE

Down river - only choice.

TR turns, looks down river. Ferris and Sylvane uneasy -

FERRIS

Raw deal, Mr. R. but nothin' you
can do in this weather...

SYLVANE

Boat didn't cost twenty bucks...

ROOSEVELT

It's not about the money.

LATER - TR and his men have cobbled together a large RAFT and
dragged it to the river bank... loaded some SUPPLIES...

FERRIS

Mr. R., can I speak to you for a
minute?

He pulls TR out of earshot of the men -

FERRIS (cont'd)

Don't do this.

ROOSEVELT

What do you-

FERRIS

This is crazy. I know you, Mr. R. -
but this time you're going too far.
These men aren't just thieves - out
here they'll kill you soon as rob
you. And if they don't getcha, the
weather will. River's gonna freeze
over any time now...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

If it freezes for me, it'll freeze
for them.

FERRIS

(all he can think of)
Mr. R., don't you never doubt?
Anything? EVER?

ROOSEVELT

(a serious answer)
If I start doubting, where do I
stop, Joe? (aloud to the men) See
here, men, no one has to go with me-

Jonesy has hero worship in his eyes -

JONESY

Oh, I'm going...

ROOSEVELT

Welcome aboard. Sylvane you and
the boys keep an eye on the herd...

Sylvane tips his fingers to his hat brim, re-mounts his horse
as TR and the kid push off.

At the last second, Ferris leaps aboard - TR smiles.

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Glad you could make it, Joe.

FERRIS

(through gritted teeth)
Would'na missed it.

They start polling down river...

SEVERAL ANGLES of their progress. The weather is unforgiving.
Ferris and young Jonesy miserable. Only TR seems happy...

FERRIS (cont'd)

Who'd wanna steal your old boat,
anyway?

ROOSEVELT

(grins)
I expect we'll discover...

HIS POV - A DEER on a nearby butte. TR grabs the Sharp
Repeater and FIRES! the shot echoing...

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

the raft beached on a bank of SNOW. Ferris and Jonesy huddle by the FIRE as they consume the deer, grateful for the warmth of its cooked flesh... Ferris is reading *Huckleberry Finn*...

JONESY

What's that?

FERRIS

(shows him the book)

Mr. R. said I could understand it
and he was right. (looks around)
It's kinda like what we're doin'
right now...

Jonesy looks over to where TR, beneath a staked TORCH, reads another book, oblivious to the cold or anything else.

JONESY

Why are we doin' it?

FERRIS

Mr. Roosevelt ain't happy unless
he's in a fight. When there's no
fight, he has to go and find one.
Only way he can get to sleep.

On Jonesy as he considers this... He checks the thermometer by firelight: *18 below*...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIVER - NEXT DAY

WHITE WATER and the channel narrowing with ICE as TR navigates the rapids...

The raft takes a big bump and half the provisions flip overboard... Reactions... nothing to be done...

CLOSE ON THE THERMOMETER: *31 degrees below zero*...

ROOSEVELT

Look -!

Up ahead, a SCOW - TR's boat! - pulled onto a bank...

LATER - TR leading his party stealthily ashore, keeping low as they climb a small rise... TR first, waves them forward with a hand signal that also says, Stay down...

THEIR POV - A CAMPFIRE tended by TWO CHARACTERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They look as miserable as our bunch. The WIND HOWLS, SNOW FLIES... Ferris starts forward but TR holds him back...

They stay on their bellies... watching...

LATER - the SUN getting lower... That FIRE sure looks good... A NOISE. As they watch, a THIRD MAN emerges, carrying more wood, his face obscured by his hat and the wood...

ON TR'S HAND wrestling his COLT free of its frozen holster -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Raise your hands.

He stands. Ferris and Jonesy do the same with difficulty -

TR's got the drop on the THREE ROBBERS, who raise their hands in surprise. The wood carrier drops his logs, REVEALING -

REDHEAD FINNEGAN. His jaw is odd from where TR broke it.

Ferris reacts, eyes TR. For his part, Red isn't surprised; he knew it was TR's boat. He nods at the revolver -

REDHEAD
That thing's froze.

ROOSEVELT
(happy, toothy snarl)
Are you sure?

Redhead stares at TR with pure loathing. TR does nothing. Ferris, alarmed at the standoff...

FERRIS
Mr. Roosevelt - you have to shoot.

ROOSEVELT
(startled)
What? We're going to take them prisoner...

FERRIS
You can't. You tie 'em up, they're gonna die of frostbite. You have to kill 'em here. I thought you knew that when we set out.

TR hesitating, confused. Ferris worried. Jonesy watching. Whatever happens, he'll remember this 'til the day he dies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERRIS (cont'd)
It's what you always wanted,
remember? And you can do it.
There's no law...

ROOSEVELT
There's law in Dickinson...

FERRIS
Dickinson? That's 30 miles. We'll
have to stay awake the whole time
or these scumbags'll get the jump
on us. You have to do it NOW.

Redhead's feral grin widens. TR thinks, then unslings his
clunky CAMERA and chucks it to Ferris, who catches it awkwardly-

ROOSEVELT
Take the picture.

FERRIS
WHAT?

ROOSEVELT
Before we lose the light.

Fumbling, Ferris locates the view-finder, breathing on his
numbed fingers... Jonesy can't believe this...

FERRIS
Just push the button..?

ROOSEVELT
And hold it absolutely still.

TR poses for the picture of himself capturing the thieves...
Red and his terrified cohorts stare in their own frozen
tableau as Ferris finally manages to SNAP! as we -

EXT. SCOW - NEXT DAY

the weather turning more foul by the minute as the scow
drifts downstream with Red and his boys facing off against
TR, Jonesy and Ferris... who will pass out first?

JONESY
...I'm frostbit... and hungry.

TR sneaks a look at the remainder of their provisions -

ROOSEVELT
Nothing left but flour. Lick it off
your gloves before it freezes...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jonesy tries it. Awful but better than nothing...

FERRIS

Mr. R... I'm falling asleep...

ROOSEVELT

If you sleep, you'll die. Isn't that right, Red?

Red just stares - his adrenaline will keep him awake. He knows what'll happen if he winds up in Dickinson...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Keep talking...

FERRIS

What about?

ROOSEVELT

Doesn't matter. When Dakota becomes a State, with laws and judges and voting, it'll be-

JONESY

Yeah, I'll vote! I'll be free, white and twenty one! I'll exercise my God-given rights and vote you in as Sheriff..!

ROOSEVELT

Jonesy, I am certainly flattered. But voting is no God-given right. It's no more God-given to let a 21 year old white male vote than it is to deny that vote to an 18 year old Negro female. It's a matter of law - and the law happens to be wrong.

JONSEY

Was you ever a preacher, Mr. R? You sure talk a lot...

ROOSEVELT

(eyes always on Red)
I have a lot to say...

FERRIS

You want to give women the vote?

REDHEAD

(finally joining in)
And niggers. Wants niggers to vote.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The scow clunks to a stop. They react. The river's frozen -

CLOSE ON THE THERMOMETER: *50 degrees below zero...*

EXT. FROZEN LANDSCAPE - DAY

in the worst blizzard in the history of the territory, TR, et al march like robots in conditions of near zero visibility...

Prisoners first, Red and his men, hands behind their heads, followed by TR, with Jonesy and Ferris on either side...

Red collapses; TR picks him up and ducks his shoulder under the man... it's like an albino version of the Sahara...

THEIR FROZEN FEET, stumbling forward...

TR'S FACE a mask of ice, his glasses completely fogged over, cracked; mustache frozen solid... THE PISTOL FROZEN as well.

It doesn't matter. It's now become completely existential. All they can do is keep walking... they look like ghosts... As they disappear into a total WHITEOUT... HOLD...

FERRIS' VOICE OVER

Everything died in that storm -
except us. Don't ask me how we
made it 'cause I couldn't tell you.

OUT OF THE WHITEOUT, FIGURES EMERGE, walking TOWARDS US... Redhead and his pathetic gang, then Ferris and Jonesy...

Last of all, unrecognizable and scarcely human: TR. They are all snow-blind and probably don't realize they're in -

EXT. DICKINSON - DAY

the storm is over and astonished FOLKS are drifting out onto the street to gape. TR still holds the frozen gun...

FERRIS' VOICE OVER

Capturing that drunken horse thief
Redhead Finnegan - that was really
the beginning of TR...

INT. MEDORA SALOON - NIGHT

the place in full swing as TR walks in... he's starting to look like the Theodore Roosevelt we know. Reactions -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FERRIS' VOICE OVER
You better believe the next time he
walked into this place, they all
stood up like he was president.

And everybody does - in mute, awed tribute, parting before
him like the Red Sea for Moses... in contrast to which...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MEDORA SALOON, 1901 - DAY

empty and deserted, the bottle almost finished as the Reporter
listens. Ferris is sentimental by now - but not slobbering...

REPORTER
You ever figure him out?

FERRIS
Me? Nah...

REPORTER
You think he was crazy?

FERRIS
Crazy as a bedbug.

REPORTER
But you miss him...

Ferris shrugs -

FERRIS
All I know is: when he was here, I
was living; now ...I'm just paying
rent.

REPORTER
Why DID he leave?

FERRIS
'storm killed all the cattle in the
territory. Mr. Roosevelt was ruined
and so was every other rancher. When
spring came, the stench of dead cows
was so bad you couldn't draw breath.
(looks around) What you see is all
that's left...

REPORTER
How'd he take it?

EXT. MEDORA TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

Jonesy, heartsick, leaning against the station, watches as Ferris walks TR to his train; TR's carrying only one bag and is dressed like an East Coast civilian again... smiling...

FERRIS

Sure you don't want that Sharp Repeater? Mighty fine weapon-

ROOSEVELT

You hang onto it, Joe. Who knows, one day you might take up hunting.

FERRIS

Sure am sorry, Mr. R. Sorry about the whole dang thing...

ROOSEVELT

Don't be. This town'll come back one day...

FERRIS

What about you?

TR looks around - is he wistful?

ROOSEVELT

To visit, sure. Dakota saved my life and I won't forget. But there's a little girl waiting for me; at least I hope she is...

He climbs aboard the train as it starts to move. Ferris walks alongside, his eyes blinking rapidly -

FERRIS

I been reading those books you gave me, Mr. Roosevelt and I-

The train moving faster now -

ROOSEVELT

Joe... it's Teddy.

REVEAL OLDER FERRIS, his eyes filled, watching as -

The train carrying the waving REPORTER pulls away...

REVERSE: Ferris and Medora getting smaller, disappearing...

CRASH! A **BOOK** LANDS ON TOM PLATT'S DESK - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. TOM PLATT'S NYC "OFFICE" - DAY

SMOOTH ED
He's back.

We're in the so-called "Amen" corner at the Waldorf Astoria, a smoke-filled room where Platt holds court with his cronies -
Platt examines the volume: *HUNTING TRIPS OF A RANCHMAN* by Theodore Roosevelt. Smiles -

PLATT
How long was he gone - a year? This makes it look like a lifetime...

SMOOTH ED
'Says he's gonna run for Mayor.

Platt holds up Ferris' hokey-looking PHOTO in the book of TR capturing Redhead Finnegan et al. and shows it to Smooth Ed -

PLATT
I don't think so.

CLOSE ON CLIPPED NEWSPAPER HEADLINE & ARTICLE with Date: 1886

**ROOSEVELT LOSES AS GOP MACHINE URGES PARTY
FAITHFUL TO SUPPORT DEMOCRAT**

WIDEN TO REVEAL -

INT. REPORTER'S PULLMAN COMPARTMENT, TRAVELING - EVENING

as the Reporter contemplates the headline on the top of his clippings pile - and shakes his head. Good old Tom Platt.

The Reporter flips to the next clipping in his files...

ELLIOT ROOSEVELT HOSPITALIZED FOR ALCOHOLISM

And flips to the next: Dec. 2, 1886 -

**ROOSEVELT MARRIES CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART
COUPLE TO LIVE ON LONG ISLAND**

REPORTER
"Childhood sweetheart"..?

FLASHBACK INT. ROOSEVELT DINING ROOM, NYC, 1868 - NIGHT

PUSH IN ON EDITH, the little girl who has eyes only for TR.

As we recall her, EDITH morphs before us into...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The solemn Brunette watching TR boxing at Harvard... into -
EDITH KERMIT ROOSEVELT, 28, the second wife of TR - WIDEN
INT. ROOSEVELT DINING ROOM, SAGAMORE HILL, LI, 1889 - DAY

Unlike bubbly Alice, Edith is dark and reserved. And presently, puzzled. Seated beneath a large moose head, she is presiding in gloomy splendor over a bunch of empty chairs. She rings a table bell and the BUTLER appears-

EDITH
William, where is Mr. Roosevelt?
Where are the children?

WILLIAM
I believe they're not quite
finished, Madam...

EDITH
Finished?

CLOSE ON TADPOLES - WIDEN TO REVEAL

EXT. OYSTER BAY, LI - 1 MILE FROM SAGAMORE HILL - DAY

TR in white linen, sits in wet beach sand with his kids - ALICE, TED, JR. and KERMIT - next to the water. Socks and shoes are off and the boys' trousers rolled up, including TR's as he shows them small tadpoles.

ROOSEVELT
...see? See...? Count them!

TED, JR
Will they grow?

ROOSEVELT
They'll become frogs! Careful, don't
squeeze. Alice, open your hand-

Alice, the child of his first wife, doesn't extend her hand. She's going to be gorgeous...

ALICE
Why won't you tell me about my mother?

Behind his glasses, TR blinks - then turns deliberately away from her, to his second son, two year old -

ROOSEVELT
Kermit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He scoops a handful of tadpoles into the little boy's hand -

KERMIT

They tickle...

ROOSEVELT

Yes... Now back in the sand before
they suffocate. They need water...

A PAIR OF WOMAN'S SHOES intrude on TR's vision. He looks up -

Edith stands there - it makes sense to see her from this
angle: she's the adult. And we now realize: she's pregnant.

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Edie... (realizes) Are we late for
luncheon? Children, chop-chop...

IN THE WOODS, LATER - TR carries Kermit through the lush forest
as other children scamper ahead on the trail. TR's jacket is
draped on Edie's shoulders, an arm around her waist...

EDITH

Theodore, you and I must have a
serious talk this evening.

ROOSEVELT

Serious?

INT. TR'S STUDY, SAGAMORE HILL - NIGHT

dominated by an imposing portrait of TR's revered father.
The place filled with more BOOKS than a public library; also
antlers, glass-eyed elk heads, moose heads, bear skin rugs...

EDITH

Theodore, we're just about broke.

ROOSEVELT

Broke...?

Throughout the following, it is clear these two are very much
in love. Edith is TR's anchor - wife, mother and best friend-

EDITH

Broke. I'm having awkward
conversations with the greengrocer.

ROOSEVELT

(an emphatic fist in palm)
Well, clearly, we must economize-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH

My dearest, I give you twenty
dollars every morning. Money flows
through your fingers like water....

ROOSEVELT

I do my best - (eager) Look, the
book's almost finished; Scribners
will give me another advance...

We glimpse pile of ms and the title: *THE WINNING OF THE WEST* -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

And I'll run for Congress in the-

EDITH

Theodore, your political aspirations
must be put on hold. We cannot wait
for elections and hope you will win;
we must be practical.

ROOSEVELT

What would you have me do, Edie?
Sell Sagamore Hill? The children
are so happy here...

EDITH

My darling if we're to hang on to it
you *must* find salaried employment.

New York Journal headline, dated 1889:

**PRESIDENT HARRISON NAMES ROOSEVELT
TO HEAD CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

INT. TOM PLATT'S NYC "OFFICE" - DAY

Platt reads the headline with a satisfied smile - hands it
across the breakfast table to Smooth Ed -

PLATT

The president has the right idea.
Stash him behind a desk where he
can't make speeches about reforming
everything...

Another headline, dated 1890 -

ROOSEVELT EXPOSES CORRUPTION IN CIVIL SERVICE; CALLS FOR REFORM -

REVEAL - PLATT scrunching up the paper in a dull rage -

INT. REPORTER'S PULLMAN COMPARTMENT, TRAVELING EAST - NIGHT

The Reporter, in bed, reading by the night LIGHT, chuckles, shaking his head; Tom Platt must be ready to kill himself... He switches out the LIGHT as we -

CLOSE ON A BOOK - HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES by Jacob Riis -
WIDEN TO REVEAL -

INT. TRAIN PLATFORM, GRAND CENTRAL DEPOT, NYC, 1901 - DAY

...predecessor to today's Grand Central, where -

JACOB RIIS, (51), a large, rumpled journalist with glasses, self-consciously holds his own book so debarking PASSENGERS from the train can see it as they scurry past him into the noisy chaos of New York City...

TITLE OVER: INDOOR MAN

The Reporter, among the arriving mob, sees the book, identifying -

REPORTER

Mr. Riis (Reese)? Sorry, the train was delayed in Chicago. I appreciate you finding the time. How's McKinley doing?

They start walking along the platform amid other passengers -

JACOB RIIS

They say he'll pull through...

REPORTER

Thank God for that...

JACOB RIIS

Oh, that's right; you're looking for the goods on TR. What's Hearst have against him anyway?

REPORTER

Who knows? Maybe 'cause he got tossed out of Harvard and TR was near the top of his class. How'd he wind up as police commissioner?

JACOB RIIS

(grins; shrugs)

Well, after six years in Washington, he'd saved enough to run for something here in New York... Platt had to work fast-

INT. TOM PLATT'S NYC "OFFICE", 1896 - DAY

Agitated, Platt now 62 and troubled by arthritis, paces as his men watch, including MAYOR STRONG, smoking a thoughtful cigar.

PLATT
...you offered him Commissioner of
Street Sweeping?

SMOOTH ED
He turned it down flat.

MAYOR STRONG
What about Police Commissioner?

SMOOTH ED
Mr. Mayor, are you joking? New
York's got the most corrupt police
department in the country. Chief
Byrnes'll tie him in knots. What's
in it for *him*?

Platt stops pacing; smiles...

PLATT
A fight.

CLOSE ON SUCCESSIVE **BLACK & WHITE** PHOTOGRAPHS -

HORRENDOUS SLUM POVERTY OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN - REVEAL

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM, NYC, 1896 - NIGHT

as TR slowly flips through the pages of Riis' book, **HOW THE
OTHER HALF LIVES**... he is dazed by what he's seeing. Us too.

Beside him in bed, Edith is reading a novel. With her hair
down, she's different... sexy. The PHOTOS catch her eye -

EDITH
Thee..? (short for Theodore) What
are you looking at?

Without taking his eyes off the page, he shows her the book -

ROOSEVELT
Years ago, Joe Ferris told me I
didn't know about paying rent...

She turns from the pictures to contemplate him -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH

You know what it is to work for a living; you've never done anything else...

Pause. TR flips to the next horrific image -

ROOSEVELT

It's not the same...

EXT. MULBERRY STREET, NYPD HEADQUARTERS, 1896 - DAY

A MARBLE EDIFICE amidst tenement squalor. A WAGON races past, dumps out a BODY and keeps going. The VICTIM, knifed but still alive, crawls bleeding up the steps as -

ON THE STOOP ACROSS THE STREET, loitering REPORTERS watch dispassionately, RIIS, (46), among them. They're blase...

JACOB RIIS'S VOICE OVER

My book had just come out but I was still writing for the *Sun*. We reporters used to sit on the stoop across from Headquarters just to catch the action. Our favorite was that blarney blowhard, Chief Thomas F. Byrnes.

INT. CHIEF BYRNES' OFFICE - DAY

as the PRESS watches, BYRNES, 53 and pompous as all get out, holds up his majestic fingers, consoling a SOCIETY MATRON -

CHIEF BYRNES

Rest assured, Mrs. Astor - your diamonds will be delivered to your house in three days...

The reporters eye one another, amused -

JACOB RIIS'S VOICE OVER

Of course they would, 'cause he knew who *had* 'em. Byrnes was in cahoots with everyone ...but the cavalry was on the way.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET, 1896 - DAY

TR, 36 years old and ten pounds heavier - all muscle - now marching briskly down the street, hat cocked rakishly as -

RIIS reacts, grins, takes off, racing ahead...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After TR passes a GROCERY, a FAT COP saunters up, looks idly both ways and holds out flat palm...

The GROCER knows the deal and slaps TWO DOLLARS into it.

EXT. NYPD HEADQUARTERS, MULBERRY STREET, 1896 - DAY

Thrilled, Riis races up to the stoop where REPORTERS sit, eating oysters and licking colored ices...

JACOB RIIS
Guess, who's coming to clean up
Dodge City!

He points. Behind him, TR has walked into frame. But instead of going inside, he accosts the reporters on the stoop, holding up a copy of *HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES*...

ROOSEVELT
Did one of you gents write this?

JACOB RIIS
Me.

TR's hand juts out -

ROOSEVELT
Theodore Roosevelt, police
commissioner. Dee-lighted! I have
read your book and come to help.
Will you accompany me to my new
office?

Heading off without waiting to see if Riis follows. He does - to razzing from his colleagues, pissed at his notoriety...

INT. MULBERRY STREET, NYPD HEADQUARTERS LOBBY - DAY

as TR bursts in, followed by a panting Riis... The UNIFORMED PORTER snaps open the elevator cage -

UNIFORMED PORTER
This way, Commission-

But TR is already bounding up the steps, Riis on his tail... The Porter leaps for the lobby PHONE and CRANKS..!

INT. MULBERRY STREET, NYPD HQ, HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

TR charging down the hall with Riis as COPS and STAFFERS (all male), poke their heads out to see. Riis is self-conscious, sensing their amusement by this bull terrier. Has he backed a loser? A SERGEANT walks up to TR -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERGEANT
Commissioner Roosevelt, we didn't
expect you quite so-

ROOSEVELT
Where is my office..?

SERGEANT
Just here... And, uh, there's a ...
woman waiting to see you...

A suffragette? She sits on a bench: petite, dark-haired under
her hat, demurely attired, cute in an unremarkable fashion -

ROOSEVELT
That would be my secretary. Miss
Kelly, would you come in, please?

He enters his office with Riis, MISS KELLY follows...
COPS cluster round the Sergeant. Sniggers -

COP
His secretary's a *girl*?

INT. ROOSEVELT'S POLICE HQ OFFICE - DAY

ROOSEVELT
(explains to Riis)
Miss Kelly performs the work of two
men for half the price. Now listen
to this:

TR pulls a document from his breast pocket and reads aloud -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
"The rank of Captain in the New
York Police Department can be
purchased for ten thousand dollars.
Patrolman costs a mere three
hundred. Protection money is
routinely received from bars and
brothels, plus 'favors',
euphemised as 'taxes' or 'dues'."
Riis, do you know where these
statistics come from?

JACOB RIIS
Can't say I do, Commissioner -

ROOSEVELT
From a New York City Tourist Guide
Book!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He balls the thing up and hurls it across the room. Riis flinches but Miss Kelly is unfazed and flips open her pad...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
The whole department is gangrenous.
Where the devil do we start?

JACOB RIIS
Did you say "we"?

ROOSEVELT
Riis, there are certain parties who think by shoving me behind a desk, they can muzzle me. But one thing I learned in Washington is the value of the press. Are you in or out?

JACOB RIIS
Commissioner I've waited all my life to be IN. But if you'll permit me-

ROOSEVELT
Fire away...

JACOB RIIS
Rome wasn't built in a day and you won't tear it down in a day either. You've got to work up to it-

ROOSEVELT
Form a committee...

JACOB RIIS
Exactly -

ROOSEVELT
Hold hearings...

JACOB RIIS
Yes...

ROOSEVELT
NO!

He thunders, Riis flinches, but Miss Kelly keeps writing...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Jake, the slower I go, the more the forces arrayed against reform will dig in. They'll bury us in paperwork and postponements. The trick is to strike quickly - and if you help me assemble the ammunition, I will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB RIIS
Strike where?

INT. MULBERRY STREET NYPD HQ, HALLWAYS - DAY

the PRESS trailing Chief Byrnes down the hall like fleas on an affable elephant, their cacophonous inquiries overlapping -

VOICES
Chief Byrnes? / Do you know why
you've been sent for? / Have you met
Commissioner Ro-? / Is there gonna be
a shake-up? / Would you care to specu-

The Chief chuckles heartily -

CHIEF BYRNES
Boys, boys, take it easy. This is
an invitation, not a summons, an
informal get-acquainted session.
And I'm confident once we sit down,
Commissioner Roosevelt and I will
see eye-to-eye...

INT. ROOSEVELT'S POLICE HQ OFFICE - DAY

Miss Kelly opens the door. The office is still not decorated -

MISS KELLY
Chief Byrnes...

Byrnes breezes in and Miss Kelly follows, discreetly taking a seat and opening her pad. Roosevelt is formal... clearly not "dee-lighted" -

ROOSEVELT
How do you do, sir?

CHIEF BYRNES
Tip-top, Commissioner, tip-top!

He now clocks TWO MEN seated in the office; combined with Miss Kelly, this isn't exactly the audience he anticipated.

CHIEF BYRNES (cont'd)
I don't believe I know these
gentlemen - or the little lady...

ROOSEVELT
The "Little Lady" is my secretary;
Mr. Riis and Mr. Steffens are
members of the press...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF BYRNES

Press?

ROOSEVELT

They sit in on all my meetings. The people have a right to know what their taxes pay for, don't you agree?

CHIEF BYRNES

Well, I-

ROOSEVELT

There are some alterations which I think proper, so I take this occasion to inform you first. Henceforth, all police parades will be cancelled; at present we have nothing to celebrate.

CHIEF BYRNES

Now just a minute, Mr.-

ROOSEVELT

COMMISSIONER. Any officer caught in dereliction of duty will be suspended without pay. Any officer caught on the take will be sacked.

CHIEF BYRNES

Well, naturally. In my twenty-five years on the force-

ROOSEVELT

That includes you.

CHIEF BYRNES

I beg your-

ROOSEVELT

You have listed, or rather boasted, of your net worth at three hundred thousand dollars -

STEFFENS

(consults his notes)

Three hundred and *fifty*...

ROOSEVELT

Three hundred and *fifty* thousand dollars when your salary is in fact ten thousand a year. Good God, man, you're public servant!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF BYRNES
I have real estate investments-!

ROOSEVELT
And they are -?

CHIEF BYRNES
(jumps up, enraged)
None of your fucking business!

ROOSEVELT
That is not the case. If your real estate investments put you in a conflict of interest as regards your official duties, I must know. Do you, for example, own property in the Tenderloin?

CHIEF BYRNES
My investments... are in Japan.

Silence. Riis giggles. TR snarls/grins; oh, those teeth.

ROOSEVELT
Japan...

TR leaps up with a suddenness that causes Byrnes to flinch.

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
You make me sick.

TR comes around his desk with a typed PAPER -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Here's your letter of resignation. Sign it and these gentlemen will report that you have left the force over differences in policy.

Byrnes torn between truculence and feeling his legs cut off -

CHIEF BYRNES
And if I refuse?

ROOSEVELT
These gentlemen will commence an exhaustive investigation into your "Japanese" real estate...

Byrnes looks around. Miss Kelly is writing like a court reporter. Riis and Steffens can barely conceal their glee.

INT. MULBERRY STREET, NYPD HQ, HALLWAYS

Byrnes stalking down the hall, REPORTERS crawling all over him like hounds on a stag at bay - alarmed COPS popping out of doors in his wake as word spreads...

EXT. NYPD HEADQUARTERS, MULBERRY STREET - DAY

Reporters on the stoop react when a window from TR's office across the street is flung open and STEFFENS yells -

STEFFENS

He's OUT!

INT. PLATT'S "OFFICE", NEW YORK, 1896 - DAY

PUSH IN as Platt turns in reaction to the news...

EXT. UNION LEAGUE CLUB, MADISON AVE. 1896 - NIGHT

Quiet. A MAN IN AN OVERCOAT, collar turned up, exits the club and starts walking, FOOTSTEPS echoing... He fumbles for his pocket watch: it's 2:00 AM...

ANOTHER MAN, similarly dressed, joins him. REVEAL -

JACOB RIIS

You sure about this, TR?

The first man is TR. Under his coat, we glimpse formal dinner dress from whatever function he was attending...

ROOSEVELT

Let's go, Jake.

MONTAGE - TR's TOUR OF THE TENEMENTS, starting at 3rd AVENUE and heading south... Riis' ghastly photos come to life...

Sagging LAUNDRY strung between ramshackle buildings... Glimpses into lit windows, down alleys, up flights of rickety stairs... Distant VOICES... crying babies, foreign curses...

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER

Not a policeman in sight...

FACES of want... CHILDREN... WOMEN... big, staring EYES...

JACOB RIIS'S VOICE OVER

...coppers won't come here...

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER

How did you learn about all this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEGROES... hungry... a mournful lullaby sung somewhere...

JACOB RIIS
...This is where I used to live...

Riis and TR walking gingerly... RATS scurrying before them...
Garbage everywhere... a world TR doesn't know...

CHILDREN asleep against walls, huddled for warmth... TR stubs
the toe of his boot. Looks down...his eyes bulge -

ROOSEVELT
What's that?

JACOB RIIS
I believe it's... it's a dead
infant... Commissioner, come away -!

TR can't speak or move. He starts to wheeze. Riis drags him
off, as he rasps for breath...

EXT. LYON'S BOWERY SALOON - NIGHT, LATER

TWO COPS inside, laughing and drinking. TR in shock, still
trying to breathe, sees them from across the street. He is
roused to fury by the sight and dashes over, bursting into -

INT. LYON'S BOWERY SALOON - CONTINUOUS

ROOSEVELT
Why aren't you men on patrol?!

1ST COP
(swallowing an oyster)
Who the fuck are you?

ROOSEVELT
I'm Commissioner Roosevelt!

1ST COP
And I'm U.S. Grant.

ROOSEVELT
I want your badge number!

2ND COP
Get lost...

TR grabs the blue lapel of the first cop and is slapping the
astonished man across the face -

ROOSEVELT
NOW!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1ST COP

Hey -!

The 2nd COP goes after TR but Riis jumps in his face -

JACOB RIIS

It's himself! It's Roosevelt!

Shock of both men who take off at a run -

ROOSEVELT

Come back here -!

And he tears out after the cops... Riis trailing - he's ten years older and not in the same shape as TR -

TR'S FURIOUS, DREAMSCAPE PURSUIT down alleys, over wooden fences, tripping over INDIGENTS - or worse - the COPS just out of reach - as TR looks for them everywhere as he runs -

IN THE WINDOWS OF A CROWDED SHIRTWAIST FACTORY, SWEATSHOP WOMEN squint over piece work, mumbling Yiddish or Russian -

CHINESE...clicking abacuses, chattering in agitated Mandarin. ITALIANS... laughing across the alleys in Sicilian...

THE TENDERLOIN... yells and drunken laughter of the GIRLS... SAD PAINTED, TUBERCULAR FACES coughing up against buildings.

TR sees the Cops nip into a DOOR and follows, breathless, wheezing but in a lethal rage as he pounds his way into -

INT. BROTHEL - NIGHT

late but still lively, with NAKED or half-clothed GIRLS on duty in flattering gas light, reacting to TR bursting in, streaming sweat. A weary MADAM approaches, cigarette dangling-

MADAM

...youse looking for a fuck..?

ROOSEVELT

(eyes roving maniacally)

I'm looking for...

HIS POV: A BLUE-COATED ASS PROTRUDING BENEATH A SEATED WHORE'S HASTILY SPREAD PETTICOATS - it looks like he's eating her.

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

HIM!

And without ceremony, TR drags the burrowing COP out from under the screaming whore -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
You're suspended! Do you hear me?!

Realizing where he is, TR immediately covers his eyes.

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Oh, God-!

MADAM
Hey, I pays my protection on time!

ROOSEVELT
Madam - if I may so address you -
you are about to be astonished...

INT. FOYER, ROOSEVELTS' HOUSE, NYC - MORNING

TR enters, exhausted, startled to find himself at home.
Equally surprised, William takes his coat -

WILLIAM
Mr. Roosevelt - good morning, sir.

ROOSEVELT
Thank you, William...

TR wanders past him into -

INT. ROOSEVELT DINING ROOM, NYC - CONTINUOUS

where his ENTIRE FAMILY is happily seated at a lavish but
typical breakfast. He has more kids, too - ETHEL and baby
ARCHIE have been added to the brood. Their noise ceases and
they stop moving; immobile, they look like a Sargent painting.

TR, haggard, his evening dress dirty and askew, surveys them,
struck by the incongruity; he eyes the sideboard -

GLEAMING CHAFING DISHES, WITH FOOD they all take for granted:
EGGS, TOAST, STEWED TOMATOES, BACON, HAM, JUICE, COFFEE.

EDITH
Theodore..?

TR's eyes fasten on INFANT ARCHIE in Edith's arms - **FLASH TO:**

THE INFANT CORPSE at his feet -

BACK TO SCENE: TR turns and leaves the dining room...

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Edith quietly opens the door to see TR on his back, still clothed in last night's apparel, staring at the ceiling...

EDITH

Thee -?

Edith sits on the bed, takes one of his hands in hers. Tears stream down his cheeks...

EDITH (cont'd)

Where were you..?

ROOSEVELT

(finally)

In another country...

EDITH

Thee...

She climbs onto the bed beside him; kisses him - and kisses him again. He responds, longing to lose himself in her... but he's sobbing - and then, without warning, Edie realizes it has turned into -

An asthma attack - TR's choking, gasping, turning blue...

EDITH (cont'd)

Thee! William -!

She would leave to get help but TR is holding her fast. Edie does what she's done before - takes a deep breath and breathes it into his mouth... then another... and another...

EDITH (cont'd)

Thee - breathe..!

Slowly, the attack subsides... it leaves him gasping in her embrace, both shaken, looking at each other, wet-eyed as -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER

The following officers suspended -

INT. ROOSEVELT'S POLICE HQ OFFICE - DAY

forever undecorated. As Miss Kelly keeps score, PUSH IN on TR snapping off commands like it never happened in a room crammed with COPS and PRESS - Riis beaming. TR is his hero...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

O'Malley, badge number 6792, Rath,
badge 3795, McCormack, badge 4378,
Pictcairn, 1209. Dismissed from the
force: Wurlitzer, badge 6540,
O'Hara, 8328 and Mulrooney, 2793.
From now on all badges to be
visible while on duty. All officers
to have weapons training and target
practice with identical firearms...

As he talks, PUSH CLOSER AND CLOSER TIL THERE'S ONLY TEETH -

MATCH CUT TO:

CHATTERING WIND-UP MECHANICAL TEETH - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. PLATT'S OFFICE, NEW YORK - DAY

clacking away on Platt's desk as Platt et al regard them -

SMOOTH ED

To frighten coppers! They're selling
these things all over the city.

Holds up a huge newspaper cartoon of TR and trembling COPS -

CRONY 1

And these headlines! (reads) **"TR'S
NIGHTLY RAIDS REFORM COPS" "POLITICS
OUT, MERIT IN AT POLICE HQ"...**

PLATT

Get rid of those things...

The Crony chucks the teeth in the wastebasket. Silence, then
a giggle. Smooth Ed holds up another headline:

ROOSEVELT'S NEW GIRL SECRETARY A SENSATION.

SMOOTH ED

He's awful hard to hate, ain't he?

PLATT

Not for me.

SMOOTH ED

C'mon he's just another, small-time-

CLOSE ON PLATT, who speaks from the heart -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLATT

No he's not. His sanctimony offends me. Such men must be kept in check - for the general good. TR may think he's Joan of Arc but if he tries for sainthood I intend to burn him at the stake. (leans back, smiles) Meantime, I don't see the problem.

CRONY 1

He's leveling tenements...! He's urging piece-workers in the sweatshops to unionize!

CRONY 2

He's got the press in his pocket, working with him hand and glove! Byrnes didn't last a week-!

PLATT

You're missing the point: he's leaving state politics alone. He's happy playing with his tin, make that copper soldiers. And when he's not reforming the police, he's barn-storming cross-country for McKinley like a good Republican. Which is dandy; business loves McKinley.

Platt rises and pulls down a MAP of the New York area. At this time, Brooklyn, Queens, etc. are SEPARATE CITIES...

PLATT (cont'd)

Keep your eyes on the prize, men. We're gearing up for the biggest gerrymander in American history.

Points to the big MAP with his glowing cigar tip -

PLATT (cont'd)

When we're finished, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island will join Manhattan and the Bronx as the Metropolis of Greater New York and we'll control all of it. Commissioner Roosevelt will go the way of the Stegosaurus.

SMOOTH ED

If he don't own the city by then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLATT

Let me tell you about our energetic friend. I understand him better than he does himself. When things are tough, he's brilliant; but when they go smooth, he'll screw up. Keep paying out rope. One day he'll pick a battle he can't win.

CLOSE ON A BIG STEIN OF GOLDEN BEER FILLING - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. LYONS BOWERY SALOON, 1897 - 3AM

on a warm, summer night, the place alive with a handful of REGULARS at this hour as Steffens carries his huge stein to the booth where Riis is already nursing one of his own.

TR enters, a familiar regular himself, undisguised, removing his straw boater. He's exhausted, sweaty but pleased...

VOICES

Teddy, hi/ How goes it, Commish?/
Evening, TR... /Hot, ain't it boss?

ROOSEVELT

Evening, boys... Gentlemen...

TR waves, acknowledging, as he joins Riis and Steffens...

STEFFENS

How's it going, Commissioner?

ROOSEVELT

As Byrnes would say, Tip-top. Every man at his post. I even spotted Monahan turning down a pay-off...

JACOB RIIS

You've got them all scared to death and licked into shape... what next?

ROOSEVELT

(picks up Riis' stein)
Are you aware there's a Sunday blue law on the books, banning the sale of alcohol?

STEFFENS

Dumb law. You got a city of laboring stiffes who put in ninety hours a week, get one day off and they're not allowed to kick back with a beer in August?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

I agree. The law is stupid.

It takes a moment for the two journalists to realize -

JACOB RIIS

TR, you're talking about closing
15,000 saloons. You try and enforce
dry Sundays, you'll undo everything
you've done so far -

STEFFENS

He's right. Folks who think you
walk on water for cleaning up the
police will throw rotten eggs-

JACOB RIIS

I know how your brother died, TR,
but this isn't the way...

STEFFENS

You play your cards right, you
could be president one day-

ROOSEVELT

NEVER SAY THAT TO ME! NEVER!

People react. What'd he say? Riis and Steffens are stunned
by TR's vehemence. TR lowers his voice -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Once a politician starts thinking
that way, he's finished. He can't
be independent anymore; he starts
pulling his punches and that's the
end of him... (softening) I know
you boys mean well -

Riis, infuriated, rises to his feet -

JACOB RIIS

Don't patronize me, TR. I've walked
in lock step with you every inch of
the way but now you're going too
far. This isn't about cleaning up
the tenements...

ROOSEVELT

(surprised)

It IS...

JACOB RIIS

The hell it is. It's about you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He chucks a coin on the table and storms out. TR to Steffens -

ROOSEVELT
What's troubling *him*?

STEFFENS
He thought you were infallible.

Steffens gets up to leave, as well...

ROOSEVELT
You don't understand: I want to
enforce this law...

INT. OLD MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

Beneath a banner proclaiming, **THE GERMAN-AMERICAN SOCIETY**,
TEN THOUSAND MEN have crammed in to hear TR bellow:

ROOSEVELT
FOR ONE PURPOSE ONLY! BECAUSE IT *IS*
THE LAW!

Boos and hisses from all quarters and a German-accented:

VOICE
Ve got our rights!!

But TR is at his teeth-snapping best, loving a fight. The crowd may not agree but his charisma - no microphone! - is hard to resist. He holds up his hands and is granted silence.

ROOSEVELT
My friends, if this is a bad law,
tell your representatives in Albany
to change the law! And while you're
at it, tell them to get rid of a
sixteen hour work day so a man can
spend time with his family..!

Grudging murmurs of assent. TR warming up -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
But as long as I'm making myself
unpopular, let me propose that you
amend your banner. You are *not*
German-Americans.

An agitated mutter of protest -

ANOTHER VOICE
Ve ARE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

No! My ancestors were Dutchmen, but I do not call myself a Dutch-American. Those who live in this country are NOT German-Americans or Irish-Americans or African-Americans. They are AMERICANS, pure and simple. (first pounding his hand) I AM AMERICAN! YOU ARE AMERICAN!! EVERY MAN IN THIS HALL IS AMERICAN!!!

Dead silence. Then, a lone

VOICE

We want our beer!

TR baffled, unused to not being able to win them over.

Nearby, Steffens and Riis hurting for him, especially Riis.

CLOSE UP OUTDOOR THERMOMETER: **90 DEGREES** and SILENCE...

WIDEN TO REVEAL -

EXT. TENEMENTS - SUNDAY

sitting on their stoops in the heat, dozens of silent, sullen WORKERS and their families... Angry, bored, hot FACES...

Their KIDS play in the streets but the atmosphere is charged.

ANOTHER THERMOMETER: **95 DEGREES** - This one is attached to -

EXT. SAGAMORE HILL, LONG ISLAND - DAY

A working farm with a towering sixty foot high WINDMILL as TR climbs to the vertiginous top, followed by his petrified but determined KIDS...

ROOSEVELT

No stopping -! No stopping -!

Watched by a terrified Edie, shading her eyes.

She would give anything to stop this... but knows better.

LATER - surrounded by panting husband, children and barking DOG, Edith is grimly trying to learn how to ride a bicycle... TR has hold of the seat of the bike as she sits anxiously...

EDITH

Not too fast, Thee -!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

Nonsense! Speed is what you need.
Keep it going -!

He gives it a good shove and Edith takes off, SCREAMING as the children howl with glee to see their mother RIDE -!

KIDS

Mother's riding! /She's doing
it!/Go, mother!

It's tricky but Edith is staying upright, dee-lighted-!

EDITH

Look at all the ground I can cover!

As she pedals unsteadily, TR watches, an idea taking shape...

EXT. MULBERRY STREET, NYPD HEADQUARTERS - DAY

...as A DOZEN COPS ON BICYCLES peel shakily out on patrol, passing a thermometer reading: **105 DEGREES...**

SMOOTH ED'S VOICE OVER

You've got to call him off-!

INT. PLATT'S OFFICE, NEW YORK - DAY

as Platt turns away from *his* thermometer, serene -

PLATT

Off?

SMOOTH ED

The city's ready to blow.

PLATT

(deadpan)

It's the law. How can you ask me
to ignore the law?

CRONY 1

We can get the legislature to
repeal it. We can -

PLATT

You'll do no such thing.

SMOOTH ED

Tom, if you allow this law to stay
in place, come election day we're
gonna lose New York City.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLATT
(satisfied smile)
That's not all we'll lose...

A ROCK FLIES THROUGH A PLATE GLASS WINDOW - REVEAL

EXT./INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Rioting WORKING STIFFS, breaking into the closed saloon...
SALOON OWNERS fight to expel them and save their liquor...
a vicious donnybrook ensues, MEN getting their heads bashed
open, BLOOD and flying glass everywhere...

INT. UNION LEAGUE CLUB - SAME TIME

A formal banquet concluding amid CIGARS and PORT. Scores of
GENTLEMEN listen to their guest speaker, a NAVY ADMIRAL -

ADMIRAL MAHAN
...a mere ninety miles from
Florida, the Spanish conqueror
occupies Cuba and suppresses the
natives with torture and barbaric
concentration camps...

REVEAL TR listening, absorbed...

ADMIRAL MAHAN (cont'd)
By rights, the United States should
protect its interests by expelling
these invaders, but we are unable
to lift a finger. Why? Because
for the most part, our Navy exists
on paper only...

EXT. SALOON - SAME TIME

WHISTLES blowing as - TR's COPS show up, trying to restore
order. Mayhem...

INT. UNION LEAGUE CLUB - SAME TIME

ADMIRAL MAHAN
During the War of 1812 our navy
was proportionately better equipped
and more powerful than it is today.

Glancing around, TR is surprised to see Tom Platt looking at
him from another long table, an ironic smile on his face...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADMIRAL MAHAN (cont'd)
If you doubt me, I urge you to read
the best book on the subject,
written by your own Commissioner of
Police, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt...

Heads turn. TR is surprised but pleased to be mentioned. He
can't help looking back at Platt and is disconcerted to see -

Platt getting some kind of message from a UNIFORMED PORTER...
As Platt listens to the man whispering in his ear, he now
cannot conceal a broad grin in TR's direction -

MAYOR STRONG
Perhaps at this juncture, the
Commissioner would favor us with
some brief remarks..?

It takes TR a moment to tear his attention from Platt to
realize he's being asked to speak... TR rises -

ROOSEVELT
Uh... I share Admiral Mahan's
concerns. Spain has no more
business in Cuba than Japan has in
Hawaii. We rely on our oceans to
protect us, which is naive. But it
isn't merely our navy, it is our
national character which is at
stake and we require a national
purpose to define it.

Gents listening - where's this heading?

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
I know that I am considered to be
of the extreme left, but I take the
view that there is more to life
than business - even *big* business -
and that the pursuit of wealth to
the exclusion of manly endeavor is
craven. The coming century will be
the American Century. Will it live
up to its name? Will we live up to
ours? I for one believe that no
triumph of peace can equal the
supreme triumphs of war.

PLATT
(smiling)
May I ask: is the Commissioner
speaking from personal experience
of armed combat?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
(turns red)
I haven't yet had the opportunity-

PLATT
Then, possibly you are invoking
the Civil War reminiscences of
your esteemed father?

TR explodes and starts over to slug Platt -! Confusion -!

ROOSEVELT
I have warned you once before not
to make mention of my father-!

When DINERS hastily intervene, holding TR back -

VOICES
Gentlemen, please...!/Gentlemen-!

ROOSEVELT
If you were my age I'd knock you down!

PLATT
If I were *your* age, I'd grow up!

Both men aware of how ridiculous they must look when -

JACOB RIIS
Commissioner Roosevelt -!

Riis is standing on a chair by the door, waving urgently. TR
stops struggling -

ROOSEVELT
Please excuse me...

To the accompaniment of some genial laughter and a smattering
of applause, TR heads towards Riis...

INT. ROOSEVELT DINING ROOM, NYC - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A CRUDE BOMB, partially dismantled atop newspaper on
Edith's polished dining room table. Edith looks up from the
bomb as TR rushes in -

ROOSEVELT
Is everyone alright?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A COP

No harm done, sir. Your butler thought it looked funny when it came in the mail so he gave us a call and we managed to defuse it. Close call though...

TR looks at Edie, who silently looks back up at him. Then -

ROOSEVELT

Thank you, Officer Kincaid.

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM, NYC - LATER

TR sits backwards on a chair in his shirtsleeves. Edith, behind him, kneading what must be awfully tense shoulders -

ROOSEVELT

...I am so sorry...

Her HANDS keep massaging; we don't see her face -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Do you think I am wrong?

Her hands stop massaging. PAN UP TO EDITH - conflicting emotions cross her features; part of her might like to brain him for putting her family at risk, but finally...

EDITH

You may not be wrong, Thee - but this is one fight you won't win.

CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: **GOP SWEEPS STATE - EXCEPT NYC!**

PLATT'S VOICE

Dear-oh-dear...

As Platt lowers the newspaper - REVEAL

INT. TOM PLATT'S NYC "OFFICE" - DAY

TR sitting, subdued, on the other side of Platt's desk. Behind him, the newly redrawn map of GREATER NEW YORK CITY -

ROOSEVELT

Am I fired?

PLATT

You know how the system works - you've fought it long enough. The new mayor will pick his own stooges.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TR reddens, says nothing. Platt smiles -

PLATT (cont'd)
But cheer up, McKinley's in and
patronage cuts both ways. You
campaigned hard for the man and I'm
sure there'll be something for you
in Washington. I trust you'll over-
come any scruples and let us know
which slice of the pie you prefer.

Long pause. TR eating humble pie at present. Finally -

ROOSEVELT
I should like to be Assistant
Secretary of the Navy...

PLATT
Oh, that's right; you wrote that
book. Why not?

Like a waiter, Platt jots down TR's request... then TR rises
miserably as Platt and his crew observe. At the door -

ROOSEVELT
You know I'll be back.

PLATT
Will you?

JACOB RIIS'S VOICE OVER
He wanted me to go to Washington...

INT. LYONS BOWERY SALOON - DAY

as if to emphasize TR's failure, Riis toasts from a huge beer
mug as he talks over busy lunch-crowd walla to the Reporter.
He looks around fondly at all the lunch-hour mayhem, sighs...

JACOB RIIS
But I'm happy stirring the pot here.

REPORTER
What do you think he finds so
irresistible about politics?

JACOB RIIS
That's easy: politics is a fight
that never ends. Mind you, he was
wrong about the liquor law - dead
wrong, and I told him - but I don't
think he lost any sleep over it.
(laughs) 'Cause he never slept!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB RIIS (cont'd)
TR had all the qualities of a born leader: he never looked back and he never looked in. He had to keep moving, running and running...

REPORTER
Running where? Towards something or away from it?

JACOB RIIS
Search me. (smiles, leans back) Maybe he just liked running...

REPORTER
Can you see him as president?
Reforming everything in sight?

JACOB RIIS
Let me ask you: what would be so terrible if once, just once, we had a president who was really smart?

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

MCKINLEY'S VOICE OVER
Are you out of your mind?

A NEW VOICE OVER
Of course he terrified McKinley.

REVEAL our Reporter strolling beside the White House fence with a SLENDER GENT (42), who limps and uses a CANE. His features are vaguely familiar, less so his neatly trimmed Van Dyke...

REPORTER
Are you telling me Platt's offer was not a done deal?

The Slender Gent looks at the White House, amused -

SLENDER GENT
You could say that. Of course, I wasn't in the room...

INT. MCKINLEY'S WHITE HOUSE, 1897 - DAY

You'd never recognize the oval office. The place is a late Victorian, bric-a-brac mess. And the Chief Executive, the imperious McKinley, is currently wringing his hands -

MCKINLEY
I don't know what you were thinking, Tom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MCKINLEY (cont'd)

The man's a war-monger. Every chance he gets he rants about annexing Hawaii and booting the Spanish out of Cuba. (disbelief) Calling for "blood" to "define our national character"! I can't do it.

PLATT

I need him out of New York, Bill. He stumbled with the liquor law, but if he ever actually runs for office there, he'll get elected and then he'll remake the whole damn party in his own image.

MCKINLEY

Perish the thought. But I won't have him here. Talking to him is like talking to... a steam engine in pants!

ANOTHER VOICE

Mr. President, if I may...

We are now aware of a third party - a presidential advisor... thoughtful, prosperous in the McKinley mold...

MCKINLEY

Not you too, Mark...

MARK HANNA

He's only asking to be made *Assistant Secretary*...

MCKINLEY

Secretary Long is my sort of Navy Secretary - he doesn't make waves.

MARK HANNA

But we DO need to acknowledge Roosevelt's tireless efforts on your behalf, Mr. President. As you say, Secretary Long's a good man. I think we can count on him to keep our young cowboy on a tight rein.

MCKINLEY

(gloomy look to Platt)
Promise?

CLOSE ON A BOOK OF POEMS - REVEAL

INT. SECRETARY LONG'S OFFICE NAVY DEPARTMENT, '97 - DAY

as SECRETARY LONG, a timid, older chap, presses the volume into a somewhat startled TR's hands as he reads the title...

ROOSEVELT
"Bites of the Cherry"...

SECRETARY LONG
 Some of my poetry; I wanted you to have it as a sort of welcoming gift.

We're in Long's office, with a view of the White House. It's furnished as for a grandmother. The place looks... un-busy. TR is at great pains to appear moderate and deferential.

ROOSEVELT
 I will... treasure it. Thank you.

SECRETARY LONG
 And if you enjoy it, I'll pass along my second volume, *"At the Fireside"*. (he winces) Oh, dear...

ROOSEVELT
 Are you alright, Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY LONG
 I'm martyr to all manner of afflictions. Today, I feel a migraine coming on.

He sits, massaging his forehead -

SECRETARY LONG (cont'd)
 And that usually leads to my heart palpitations...

ROOSEVELT
 Mr. Secretary, a man's health is no trifling matter as I have every reason to know. A migraine can be a dreadful experience. Why not go home and rest in a darkened room?

SECRETARY LONG
 But it's your first day. Will you be-

ROOSEVELT
 I'll find my way around. Go home before the thing kicks in and be certain I'll send word if anything needs your attention, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's walking the guy out -

SECRETARY LONG
You're most kind... As it's the
weekend the day after tomorrow-

ROOSEVELT
Quite right, no sense coming in for
just one day...

Long out the door with a feeble handshake. TR shakes his head-

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Poetry...

He walks out of the office and down an eerily quiet hall.
Abruptly, a PAPER PLANE sails out from an open door.

Instinctively, TR snatches it and follows it backward into -

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

where our Slender Gent is rising, embarrassed -

HUSTON APPLGATE III
I'm terribly sorry...

ROOSEVELT
Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant
Secretary of the Navy... delighted!

HUSTON APPLGATE III
Huston Applegate the Third. We've
actually came to blows, you know...

TR's puzzlement -

FLASHBACK INT. HARVARD GYMNASIUM, 1879 - DAY

the Slender Gent, minus beard and limp, now recognizable as
TR's "wiry opponent", slugs TR beneath the championship banner.
Replayed from his perspective, he's amazed to hear TR explain
to the booing crowd that he hadn't heard the bell!

BACK TO SCENE

ROOSEVELT
(laughs heartily)
Applegate! Well, isn't this bully!
I'd never have known you with that
fuzz. I've just met, uh, Secretary
Long. He seems to have gone home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
He's inclined to.

Pregnant silence as TR takes a turn around the office,
looking at everything, then grins and rubs his hands -

ROOSEVELT
Well, when the cat's away...

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
What would you like to do?

ROOSEVELT
Order construction of a battleship.

Applegate regards him - is he serious?

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
Only one..?

ROOSEVELT
(pulls out a shopping list)
As a matter of fact, the navy needs
six battleships, six heavy cruisers,
75 torpedo boats, 9,000 armor-
piercing projectiles, four dry docks-

As TR goes on, X-FADE with Edith's VOICE in continuation -

INT. ROOSEVELT RENTED HOUSE IN WASHINGTON, 1897 - DAY

as MOVERS pile into the bedroom with furniture under Edie's
direction. She is very pregnant, moves with difficulty -

EDITH
...the credenza by the far wall,
the sideboard in the dining room...
those curtains go downstairs...

As she gives directions, the Roosevelt KIDS are climbing all
over the place, sliding down bannisters, getting under foot -

TED, JR
...look, there's a garden -!

ARCHIE
Where's MY room..?

ETHEL
...down here, Arch....!

KERMIT
I'm taking the big one!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There's a CRASH and Ethel appears breathless on the landing -

ETHEL

The baby's coming! Send for Father!

INT. TR & EDITH'S WASHINGTON BEDROOM - LATER

surrounded by her family, Edie lies exhausted but happy - as TR cradles and smiles down at little QUENTIN...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER

For the next year, I watched TR
build up the United States Navy
in the teeth of all opposition...

BOOM!

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A flotilla of BATTLESHIPS, all painted WHITE, guns firing...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER

Within 22 days, he'd fixed a dry-
dock shortage, written a report of
inspection, cut red tape,...

EXT. BRIDGE, BATTLESHIP **IOWA** - DAY

11,000 tons and TR, the only civilian, grinning as he holds his hands over his ears as her big guns blaze and bellow...

HUSTON APPLGATE III (CONT'D)

...filled a backlog of vacant
appointments, drawn up a cruising
schedule for the new torpedo boat
flotilla and fired all personnel who
scored below 70 on the physical.

From the roaring of the **IOWA**'s CANON, MATCH CUT TO:

A BATTERY OF PEA-SHOOTERS spewing out PEAS - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. FOYER, ROOSEVELTS' WASHINGTON HOUSE, 1898 - NIGHT

the Roosevelt gang pressed between the slats of the upstairs landing with their pea-shooters, bombarding -

The DINNER GUESTS below crossing the foyer on their way into the dining room. Edith is on TR's arm... Amiable chatter...

CLOSE: A PEA smacks a WELL-DRESSED WOMAN on the back of her neck like a bee sting and she whirls around, looks up at -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOUR DEMURE faces peering down through the slats... innocent.

Edith has looked up at them, too. She knows better...

INT. ROOSEVELT WASHINGTON DINING ROOM, 1898 - LATER, NIGHT

a formal dinner with a collection of TR's friends and intellectuals, rather than Inside-The-Beltway types...

WOMAN GUEST

The children are growing up so fast-

Edith looks down the table at TR with wry amusement -

EDITH

Most of them...

1ST MALE GUEST

TR, do you think there will be war?

2ND GUEST

War is how Americans learn geography.

Laughter, followed by an unhappy shrug from TR -

ROOSEVELT

Our president, as it happens, has the backbone of a chocolate éclair.

The table goes silent, scandalized -

1ST GUEST

But it is not for us to question his policies, surely...

ROOSEVELT

Nonsense. To maintain that the policies of a president must be embraced, right or wrong, is not only cowardly and servile, but morally treasonable to the American public.

Radical idea, then as now. Uncertain silence. Then -

3RD GUEST

If only one could persuade Theodore to speak his mind.

More laughter. A trifle relieved...

2ND GUEST

You'll never play Hamlet, TR...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

I wouldn't care to. "To be or not to be" is NOT the question! We're here! The question is: what do we do now? Speaking for myself, if there is a war, I would leave my wife's deathbed to be in it.

Oops. He looks down the table at Edith. Awkward silence. Broken by Edith, who turns smoothly to the man beside her -

EDITH

More wine, Henry..?

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM, WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Husband and wife undress in silence, removing collar studs, cuff links, jewelry, etc. Finally -

ROOSEVELT

I didn't mean what I said...

EDITH

I don't mind that you meant it.
But why did you have to say it?

TR's appalled to see tears streaming down her face -

ROOSEVELT

Edie...

EDITH

You're the only character in the book of your life, Theodore. You suck the oxygen out of every room you enter. The rest of us may not be geniuses - but we *do* have feelings! But you - you've given another meaning to your favorite word: bully!

TR sits as if he'd been sucker-punched, head hanging...

ROOSEVELT

How can you love me..?

Edie studies him... her biggest child, now remorseful... finally, with a small smile -

EDITH

How can I not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
(eager to please)
I know I talk too much...!

She embraces him; he holds her close, but can't help himself -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Only I know what to do and McKinley
doesn't! Oh, Edie, if I could only
take the levers in my hands-!

His outstretched hands grasp only empty air... Edie's
expression in his embrace... this is how it is.

INT. ROOSEVELT'S OFFICE, NAVY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Beneath a wall-to-wall WORLD MAP, TR deluged in paperwork
with a SECRETARY as Applegate enters with notes...

HUSTON APPLGATE III
The Brazilians have a battleship
they're willing to sell...

ROOSEVELT
How much?

HUSTON APPLGATE III
Uh... half a million -

ROOSEVELT
Buy it, buy it...

Long comes in, upset - angry if he could get there.

SECRETARY LONG
Theodore - did you send the Pacific
Fleet to the China Sea with (checks
his notes...) Commodore Dewey?

ROOSEVELT
Yes, sir, I did.

SECRETARY LONG
Really Theodore, I'm most
appreciative of all your...
improvements, but you oughtn't to
have acted on your own initiative.

Applegate and the Secretary watching...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary. You were having a migraine and I tried to put myself in your place. The Spanish had just closed down four opposition Cuban newspapers and you *did* despatch the battleship MAINE to Havana...

SECRETARY LONG

Merely as a precaution...

ROOSEVELT

Exactly. "Speak softly and carry a big stick - you will go far."

HUSTON APPLEGATE III

Who said that?

ROOSEVELT

I did.

SECRETARY LONG

Theodore, I take your point but-

ROOSEVELT

(points to the map)

But should hostilities commence, we must be prepared to attack the enemy in Manila, as well as Cuba. (tries for cool) Do you wish me to recall Dewey?

SECRETARY LONG

(backtracking)

Uh... no... no...

A UNIFORMED MESSENGER appears -

MESSENGER

Mr. Roosevelt? A message from home: your wife's been taken ill...

TR's reaction...

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM, WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Edie feverish and in great pain. TR looking on anxious and helpless as the DOCTOR concludes his examination...

ROOSEVELT

Is she -?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR
Lie back, Mrs. Roosevelt, I've
given you something to ease your
discomfort...

He leaves the room, indicating TR to follow. He does -

INT. LANDING OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

as TR gently closes the bedroom door... The doctor is urgent -

DOCTOR
She requires immediate surgery.
There is an abscess on the hip.
If it ruptures, she will die.

ROOSEVELT
Nonsense -

The doctor's sharp look cuts short his bullshit.

DOCTOR
You want William Osler from Johns
Hopkins and you want him now.

TR looks around helplessly and bumps into the faces of - HIS
KIDS at the end of the hall, all looking back at him...

ROOSEVELT
... very well...

The Doctor heads downstairs. TR returns to -

INT. TR & EDITH'S BEDROOM, WASHINGTON - CONTINUOUS

where he goes and sits by Edie's bed, holding her hand. It's
like a recurring nightmare. And he begins to wheeze...
Hearing him, she opens her eyes, speaks with difficulty -

EDITH
...All I ever wanted... was you.

ROOSEVELT
I'm here, Edie. I'm not going anywhere.

A BUGLER begins a soulful rendition of TAPS as -

EXT. HAVANA HARBOR - NIGHT

lights aglitter in front of Morro Castle, the battleship **MAINE**
rides motionless at anchor, the AMERICAN FLAG lowered from her
mast as the Bugler blows TAPS, echoing across the water...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After which, several awful seconds of calm and then...

KA-BOOM!! The **MAINE** explodes, turning night to day, blowing to pieces with a force that shatters windows along the Malecon...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT, LATER

McKinley's HAND crumples a CABLE. PAN to his equally shattered FACE as A TERRIFYING RUMBLE OF NOISE brings us to -

INT. NEW YORK JOURNAL PRESSROOM, NYC - DAY

the papers roaring off the presses - one word, in bold BLACK -

WAR!

...repeated endlessly in successive copies of the paper...

INT. OPERATING THEATRE - DAY

as Edith undergoes surgery. It's a very different set-up than today's... but just as bloody... DR. OSLER leads the team...

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

as TR paces, his asthma pronounced and rasping... This is the worst for him; his nightmare recapitulated and nothing he can do - for the second time in his life...

Outside, the CRY OF NEWSBOYS hawking the headlines -

NEWSBOYS' VOICES

"Remember the Maine and to Hell
with Spain!" /Read all about it..!

TR can't help but hear - a man torn down the middle, when - OSLER appears at the end of the hall, tired... TR rushes up -

DR. OSLER

...she should be alright...

ROOSEVELT

Truly? Truly??

The tired surgeon nods, puts a hand on TR's shoulder; TR collapses against the wall, tears streaming under his glasses.

SECRETARY LONG'S VOICE

Resign? What do you mean, resign?

INT. SECRETARY LONG'S OFFICE, NAVY DEPARTMENT - DAY

as an appalled Long confronts a conflicted TR -

ROOSEVELT

Mr. Secretary, I must practice what I preach. I cannot have placed these young men in harm's way and not share their danger.

SECRETARY LONG

You're forty years old; what can you hope to accomplish by throwing your life away in Cuba? You have children! Your wife needs you, the Navy needs you - and what's more, if you persist in this reckless course of action, you will be committing political suicide. In every sense it will be the end of you.

ROOSEVELT

John, I have to do this...

SECRETARY LONG

But *WHY*?

FLASHBACK INT. ROOSEVELT DINING ROOM, NYC, 1863 - DAY

CLOSE ON SEVERAL ANTS - crawling on the floor as a very young TR (6) peers intently and myopically at their activities... Behind and above him, his parents' agitated VOICES at table -

TR, SR'S VOICE

My dear, you must understand; it is out of the question for you to drape a Confederate flag outside our window! We are in New York City-

The ANTS all come from a little hole in the corner... Mittie's Southern accent is even more pronounced than usual -

MITTIE'S VOICE

I shall honor the heroism of my brothers; you cannot expect me to do otherwise..!

TR, SR'S VOICE

Mittie, I am fully cognizant of the position in which you find yourself-

MITTIE'S VOICE

And what of *your* position Theodore? Have you thought about that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TR, SR'S VOICE
How do you mean?

MITTIE'S VOICE
I refer to the military draft,
instituted by your obnoxious Mr.
Lincoln. Will you be takin' up
arms against my family?

TR now motionless on the floor as the ANTS scuttle... there
is now an interminable silence. Then, subdued -

TR, SR'S VOICE
No.

MITTIE'S VOICE
"No"? What do you mean, No? You
have no choice, Theodore... You
are obliged to fight.

TR now turns to look up at his father, seated at one end of
the dining room table. He has never beheld him like this -

TR, SR
I have paid a substitute.

MITTIE
A substitute?

TR, SR
It is legal. I have paid someone
to fight - and die - in my place.

Mittie, moved and relieved, kneels by TR Sr., clutching him -
he sits there, wooden, defeated...

MITTIE
Oh, Theodore. You promise?

TR, SR
(flat)
I won't fight.

CLOSE ON TR, taking this in - forever. Wheezing... HOOFBEATS
POUNDING OVER!

EXT. ROUGH RIDER CAMP, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, 1898 - DAY

...in the strangest, action-packed polo match ever seen, on
flat, arid landscape... On the one side, a snazzily dressed
POLO TEAM with polo ponies and all their accoutrements. They
play with expertise and precision against -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A bunch of COWBOYS (and INDIANS) skittering around on quarter horses. What they lack in expertise, they make up in gusto...

TITLE OVER: EVERY MAN

Huston Applegate III, (English saddle), is racing ahead of the pack, swings his mallet to score a goal, when -

A LASSO expertly tossed by an INDIAN lands around his arms and torso, yanking him from the saddle into a dusty heap-!

To rounds of hoots and applause from mounted ON-LOOKERS...

NEARBY A HAND-PAINTED SIGN: *Welcome to Roosevelt's Rough Riders, 1st Volunteer Cavalry, San Antonio, Texas*

The East Coast team is understandably less than amused and the scene threatens to degenerate into a melee... REVEAL

TR, in the uniform of a Lt. Colonel, complete with SWORD, watching from a buckboard. He's just arrived, grins...

ROOSEVELT
...East meets West...

A MOUNTED SERGEANT fires his pistol into the air -

SERGEANT
Game's over -! Company. Dis-miss!

REVEAL Jonesy, now 30, as his eyes widen with excitement -

JONESY
He's here -!

Other men realizing it, too - Ferris and many of the COWBOY FACES we saw in the Dakotas; Aristocratic EASTERN FACES, too. Men leaping off their mounts any which way or riding right up to where TR is trying unobtrusively to unload his gear...

VOICES
Colonel!/TR!/It's me, Dutch!/Bet
you never thought you'd see me
again...!/Theodore, old man...

TR grins, waves, dee-lighted. Some are hefting his luggage...

ROOSEVELT
Well, look who's here... Jonesy!
You're an old man of thirty; hello,
Ferris, how's your brother? Why,
if it isn't Buckey O'Neill -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKEY O'NEILL
Captain O'Neill...

ROOSEVELT
 Splendid. And Ham Fish! The last
 time I saw you was at the Columbia-
 Harvard game!

And to his astonishment, there's Huston Applegate, saluting -
 he has no limp or cane.

HUSTON APPLGATE III
 Welcome to Texas, Lt. Colonel...

They're all moving with him in a mob towards the tents...

ROOSEVELT
 Well, isn't this bully -

HUSTON APPLGATE III
 Dudley Dean's here and Jack Whitney
 from the Long Island Hunt Club...

ROOSEVELT
 You don't say -

HUSTON APPLGATE III
 Smart uniform -

ROOSEVELT
 Do you like it? Brooks Brothers...

JONESY
 Colonel -

ROOSEVELT
 (stops walking)
 Don't call me that - and remove
 that sign: Colonel Wood is in
 command of this outfit, not me.

FERRIS
 Paper says the President offered
 command to *you*, Teddy -

ROOSEVELT
 He would've offered me the moon if
 I'd leave Washington but I turned
 him down. I don't know anything
 about being an officer. Yet!

He roars, flashing his teeth and they roar with him - The
 SERGEANT trots up on horseback; everyone always mounted -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERGEANT

Alright, you men, get these horses
back where they belong...

VOICES

Yes, sir!

The group busts up except for Applegate, carrying a valise -

HUSTON APPLEGATE III

...you heard the news?

ROOSEVELT

I've been three days on the train -

HUSTON APPLEGATE III

Dewey took Manila; didn't lose a man.

TR stops, astonished - thrilled - gives an Indian war whoop!

HUSTON APPLEGATE III (cont'd)

The Navy was the only branch of the
service that was ready..!

ROOSEVELT

Well, isn't that- SIR!

He breaks off to salute a genial, handsome COLONEL -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Theodore Roosevelt reporting,
Colonel Wood.

COLONEL WOOD

At ease, Roosevelt. (to Applegate)
I've got this. (i.e. the valise)

HUSTON APPLEGATE III

Sir.

Applegate salutes and leaves. TR and Wood walk together; they
are old friends from Washington...

ROOSEVELT

This all looks grand, Leonard...

COLONEL WOOD

A motley crew - cowboys, Indians-

ROOSEVELT

And polo players! They look All
American to me...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WOOD
You got your war, TR...

He enters his tent, leaving TR with this sobering thought.

INT. WOOD'S COMMAND TENT - CONTINUOUS

Wood sets down TR's valise as TR enters, looks around...

ROOSEVELT
When do we leave for Florida?

COLONEL WOOD
Your guess is as good as mine.
These boys are raring to go and if
they don't they're going to tear
each other to pieces. You saw their
idea of a polo match. They shoot up
San Antone, drunk every night while
Washington remains disorganized...
(hands TR a book) Here's an
officer's manual...

ROOSEVELT
Thanks, I'll study it.

He starts out -

COLONEL WOOD
One other thing, *Colonel*. Most of
these men don't give a damn about
Spanish tyranny in Cuba. They're
here because of you. But don't be
over-familiar with them. This isn't
politics. It isn't a popularity
contest. When the time comes, they
have to know who's in charge.

ROOSEVELT
(snaps a grinning salute)
Understood, sir!

EXT. ROUGH RIDER CAMP, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, 1898 - NIGHT

SENTRIES patrol 500 neatly ordered tents. The nickering of
HORSES nearby, and then -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE
Attention! Left ...face!

INT. ONE OF THE TENTS - CONTINUOUS

as MEN blink their eyes open, startled -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE
Dress right! Present arms! Fall out!

One of the men smiles contentedly -

ROUGH RIDER
He's practicing...

Others lie awake, listening to the commands; reassured...

INT. ROOSEVELT'S TENT - NIGHT

TR squinting at the officer's manual and yelling -

ROOSEVELT
Left column, wheel -!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

SEVERAL ANGLES as TRAINS with HORSES and tough men leaning out the open doors, cross the countryside... passing through -

RURAL STATIONS where FLAG-WAVING ENTHUSIASTS greet them with placards: *"Give'em Hell, Teddy!"*

Aboard the stifling boxcars, card games and hard-tack, wiping the heat with bandanas... Men asleep, hats over their heads -

Seated on the floor in one boxcar, mopping his neck with a bandana, TR continues his perusal of the officers' manual...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER
We were four sweltering days on those
trains before we reached Tampa...

EXT. ROUGH RIDERS' CAMP, TAMPA FLA - DAY

The tents laid out, neat as you please. MEN cleaning gear...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER
While the army continued to fumble
the ball, Colonel Wood gave TR day
leave to go into town and see his
wife, who had been ill...

INT. TAMPA BAY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

gazing down through a stately swirling ceiling fan at 2 NAKED BODIES sprawled on a bed. They've just concluded making love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Outside a band plays, *There'll Be A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight*. We can HEAR hearty male laughter and conversation -

EDITH

I feel like a camp follower...

CLOSER - TR on his back, as Edie, propped on one elbow, silently traces his glasses-less profile with her finger...

Notwithstanding all those children, Edith is very sexy. Only with TR does she ever let her hair down - in every sense. Edie and Teedie forever...

ROOSEVELT

I've missed you... I was worried...

EDITH

I'm fully recovered... (sultry) As you see...

ROOSEVELT

How are the children? Do they miss me?

EDITH

Well... it varies. Quentin doesn't know you're alive and what's more he can't talk, so I'd say, No. Archie and Kermit are a pair of rough-housers; they miss you implicitly since you aren't there to join in pillow-fights...

ROOSEVELT

How's Ted..?

EDITH

Better since you stopped pushing him so hard...

ROOSEVELT

My mistake. (smiles) And what about Elephant Girl..?

EDITH

Teedie, you mustn't make Ethel self-conscious about her weight. She'll lose it in time...

ROOSEVELT

Will she look like Alice, do you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH

I doubt anyone on earth will look
as beautiful as Alice. She's taken
up smoking, by the way...

ROOSEVELT

Not in the house! ...Father used to
make me smoke cigars when I had
asthma attacks... doctor's orders.

EDITH

I remember...

He stares at the ceiling; she at him. The topic they've
avoided...

ROOSEVELT

The generals are criminally
incompetent, Edie...

EDITH

You're not dressed for a speech,
dear; just talk to me.

ROOSEVELT

Half the men won't even be able to
go to Cuba and the rest won't be
able to bring their horses for lack
of space. Can you imagine? The
Rough Riders will have to walk. When
Tom Platt hears about it, he'll die
laughing. Well, *I'M* bringing a
horse, no matter what-

He looks at his pocket-watch -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

I have to be back by taps...

EDITH

Thee - are you afraid?

TR stops moving.

ROOSEVELT

My life insurance is all paid up...

EDITH

Thee - are you?

He looks at her - and finally his admission...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
I'm afraid of fear. Cowardice is
the unpardonable sin.

She takes him in her arms... it might be the last time...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CUBA - DAY

seen from off-shore, the island is green, mysterious and lush
beyond fantasy, its 6,000' mountains verdant and forbidding.

REVEAL TR next to Wood at the crammed rail of their ship, the
YUCATAN.

Other ROUGH RIDERS, shielding their eyes from the merciless
sun and pouring sweat as they peer at the island -

ROOSEVELT
Where ARE they?

COLONEL WOOD
Oh, they're in there...

Wood now clocks THREE CIVILIANS, also at the rail, 20 feet
aft, one cranking a movie camera, the TWO OTHERS scribbling.

COLONEL WOOD (cont'd)
Who're those men?

ROOSEVELT
Press. They were hanging around
the docks in Tampa. I yanked them
aboard as we were leaving. I
thought they might prove useful.

Wood looks at TR. Is he pissed? Then, he has to smile -

COLONEL WOOD
You are a politician. (walks off)
O'Neill, prepare to disembark!

Stay with TR at the rail, who stares at the mysterious place
as the NOISE of disembarkation grows...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CUBAN JUNGLE, NEAR SIBONEY BEACH - NIGHT

A coconut grove where the Rough Riders camp in pissing rain.
The place is steaming, filled with buzzing INSECTS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wandering SEARCHLIGHTS from the SHIPS illumine the chaotic mess as more men and equipment comes ashore, amid curses and laughter...

FIND the REPORTERS, STEPHEN CRANE, RICHARD HARDING DAVIS and EDWARD MARSHALL, bleakly getting soaked til Crane points:

Wood is galloping back up to TR and Buckey O'Neill...

STEPHEN CRANE

Looks like the generals have
finally made up their minds...

They can't hear, only speculate - but we move closer as...

TR and Buckey O'Neill huddle round Wood, who pulls out a MAP, allowing us to follow... (US HQ is pronounced Si-bo-NAY).

COLONEL WOOD

Marines have taken Guantanamo.
Here's us at Siboney and there's
Santiago, with 10,000 Spanish. And
these hills in front of the city -
Kettle, San Juan - are said to be
impregnable. We reckon it's 20 miles
but our Cuban allies have informed
us the enemy has snipers and
ambushes positioned all along the
way. Our orders are to head north.
General Wheeler's regulars will do
the same on our right with artillery
on the main road. The Rough Riders
will keep to the jungle and we'll
rendezvous where the trails meet at
the entrance to a pass called (hard
to pronounce) *Guasimas*... Fish and
Capron will take the point. We leave
at 0600. Questions?

ROOSEVELT

Anything to mark the rendezvous?

COLONEL WOOD

A corpse...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

500 ROUGH RIDERS cautiously making their way, single file
through lush, hot green. On Point, CAPRON and FISH, big men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPRON

Hamilton Fish: aren't you kinda
young to be Secretary of State..?

FISH

You're thinking of my grandfather -

There's a distinctive BIRD CALL...

DOWN THE LINE behind them, Ferris and Jonesy, struggling
through foliage together, hear the bird-call as well...

FERRIS

Teddy'll know what it is...

FURTHER DOWN THE LINE - TR and WOOD on horseback hear it too.
But TR can't place the bird-call...

ROOSEVELT

...some kind of cuckoo...

Their horses move forward, REVEALING...

The THREE REPORTERS walking... fanning with their hats...
Crane, an alcoholic, always glugs from a pocket FLASK...

DAVIS

Cuckoo is right...

MARSHALL

What I'd give for a cold beer...

CRANE

What a farce - we're here to help
propel that know-it-all prude into
his next job...

MARSHALL

Bull; we're here to help your man
Hearst sell his newspapers. At
least TR overhauled the Navy-

CRANE

He's a glory-hunting, pain-loving
phony...

BEHIND THEM, Rough Riders, sweating and panting -

JONESY

Why didn't they attack us on the
beach? They *could've*...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
They're waiting for Yellow Fever
season to do the job for them...

BUCKEY O'NEILL
(smokes a cigarette)
Quiet, you men...

AHEAD with TR and WOOD who've joined Capron and Fish, halted
before THE DEAD BODY that marks the meeting of the trails.

COLONEL WOOD
Looks like we made better time than
Wheeler. Theodore, go back and pass
the word to keep silence in ranks.

ROOSEVELT
Sir.

He starts to wheel his horse back... when he spies something -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Hang on...

TR dismounts, cautiously examines FRESHLY CUT BARBED WIRE,
removing his glasses to peer at the CUT -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Shiny... no rust...just cut...

The bird-call again as TR realizes -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
... it's not a real bird!

UP AHEAD, distinctive MAUSER reports and Fish and Capron go
down instantly, both dead.

As ALL HELL BREAKS loose... A FIRE FIGHT in the dense JUNGLE
with ROUGH RIDERS pinned down and picked off by invisible
SPANISH SNIPERS...

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
Where ARE they..?

Just the question TR is asking himself as he rolls down,
getting his legs twisted in the dumb sword...

BUCKEY O'NEILL
They're using smokeless gunpowder,
probably up in the trees..!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Reporters' terrified faces - Marshall supine as the Mauser bullets whine around them... he's been hit...

Rough Riders are falling everywhere... TR still STANDING as bullet whiz around him. He does not take cover..

To their right, unseen HOWITZERS open up - Wheeler's men...

As the bullets whir, and men keep falling, TR can't find Wood. Can't find anyone...

BANG! tree bark rips his cheek, tearing off and smashing his glasses. Automatically, he reaches into his hatband where he has secreted another pair as-

Richard Harding Davis manages to crawl up, twisting the binoculars off his neck...

DAVIS
Over there, Colonel!

ROOSEVELT
Have seen Colonel Wood?

DAVIS
Look, the Spanish! You can see
their hats -!

Roosevelt takes the field glasses and peers across the valley-
BINO-MATTE - indeed, the Spanish HATS are visible...

ROOSEVELT
Gephardt, McKenzie, Rule, O'Hara:
aim for those trees! Rapid fire!

The men blast away as directed and are rewarded with Yells -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Come on, we've got them on the run!

The fire-fight becomes a chase with TR tripping over his sword, followed by his men as they continue firing...

But TR keeps stopping and picking up things -

HUSTON APPLEGATE III
Colonel, what're you doing..?

ROOSEVELT
(holds up sniper shells)
Souvenirs for my children...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK WITH THE REPORTERS - the sounds of battle grow more distant... the Rough Riders claiming the ground...

Crane is awed by what he has witnessed...

MARSHALL

Stephen...

Crane now realizes: Marshall has been hit.

STEPHAN CRANE

Edward..?

MARSHALL

I can't seem to move. Would you be so kind as to file my despatches for me? After your own, of course.

STEPHAN CRANE

You may rely on me, old man.

MARSHALL

Where's Roosevelt?

STEPHAN CRANE

(thrilled to admit)

In the thick of it. If I still had my hat, I'd eat it. Tell me what you wish me to send, old man...

As Marshall, gasping, dictates...

INT. JOURNAL PRESSROOM - NIGHT

as the headline roars into our faces:

16 US DEAD, 52 WOUNDED AS ADVANCE CONTINUES!

As we watch, the paper's name morphs to... *Journal-American!*

EXT. NY STREETS - DAY

as NEWSBOYS can't unload Pulitzer's *Sun* fast enough-

NEWSBOYS

"Roosevelt proposed for Governor!"
/Read all about it!/Extree..!

A NEWSBOY moves to REVEAL a WOMAN exiting a STORE clutching a "TEDDY" BEAR as advertised in the shop window behind her:
"Get Your Col. Roosevelt Teddy Bears here!"

INT. A RICH FAMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

as the paper is carefully placed on a SILVER BREAKFAST TRAY -

HOW DO YOU LIKE THE JOURNAL'S WAR?

EXT. CUBAN SKY - DAY

Swarms of TURKEY BUZZARDS, wheeling overhead, the aftermath of battle... PAN DOWN TO REVEAL -

EXT. GUISIMAS, CUBA - TWO DAYS LATER

as hordes of GIANT CUBAN LAND CRABS - the size of dinner plates! - feast off dead Rough Riders, their hideous, extended jaws and claws going to town...

REVEAL TR and a squad of troopers marching through the corpse-littered pass, carrying boxes of BEANS brought from the beach. Ferris blanches at the sight of the crabs - a sci-fi nightmare.

FERRIS

God in heaven...

ROOSEVELT

(doesn't stop)

Terrible...

FERRIS

Teddy... Colonel, these men... were your friends - and they're-

ROOSEVELT

I can't help them, Joe. My concern must be for the living.

He moves on, leaving Ferris bewildered, Jonesy beside him -

JONESY

He's right... Our boys haven't eaten in three days...

A HORSEMAN gallops through the pass to find TR -

HORSEMAN

Colonel Roosevelt, Colonel Wood's compliments, sir! You're to return to your regiment directly. Tomorrow the entire army will make the assault on Santiago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HORSEMAN (cont'd)

The Colonel further wishes me to inform you that as Generals Wheeler and Young are down with Yellow Fever, he will be taking charge of the 2nd *Brigade* and you will now command the 1st Volunteer Cavalry.

ROOSEVELT

Me..?

The guy wheels off. What TR's waited for all his life...

A FURIOUS HOWITZER BARRAGE OVER

EXT. PLAIN FACING SAN JUAN HILL - DAY

As Grimes' battery at El Pozo opens up on the city of Santiago and the hills in front of it...

TITLE OVER: **July 1, 1898**

On the horizon a mile or so distant, KETTLE HILL with its block-house. As the US guns keep roaring, PAN DOWN TO REVEAL

The Rough Riders, now less than five hundred, slipping and sliding down to -

THE SAN JUAN RIVER, the innocuous slender stream that separates them from their objective...

TR, on horseback, wears a dark blue shirt and yellow braces with his officer's insignia fastened on them. He's tied his Rough Riders' BLUE AND WHITE BANDANA to the back of his hat to protect his neck... as he and his horse slide downhill...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER

The plan was to move on San Juan Hill just soon as General Lawton took El Caney (Can-NAY) on our right-

Lawton's battery opens FIRE off to the right...

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER

(cont'd)

That's when it all went to Hell.

It's only when they're in what is effectively a steep ditch, that Spanish rifles and artillery open fire -

HUSTON APPLGATE III'S VOICE OVER

(cont'd)

El Caney didn't collapse on schedule.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSER - ROUGH RIDERS getting blown to bits as the men hunker down in the face of withering fire...

ROOSEVELT

We've got to cross this stream!

TR plunges his horse into the stream, a huge target -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Forward!

Men tumbling into the little river and turning it RED with their BLOOD as they attempt to follow TR.

FACES of men we know - Applegate, Ferris, Jonesy, O'Neill - all frightened - but they follow TR, tripping over the corpses of their brethren, up to their chests in the crimson current.

SEVERAL ANGLES of the BLOODY ford... men and horses killed... bodies afloat, choking the little stream...

Now on the far side, those who have survived crouch in the hollow of the steep bank, where they are somewhat protected from the Spanish fire, but still hit...

A SOLDIER crouched next to TR - (still mounted) - gets his leg shot away, shrapnel tearing into TR's wrist...

ROUGH RIDER

Those sons of bitches...

He's hit through the forehead -

HUSTON APPLEGATE III

Colonel, get down! Captain O'Neill!

TR dismounts and searches for Wood, as O'Neill lights up -

BUCKEY O'NEILL

Calm down, son. The Spanish bullet hasn't been made could kill me...

One tears through his mouth, killing him instantly as -

TR reaches Wood to the left (i.e. West) -

COLONEL WOOD

Where's your sword?

ROOSEVELT

I, uh, lost it. Leonard, we have to move forward-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WOOD
Not without orders...

ROOSEVELT
If we stay here -

COLONEL WOOD
I know...

ROOSEVELT
At least let me send someone to
GET orders...

Wood thinks, nods, Alright, gallops off, west. TR turns -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
I need a volunteer...

Jonesy crawls rapidly over, frightened but trying for cool -

JONESY
Here I am, Colonel -

ROOSEVELT
Jonesy, think you can ride back
to El Pozo, explain our situation
and request permission to go after
that blockhouse on Kettle?

He points to the hill shelling them from the right.

JONESY
Yes, sir -

Bullets rain like hail all around them -

ROOSEVELT
Tell them if we stay here, in three
hours there'll be nothing left...

JONSEY
Got it.

He leaps onto the back of TR's horse and is promptly shot
dead, tumbling off into TR's arms.

CLOSE ON JONESY'S dying face as he slides to the ground
through the astonished TR's arms -

That's it for TR. He flings himself back into the saddle
amid the gunfire to yell at his men -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT
We're going!

He leaps up the bank, a huge target on horseback, his blue bandana flapping at the back of his neck, waving his pistol -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Charge!

As his men hesitate in astonishment, TR and the horse continue up the hill in a waist high grass...

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Are you afraid to stand when I am
on horseback? *Follow me!*

"Follow me!" does the trick. The men surge forward. TR gallops left (ie west) and comes upon a company of BLACK SOLDIERS sheltering on the bank -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Who are you?

BLACK SOLDIER
Tenth cavalry -

ROOSEVELT
Who's in command -?

A WHITE SOLDIER salutes -

WHITE SOLDIER
I am. Lt. Pershing -

ROOSEVELT
Pershing, you and your men, follow me!

He gallops back along the line, waving his pistol -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Get the lead out! I'll shoot the
man who retreats! Go, go, go..!

And starting uphill again as men all along the line, Rough Riders and blacks of the 10th cavalry, plus other regiments, start to follow as Spanish FIRE pours down. More men drop, SCREAMING as -

FROM THE TOP OF THE US HEIGHTS NEAR EL POZO, Davis and Crane watch with astonishment, along with amazed OFFICERS and MEN -

DAVIS
What the hell are they doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

They were pinned in the ditch. Too many wounded behind them to retreat-

DAVIS

They're being cut to pieces...

AN OFFICER realizes this as well -

OFFICER

Have those Gatlings open fire!

BACK ON THE HILL - TR and his horse continue to zig-zag up, followed by staggering troops, who looks like they're wading -

Applegate is hit in the leg, knocked down... but keeps struggling forward...

Other FACES of the men, including Ferris, as they move upward, looking at -

TR, his bandana flapping on the back of his neck, the horse dancing among the bullets as they near the top of the hill -

AS THE US GATLING GUNS open fire, lending a welcome hand -!

WHERE SPANISH RIFLEMEN become more alarmed as the American advance refuses to quit, the Gatlings find their marks and the guy on the horse keeps getting nearer to the barbed wire -

TR leaps down and cuts the wire, abandoning the horse -

ROOSEVELT

Come on!

Now he's running full tilt at these guys with just a pistol.

As the Spanish line breaks into retreat. TR finds himself facing one terrified RIFLEMAN. They look into each other's eyes for a frozen instant, both taking aim. TR fires first -

And kills him. The confused expression on TR's face as he looks around as ALL SOUND DISAPPEARS...

Heart pounding, TR bends over the man he has killed. BLOOD pouring - TR's age old wish come true...

DISTANT VOICES yelling - "Teddy!" bring the SOUND BACK as -

TR realizes: he is in sole possession of the hill, standing next to a huge sugar refining VAT or KETTLE...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks down at the advancing troopers; waves his hat in a big arc - but there is no smile on his face... no snarling teeth...

Applegate's face, watching, betrays his puzzlement...

Where's that famous, shit-eating grin..?

VARIOUS ANGLES of men, officers and reporters seeing TR, alone atop Kettle Hill, waving his hat...

VOICES

Teddy! Ted-dy..!

Now CLOSE ON THEIR FACES... sweaty, bloody -

BLACK SOLDIER

Teddy -!

WHITE SOLDIER

Teddy -!

YOUNG SOLDIER

Teddy -!

OLD SOLDIER

Teddy -!

OFFICER

Teddy -!

REPORTER

Teddy -!

WOMAN

Teddy -!

A WOMAN?! As the yells resolve themselves into a CHANT: *TED-DY! TED-DY! TED-DY!* we realize - we're with his constituents in -

INT. OLD MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

Where MEN, WOMEN, OLD AND YOUNG, BLACK AND WHITE, yell to -

TR on stage, teeth flashing, before a giant AMERICAN FLAG, still waving his hat with bandana, but otherwise in mufti, surrounded by Rough Riders in uniform, (including Applegate now with his cane), as they stand on stage beneath a victory banner that proclaims:

Governor of New York State!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT

A square deal for every American,
black and white, male and female..!

More cheers. Many wave "Teddy" Bears. TR holds up his hands -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)

Like all Americans, I like big
things; big prairies, big forests,
big wheat-fields and railroads, big
factories, steam-boats and everything
else! But we must keep steadily in
mind that no people were ever yet
benefitted by riches if their
prosperity corrupted their virtue.

The chant resumes: *TED-DY! TED-DY! TED-DY!* He can't get them
quiet; only wave and grin at them. REVEAL -

Tom Platt, high in a balcony - his preferred seat - watching
the tumult below without expression... (think Jim Gettys)...

PLATT'S VOICE OVER

Well, governor. To what do I owe
the pleasure?

INT. PLATT'S ALBANY OFFICE - DAY

TR sits before him - their positions are again reversed...

ROOSEVELT

I am paying this call to thank you
for your help in my election...

PLATT

I couldn't stop you. War hero,
naturalist, author, politician,
reformer, champion of women's
rights and small, near-sighted boy
with asthma. There's something in
you for everyone, isn't there?

ROOSEVELT

(pressing on)

And in the hope that we can work
together for the good of New York.

PLATT

(weary)

And your platform..?

ROOSEVELT

Labor comes before capital.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMOOTH ED
That's socialism -!

TR's eyes stay on Platt -

ROOSEVELT
That's *Lincoln*. (i.e.: you idiot)
And the big monopolies, Standard
Oil, J.P. Morgan and the rest, must
be broken up along with the other
trusts...

PLATT
What is it you hate about business,
Governor? If I may ask.

TR animated and emphatic -

ROOSEVELT
I'm the best friend business has!
But if government doesn't regulate
business, business will go on
exploiting the working man without
conscience or remorse - and if
business does that, I promise you
there will be another revolution in
this country and I've no intention
of allowing that to happen.

Platt studies him in silence; then -

PLATT
You think you've won, don't you?

Realizing there's no way, TR sighs, gets up -

ROOSEVELT
Senator...

And leaves. Platt considers, turns to Smooth Ed -

PLATT
Place a call to the President...

INT. ALBANY CAPITOL CORRIDORS - DAY

as TR walks away from us, footsteps reverberating -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLATT'S VOICE OVER
Mr. President, I have finally
figured out what to do with
Theodore Roosevelt - I think I can
virtually guarantee he will never
be heard from again...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

McKinley on the phone, laughing, incredulous -

MCKINLEY
Tom, that's the most outlandish...
Will he fall for it..?

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION, ALBANY - NIGHT

TR enters. He looks terrible. No one around which is just
as well. He heads into -

INT. LIBRARY, GOVERNOR'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Where he's startled by a GANGLY SIXTEEN YEAR OLD BOY who
leaps up from behind a sofa and extends a jaunty hand.

BOY
How do you do, sir...

ROOSEVELT
(shakes, unsure)
Are you one of mine?

A RAVISHINGLY BEAUTIFUL 17 year old ALICE sits up, REVEALING
herself from behind the couch - what have they been doing..?

ALICE
Of course not, father. This is
cousin Franklin...

ROOSEVELT
Cousin Franklin-? Alice, I don't-

ALICE
You know, cousin Sara's boy...

TR, distracted, hasn't a clue -

ROOSEVELT
Oh, of course. Cousin Franklin.
How do you do, young man?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

He does very well. In fact, I've
offered to show him... my snake...

She's become disturbingly seductive and very eccentric -

ROOSEVELT

Uh, splendid - (what to say?) So...
Franklin, what do you want to be
when you grow up?

FRANKLIN

(eyes shining)

You.

TR blinks, uncertain, off-guard. Alice sees something wrong -

ALICE

Come, cousin Franklin...

And escorts the star-struck kid from the room.

TR sits heavily behind his desk, staring out the window. We
HEAR Alice calling, "Mother!" and moments later, Edith enters-

EDITH

Thee -? What's the matter?

His back to her as he looks out the window -

ROOSEVELT

I've been out-maneuvered.

EDITH

Out-man- by whom?

ROOSEVELT

Platt. He's had the last laugh...
As he did with my father...

She sits across from him; rarely seen him this blue -

EDITH

Theodore, you will have to speak
more plainly...

He swivels to face her -

ROOSEVELT

McKinley has asked me to run for re-
election with him on the ticket as
Vice President.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH
Vice-president...

ROOSEVELT
I've just been buried alive.

EDITH
Surely, it's not as bad as all-

ROOSEVELT
Oh, no? Who was Grant's vice
president? Who was Cleveland's?
Tell me Arthur's...

EDITH
Very well, I take your point...
(she thinks) Why not simply
decline? Say No.

He considers this for a nano-second -

ROOSEVELT
I've never said No in my life.
Checkmate. (stymied, he looks at
her) I could have helped, Edie. I
think I really could've helped...

Edith knows this is true. She comes 'round the desk and sits
on his lap... They sit there in silence. Then -

ROOSEVELT (cont'd)
Well, I suppose I can't complain.
(he smiles up at her) What a run
I had, eh? Wasn't it bully?

EDITH
It was bully.

She kisses him tenderly on the forehead as -

BOOM! -

MCKINLEY'S ASSASSIN'S HANDKERCHIEF-WRAPPED PISTOL NOW FILLS
THE FRAME exploding in our faces, REVERBERATING, bringing us -

CLOSE ON THE REPORTER'S PAGES OF TR RESEARCH - WIDEN TO

INT. HEARST'S OFFICE, JOURNAL AMERICAN - DAY

as Hearst glumly sets the pages on his desk.

HEARST
Hell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Reporter sits on the other side of the desk -

REPORTER

Sorry, Chief... I couldn't find-

A hub-bub in the outside Editorial offices which swing into frenzied activity as Hearst and the Reporter react... An EDITOR sticks his head in -

EDITOR

McKinley just died...

Hearst faces the Reporter, poker-faced...

HEARST

Never mind.

CLOSE ON A HAND HANGING UP THE PHONE - WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. TOM PLATT'S NYC "OFFICE" - DAY

Platt sits there, staring at the phone, suddenly an old man. He turns to Smooth Ed -

PLATT

Where is Roosevelt?

BINO-MATTE CLOSE ON A beautiful MEADOW-LARK - REVEAL

EXT. PEAK OF MT. MARCY, ADIRONDACKS - DAWN

TR alone, watching the BIRD through his binoculars... It's very peaceful. Then he sees something else and smiles...

Below, the gaggle of Reporters who now routinely follow him everywhere, struggling up the distant mountainside...

TR smiles at the sight, then spies something else -

TR's POV - further down the mountain, a MAN, running, his arm outstretched...

TR picks up the binoculars and trains them on...

BINO-MATTE: The struggling runner. He is holding a TELEGRAM.

TIGHTEN ON THE TELEGRAM, then -

SLOW CLOSE ON TR as he pulls down the binoculars, realizing: McKinley has died... he is now president. As we contemplate TR contemplating his future, we HEAR -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER
...the credit belongs to the man
who is actually in the arena -

REPLAY - TR being thrown to the ground by bucking Manitou -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Whose face is marred by dust and sweat
and blood; who strives valiantly...

REPLAY - TR speaking on behalf of the liquor law to the
booing German-American crowd at Madison Square Garden -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Who errs and comes short again...

REPLAY - TR galloping up Kettle Hill, amid gunfire..!

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Who knows the great enthusiasms,
the great devotions...

REPLAY - TR and Riis prowling the slums of New York -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER (cont'd)
And spends himself in a worthy cause -

BACK TO TR, alone on the mountaintop -

ROOSEVELT'S VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Who, at best, knows in the end the
triumph of high achievement... And
who, at the worst, if he fails, at
least fails while daring greatly.

DISSOLVE FROM
HIS FACE TO:

EXT. MT. RUSHMORE - DAY

ROOSEVELT'S SCULPTED FEATURES, nestled amongst WASHINGTON'S,
JEFFERSON'S and LINCOLN'S - pulling back as if to assume his
rightful place among them -

TITLE OVER:

**Theodore Roosevelt was the only president to win both the
Nobel Peace Prize and the Congressional Medal of Honor.**

**Our youngest and most popular president (excepting
Washington), he fought for social justice, built the Panama
Canal and set aside 230 million acres of National Parks and
monuments.**

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In eight years as president, he never fought a war.

FADE TO BLACK.

NOTES

The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt is a distillation of history. Characters, time and events have been compressed, conflated and simplified.

(EG: The Roosevelts occupied *three* homes in New York but only a single residence is indicated here. In fact there were *four* members of the New York City Police Commission, of which TR was "president"; I have depicted only him in this role. Similarly, TR made several trips to North Dakota; only one is the subject of our scrutiny. Jonesy and Houston Applegate are fictitious composites).

TR was the first president to be extensively chronicled in the new medium of cinematography. There's a great deal of footage of him both before, during and after his presidency. There is much newsreel footage of the Rough Riders and the campaign in Cuba, as well as the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, where people can be seen on line to meet President McKinley, minutes before his assassination.

There are also recordings of TR's voice.

TR wore glasses outdoors but otherwise favored the clip-on variety, known as *pince-nez*.

Most importantly, TR's thoughts, feelings, actions and in many cases his words, are his own.

Nicholas Meyer