

VANDERGRIFT!

By
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CAST

1. George McMurtry, early fifties, steel tycoon, director of Apollo Iron and Steel Company
2. Ida Tarbell, early forties, Nation's leading journalist
3. Frederic Law Olmsted, Jr., early twenties, landscape architect
4. James Whitworth, mid-twenties, lawyer
5. Katherine Townsend, secretary, late teens
6. Archie Davis, mid-twenties, plant manager
7. John Dunmore, mid-twenties, union organizer
8. Elbert Gary, fifties, President of US Steel.
9. Violet, mid-forties, astrologer and fortune teller
10. Present Day Police Chief, mid forties
11. Fredericka Olmsted, early twenties, Allegheny College student
12. Jack F. McIntyre, early twenties, plant manager. Becomes Vandergrift's burgess.

Act 1

SCENE 1 BOARDROOM, APOLLO IRON AND STEEL COMPANY,
PITTSBURGH, 1892

George McMurtry, mid fifties, is examining documents at a long board table. James Swanson Whitworth, Jack F. McIntyre, and Stewart Archibald "Archie" Davis, all in their mid-twenties enter hurriedly, carrying briefcases.

WHITWORTH

Hello, Mr. McMurtry

ARCHIE

Sorry we're late.

MCINTYRE

The train was slow in arriving.

MCMURTRY

Relax, Gentlemen. Have a seat. The rest of the Board has already left. I will have to call the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad and complain about these trains running on time. Coffee and even dinner is awaiting you outside. But first, do you have news?

MCINTYRE

Yes, Sir.

ARCHIE

Yes, Sir.

WHITWORTH

Yes, Sir.

MCMURTRY

Are they planning a strike? Did you speak to them? And have the speculators been at it?

WHITWORTH

Yes to 1!

ARCHIE

Yes to 2!

MCINTYRE

Yes to 3!

MCMURTRY

Don't all begin at once. Leave your briefcases unopened, and tell me everything in everyday English. I expect the worst, so I told J.J. Vandergrift to go home. My gut feeling was right?.

MCINTYRE

The strikers were implacable.

MCMURTRY

Who were they?

MCINTYRE

The regular ones: Dunmore, Young, Weaver, Stewart, Kunkle, McCutcheon...

MCMURTRY

Stop! I know the rest. And their demands?

MCINTYRE

Twelve cents an hour, safe working conditions....

MCMURTRY

(interrupting) Workman's compensation, eight-hour day?

MCINTYRE

Yes. Six paid holidays a year, time-and-a-half for overtime, health insurance...

MCMURTRY

Stop! When are they planning to strike?

MCINTYRE

Next Monday.

MCMURTRY

All strikers are to be fired. They may re-apply after a year and then be rehired..... with loss of seniority.

MCINTYRE

May not work this time. Too many strikers.

MCMURTRY

How many?

MCINTYRE

A hundred.

MCMURTRY

A third of the work force..

MCINTYRE

And some of the best, this time.

ARCHIE

And the worst also.

MCINTYRE

Why the increase? Only eighty last time.

ARCHIE

The Slovak workers have nearly all joined in.

MCMURTRY

That settles it. No more Eastern Europeans. Off to the coal mines they go, if the coal operators will hire them. The Germans, Irish, and Italians are grateful, but not these folks.

ARCHIE

Some of them are beginning to join in, too.

MCMURTRY

What about the adjacent land for the plant expansion?

WHITWORTH

The speculators bought all the nearby land...this morning.

MCMURTRY

Same fellas?

WHITWORTH

Who else? They took out a large loan yesterday, offered the farmers twice our price, and went to settlement this morning. Now they want five thousand dollars an acre.

MCMURTRY

Forty-nine hundred dollars more than the inflated price we offered the farmers. And what happens to the speculators if we don't buy? (smiles)

WHITWORTH

Bankruptcy!

MCMURTRY

A few suicides might follow. J. J. Vandergrift and I have our own plan. And damned to the parasite strikers and speculators. (beat) WE MOVE!

ALL

Move!

ARCHIE

How do you move a plant?

MCMURTRY

(beat) We keep this damned Apollo plant open for a few years. But open up a whole new plant. Only a few miles, a whole county away. Damned be Apollo and Armstrong county.

MCINTYRE

Where?

MCMURTRY

The Townsend farm.

WHITWORTH

I am sure my future father-in-law would accept a reasonable offer..

MCMURTRY

Already done. We offered 50 dollars an acre, and he took it.

ARCHIE

It's worth at least fifty-five.

MCMURTRY

Right. We are both good Christians. We then told him we would give him more for a total of sixty dollars. We went to closing in minutes. Within a week, we begin work on the most modern, efficient and largest steel plant in the world.

ALL

THE LARGEST!

MCMURTRY

You heard it! THE largest!

ARCHIE

And the Apollo plant?

MCMURTRY

Will be closed a few years after the new one opens. And of course no strikers will be hired at the new plant. If necessary we will follow the route of our friend, Henry Clay Frick, and call the Pennsylvania National Guard to close them down. The Westmorland County government will be our best friend. Not like these rogues in Armstrong County.

ARCHIE

How many workers?

MCMURTRY

Five thousand.

WHITWORTH

And where do we get the workers?

MCMURTRY

ELLIS ISLAND. And Alabama if we need to. New immigrants are more grateful, work harder, and are too afraid to join unions. The native born will behave better when they are replaced by these immigrants.

ARCHIE

Do you really want all these immigrants?

MCMURTRY

Not in my home, but in my factories. And Whitworth, please draft a new piece of legislation to improve our immigration laws.

MCINTYRE

Most people don't want any more immigrants.

MCMURTRY

I'm one myself. Proud to say that we Scotch-Irish are the best!

MCINTYRE

They object to the ones from Southern and Eastern Europe.

MCMURTRY

Tough luck! We need their bodies. Our Pennsylvania Senators and congressmen will do as told. We pay them enough.

Everyone laughs.

MCMURTRY

And the best is yet to come.

MCINTYRE

You have us in suspense.

MCMURTRY

We will build a whole new town with it.

ARCHIE

A company town?

MCMURTRY

I never want to hear that word again. No. A workers' town. A town BETTER THAN THE BEST. The most beautiful worker's town in the world. With parks, schools, fine houses, shopping, many churches, and paved streets. And cheap prices.

ARCHIE

How do we pay for this?

WHITWORTH

Better yet. How do the workers pay for this?

MCMURTRY

Lots will be sold cheaply. One part of town for the workers, another for management. Part of the town for immigrants, (except Poles and Slavs, of course), and we are all one happy town. We are now looking for an architect.

WHITWORTH

May I make a suggestion, Sir? Have you ever heard of Frederick Law Olmsted?

MCMURTRY

I can't say that I have.

WHITWORTH

He is the Nation's preeminent architect. He designed Central Park, buildings at Harvard, Yale...

MCMURTRY

Enough! He's our man!

WHITWORTH

And I am sure he would love to have something to show off the World's Fair in Chicago. A worker's paradise built by company for its workers!

MCMURTRY

And guess what I have decided to call the town.

ARCHIE

McMurtry, Pennsylvania sounds very nice.

MCMURTRY

I want to name the town for the one man who took a penniless Scotch-Irish immigrant boy, and taught him everything he know about the iron and steel business. Captain Jacob J. Vandergrift. How does Vandergrift, Pennsylvania sound. And hopefully we and the new town will live up to his ideals.

ALL
To Vandergrift! Hip-hip-hooray!

MCMURTRY
Goodbye to Apollo!

ALL
Bye-bye Apollo!

MCMURTRY
Hello, Vandergrift!

ALL
Long live Vandergrift!

SCENE 2 VANDERGRIFT, PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE OF GEORGE
MCMURTRY, AT THE APOLLO IRON AND STEEL COMPANY, 1897

George McMurtry, stands before a huge hanging map of the newly incorporated borough of Vandergrift. George carefully examines different parts of the map. Four large photographs adorn the wall: Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Jacob J. Vandergrift, and Henry Clay Frick. A large Bible is on his desk. A sign hangs from the wall saying "VANDERGRIFT: BETTER THAN THE BEST" He puffs on his cigar and takes another drink from his large whiskey glass and then raises it to a toast.

MCMURTRY
To my town. VANDERGRIFT: BETTER THAN THE BEST.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., early twenties, enters.

OLMSTED
You deserve that drink. May I join you?

MCMURTRY
Are you Mr. Tarbell?

OLMSTED
No? But that name seems familiar.

MCMURTRY
Some newspaper man for some Titusville newspaper.

OLMSTED

Mmm. I recall the name from something I read at Harvard.

MCMURTRY

A Harvard man?

OLMSTED

Yes. And you?

MCMURTRY

No college. Not even grade school.

OLMSTED

The American dream?

MCMURTRY

And an orphan at six to boot.

OLMSTED

Up by your bootstraps. I admire that. I'm Fred Olmsted.

MCMURTRY

Vandergrift's architect! You are not he.

OLMSTED

But I am.

MCMURTRY

I met with the great designer myself, three times. And you are not he.

OLMSTED

That's right.

MCMURTRY

But the signature said Frederick Law Olmsted. Look at the letter.

OLMSTED

You missed the Jr. It's all in the family. I am Frederick Law Olmsted , JR. . My father is too ill to be here.

McMurtry examines him closely .

MCMURTRY

A chip off the old block, then.

OLMSTED

Actually, I'm his stepson. He adopted both my brother and me. In no way does this diminish our love for him. I did most of the Vandergrift design.

MCMURTRY

What! A college student?

OLMSTED

Under the supervision of Charles Eliot.

MCMURTRY

That other partner?

OLMSTED

He's more than "that other partner" He is equal to my father. And surely you are aware that his father has been president of Harvard since 1869.

MCMURTRY

Indeed! My town was designed by the son of Harvard's president! Wait till the Vandergrift Land and Improvement Company's Board get's a load of this.

OLMSTED

But not too hastily, Mr. McMurtry. I have some news that may change your opinion.

MCMURTRY

And what might that be?

OLMSTED

Mr. Eliot and my father may want our name removed from this project. Mr. Eliot feels the town bears little resemblance to the original plan.

MCMURTRY

Why!

OLMSTED

You cut the lots in half so that only long narrow houses can be built on them. Each house was supposed to be surrounded by a lot of land.

MCMURTRY

We had to break even.

OLMSTED

In fact you doubled your already high profits.

MCMURTRY

It's free enterprise.

OLMSTED

What happened to the workers paradise?

MCMURTRY

Well at worst, it's half a workers paradise. Still there's no other place like it.

OLMSTED

Cutting the lots in half and charging the same price!

MCMURTRY

Workers don't need that much yard space. If they work all day, how much time can they spend on their yards?

OLMSTED

He also feels the design bears no similarity to what the town now looks like.

MCMURTRY

The removal of a few parks, a couple of bushes!

OLMSTED

The location of the Casino Theatre has changed. It now faces the steel mill. The village green is not where it is supposed to be. The trees do not...

MCMURTRY

Blah, blah, blah. So what. A couple of bushes and a damned park! No! Tell him to forget it. My lawyers will beat the living daylights out of his lawyers. And now there is something else I would like for you to do.

OLMSTED

Under these conditions...

MCMURTRY

I want you to design the Sherman Inn.

OLMSTED

What?

MCMURTRY

Look out the window and you can see the vacant lot on Sherman Avenue.

OLMSTED

But, Sir. I'm a landscape architect, not a building architect.

MCMURTRY

So what! Make up a drawing?

OLMSTED

I would not be doing you justice.

MCMURTRY

Just do it!

OLMSTED

I should get the approval of the main office.

MCMURTRY

There is no time.

OLMSTED

I can't even fit this into my schedule. I would need a year before I could get started.

MCMURTRY

Won't do. The fee is 250 dollars, for a simple workable drawing?

OLMSTED

If you INSIST, Sir, I'll do it!!!!

MCMURTRY

When can you complete the drawing?

OLMSTED

If I begin next week, I can finish it in a week.

MCMURTRY

Absolutely not!

OLMSTED

When do you need it?

MCMURTRY

Within the next half-hour.

OLMSTED

No architectural drawings in the history of mankind have ever...

MCMURTRY

I don't care. Just go in the other room. Return it in half an hour.

OLMSTED

You are cheating yourself. I'll miss my train to Pittsburgh and will then miss my train to Boston, and will have ...

MCMURTRY

No you won't. I'll be calling the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Now get started.

A knock is heard at the door.

MCMURTRY (cont'd)

At last. Come in, Mr. Tarbell.

Ida Minerva "Ida Mae" Tarbell, early forties, enters.

MCMURTRY (cont'd)

I'm so sorry. I was expecting MR. I. M. Tarbell.

TARBELL

My name is Ida Minerva Tarbell. Ida Mae, to my friends and colleagues.

MCMURTRY

Please accept my apologies. "I.M. Tarbell"? I was expecting a man, Mrs. Tarbell.

TARBELL

I'm a woman. Intend to stay that way. And I am Miss Tarbell.

MCMURTRY

Ah, Miss Tarbell. Let me present you with...

TARBELL

(interrupting) Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

OLMSTED

An honor indeed, Miss Tarbell. How do you know my name?

TARBELL

I met you at your father's office in Boston, when you were a freshman at Harvard. That's what piqued my interest in this place.

OLMSTED

How's that?

TARBELL

A mill town designed by the Nation's preeminent architectural firm.

MCMURTRY

A MILL TOWN indeed! This is not a MILL TOWN.

TARBELL

What is it then?

MCMURTRY

It is a town that will be a unique experience with schools, parks, churches, ball fields, shopping...

TARBELL

(Interrupting) Built around a mill by a steel company. No mill, no town. Sounds like a fancy company town.

MCMURTRY

I BEG YOUR PARDON! Let me clarify, Miss Tarbell. This new concept of a town is near and dear executives in the steel industry.

TARBELL

Some say the only thing near and dear to these folks is the almighty dollar.

MCMURTRY

Did you receive the notice from our public relations department.?

TARBELL

Releases from the steel and oil companies go into the trash can.

MCMURTRY

Are you a spy from the labor unions?

TARBELL

You're one of the captains in the steel industry and have never seen my writings in McClure's or Iron Age magazines?

MCMURTRY

I'm too busy making steel to do much reading.

OLMSTED

I loved your pieces on Napoleon Bonaparte.

MCMURTRY

Napoleon. The savage! That's what you write about? Let's change the subject. What REALLY brings you HERE? Miss Tarbell?

TARBELL

Vandergrift!

MCMURTRY

Now we're speaking.

TARBELL

Your idea fascinates me. A workers paradise as an incentive to workers? Do you think it will work?

MCMURTRY

Let me show you around.

TARBELL

Accepted.

MCMURTRY

And I'll let you know that a British delegation visited this town. They want to adopt the idea in England. Have to get their ideas from a Scot. And now this young man wants to have his name removed from the credits.

OLMSTED

Mr. McMurtry!

TARBELL

Now why would your company want to remove its name?

OLMSTED

Mr. Eliot thinks the plans have been too compromised in the name of economy.

TARBELL

Mr. Olmsted. You want to remove the OLMSTED name from this beautiful town of winding streets, green spaces, and the first steel town ever known to be aesthetically designed? You would remove your name from a lasting monument designed to help the working man. Some of your father's monuments to the wealthy have been much less graceful. Of course, you can do what you want. This is my unsolicited opinion.

OLMSTED

I shall speak to Mr. Elliot and my father and ..

MCMURTRY

Off to complete the plans for the Sherman Inn. No more than one half an hour, young man.

OLMSTED

Yes, sir. (exits)

TARBELL

Plans in half an hour? Impossible!

MCMURTRY

There will be a dance at the Sherman inn on February 28 and you are invited.

TARBELL

I am busy that night.

MCMURTRY

Don't you want to meet and someday marry a nice man?

TARBELL

No.

MCMURTRY

Wouldn't you like to marry some nice man?

TARBELL

I am married to my work.

MCMURTRY

Have you ever fallen in love?

TARBELL

I fell in love with Paris.

MCMURTRY

Why didn't you marry this guy Paris?

TARBELL

I mean THE CITY Paris.

MCMURTRY

Well you can't marry a city and have kids. You like Paris?

TARBELL

My heart belongs there. And you?

MCMURTRY

Was there once. Never again. The people smell, the Eiffel Tower is useless, and they still like that pot-bellied Napoleon. How did a nice woman like you become a journalist?

TARBELL

Once I thought I could not reconstruct the world because I AM A WOMAN. And then I decided that I could reconstruct the world because I AM A WOMAN. .

MCMURTRY

Ah, a feminist and maybe a suffragette.

TARBELL

You're half right. (Pointing to the three portraits on the wall). I see you have a portrait of President Lincoln. I am currently writing his biography.

MCMURTRY

Indeed! You write biographies of both Bonaparte and Lincoln. The worst and the best. Lincoln saved our country. I was an American but three years when as a young man of twenty three, enlisted in the American Army to save the union and free the slaves. A good man.

TARBELL

And the other four felons on your wall?

MCMURTRY

Felons! You call John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick , and Jacob J. Vandergrift felons!

TARBELL

Rockefeller has committed the most massive grand larceny in U.S. history.

MCMURTRY

You like that no good Napoleon Bonaparte, and you call John D. Rockefeller a thief!

TARBELL

A snake oil dealer's son and a predator to boot. He destroyed his competitors, including my father, and gouged the American public.

MCMURTRY

You're wrong, but what does that have to do with this town.

TARBELL

You named this town after that henchman. (Pointing to Vandergrift's portrait)

MCMURTRY

Henchman! Captain Jacob J. Vandergrift merely worked with John D, and only after he was forced into it.

TARBELL

Captain Vandergrift was the chief predator in forcing honest small independent oil drillers like my father and other friends from Titusville to sell out. In fact your sweet JJ helped JD defraud his own brothers.

MCMURTRY

All I say is that JJ Vandergrift is in the steel business, and now one of this country's leading philanthropists. No more on the subject! And now, why do you dislike Carnegie and Frick, two other great philanthropists.

TARBELL

Have you forgotten the Homestead strike?

MCMURTRY

The strikers got what they deserved.

TARBELL

I beg to differ.

MCMURTRY

And Rockefeller! The richest man in the world! And its leading philanthropist too! He is a fine Baptist.

TARBELL

He is a Baptist. But he is not fine.

MCMURTRY

He has given millions to churches, the University of Chicago, and other charitable causes.

TARBELL

Shame on the Baptists for accepting.

MCMURTRY

Fine people they are. I say this as a Presbyterian. And you? A Methodist?

TARBELL

I'm a (beat) biol-o-gist.

MCMURTRY

So you're a non-believer?

TARBELL

Giving up heaven wasn't easy. Came to me during my sophomore year at Allegheny College where I majored in biology.

MCMURTRY

You're a smart gal but we gotta straighten your head out.

TARBELL

And you "gotta" stop cavorting with skunks.

MCMURTRY

Skunks! The Pittsburgh newspapers say of Captain Vandergrift that his entire life is marked by strict integrity and honesty of both principle and practice.

TARBELL

They know where their bread is buttered!

MCMURTRY

They also say he has been generous to his church and philanthropic causes.

TARBELL

Has Philanthropist Vandergrift ever VISITED Vandergrift?

MCMURTRY

He is a busy man. Even today.

TARBELL

Busy *philanthropizing*?

MCMURTRY

Perhaps.

TARBELL

I'm sure he is currently either in bed or playing golf.

Olmsted enters the room.

OLMSTED

Here are the initial drawings.

MCMURTRY

Let me see. Perfect. You can do the specs on your train ride to Pittsburgh. And here is your check.

OLMSTED

You made a mistake. The check is for \$500!

MCMURTRY

A bonus for doing it in half the time. Now hurry, or you'll miss your train.

OLMSTED

Miss Tarbell, I hear you are writing a history of the Standard Oil Company. When will it be finished?

TARBELL

Years. I am doing very careful research.

OLMSTED

Good luck.

Telephone rings.

MCMURTRY

So you're now investigating Rockefeller? Perhaps you can accompany our Boston visitor to the door.

Tarbell and Olmsted exit.

MCMURTRY

Hello....JJ, It's George.Ever hear of Ida Tarbell?.....Are you still there?What does she want? She's doing a story on the town....I know...I agree. She's hell on wheels.....What can I do?.....MURDER Her?....I can't....Why NOT?Because, I'm a good Presbyterian....Then , STOP being a good Presbyterian? ... Short of murder, what do I do with this Miss TARHELL? Sweeten her up?....Sounds good. Here she comes. I'll talk later.

TARBELL

I am ready for the tour. Shall we begin?

MCMURTRY

(taking her arm) Perhaps I spoke too soon. I think we should have an examination of Rockefeller's domination of the oil market.

TARBELL

Let's get back to Vandergrift. A town built for workers. It seems too good to be true. Some say the town was created to destroy labor unions.

MCMURTRY

That's right. Unions will destroy the steel industry and this country. Happy workers who own their own homes in a nice setting and earn good money will not be swallowed up by labor unions.

TARBELL

So then the reports are true?

MCMURTRY

Absolutely!

TARBELL

I received two letters that were disconcerting.

MCMURTRY

Like what?

TARBELL

One said that there is a sign separating Vandergrift from East Vandergrift saying, "Polaks and stray dogs not welcome."

MCMURTRY

I would never put up one of those signs.

TARBELL

The second said "if you don't buy our lots, you don't need to work in our mill"

MCMURTRY

I can't control what every single resident of this town says and does.

TARBELL

Do any Poles work here?

MCMURTRY

As few as possible. Unlike other foreigners they want to be unionized. There's no ethnic discrimination, however.

TARBELL

And Jews?

MCMURTRY

The more the merrier. We need merchants. My friend Izzy Rubin will be opening a clothing store, and more are coming. I'll even build them a synagogue if enough come.

TARBELL

Interesting indeed.

MCMURTRY

Of course, in Belfast being a Jew is not what counts. What's important is whether you're a Protestant Jew or a Catholic Jew. Protestant Jews are much better than Catholic Jews.

TARBELL

And Negroes?

MCMURTRY

Very welcome. They make excellent strike breakers. Remember, I fought to free them from slavery.

TARBELL

So all are welcome except Poles.

MCMURTRY

This plant will employ five thousand workers. I will do whatever it takes to destroy labor unions.

TARBELL

Meaning?

MCMURTRY

We need workers.

TARBELL

So Ellis Island is your way to break the unions!

MCMURTRY

Opening our doors to the hungry and the needy is American. Let's change the subject. Take a look at this map. Any questions?

TARBELL

So charming to name streets after Presidents, poets, and statesmen.

MCMURTRY

The credit goes to Mrs. McMurtry.

TARBELL

But you named the main street after Ulysses Grant.

MCMURTRY

Our finest President.

TARBELL

A drunk at best.

MCMURTRY

The man saved the Nation! I fought under him to save this country.

TARBELL

You name the town after a thief and the main street after a drunk? Nice beginnings.

MCMURTRY

What should I have named this town. Napoleon-ville!

TARBELL

Of course not but..

MCMURTRY

After that French pervert, like Voltaire!

TARBELL

You have a myopic view of things.

MCMURTRY

What does myopic mean?

TARBELL

Little.

MCMURTRY

Because I won't name my streets after French dictators and perverts. Do you object to Washington, Jefferson, and Madison Avenues?

TARBELL

Our founding fathers. Of course not!

MCMURTRY

So you like slaveholders?

TARBELL

McMurtry, you're irascible. Of course not.

MCMURTRY

Ha! Ida M. Tarbell loves slavery. Great headline.

TARBELL

Nonsense. Onto a more pleasant topic. I noticed many churches have already been built.

MCMURTRY

I want more. That's why we only have two policeman.

TARBELL

What's one got to do with the other?

MCMURTRY

Everything. The more churches you have, the fewer policeman you need.

TARBELL

Does this mean that if you build two more churches you won't need any police at all?

MCMURTRY

Smart-aleck

TARBELL

Well if what you say holds, Rome with all of its churches should be the safest city in the world . I had two handbags stolen there.

MCMURTRY

That's Rome! Not Vandergrift!

TARBELL

Is it also true that Churches here are not permitted to have bells?

MCMURTRY

That's right. We have thousands of men working three shifts. I don't want my workers losing any sleep.

TARBELL

Well, if your workers don't have to go to church won't they become criminals?

MCMURTRY

God wants workers to get their sleep.

TARBELL

So that means only women and children, as potential criminals need to go to church. This is a strange town indeed.

MCMURTRY

Maybe you should begin going to church again.

TARBELL

I'm not a criminal.

John Dunmore, mid-twenties, appears at the door.

DUNMORE

Ah, my fellow Scot, George McMurtry himself is here.

MCMURTRY

What are you doing in my office, you useless union rabble-rouser?

DUNMORE

I came for a social visit. Some bourbon?

MCMURTRY

Dunmore, you're drunk! There's one thing worse than an Irish drunk, and that's a Scottish drunk.

DUNMORE

Who's the fine lady? Or is she one of your own ladies?

MCMURTRY

MISS Tarbell. Show some respect.

DUNMORE

Management's flower girl?

MCMURTRY

I'll break every bone in your body!

DUNMORE

You and who else, old man! (Pulls out sign) Look what the Amalgamated Union found at Ellis Island. Read it in six languages. Translated: "Come to Vandergrift. Many Jobs." You're trying to ruin unions.

MCMURTRY

We're trying to help the Statue of Liberty, that's all. Lend me your poor...

DUNMORE

Even one in Yiddish. Are you now trying to hire Jewish steelworkers!

MCMURTRY

You can be replaced by an Italian.

DUNMORE

You bastard! So you think you're better than me?

MCMURTRY

I do.

DUNMORE

You think I have no worth!

MCMURTRY

That is correct. You have no worth.

Archie Davis, McIntyre, and Whitworth
rush into the room

DUNMORE

You worthless son-of-a-bitch.

MCMURTRY

You're fired!

DUNMORE

Kiss my...

MCMURTRY

I said "You're fired."

The three men grab Dunmore and drag him
from the room.

DUNMORE

And remember this King George! Vandergrift will someday be
an all-union town.

MCMURTRY

Not in my day.

Whitworth and McIntyre drag Dunmore
off.

ARCHIE

Shall I make out one week's severance pay.

MCMURTRY

No. DOCK one week's pay. He's been drinking on the job.

ARCHIE

We've had reports to that effect.

MCMURTRY

Off to the coal mines he goes, if they'll have him.

ARCHIE

As you say, sir. (exits)

TARBELL

Maybe you should close down a few churches and hire a few more policemen.

MCMURTRY

Perhaps we need even more churches.

TARBELL

I think Mr. Dunmore needs some human compassion!! I think he feels inadequate.

MCMURTRY

That's because HE is inadequate. Let's get back to Vandergrift.

TARBELL

It's a delightful town. But I would like to see one change.

MCMURTRY

What's that?

TARBELL

Some say the town needs a new founder.

MCMURTRY

Isn't that like asking Columbus to find someone else to discover America.

TARBELL

Ya' got me. I'm surprised. You mean you actually landed on Ellis Island?

MCMURTRY

I didn't swim across the Atlantic. (beat) Good luck on your Vandergrift story for Iron Age Magazine. The publishers are my friends and colleagues.

TARBELL

But this is for McClures, and they are not your friends and colleagues.

MCMURTRY

Write what you wish. And remember one thing, Miss Tarbell. One day, long after I'm gone, the Dunmores will have their way and that will be the beginning of the end of the steel industry. And maybe the town.

TARBELL

Time will tell.

MCMURTRY

But I'll be looking down from heaven.

TARBELL

Back to the issue. I want to see the rest of this beautiful city and its winding streets.

MCMURTRY

Please take my arm. Miss Tarbell.

TARBELL

Mr. McMurtry. I admit, I ain't perfect.

MCMURTRY

You know, Miss Tarbell, I admit I ain't perfect either.

Dark. VOICES OFF STAGE

ARCHIE (O.S.)

Hey McIntyre! Jamie! Look at what Ida Tarbell says about Vandergrift.

TARBELL (O.S.)

"McClure's Magazine. Winter Issue, 1897. Vandergrift, Pennsylvania. A town of homes and gardens may well become the world's most beautiful industrial city in the world. George McMurtry has proved that good homes make good workmen.

ARCHIE (O.S.)

And the rest of the story gets even better. You never know what to expect.

WHITWORTH (O.S.)

This note to the old man might explain some things:

TARBELL (O.S.)

"Mr. McMurtry: The namesake is flawed. The town is not. I love Vandergrift. Perhaps you ARE a good Presbyterian. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. You have ventured much, you have gained much. Society has won. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. You're tough. I have learned not to judge a book by its cover.. Sincerely, MISS IDA MAE TARBELL."

ARCHIE (O.S.)

Seems like a change of heart.

WHITWORTH (O.S.)

Or, maybe she just knows where her bread is buttered, after all.

SCENE 3 VANDERGRIFT, RAILROAD STATION, TEN YEARS LATER

Elbert Gary(fifties), McMurtry, Whitworth, ARCHIE,McIntyre are waiting at the Vandergrift Train Depot. A short distance away, Whitworth and Katherine Townsend(twenties), carrying a floral bouquet, are holding hands.

MCMURTRY

What, oh what, am I doing here! We have work to do.

GARY

Now, now. George. We await the most powerful journalist in America. We should adopt the attitude that what is good for US. Steel is good for its management, and what is good for its management is good for US. Steel. As President of US. Steel, I too, have a busy schedule.

MCMURTRY

If you want to wait for TARHELL, you can. But why drag me into it?

GARY

Because she loves YOUR city. And now comes back for a return visit. And please don't call her Tarhell. Hopefully she will be as kind in this write-up as she was in the last one. After all Miss Tarbell did... in the vernacular..kick John D. Rockefeller where it hurts. It's only a matter of time before the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey is dissolved. Do you want her to do likewise to us?

MCMURTRY

She did kick us. The History of the Standard Oil Company has many unkind references to Captain JJ Vandergrift, may his soul rest in peace. Surely he is in heaven.

GARY

Perhaps. (beat) But all she said was that as one of JD Rockefeller's partners, he was indicted by a grand jury for price fixing , helped drive independent oil drillers out of the oil business, and a few other unsavory practices.

MCMURTRY

He was found not guilty! JJ Vandergrift. She speaks of a saint, a Protestant saint.

GARY

Well, a Protestant certainly. My mother also said you can attract more bees with sugar than you can with vinegar. It's only a matter of time before the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey is dissolved. Do you want her to do likewise to us?

MCMURTRY

You're doing an about face.

GARY

Mother also taught me that if you can't fight 'em join 'em. Also there's the matter of my biography. She would make a worthy biographer.

MCMURTRY

Biographer! They named the city of Gary, Indiana after you, what more do you want? Perhaps a state named after you? Like Gary, USA.

GARY

You know, McMurtry, the board of US Steel has many members who would like to ring your neck. I am not one of those people. Often we disagree, and sometimes you are right, sometimes you are not. You have an independent streak which brings out the worst in people. Now, I will admit that I thought you had gone bonkers when you decided to build a paradise for workers, but now I see you were right. Being the darling of the St. Louis World Fair and all the worldwide acclaim has done US Steel no harm. So let us not undo what you worked so hard to accomplish.

The train arrives

MCMURTRY

At last.

The train stops, but no passengers exit.

MCMURTRY

A no show! Time to get back to the office.

ARCHIE

I wonder if she's already here. There's a Minerva Bell and a Fred Holmes registered at the Sherman Inn, separate rooms of course. And they've been going through town, and the townspeople say that this Bell woman has been asking all types of snoopy questions.

MCMURTRY

TARHELL is here! I knew it!

Tarbell and Olmsted suddenly appear.

GARY

Miss Tarbell, you come at last! And what a pleasant surprise. You arrive a day early.

TARBELL

Am I being welcomed by none less than the President of the US Steel Corporation?

GARY

The pleasure is totally mine...ours. Right George?

TARBELL

We meet again.

MCMURTRY

We meet again.

TARBELL

And you remember, Mr. Olmsted.

GARY

Mr. Olmsted, thank you for designing our town.

OLMSTED

I loved sleeping at the Inn I designed a decade ago.

GARY

How delightful. The idea was totally mine. You must have spent a long time in drawing up the plans.

OLMSTED

Weeks and months!

GARY

You see the town a decade later. Are you happy with the results, young man?

OLMSTED

Let me think about that.

GARY

I know that we cut the lots in half and took a few other liberties.

OLMSTED

The deed is done.

MCMURTRY

And to think you almost removed the Olmsted and Eliot names.
How is this son of Harvard's President?

OLMSTED

Oh, you don't know about the tragedy! He suddenly died of
spinal meningitis in 1899. His father, in addition to
remaining Harvard's president, does what must be the most
dreadful thing for a man to do: write his dead son's
biography.

MCMURTRY

That is sad indeed. And you Miss *Tarhell*..I mean Miss
Tarbell.

TARBELL

I heard you right the first time.

GARY

And Miss Tarbell, I must commend you on your outstanding
work on the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. Price fixing
is a dreadful thing.

TARBELL

I agree.

GARY

That is why we at US. Steel are so upset about the
allegations that...

TARBELL

But now I am here to visit Vandergrift.

TOWNSEND

Miss Tarbell, these flowers are from the people of
Vandergrift.

TARBELL

Now who is this lovely young lady?

WHITWORTH

This is Katherine Townsend. About to be Mrs. James
Whitworth.

TARBELL

How lovely. Like the Townsend farm?

TOWNSEND

My grandfather.

TARBELL

I always say that the family is at the core of American life. And only the American woman can keep the family together.

TOWNSEND

You shall have to visit our home often.

GARY

I must now be off. May we give you a lift to Pittsburgh? You can stay at the DUQUESNE Club as my guest.

TARBELL

No, I will stay at the Sherman Inn. Mr. Olmsted may accept your invitation. I will spend another day here.

GARY

As you wish. Mr. Olmsted will be my guest. And can you drop by my office sometime? Our company needs your services to prepare some biographical material.

TARBELL

Gladly. In the meantime I shall meet with Mr. McMurtry and Burgess McIntyre.

Olmsted , Gary and all others exit.

MCMURTRY

Ten years is a long time. What has your snooping uncovered?

TARBELL

Much.

MCMURTRY

Like the job on JJ.

TARBELL

The portrayal was fair and balanced. Even Mr. Rockefeller agrees.

MCMURTRY

Fair and balanced!

TARBELL

I only reported court findings and facts.

MCMURTRY

Shall we change the subject? What will your report on Vandergrift say this time?

TARBELL

Surely, Mr. McMurtry...

MCMURTRY

Look up on the hill. Do you see the Casino Theatre? The Municipal Center

TARBELL

Looks fine.

MCINTYRE

That's all you have to say?

TARBELL

I like it.

MCMURTRY

That's all?

TARBELL

I've seen pictures before.

MCINTYRE

And does it look like the Acropolis?

TARBELL

Like a Scotch-Irish Acropolis.

MCMURTRY

Even better. MY Scotch Acropolis?

Bells begin ringing

TARBELL

The bells are ringing. They will awaken your workers. You'd better go and arrest the offending priest

MCMURTRY

Catholics always do it their own way. Now we're at the Municipal center. It's all there. The jail, the library, the Police Chief's office, the Casino Theatre, Council Chambers, all in one package.

TARBELL

With bells to remind their members, at least the Catholics will have fewer criminals.

MCMURTRY

Back to my Scotch-Irish Municipal center.

TARBELL

Unique indeed! So you mean someone can get out of jail, then go to the library? Then visit city council, and then do some shopping.

MCMURTRY

A convenient town, as they say.

Dunmore appears.

MCINTYRE

Mr. Dunmore? What are you doing in this fine town?

DUNMORE

I live here now.

MCMURTRY

Who let you in?

DUNMORE

My lovely bride and her father. Ellen and John Painter.

MCMURTRY

My finest steam roller. How would he allow his daughter to marry you!

DUNMORE

He welcomed me with open arms shall we say. He insisted on it...if you know what I mean. Mary and I decided to start a family earlier than we thought. And she doesn't want to leave her mother. You know what these Vandergrift girls are like.

MCMURTRY

Remember that this is a non-union town.

DUNMORE

That might change. You see, I work for the CIO...out of New Kensington.

MCMURTRY

We've beat the unions twice.

DUNMORE

These poor underpaid folks from Vandergrift know all that. Is this Miss Ida Tarbell again? THE Muckraker. After ten years absence! Let me welcome you to this fine town. Union guys all love you. You exposed Rockefeller...and Captain Vandergrift.

MCMURTRY

Be on your way!

DUNMORE

Remember Miss Tarbell. Your work is not done til you do the same to these steel guys.

MCINTYRE

On your way!

DUNMORE

Just a joke, ole boy. What type of Scotch fellas are you?

MCINTYRE

Honest and straight.

DUNMORE

Me too. I now reckon I'll become more civic minded, now that I live in the worker's paradise.

MCMURTRY

A good sign, indeed.

DUNMORE

Maybe I'll someday run for city council. Burgess McIntyre here needs help. I love this town. Even if it's named after a thief, like Miss Tarbell says. (laughs)

TARBELL

No thief. Mr. Rockefeller, with the able assistance of water boat Captain Vandergrift, developed the American oil industry. Their ways may have been questionable, but they committed no crime.

DUNMORE

You said they were indicted.

TARBELL

But not convicted!

DUNMORE

Where there's smoke, there's fire, like my mother in Belfast says. Now I must be on my way. My baby's to be born tomorrow.

MCMURTRY

Now be on your way. And behave yourself.

DUNMORE

Have a fine day, and long live the... Union! (exits)

MCMURTRY

(with lips) Bastard!

TARBELL

Don't say it.

MCMURTRY

And now, Miss Tarbell, you spoke of the Scotch Acropolis.
Here you have something Greek.

TARBELL

A church?

MCMURTRY

The first Greek Orthodox church in the Commonwealth.

TARBELL

And now I noticed two cemeteries when I entered the town.

MCINTYRE

One Catholic. They want their own cemetery. Don't want to be
tainted by other folks.

TARBELL

And the other?

MCINTYRE

Protestants, non-believers, throw-away Catholics.

TARBELL

Throw-away Catholics?

MCMURTRY

Those that haven't bellied up to the priest when they were
alive.

TARBELL

The townspeople say you, the burgess, and the other ministers
met with Father Wirtner.

MCINTYRE

We did. A cordial meeting.

TARBELL

Any hypocrisy?

MCMURTRY

How could it be a cordial meeting if there wasn't any hypocrisy. They go hand in hand. But I did offer them 15,000 dollars for the construction of their St. Gertrude's Church. And they promised not to ring their bells.

TARBELL

This has got to be the only town in the world where churches are not supposed to ring their bells.

MCMURTRY

Why did you have to snoop around the town?

TARBELL

That's my job.

MCMURTRY

You think I would lie?

TARBELL

Of course not. But I have to get other perspectives.

MCMURTRY

Ask me whatever you want.

TARBELL

Why is the 14 foot fence still up?

MCINTYRE

We tore it down. But the townspeople put it back up.

TARBELL

And look at this: (Pulls out sign from her bag) "Polacks and stray dogs not welcome"

MCINTYRE

A shame that those signs are still up.

TARBELL

Can you hire more police to tear them down?

MCMURTRY

We are not living in a police state.

TARBELL

This is the only town I have ever visited with a fourteen foot fence and offensive signs like this one.

MCMURTRY

Perhaps you're not searching enough.

Church bells ringing three times

TARBELL

Did Father Wirtner break the treaty. Will you penalize the church by deducting \$15,000:

MCMURTRY

Down to \$12000!

Bell rings three more times

MCMURTRY (cont'd)

\$9,000!

Bell rings three more times.

MCMURTRY

\$6,000.

TARBELL

They stopped. A nine thousand dollar penalty for ringing church bells? Newspapers across the country will love this. I can see the headlines: "Steel tycoon penalizes church for ringing bells.

MCMURTRY

I speak with tongue- in- cheek. You do not know Scottish people.

TARBELL

Maybe a little less hypocrisy next time.

MCMURTRY

That would mean less cordiality too.

MCINTYRE

M-m-m. I just remembered something. I heard Dunmore just converted to Catholicism with his marriage and all that.

MCMURTRY

Good riddance? He's going to hell anyhow. Better that he go to hell as a Catholic than a Presbyterian.

MCINTYRE

He's in charge of the bells at St. Gertrude's.

MCMURTRY

BASTARD!

SCENE 4 VANDERGRIFT, IN FRONT OF THE CASINO THEATRE, 1915

Tarbell, McMurtry, Whitworth, Tony Townsend, and McIntyre stand before a Marquee which reads "VANDERGRIFT, HAPPY TWENTIETH." An object covered with canvas stands nearby.

TOWNSEND

We are dying to see what is beneath the canvas..

MCMURTRY

Curiosity killed the cat. We must wait for Olmsted to arrive from Pittsburgh.

TOWNSEND

The train must be running late. Vandergrift is twenty years old tomorrow.

ARCHIE

And people are grumbling because they can not see their silent films at the Casino Theatre for two days.

MCINTYRE

But they have the esteemed internationally known journalist MISS IDA TARBELL to help us celebrate!

TARBELL

I have come to love this town and its people.

MCINTYRE

How many dinner invitations have you received?

TARBELL

About a dozen. Could only accept two.

WHITWORTH

Surely you will dine with Katherine and me this evening. I'll send my car for you.

TARBELL

Why of course. I savor seeing the two children.

TOWNSEND

Is it true that John D. Rockefeller not only held a door open for you, but actually ordered a cab for you in New York City?

TARBELL

Mr. Rockefeller is a very kind man!!

TOWNSEND

And how often have President and Mrs. Wilson invited you to the White House?

TARBELL

Not worth mentioning.

TOWNSEND

Six times for official state dinners, and twice for interviews, is what the Pittsburgh newspapers reported.

MCMURTRY

The suffragettes must be suffering when they read that.

TARBELL

Is that Mr. Olmsted I see in the distance?

MCINTYRE

With Elbert Gary?

TARBELL

What a surprise to see Dear Elbert and Mr. Olmsted.

MCMURTRY

Dear Elbert? Are you writing his biography?

TARBELL

Just some preliminary work on the US Steel Company and as it's president.

ARCHIE

I had no idea Gary was coming. He was invited but never responded.

MCMURTRY

Olmsted, welcome. Seems like you hired an expensive chauffeur.

GARY

Ida, so pleasant to see you here.

MCMURTRY

What brings the President of US Steel to our town? Twice in less than ten years.

GARY

Our joint venture-- Vandergrift. I personally picked up Mr. Olmsted at the Pittsburgh railroad station and we have travelled here by automobile. My new Ford.

MCMURTRY

Then you shall see the latest work by Mr. Olmsted.

OLMSTED

Shall we lift the curtain?

MCMURTRY

No need to lose time. Please draw the curtain, Katherine.

She draws the curtain revealing a large drawing of a mausoleum which resembles the Casino Theatre.

OLMSTED

It's a mausoleum!

ARCHIE

Resembling the Casino Theatre.

OLMSTED

And not bad.

GARY

Whose is it?

MCMURTRY

Mine.

ALL

Yours?

TARBELL

Are you planning an imminent departure of some kind?

MCMURTRY

We all have a departure of some kind. We just never know when.

GARY

I thought surely you would have wanted a simple headstone.

MCMURTRY

I want my mausoleum to reflect me, and the design which Olmsted here made.

GARY

(Smiling devilishly) How about a steel mill?

MCMURTRY

That's not my lasting legacy. It's the municipal center that faces the plant.

GARY

Well, you are to be commended.

MCMURTRY

Mr. Olmsted. What do you think of the town you designed twenty years ago?

OLMSTED

It's lovely.

MCMURTRY

What do you really think?

OLMSTED

Well the town is filled with smoke and fog.

MCMURTRY

It's actually good for you.

OLMSTED

I believe it can be harmful to the environment.

MCMURTRY

What's that?

OLMSTED

The air we breath, the destruction of the atmosphere.

MCMURTRY

So, how are we to become the most powerful nation on earth?

OLMSTED

That's a separate issue. You asked about the town.

MCMURTRY

Well you don't like the air and the smoke. Anything else?

OLMSTED

The municipal center faces the mill. This still bothers me.

MCMURTRY

That's the town's bread and butter. WE are now the world's largest steel producing plant

OLMSTED

True. But I had to point out what I thought was negative. On the overall, your town has been a success. Grant Avenue is a delight.

MCMURTRY

Miss Tarbell once called the Municipal Center the Scotch-Irish Acropolis. Do you agree?

OLMSTED

Not quite. I think that the Casino Theatre with all of its soot actually looks more like the Kiski Acropolis. This way you combine the Greek architecture with the historic origins of the town.

MCMURTRY

Mmm. I never thought of that.

Suddenly a chorus of demonstrators is heard.

DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

We want unions. We want unions.

MCMURTRY

Dunmore's people.

COUNTER- DEMONSTRATORS
(O.S.)

We love Vandergrift.

TARBELL

McMurtry's people.

DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

Kiss our butt.

COUNTER-DEMONSTRATORS

Leave Vandergrift.

DEMONSTRATORS

Higher wages! Better working conditions.

COUNTER- DEMONSTRATORS

Communists!

MCMURTRY

Arrest the Union demonstrators for disturbing the peace.

MCINTYRE

Immediately.

MCMURTRY

One thing you were right about, Miss Tarbell.

TARBELL

Yes.

MCMURTRY

More churches don't necessarily mean fewer police.

Dunmore enters.

DUNMORE

Now. Now. You're not going to arrest these peaceful demonstrators on the town's twentieth birthday.

MCMURTRY

They are worthless troublemakers who will destroy this town, this company and this country.

DUNMORE

And US Steel profits.

MCMURTRY

Get out of my town!

DUNMORE

Your town! This is the United States of America!

MCMURTRY

Arrest this man.

MCINTYRE

I can't.

DUNMORE

The union's lawyers will be here in no time.

MCINTYRE

He's right.

Suddenly McMurtry collapses. Dunmore exits.

TOWNSEND

Get Dr. Boale. Here, drink this water.

Immediately WHITWORTH

I'll be fine MCMURTRY

GARY
He's had these attacks before. He'll recover.

MCMURTRY
This glass of water will make me be as good as new.

TARBELL
George, your health is the most important thing.

MCMURTRY
You gotta get 'em. Ida Mae.

TARBELL
Get who.

MCMURTRY
The Unions. (Getting Up) I'm fine now. Just a little shortness of breath.

TARBELL
Off to the doctor first.

MCMURTRY
I'm as good as new. And I plan to live at least another twenty years. Let's celebrate.

The bells begin ringing again.

Act 2

SCENE 1 VANDERGRIFT, CUSTER AVENUE, 1925

Whitworth lawn. Store Signs reading Manganello's Fruits, Rubin's, Peggy Ann Shop, Sweetlane, Ross Drug Store, Altmire's, can be seen. Ida, Katherine, and James are seated on swings. Flapper music is heard in the background

TARBELL

Are both children now in college?

KATHERINE

Henry at Allegheny, Ann at Washington and Jefferson. .

TARBELL

Can it really be thirty years since the founding of the town?

KATHERINE

Yes. And surely George McMurtry is looking down from somewhere in that great beyond and must be pleased by what he sees. A high school, a town of twenty thousand, and 5000 employees at the US Steel plant. Of course the smoke, the rise of the labor unions should not please him.

TARBELL

I regretfully missed Mr. McMurtry's funeral. President Wilson insisted that I chair one of his committees that day.

KATHERINE

We went to New York for the funeral. Over a thousand people attended.

TARBELL

I paid my respects at Valhalla Cemetery, and the Mausoleum of the Casino Theatre is truly impressive.

KATHERINE

Archie, James, and the Burgess accompanied the body from Atlantic City to New York. His last words were that his living legacy would be the town he created. And what you have done for the town is remarkable.

TARBELL

The town I once visited as subject material for an article is now a place near and dear to me. All the families I have come to know on a personal basis. I have always said that families take first priority, and that is what our American lifestyle is all about.

KATHERINE

Well it's so nice of you to testify at tonight's Council hearing.

WHITWORTH

It's outrageous that ten years after his death we still do not have a monument of any kind to the memory of George McMurtry.

TARBELL

Hopefully tonight will change that.

WHITWORTH

You know that Dunmore is now city council chair?

TARBELL

Surely he will respect the dead.

WHITWORTH

He does. But with one exception.

KATHERINE

Let us think more pleasant thoughts. Shall we take a walk up Grant Avenue to see the newest stores?

WHITWORTH

And I must go back to the office.

TARBELL

I would love to swing for a while and just watch the traffic go by.

Katherine and Whitworth exit. The music gets louder and cars go by the street. Horns are honking. Tarbell begins fanning herself. Suddenly George McMurtry appears.

MCMURTRY

Hello, Ida Mae.

TARBELL

A ghost! I must be dreaming.

MCMURTRY

Don't use that word. It sounds too ghoulish.

TARBELL

But you died ten years ago.

MCMURTRY

I am well aware of that.

TARBELL

Then who are you?

MCMURTRY

George McMurtry. Either real or in your mind. Now quiet down. You are the only person who can see me. And if your lips move too much, people might think you're crazy, talking to yourself.

TARBELL

Why have you come back!

MCMURTRY

I came to see you. Does the town work?

TARBELL

Of course it does.

MCMURTRY

But is it different from any other mill town?

TARBELL

You once told me never to use that term.

MCMURTRY

I was hoping you would say it IS different from any other mill town.

TARBELL

It is but where are you?

MCMURTRY

I'm here.

TARBELL

I know that, but tell me what it's like.

MCMURTRY

My lips are sealed.

TARBELL

Please?

MCMURTRY

I can discuss your world. I am forbidden to discuss my world.

TARBELL

What! Why!

MCMURTRY

Why haven't you exposed those corrupt unions.

TARBELL

They are no more corrupt than some of your executives.

MCMURTRY

You sold yourself.

TARBELL

Me! Never!

MCMURTRY

You slew John D. Rockefeller and you set up Elbert Gary for adoration by writing that dumb biography.

TARBELL

Stop it!

MCMURTRY

You ravaged Captain Vandergrift and idolized that worthless Episcopalian.

TARBELL

I'm plugging my ears.

MCMURTRY

And the newspapers had a field day on you! "St. Elbert of the Clouds" they said. And so you are letting the unions free too.

TARBELL

You are attacking my professionalism.

MCMURTRY

A woman who opposed women's right to vote, now helps labor and useless steel executives at the same time.

TARBELL

Drop dead!

MCMURTRY

I am dead!

TARBELL

Then drop dead again!

MCMURTRY

Have you visited my mausoleum?

TARBELL

I have and that's why I am here tonight. To put up a lasting memorial to you.

MCMURTRY

No need. The town is my memorial. Just use all your power to destroy the union. Forget about my statue.

TARBELL

Never.

MCMURTRY

Don't bet on succeeding.

Vandergrift Council Chambers. Dark.

DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

Yes. Yes. Yes.

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

No! No! No!

MCINTYRE

Now comes the question of a memorial to George W. McMurtry, which some of you on this council have long awaited. Mr. Dunmore will give his report.

DUNMORE

Mr. Police Chief and members of Council. The committee has worked hard on this project and we have voted 4 to 3 to postpone any action at this time.

ARCHIE

This is the fourth time action has been postponed.

DUNMORE

We can act too precipitously.

ARCHIE

Is a statue to the town's founder out of our reach?

DUNMORE

We have no funds.

ARCHIE

Our treasury is filled.

DUNMORE

We have schools to build, fire departments to assist, and so on.

WHITWORTH

Private funds can be raised.

DUNMORE

That is out of the question. We have no space to put such a statue. Also, union members are opposed to a statue.

WHITWORTH

How about naming a street after him.

DUNMORE

What street?

WHITWORTH

Why not Holland Street?

DUNMORE

Holland street. Holland is my favorite country.

ARCHIE

Most of the residents are Italian.

DUNMORE

All the more reason not to change the name of the street. The Dutch love the Italians and the Italians love the Dutch.

ARCHIE

I wasn't aware of that. In fact, I've spoken to some of the residents and none objected to a name change.

DUNMORE

Holland Street has some liars living there. You must have spoken to some of the liars.

WHITWORTH

Mr. Chairman, I must point out that Holland Street was not named after the country but the writer. Are you familiar with his work/

DUNMORE

I knew that. He's one of my favorite novelists. All the more reason not to rename the street.

WHITWORTH

Oh, you've read his works.

DUNMORE

Yes.

WHITWORTH

Which ones?

DUNMORE

I can't recall. What is this? A trial.

WHITWORTH

Are you willing to abandon any lasting memorial to the man who built this town?

DUNMORE

No. I do have a solution. How about naming the alley behind Holland Avenue after him?

MCINTYRE

An alley! That runs by the town dump!

DUNMORE

We can call it McMurtry's Court. If I can get my committee to go along with it.

MCINTYRE

Absolutely not.

DUNMORE

Then I have another idea. Perhaps we can name the city dump after him.

MCINTYRE

The Dump!

DUNMORE

A dump is very important to Vandergrift. How would you like to have a town without a place to put its garbage?

MCINTYRE

I see the motion is going nowhere. Perhaps we can hear a few words from our distinguished visitor whom some call the Nation's most preeminent journalist. Ida Tarbell has taken an interest in this town since its inception.

DUNMORE

Let us hear from Miss Tarbell herself.

MCMURTRY (O.S.)

Ida Mae, don't say anything.

TARBELL

Hush.

Everyone begins laughing.

DUNMORE

Are you telling me to shut up!

TARBELL

No, I was just clearing my throat. Please accept my apology

DUNMORE

You better watch that, dear Ida Mae. Some folks saw you talking to yourself today.

TARBELL

People are always saying that about me.

ARCHIE

Let us hear Miss Tarbell.

TARBELL

Vandergrift is a unique town indeed. There is no other city in the country quite like it. Thirty years after its creation, it is a thriving city built around one man's ideal of a workers paradise. A town of homes and gardens, the result of one man's deliberate attempt to make a better town than there s in the world for physical health and comfort. How many other such cities have been designed by Frederick Law Olmsted? Each time I return, I see the lovely streets, gardens, parks, play areas, trees, streets named for poets and statesman, and trees. The city is a living ideal to a man of dreams. That man is George McMurtry. One small memorial like a street or statue would be an appropriate way to honor his contribution.

DUNMORE

Dear Miss Tarbell. You forget one thing. He made a bundle of money when he sold the lots.

TARBELL

Mr. Dunmore, that too is an American ideal.

DUNMORE

And he cut the lots in half. So much for Olmsted's ideal.

TARBELL

No one is perfect.

DUNMORE

And he tried to destroy labor unions.

TARBELL

He could have chosen many other routes to do this. Please have your committee reconsider, Mr. Dunmore.

DUNMORE

Who can turn down the one and only Ida Tarbell? I am now a college graduate. I just read your Rockefeller book. JJ Vandergrift seems like an unsavory person.

TARBELL

I am not asking you to honor Captain Vandergrift. Only George McMurtry.

DUNMORE

OK. My committee will reconsider and come up with a report in a couple of years.

MCINTYRE

George McMurtry. Rest in peace.

DUNMORE

And remember, he already has a fire company named after him. They could have called it something else, like the William Penn Fire Company but they chose to name it after George.

MCINTYRE

Let the dead rest in peace.

DUNMORE

I will be glad to. Just don't bring his name up again.

MCMURTRY (O.S.)

Bastard!

SCENE 2 VANDERGRIFT, DAVIS FIELD, 1935

Archie and Ida are standing on Davis Field. Ida's eyes are closed.

ARCHIE

Turn on the lights.

The lights come on.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

You can open your eyes now.

TARBELL

Wow! Your dream come true. DAVIS FIELD.

ARCHIE

My next dream is to have a professional baseball team here.

TARBELL

The Vandergrift Steelers?

ARCHIE

Might cause a problem with the Pittsburgh football team.

TARBELL

How about the Vandergrift Pioneers?

ARCHIE

A thought. And you have to come back for one of the Vandergrift High School Lancer football games.

TARBELL

My schedule has quieted as I approach 80.

ARCHIE

You've never looked so good Miss Tarbell. Shall we play ball?

Pulls out softball and bat.

TARBELL

I!

McMurtry appears.

MCMURTRY

Thought I had forgotten you. Do it, Ida Mae.

ARCHIE

I can always say Ida Tarbell played ball on Davis Field.

DUNMORE (O.S.)

Miss Tarbell is always playing ball. But with the wrong people.

Dunmore appears on stage.

ARCHIE

What brings you here at this time of night?

DUNMORE

The lights from Davis Field came straight through my window.
I was wondering what type of creature would be here at night.

ARCHIE

Come and play ball with us.

DUNMORE

You're using city electricity.

ARCHIE

With the Burgess' approval. And my own ball field?

DUNMORE

There's a depression?

ARCHIE

If you play ball, will that make the Depression worse?

DUNMORE

Not much to celebrate about. One out of every four residents
of the Worker's Utopia is being foreclosed upon.

TARBELL

Sad indeed. But that rate is much lower than for the rest of
the country.

DUNMORE

That doesn't help. People are starving. Where is McMurtry's
dream now.

TARBELL

Very much alive. The town is now 40 years old.

DUNMORE

And unionized.

ARCHIE

George McMurtry is turning over in his grave.

MCMURTRY

He is not.

DUNMORE

Wherever in hell he's burning. Five thousand men are now
out of work. Some people are starving.

TARBELL

(To McMurtry) Well are you?

ARCHIE

(To Tarbell) Am I what?

MCMURTRY

(To Tarbell) My lips are sealed.

ARCHIE

Well join us in a little practice. Dunmore.

DUNMORE

What the heck!

ARCHIE

Take this bat, Ida. I'll pitch. You catch, Dunmore.

TARBELL

I have never hit a ball in my life before. And here I go at age 78. ..

They get in position. Ida raises the bat, and McMurtry puts his arms around her and holds the bat with her.

ARCHIE

First pitch.

She hits the ball into left field.

MCMURTRY

That a girl, Ida Mae. Now destroy those dam unions!

ARCHIE

What's your secret.

DUNMORE

That's at least a single.

ARCHIE

Here's the second pitch.

She and McMurtry hit the ball into right field.

DUNMORE

That's at least a double.

ARCHIE

Here's the third pitch.

She and McMurtry hits the ball into center field.

TARBELL
Now it's your turn Mr. Dunmore.

ARCHIE
Come on Dunmore.

DUNMORE
What the heck.

ARCHIE
Here's the first pitch.Strike One.

DUNMORE
Try again.

ARCHIE
Strike two.

DUNMORE
Try again.

The ball goes over the fence for a home run.

ARCHIE
A home run, old man.

DUNMORE
That proves that it's not over till it's over.

ARCHIE
There are many more innings to this game.

A fire siren is heard and a fire truck whizzes by with the name GEORGE MCMURTRY FIRE ENGINE COMPANY emblazed on the side.

TARBELL
Oh, dear, a fire.

ARCHIE
Na. That means the fire is over. But the name is a reminder of the George McMurtry's contribution to this town.

DUNMORE

Don't say that too loudly, Archie ole boy. You might be tarred and feathered.

ARCHIE

I don't think so.

DUNMORE

Gotta go. (exits)

ARCHIE

What's your verdict on our fortieth anniversary?

TARBELL

The town is delightful even though the smoke, smog, noise, and the stream of workers is like that of any other town in Pennsylvania. But Olmsted's design will not change. And he hopes to be here for the town's fiftieth. But I have one problem.

ARCHIE

What is that?

TARBELL

Davis Field.

ARCHIE

You don't like it!

TARBELL

I do. But it is a segregating line. Davis Field is a natural barrier between the desirable part of Vandergrift and Vandergrift Heights and the Park Plan. And then East Vandergrift is divided from Vandergrift.

ARCHIE

Sure it is. But what's wrong with segregation?

TARBELL

We are one country. This town is divided by class and ethnicity,

ARCHIE

What's wrong with that?

TARBELL

We are one country.

ARCHIE

With many parts. That's what gives the town its charm. Good solid segregation. I haven't seen anybody cry about it.

TARBELL

It seems unjust.

ARCHIE

Our schools are not segregated. And spaghetti, mashed potatoes, and holopki don't mix well.

TARBELL

If that's the way you look at it.

ARCHIE

Don't you spend most of your year in your Central Park Apartment in New York City?

TARBELL

I do.

ARCHIE

And that isn't segregated?

TARBELL

But..

ARCHIE

Now let's head back home.

TARBELL

I would like to walk back to the Whitworth house alone. Just a relaxing walk.

ARCHIE

Do you feel safe?

TARBELL

If you are not safe in Vandergrift, where are you safe?

ARCHIE

Good night. And I will drive you to Pittsburgh in the morning.. Adieu. (exits)

MCMURTRY

You stayed back for me, didn't you?

TARBELL

The truth be known. Yes. I have a question I've been dying to know?

MCMURTRY

Yeah?

TARBELL

Is President Wilson in Heaven?

MCMURTRY

My lips...

TARBELL

Are sealed.

MCMURTRY

Some people feel that Democrats should never go to heaven. How about Hoover, Coolidge and Harding? Seems as if they all rolled out the red carpet for you.

TARBELL

If your darned LIPS ARE SEALED, what good would it do me? Are you happy with your town?

MCMURTRY

Nope! It's a union town.

TARBELL

Things could be worse.

MCMURTRY

Nope. Now Vandergrift is in the Union's palm. A fate worse than ---, and I won't say the word. Maybe the union will just go away.

TARBELL

Perhaps the Depression too.

MCMURTRY

Maybe. Come back for the fiftieth and find out.

TARBELL

I doubt that I will make it.

MCMURTRY

I think you will. Good night, Ida Mae.

SCENE 3 VANDERGRIFT, GRANT AVENUE, 1945

Banners reading RETURN HOME BOYS, BUY WAR BONDS, OLMSTED'S DREAM COME TRUE, and VANDERGRIFT AT 50 are flying from telephone poles. Grant Avenue is flooded with people as Ida Tarbell, Frederic Law Olmsted, Jr., Katherine and James Whitworth, Archie Davis and Burgess McIntyre are on a platform listening to the Star Spangled Banner. Suddenly George McMurtry appears.

MCINTYRE

Happy Fiftieth!

CROWD

Happy Fiftieth!

MCINTYRE

We celebrate our fiftieth anniversary today. In a time of War. We pray first that all of our servicemen come home safely.

CROWD

Amen. (applause)

MCINTYRE

We are one nation, undivided, under God.

CROWD

Amen. (applause)

MCINTYRE

Young men of every ethnicity, Polish, Italian, Greek, Slavic, Irish, German and Lebanese Americans have given up their lives up in this war. Many were sons of very recently arrived immigrants. Their parents had barely unpacked. But they reflected a love we all have for this great country.

CROWD

Yes. (applause)

MCINTYRE

And now the St. Gertrude's bells will ring 21 times in memory of all those residents of Vandergrift who lost their lives fighting our enemies. .

The bells ring 21 times

MCINTYRE (cont'd)

And now we will hear from two speakers of national significance who have known a lot about Vandergrift. First is Ida Tarbell, who wrote about our town, and the second is Fred Olmsted who designed the town. Miss Tarbell, first.

Ida Tarbell rises. Her hands are shaking.

TARBELL

Ladies and Gentleman. I first visited Vandergrift nearly fifty years ago. Then I wrote about the beautiful streets, sloping hills, distinguished homes, delightful shops, and the historical significance of a town built as a workers' utopia. But the most important thing about this town are the people, a people I have come to love. Let me sum it up as did George McMurtry: We have something here that is better than the best. Thank you so much. Now, Mr. Olmsted.

OLMSTED

About fifty years ago, George McMurtry, Miss Tarbell, and I met not far from this spot as this new town of Vandergrift became a reality. A model and picturesque workingman's town created along advanced ideas. Beautiful residences and streets. A working force of 5000 men and women. The town has lived up to the ideals and goals of George W. McMurtry. God bless you.

Crowd applauds wildly.

TARBELL

(whispering) Aren't you proud.

MCMURTRY

Yes.

MCINTYRE

(whispering) Poor Ida Tarbell is talking to herself.

ARCHIE

She's been doing it for years.

WHITWORTH

But only in Vandergrift, they say.

KATHERINE

Men don't gossip, do they?

WHITWORTH

Maybe it's just her unknown disease.

OLMSTED

We drove in. I would now like to see the Sherman Inn.

WHITWORTH

I regret to inform you that it has been torn down.

OLMSTED

Torn down!

WHITWORTH

To make way for some needed wartime housing.

OLMSTED

Shucks. I spent months and years designing that inn.

Everyone laughs.

MCINTYRE

Now let us mingle with the crowd.

TARBELL

And where is Mr. Dunmore today? Surely

MCINTYRE

It's very sad. His favorite Grandson was killed in France. He is a changed, perhaps destroyed man.

TARBELL

Oh Dear. Shall I pay my respects?

ARCHIE

Perhaps not. His health is not good.

WHITWORTH

He is a broken and humbled man. He just contributed several inspiring books to the Vandergrift Library in his grandson's memory.

MCINTYRE

And an anonymous donation was made to the Vandergrift Library in honor of George McMurtry. And there are rumors....

TARBELL

Yes?

MCINTYRE

Its the best kept secret in town. The books were donated by Jack Dunmore. A now shall we mix in with the crowd?

TARBELL

I think I shall take a small walk alone.

WHITWORTH

Alone. Ida! Your health...

TARBELL

I want to walk alone. I am fine. These old age shakes are really nothing to worry about. Even though they're trying to give them a name, Parkinson's or something. I will be fine. I will return shortly. (She walks up the street)

KATHERINE

Jamie, follow her from a distance. Her niece will be very upset.

TARBELL

(turning to McMurtry) Are you pleased with these last ten years.

MCMURTRY

Very proud. But not so proud of you.

TARBELL

There you go upsetting me again! What is it this time?

MCMURTRY

You have a fetish for fat Italians. Kissing Benito's butt.

TARBELL

I interviewed him six years ago, we were not even at war.

MCMURTRY

He kissed your hand?

TARBELL

He did.

MCMURTRY

You'll never change, Ida Mae. First Napoleon, now Mussolini. And you sandwiched Abe Lincoln in between. Ha.

TARBELL

I'd like to kill you.

MCMURTRY

You can't. I died thirty years ago.

TARBELL

Are you real or in my mind?

MCMURTRY

My lips are sealed.

TARBELL

That again!

MCMURTRY

You have travelled throughout the world, you have shaken the hands of kings and queens, every 'American president since Teddy Roosevelt has shaken your hand, you kicked Rockefeller you know where, you have written three biographies, and the list is endless.

TARBELL

That's right. So what?

MCMURTRY

So why did you take such an interest in Vandergrift?

TARBELL

At first it was work. Remember, I once said that Vandergrift was the most important industrial town in America. And then the people..

MCMURTRY

But you never lived here.

TARBELL

You didn't either! I recall that you and Clare moved to New York City shortly before the turn of the century.

MCMURTRY

My work was in New York. And there was no way I could live above the store so to speak. But it's still my town. Visit my mausoleum.

TARBELL

And what happens when the industrial age is over?

MCMURTRY

The Industrial Age will never end.

TARBELL

God won't curse this country like that. The industrial age will end.

MCMURTRY

Unions may send the industrial age to China. But can I believe that THE Ida Tarbell wants to destroy American jobs!

TARBELL

Of course not.

MCMURTRY

Then why?

TARBELL

The same reason I once, perhaps mistakenly opposed women's right to vote. I believe in the family. And the woman's role is pivotal in the family. And hopefully we can go back to an agrarian society. I'm like that slaveholder named Thomas Jefferson.

MCMURTRY

Go back to the Townsend farm? That would mean destroying the town.

TARBELL

Not quite. But what happens if the mill closes?

MCMURTRY

That will never happen!

TARBELL

Ah, you have insights into the future.

MCMURTRY

I do not. But there is a woman who does.

TARBELL

Violet, the Columbia Avenue fortune teller?

MCMURTRY

How did you know?

TARBELL

There are no secrets in Vandergrift. How did you know?

MCMURTRY

My lips are sealed. And you believe in fortune tellers?

TARBELL

That's always been one of my weaknesses. Could you give me some directions.

MCMURTRY

You're standing in front of her house. And now I must go. You're better than the best, Ida Mae. Goodbye. I'll be seeing you. (exits)

Ida knocks on the door. VIOLET,
forties, answers from behind the door.

VIOLET

Yes?

TARBELL

Is this Violet's home?

VIOLET

Yes. Who are you? Another one of them Holy Rollers?

TARBELL

Far from it. .

VIOLET

I see you through the peep hole. You look like an old Holy
Roller.

TARBELL

I am old but I am not a Holy Roller. I am neither holy nor a
roller.

VIOLET

That's funny. Come in, sweetie pie.

TARBELL

Are you a fortune teller?

VIOLET

Are you working for the police?

TARBELL

No, indeed.

VIOLET

Wait a minute. I sense something fishy. (Walks around Ida)
Have you been around a Presbyterian?

TARBELL

Not that I know of.

VIOLET

I sense something. Tell me the truth.

TARBELL

I always tell the truth.

VIOLET

I believe you. You look like a nice old lady.

TARBELL

I understand you are a very good fortune teller.

VIOLET

I'm the best, honey.

TARBELL

Can you do a reading for me?

VIOLET

Yes, honey, I charge ten dollars.

TARBELL

I pay only \$5 in Titusville.

VIOLET

That's Titusville. This is Vandergrift.

TARBELL

All right.

VIOLET

What's your name, sweetie?

TARBELL

Ida Tarbell

VIOLET

(Laughing) It sounds like a cow.

TARBELL

I am not a cow. Do I smell cats?

VIOLET

You bet, sixteen of them.

TARBELL

Your husband must also like cats.

VIOLET

No husbands. All three said it was choosing them or the cats. The cats are still here. What do you want to know? Honey.

TARBELL

What is going to happen to the steel business.

VIOLET
Strange question. (Pulls out crystal ball) Abracadabra.
Abracadabra.

TARBELL
This seems suspicious.

VIOLET
Want your money back?

TARBELL
No thank you, proceed.

VIOLET
Abracadabra abracadabra. I look into the future . And I
see men and women making steel.

TARBELL
Women?

VIOLET
Yes. And I see steel being made by foreigners. They look
like Germans and Japanese.

TARBELL
I think you may be confusing our war enemies with future
steel producers.

VIOLET
I don't make too many mistakes.

TARBELL
And the Vandergrift steel plant.

VIOLET
It's closed.

TARBELL
Closed?

VIOLET
And there's a white sheet over it.

TARBELL
Surprising indeed.

VIOLET
Is there anything else you want to know?

TARBELL

No thank you.

VIOLET

Wanna know how much longer you've got?

TARBELL

No. Thank you. Now I must go.

VIOLET

You're so nice, sweetie. Here's two dollars back for you. That's a Vandergrift thing.

TARBELL

No, keep the two dollars, sweetie pie. I appreciate your service. One question for you. Have you ever heard of George McMurtry?

VIOLET

No. Who is he?

TARBELL

He once lived in this town.

VIOLET

Did he work in the mill.

TARBELL

You might say that.

VIOLET

No...Wait a minute. There's a fire truck named McMurtry. Was he a fireman?

TARBELL

No.

VIOLET

And the next time you come I'll have some coffee for you. And you know, I'd like to name my next cat after you. Cat Tarbell. Sounds nice.

TARBELL

I'm honored.

VIOLET

You're such a sweetie pie.

TARBELL

You are a sweetie pie too. Now I must go...Honey.

Ida exits and Jim Whitworth is waiting for her.

WHITWORTH
We've been looking all over town for you. Where have you been?

TARBELL
I visited an old friend.

WHITWORTH
Someone said you visited that fortune teller. Did you?

TARBELL
Of course not.

WHITWORTH
Your niece called. She is picking you up tomorrow after lunch.

TARBELL
Good. I want to go to church tomorrow.

WHITWORTH
You?

TARBELL
Yes indeed. And I think I will go to the Methodist Church.

WHITWORTH
Just a short distance away.

TARBELL
No on second thought, I think I will go to the Presbyterian Church.

WHITWORTH
Even better. That is the church we belong to.

TARBELL
I shall like seeing the Tiffany windows.

WHITWORTH
Presbyterian? Must be George McMurtry's ghost?

TARBELL
My lips are sealed.

Dark. St. Gertrude Church's bells
begin ringing.

POLICE CHIEF (O.S.)

The Industrial Age came to an end like Ida Tarbell wished. And Violet was right. US Steel, or USX, permanently closed its doors in 1986. The town that was built as a workers utopia and had the world's largest steel mill, no longer had need for steel workers. The head of the local union arrived at the plant to find the doors barred. George McMurtry was winking. The mill was closed. Now what happens to George McMurtry's dream, Ida Tarbell's ideals, and Frederick Olmsted's design?

SCENE 4 FRONT OF THE CASINO THEATER, 2006

Fredericka Olmsted, early twenties
dismounts from her motorcycle, and is
stopped by Police Chief Dunmore, late
twenties.

POLICE CHIEF

You just went through the only stop light in this town. The only one in town. Didn't you hear my siren? Driver's license?

FREDERICKA

I don't have one.

POLICE CHIEF

Why not?

FREDERICKA

I forgot my wallet.

POLICE CHIEF

Driving without a license? Grounds for arrest.

FREDERICKA

For forgetting my wallet?

POLICE CHIEF

Any jurisdiction in the United States of America would arrest you for driving without a license.

FREDERICKA

The Vandergrift Improvement Committee says that this is a friendly historic town.

POLICE CHIEF

The Vandergrift Improvement Committee does not say that you should break the law.

FREDERICKA

I did not go through that red light!

POLICE CHIEF

Other identification?

FREDERICKA

Oh wait. I have my license in my pack. (Pulls it out and hands it to him)

POLICE CHIEF

Fredericka Olmsted? Any relation?

FREDERICKA

My great, great grandfather? How do you know about him?

POLICE CHIEF

You think I'm dumb? He designed this town.

FREDERICKA

Oh no Sir. It's just that..

POLICE CHIEF

I see you're from New York.

FREDERICKA

Upper state New York. But currently live in Meadville.

POLICE CHIEF

Allegheny College?

FREDERICKA

Yes.

POLICE CHIEF

Clarion myself. Here's your citation. I'm letting you off easy this time.

FREDERICKA

Oh, thank you so much officer. I promise never to ..

POLICE CHIEF

So you want to know about your great grandfather and the design of this town?

FREDERICKA

I know enough about him. I'm primarily interested in Ida Tarbell. She is the subject of my junior thesis at Allegheny College.

POLICE CHIEF

As I recall, she went there.

FREDERICKA

And when I learned of the association between the my great grandfather and Ida, not via New York or London or Paris or Cambridge, but by way of Vandergrift, I became truly excited with the whole idea of a workingman's paradise.

POLICE CHIEF

Have you met with the Vandergrift Improvement Committee?

FREDERICKA

This afternoon.

POLICE CHIEF

And the Victorian Vandergrift Museum

FREDERICKA

Tomorrow morning?

POLICE CHIEF

And the Casino Theatre?

FREDERICKA

I'm going in there now.

POLICE CHIEF

I see the mill is gone, but the town's still here. It's been here for a hundred and ten years, and hopefully for another one hundred ten years.

FREDERICKA

But can the town ever be the same?

POLICE CHIEF

Hopefully not.

FREDERICKA

What? Five thousand jobs are gone.

POLICE CHIEF

That's right. But how does the air smell?

FREDERICKA

Fine. Other than my cigarette.

POLICE CHIEF

When I was a child, the air was filled with smoke. Faithfully each day, 1500 workers entered the plant at 8 AM and 1500 workers exited the plant at 8 AM. Then a repeat at four in the afternoon, and then again at midnight. Not a happy sight.

FREDERICKA

But the economic base? I notice an Allegheny Ludlum plant.

POLICE CHIEF

Yep. We make as much steel as ever. Two hundred workers produce as much as 5000 workers produced fifty years ago. Machines do the rest, the work of 4800 men and women.

FREDERICKA

That's a big loss.

POLICE CHIEF

We're still here. What happens in America happens in Vandergrift. A hundred years ago, millions of Americans engaged in farming. Now only 1 percent of those farmers are feeding the Nation and the world. Mining is mostly gone too. Now manufacturing is gone. Now most of our steel is made in foreign countries.

FREDERICKA

Like automobiles, computers,

POLICE CHIEF

Televisions, radios, textiles and so on. The list is endless. But somehow America survives, and so does Vandergrift and all of the manufacturing belt from New England to Illinois. But America adjusts and so does Vandergrift. We're smaller and better.

FREDERICKA

And the downtown?

POLICE CHIEF

It's still there.

FREDERICKA

But empty.

POLICE CHIEF

Go to the malls outside of town, and they're full. Same as any other town in America.

FREDERICKA

And what would Miss Tarbell say if she came here today? That's the title of my thesis: Ida Tarbell's Visit to Vandergrift, 2005.

POLICE CHIEF

Now you really have me interested.

FREDERICKA

The town was founded to house workers and destroy unions. Now there are no workers and no unions. Why the town?

POLICE CHIEF

Miss Tarbell would find a cleaner more environmentally friendly town. Unlike much of America, she would not find any traffic congestion. Reasonable housing prices and a whole bunch of good stuff. We can even go fishing and maybe someday go swimming in the Kiski River. What do you say, Fredericka?

FREDERICKA

The Scotch-Irish Acropolis still stands, Grant Avenue is still intact, Washington and Hancock Avenues still retain their Victorian charm, the parks and playgrounds are delightful, the churches are almost picturesque. Some say the empty Greek Orthodox church and the Sons of Italy Hall and should become designated landmarks.

POLICE CHIEF

Frederick Law Olmsted would be pleased. The town will always bear his landscape design.

Ida Tarbell appears.

FREDERICKA

To be sure. But my subject, Miss Tarbell?

George McMurtry appears

POLICE CHIEF

She always said that she awaited the end of the Industrial Age. It's happened. But the family was what it was all about she said. And that's where we excel. We're here.

Frederick Law Olmsted appears.

I understand.
 FREDERICKA

Whitworth, Katherine, Archie, McIntyre,
 Gary, and Dunmore appear.

POLICE CHIEF
 Because, like McMurtry once said: WE'RE BETTER THAN THE
 BEST.

FREDERICKA
 Do I hear a spirit of Tarbell, Olmsted and McMurtry?

ALL
 (waving to audience)
 (except Police Chief and Fredericka) Yes. BECAUSE WE'RE
 BETTER THAN THE BEST.

FREDERICKA
 Do I hear voices?

POLICE CHIEF
 Maybe.

ALL
 (waving to audience)
 (except Police Chief and Fredericka) Welcome to Vandergrift.
 Come Back! Because we are better than the best. And so are
 you.

St. Gertrude's Bells begin ringing.

TARBELL
 (to audience)
 We hope you like the Scotch-Irish Acropolis.

ARCHIE
 (to audience)
 Are you playing ball on Davis Field

WHITWORTH

(to audience)

Apollo really did not die!

DUNMORE

(to audience)

I loved ringing those bells. If you're asleep, wake up.

MCINTYRE

(to audience)

Vandergrift's the best borough in the world. My honest-to-goodness, unbiased opinion.

KATHERINE

(to audience)

I really never thought Miss Tarbell was talking to herself. People from Vandergrift do not gossip.

OLMSTED

(to audience)

Please find my plans for the Sherman Inn and rebuild it.

VIOLET

(to audience)

Abracadabra. Abracadabra. Does anyone have any cats?

GARY

(to audience)

Please read Miss Tarbell's superb biography of Elbert Gary. It's must reading.

FREDERICKA

(to audience)

Only one traffic light. Charming. But don't ignore it.

MCMURTRY

(to audience)

And if you get a chance, visit my mausoleum in Valhalla, New York. Or better yet, come and support the Casino Theater.

The Scotch-Irish Acropolis is now designated a historic landmark. I'm proud. My lips will not be sealed.

ALL

(To audience)

Thanks for coming. And remember: YOU'RE BETTER THAN THE BEST. Come to Vandergrift again.

END OF PLAY

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