

TESLA
The Poet of Electricity

by

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Inspired by the life of Nikola Tesla

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NOTE:

The story of Nikola Tesla is intended as 2-part mini series or extended feature and therefore deviates from the normal 90- to 120-page format.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, 1943 - WINTER NIGHT

A limo pulls up to the *New Yorker*, a cheap hotel in a shabby section of town, as TITLES superimpose. The DRIVER gets out and opens the door for an ELEGANT WOMAN. She enters the hotel and proceeds up a creepy set of stairs to the third floor. Arriving at a "Do Not Disturb" sign, she knocks on the door. Nothing. She knocks louder. Still nothing ... then, through the door:

ANGRY VOICE (VO)
Who is it?

ELEGANT WOMAN
It's Marguerite.

ANGRY VOICE (VO)
What do you want?

Marguerite's voice breaks up as she hears this.

MARGUERITE
Let me in Nikki.

ANGRY VOICE (VO)
(after a long moment)
Marguerite, go away.

MARGUERITE
(with tears in her voice)
Nikki ... why are you rejecting me?

There's a long silence.

MARGUERITE
Nikki?

More silence. Then in a softer, broken voice.

NIKKI (VO)
Because you remind me too much of
Wardenclyffe ...

Marguerite puts her head against the door.

SLOW DISSOLVE
BACK TO 1884:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, 1884 - SPRING DAY

From a high angle of a New York street, CAMERA cranes down through a maze of wires some thirteen tiers deep. A plume of smoke rises in the distance as sirens grow louder. PEOPLE go about their daily lives - even as they carefully step around a HORSE that has just been electrocuted. From the crowd, NIKOLA TESLA (28), a tall, handsome man with dark hair, blue eyes and a mustache, emerges and sits on a park bench. As he pulls a ragged letter from his pocket, four pennies fall to the ground. He quickly picks them up as a STYLISH LADY passes.

TESLA

Excuse me madam, might you know how
I get to this address?

Tesla takes the letter, which is from *Edison Electric Company* in Paris, and shows it to her.

STYLISH LADY

(looking at letter)
Are you from Paris?

TESLA

No, I'm from Austria. I *worked* in
Paris as an electrical engineer.

STYLISH LADY

What an interesting new field.
(noticing his good looks)
So many possibilities.

Tesla smiles shyly. She takes the letter and carefully observes the address. A horse-drawn carriage passes in the background as she points out the direction.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EDISON'S OFFICE - DAY

Tesla is sitting in a chair before the desk of the great THOMAS EDISON (34), his letter of introduction in hand. Thomas Edison is the opposite of Tesla in almost every way. A short and portly man six years Tesla's senior, Edison is a self-taught, street-smart inventor with an eye to the practical which made him famous and wealthy. Sirens are still in the distance as MARTHA MANNING, Edison's personal secretary, barges in screaming.

MARTHA

A curtain caught fire in Mrs. Vanderbilt's mansion and she wants you to remove your electrical contraptions immediately.

But Edison is on the phone handling another crisis. Tesla continues to wait patiently. Then to Martha:

EDISON

Okay, okay.
 (then into the phone)
 The horse was electrocuted where?
 The driver is nowhere to be found?
 For damn sakes....

Another phone rings. Edison impulsively grabs it ... anything to avoid the current problem. It's the *MANAGER* of the *SS Oregon*.

OREGON MANAGER

Mr. Edison, do you have any plans to get your dynamos on my ship repaired so I can stay in business?

By now Tesla is thinking he should come back later when Edison gruffly waves for him to hand over the letter.

EDISON

You'll have your generators fixed.
 (to Tesla)
 What can I do for you, good sir?

TESLA

(extending the letter)
 My letter of introduction.

EDISON

(back to first phone, as he starts Tesla's letter)
 I'll send a crew down to Pearl and Nassau shortly. Find the carter, I need to know exactly what happened.

MARTHA

(impatiently)
 What should I tell Mrs. Vanderbilt?

EDISON

Tell her to go to hell. Second thought, tell her I'll have the dynamo fixed by Tuesday.
 (reading Tesla's letter)

"I know of two great men. You are one of them and the gentleman standing before you is the other."
 (irritated)
 Doesn't look like you're "standing" to me.

TESLA

Yes, that's from Mr. Batchelor, at your Paris facility.

EDISON

(phone rings)
 Ignore it Martha. Okay, Mr. Tesla is it? Think you're great enough to handle some generators?

TESLA

I could try, but what I actually was hoping I could do was discuss my ideas for a new system of electricity, a system I call polyphase ...

Tesla pulls out a schematic diagram and unfurls it on Edison's desk. Edison glances at the schematic.

EDISON

Speak up damnit?

TESLA

... a system I call polyphase alternating current...
 (cutting him off)

EDISON

(brusquely)
 This will never work. You want to put me out of business?

TESLA

No sir, just make electricity safer and cheaper.

EDISON

(bristling)
 Tell you what. Fix those generators on the *SS Oregon*, and then we'll talk pie-in-the-sky, Mr. Tesla.

Tesla, a quasi-functional savant challenged by American expressions, looks out the window at the sky.

INT. SS OREGON, GENERATOR ROOM - SUNRISE

Tesla has been working all night on Edison's cumbersome DC generators. After soldering a final connection in a maze of wires and bolting the face plate back on, he closes his toolbox and leaves to get some sleep.

EXT. SS OREGON GANGPLANK - SUNRISE

The *SS Oregon*, a huge ship, sits in its slip as Edison approaches with a group of ASSOCIATES. As they start up the gangplank they encounter a weary Tesla disembarking.

EDISON

(obnoxiously cheery)

A hah! Here's our Parisian running around all night ... with the ladies, no doubt?

TESLA

(concealed resentment)

Your generators are fixed Mr. Edison ... both of them.

Edison stares in disbelief, but manages a small nod, as he marches into the *Oregon*. CAMERA follows Tesla some distance down the street as his telescopic ears overhear Edison mutter to his associates:

EDISON

Now *that* is a damn good man.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EDISON ELECTRIC COMPANY, JUMP CUTS - FALL MORNING

Tesla arrives at work at 10 AM and is dressed immaculately. He walks through the plant conferring with one electrical engineer after another, examining various contraptions. Other times he's sitting at his desk designing electronic circuits or working out complicated mathematical expressions as narration explains.

NARRATOR

Edison hired Tesla and during the next year the immigrant established himself a reputation for being a serious engineer.

Preferring to think out complex ideas in his head, or through the discipline of long mathematical calculations, the always immaculately dressed Tesla often worked until 5AM in the morning, arising just five and a half hours later to continue his work. Although frustrated at having to place his dream of *alternating current* on hold, he was glad to be in America, the land of opportunity, and worked diligently. Nikola Tesla didn't think of himself as merely an inventor, but as a discoverer, if not a benefactor of humanity.

While walking through Edison's lab, Tesla passes an elegant lady singing into a thing called a *microphone*. The famous actress, SARAH BERNHARDT (37), is here to immortalize her voice on a new contraption Edison calls a *phonograph*. A small ENTOURAGE and her PRODUCER surround her as she notices the good-looking Serbian now working at a nearby lab bench.

PRODUCER

Okay, Miss Bernhardt, you can take a five-minute break.

Miss Bernhardt wanders over near Tesla where tea and biscuits happen to be laid out. After pouring a cup, she walks away, mischievously dropping her handkerchief. Tesla, ever the observer, swoops it up and extends it to her, unable to look her in the eyes.

TESLA

Excuse me madam, you dropped this.

SARAH

(dynamically)

Oh, thank you so much.

Tesla notices she's wearing pearl earrings, which he can't stand, so he quickly goes back to work.

SARAH

(reacting to the vacuum)

What are you working on?

TESLA

A new design for DC generators.

SARAH
How interesting. What do they
generate?

TESLA
(dryly)
Electricity.

SARAH
(reaching)
How modern.

TESLA
(all business)
I suppose. I have a bet with Mr.
Edison that I can get them done
within a year.

SARAH
(taking the hint)
I see, well I better not bother you
then ... for at least a year.

Tesla squeezes out a smile, oblivious to her flirting.

NARRATOR
Although Tesla said may visionary
things about women in general --
such as they will be as, or better,
educated than men someday -- how
anyone could have been such a
genius with electricity but so
utterly obtuse with women one-on-
one was beyond those of us who got
to know him. But that's where the
obtuseness ended: Tesla never
envisioned anything in his head he
couldn't build in his lab, if only
he *had* one.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EDISON'S OFFICE - WINTER DAY

Edison, his ATTORNEY, and Tesla are having a heated meeting
several months later. Tesla sits in the usual chair before
Edison's desk. The attorney sits on the couch.

EDISON
... but unfortunately, you still
don't understand our American
humor, Mr. Tesla.

TESLA

(waving a schemata)

I wagered you \$50,000 I could re-design these generators so they wouldn't catch fire. You said I was dreaming and took the bet.

ATTORNEY

Surely Mr. Tesla, you don't think my client was serious. \$50,000. Are you insane?!

TESLA

I delivered this dream in less than a year and ... thanks to my improvements ... you will now earn sums well in excess of my wager, so either keep your end of the bargain, or I'll be forced to deliver my resignation as well.

EDISON

I warn you, future engineering jobs *may be slim*.

Feeling Edison isn't a man of his word, Tesla throws the schemata on the desk and walks out. An incredulous Edison looks on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET, DITCH - SPRING MORNING

Tesla is in a ditch installing large cables known as *mains*. Fused, burnt wires lay all over.

NARRATOR

Unfortunately, Edison was right, my buddy found himself working in a ditch ... ironically laying mains for the very system he so detested. Edison and his investors, among whom was the powerful J.P. Morgan, had sunk a mountain of cash into thousands of DC generators, motors, plants and miles of telephone poles carrying obnoxious copper wires all over the place. In addition, Morgan's railroad network transported much of the materials and finished product for this DC system.

It was a foregone conclusion that no outsider was going to jeopardize *this* empire.

As Tesla shovels dirt, he shares his vision with fellow workers OTIS POND, KOLMAN CZITZO and son, JULIUS.

TESLA

Can you *imagine*, every house in this city ... the world for that matter ... someday lit by a safe, universal system of inexpensive electricity?!

KOLMAN

What a dreamer, but I *will* say more light *would* come in handy. I could better see Otis when he cheats at poker.

OTIS

(shovels dirt at Kolman)
See that, Kolman?

TESLA

It's not only a dream. I have already been granted seven patents.

JULIUS

(looking at Tesla)
I see. Looks like those patents are really paying off too. (laughs)

TESLA

They will. DC is *not* the future. The future is AC, polyphase *alternating* current.

KOLMAN

Huh?

JULIUS

(sarcastic)
Why, isn't that what we're installing now?

TESLA

(ignoring the cruelty)
Know why Edison and his investors like DC ... because they get to build a transmission station every mile or so to make it *flow*.

OTIS
Bet that translates into lots of
dough.

TESLA
Ah, a *rhyming* poet.

OTIS
(sarcastic)
Actually I'm a *famous* engineer. I
too am waiting for my patents to
sell. (laughs)

JULIUS
(to Tesla, mimicing his
father)
Keep digging dreamer, we're *all*
undiscovered geniuses.

TESLA
(annoyed)
It's *okay* to dream. A dream is
just a reality that has yet to
arrive. Everything in this entire
world started as a dream.

KOLMAN
Even this *entire* ditch?

As Tesla and his buddies deliberate ontological questions,
the FOREMAN suddenly approaches with three suits: ALFRED
BROWN, CHARLES PECK and their attorney, EDWARD RANKINE.

FOREMAN
Tesla, some more guys want to talk
to you. Keep it short.

TESLA
(to the suits)
No more gaslights, arc lights or DC
please. I won't have my time
wasted with nonsense.

OTIS
(laughs)
Yeah, us professional trench-
diggers are busy guys.

BROWN
(ignoring the comment)
Mr. Tesla, we have been studying
your patent filings and believe we
may have a common interest.

TESLA

And that is?

PECK

Alternating polyphase current.

RANKINE

To get to the point: my clients are prepared to offer you an initial capitalization of \$500,000 to establish an electrical research company which you are welcome to name whatever you desire.

Kolman, Julius and Otis freak as these words sink in. Tesla, the "dreamer," turns to his ditch-digging colleagues, bows and gently sets his shovel up against a large coil of wire. CAMERA moves in on the shovel blade, which reads *Edison Electric Company*, as we ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH STREET - SUMMER NIGHT

CAMERA pulls back from a sign reading *Tesla Electric Company* and tracks past windows where, inside, we see all sorts of electrical equipment and drafting boards. Tesla sits motionlessly working, as sparks fly from coil to coil. He has hired his ditch-digging "professionals" to help him out as the mechanics and engineers they dreamed of becoming.

TESLA

(looking up)

Okay, close the circuit Julius.

JULIUS

(now with respect)

Yes sir.

A large AC generator smoothly fires up and runs an AC motor a short distance away. The generator hums quietly and without sparking, unlike Edison's DC generators and motors.

OTIS

You were right Nik, it works exactly like it did in your head.

TESLA

Don't give *me* any credit, my ideas come from somewhere else. I'm just here to serve humanity, perhaps make Life a little less miserable.

KOLMAN

You're a good man Nikola. I sure appreciate you freeing me and my son from that con artist Edison. Everything I came up with he filed a patent on with *his* name.

TESLA

You're welcome, but don't be harsh on Mr. Edison. Afterall he *did* believe in me enough to give me my first position here in this wonderful country. But now we have to bring our important work to fruition ... in time for the Fair.

INT/EXT. MONTAGE - FALL DAY

Shots of New York City, with its maze of wires and expensive DC electrical installations, contrast with delicate, high-society invitations arriving by mail.

NARRATOR

Even though today's equivalent of hundreds of billions had been invested in Edison's DC system, Nik knew where he was going - despite what anyone thought. Having finally created a prototype alternating current generator, he was now on the lecture circuit. The thing worked so smoothly, it wasn't long before he became somewhat famous amongst his peers. Soon after, invitations to prestigious social events began to arrive. For the first time in his life, Nik was becoming rich and respected *beyond* his dreams. One day he would even get to meet *me*.

SETTLING ON:

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - WINTER EVENING

Tesla is back stage waiting to be introduced to the *American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (AIEE) by the respected Columbia professor, MICHAEL PUPIN. He is prepared to present his paper on alternating current to perhaps the most prestigious audience of peers so far. In the audience are men who will become important to his career, amongst these are GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE (38), GEORGE SCHERFF (30) and COL. JOHN JACOB ASTOR IV (55).

PUPIN

And now ladies and gentlemen I would like to introduce Nikola Tesla, who will speak to you about his most promising polyphase rotating magnetic induction system for generating alternating electrical power, also known simply as AC.

TESLA

(after applause)

I am so grateful to be here, not only with the AIEE, but here in this magnificent city and country. Thank you so much for having me. (more applause) Many years ago, when I was a boy, I was walking with a friend reciting Goethe's *Faust* ... *The glow retreats, done is the day of toil; It yonder hastes, new fields of life exploring; Ah, that no wing can lift me from the soil upon its track to follow, follow soaring.*

(pause)

Follow, follow. With those words I suddenly got the idea of one magnetic field *following* another, around and around, induced by a soaring alternating current. Then, with a stick, I drew a diagram in the sand. This diagram has now materialized into the dynamo before you - a new system to generate electrical energy and transmit it hundreds, if not thousands, of miles. But that's not all one can do with AC.

Tesla goes to a black board, looks for chalk, and sketches.

NARRATOR

Had Nik stopped there, everyone probably would have kept up with his vision. But no, the poet of electricity kept stretching everyone's mind way beyond the snapping point.

TESLA

... one day we may be able to harness the very wheelwork of nature and transmit AC thousands of miles even without wires... perhaps pull electricity from the very Earth or the ionosphere and, in doing so, we may be able to control even the weather.

NARRATOR

Even I, who knew nothing about electricity, could see that this was horseshit. But then he talked about making it cheap, if not free. As a stockholder in Edison's DC franchise, I didn't see how *that* was going to do *me* any good. Nevertheless, half the crowd seemed to love Tesla and the other half didn't know *what* to think.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DELMONICOS RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

A pair of pigeons sit on a wall next to *Delmonicos* as a stately black coach pulls up. The DRIVER gets down and opens the door. Tesla and George Westinghouse emerge and enter for dinner. Several OTHER ASSOCIATES from the AIEE lecture accompany them.

ANGLE ON TABLE

As Tesla and Westinghouse make their way to a table with a *Delmonicos* napkin holder, we sense a major deal is brewing.

WESTINGHOUSE

... you're going to love this restaurant, it's one of my favorites.

TESLA

Delmonicos.

WESTINGHOUSE

Yep. I have to say, great presentation Nik ... no wires sounds a little mysterious ... but whatever you say. I totally believe in *polyphase*, however.

TESLA

I appreciate that Mr. Westinghouse.

WESTINGHOUSE

Please, call me George.

TESLA

Sorry. George. I really appreciate that.

WESTINGHOUSE

I'm interested in hiring you as a consultant to our company and possibly developing some of your patents. How many have you filed so far?

TESLA

About forty now sir. George.

A WAITRESS stops to take an order. She wears pearl earrings.

WAITRESS

Can I get you gentlemen a drink?

Tesla, upon noticing the pearls, starts sneezing uncontrollably.

WESTINGHOUSE

Are you all right, Nik?

TESLA

(controlling his sneezes)

Yes. I'll have a glass of cognac, please.

WESTINGHOUSE

And I'll have a scotch and water.

Tesla's sneezing attracts the attention of a woman sitting at the next table. The woman turns out to be Sarah Bernhardt, who doesn't happen to be wearing pearls this time.

SARAH

Hi, don't I know you from somewhere?

TESLA

Yes, you are the one with the beautiful voice at Mr. Edison's lab some while back.... Oh, this is my associate, Mr. Westinghouse.

SARAH

I know who Mr. Westinghouse is.
Hello George, how are you doing?

WESTINGHOUSE

Fine Sarah, how's *Broadway*?

SARAH

(to Tesla)

I opened a new opera tonight. Come
see it sometime or give me a call
and I'll arrange comps. By the
way, what's your name handsome?

TESLA

Tesla. Nikola Tesla.

SARAH

Well nice to finally meet you
Nikki. I want to hear *all about*
your bet with Mr. Edison sometime.
Bye, bye.

With this, Sarah Bernhardt, and her ENTOURAGE, leave.

WESTINGHOUSE

What bet?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - SPRING DAYBREAK

CAMERA tracks around New York down various streets. We pass from the gaslight district, to the carbon arc district to the upscale district where Edison's DC is prevalent. In this district we see telephone polls topped with so many wires they practically blot out the sky. As narration proceeds, we pass the Vanderbilt mansion where the home next-door has burnt to the ground.

NARRATOR

Edison continued to install DC all over the city. The twisted maze of copper was the result of as many as twenty different electric companies all competing to burn down your house. One advantage of AC was, if the wires touched each other, they just sparked out and that was it. DC, on the other hand, when it shorted out, the cables melted all the way back to the power station.

Then the streets had to be dug up and new cables laid down all over. If a short happened in a house or hotel, it usually started a fire. Not only did Edison and his stockholders make money selling generators, but the construction and ditch-digging businesses were booming. I even owned a small piece of a framing company, until my conscience got the better of me.

EXT. HOUSE OF MORGAN - DAY

As the streetlights go out with the approaching dawn, we come to the firm of *Drexel, Morgan & Co.*, also known as the House of Morgan.

INT. HOUSE OF MORGAN, LAVATORY - DAY

CAMERA pulls back from the bottom of a urinal -- the drain holes arranged in a \$ pattern -- and up to a pair of large hands. Since the *zipper* has not yet been invented, the hands button up the pants of J.P. MORGAN (53), as he turns to a large mirror and rubs cream on a bulbous nose set in the middle of a fierce, red face.

INT. HOUSE OF MORGAN, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

An early meeting is about to take place at the offices of Morgan's powerful investment company. Waiting for Morgan is Edison and his legal COUNSEL. Also present are MORGAN COUNSEL and Michael Pupin, who in addition to his duties as a professor, is an independent consultant, if not a bit of an industry gossip. Morgan enters and sits at the head of the conference table. He starts in without wasting a second.

MORGAN

Mr. Edison, I bet you can give me a *simplified* overview of your progress on indirect current if you really want to.

EDISON

Sure J.P. But that's *direct* current we would be talking about.

MORGAN

As you wish Tom.

EDISON

Some of you gentlemen are aware that a new company has entered the market to compete with our DC, the standard which currently services greater New York.

PUPIN

Are you talking about the *Tesla Electric Company*?

EDISON

I suppose. Let me assure you this so-called, alternating current is extremely dangerous. We will be staging some public demonstrations next month to make this point.

MORGAN

I understand they want to put up a massive exposition of electricity at the Chicago World's Fair.

EDISON

Probably.

MORGAN

(interjecting)

I have no idea what the difference between AC and DC is but whatever I'm invested in better show up at that fair and make a damn good impression. Many of my colleagues have followed my initiative in supporting you for years so I don't want any embarrassments. I will assure you I don't mind extending additional funds to construct transmission stations so long as the public keeps buying electricity. And your shares in *Edison Electric* are sufficient collateral to expand these operations when you need loans.

MORGAN COUNSEL

Are you aware that Mr. Tesla has filed over forty patents on alternating current? Won't this have a negative impact on my client and his collateral package?

EDISON COUNSEL

Absolutely not. We have carefully reviewed all the Tesla patents and they will have about as much effect on the future of electrical generation as a *poem*.

MORGAN COUNSEL

Then you assure us that this will create no liability for any Morgan interests or the new company we plan to consolidate even though Westinghouse has purchased all of Tesla's patents and hired him as a consultant?

EDISON

(exploding)

Westinghouse?! Tesla is *partnering* with Westinghouse?!!

PUPIN

Yep. In fact I hear he paid Tesla \$60,000 for all forty patents of which \$5,000 was advanced in cash and the balance as one hundred fifty shares of Westinghouse stock.

MORGAN COUNSEL

(sarcastically)

But here's the funny part, Westinghouse is so ... confident in Tesla, he gave him a royalty contract that's too good to be true: 93 cents for each horsepower of AC sold to the public.

EDISON

(even more furious)

And it never *will* be true, because AC will never happen. Westinghouse is a moron. Him and Tesla are the perfect couple. I had Tesla working over at my Pearl Street lab several years ago and he was an idiot. A *dreamer*.

MORGAN

(now yelling)

Alright AC, DC, BC. Who gives a damn what makes electricity flow, as long as we make money.

But more importantly, as long as I don't lose money. I'm getting tired of being the lender of last resort for this ungrateful country.

EXT. ALLEYS AND BACK STREETS, MONTAGE - FOGGY NIGHT

A RAT is suddenly captured in a net. A CAT, stretching into a garbage can outside a restaurant, is suddenly snatched by a pair of gloved hands. A DARK FIGURE, holding a stray DOG by the collar, shoves it into a truck while a CREEPY DRIVER waits. The truck speeds off into the night.

INT. PLAYERS CLUB - SUMMER NIGHT

Invitations to prestigious social events are now beginning to come in from members of NEW YORK'S ELITE, the so-called, *400 Club*. At the *Players Club*, Tesla is surrounded by ATTRACTIVE PEOPLE all vying for a chance to get near enough to hear what the tall genius has to say.

TESLA

... so one day we will be able to provide your businesses with all the cheap electrical power they need. The human consumption of energy will *never* decrease, it will *always* increase and increase at the rate of two and a half times per generation. Count on it.

An attractive woman, MARGUERITE MERINGTON(28), becomes so infatuated with Tesla, she is practically holding her breath. Tesla seems to be attracted to her too, made possible because she's not wearing any pearls.

TESLA

(extending his hand)
Come here, I have to show you something unbelievable.

MARGUERITE

(shocked)
Me?!

TESLA

Yes, you.
(to the group)
Please excuse us for a moment.

Tesla leads Miss Merington toward an outside terrace where he can get away from the crowd.

EXT. PLAYERS CLUB, TERRACE - NIGHT

The night sky over New York hasn't yet been polluted by light. It's beautiful and romantic as are the couple that look up at the piercing multitude of stars.

TESLA

Aren't they unbelievable. How many can you see?

MARGUERITE

Millions I suppose.

TESLA

Actually you can only see maybe 3,000 with the unaided eye, but all that will change in about 50 years.

MARGUERITE

Really, what happens then?

TESLA

Well, there will be so many electrical lights all over the city, the stars will eventually be washed out.

MARGUERITE

So I guess we should enjoy them while they last.

TESLA

Exactly. No one knows how long they will last nor how long they have been there. For that matter, no one even knows what makes them shine. All we know is they are suns like our own, but so far away they appear as tiny, colored dots.

MARGUERITE

How far away?

TESLA

Some say they're here in the galaxy, but I say many of them are galaxies in their own right. Therefore they may be trillions of miles away.

MARGUERITE

What do you *do*?

TESLA

Oh, I dabble in the sciences.

MARGUERITE

How exciting? Which ones?

TESLA

Mainly electrical engineering.
What about you?

MARGUERITE

I dabble on the piano and write a
little poetry.

TESLA

Poetry. That's exactly what I
would be doing if I didn't feel so
implored.

MARGUERITE

Implored to do what?

TESLA

Help build a better world.

MARGUERITE

How so?

TESLA

Since energy is needed for almost
all industry, I want to create
abundant supplies of it,
inexpensive, if not virtually free.

MARGUERITE

I don't need *any* energy to write a
poem.

TESLA

Actually it would take me vast
amounts of energy, mental energy,
to write a poem. Thus I'm afraid
that mission will have to be
postponed.

Marguerite laughs, as a REPORTER barges in.

REPORTER

Can I get a shot Mr. Tesla? Your
friend, Miss Merington, is welcome
too.

TESLA

Sure.

The reporter points a *Speed Graphic* at Tesla and Miss Merington and FLASHES a picture.

NARRATOR

Good thing the reporter mentioned Marguerite Merington's name otherwise the genius would probably never have realized who he was talking to.

INT. NEWS HEADLINES, MONTAGE - DAY

Over the picture of Tesla and Marguerite Merington, headlines flash the following: TESLA AC KILLS, ALTERNATING CURRENT DANGEROUS, PREVENT SHOCK, USE EDISON DC. Edison's PR machine is hard at work putting out a non-stop series of newspaper and magazine articles, press interviews and demonstrations to falsely characterize AC.

EXT. SMALL PLATFORM - FALL NIGHT

A CROWD of New Yorkers surrounds a small platform where a young Edison MUCKER holds a rat with gloves. ANOTHER MUCKER is coming at it with a pair of tongs, each prong connected to a wire that runs a short distance to a generator clearly labeled, "Westinghouse AC Current."

MUCKER

(gleefully)

Here is what AC can do if given a chance?

(zaps the rat)

Is this the type of electricity you want in *your* house?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH FIFTH STREET - NIGHT

Tesla is having one of *his* own demonstrations to show that AC is quite safe. Members of the PRESS, Westinghouse, PROFESSOR ANTHONY from Cornell, and Michael Pupin are there in support. Tesla is allowing millions of volts of AC to run through his body. As Tesla demonstrates, Professor Anthony speaks.

PROFESSOR ANTHONY

As you can see ladies and gentlemen, members of the press, it's completely bogus to make the claim that AC is dangerous, otherwise our friend, Mr. Tesla, would be quite dead by now.

PUPIN

I will second that.

All clap as Tesla gives an impressive demonstration of sparks flowing all around his body and lighting lamps in his hands.

NARRATOR

Thanks to the staunch support of Westinghouse and prestigious engineers, such as professors Anthony and Pupin at Columbia, Edison's black bag of tricks was exposed as the fraud it was.

INT. MORGAN'S MANSION - WINTER MORNING

J.P. Morgan is having breakfast and reading the morning paper. At the table is his second wife, FRANCES, and their youngest daughter, Anne. ANNE MORGAN (26) is a tall, beautiful girl with piercing tawny eyes that resemble her father's. A nearby ticker tape chatters away as a SERVANT brings a clipping of stock quotes over.

MORGAN

(reading)

Damn that poet! Now I see what Edison was saying about alternating current.

ANNE

What poet, father?

MORGAN

Tesla.

FRANCES

That handsome Serbian? We should have him over for dinner sometime John.

MORGAN

Over my dead body.

ANNE

Is this him in the paper?

(reading)

"Edison staging horrendous capers to invalidate alternating current." What's alternating current?

MORGAN

I have no idea, but it's costing me plenty.

The morning *Wall Street Journal* also has a society picture of Tesla and Westinghouse standing with a number of prominent people, among which are Michael Pupin, Professor Anthony and Marguerite Merington. Anne knows Marguerite, being a society girl herself.

ANNE

(a little jealous)

There's *Marguerite* ... with Mr. Tesla. ... He *is* cute, mom. Can you introduce me to him, father?

MORGAN

No!

ANNE

John, don't be that way.

This prompts Anne to grab the paper and avidly read the details.

NARRATOR

Unaware of the love and hate developing around him, Tesla became a consultant for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh. Fortunately or unfortunately, Nik didn't seem to get along with the 9 to 5 employee types.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC COMPANY - SPRING DAY

Tesla is in a passionate argument with STAFF ENGINEERS who are now ganging up on him.

ENGINEER 1

Your specs are ridiculous. This generator needs to run at 133 cycles per second. All Edison equipment is standardized at 133.

TESLA

No. It needs to run at 60.

ENGINEER 2

Why?

TESLA

Although a time-base is arbitrary, 133 Hertz is not stable ... no matter who standardized it.

ENGINEER 3

How so?

TESLA

Well, for one thing, it's not divisible by three and 60 is.

ENGINEER 1

Huh?

TESLA

Just as three points define a plane, an armature must be moved by an electromagnetic field divisible by three oscillations, otherwise the entire mechanism will vibrate and you will get noise, hence thermal loss.

ENGINEER 2

So?

TESLA

So, 60 cycles per second needs to be the universal standard for alternating current.

SENIOR ENGINEER

(giving up)

All right, all right, I guess you know what you're talking about Mr. Tesla. We'll make it 60 cycles per second as you wish.

EXT. MEDIUM PLATFORM - NIGHT

Edison's agents have set up a larger platform before a GROUP OF CITIZENS. This time a SCARED DOG is leashed to a pole next to a dynamo labeled "Westinghouse AC Generator."

EDISON AGENT 1

Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you to demonstrate how unsafe 60 cycles per second AC is.

With this, the agent touches the dog, which yelps in pain. It's pathetic.

EDISON AGENT 2

Would you want this kind of electricity in your house?

A REPORTER takes a shot which dissolves into ...

INT. SARAH BERNHARDT'S APARTMENT - SUMMER DAY

... an article in the hands of Sarah Bernhardt which she is reading in her swank apartment. Abhorred, she throws the pathetic article down, picks up the phone and dials.

SARAH

Hi Nikki. I got your number from George. Another year's up and you *still* haven't called me. I've been reading about you so I thought I'd call and see if any of it's true.

TESLA

Not a word, especially what Edison is saying.

SARAH

Well how about dinner to celebrate your becoming an American citizen? *That's* true, isn't it?

TESLA

Yes, and that sounds divine, Sarah. Where would you like to go?

SARAH

Why don't you meet me at the Waldorf-Astoria in town.

TESLA

Okay, on one condition. Promise you won't wear any pearls.

SARAH

Nikki, would I dare?

TESLA

I'll meet you in the lobby.
9 o'clock, next Saturday.

INT. TESLA'S ROOM, PITTSBURGH - SUMMER DAY

Tesla hangs up the phone, shakes his head subtly and looks at a picture of New York City. Even though he is staying in a splendid room at *Homewood*, the estate of George Westinghouse, he longs for the grand city. He also can't wait to get away from Pittsburgh and all the recalcitrant engineers that are deluging him with insane small-thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. TRAIN FOR NEW YORK - FALL DAY

From a high shot of a train winding through a beautiful Autumn in western Pennsylvania, CAMERA moves in on a window where we see Nikola Tesla ... asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA, DINING ROOM - EVENING

Nikola Tesla and Sarah Bernhardt sit at an elegant table defaced by a pile of eighteen napkins. As Tesla uses one after another to feverishly polish his silverware, Sarah looks straight ahead, feigning oblivion. As promised, she has worn no pearl jewelry.

TESLA

I suppose you are wondering why I have an aversion to pearls.

SARAH

(now watching him polish)
Okay, let's *start* with that.

TESLA

Pearls are the porous remains of tormented sea creatures. We grow them for no other reason than to display them on our bodies. But alas, they get their revenge. They absorb our sweat, retaining it long after it has putrefied, and then stink us up to high-heaven.

SARAH

I see?

TESLA

Unfortunately I have an overly acute sense of smell and don't care for rank odors on a woman.

SARAH

Okay fair enough. Now, what about the silverware?

Tesla is on his 9th napkin, polishing a knife as he speaks.

TESLA

I polish silverware to kill germs. Realize where you are. You're in a huge city with millions of people, many with poor hygiene ...

a cesspool writhing with every germ imaginable. On top of that, smokers pollute the air with tobacco, a practice that will someday be banned.

Miss Bernhardt, feeling paranoid, looks around but continues to listen with rapped attention.

SARAH

I don't see any germs Nikki.

TESLA

It's not a matter of *seeing* them. It's a matter of *killing* them. By rubbing this silverware I am creating heat to *kill* them. The number of germs I can kill varies directly with the heat I generate through friction, times the square of the duration. $Ng = Hf \cdot t^2$, if you want to reduce it to an equation.

SARAH

(teasing, a' la Mae West)
Yes, I always *do* like to reduce things to an equation, Nik.

She grabs a napkin and starts polishing *her* silverware.

TESLA

I expect you do.

SARAH

Since you can't make things as hot as you would like, you just rub a little longer.

TESLA

The story of my life. You either kill them with heat or with time.

SARAH

So that's the technique.... Let's talk about me now Nikki. Sometimes I don't want to be an actress any longer, I want to settle down.

TESLA

(changing the subject)
Speaking of settling down, I think I'm going to get a place here at the Waldorf someday.

SARAH

(remembering)

Some day you said you were going to tell me about your bet with Mr. Edison.

TESLA

Not much to tell. I bet him I could improve his generators and I did. But there's more to be done.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH STREET - EARLY WINTER MORNING

Tesla has been working all night on the coil for a more powerful generator. The new coil will enable him to drastically boost the frequency of his oscillations without having to resort to mechanical contrivances. CAMERA moves in CU on some of his drawings and mathematical calculations.

NARRATOR

I always thought Tesla was way too serious about life, his high purpose and all that. What's wrong with relaxing a little, maybe having some fun with women, as even J.P. did from time to time ... whether New York-society approved or not?

INT. TESLA'S HOTEL, ASTOR HOUSE - NIGHT

As Tesla moves into his new space at the Astor House he works with a CUTE MAID to set up his wardrobe closet. As the narrator fills us in on some personal facts, the maid looks like she is overwhelmingly attracted to Tesla.

NARRATOR

I guess Nik felt there was no way he could lump his gifts upon the world if he had to cater to the demands of children, something most women want whether they admit it or not. Unfortunately for *Nikki*, gorgeous women seem to love geniuses, even if they're idiots much of the time. I guess that's why there's so much hate in the world ... love and genius are rare.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LARGE PLATFORM - DAY

Edison has erected a large platform off a busy street. A generator prominently labeled "Westinghouse AC Generator" is present, as usual. This time an *elephant* named TOPSY stands on a metal sheet before a barrel of water where HAROLD BROWN and his THUG ASSISTANT are trying to make her drink. A thick cable attaches to the metal sheet and another runs into the barrel of water. Topsy finally takes a drink and is electrocuted. The crowd gasps as one of Edison's inventions, the *motion picture camera*, records the event for posterity.

BROWN

Is this the kind of hateful
electricity you want in *your* house?

THUG ASSISTANT

Tell your congressman you want
Edison DC, *not* Westinghouse AC.

BROWN

Protect your kids from being
Westinghoused.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VARIOUS MAGNIFICENT HALLS, MONTAGE - SPRING DAY

Tesla is continuing with his lectures, visiting various colleges, universities and electrical societies around the country.

NARRATOR

While Edison and his *muckers* did their best to discredit Westinghouse and AC, Nik took the high road addressing many prestigious organizations, such as the *Institution of Electrical Engineers*, *The Society of Electrical Engineers* and *The French Society of Physics*. In these lectures, he related his discoveries using his latest invention, what has become known as the *Tesla Coil* and its potential for transmitting electrical power using what's now known as the *radio spectrum*.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH STREET - NIGHT

As Tesla works on his *Tesla Coil*, a group of ASSOCIATES and PRESS MEMBERS are present. To demonstrate the new coil, he places an incandescent lamp in his right hand and extends his arm towards the coil, about twelve feet away. The lamp mysteriously lights up.

TESLA

The electricity ... a million volts AC in fact ... is transmitting through the air, through my body and into the lamp. As you can see, alternating current is completely harmless, provided the amperage is not too high.

One of the guests present is ROBERT JOHNSON, editor of *Century Magazine*. Johnson, who also happens to be an amateur poet, takes a keen interest in Tesla.

JOHNSON

How does the electricity actually get to the lamp? Through the air or through the ground?

TESLA

(enthusiastically)

It travels through the air but it *may* be able to travel through the ground as well. The same principle that allows an *alternating* electric current to travel through the air can be used to send a *modulating* electrical current upon which the human voice will someday ride.

JOHNSON

Your work is *amazing* Mr. Tesla.

TESLA

(even more enthusiastic)

Not only *this*, AC is universal! Just one set of wires is sufficient for lamps and motors. Not true with DC which is much more expensive because you need two sets of wires, thus twice the amount of copper and waste.

JOHNSON

(totally excited)

I would like to do a special series about your system for our magazine.

(hands Tesla a card)

My name is Robert Johnson.

TESLA

(reading, impressed)

Century magazine. Why thank you Mr. Johnson. I will surely keep you on my guest list for updates and future events.

JOHNSON

Actually it is I who would like to invite you to a future event. My wife and I are having a dinner party the 30th. Some of our guests may be of great service to your enterprise. I hope you'll join us.

INT. MORGAN'S MANSION, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

J.P. Morgan is having dinner with one of his senior associates, CHARLES COFFIN. They're discussing the formation of a new company which Morgan will heavily invest in.

MORGAN

Our railroads are transporting copper in larger quantities than ever. You will be in charge of founding *General Electric* to make sure it stays that way. The House of Morgan will be the lead investor. I am getting fed up with Westinghouse and Tesla. I want you to have our brokers gradually purchase voting stock in *Thomas-Houston Company* until we have a controlling interest. We will then use this entity to under-sell our competitors.

COFFIN

I see, if we can weaken their balance sheets, it will make it more difficult for them to raise money on Wall Street. Then I assume you will want to buy a controlling equity position in each company at a discount.

MORGAN

That's the tune Mr. Coffin.

NARRATOR

This strategy worked well for Morgan on all his businesses, from railroads and mining companies to banks and trusts. Even Edison was crippled by the price wars and was eventually forced to consolidate his company with the *Thomas-Houston Company*. As soon as Morgan had merged with as many electric companies as he could, he simply re-named *Thomas-Houston General Electric*, or *GE* for short. Now the new entity was under control of Morgan and his cronies. But he didn't stop there. The House of Morgan then went after the *Westinghouse Electric Company* by floating rumors on Wall Street that George Westinghouse was mismanaging his company and was doomed unless he merged with *GE*. Morgan and Edison would stop at nothing to crush Westinghouse and Tesla, even the grotesque.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUBURN STATE PRISON, DEATH ROW - SUMMER NIGHT

The *War of the Currents* now takes an ugly and desperate turn. On a raised platform is WILLIAM KEMMLER, blind folded and strapped into an electrified wooden chair. Off to the side we see Edison standing next to a 2,000-volt Westinghouse AC generator, prominently labeled and displayed as usual. DR. ALFRED SOUTHWICK and members of the PRESS are assembled in rows of chairs watching as the prisoner is given one horrifying jolt after another ... but he just won't die.

NARRATOR

Unbeknownst to Westinghouse, Harold Brown, an Edison apologist, managed to get hold of a Tesla generator and have it installed in the *Auburn Prison*. Poor William Kemmler, a murdering dog, was chosen the very first human to be electrocuted. As this audience of perverts finds out, AC is way too safe to kill anyone ... at least very dead.

Perhaps the prison should have used DC. Seemed to have worked pretty good on horses that encountered Edison's power mains all over the city.

Finally Kemmler seems to be dead. Edison steps before those assembled, somewhat shaken and embarrassed, as a lumped-over body smolders in the background.

EDISON

As you can see, Mr. Kemmler has been *Westinghoused*. Is AC the kind of electricity you want in *your* house, near *your* children and pets?

PRESS MEMBER

But Mr. Edison, why did it take so long to kill him?

EDISON

Criminals have extremely thick skins, therefore it takes electricity a while to get through.

SOUTHWICK

(piping up)

But if this had been you, or your loved ones, you would have been killed instantly.

EDISON

That's right, believe me, you do *not* want the AC hazard in your house. Stick with *General Electric Company's* safe system of DC.

Suddenly, Kemmler moves in the background. All let out a gasp. Edison turns around and seeing this, quickly draws a curtain to shroud the viewing platform.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE'S OFFICE - FALL MORNING

A meeting has been called to discuss other urgent matters. A movie of Topsy's gruesome electrocution has just finished playing in the background as George Westinghouse reads a stock ticker and walks around behind his desk. As he takes a seat before his legal COUNSEL and investment banker, AUGUST BELMONT, he does not look happy.

WESTINGHOUSE

I have called this emergency meeting because our war to counter Edison's insane shenanigans has placed the company into a position where we have not been able to declare any dividends for quite some time. Consequently, our stock price has been falling.

BELMONT

And that's why I, and my associates, urge you to merge with Morgan's new company. Stop bickering amongst yourselves and join forces.

WESTINGHOUSE

I wouldn't merge with that scoundrel for all the money in the world.

WESTINGHOUSE COUNSEL

What about merging with several other companies, such as *U.S. Electric and Consolidated Light?*

WESTINGHOUSE

That's a possibility. How about pulling Tesla's company into the mix as well?

BELMONT

I don't know, it may be more prudent to just keep his firm as a consultancy. Never know when the company will have to distance itself from some of his more eccentric ideas.

WESTINGHOUSE

All right, let's file *Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing*.

WESTINGHOUSE COUNSEL

I suggest we make it a Delaware C corporation and authorize 500,000 shares of convertible preferred. *Westinghouse Electric* will own these new shares and we can use the new entity to go after the contract for the World's Fair.

WESTINGHOUSE

Fine. We *must* get this contract even if we have to underbid our competitors and sustain a loss ... the publicity alone will make it worthwhile.

INVESTMENT BANKER

At the very least, you should take a serious look at rescinding Tesla's royalty agreement, because, if you can, we may be able to recoup some of these losses.

WESTINGHOUSE

I'll take that under advisement.

INT/EXT. WAR OF THE CURRENTS, MONTAGE - WINTER

As the narration below proceeds, we see the infrastructure of the Chicago World's Fair being constructed. We also see the following: a score of bids from various electrical companies; thousands of all-glass lamps being manufactured and placed in Edison-labeled boxes; Edison and Westinghouse sitting in court as their lawyers argue about patent infringement; LEONARD CURTIS filing new patents on Westinghouse's new, two-piece *stopper lamp*; an IRATE JUDGE hammering out a verdict; thousands of stopper lamps being manufactured and placed in Westinghouse-labeled boxes.

NARRATOR

Actually, far from the way the bankers were trying to twist it, Tesla's superior system of polyphase alternating current was the *only* reason Westinghouse was able to underbid General Electric and all his *Morganized* competitors. Edison bid \$19 per lamp for 100,000 lamps whereas Westinghouse came in at \$4 per lamp, a total of a million and a half bucks cheaper. Happily the Commission awarded the contract to Westinghouse. Morgan and Edison were furious, so this was where Edison played his card: Edison owned the patent rights on the *screw-base* of the incandescent lamp so Westinghouse had just eleven months to literally re-invent the *light bulb*. Of course Edison's lawyers and detectives were not going to let *that* happen.

Fortunately, one of Edison's lawyers was overzealous and managed to annoy the judge so much, he ruled in favor of Westinghouse. Thus the *stopper-lamp* was born and Tesla technology lit up the World's Fair.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WORLD'S FAIR, COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION - SPRING NIGHT

From a magnificent wide shot of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, CAMERA pulls back past the first *Ferris wheel* holding 36 cars with 60 people each; past the first Ford *Model-T* and over to a high stage where President GROVER CLEVELAND stands before thousands of SPECTATORS. An orchestra plays Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*.

CLEVELAND

Ladies and gentlemen, I now give you the *City of Lights*, courtesy of George Westinghouse and the gifted inventor that made all this possible, Nikola Tesla.

With this, Cleveland throws a giant knife-switch and over 100,000 lamps burst to brilliance as fountains of water shoot up, cannons boom and flags from every nation wave in the gentle spring breeze.

EXT. WORLD'S FAIR, GROUNDS - NIGHT

CAMERA tracks through the fair grounds past various exhibitions, such as Edison's new *Kinetoscope*; past DANCING GIRLS from Algiers; past a demonstration of the first *zipper*; past the huge Westinghouse Switch Board and into the *Hall of Machinery* where twelve magnificent, 1,000-horsepower Tesla generators power the entire Fair.

NARRATOR

After this grand event, Nik was subjectively *and* objectively at the height of his prestige. Millions now openly recognized the young Serbian inventor, not only publicly on the covers of magazines, but privately from the endless procession of parties and events he attended. Polyphase AC had become a household word, as had the name, Nikola Tesla.

INT. WORLD'S FAIR, TESLA'S EXHIBIT - NIGHT

Tesla has his own smaller exhibit where he's continuing to demonstrate the wonders of alternating current. In the background is one of Tesla's many inventions: *florescent lights*. The names of his favorite scientists - Maxwell, Faraday, Henry and the poet, Zmaj - are spelled out in neon. A small iron egg spins on a metal patter as Tesla speaks to a mixed crowd of SPECTATORS and REPORTERS. He wears shoes with 4-inch thick cork soles.

TESLA

The egg spins because the electric field around it is alternating. This is the principle of AC. I will now allow two million volts of this AC to run through my body.

With this Tesla steps up to one of his giant Tesla coils and turns a rheostat. Slowly his entire body begins to glow like a human florescent lamp.

NARRATOR

For the thirty million people that attended the World's Fair, it became dramatically clear that AC was the kind of electricity *they* wanted to have in *their* homes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSONS' HOUSE, GRAND BALLROOM - SUMMER EVENING

From a CLOSE UP of one of many lamps on a huge chandelier in the home of Robert and Katherine Johnson, CAMERA pulls back to reveal a ballroom where the ELITE OF NEW YORK are dancing and enjoying each other's company. The Johnson's have a unique ability to attract a mixed crowd, thus, amongst the guests, are industrialists, musicians, politicians, actors, multimillionaires, dilettantes and beautiful heiresses. A number of famous friends stop by as well, among which are author, MARK TWAIN (54), the famous Czech composer, ANTHONY DVORAK and popular poets, RUDYARD KIPLING and JOVAN ZMAJ. Tesla is backed into a corner by KATHERINE JOHNSON - petite, pretty and sharp, if not a little restless with her role as a wife and mother.

KATHERINE

Robert and I were worried the electric company wouldn't get your system installed before the party. Can you imagine how embarrassing that would have been?

TESLA

Not at all, it will take time to convert the world. So tell me, what are *your* interests Mrs. Johnson?

KATHERINE

I dabble in astrology and palm-reading.

(looking at him intensely)
Your eyes are a *much* lighter blue than I expected. You must think a lot.

TESLA

If so, it's not because I choose to. I just feel one should not waste any God-given ability they may have.

She suddenly grabs his hand ... to read his palm.

KATHERINE

My God, your thumbs are huge.
(teasing)
I know what *that* means.

Just then Robert Johnson wanders over with Mark Twain, having overheard that last.

JOHNSON

No, what *does* that mean, honey?

TWAIN

(interjecting)
It means you have a thumb up on the competition?

KATHERINE

(polite laugh, then)
Mr. Tesla, I want you to meet Mr. Twain. Some people know him as Samuel Clemens but his friends know him as simply Mark.

Twain extends his hand to Tesla, but Tesla has an aversion to touching other people - especially hands or a woman's hair.

TESLA

Nice to meet you Mr. Twain, but I don't shake hands.

TWAIN

And why is that, Mr. Tesla?

TESLA

I get sick easily. But strangely enough, you actually cured me once.

JOHNSON

Oh, how so?

TESLA

I was reading one of Mr. Twain's books and it made me laugh so much, I utterly forgot my hopeless state.

TWAIN

Well, my friend, I'm glad to hear at least one person has survived my sometimes-sotted prose.

KATHERINE

(gesturing to the room)

Tell Mr. Twain about your AC inventions which will revolutionize the world as much as you have brightened up this room.

TWAIN

(with possibly a tear)

Yes, do tell.

TESLA

Well there's not much to tell. AC is safer, cheaper and can be transmitted hundreds of miles without significant loss. My associates and I will prove this by harnessing Niagara Falls and sending the power of water to Buffalo, and eventually here.

TWAIN

Incredible! I guess this means I should sell my shares of *GE* and perhaps look for a better investment.

JOHNSON

That could make a lot of sense Mark.

TESLA

I'll put you on my guest list, Mr. Twain, and keep you apprised of developments, like my *shadow-graph*.

TWAIN

Please, call me Mark. What *is* a shadow-graph anyway?

TESLA

While I was experimenting with molecular bombardment of my *carbon-button lamp* I discovered strange rays that travel right through flesh and make a shadow of the bones on a photographic plate. This can perhaps be used to peer inside the human body.

TWAIN

What about peering *through* a woman's dress? I would be interested in investing in *that*!

Just then Rudyard Kipling and Jovan Zmaj pass near. Katherine, ever the socialite, pipes up.

KATHERINE

Spicy, Mark. Mr. Tesla, I want you to meet two poets whose work I just adore ... Rudyard Kipling and Jovan Zmaj. Jovan's from Serbia.

TESLA

Dr. Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj, how delightful to meet you.

ZMAJ

I have heard that you are quite the bard of electricity.

TESLA

But it was you that was the poet of my childhood.

(recites)

Tell me, tell, How should I call you; Tell me, which Name I should give you, - Will I my "pride" Or my "strength" veneer, Or will I "treasure" Or "my little deer", Will I "soul", or "my dear" - Tell me, which name I should give you! Each of these is a sweet And beautiful name with which a Serb His gold will nickname ...

The poet of electricity at his best, Katherine breathes even more heavily as Tesla turns and addresses her directly.

TESLA

*... But I would spend One whole
life Searching for beautier,
Prouder and sweeter, Dearer name,
yet unheard by world to call with
it my flower yet furred.*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TENNIS CLUB - FALL DAY

Morgan and Edison are playing a little tennis at Morgan's private estate on *Jekyll Island*.

MORGAN

What's happening with my DC investments, *Tom*?

EDISON

Tesla will never be able to send AC very far.

MORGAN

That's good, because if he does, we're out a lot of money.

EDISON

Don't worry, their hopes will be squashed by their incompetence.

INT. SQUASH COURT - DAY

Competition is in the air. George Westinghouse has invited Tesla to play a game of squash and talk over some business. Tesla, who usually wears jet black clothes and works in a dim laboratory stuffed with ominous dark machines, looks quite out of place in this pure-white, empty box.

WESTINGHOUSE

Nik, the Niagara Commission says they're not going to pay off on our contract until *after* we demonstrate the hydro-electric plant works. This is going to be a great risk.

TESLA

Don't worry, I'm absolutely positive my generators will perform exactly as I imagine them to.

WESTINGHOUSE

This is also going to take a great deal of money.

TESLA

Money is just a means to an end.
It's no different than the flow of
water.

WESTINGHOUSE

While that may be true, it's going
to take a lot of water to float
this new boat, but more to the
point, my principal investment
banker, August Belmont, is giving
me a difficult time.

TESLA

(exhausted)
About what?

WESTINGHOUSE

He says the company is out a lot of
money countering Edison's black
propaganda campaign, developing
stopper lamps and litigating over
them, not to mention what we spent
on the Columbia exposition. To put
it bluntly, he won't arrange for
any more capital until I address my
royalty agreement with you.

TESLA

Address? What does that mean?
Don't tell me, I bet I can guess.

WESTINGHOUSE

Yes, but consider: he has a
relationship with the House of
Rothschild in Europe. If we please
them, we could place ourselves in a
position to negotiate significant
capitalization for future projects
of *mutual interest*.

TESLA

I see. Some carrot and stick.
Mostly stick. Okay, I understand.

WESTINGHOUSE

Well if that's true, please allow
me to propose a simple modification
of our original deal. If you will
void the royalty agreement we made,
I'll give you \$215,000 for the
outright purchase of your patents.

Tesla pauses the game and, after a long tense moment contemplating the floor, slowly looks up, directly at Westinghouse.

TESLA

\$215,000. You want to give me \$215,000 for all my precious patents?! No way, George ... but if you make it \$216,000, you have a deal.

WESTINGHOUSE

(stunned)

I do?

TESLA

Not because of the money, but because you have been the best friend an inventor could have. I want to show my appreciation for your patronage.

WESTINGHOUSE

(stunned)

Thanks Nik, I will never forget this ... or let you down.

TESLA

(they shake)

Now, can we get out of this insipid box.

As the two begin to leave, Westinghouse looks over at Tesla quizzically.

WESTINGHOUSE

But why two hundred and *sixteen* thousand?

TESLA

Because 215,000 is obviously *not* evenly divisible by three.

NARRATOR

True to his word, Tesla tore up his royalty agreement. In doing this, the genius performed an act of unsurpassed generosity, if not pure stupidity, for that royalty agreement would have eventually yielded him well over \$17 million over the course of his life.

By 1905 alone, the world had consumed over seven million horsepower! Had Tesla retained royalties, his heirs would have become mega-billionaires, and every place you now see the *GE* logo, you would instead see the *TESLA* logo.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NIAGARA FALLS - SPRING DAY

The breathtaking power of the falls waits to serve humankind and thus partner with Tesla in the fulfillment of a dream.

INT. NIAGARA FALLS, GENERATOR STATION - SPRING DAY

The last of the first three Tesla generators is being installed. Edward Rankine, the attorney for Tesla's first investors, is in charge of the overall project. Tesla is present with his new business manager, GEORGE SCHERFF, and his engineer, Otis Pond. Also present, and nervously watching the progress, are an assortment of VIPs, among which are John Astor, LORD ROTHSCHILD, THOMAS FORTUNE RYAN, W.K. VANDERBILT, LORD KELVIN, EDWARD ADAMS and FRANCIS STETSON - all major investors in the Niagara project or directors of the construction company, *Cateract Construction*. The pressure is on as Tesla stands next to his chief mechanic, Kolman Czito, and directs FRITZ LOWENSTEIN, his new engineer, in the operation of a huge crane which lifts the 88-ton generator from a truck into its exact place.

TESLA

Okay Fritz, just 3 more centimeters and you'll clear the truck.

FRITZ

(yelling)

To the left or right?

TESLA

(keeping his cool)

To *your* left.

Edward Adams approaches Tesla and Scherff. John Astor, Lord Rothschild and Lord Kelvin are in tow. Scherff immediately acknowledges Adams, as Tesla continues to give ad-lib directions in the background, oblivious to the VIPs' presence.

SCHERFF

Mr. Adams, so glad to see you at this momentous event.

I'm Mr. Tesla's new business manager and accountant. We really appreciate the work your construction company has done here at Niagara Falls.

ADAMS

Well the feeling is mutual. In fact I'm so pleased with your progress I want to introduce you to my most cherished associates, Lord Rothschild, Colonel Astor and Lord Kelvin.

SCHERFF

Gentlemen, pleased to make your acquaintances.

Sherff shakes each investor's hand, something Tesla could never have done, not only because of his aversion, but because he's totally absorbed by the task at hand.

ASTOR

I'm very happy to meet you and look forward to saying hello to Mr. Tesla when he gets a break.

KELVIN

(arrogantly)

I have to say, I felt alternating current was the work of the devil right up until the Chicago exhibition. But now I'm skeptical as to whether you can deliver this power twenty miles to Buffalo.

Tesla, overhearing this, tears half of his attention away from directing the massive generator ...

TESLA

(confidently)

If the company will put 400,000 horsepower upon a wire, I will deliver it 450 miles to the city of New York at a commercial profit.

Tesla goes back to his work.

KELVIN

Well, I'll reserve my judgement until the turbine wheels start spinning and usable electricity actually arrives where it's supposed to.

ROTHSCHILD

(skeptical)

Let's say it doesn't work, or we hit a big obstacle, what other inventions are you working on?

As Tesla again turns to counter any possible negativity, the massive generator starts banging up against its mounting. We can hear Fritz yelling in the background.

TESLA

(ignoring Fritz)

There is no obstacle in the way of the successful transmission of power from here to Buffalo as soon as the power company is ready to do so. All the problems have been solved, Lord Rothschild.

We suddenly hear a huge CRASH.

OTIS

Look out boss.

Tesla swings around and instinctively grabs the generator, steadying it.

TESLA

Otis, George, give me a hand.

Otis Pond and George Scherff grab the generator. Scherff, ever the promoter, continues talking to the investors without missing a beat.

SCHERFF

As far as breakthroughs, Mr. Tesla and I feel we are close to a major breakthrough on wireless transmission of electric impulses.

ASTOR

That sounds positive. Could it work for the cold lamps you demonstrated at the Fair?

TESLA

(overhearing)

Yes. In fact, if you would like to come down to the laboratory sometime, we would be happy to give you a *personal* demonstration.

ROTHSCHILD

Isn't a Marchese Marconi working on a similar invention? I think he's an Englishman.

SCHERFF

I don't know, but I do know our tuned circuits patent was granted at least two months before Marconi even *filed* in America.

TESLA

Marconi's a good man, let him continue, he's using 12 of my patents, in particular patent 645,576 to individualize signals and selectively tune them in.

As work progresses, Edward Rankine continues to talk to Mr. Stetson, Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Ryan across the room.

RANKINE

I worked with Mr. Brown and Mr. Tesla in funding *Tesla Electric* several years ago.

VANDERBILT

Would you advise me to sell my shares in *General Electric*?

RANKINE

Well all I can say is Mr. Brown has been very pleased with his association with both Mr. Tesla and Mr. Scherff.

RYAN

So Mr. Brown got in early I presume.

RANKINE

Oh, the best is yet to come.

STETSON

Speaking of the best to come, I hope you will all join us at the opening gala at the *Ellicott Club*.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT/EXT. TRANSMISSION ROUT, NIAGARA TO CHICAGO - FALL DAY

CAMERA starts with the completed *Edward Dean Adams* power station at Niagara Falls, where ten 5,000-horsepower Tesla AC generators are humming away, and tracks along high tension wires through rural country on their way to Buffalo, New York City and Chicago. Narrator fills us in on the details.

NARRATOR

Yep, the poet of electricity was sure causing some hairs to bristle. Not only would the AC flow 23 miles to Buffalo and *arrive where it was supposed to*, but after seven more 5,000-horsepower generators were installed, the power flowed 500 miles to New York City and Chicago as well. But for one horrible detail, my buddy said his dream had become a reality. What was the horrible detail? The Niagara Commission had only installed a total of ten generators and ten is not evenly divisible by 3 ... but that's *not* what bothered Morgan.

INT. HOUSE OF MORGAN, MORGAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Morgan is reading his morning newspaper as we hear phones ringing in the background. He suddenly slams his paper down on the desk and yells for his secretary, EDITH.

MORGAN

Edith, get Edison on the phone.

CAMERA catches the headline of what he was reading:
Westinghouse Transmits AC From Niagara Falls to Chicago.

EDITH

Yes sir, but you have two calls waiting, one from Mr. Carnegie and the other from Mr. Vanderbilt.

Morgan reluctantly grabs the phone.

MORGAN

(civil)
Andrew, how are you?

CARNEGIE

(irate)

John, at your recommendation I invested a fortune in Edison's DC scheme and now my shares in *General Electric* are turning into dust.

MORGAN

Let me call Edison and find out what's going on. I'll get back to you. (hangs up, then louder than ever) Edith, get me Edison gadamit.

EDITH

Should I keep Mr. Vanderbilt on hold?

Morgan grabs another phone.

MORGAN

J.P. Morgan. Hi Mr. Vanderbilt how are you doing?

VANDERBILT

Not good J.P. First my house practically burns down and now my *GE* portfolio is going up in smoke. Why are you leading me into these hare-brained investments?

MORGAN

Now don't lay all the blame on me Bill. You know I'm a big believer in hedging my bets and, if you have been following my moves, you *should* be having no problems.

VANDERBILT

Okay, I'll just consider this an anomaly. Thanks J.P.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GENERAL ELECTRIC, EDISON'S OFFICE - SUMMER MORNING

Edison has moved into his plush new offices at *GE* and is also aware of the news. He is literally foaming at the mouth as he screams to his new secretary, SAMUEL INSULL.

EDISON

Samuel, will you *please* get me Morgan on the phone.

SAMUEL

I'm sorry Mr. Edison. I have been trying, but his line has been busy all morning ... oh, wait, it's ringing now ... Mr. Edison's office calling for Mr. Morgan ... okay will do. (to Edison) I think I have him on the line Mr. Edison.

Edison grabs the phone.

EDISON

Hello J.P. Hello? (Morgan finally picks up) Hi, J.P.

MORGAN

Hi Tom.

EDISON

I guess you heard the news.

MORGAN

Yep, looks like AC is a blinding success ... my DC investments down the drain.

EDISON

Looks that way, but remember, I have a lot invested as well ...
(impulsively)
... Sometimes I wish that bastard's lab would burn to the ground.

Edison says this so loudly, Samuel looks over.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELLICOTT CLUB - FALL NIGHT

To celebrate the opening of the Niagara Falls generating plant, the *Cataract Construction Company* sponsors a large gala. It's the dead of winter, but over 400 GUESTS show up to honor "the company" and Nikola Tesla, the inventor. All of Tesla's friends, partners, investors and associates are present and FRANCIS STETSON is the MC. There are also some new faces, among which are HELEN HUNT JACKSON, JOHN MUIR, JAY GOULD, EDWARD HARRIMAN, JOSEPH JEFFERSON, MARION CRAWFORD and HENRY FORD. Backstage, while Tesla is waiting to be announced, he's pegged in a corner by beautiful women. This time it's Sarah Bernhardt, the beautiful heiress, FLORA DODGE(35), and Katherine Johnson. The romantic grapevine travels fast, as not one of these women has any pearl jewelry on. Tesla couldn't be having a better time.

SARAH

They look blue enough to me Katty.
Maybe you're a little color blind.

KATHERINE

I don't think so Sarah.

FLORA

Nikki, were you always interested
in electricity?

TESLA

(somewhat attracted to
Flora)

As far as I can remember, Flora.

KATHERINE

And you have a good memory.

FLORA

Katherine said you recite the most
wonderful poetry. Have you written
any yourself yet?

TESLA

Yes, I creep out into the limelight
and write one every once and a
while, Flora.

SARAH

You don't strike *me* as the writer-
type, Nikki.

Off CAMERA we hear Stetson announce Tesla.

STETSON

... And now ladies and gentlemen,
the moment you have been waiting
for, the man who made the Niagara
generating plant possible, Nikola
Tesla.

Tesla, dressed in his Prince Albert coat, white silk shirt,
green suede boots and kidskin gloves, comes on stage. He
looks great on the outside, but something weird happens.
Inside, Tesla is suddenly unable to accept the happiness of
the moment. Thus, at the height of his power, he begins a
speech of self-deprecation, as visions of horrible events
from boyhood jam his mind.

TESLA

I scarcely have the courage to address you, so please understand these remarks are not made with the selfish desire of winning your kindness and indulgence of my shortcomings, but with the honest intention of offering you an apology for your disappointment. I am hopeful that in my formless and incomplete statements there may be something of interest benefitting this unique occasion ...

FLASH BACK:

EXT. TESLA'S YOUTH, MONTAGE -SPRING DAY

As narration proceeds, we see a 7 year old Nikola Tesla rolling in tall grass with his older brother DANE, his older sisters, ANGELINA and MILKA, and his younger sister, MARICA. We see Nik catching frogs in a stream; building water wheels with Angelina; jumping off a barn roof with a parasol and consequentially lying in bed with a broken leg. We see Tesla watching his friend eating June bugs with disgust; falling into a large kettle of milk and being saved by Marcia; we see him getting swept over a water fall; ringing a bell in a belfry with Angelina; watching as Dane gets bucked off a horse; and diving into a lake to remove the water-stopping kink from a firehose to become the town hero.

NARRATOR

Nik had a very active childhood and loved his older brother, Dane. He also had two older sisters, Angelina and Milka, and a younger sister, Marica. They used to play together and, inspired by their mother, invented all sorts of things. Dane was extremely talented and accomplished, but one day he was bucked off an Arabian horse ... and died.

INT. TESLA'S CHILDHOOD HOME, SMILJAN - DAY

Tesla is in the kitchen with his mother, DJOUKA, and his father, MILUTIN.

TESLA

Father, I got straight A's again.

MILUTIN

Haven't I warned you? You are
risking your health by such
obsessively long hours you study.

DJOUKA

Dane used to get straight A's and
look where he is now.

As narration continues, Tesla tries to show his parents another unique invention he has just made: a propeller driven by sixteen June bugs. As Tesla taps the bugs, the wheel spins furiously, driven by pure bug-power. Djouka and Milutin barely pay any attention.

NARRATOR

... Nik's parents were so devastated by Dane's death there was nothing anyone could do or say to fill the vacuum. No matter how much Nik tried to cheer them up or impress them with accomplishments, Djouka and Milutin couldn't stop talking about *Dane's* accomplishments. Nik's accomplishments even *upset* them because they brought up thoughts of Dane's accomplishments. Nik often went to bed in tears.

Young Tesla runs out, tears in his eyes as his parents continue talking amongst themselves, oblivious.

NARRATOR

... Thus, at the height of my buddy's accomplishment of conquering Niagara Falls, past insecurities implanted by his parents, kicked in and did their best to ruin him. To combat this, Nik sometimes reacted the opposite of how he felt, with his *god-complex* that he could invent or do anything, like split the Earth in half or control the weather.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELLICOTT CLUB - LATER

Somehow Tesla manages to pull his mind out of the past and end his speech on a more positive note.

TESLA

... Among the many departments of research, there is one which is of the greatest significance for the comfort and existence of Mankind, and this is the transmission of electrical power. We have many a monument of past ages exemplifying the greatness of nations, the power of Mankind, the love of art and religious devotion, but the monument at Niagara Falls has something of its own, worthy of our scientific age, a true monument of enlightenment and peace. It signifies the subjugation of natural forces to the service of Man, the discontinuance of barbarous methods and the relieving of millions from want and suffering, for energy is our mainstay and the primary source of our many-sided accomplishments, accomplishments that will someday colonize the Galaxy.

As Tesla continues, Stetson suddenly comes up to him at the podium and whispers in his ear. Tesla's face goes grey.

TESLA

Thank you for your attention ladies and gentlemen. I must be going now as I am informed that my laboratory is on fire.

The audience, thinking this a joke, laughs and gives Tesla a grand applause, as the poet of electricity rushes off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH STREET - WINTER NIGHT

Mysteriously, the lab that gave birth to AC, actually has caught fire. Tesla stands in the street watching helplessly as heavy machinery crashes through the floors. Firemen are attempting to put out the blaze as Tesla's exquisite plans for an energy-starved world go up in smoke.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

EXT. TESLA'S LAB, SOUTH STREET - DAWN

Tesla is now standing motionlessly in the ashes of his uninsured lab when suddenly a beautiful WHITE DOVE lands on his shoulder. Taking this as an omen of better times, he turns to George Sherff, standing a little farther back.

TESLA

We will rebuild and be successful
no matter what.

Farther back, we see all of Tesla's LAB ASSISTANTS as well as a number of his CLOSE FRIENDS standing in the cold air, silent and shocked at their friend's horrible misfortune. Katherine Johnson, Flora Dodge and a number of other admirers are weeping.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - EARLY MORNING

As Tesla wanders the streets of New York contemplating his loss, we see him from HIGH ANGLES through Edison's grotesque cobweb of black, DC wires. He wanders past open ditches where the remains of fused thick wires lay like burned cadavers in muddy coffins. He also walks past the remains of stores, hotels and homes that have burned from Edison's ubiquitous system of DC.

NARRATOR

Newspapers from all over the world reported Nik's misfortune. The *New York Sun* said that "the destruction of Nikola Tesla's workshop with, its wonderful contents, is something more than a private calamity. It is a misfortune to the whole world." Only his closest assistants really understood the scope of the disaster, for it was they who worked with him on experiments that would someday lead to such things as *radar, florescent lighting, cathode ray tubes, radio, X-rays, TV, laser, atom smashers, liquid oxygen, bladeless turbines, aluminum and aviation.*

Finally Tesla comes to the very park bench he sat on before his interview with Edison in 1884. He sits down and places his head in his hands as CAMERA moves in close.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. TESLA'S HOTEL, THE GERLACH - WEEKS LATER

Tesla has relocated from the Astor House to the Gerlach Hotel. He's lying in bed sleeping when a KNOCK is heard on the door. He gets up to answer as CAMERA tracks through his functionally-appointed suite. At the door stands Mark Twain.

TWAIN

I thought I'd stop by to see if I can still make you laugh.

TESLA

You have my fullest permission to try.

TWAIN

(after a beat)

Katherine Johnson tried to send you a letter, but said she couldn't figure out how to enclose tears.

TESLA

(managing a small laugh)

That's a good start.

TWAIN

She said she wants me to extend an invitation to you. She and Robert are going to have a sort of fund-raising party for you. A lot of powerful people in this town want to see you up and running again.

TESLA

(bursting out)

Now *that's* funny. Just as many probably want to see me broke and in my present spirit.

TWAIN

Speaking of, got any whiskey around here?

TESLA

No, but if you're not doing anything, want to join me for a sad night at the opera?

TWAIN

Is there a happy bar in the house? My wife, Livy, wants a separation.

TESLA

I believe so, a very happy one ...
and you can be my laugh therapist.

TWAIN

Sounds good to me. And for my
first prescription I advise you to
get as sotted as necessary to erase
all prickly memories.

TESLA

I usually have one glass a day -
for medicinal purposes - but
tonight I may have more.

TWAIN

Is Sarah Bernhardt in this show?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. METROPOLITAN OPERA, BALCONY - EVENING

Tesla and Twain are sitting in a balcony enjoying the opera -
each in their own way. Tesla's way is to actually *watch and
listen* to the opera. Twain however, being reasonably
crooked, is enjoying the opera by peering through binoculars
at various PRETTY WOMEN sitting in other balconies.

TWAIN

(slurring)
I'll tell you, the real scenery
ain't on the stage. Have a look up
there.

Twain hands the binoculars to Tesla, who reluctantly puts
them up to his eyes.

BINOCULAR POV

A somewhat attractive woman comes into focus.

TESLA

Who is that?

After a brief study of the woman, Tesla pans over to a
serious, mean-looking gentleman sitting next to her.

TWAIN

It's Anne Morgan.

Quickly realizing who the "gentleman" is, Tesla pans back
over to Anne but is shocked to see that she's now looking
back at *him* through *her* binoculars.

Tesla quickly hands the binoculars back to Twain who puts them up to his eyes and starts obnoxiously waving to Anne. Tesla, the master of electricity, tries to suppress a laugh but it's no use, he's in the grip of the master of humor.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - NIGHT

Twain and Tesla are now walking down the street, both apparently drunk. Twain is bowing and pretending to goose WOMEN as they pass. Tesla has lightened up, but will never be that light. As they pass two STREET WALKERS, Twain stops and blatantly pulls out his wallet.

TWAIN

Well I guess I'll be paying for the both of us tonight.

Twain offers his arm to one of the street walkers, who takes it. He waits for Tesla to offer his arm to the other but he does not, so Twain offers his free arm to her, which she takes. The four continue down the street, dimly lit by sputtering arc lamps.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSONS' HOUSE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

The Johnsons, ever the loyal friends, have thrown a magnificent dinner party in honor of Nikola Tesla. Around the table sit many of NEW YORK'S ELITE, including Edward Adams and John Astor.

JOHNSON

I would like to propose a toast to the greatest inventive genius of our time, Nikola Tesla.

All hold up their glasses in firm agreement.

KATHERINE

And not only that, he speaks nine languages fluently and writes beautiful poetry in at least one.

TESLA

Writing poetry is a skill of which I am but a novice. I defer to my good friends, Robert and Rudyard, on these matters.

Edward Adams then holds up his glass and proposes a toast.

ADAMS

I propose we finance a new company for Mr. Tesla so he can carry on his important work.

KATHERINE

Great idea! I second that.

ADAMS

I propose this company be capitalized with \$500,000 and I hereby pledge 100,000 for the first subscription of stock. Here's an advance on my pledge.

With this, Adams pulls a check for \$40,000 out of his inner breast pocket and hands it to Nikola Tesla.

ADAMS

Any other subscribers?

ASTOR

Count me in too.

Almost everyone around the table holds up their glass and exclaims that they are in as well, even Mark Twain.

TWAIN

I sold all my Edison and *GE* stock and want you to know, I can't think of a better place to reinvest the proceeds.

With this Twain also hands Tesla a check - but it's not the money that causes Tesla's eyes to water, it's the fact that he has so many dear friends that really believe in his dreams. The White Dove was right.

TESLA

We *will* rebuild and be successful no matter what. I love you all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE OF MORGAN, PIERPONT LIBRARY - SPRING DAY

Morgan is reading a newspaper having his usual heart attack, courtesy of the poet of electricity.

MORGAN

(reading)

Tesla to broadcast signal to miniature remote-controlled boat at Madison Square Garden. Broadcast!

What the hell does *that* mean? Why
can't this poet just go away?

EXT. TESLA'S LAB, HOUSTON STREET, MONTAGE - DAY

As narrator speaks, we see a montage of Tesla's new lab being assembled. We see stock subscriptions being filled out and heavy machinery being moved off trucks into the lab. Tesla and his ASSISTANTS direct the operation as the Johnsons direct various additional fund-raising events.

NARRATOR

My buddy wasted no time getting a new lab together, this time on East Houston. Tesla without a lab is like a writer without a piece of paper, or should I say a bottle of booze. No I shouldn't say that, look where it's taken me!

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

Tesla is standing in front of a set of bleachers where a CROWD of reporters, scientists and enthusiasts are assembled in front of a large rink of water. He has what looks like a giant remote control in his hand.

TESLA

And now I will cause the boat to turn to the right, stop and switch on its lights.

Tesla hits a series of buttons. Weird sparks are emitted in the direction of a 3-foot, flat-topped boat about 20 feet out on the water. The boat turns to the right, stops and three lights come on. The audience gasps and we hear someone in the background exclaim, "it's witchcraft."

TESLA

(overhearing this)

This is nothing more than the electrical phenomenon, a unique force of nature, with its attractions, repulsions and rotations, all mysterious agents in an infinitesimal world, a miniature universe complete with molecules and atoms spinning in orbits much the same way as celestial bodies. Later I will demonstrate the same thing, but 20 miles up the Hudson.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESLA'S HOTEL, THE GERLACH - SUMMER DAY

Every year on the 9th or 10th of July, Tesla has a birthday party. Since he was born at the stroke of midnight in 1856, Tesla has his birthday party on *alternating* dates each year.

TESLA

With the development of my remote-controlled boat, we have the beginnings of what could eventually turn into a race of robots ... mechanized men which will do the laborious work of the entire human race. To deliver this to the world, is one of the reasons I was born.

REPORTER 1

(back to reality)

But upon which day do you actually consider you were born?

TESLA

I prefer to think I was born on the 9th of July rather than the 10th.

REPORTER 1

(joking)

And why is that? Couldn't wait to get to work no doubt.

TESLA

(laughs)

Good thought, but actually, the 9th is evenly divisible by 3.

REPORTER 2

And what's with these threes you are always going on about?

TESLA

Three is the most stable number, so stable, the reverse of a number divisible by three, is a number also divisible by 3.

REPORTER 3

Huh?

TESLA

Try it. Let's generate a multiple of 3, say 3 times 1,687 which happens to be 5,061.

Reverse the order of the digits in 5,061 and you get 1,605, a number also evenly divisible by 3.

Just then a bug lands on Tesla's chest. He brushes it onto the floor. Continuing to talk throughout, Tesla takes a napkin and gently picks up the bug in a wad. He then tosses the wad into a trash can and walks back to his chair.

TESLA

... Take another multiple of 3, say 3 times 81,672 which is 245,016. Now reverse this number and you get 610,542. 610,542 is evenly divisible by 3. 203,514.

The reporters, skeptical about this, are taking down Tesla's impromptu numbers to later check his math.

TESLA

This is why I like threes and why my polyphase electrical system is based on a trinity of phases.

With this Tesla sketches what he's talking about on a napkin.

TESLA

In a 3-phase voltage system, each leg of the current is advanced by a third of a cycle, 120-degrees, from the last ...

Tesla suddenly gets up and goes over to the trash can. He takes the wad with the bug out and walks over to the window. He releases the bug into the air by shaking it from the wad.

TESLA

... There you go little fellow. Who am I to deny you freedom and life?

The reporters really enjoy Tesla's birthdays and attend each year religiously. Where else can they get such a variety of strange entertainment for free.

REPORTER 1

Tell me Mr. Tesla, will you ever marry and raise a family?

TESLA

I am often asked this question, so for you, my good friends of the press, I will give you my deepest feelings on the subject.

(returning to his chair)

I do indeed believe in marriage for people of an artistic temperament. An artist, yes. A musician yes. A writer, yes. But for an inventor, no. It's a pity, too, for sometimes we feel so lonely. The first three must gain inspiration from a woman's influence and be led by her love to finer achievement, but ... I do not think you can name many great inventions that have been made by married men.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MORGAN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anne Morgan is sitting with her father and mother, Frances, reading the article about Tesla's feelings on marriage.

ANNE

(reading)

Father, will you *please* introduce me to Mr. Tesla. There's an article here about him. He says sometimes he feels lonely, but marriage is not for inventors.

MORGAN

That's the first reasonable thing I've heard out of him. People like him should definitely *not* multiply.

ANNE

(spirited)

Well you know what, I don't think I'm going to marry either.

MORGAN

(in jest, but irritated)

Watch yourself. You indeed *will* marry if it's the only thing you do. I don't want you around here driving *me* crazy for the rest of my blessed life.

FRANCES

Honey, didn't you say you saw Mr. Tesla at the opera the other night?

ANNE

(softly)

I believe I did, mother.

FRANCES

Sounds cultured to me John. As well as smart and handsome.

ANNE

Father, please? *Please!*

Morgan, irritated by the fact that all the females in his house are ganging up on him, buries himself even deeper in the paper.

INT. EDISON'S OFFICE - DAY

Edison, a married man, after reading the same article, yells for his new secretary, RUTH FERGUSON.

EDISON

Miss. Ferguson, will you *please* get me Morgan on the phone.

He slams the article on his desk.

EDISON

(irritated)

I'm a married man. I have no problems inventing. What's this idiot saying? Do you think he was referring to me?

RUTH

I don't know Mr. Edison. I've only been working here a week.

EDISON

(not the answer he was hoping for)

Just get me Morgan, gadamit.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, HOUSTON STREET - DAY

Tesla is on the phone with JOSEPHUS DANIELS trying to interest the Navy in his robot boat.

TESLA

I think my remote-controlled boat could also be turned into a remote-controlled submarine, or underwater missile. Surely the Navy would be interested in that.

DANIELS

I don't know. The submarine seems kind of flimsy to me.

And how far could it really go
before the batteries were dead?

TESLA

I am confident that I will be able
to not only send it directions, but
electricity as well. That way no
batteries will even be needed.

DANIELS

I'll talk it over with my
superiors, but I'm pretty sure the
Navy will feel there's no future in
either robotics or underwater
vehicles.

After Tesla hangs up, Otis Pond and Julius Czitzo, his lab
assistants, come over and sit down.

OTIS

And *those* are the people
responsible for our national
security?!

TESLA

Actually they're paid to *create* the
illusion of security.

JULIUS

Rather pathetic.

TESLA

Don't worry, they will come around
sooner or later.

George Scherff enters the office.

TESLA

George, you think the Germans take
my inventions seriously?

SCHERFF

I don't know, let's try and solicit
them on your bladeless turbine.
But before we do that, why not
contact J.P. Morgan?

OTIS

What would you have to lose? He's
sure to have a *certain* amount of
respect for you now.

TESLA

You mean disdain. But you're
right, why not shoot for the stars.

Try to set up a meeting or put in a call for me, Mr. Scherff.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DELMONICOS RESTAURANT - FALL NIGHT

Tesla is at his usual table having dessert. A pile of 18 used napkins sits on the table as a WAITER approaches.

WAITER
Will that be all sir?

TESLA
Yes, thank you.

Tesla gets up and walks over to an area of the restaurant where the pool tables are. He encounters STANFORD WHITE standing next to a pool table talking with a cute young girl named JILL BOWDOIN. Jill is the daughter of one of Morgan's partners, George Bowdoin. White immediately recognizes Tesla as he enters the room, looking dapper as usual.

WHITE
(a little drunk)
Mr. Tesla, I heard you speak at Columbia University a while back. I'm Stanford White.

TESLA
How pleased to finally meet you, Mr. White. You couldn't have done a finer job on the design of the Niagara Falls station.

WHITE
Thank you.... Oh, this is my friend, Jill, Jill Bowdoin.

TESLA
Miss Bowdoin.

JILL
(slightly tipsy)
Very pleased to meet you, Mr. Tesla. I have read some of your interviews of late. (looks him up and down) Sorry you feel that way. (snickers)

WHITE
And what way is that, sweets?

Used to the marriage evaluation, Tesla defers.

TESLA

No matter. Tell me, Mr. White, do you play pool?

WHITE

Sure do.

JILL

Actually Stan and I were in a game, but why don't you finish out my turn, Mr. Tesla.

TESLA

I'm somewhat of a novice at pool, but I played a little billiards when I was at University of Prague.

JILL

I trust you ... probably too much!

Tesla grabs a cue stick, chalks the tip and bends down near the table to look for a shot. As he looks at the scattered balls, his mind SUPERIMPOSES a network of lines between each indicating every possible angle of reflection. Tesla takes a shot. Five balls meticulously find their pockets.

WHITE

(in jest)

A *little* billiards, Mr. Tesla?!

Jill giggles, as White gives her a playful swatt on the derriere, something one rarely sees in proper New York society of the time.

WHITE

Mr. Tesla, you and I will have to get together. I'm interested in seeing your new lab, and oh, by the way, I'm terribly sorry to hear about the fire ... next time get me to design a fireproof building for you if you don't plan on carrying insurance.

NARRATOR

Not only did Stanford White design the Niagara Falls station, but he designed Madison Square Garden, the Boston train station, the *Player's Club* and the new extension for the White House. Yes, Stanford White was a talented architect ...

that is, when he wasn't sleeping around with everyones' wife and girls of dubious age. But, being a buddy of J.P., I guess he could do as he damn well pleased. Ironically, Tesla's new investor, John Astor, was estimated to have a net worth of over \$100 million whereas Morgan was probably closer to 30. But few people suspected that because J.P.'s roar was evidence of at least 200.

INT. HOUSE OF MORGAN, MORGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Morgan, usually kicked back at his desk smoking one of his obnoxious cigars, is standing in the middle of the office roaring at GEORGE BOWDOIN, who is frozen at attention.

MORGAN

I am so fed up with this banking system. You tell August Belmont that I will help him secure 60 million from Rothschild on two conditions: Cleveland makes me exclusive U.S. agent and Belmont keeps the pressure on Westinghouse.

BOWDOIN

(terrified)

Yes, sir. I will inform all parties exactly what you expect.

MORGAN

(loudly)

And Bowdoin, I must have that \$60 million loan in *gold*, not paper. Cleveland has spent this country into bankruptcy and now we have to rely on a bunch of Jews in England to bail us out?! *That* will not look good to the rest of the world. I will broker the transaction only if Rothschild *also* makes me his exclusive agent.

Just then, Morgan's secretary, Edith, enters.

EDITH

Excuse me for interrupting Mr. Morgan, but there's a Mr. Tesla on the phone. He says it's of highest importance.

MORGAN
(still irate)
Okay, I'll take it in a second.
(to Bowdoin) You tell him, those
are the terms or no deal.

Morgan grabs the phone on his desk.

MORGAN
(very pleasantly)
Mr. Tesla, how nice of you to call.
Your good name proceeds you.

TESLA
It's an honor to talk to you as
well Mr. Morgan. Thank you for
taking my call.

MORGAN
Please, call me J.P.

TESLA
Okay, J.P. The reason I'm calling
is I wanted to talk to you about
one of my new inventions. I think
it will have great promise if I can
develop it.

MORGAN
(condescendingly)
And what invention is that, son?

TESLA
It's called the bladeless turbine.
It will make all other turbines
obsolete someday.

MORGAN
(in slight jest)
Just like AC has made DC obsolete?

TESLA
In a way.

MORGAN
(starting to loose it)
Mr. Tesla, let me be blunt: I read
your article the other day about
marriage and quite frankly it's all
a bunch of crap.

I've been following your career for quite some time now, and indeed you have a lot of talent, but for Christ's sake, be a team player. You're off in left field stirring everything up, changing standards, causing everyone to lose money. You're a damn loose cannon. Why don't you shape up and fly right?

TESLA

(composed)

Well I'm sorry you feel that way sir.

MORGAN

(more conciliatory)

Ah, look, I don't mean to come off as a hard ass. As I said, you're extremely talented. I recognize that. Why even my wife and damn daughter recognize that.

TESLA

Well that's nice of you to say so Mr. Morgan. I'm truly sorry about what happened with AC and I would like to try and make it up to you.

MORGAN

How so?

TESLA

Well, as I mentioned, I have a new project, in fact several new projects, one of them involves wireless telography. But the project at hand could be developed much more quickly.

Tesla has weathered Morgan's rage and still maintains such a polite dignity, it gets Morgan thinking the unthinkable.

MORGAN

Nik, may I call you that?

TESLA

Sure, sir.

MORGAN

How would you like to go into business with the House of Morgan? And I mean big time. Join the family, literally?

TESLA

That would be great sir. What did you have in mind?

Morgan pauses, thinks and then spills out an idea he hopes might hit two birds with one stone.

MORGAN

I will finance your venture to any tune you desire if you will put down your cocky ways and marry my daughter, Anne. You shape up and fly right, join our team and become a good husband to my daughter, and I will finance your wildest dreams to kingdom come ... but Anne and my wife must never know a word about this, nor anyone else. This deal is strictly between you and me.

TESLA

I am deeply honored Mr. Morgan, I mean J.P. Really I can't tell you. And, *I think*, your daughter is beautiful. But let me sleep on it if you would.

Realizing the awkwardness of how that last came out, Morgan jumps in to cover Tesla's embarrassment with a joke.

MORGAN

Now Nik, you don't get the milk until you buy the cow ... not that Anne's a cow or anything.

Tesla, more embarrassed than ever by the vulgarity, seeks to just *end* the conversation.

TESLA

Again, thank you so much J.P. I will carefully consider this arrangement and contact you as soon as possible.

MORGAN

Okay Nik, remember, any deal you want. Don't be a loose cannon. Join our team. Join my family. Marry my daughter and get her out of my hair. Only kidding.

TESLA

Okay, thank you sir.

MORGAN

Bye, Nik.

TESLA

Bye, Mr. Morgan.

INT. TESLA'S OFFICE, BROADWAY - DAY

Otis and Julius are boxing up a prototype of Tesla's bladeless turbine. Scherff is sitting at a desk filling out some paperwork.

TESLA

Give me ADMIRAL VON TIRPITZ of the German High Command please....
Nikola Tesla.

As Tesla cuts a deal in the background, narration progresses.

NARRATOR

My buddy had now found a way to the top of the financial world and all he had to do was marry someone he had never met and become a 9 to 5 slave to the House of Morgan. This would have been a convenient arrangement for Morgan, for what better way to control a wild poet than to own him and saddle him down to a daughter and babies. Since divorce is not an option amongst New York's elite, Tesla decided he would rather be in bed with the Germans. After all, they seemed to be the only ones smart enough to see merit in his bladeless turbine.

From the look on Tesla's face, he has closed a deal for one of his patents.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, HOUSTON STREET - WINTER NIGHT

Surprisingly, Twain appears at the door with Jill Bowdoin. He has his arm around her and she's drunk. No surprise.

TESLA

Mark Twain and Jill Bowdoin ...
come on in. Perfect timing.

TWAIN

(drunk)

How you doing Nik? Congratulations on the Germans. They may take over the world yet.

JILL

(drunk)

Hi Nikki. I hear you haven't had much great sex lately.

TESLA

No, but I *have* been thinking about it, when I'm *not* working on more important things. Where's Stanford?

JILL

Oh that bastard dumped me for Flora. But Mark has been a real sweetheart.

TESLA

(to Twain)

I see, the therapist helping her through the loss.

Mark nods in the negative.

JILL

Flora also told me she thinks you're really intelligent.

TESLA

(not jealous at all)

Well that's very kind of Flora. Is she coming?

JILL

I hope not.... Nikki, show me the machine that makes the big sparks. Mark said you have all sorts of contraptions around this place.

(looks around)

What *is* this place.

Tesla's lab is a strange place. All sorts of equipment - dynamos, motors, vacuum bulbs, radio transmitters, huge coils of wire, florescent tubes and contraptions (there aren't any names for yet) populate the neon-lit space.

TESLA

Okay, I'll show you my pulsating coil experiment.

TWAIN

Pulsating coil?! Now that sounds useful, right Jill. Maybe I should give Nik a swig first.

Twain goes her good as she lets out a playful yelp.

TESLA

No thanks Mark, you all are
intoxicating enough.

As narrator speaks, Tesla walks his guests over to his pulsating coil, a 2-foot device clamped to one of the girders of the building. The thing is pulsating.

NARRATOR

Every now and then Tesla stayed up until the wee hours of the morning partying and discussing the universe ... all the while running his experiments. Tonight he ran his pulsating coil for a number of hours. Said it transmitted pulses into objects in the form of standing waves, whatever they are.

The pulsating coil is getting quite loud.

JILL

(wrapping herself around
the pole)
Wow, Nikki I can really feel the
pulses now.

TWAIN

Here, let me feel.
(offers her a swig)

JILL

Thanks Sam. Should I call you Sam
or Mark?

NARRATOR

The theory behind the pulsator was like pushing a swing. You just give a little push each time and the swing goes higher and higher. You have to push at the exact right moment, the exact right frequency of pushing. That's what the pulsator did. It pushed on the beam over and over at the exact right frequency until the whole thing started vibrating violently. This frequency is known as its harmonic frequency. See, I learned something from the mad scientist over the years.

So when he said he could split open
the Earth with this principle, I
would have been mad to doubt him.

Suddenly a small detachment of THREE POLICE and a SERGEANT
burst into the lab.

SERGEANT
Mr. Tesla, buildings downtown are
shaking. Do you have any idea
what's happening?

TWAIN
I know exactly what's happening: a
damn good year for bourbon. Want a
swig?

SERGEANT
(star-struck)
No thanks. But I love your short
stories. Would you give me an
autograph for my daughter instead?

As Twain manages to sign a scrap of paper, Tesla goes over to
the sergeant and puts his arm around his shoulder.

TESLA
(god-complex)
It must be a minor earthquake
sergeant. I'll see what I can do
to stop it.

SERGEANT
(having no doubt)
Okay, Mr. Tesla, I would appreciate
that. Nice to meet you Mr. Twain.

As Tesla nods, the police back out of the lab.

TESLA
I think I'm going to have to find a
more isolated place.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TESLA'S LAB, COLORADO SPRINGS - SPRING DAY

CAMERA is tracking down a string of 201 edison-type lamps
stuck in the sand. Suddenly the lamps furthest in the
distance begin to glow, dimly at first and then to brilliant
white. As CAMERA tracks down the array of lamps through
miles of remote prairie, we pass a sign reading *KEEP OUT,*
GREAT DANGER and settle on a large, barn-like wooden building
with a funky pole on the roof.

The pole extends 141-feet into the air and supports a 3-foot copper ball from which 135-foot bolts of man-made lightning scream into the atmosphere. Claps of thunder can be heard for fifteen miles.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, COLORADO SPRINGS - NIGHT

Tesla is standing in a tower window looking out at the distant necklace of lamps with powerful binoculars. In the lab, sparks are flying from a 51-foot coil to three smaller coils. Tesla's mechanic, Fritz Lowenstein and his assistant Colman Czito, are walking around adjusting dials.

NARRATOR

Confident that he was onto a major breakthrough for humanity, and to avoid disturbing his fellow New Yorkers, Nik built a lab in a sparsely populated area near a place called Colorado Springs. John Astor, who co-owned the Waldorf-Astoria with his brother, had stepped forward to finance the construction ... and marriage to his daughter was not required. Out in the middle of the prairie, Nik was obsessed with what he said was his most important experiment for his new *World System*.

TESLA

(still looking through binoculars)

Fritz, turn the pressure on the large coil up to 3 million volts and Kolman, please attenuate the third coil down from 15 Hertz until I say stop.

KOLMAN

You got it boss.

TESLA

(carefully observing the lamps)

... okay ... stop. They seem to be at their brightest right now Fritz. (observing some more) Just as I thought, the Earth is literally alive with electrical energy.

FRITZ

I guess that makes us the very first to set up stationary waves using the entire Earth.

TESLA

I believe you are correct Fritz. And it looks like the exact resonance frequency of the planet is what Kolman?

KOLMAN

(looks at dial)
Exactly 12 Hertz boss. That's fantastic!

TESLA

What else could it be. Okay, Kolman, just hold the pressure there and let's see if it remains stable until daybreak.

KOLMAN

You got it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REMOTE PRAIRIE, COLORADO SPRINGS - DAYBREAK

Tesla, Fritz and Kolman have journeyed by horse-drawn carriage miles down the array of 201 lamps which have been burning brightly all night, with no flickering.

FRITZ

(running up to the array)
Magnificent.

KOLMAN

Truly. You are going to change the world Mr. Tesla.

TESLA

As we can see, not only is it practical to send telegraphic commands, it's practical to transmit power, possibly in unlimited amounts, to significant terrestrial distances and almost without any loss.

NARRATOR

On the way to the goal of transmitting electricity without wires, Nik had stumbled across the secret of sending signals from a transmitter to a tuned receiver. This invention later became known as *radio* and indeed Tesla had filed patents demonstrating the critical 4-tuned circuits to prove that *he* was its inventor, well before Marconi. But radio was the easy problem. What my buddy really wanted to do was extract infinite amounts of electricity from the core of the Earth and transmit it to everyone *for free!* This last was a secret because Tesla knew that if the money-grubbing powers-that-be ever found out about *this* dream, he would have been shut down forever ... *or* who knew who he would have had to marry. Nik therefore entrusted *this* secret to no one, not even a ghost ... well that's not exactly true, he entrusted the secret to Fritz, Kolman and me.

Suddenly the 201 lamps go dark. Knowing instinctively what must have happened, Tesla looks in the direction of the town of Colorado Springs.

TESLA

Oops.

INT. EL PASO POWER STATION, COLORADO SPRINGS - MORNING

A huge generator is sparking and winding down. Obviously Tesla's experiments have drawn so much power they have blown out the power station's main generator and the entire town has gone black.

ATTENDANT

Shut down the other generators. I have to get Leonard Curtis on the phone. The mayor and townsfolk will *not* be pleased about this.

ASSISTANT

I knew that Tesla was trouble from day one.

ATTENDANT

He's staying over at the Alta Vista Hotel, see if you can get a hold of him. He may be in for a law suit unless he can fix this generator.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM OF ANDREW CARNEGIE - DAY

While all this is happening in Colorado Springs, Edison and Pupin are now in a meeting with MARCHESE GUGLIELMO MARCONI and financier, ANDREW CARNEGIE.

NARRATOR

While Tesla and his friends were having fun playing with lightning in Colorado, the mice were gnawing away at the wires back in New York. Edison, who was still bristling from his defeat in DC, swore this wouldn't happen again and decided to team up with a wealthy nobleman named Guglielmo Marconi. The two of them then set up a meeting with financier, Andrew Carnegie, after Pupin got them stirred up about Tesla's plans.

CARNEGIE

Are you *positive* you're onto wireless telography and your work isn't infringing on any of Tesla's patents? I don't want to be sued.

MARCONI

Yes. I can deliver in short order and my system won't require that much money to bring to fruition.

CARNEGIE

And you're *positive* Tesla is going for wireless telography too?

PUPIN

That's right, I saw him sending electrical waves in his lab with my very own eyes. And he said it was an insignificant step before he could send the human voice.

CARNEGIE

Alright, then we're agreed. We will join forces and beat Tesla and Westinghouse at their own game ... and to hell with Morgan. I'm not going to follow him around by the apron strings any more.

EDISON

Well remember, J.P. has been good to me and he lost as much over DC as I did. I'm sorry you got embroiled in the deal, but we really have Westinghouse to blame. After all it was he that made the mistake of funding a fringe nut-case.

CARNEGIE

That's true. We have to be very careful about who we acknowledge with financial support. Either they're a team player or they're a loose cannon.

EDISON

And there is no doubt Tesla is a loose cannon. I won't say I'm glad his lab burned down, but you get what you deserve.

PUPIN

I hear he's out in Colorado now. Astor is funding his experiments.

CARNEGIE

Astor?!

PUPIN

That's right.

EDISON

What about Morgan? Is he involved?

PUPIN

Not to my knowledge.

EDISON

Well then, nothing is happening. You don't fool J.P. Morgan for very long, just remember that Mr. Pupin.

CARNEGIE

All right gentlemen, I could make a comment here, but I'll refrain. I *will* say this however, Astor's involvement gravely concerns me. I think I'm going to have to have a talk with the Colonel.

MARCONI

Maybe we can bring Colonel Astor into our deal ... and Morgan as well.

EDISON

The more the merrier. I have a feeling wireless telegraphy is going to be real big, especially if we can turn Tesla into a non-person in the process.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TESLA'S LAB, COLORADO SPRINGS - SUMMER NIGHT

It's an extra warm night and Tesla is taking a break lying under the stars as Fritz and Kolman wrap up an experiment. In the distance we can see the town of Colorado Springs with its lights now back on. As Tesla enjoys the beauty of the heavens, a 6-inch ball of bright plasma suddenly floats by. Just then we hear a SCREAM from Kolman. Tesla dashes toward the door to the lab.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, COLORADO SPRINGS - NIGHT

Inside the lab a number of balls of plasma, ranging from 2 - 12 inches in diameter, have Kolman and Fritz backed into a corner. They're terrified. Tesla holds out a pole and touches one. It explodes. Fritz and Kolman jump away.

TESLA

Relax, it's just ball lightning.

FRITZ

Oh, it's not a visitor from outer space?

TESLA

Afraid not.

KOLMAN

What's ball lightning?

Tesla systematically explodes the other balls which are creeping around the lab, some passing through glass containers and others through the windows.

TESLA

It's a plasma, free-roaming
electrons stuck on dust particles.

FRITZ

We were just shutting down the
coils.

TESLA

I would expect something like this
to happen if a stray oscillation
hits one of the coils.

KOLMAN

Glad to hear that's all it is.

TESLA

Why don't you two get some sleep.
I want to run a few last
experiments with the low frequency
receiver.

FRITZ

Okay, see you tomorrow.

KOLMAN

Good night.

TESLA

Good night. Thanks for your good
work helping me get the town
generator back on line.

With this, Kolman and Fritz leave Tesla alone in the lab.
It's now 11:30 PM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESLA'S LAB, COLORADO SPRINGS - LATER

It's now 3:30 AM and Tesla is tuning his low frequency receiver and poking an occasional ball lighting that floats by. He suddenly hears a strange rhythmic noise coming from the speaker. He listens carefully to what sounds like a code and then looks out the window at the night sky. Amongst the stars is a small red dot, the planet Mars was never brighter.

NARRATOR

Done with some important work in Colorado Springs, the genius made the mistake of writing a letter to the *American Red Cross* announcing that he had been the first to hear the greeting from one planet to another. When the newspapers got wind of this story, they had a field day.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - WINTER NIGHT

The city is brighter than ever - AC has helped make New Yorkers more prosperous than they could have imagined. Tesla decides to move into the nicest hotel he can find.

NARRATOR

Tired and low on money, not only from the expedition but several expiring patents, my buddy moved back to New York and took up residence in the posh Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, a small dream come true. In this environment, where investors were a dime a dozen, Tesla was confident he'd be back to financial health in short order.

INT. TESLA'S HOTEL, WALDORF ASTORIA - DAY

Tesla is moving into the Waldorf-Astoria, courtesy of John Astor. A SEXY MAID unpacks the famous inventor's ever-finer wardrobe. As Tesla dresses for a gala fund-raising event, the maid looks like she could jump his bones.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE PLAYERS CLUB - NIGHT

Dressed impeccably as usual, Tesla is hobnobbing with GORGEOUS WOMEN and SAVVY FINANCIERS who hang out after a hard day on the street. At the pool table, Tesla is surrounded by a small group of friends and associates, among which are Mark Twain, Stanford White, Katherine Johnson, Sarah Bernhardt, Jill Bowdoin, Flora Dodge, Lord Kelvin and Michael Pupin. Mark Twain is sitting in a love seat with Sarah Bernhardt and it looks like Stanford is now trying to put the make on Katherine Johnson even though her husband, Robert is nearby.

KATHERINE

So good to have you back Nikki.

TESLA

Yes, it's good to be back in civilization.

WHITE

I hear there were lots of Martians out there on the prairie?
(puts his arm around Katherine)

TESLA

Not exactly, but I do believe they showed excellent taste in choosing Colorado Springs as the place with which to open communications.

KELVIN

Oh, that's a bunch of malarkey. There is no one on Mars or Venus, and I don't care what Percival says.

FLORA

With all those stars, I believe the universe is teaming with life. I just wish I could have been there to hear them talk to you Nikki.

TESLA

(warm smile)

Well as soon as I get my new lab, I'll have you out and let you hear them for yourself.

KELVIN

(still skeptical)

New lab?! And what's *this* venture going to be?

TESLA

I am going to build a new world system.

PUPIN

For what?

TESLA

It will be a network allowing humans anywhere in the world to send messages to humans anywhere else in the world. Not only will my world system be able to send and receive the human voice, but photographs, motion pictures, music and data will be sent as well.

KATHERINE

Wow, that's *so* exciting Nikki.

JILL

Yes, I can't wait.

FLORA

You are unbelievable Nik.

KELVIN

Well I think that's a bunch of horseshit, Nik.

TESLA

I suggest you get in bed with me early Lord Kelvin, don't wait until we meet at another Niagara Falls.

Sarah Bernhardt, hearing something about Tesla wanting to go to bed, drags Twain over.

SARAH

I'll get in bed with you Nikki, how about right here on this pool table? (turns to Twain) Only kidding sweetie.

KATHERINE

I should hope so. (smacks Stanford, who is now trying to nibble on her hand) Stop it Stanford, *I am married.*

TWAIN

Well Nik, looks like you have your work cut out for you.

KELVIN

Well, we'll see.

JILL

(flirting)

Oh, I'm sure whatever Mr. Tesla puts his mind to will work.

Remember that night you started the earthquake with your pulsator Nikki?

WHITE

Oh, now we're talking! What pulsator?

TESLA

(god-complex)

With that same principle I can split the Earth in half.

KELVIN

Oh please leave me alone Tesla.

WHITE

You're free to go anytime *Lord* Kelvin.

PUPIN

I guess you have heard, Edison and a chap named Marconi are planning on beating you to wireless telography, Nik.

TESLA

Let them try, I'm working on something far more important, and those that invest with me will see rewards beyond their wildest.

WHITE

I'll give you my services for free Nik.

Robert Johnson wanders close and overhears this last.

TWAIN

You got my support too Nik.

TESLA

Thanks Mark. And Stanford, this time I want you to help me make it fireproof.

SARAH

(a little hostile)

He will help, or he won't get any more free tickets for *my* plays.

JOHNSON

Say Nik, why don't you write an article on your discoveries in Colorado as well as your new plans?

TESLA

Funny you should suggest that. I have been working on an article I call *The Problem With Increasing Human Energy*. Would you like me to send it over when it's done?

JOHNSON

Please do. We'll make it a special in our illustrated edition of *Century Magazine*, so feel free to include photographs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STANFORD WHITE'S DESIGN STUDIO - SPRING DAY

Tesla's "World System" is on the drafting boards. To build this, Tesla plans on purchasing 201 acres of farming country in Shoreham, Long Island. Tesla is standing with White next to a drafting table.

TESLA

Well Stanford, you did a beautiful job designing the new lab. I have decided to call it Wardenclyffe.

WHITE

Thanks Nik. I hope it all works out.

TESLA

Only thing I need to do now is raise the pin money to build it. I need about a million dollars, given the price of copper and steel don't go up.

WHITE

If they do, it's probably Morgan at work, manipulating the markets again.

TESLA

Probably.

WHITE

Say, Jill and I are attending an event at the White House next weekend. They're celebrating the opening of the new wing I designed. Why don't you be my guest.

Colonel Astor and Jill's father
will be there.

TESLA
You're back with Jill?

WHITE
I guess so. Her father has been
very helpful to me and you know how
it is for an artist, you're always
looking for your next patron.

TESLA
Indeed I do. I will be happy to
join you Stanford. Thank you.

INT. TESLA'S LAB, HOUSTON STREET - NIGHT

It's late one night and Tesla is working on his article for
Century Magazine. Experiments are running as he works.
Sparks and ball lightning are all over. A soft breeze blows
through the door where suddenly Flora Dodge appears. Tesla
looks up a little shocked.

TESLA
Flora.

FORA
Sorry to stop by unannounced Nikki,
but I couldn't wait to hear
messages from the Martians.

TESLA
Of course, I'm happy you stopped
by. Come on in.

Flora is wearing an alluring dress and looks more attractive
than ever. Tesla, who usually dresses up even though he
works in a lab, doesn't look bad either.

FLORA
It was great to see you at the
Players Club. (She moves a little
closer)

TESLA
Yes it was.

FLORA
(moving still closer)
Sometimes I get lonely and there
aren't many places I can meet men
that like me *just* for myself.

TESLA

(moving away)

Well I like you for *just* for your
self, Flora.

FLORA

You do?!

TESLA

Sure. You're a wonderful person,
full of energy and curiosity.

FLORA

That's for sure.

Seeing the perfect way to satisfy her curiosity, she approaches Nik close enough for him to kiss her. Sparks are flying in the lab tonight and even Tesla responds by running his hands *through her hair*. But the pressure is too great, he backs away. He can't destroy his mission over a romance.

NARRATOR

Even though Flora was six years
Nik's senior, you never would have
known it. It's also doubtful that
my genius friend knew that Flora
could have been another answer to
all his money problems, for she had
inherited millions from her
family's mining ventures. Ever
hear of Dodge City?

FLORA

Oh, Nik, I know you must be lonely
... as lonely as me.

TESLA

Yes, Flora, it is true, I do have
thoughts of you.

FLORA

So why are you so hesitant?

TESLA

I'm sorry Flora, it's not you.

FLORA

I could help you out. We would be
a great team ...

TESLA

I know we would Flora.

FLORA
 (blurting out)
 ... and think of the babies we
 could create.

Tesla, who has been backing away, suddenly bumps into a wet mop. Startled, his vivid imagination momentarily pictures the mop as Flora's head. Just then there's a crash, and who enters the lab but Mark Twain. He's drunk and has just knocked over a rack of incandescent lamps, about 25 of them.

TESLA
 (with ambivalence)
 Mark, how good to see you.

TWAIN
 I hope I'm not butting in.
 Scherff said you were here. Hi
 Flora.

FLORA
 Well I guess I should be going now.

TESLA
 Okay Flora. Let's talk some more
 later. I'll try to call you.

FLORA
 Do whatever you want Nikki.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - SUMMER EVENING

A grand event is taking place in the new wing of the White House. Tesla is chatting with Stanford White while Jill Bowdoin stands near, now flirting with BENJAMIN HARRISON, President of the United States who also happens to be a bachelor. Across the room, Jill's father, George Bowdoin, is chatting with George Westinghouse. Investment banker, August Belmont, is chatting with Edison. Many others from the NEW YORK and WASHINGTON ELITE are scattered around the room, including Flora Dodge and Anne Morgan. Not surprisingly, as many people surround Tesla as the President.

ANNE
 So ... is he courting you?

FLORA
 No, we're just good friends. Nikki
 doesn't seem to want a commitment
 with anyone. Says his work is too
 demanding.

ANNE

That's what he said in his article
some time back. Did you see that?

FLORA

No, I didn't. What did it say?

ACROSS THE ROOM

We can see the grapevine is doing what it does best. While Anne and Flora are comparing notes on Tesla, others are sizing each other up. Tesla isn't ready to talk to Flora.

WHITE

I'm very happy you could make it
Nik. I'll try and introduce you to
the President as soon as there is
an opportunity.

TESLA

That would be very exciting. By
the way, you did a great work on
the new wing.

WHITE

Thanks. We actually finished
before we ran low on funds, if you
can believe that.

Jill is standing about 5 feet away with a GROUP OF PEOPLE talking to President Harrison. She is crooked as usual.

JILL

So how do you like living in this
huge house all alone?

HARRISON

It's not bad. Actually there are a
lot people here at all times, so I
never get the feeling of being
alone.

JILL

Have you met Nikola Tesla? He's a
bachelor too.

Jill turns to Stanford, who is now just an arm's length away.

JILL

Stanford, bring Nikki over here, I
want him to meet the President.

Tesla and White turn to speak to Harrison.

HARRISON

How are you doing Stanford? Good to see you again. Real nice work on the wing.

WHITE

Thank you sir. It was a pleasure.

JILL

Ben, this is Nikola Tesla, the inventor. And Nik, you of course know President Harrison.

TESLA

President Harrison. Very nice to make your acquaintance. Thank you for welcoming me into your home.

HARRISON

I have been following your work for years, Mr. Tesla and I have to say, you have done this nation a real service.

TESLA

Thank you, sincerely. I'm always tinkering with something to hopefully make life a little easier.

HARRISON

Well, as you can see, Stanford made certain we outfitted the White House with alternating current as soon as we could.

JILL

What's alternating current?

WHITE

I'll explain later.

TESLA

I tried to interest your Navy in my bladeless turbine, but they passed.

HARRISON

Well that doesn't surprise me at all. You are aware that Mr. Edison sits on the Armed Services Board?

TESLA

I'm sure that doesn't mean anything.

HARRISON

Maybe not, but your new system cost Edison and *GE* some real headaches so I'd be surprised if they're not quite paranoid about your bladeless turbine.

TESLA

I see. Yes it's always a thin line between making advancements and inhibiting the amortization of dated technology.

HARRISON

Indeed it is.

TESLA

But don't you think, sir, that the advances always end up benefitting society in the end? Look at what cheaper electricity has done for the city of Niagara and even Buffalo. If the electricity wasn't now cheaper, Chester Hall never would have been able to have established *Alcoa Aluminum*. This cheap, lightweight metal will now make it more possible for the aviation industry to develop.

HARRISON

You *do* have a point.

JILL

(getting obnoxious)

Unfortunately, there's always pigs out there that just wanna make *money*.

HARRISON

(winks)

That's right Jill. But I didn't say it.

Anne Morgan, seeing Tesla talking to the President, wanders to the nearby food table, probably anxious to talk to Tesla if possible. Tesla notices her and mentally disengages from his conversation, as Jill more intensely flirts with the President to monopolize his attention.

JILL
 (crudely)
 I bet it's a real pain in the ass
 being President.

HARRISON
 (accommodatingly)
 It *does* have its pains, and I'll
 refrain from describing the exact
 part of the anatomy most effected.
 But mostly it's an honor.

JILL
 (looking at Tesla)
 So, have any plans to grant some
 lucky girl the honor of marriage?

HARRISON
 Oh, no. No one would have me, so
 there's no point in even *thinking*
 about it.

JILL
 Mr. President, you could have
 anyone you wanted ... especially
 me.

Tesla realizing that the conversation is going to places he
 can do without, wanders over to Anne Morgan as a sotted Jill
 and a sober President continue flirting in the background.

ANGLE BY BUFFET

TESLA
 Hi, you must be Miss Morgan. I'm
 Nikola Tesla.

Anne Morgan is now beside herself. She finally gets to meet
 the Poet.

ANNE
 (softly)
 It truly is a pleasure to meet you,
 Mr. Tesla.

TESLA
 I almost feel like I should
 apologize for my childish behavior
 at the opera a while ago.

ANNE
 Oh, think nothing of it.

TESLA

My friend put me up to it. He was just trying to cheer me up.

ANNE

You mean Mark Twain?

TESLA

Yes.

ANNE

I wish I could count Mr. Twain amongst *my* friends.

TESLA

Yes, he's a really funny man. He's actually my laugh therapist.

ANNE

Your laugh therapist?! Don't you ever laugh?

TESLA

Well that night I wasn't.

ANNE

Oh, that's right, you had that terrible fire in your lab. I'm so sorry. I would be surprised if my father didn't have something to do with that, your AC caused him such a loss.

Anne says this last in such a way we have no idea whether she's kidding.

TESLA

I'm sure *he* had nothing to do with the fire, and as for his loss, I'm sure he'll land on his feet.

Tesla says this last in such a way we have good reason to believe that someone else may have been the culprit.

ANNE

You mean claws. I love my dad but he's usually impossible. I have been asking him to introduce me to you for years, but he simply refused.

TESLA

That's just the way great men are:
they get some stubborn idea in
their head and no one can change
their ways.

ANNE

Please forgive me for being
forward, but doesn't that actually
apply to you somewhat?

TESLA

How so?

ANNE

I read your article about women and
marriage.

TESLA

Oh, that. I should never have
given that interview. It's caused
me nothing but trouble.

ANNE

Why is that?

TESLA

Because somehow, society infers
that a man or a woman is defective
if they choose to not marry.

ANNE

Yes, I know what you mean. I too
have no intention of getting
married.

TESLA

(shocked)

Really?! Why is that?

ANNE

I want to pursue my work, like you
I guess. My position in the family
gives me great potential to do good
for society. I feel there's more
to life than just enjoying the
fruits of wealth.

TESLA

Your attitude is truly unusual for
a woman.

ANNE

You have been a good influence on me over the years, even though you were probably completely unaware.

TESLA

I am stunned, yet honored!

With this, John Astor wanders over.

ASTOR

Hi Anne, how are you?

ANNE

Hello Colonel Astor. Nice to see you. You know Nik Tesla, I'm sure.

ASTOR

Sure, how are you Nik? Like your new place?

TESLA

I love it. There is no finer hotel than the Waldorf-Astoria.

ASTOR

True, but I'll tell you, there was a time when I almost passed on it. My brother was trying to get me to go in on the deal, but I was just too damn conservative for my own good.

TESLA

That can happen.

ASTOR

Well, I've learned my lesson, and that's why I've decided to give George Scherff a call. I'm going to continue to back you because I think the commercial potential of your new cold lamps is unlimited. Push hard on that line, son. Sorry Anne, you know how it is, the boys can't stop talking business.

ANNE

That's okay Mr. Astor.

ASTOR

Give my best to your father. I'm going to see if I can get a word with the President. Excuse me.

After Astor moves away.

TESLA

He's been very generous to me and I am exceedingly grateful.

ANNE

Yes, he's a wonderful man.

TESLA

You should come out to the new lab I'm hoping to build in Shoreham. I may even be able to introduce you to my *friend*.

ANNE

I would love to come out. Just call me and we'll arrange it.

NARRATOR

Well, the genius finally made the most important connection of his life. Too bad he had no idea. What's more, too bad he had no idea how much Miss Morgan wanted him. That line about her having 'no intention of getting married' was only partially true. Anne had no intention of getting married to *anyone other than Nikola Tesla*. Of course, had the heiress mentioned that, she would probably be in the same dust bin as Sarah Bernhardt, Flora Dodge and Jill Bowdoin.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. BANK, MIDTOWN NEW YORK - FALL DAY

Unfortunately there has been another run on the banks, and BANK DEPOSITORS are standing in line.

DEPOSITOR 1

If they don't give me back my savings, my oldest won't be able to go to college.

DEPOSITOR 2

I know what you mean. Damn banks.

DEPOSITOR 1

I don't know if Morgan is going to come through this time.