

Not Without Our Women

A Musical

Book Andrew Black and Patricia Milton

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SYNOPSIS

“Not Without Our Women” is a love story, set against the backdrop of an historic step forward in human rights about which few people are aware. In 1869, Wyoming was the first territory to give women suffrage (the right to vote and hold public office) — fully 50 years before all women of the US received suffrage. How were these rights achieved? In the USA, such advances happen when people in power (usually white men) give up their privilege. How this evolution occurs — how expectations are shattered, hearts opened, and rights won (sometimes only temporarily) — is the story of “Not Without Our Women.”

The struggle for equal rights (and the resulting triumphs and disappointment) occurs in a two-steps-forward, one-step-back cadence. This optimistic and rousing musical invites us to consider Wyoming’s pioneering step forward alongside continuing struggles for rights — including marriage equality — in the United States today.

NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Abigail Bardette- Female lead, ingénue with great inner strength and sense of purpose, legit soprano to high B flat with pop capabilities, aged 22-30.

Beau Montgomery- Romantic male lead, slightly dreamy, searching, good-hearted, but can be swayed, tenor or high baritone, aged 24-35.

Benjamin Sheeks- Strong willed, slightly damaged, clever, stuck in his ways, bass-baritone, aged 30-42.

William Bright- Congenial fellow, strong leader in society, tenor or high baritone, aged 30-45.

Julia Bright- Practical, hospitable, smart wife to William, warm and congenial, mezzo-soprano to high G, aged 28-40.

Esther Morris- Tough but sincere, suffragette, mezzo with belt, aged 45-60.

Charlie Johnson)- Store keeper, in relationship with Earl, somewhat optimistic, baritone. Aged 28-35

Earl Johnson- Owns store with Charlie, a bit cynical, tenor. Aged 26-35.

Leah Cohen- Tomboy, slightly rough, strong-willed, alto, age 22-30

Golden Feather- Native American, wise, witty, observer and ultimately friend to Abigail, mezzo-soprano, aged 28-35.

Thomas Jefferson Howard- African American, friend to Beau and Abigail, wise about human nature, baritone, aged 28-35.

Clancy Holmes/Carey/Delegate #2- Trapper, a bit clumsy and awkward, rough around the edges, tenor, aged 35-45.

Farley Jee/Representative in Washington, DC- Homesteader, looking to start a family, baritone, aged 24-32.

Brett Walker/Delegate #1 - Cowboy, earnest, very masculine, baritone, aged 24-32.

Sarah Bardette- Abigail's younger sister, very conservative and old fashioned, falls for Brett, soprano, aged 18-22

Minerva Vincent- Romance Writer, practical woman of the world with romantic edge, blousy, dramatic, mezzo-soprano, aged 28-40.

Eve Winthrop—Religious reformer, seemingly straight-laced, prohibitionist, mezzo-soprano, aged 24-32.

Narrator/Delegate #3

Setting: South Pass City, Wyoming, 1869. The time is 1869. Ulysses S. Grant is the President of the United States. There are 37 states in the Union. Women do not have the right to vote. That's what this musical play is all about.

There are three distinct areas onstage: Esther Morris' home. The Johnson Brothers' General Store (center). The South Pass City Saloon. Downstage area represents the streets of South Pass City and in some scenes represents Cheyenne, Omaha, and Washington D.C.

Act I, Scene i

Main Street, South Pass City, Wyoming

BEAU MONTGOMERY, a young man who has been struggling to make a living in the territory of Wyoming, enters. He carries an empty gold pan.

Music #1A: Now What?

BEAU

NOW WHAT, NOW WHAT, NOW?
I CAME HERE TO WYOMING; MY FUTURE WAS UNKNOWN
I BOUGHT MYSELF A HOMESTEAD FOR A FAMILY OF MY OWN
BUT THE GOLD I KEEP ON MISSIN'; IT'S ALL GONE UP IN SMOKE
AIN'T GOT A POT TO PISS IN, AND WHO WANTS A MAN WHO'S
BROKE?

THE BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST,
I'VE WORKED MY STAKE, NOT ONE DAMN GOLD FLAKE
I'M GETTING DESPERATE AND MAD, THERE'S NO HOPE TO BE HAD,
THIS DAY IN AND OUT WITH NOTHING, IT'S GETTING MIGHTY OLD
I CAN SEE'S THIS WINTER'S GONNA BE AWFUL, AWFUL COLD.

BRETT

I CAME HERE TO WYOMING 'CAUSE I HOPED TO ROPE SOME STEER
HAD A GUN, A HORSE, A SACHEL, AND A LOADED BANDOLIER
NOW THERE AIN'T A COW FOR MILES, AND MY HORSE, HE UP AND
DIED.

FARLEY

HE'S COMPLETELY OUT OF BULLETS,

BRETT

JUST WATCH THIS COWBOY CRY.

BEAU/BRETT/ FARLEY

THE BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST,
I'VE WORKED MY STAKE, NOT ONE DAMN GOLD FLAKE
I'M GETTING DESPERATE AND MAD, THERE'S NO HOPE TO BE HAD,
THIS DAY IN AND OUT WITH NOTHING, IT'S GETTING MIGHTY OLD
I CAN SEE'S THIS WINTER'S GONNA BE AWFUL, AWFUL COLD.

CLANCY

I CAME UP WITH SOME GOLD DUST, THEN MY PARTNER STOLE MY
STAKE

HE LEFT FOR COLORADO, THAT YELLOW BELLIED SNAKE.
I LIVE ON SEEDS AND CACTUS, IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE ME GAG

BRETT/FARLEY
HE'S BEEN PANNING GOLD FOR HOURS NOW

CLANCY
BUT ALL I FIND IS SLAG.

CLANCY/BRETT/FARLEY/BEAU
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST,
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST.
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST,
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST (fade)

The setting changes to the South Pass City streets where
JULIA BRIGHT passes by CHARLIE and EARL's
General Mercantile. She calls out.

JULIA
Better hurry, Charlie, Earl! You don't want to miss Esther Morris' tea party!

CHARLIE
We're just on our way, Miz Bright!

EARL
I am not interested in going to any fancy "tea party."

JULIA
It wouldn't be the same without the Johnson Brothers! She's expecting you both--- and, Earl,
she's preparing a tasty buffet.

CHARLIE
She bought the vittles at our mercantile!

Music #1B: Now What?

CHARLIE/EARL
TWO BROTHERS FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE, NOW WE OWN THE
GEN'RAL STORE.
WE USED TO BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT THE PROBLEM IS – NO MORE.
WE'VE TRIED EXTENDING CREDIT, BUT THERE'S PROBLEMS IN THIS
TOWN.
AND IF SOMETHING DOESN'T HAPPEN, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SHUT
HER DOWN.

MEN
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST,
BOOM'S GONE BUST, MY DREAMS HAVE TURNED TO DUST. (fade)

The action shifts to the El Dorado saloon porch, where
BEN SHEEKS is talking with BEAU MONTGOMERY.

BEAU
I know I got what it takes to be a land speculator, Ben. All I'm asking is for you to teach me what you know.

SHEEKS
Don't you have your hands full tending the Sweetwater stake?

BEAU
I, uh . . . Sure. (silence) To be honest, Ben, the new crop I laid hasn't turned out like I hoped. And no one's found a vein of gold around here for the past six months.

SHEEKS
Son, you don't know anything about land speculation. Let me ask you this: How would you handle making a land sale to a family moving here from out of town?

BEAU
By post. In a fair and honest manner. Make them the best deal I could, Ben.

SHEEKS
You've got a lot to learn, boy. I'll tell you what: I'll start by taking you on as my clerk.

BEAU
Your clerk.

SHEEKS
Sure, for my Justice of the Peace duties.

BEAU
You won't even consider-?

SHEEKS
I'll pay you five dollars a week. After what happened to your family, I feel an obligation to you. Next time, don't wait so long to ask for help. (calling out) Golden Feather!

GOLDEN FEATHER enters.

SHEEKS (Continued)
Any time you'd like to take Golden Feather upstairs for a free one, you just say the word. I know a young man needs some comfort from time to time.

GOLDEN FEATHER makes a face. SHEEKS pushes her.

SHEEKS (Continued)

You dumb squaw, don't you be treating Beau like that.

BEAU

I'm not interested, Ben, thanks. (Tips his hat to GOLDEN FEATHER) Miss. (to BEN) Did you say five dollars a week? I could sure use my first week's pay in advance.

SHEEKS

Step inside, we'll take care of that.

SHEEKS and BEAU exit into the saloon. THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD joins GOLDEN FEATHER on the front porch.

Music #1C: Now What?

GOLDEN FEATHER

I KNOW THINGS ARE HARD ALL OVER; THEY'RE ALL KNOCKIN' AT MY DOOR
WHEN THEY FEEL DOWN THEY COME LOOKIN' FOR A WHORE

THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE WHITE MAN IS COMPLAINING, 'CAUSE TIMES ARE KIND OF TOUGH,

GOLDEN FEATHER

BUT WHAT I KNOW OF WHITE MEN IS THEY NEVER GET ENOUGH.

GOLDEN FEATHER/THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE BOOM'S GONE BUST; THEY THINK THAT IT'S UNJUST.
COMPLAIN THEIR LIFE'S ALL TROUBLE AND STRIFE.
IT'S WORSE FOR YOU AND ME. WE'VE GOT NO SYMPATHY.
WE'RE ALWAYS AT THE BOTTOM, SO WE SAY WHAT'S THE FUSS?
THEY THINK THEIR BOOM HAS BUSTED; IT'S ANOTHER DAY TO US.

SHEEKS and BEAU emerge from the saloon.

SHEEKS

Hey! You two are supposed to be over at Mrs. Morris' house. Get on out of here.

GOLDEN FEATHER and THOMAS exit.

SHEEKS

(to BEAU) We'd better head over there ourselves.

BEAU

To the tea party? I wasn't planning on it, Ben.

SHEEKS

If you are to be my clerk, you will accompany me to town gatherings. And if you ever want to be a successful land speculator, you'll have to stop being such a loner out there by the river.

BEAU

I will?

SHEEKS

You've got to get out and glad-hand a little. Let people know you want to be involved in their business. Why, you've been here nearly a year, and we hardly see you.

BEAU

I been workin', Ben.

SHEEKS

Now you'll be workin' in another way. Between you and me, I believe this so-called tea party is nothing more than a platform for William Bright to spout his progressive views. He is running against me to represent South Pass City in the territorial government --- and we need to get over there and see what he is up to. Coming?

BEAU

(beat) I'll be right there, sir.

SHEEKS exits. BEAU is alone.

BEAU

MY HOMESTEAD'S GONE TO PIECES; THIS AIN'T THE LIFE I
PLANNED.

AM I TO EARN MY LIVING WITH MY HEAD AND NOT MY HANDS?
MAKING DO AIN'T WHAT I'M AFTER; I WANTED SO MUCH MORE...
SOME GOLD, SOME CROPS, A WIFE BY MY SIDE
THE COIN HAS DROPPED AND SO HAS MY PRIDE
THE BOOM'S GONE BUST, HOW CAN WE SURVIVE?
THE BOOM'S GONE BUST, HOW WILL WE SURVIVE?

End Scene.

Act I, Scene ii

ESTHER MORRIS' home. ESTHER, GOLDEN FEATHER, and THOMAS JEFFERSON are setting up for the party.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Here is the pickled pork, and I've got some baking-powder biscuits in the oven. There's antelope steaks, and stewed peaches, too.

ESTHER

It smells heavenly.

GOLDEN FEATHER

As long as you have plenty of whiskey, Ma'am, that's all these men will care about.

ESTHER

Oh, no, I need them sober and attentive. At this tea party....I'm hosting a man named William Bright, a politician, and he's on the side of woman suffrage.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

You mean women . . . Voting?

ESTHER

That's right. We're going to convince this crowd to put him in the territorial government. Then, he'll see to it that women in Wyoming have the right to vote and the right to hold public office!

GOLDEN FEATHER

Put peyote in the tea. That might help.

WILLIAM and JULIA BRIGHT enter. JULIA is carrying a large stack of SUFFRAGETTE magazines and other mail.

ESTHER

Mr. Bright! Julia! Welcome!

JULIA

I brought something, Esther, that I think might come in handy today.

ESTHER

What's this? (examines them) A letter? And a portrait?

JULIA

You'll see. What a lovely spread. (sees GOLDEN FEATHER) Oh, dear! What is... (whispers) Esther, what is that woman from the saloon doing here?

ESTHER

She is serving refreshments to my guests. And I would have thought a fellow suffragette would be more charitable, my dear Julia.

GOLDEN FEATHER

I washed my hands, Ma'am.

JULIA, chastened, takes something off the tray. The townsmen arrive. SHEEKS and BEAU stick together. The JOHNSON BROTHERS enter.

CHARLIE

The place looks just lovely. That lace tablecloth! Earl, she bought that at our store, remember?

EARL

Pickled pork! That's different. Now, Charlie, you stay away from those peaches. You're fat enough already.

SHEEKS

Good afternoon, Mr. Bright.

BRIGHT

Mr. Sheeks, I'm hoping today we can set aside our differences and focus on our common interests, which I'm sure are plentiful.

SHEEKS

Of course, Mr. Bright. Ah, and your lovely wife. (To BRIGHT) Is this the little lady who is forcing your hand on this suffrage movement?

JULIA

I believe I've had an influence, but William has always supported equality of the sexes.

SHEEKS

I see. And has he always been supportive of a woman who answers the questions that were directed specifically to him?

BEAU

(quickly) Miz Bright, you seem to be carrying quite a heavy load there. Do you think I might help you?

JULIA

Thank you Beau, but I prefer to keep track of my own belongings.

SHEEKS

Give her time—I am sure she will be keeping track of your belongings, too, if you don't look out.

BEAU

(aside to BEN) Why are you being so rude, Ben? (Nods to JULIA) She seems like a nice lady.

SHEEKS

Those nice ladies, bright, educated, and proper. They're the ones you have to watch out for.

ESTHER

May I have your attention, please? On behalf of my husband John and myself, I'd like to extend a warm welcome. And now, I want to introduce a statesman and a man of the people, Mr. William Bright, who will speak to us today about a pressing issue.

Music #2. What this Town Needs is Women.

BRIGHT (singing)

MY FRIENDS OUR TOWN IS DYING.
MEN FLEEING IN DESPAIR
WE NEED SOME INSPIRATION NOW:
THE SEX THAT IS MOST FAIR.

NOW MY JULIA KEEPS ME SECURE AND STEADY
MY HOME IS A BEACON OF LIGHT IN THE GLOOM
SHE COOKS BREAKFAST AND SUPPER
KEEPS MY GUN AT THE READY,
SHE'S A MISTRESS OF HEARTH, HOME, POT, PAN, AND BROOM!

SHEEKS (spoken)

Get on with it!

BRIGHT (singing)

THE COMMUNITY'S AILIN'
THE ECONOMY'S FAILIN'
OUR FUTURE IS LOOKING UNSOUND!
WHAT WE NEED'S A GUARANTEE
TO POPULATE THE TERRIT'RY
I KNOW WE CAN TURN IT AROUND:

WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN!
TO BRING NEW TOWNSFOLK IN.
LET'S BRING SOMETHIN' FEMININE IN!
THIS BUST IS WEARING THIN.

WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN
TO PUT AN END TO CRIME
WITH THE MILK OF KINDNESS, WE'LL BE BRIMMIN'

KEEPING US SNUG IN WINTERTIME.

ESTHER
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN!
IMAGINE YOUR DELIGHT
LIKE A FEAST WITH ALL THE TRIMMIN”S

SHEEKS
ESTHER, YOU GIVE ME A FRIGHT!

EARL
THEY’LL CRAMP OUR STYLE
OUR MANLY WAYS REVILE

CHARLIE
THEY’LL BUY SILK AND SATIN.

JULIA
WHILE THEY’RE TEACHING GREEK AND LATIN

BRETT
THEY CAN LEARN TO BREAK THE PONIES

CHARLIE
AND THEY’LL COME SPEND ALL THEIR MONIES!

ALL MEN (EXCEPT SHEEKS)
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN
WE’LL BE HARMONIZING YET,
WE’LL BE HUMMIN’ AND A HYMMIN’

JULIA
MAKE YOUR SOLO A DUET.

JULIA/BRIGHT
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN
OR WE’LL KISS THIS PLACE GOODBYE,
CLEAR THIS RUT WE’VE ALL BEEN IN AND
THAT’S WHAT SUFFRAGE WILL SUPPLY!

Song stops abruptly.

MEN
(spoken/ad lib) What’s that??? Suffrage??!! Did you hear what he said?

SHEEKS

Now wait just one minute! Mr. Bright, you seem to be claiming that South Pass City could benefit from an influx of members of the fairer sex.

BRIGHT

The exact ratio of single men to single women in this town is 66 to one!

BEAU

I could've told you that.

SHEEKS

Beau, shush. Did I hear an intimation of . . . woman suffrage?

BRIGHT

Exactly, my friend. If I am elected, I will propose that women be granted the legal right to vote and to hold political office. That's right, suffrage. And with suffrage will come women!

JULIA and ESTHER clap for this.

EARL

I think we have enough women already!

CHARLIE

Hush up, Earl. Women buy things!

BRETT

You mean a man's wife would be messing around in politics?

SHEEKS

You've lost your ever-lovin' mind!

JULIA

Mr. Sheeks, political policies affect women's lives, and we have a right to influence them.

BEAU

With respect, ma'am, I am all in favor of bringing women to South Pass City ---but if ladies want the ability to influence the laws, go through your husbands. Women and politics don't mix.

SHEEKS

Well said, Beau. (To JULIA) I'm sure you'll recall, Mrs. Bright, that Julius Caesar was stabbed to death on the floor of the Senate...by other politicians. We'd hate to have something like that happen to you.

BRIGHT

Now, gentlemen. Let's stay respectful.

BRETT

Come on, Ben. You must admit, it'd be nice to have another available woman around besides Golden Feather.

(Ad-lib) Men agree whole-heartedly.

BRIGHT

My friends, a fair complement of female citizens would bring us closer to the city we always dreamed of.

ESTHER

Our territory will be the most forward-thinking, enviable spot on this continent. Tell them, Mr. Bright.

BRIGHT

And if we move quickly, we will be able to advertise Wyoming as a progressive and modern destination to which families may flock for opportunity and good fortune!

CHARLIE

In that case, I'm in.

FARLEY

Me too.

Singing resumes.

ALL except SHEEKS

WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN!
MAKE A CHANGE IN OLD SOUTH PASS,
WE'LL BE BRAVELY "OUT ON A LIMBIN"

SHEEKS

BRANCH WILL SNAP--WE'LL BREAK OUR ASS!

BEAU

BEN, IT'S TRUE WE NEED SOME WOMEN
BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I LAUGHED.
HAVEN'T PLAYED, NO STONES A SKIMMIN'

SHEEKS

SON, I THINK YOU HAVE GONE DAFT!

BRETT

THEY'LL WARM US IN THE FEATHERBED.

SHEEKS
BELIEVE ME, YOU'D BE BETTER DEAD!

JULIA
WE'LL VOTE TO CLEAN THE CITY STREETS.

BRETT
AND PLEASE US IN BETWEEN THE SHEETS.

JULIA (spoken)
Well, I never!

MEN (EXCEPT SHEEKS)
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS MISSES,
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS GIRLIES,
MARYS, LULUBELLES, AND LISSAS,
ANTOINETTES, AND NELLS, AND SHIRLEYS.
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS FEMALES,
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS LADIES,
WINIFRED AND GWEN AND ABIGAIL

ESTHER
AND HARRIETS AND CADY'S!

MEN (EXCEPT SHEEKS)
WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS IS WOMEN.
WE'LL SUPPLY THE RIGHT TO VOTE!
NO MORE FLAILING, UP STREAM SWIMMIN!
THIS IS HOW WE'LL STAY AFLOAT.

SHEEKS
You all mark my words. This entire idea is nothing more than a wild hair lodged in the nether regions of William Bright's long johns.

JULIA
Actually, I have some evidence that my husband's plan will be a success. (producing her letter) I have here a letter from an educated woman, with a bank account of her own: a graduate of Oberlin University.

SHEEKS
What is a letter going to prove?

JULIA
Let me read it. I believe Abigail, the young lady in question, can speak for herself. (JULIA reads from the letter.) "Dear Mrs. Bright . . . it is with pleasure that I write you, upon hearing the news that there is a possibility that the territory of Wyoming may grant women suffrage...."

Lights shift. ABIGAIL BARDETTE appears in a spotlight.
She and JULIA speak together.

JULIA/ABIGAIL

“That will remove the only obstacle that stands in the way of my relocation to your town.”

ABIGAIL

Wyoming seems many ages ahead of Ohio in terms of equality of the sexes!

Music #3 Letter recit.

I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THE NEWS
AND I'M FEELING MOVED TO ACTION.
THE FORWARD THOUGHTS OF THE NEW FRONTIER
INSPIRE FAITH, AND HOPE AND SATISFACTION.

WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, I SHALL SEVER THESE TIES
THAT HOLD ME TO TRADITIONS OF OLD.
I CAN FEEL A CHANGE NOW, AND MY HEART IS BEATING, RACING,
FLEETING BRACING,

READY FOR THE FIGHT, WE HAVE LACED UP OUR BOOTS
IT'S TIME TO CLAIM OUR RIGHTS AND GROW STRONGER ROOTS
FOR EQUALITY AND FREEDOM, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE TOLD,
WILL FAR OUTWEIGH THE PROMISE OF A LAND RICH WITH GOLD.

BEAU

Now what kind of talk is that for a woman?

SHEEKS

She probably isn't much of a woman.

JULIA lowers the letter in frustration and a portrait drops to
the floor. BEAU picks it up.

BEAU

Who's this?

JULIA

That is a portrait of Abigail.

BEAU

She, uh...don't look like she sounds.

SHEEKS

For God's sake, Beau, don't let her appearance fool you. You can't let a woman turn your head --that is asking for trouble.

ESTHER

There's dozens more like her back East. And a vote for Mr. William Bright will be a vote to get these women into South Pass City.

SHEEKS

Thank you very much for the tea, Mrs. Morris. This whole affair reminds me a bit of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. The ideas expressed here were equally lunatic. Gentlemen, I am running against William Bright for territorial representative, and I can promise you --- if I'm elected, these female emancipationist rabble-rousers will be stopped in their tracks.

SHEEKS exits.

BEAU

He doesn't mean that in a bad way.

EARL

What was he talking about, Charlie? The Mad Hatter's Tea Party?

CHARLIE

It's from a book, Earl. If you'd ever take a minute to read anything, you might know what he meant.

JULIA

And what do the Johnson brothers think of this suffrage idea?

EARL

I'll tell you plain, Mrs. Bright. In my opinion, this idea is a hunk of salt water taffy stuck in the middle of a huge cow patty. It is not worth what you have to swallow to get to the taffy!

CHARLIE

I can see it now: women lining up at our store to buy perfumes, soaps, lotions and all kinds of dry goods. We might have to make a special buying trip to Kansas City to get stocked up.

ESTHER

Something to think about.

CHARLIE

Hey, Esther, it looks like you got some food left over-

ESTHER

Go right ahead and have Golden Feather make up a plate you can take with you.

CHARLIE and EARL busy themselves with the food.

ESTHER (Continued)

Mr. Bright, thank you—I think we made some headway today.

BRIGHT

The wild and wooly days of South Pass City are numbered. We'll have the two greatest civilizing agents in the world: Barbed wire and women.

ESTHER

Is he always so romantic?

JULIA

It's not the most romantic way to put it, but he's right, Esther.

BRIGHT

I have to say that if it weren't for you, Julia, I might be as backward as Ben Sheeks myself. And I hope we've influenced you, too, Mr. Montgomery. Good day.

JULIA and BRIGHT exit.

EARL

Charlie, before we go, let's get that recipe for pickled pork.

GOLDEN FEATHER begins to clean up while EARL and CHARLIE approach THOMAS JEFFERSON. BEAU still holds the portrait of ABIGAIL.

BEAU

Excuse me, Mrs. Morris.

ESTHER

Oh, dear, it looks like Julia left behind that portrait of Abigail.

BEAU

I guess she did.

ESTHER

I'll give it to her the next time I see her.

ESTHER reaches out; BEAU hesitates.

ESTHER (Continued)

Is there something else?

BEAU

Well, I did want to apologize for my employer, Mr. Sheeks.

ESTHER

Thank you, Beau, but, don't you feel the same way he does?

BEAU

I do, ma'am, but I think he should have said it more politely. If you'll pardon my forwardness, I don't understand why you are so set on this "equality" idea.

ESTHER

Let me see your hat a moment, would you, Beau? (takes it and examines it) Fine beaver pelt, delicate bow on the band, and it's made of felt, I see. A little tattered, though—

BEAU

Why, yes...you sure know a lot about hats.

CHARLIE

(Approaching with Earl and a plate of food) Before she came out West, Mrs. Morris was a hat maker.

ESTHER

That's right, Beau, I took a job as a milliner's apprentice when I was just eleven years old. After my parents died.

BEAU

I'm sorry to hear that. I was taught women should work in the home.

ESTHER

Even if we have no home to work from, and would starve otherwise? (Silence as she hands BEAU his hat) In my business, I had to be just as shrewd and capable as any man. Hundreds of women came in and out of my shop. I saw women in hopeless situations. . . . Trapped in their own houses, some of them, with husbands who treated them terribly. They had no rights, no protections. And there was nothing I could do, Beau, nothing . . . but make them a hat.

BEAU

Listen, I'm not all that interested in politics, ma'am. I was just hoping- to... (trails off. Looks at the portrait in his hand.)

ESTHER

Now I have a chance to do something more, Beau. And with your help, I can.

ESTHER (sings)

OH I MADE HATS, I MADE HATS.
YES, I MADE HATS, A HAT LIKE THIS FOR A PRETTY MISS
A GAY BONNET INSPIRES A SONNET
OR A GENTLEMAN'S KISS.

I COULD SEW A TOPPER, WHAT A BEAUT!
A REAL SHOW-STOPPER!
A BOATER OR A FRENCH BERET. VOILA, MY DEAR,
BUT I DARESAY
A HAT THAT COULD MAKE HER
STAND EQUAL TO A MAN
SO HE COULD NEVER BREAK HER
AND RENDER HER "LESS THAN"
I COULDN'T SEW, OH, MY DEAR NO,
A HAT LIKE THAT.

I COULD CRAFT A TURBAN, VERY SLEEK AND CHIC AND URBAN
A FANCHON FRAGRANT WITH REAL FLOWERS, BUT PERFUME
CANNOT GIVE HER POW'RS
TO LET HER MAKE A CHOICE
EQUAL FOOTING WITH A SPOUSE
TO HELP HER RAISE HER VOICE
WHEN SHE'S A PRIS'NER IN HER HOUSE
THOUGH I MIGHT ITCH TO, I COULDN'T STITCH YOU,
A HAT LIKE THAT.

I HAVE DESIGNED A CAP, WITH A WARM-YOUR-EARS-UP FLAP
OF STRAW OR WOOL OR FEATHERY PIECES, OF FELT OR SILK
OR COZY FLEECES,
BUT NOW LET'S HEAL THE SORROW
OF BEING KEPT UNDER HIS THUMB.
WE WILL NOT WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW,
OUR EQUAL TIME HAS COME!

(Indicates portrait of Abigail.)

THIS TIME I WILL NOT FAIL HER, FOR FIN'LLY I WILL TAILOR
A HAT LIKE THAT.

CHARLIE

She makes a good argument.

EARL

No one ever said Esther Morris couldn't argue, Charlie. Let's go.

CHARLIE and EARL exit.

ESTHER

And you, Beau?

BEAU

Mr. Sheeks says you're a red Republican radical.

ESTHER

I suppose you'll want to get back to your Mr. Sheeks, then. I just hope Miss Abigail Bardette here (indicating portrait in Beau's hands) will someday have a reason for leaving Ohio.

BEAU

Yes'm.

BEAU looks at the portrait.

ESTHER

She is pretty, isn't she?

BEAU (continued)

She's as pretty as a magnolia in the moonlight. Her letter even smells nice, doesn't it?

ESTHER

It does at that.

BEAU

What I wanted to ask was, do you think I might write her a letter? I mean, I was thinking to give her the man's perspective on South Pass City before she hauls herself out here and all?

ESTHER

Hmmm. You might. Her address is on this envelope. Let me write it down for you.

ESTHER exits.

GOLDEN FEATHER

Perhaps women should be given the right to vote.

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD

What you know and I know is that you can have a right and it doesn't even matter. Miz Morris might learn the hard way: you can't just pull justice out of a hat.

THOMAS JEFFERSON AND GOLDEN FEATHER exit.
Beau takes out a piece of paper and pencil and sits to write.
Cross fade to include Abigail in Ohio.

Music #4: When You Come to Wyoming.

BEAU

DEAREST ABIGAIL,
YOU LOOK SO NICE.
PRETTY AS A FLOWER IN THE MOONLIGHT.

(Beau crumples paper; spoken) No.

DEAR MA'AM,
IT WOULD BE MY HONOR IF YOU WOULD BE MY WIFE.
BEAR ME LOTS OF CHILDREN AND I'LL GIVE YOU A NICE...

(spoken) No, this is terrible.

THIS IS A LADY OF CLASS AND BREEDING.
WRITE HER A LETTER THAT'S FIT FOR READING--

(spoken) Dear Miss Bardette,

THAT FLAT CROWDED CITY LIFE IS WEARING ON YOUR NERVES
SMELLY, NOISY CITY STRIFE IS NOT WHAT YOU DESERVE
THE HARSH TOWERING BUILDINGS
SHUTTING OUT THE SUN

ABIGAIL

CORSETTING AND CONFINING
ALL MAKE ME WANT TO RUN.

BEAU

AND THE DREAM OPENS UP BEFORE YOU, FREEDOM, GOLDEN
LIGHT.

ABIGAIL

AND MY PASSIONS SOAR FOR WHAT LIES IN STORE.

BEAU

WHEN YOU COME TO WYOMING, THE AIR SO FRESH AND MILD
WHILE TO SOME, MY WYOMING MIGHT SEEM HARSH, UNTAMED
AND WILD
BUT WHEN THE SUMMITS GLEAM, THEY TOUCH YOUR HEART LIKE
SPIRES OF GOLD

AND THE CITY FRAY SEEMS SO FAR AWAY

Back in Ohio, SARAH enters with a sign "Equality for
Women," and hands it to ABIGAIL.

SARAH

I'm embarrassed that you're my sister. Carrying a sign like a common laborer.

ABIGAIL

I don't suppose you'd like to walk with me to the suffragette meeting.

SARAH

I'm staying as far away from that lot as I can. If you keep acting like a socialist, you will end up an old maid!

ABIGAIL

Sister Sarah, there are many worse things than remaining unmarried.

SARAH

Mr. Harris left his card for you this morning.

ABIGAIL

Heaven deliver me from the Mr. Harrises of this town. I'm just glad there are plenty of fish in the sea.

SARAH

I'd cast a wider net, if I were you.

ABIGAIL

I may do just that. Now before I come downstairs, I'm going to finish this letter.

(sings) THE DULL CLODDISH CITY GENTS ARE MORE THAN I CAN
BEAR

PERFUMED, MULISH, WITHOUT SENSE, I'M TEARING OUT MY HAIR
I AM A MODERN WOMAN, A PRODUCT OF TODAY
THESE MEN DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT, IT HAS TO BE THEIR WAY
AND THE DREAM OPENS UP BEFORE ME
MEN WHO VALUE ME,
AND MY PASSION SOARS FOR WHAT LIES IN STORE

THERE'S A MAN IN WYOMING, MY HEART WILL KNOW ITS OWN
TAKE MY HAND IN WYOMING; AND I KNOW I'M NOT ALONE
AND WHEN HE TALKS WITH ME, I'LL KNOW HE SEES ME THROUGH
AND THROUGH
AND WE'LL SHARE THE LAND, EQUALS, HAND IN HAND

BEAU/ABIGAIL

WHEN YOU/I COME TO WYOMING

ABIGAIL

WE'LL TASTE EQUALITY

BEAU

OUR NEW HOME IN WYOMING

BEAU
WE WILL RAISE A FAMILY

ABIGAIL
WILL BE WILD AND BOLD AND FREE

BEAU
AN ANSWER TO MY PRAYER

BEAU/ABIGAIL
OUR / MY LIFE IS WAITING THERE

ABIGAIL
AND I KNOW, TO WYOMING I MUST GO.

(spoken) Sincerely yours, Abigail.

End Scene.

Act I, Scene iii

The El Dorado Saloon. All the men of South Pass City are present. There is a sign that says "Polling Place." As Justice of the Peace, SHEEKS is counting the votes; BEAU as his clerk is keeping tally on a blackboard. FARLEY comes forward and hands his ballot to SHEEKS.

SHEEKS
(opens and looks) Another one for Bright.

BEAU puts a mark on the blackboard for Bright.

SHEEKS (continued)
Farley, how come you didn't vote for me?

FARLEY
Ben, I can vote for any fool I want to.

SHEEKS
You cast your vote for a fool all right. You are a regular Benedict Arnold. Plus, you owe at least five bucks on your bar tab. You're gonna have to pay that up before I'll let you drink in my saloon again.

BRIGHT
Ben, you can't spend ten minutes berating each citizen who didn't vote for you! Otherwise, the meeting of the Wyoming delegation will come and go, and South Pass City will have no representation at all.

SHEEKS

Better no representation than representation by you.

FARLEY

It's over, Sheeks and you know it. You might as well just declare Bright the winner.

BEAU

As the clerk in charge of the vote counting, I will stay here till every vote has been counted.

BRIGHT

I think every man in South Pass has cast a ballot. Is there anyone left?

Everyone's gaze comes to rest on THOMAS JEFFERSON
HOWARD.

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD

You know, Mr. Bright, I ain't cast a vote yet.

There is a murmur through the crowd.

SHEEKS

Calm down everyone. I'm sure my hired man didn't mean anything by that.

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD

No sir. I just was answering the question. Sir.

CHARLIE

They re-wrote the U.S. constitution, if anybody wants to know. They let colored men vote in New Hampshire.

SHEEKS

That's because they got a bunch of crazy people up there. Wyoming territory is not yet part of the United States. We make our own rules about who votes and who doesn't.

BEAU takes SHEEKS aside.

BEAU

Ben, odds are Thomas Jefferson will vote for you. And you need all the votes you can get.

SHEEKS

You're damn right he'll vote for me.

BEAU

Then why are you acting like this? Arguing against what would be best for you?

SHEEKS

Because as soon as one of 'em casts a ballot, we got to let all of them do it, just like with women. Mark my words, in order to do what is right, sometimes you have to act against your own best interests. It all comes around in time. (to the crowd) Are we goin' to let this man vote?

MEN

No!

THOMAS looks around the room. CLANCY and BRETT touch their guns.

BRIGHT

Thomas, I'm sorry, but I have to recommend-...

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD

I understand, sir. I reckon my vote won't make a difference anyway.

BRIGHT

Then that's settled. Everyone relax. Sheeks?

SHEEKS

(Looks at the blackboard, then back at Bright) I'm smart enough to know when I'm licked. So. With my power as Justice of the Peace, I hereby declare that William Bright made promises to a bunch of horny men that he was never going to be able to keep. He hereby stole this election right out from under me.

BRIGHT

That may go down in history as the worst concession speech ever given. I'll take it.

SHEEKS

How's this? I'll raise a glass to our new territorial representative.

SHEEKS raises a glass to toast BRIGHT. The men raise their glasses and cheer, some rather half-heartedly.

BRIGHT

And I'll raise a glass to my worthy opponent.

BRETT

(Raising a glass) And here's to William Bright getting some women to come out here.

SHEEKS

This silver lining you are so happy about, Brett, may just have a dark cloud wrapped around it. As long as we're a territory, we can pretty much do what we like. But when we apply for statehood, the federal government may not approve of these foolish notions.

BRIGHT

If you'll excuse me, gentlemen, I will be off to tell my wife the news.

BRIGHT exits.

SHEEKS

Men, I don't know if you realize what the world is going to be like when William Bright gets women the vote. It's like we're opening Pandora's Box.

BRETT

What's Pandora's Box?

CLANCY

Wasn't those her private parts?

SHEEKS

Pandora's box was a big crate given to Pandora back during the time when Greece was the most powerful country in the world. That box contained all evils that could be unleashed on mankind — ills, toils and sickness. And Pandora was told to leave it alone. But did she?

Music #6: Pandora's Box

(Singing) PANDORA'S BOX BEWITCHED ITS OWNER
PANDORA HAD TO GET INSIDE
SHE HAD TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT WAS IN THERE
OR SHE'D NEVER BE SATISFIED
THEN SHE FOUND THE KEY TO UNLOCK IT
AFTER SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW
PANDORA LIFTED UP THAT COVER
AND LET OUT ALL THAT TROUBLE AND ALL THAT WOE

MEN

PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—THROW AWAY THE KEY

PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—FULL OF MISERY

SHEEKS

PANDORA'S ACT RELEASED THAT TROUBLE
BECAUSE OF HER, WE MOAN AND GROAN
FROM HER WE LEARN
A FATEFUL LESSON:
"BETTER LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE"
'CAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT IS WITH THE WOMEN

A PRETTY GIRL, WHO FLIRTS AND TALKS
BETTER BE CAREFUL
NOT TO TRUST HER
YOU'RE OPENING PANDORA'S BOX

ALL MEN
PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—THROW AWAY THE KEY
PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—FULL OF MISERY

BEAU
Were all those terrible things really let loose in the world?

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Mr. Sheeks, sir, I heard that same story from my mother. Wasn't there something good Miss Pandora left in the box?

SHEEKS
I don't know that version.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
My mother said there was hope left. Kind of a consolation prize for Miss Pandora and the rest of us. The earth got those evils, but we still got hope.

SHEEKS
Tom, are you sassing me? Believe you me, there is no hope in this story. Hope is something you cannot hang on to. Especially not if you give women the vote!

(Singing) AND HERE WE ARE OUT IN WYOMING
THE WOMEN WANT THE VOTE, BUT HEED!
THEY'RE FOOLING WITH
GOD'S NAT'RAL ORDER
CHANGING THINGS THE LORD DECREED.

CAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT IS WITH THE WOMEN
THEY'RE LIKE WATER;
WE'RE LIKE ROCKS.
AND IF WE GO FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE,
WE'RE OPENING PANDORA'S BOX.

ALL MEN
PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—THROW AWAY THE KEY
PANDORA'S BOX—DO NOT OPEN!
PANDORA'S BOX—FULL OF MISERY

CLANCY

We got to keep them from opening that box! What can we do?

SHEEKS

Men, drastic action is required. I'll write a letter to the head of the territorial government registering my disapproval. Then I'll resign my position as South Pass City's Justice of the Peace in protest.

BEAU

Are you sure you want to do that?

SHEEKS

William Bright isn't going to be the only representative in that government. When he gets to Cheyenne, he may discover there aren't as many men as interested in suffrage as he is. The deal is not closed.

CLANCY

The party isn't over!

SHEEKS

Yeah, well, this party is. I'm closing it up for tonight. I think everybody got his free drink.

BRETT

I got three.

SHEEKS

I counted four, and I'm putting the extras on your tab.

End Scene.

Act I, Scene iv

The SOUTH PASS CITY MERCANTILE. There is a small crowd at the MERCANTILE. EARL, CLANCY, BRETT and FARLEY are looking at a piece of farm equipment. In the back of the store, CHARLIE is helping ESTHER with a piece of colorful fabric. BEAU enters.

BEAU

Hey, everybody, I got news!

EARL

You better make it fast, we're about to close up shop.

BEAU

You may want to extend your hours for this, Earl Johnson. I just heard that the territorial assembly in Cheyenne closed its session day before yesterday, and its very last order of business, was to pass woman suffrage.

EARL

You got beat to the punch on that news. Look who's here!

ESTHER turns around.

ESTHER

Don't worry, Earl, I could hear people making that announcement until next week and not get tired of it.

CHARLIE

Bright was in here a while ago. The governor signed the bill yesterday morning. Women can vote in Wyoming now.

FARLEY

They can even run for public office!

EARL

Not that anyone would vote for one.

CLANCY

You wait and see. Give womenfolk the vote, and pretty soon they're telling their husbands what to do, like vote for another woman.

BEAU

This is a big day for South Pass, 'cause it all started right here.

EARL

I don't know why you are so excited. It's not like it's going to change your life any. You had the vote already.

CHARLIE

Oh, Earl, you are the most un-romantic man on the face of the planet. This boy's been writing to one of those suffragettes.

BRETT

Is she pretty?

BEAU

None of your business, you smelly cowhand. Charlie, I been working all day composing this letter to Miss Abigail Bardette, tellin' her the news about suffrage. I wanted to make sure she heard it direct from me.

ESTHER

So you and Miss Bardette have struck up a friendship, have you?

BEAU

You might say so. So how are you going to celebrate, Mrs. Morris? (Looks at the fabric)
Gonna make a hat or something?

ESTHER holds up the fabric for BEAU's inspection.

ESTHER

I got a piece of fabric here on layaway. In honor of suffrage, I put a little more down on it today.
What do you think of it, Beau?

BEAU

It's pretty. Lots of different colors.

ESTHER

This print: it's called a conversational. It's not just stripes or dots; it tells a story. See how it shows men and women from all walks of life? Someday I'll sew a shawl out of this fabric, with a matching hat. I will wear them to the polls the day I cast my first vote.

EARL

It's a little busy if you ask me. I prefer a solid color myself.

CHARLIE

Earl, will you please keep your opinions to yourself?

ESTHER

That's all right, Charlie. You two can't possibly know what it means to me, to us, to finally get our rights. To be equals.

CHARLIE

I guess you're right about that, Esther. (to EARL) How could we possibly know how it feels?

SHEEKS enters. Silence.

SHEEKS

Look at this fine bunch of ragamuffins. I wondered why there was no one drinking down at the El Dorado.

CHARLIE

We'll be closing up soon, Ben. We were...uh...just discussing the news of the day.

SHEEKS

I see. A temporary victory. There will be another legislative session next year. You know, of course, what's done can always be....undone.

CHARLIE

But before that happens, I sure hope we get some of those women to move here, just like William Bright said.

BRETT

So let's say we were to get overrun with women. What kind of girls do you think would come to a place like South Pass?

EARL

Oh, my brother's got it all figured out, don'tcha, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Earl, let's show 'em.

Music #7A: SOUTH PASS CITY WOMAN

CHARLIE grabs a couple of items from the store and uses them to dress EARL up as the woman he is about to sing about.

CHARLIE

A WOMAN WITH BREEDING WHOSE TASTE IS DIVINE
AT HOME OR IN PUBLIC--HER MANNER'S REFINED
SHE'LL REEK OF GENTEELNESS, LOVE WINES AND HIGH TEA
A GLAMOROUS MATRON, LIKE MISS LILLIE LANGTRY.

IN SOUTH PASS CITY, A NOBLE WOMAN--A WOMAN WHO'S REALLY
TOP DRAWER
SHE LOVES ART AND SCULPTURE
AND ALL SUCH CULTURE
SHE'LL BUY LOTS OF THINGS IN OUR STORE

CLANCY

Ah, piss on that. The kind of woman I would want out here wouldn't know a piece of art if it hit her on the noggin'.

BRETT

So, Clancy, what kind of gal do you have in mind?

During the following, CHARLIE helps EARL dresses up like the woman CLANCY is singing about.

CLANCY

A STURDY YOUNG WOMAN WITH MUSCLES GALORE
SHE'LL NEED ALL THOSE MUSCLES FOR SCRUBBING MY FLOOR
SHE'LL BE AN EXPERT WITH HATCHET OR CLEAVER
FOR SHE'LL HELP ME SKIN LOTS OF BEAVER.

IN SOUTH PASS CITY, A RUGGED WOMAN—A WOMAN WHO KNOWS
HOW TO WORK
SHE'S NOT SO FINE LOOKING
BUT GOOD AT COOKING
THAT WOMAN WILL DRIVE ME BERSERK.

BRETT

Clancy, let's face it. There's certain things a man needs that you just can't take care of yourself.

FARLEY

You got Golden Feather to take care of that for you.

BRETT

She only likes me when I can scrounge up six bits.

During the following verse, EARL dresses up like the woman BRETT is singing about.

BRETT

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WITH NOTHING BUT CURVES
AND SOFT SILKEN FINGERS TO WORK ON MY...NERVES
I'LL TAKE OFF HER HAT, AND I'LL TAKE OFF HER BODICE,
AND I'LL HAVE MY FILL OF A GENUINE GODDESS.

IN SOUTH PASS CITY, A SEXY WOMAN—A WOMAN WHO KNOWS
HOW TO LOVE
A GAL WHO PLEASES
WITH NO DISEASES
THAT WOMAN'S THE ONE I SPEAK OF

CLANCY

Hey, Brett, if that suffrage thing don't work out, you could just marry Earl here. He seems to know his way around a dress.

EARL

It's just something I learned in the Army.

FARLEY

You know what's going to follow once you take them into the bedroom! That's what I'm interested in.

During the following verse, EARL dresses up like the woman FARLEY is singing about.

FARLEY

I'VE HEARD ALL YOUR STORIES; I'VE HEARD ALL YOUR QUIPS
I JUST WANT A WOMAN WITH CHILD BEARING HIPS
THAT'S WHAT COMES AFTER ALL THAT LOVIN'
I JUST WANT A GIRL WITH A BUN IN THE OVEN

IN SOUTH PASS CITY, A PREGNANT WOMAN—A WOMAN WHO'LL
GIVE ME FIVE SONS
SHE'S UNASSUMING
BUT ALWAYS BLOOMING
FOR HER I WILL SHOOT OFF MY GUNS.

MEN

YES, IN SOUTH PASS CITY, WE ALL WANT WOMEN—A WOMAN
WHO'S MORE THAN SHE SEEMS
SHE'S OUT THERE WAITING
ANTICIPATING
A LIFE THAT WILL MEET ALL OUR DREAMS

CHARLIE

We all know what kind of woman Beau would like...the kind he's been writing to!

BEAU

That's no big secret. Hey, Ben, what about you? What kind of woman would you want?

There is a sour chord on the piano; someone drops something. Everything comes to a grinding halt. Everyone looks at SHEEKS.

EARL

Hey, listen, everybody, it's past time for us to close.

CHARLIE

That's right. But, tomorrow we're gonna have a sale on corn meal. Be sure to stop by and pick some up.

Everyone exits to the street but SHEEKS and BEAU.

BEAU

Sorry if I spoke out of turn, Ben.

SHEEKS

If you expect to stay on my good side, Beau, you got to learn not to talk about my personal business in public at any time. That's how Othello got on the outs with Iago.

BEAU

I never heard of those folks.

SHEEKS

Never mind.

BEAU

Good-night, sir.

BEAU exits. A moment, as SHEEKS considers.

Music #7B: South Pass City Woman

SHEEKS

THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN YOU TOOK FOR YOUR WIFE
WAS ALWAYS BESIDE YOU, YOUR HELPMATE FOR LIFE
TIME WENT BY AND YOU SAW THAT SHE'D DRIFTED
SHE CHANGED AND YOU WONDERED HOW THINGS COULD HAVE
SHIFTED

IN CAROLINA, A TENDER WOMAN—THAT WOMAN WAS LOVELY
AND SMART
BUT THEN SOMETHING CHANGED HER
IT REARRANGED HER
YOU JUST CAN'T TRUST A GIRL WITH YOUR HEART.

End Scene.

Act I, Scene iv.b

Scene shifts to ABIGAIL and SARAH's home. ABIGAIL is writing a letter; SARAH carries in Suffragette Magazine.

SARAH

There's a letter from your sweetheart in Wyoming!

ABIGAIL

Give me that!

SARAH

And your latest copy of Suffragette Magazine. I swear, Abigail, you are the scandal of this neighborhood with your modern views.

ABIGAIL

(Taking the magazine and calling out) Leah! Look at this! Wyoming has passed woman suffrage!

LEAH enters.

LEAH

Well, whoo-hoo! Hug me, Abbie, this is the moment we've been working for!

ABIGAIL

Suffrage! Equality!

ABIGAIL and LEAH do a little dance together.

SARAH

Honestly! I think any self-respecting man would look down on a woman who marches into a voting booth and casts a vote.

LEAH

In other words, you're too dumb and lazy to educate yourself as a citizen.

SARAH

I simply know that the power of woman is her dependence, flowing from the weakness God gave her for protection.

LEAH

Good grief, somebody loosen this girl's corset. It's cutting off the flow of oxygen to her brain!

ABIGAIL

All right, you two. Leah, the time has come for us to pack our bags. I intend to use my inheritance to purchase a piece of my own land out in the Wyoming territory. I am going to write my friend Julia Bright and see if she has any advice for me.

SARAH

All you want to do is see that boy who has been writing you all those letters. You know, he might turn out to be as ugly as a mud fence.

ABIGAIL

Beau Montgomery has been very sweet in his correspondence, but that has nothing to do with why I want to move to South Pass City.

LEAH

Oh, come on. You could move to any city in Wyoming. It doesn't have to be South Pass City.

ABIGAIL

Well, of course, I would want to move to a place where I have a . . . friend.

LEAH

“Friend.” Is that what you call him?

ABIGAIL

Believe or don’t believe; it’s up to you. But now, I’m going to make plans for a radical move west.

LEAH

If it’s radical, count me in!

SARAH

As for me, I’m going to stay right here in Ohio.

ABIGAIL

We’ll see about that, little sister. Now if you’ll excuse me. I have a letter to read.

LEAH and SARAH leave. BEAU appears in a spotlight.

BEAU

My darling, Abigail. Now that we have passed suffrage in our territory, I hope you will take that as a sign to make the change you have been contemplatin’.

Music #8: When You Come to Wyoming (Duet, Reprise).

BEAU

WON'T YOU FLY TO WYOMING, JUST AS LIGHT AS ANY BREEZE?

ABIGAIL

TIME TO TRY OUT WYOMING

BEAU

YOU WILL SET MY HEART AT EASE

BEAU/ABIGAIL

AN ANSWER TO MY PRAYER

OUR/MY LIFE IS WAITING THERE

ABIGAIL

AND I KNOW TO WYOMING I MUST GO.

End Scene.

Act One, Scene v

The El Dorado. SHEEKS is alone, doing book work. BEAU enters.

BEAU

Kind of quiet in here today.

SHEEKS

There were rumors of a gold strike up North. Cleared everybody out. I'm surprised you're not up there yourself.

BEAU

There's nothing up there, Ben. Everybody is so hungry for gold that if one prospector brings in a gold flake left over from last year's strike, it starts a stampede. I got other things on my mind.

SHEEKS

Is that so?

BEAU

Yep. Since you stepped down as the Justice the Peace and I lost my clerking job, I been thinking about how I can make some more money. I'm here to have another talk with you about getting into land speculation. I got to be prepared for my future, you know.

SHEEKS

Oh, really?

BEAU

And land speculating is the way I'm gonna do it. I been watching you in action over the last little while, and I think I got a few things figured out.

SHEEKS

How about a little test? (SHEEKS takes out a letter and looks at it.) Let's say I had a letter from a prospective buyer from back east. A buyer who wants to buy a piece of land. How would you handle it?

BEAU

Well, first off, did this here buyer tell you how much money he wanted to spend?

SHEEKS writes a number down on a pad and shoves it across to BEAU who looks at it.

BEAU (Continued)

Okay. So this buyer.... he's not negotiating from...what do you call it ? A position of strength. So, that kind of gives you the upper hand. Right?

SHEEKS

This is test, boy; I'm not going to give you the answers as you go along.

BEAU

Does he want to farm this land, or prospect it? Or does he have something else in mind?

SHEEKS

I'll give you that. It's in the letter. It's for farmin'.

BEAU

For that price, I'd try to find maybe 40 acres or so.

SHEEKS

And how much would you ask for it?

BEAU

You start by offering it for a little bit more what the guy has said he's willing to pay. And then you go back and forth. You can come down some, but make sure you're makin' at least twenty percent more than what the land is worth.

SHEEKS

You have been paying attention. Maybe I should hand this inquiry over to you and let you negotiate it for me.

BEAU

(Leans forward in his chair; he is unsteadily perched) Sure! So who is he: my first customer in the speculation business?

SHEEKS

It's not a "he," Beau. It's one of those suffragettes. A woman named Abigail Bardette.

BEAU falls out of his chair.

SHEEKS

Hey, there. You okay?

BEAU

Yeah, it's just..... What was her name again?

SHEEKS

Abigail Bardette. She was referred to me by Julia Bright. She's probably planning to move out here to run for mayor.

BEAU

What makes you think she's a suffragette?

SHEEKS

She has to be. Why else would a single woman be moving out here all alone?

BEAU

Yeah. Why else?

SHEEKS

So, Beau. I propose you sell her fifty percent of your stake.

BEAU

My stake!

SHEEKS

Just you listen. You sell her that piece of land on the river. The part that's shady and full of sand. She is not going to be able to work that land, or prospect it either. We both know that.

BEAU

But my house is on that part of the property.

SHEEKS

You'll stay with me for the duration. After six weeks, she'll be begging you to take it back. You'll get your property, and you pocket a sum of your own. That's how speculation works.

BEAU

Ben, I been corresponding with this lady. Abigail. We got kind of a friendship going.

SHEEKS

All the better. She'll be much more likely to take your advice if you're already... friendly.

BEAU

(Takes the letter and looks at it) It seems like she should find a man to own property for her, and then she can do womanly things, like working in the kitchen, and raising up children.

SHEEKS

You're right, of course. But if women insist on taking over men's jobs, then it's up to us to show them how to do it. If this little lady really wants to own property so bad, you're doing her a favor by showing her how it's done. Agreed?

BEAU

"I'd be doing her a favor." I never thought of it that way.

SHEEKS

As I've said before, in order to do what's right, sometimes you have to act against your own personal interests. This will work out fine for both of you. You still own the stake next door, so when she gets into trouble, you can run right in and help her. You get to be Sir Ivanhoe and she's ...Rebecca.

BEAU

Maybe.

SHEEKS

Write her a letter and tell her you're authorized to act as my agent. That'll impress her. Offer the forty acres of the Sweetwater stake we talked about for ten dollars an acre.

BEAU

Ben! I only paid a buck and a quarter an acre myself.

SHEEKS

You know how speculation works around here. If you want, I can just do this deal myself.

BEAU

No, no, I'll do it. I'll do it.

SHEEKS

Good enough.

BEAU

Ben, I do appreciate the way you've been helping me. Giving me that clerking job was a start, and now, you're letting me do this.

SHEEKS

Son, after what happened to your family, I want to do what I can.

BEAU

I wanted to give you a token of my gratitude. It's a way of saying thanks...you know....for all you've done.

BEAU hands SHEEKS a package wrapped in newspaper. BEN unwraps the package. It is a small wooden box.

BEAU (Continued)

My daddy carved that himself. I found it after . . . It's a miracle, almost, that it survived, it bein' made out of Louisiana pine wood.

SHEEKS

This is a very thoughtful gesture.

BEAU

It's like that box in the story about that lady Pandora. But this here box is already open, so you don't have to worry about releasing any evil into the world. You can use it to hold your doo-dads and such.

SHEEKS

Now, son, I don't want you to take this the wrong way, but I am not going to take this box from you.

BEAU

What?

SHEEKS

This is an heirloom. Your daddy made it with his own hands. And it's the one thing of yours those Union soldiers didn't kill, steal, or set on fire. One day, you're going to want to give it to somebody who means more to you than Ben Sheeks. Your own son, maybe.

BEAU

You think?

SHEEKS

You hold on to that box till the time is right.

BRIGHT enters with ESTHER MORRIS.

BRIGHT

Morning, Beau, Ben.

SHEEKS

Bright and Esther Morris? What is it now? Has the governor passed a law that allows Esther Morris to take over my saloon?

BRIGHT

I wanted you to hear the news from me. As the delegate to the territorial convention, it's my job appoint somebody to replace you, now that you've given up your job as Justice of the Peace.

SHEEKS

And I'll just bet you appointed this reactionary, Mrs. Morris, didn't you?

ESTHER

That's Justice Morris.

BRIGHT

Ben, how on earth did you guess?

SHEEKS

Why else would she be standing here, looking like the cat that just ate the chicken that the family was planning to have for Sunday dinner?

BRIGHT

You might at least offer congratulations and good wishes. We did stop by so you would hear about it before anyone else did.

SHEEKS

You should be thanking me for my forbearance. In ancient times, the bearers of bad news were often summarily executed!

BEAU

Now, Ben-

ESTHER

No ill feelings on my part, Mr. Sheeks. (to BRIGHT) I told you this was a bad idea. Good day, gentlemen.

BRIGHT exits with ESTHER.

SHEEKS

Sometimes I don't know why I even bother to open my mouth. This must be how Hercules felt when he was facing that mountain of crap in the Aegean stables.

BEAU

Yeah. I bet he felt just that way.

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD enters.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Mr. Sheeks, there's no gold up north. Only a bunch of men fist-fighting each other out of pride. There'll be a claim to settle.

SHEEKS

I can't wait to see how the men of South Pass City react to Mrs. Esther Morris . . . excuse me, Justice Morris . . . trying the case of two prospectors fighting over a stake.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

What's that, sir? Esther Morris is taking over as Justice of the Peace?

SHEEKS

She's gonna try. Doesn't that beat all? Come on, Beau.

SHEEKS and BEAU exit. GOLDEN FEATHER enters.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Here's one for you. Mrs. Esther Morris took Mr. Sheek's place as the new county judge.

GOLDEN FEATHER

Women judges have a place in history. In legend, and in your Christian bible.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

But this is the Wyoming territory. No such thing as a woman judge. Of course, I never thought I'd live to see the day when the black man would walk free in this country.

GOLDEN FEATHER

You walk free, do you? Even when you walk in to cast your ballot at the voting place?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

You got a point there, ma'am. You got a point.

Music #9: Outside

THOMAS JEFFERSON (Singing)

I WAS BORN AS PROPERTY
FROM MY FAM'LY I WAS PRIED
THEN CAME THAT DAY I WAS SET FREE
BUT STILL I LIVE OUTSIDE

NO HOME THAT I CAN SPEAK OF
I CROSSED THE GREAT DIVIDE
I'M LIVING IN A WHITE MAN'S WORLD
FOR NOW, I LIVE OUTSIDE

THEY SAY THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING
THE CUP OF LIFE WILL FILL
I'VE BEEN THROUGH CHANGE AND YET I FIND
THAT I AM OUTSIDE STILL

GOLDEN FEATHER

AND I WAS BORN SHOSHONE,
A PROUD AND NOBLE TRIBE.
MY EARTH WALK'S LASTED MANY DAYS
AND LEFT ME HERE, OUTSIDE

A SOLDIER IN THE CAVALRY
TOOK ME FOR HIS BRIDE.
I WAS A WAY TO PASS THE TIME.
HE LEFT ME HERE, OUTSIDE.

THEY SAY THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING,
AS CORN RUNS THROUGH LIFE'S MILL.
THAT CHANGE MAY NEVER COME TO ME
AND I'LL BE OUTSIDE STILL.

GOLDEN FEATHER/THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD (UNISON)
THEY SAY THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING
THE CUP OF LIFE WILL FILL
I'VE BEEN THROUGH CHANGE AND YET I FIND
THAT I AM OUTSIDE STILL.

Action shifts to the South Pass City Mercantile.
EARL and CHARLIE are closing up for the night.

CHARLIE

So South Pass City is going to have a woman Justice of the Peace.

EARL

What is the frontier coming to? Pretty soon it'll be all parasols and baby buggies.

CHARLIE

I find it inspiring that a woman could step out in society. Maybe, one day, you and I can stop pretending we're "brothers."

EARL

That day is not coming any time soon.

CHARLIE

But it will. I'd like to step out, together, in a free society.

CHARLIE tries to kiss EARL on the lips. EARL
resists.

EARL

Charlie, someone will see us!

CHARLIE (singing)

THE SHADES ARE DRAWN. NO ONE CAN SEE.
WE'VE BEEN PRETENDING FOR SO LONG.

CHARLIE (Continued)

(Spoken) Don't you get tired of the pretense?

EARL

We been doin' it so longand there's nothing we can do about it, anyhow.

A gentle kiss.

CHARLIE

WE TOLD THEM WE WERE BROTHERS
TO KEEP THEM SATISFIED
LET OTHERS THINK WE'RE JUST LIKE THEM
WE KNOW THAT WE'RE OUTSIDE
I CAN'T EXPRESS THE WAY I FEEL
IT SEEMS MY HEART IS TIED

EARL

UNTIE THAT KNOT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
PLEASE LEAVE IT ON, OUTSIDE.

CHARLIE and EARL go out in the street.
CHARLIE puts his arm around EARL and they
cross by the saloon. GOLDEN FEATHER and
THOMAS JEFFERSON are on the front porch.

GOLDEN FEATHER/THOMAS JEFFERSON/CHARLIE/EARL
FOR WOMEN, THINGS ARE CHANGING,
AND THEY ARE STARRY EYED.
FOR THEM THE DOORS MAY OPEN UP
AND WE'LL BE LOCKED OUTSIDE.

End Scene.

Act I, Scene vi

Omaha. A train station. LEAH, ABIGAIL, and a
group of women are in traveling clothes with
suitcases.

SARAH

Honestly, Abigail, this journey grows more unpleasant by the minute. How could you drag me all the way out here. . . just because I don't have a husband of my own?

ABIGAIL

I promise you, you won't be sorry.

MINERVA

Believe me, there will be plenty of husbands in Wyoming to choose from. I can sense the imminent presence of rugged men! Such a wild frontier, it's thrilling, it's heart-pounding! It's . . . Omaha!

SARAH

It smells like cows. (to MINERVA) What will you do in Wyoming?

MINERVA

I published two romantic novels in Akron. I'll keep doing that. Just change the wicked four poster bed to a couple of bales of hay!

LEAH and EVE enter carrying luggage.

LEAH

Can you believe it? One of those men just tried to carry our trunks for us.

MINERVA

How very chivalrous! (she makes a note)

EVE

(disappointed) Leah told him off.

LEAH

As modern women, we must prove to the world that we are strong and independent enough to fend for ourselves.

SARAH

Leah, you are so self-sufficient, I can't believe any man in his right mind would offer to help you with anything.

ABIGAIL

This is a point on which Leah and I disagree. Every now and then, it's pleasant to have a man offer to help with something.

LEAH

Only if there is no implication that he sees you as weak, or inferior. We have to fight that attitude at every turn.

SARAH

I would only be too happy if a man put me in a sedan chair and carried me the rest of the way to Wyoming!

EVE

I don't have a strong opinion, as long as the man has sworn off all alcoholic beverages and taken a vow of temperance.

ABIGAIL

Ladies, ladies! I think I hear the train.

MINERVA

The heroine of my latest dime novel would have something to say about that!

EVE

Who?

MINERVA

Gladys Happybottom. Her bosom would heave, and she would say, "Wyoming is just a heartbeat away!"

Music #10: Our Future Is Just a Heartbeat Away

THE WOMEN

WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
WY-OH-WY-

WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
AH!

ABIGAIL

OUR FUTURE IS JUST A HEARTBEAT AWAY
WE'LL BE THE QUEENS OF ALL WE SURVEY

SARAH

THIS TRIP HAS HAD SOME COMPLICATIONS!

ABIGAIL

BUT IT WILL MEET OUR EXPECTATIONS
THE END'S AT HAND, AND I'M GLAD TO SAY
OUR FUTURE IS JUST A HEART BEAT AWAY.

THE WOMEN

WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
WY-WYOMING
AH!

MINERVA

I WANT A MAN WITH TALL DARK LOOKS
JUST LIKE THE ONES IN ALL MY BOOKS!

EVE
I'LL FIND A CHURCH AND I'LL START TO PREACH

LEAH
WOMEN'S RIGHTS....

ALL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH!

EVE
GOD SENT ME HERE,

ALL
GOD SENT HER HERE.

EVE
I DID OBEY!

ALL
SEE HOW SHE OBEYS.

EVE
(WAVING HER AXE) NOW FOR THAT DEMON RUM

ALL
WICKED, WICKED RUM. IT'S JUDGMENT DAY!

OUR FUTURE IS JUST A HEARTBEAT AWAY
IT'S LOOKING BRIGHT, WE'RE HAPPY TO SAY
WE'RE THROWING OFF ALL RESERVATIONS

SARAH
BUT WILL IT MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

ALL
FIN'LLY A CHANCE BEFORE WE'RE ALL GREY.
OUR FUTURE IS JUST A HEARTBEAT AWAY.

The South Pass City Mercantile. The men are somewhat dressed up, awaiting the arrival of the women. CLANCY shows up all bloody from shaving. BRETT is tipsy.

FARLEY
These pants don't fit right. Can somebody help me fix my suspenders?

EARL

I can.

BRETT

(Takes a big swig) I got me a bottle of hooch I made myself. I can't wait to walk up to one of those frisky fillies and offer her a welcome drink!

CLANCY

When that stagecoach gets here, stand back! I'm gonna rush up to the finest-looking gal I see, take her into my arms, and kiss her womanly lips.

CLANCY pulls EARL away from FARLEY and, demonstrating, kisses him.

CHARLIE

All right now, that's enough practice.

EARL

Clancy just got carried away. You can practice on me any time you want. You too, Brett.

CHARLIE

Brother Earl! Say, Beau, what are you doing with that sad bunch of flowers?

EARL

He's gonna give them to his sweetheart he's been writing to all these months.

BRETT

(To BEAU) I heard you sold her part of your land. She's gonna be mad when she finds out it's got no gold and can't grow even weeds!

BEAU

You hush up.

BRETT

(Taking another drink) Feeling guilty?

FARLEY

When are they going to get here? I can't wait another minute!

SHEEKS and ESTHER arrive.

SHEEKS

Maybe they lost their way. It wouldn't surprise me a bit.

ESTHER

That great cloud of dust--see? That's the stagecoach!

Those gals are almost here!

BRETT

In my Wyoming.

BEAU

Music #11: Heartbeat Two

MY WYOMING
MY WYOMING

BEAU

MY-WYOMING
AHHHHHAHAH!

BEAU AND ALL MEN

BEAU
THE GIRL THAT I LOVE IS A HEART BEAT AWAY
AND I'LL MEET HER HERE WITH THIS PRETTY BOUQUET

SHEEKS
SHE MAY REGRET YOUR ASPIRATIONS

BEAU
SHE'S SURE TO MEET MY EXPECTATIONS

BRETT
A PRETTY GIRL I HOPE AND PRAY
THOSE WOMEN ARE JUST A HEARTBEAT AWAY

BEAU
HER TRIP WAS LONG, IT GROUND AWAY.
THEY CROSSED THE GREAT BIG USA.

FARLEY
THEY MADE IT THROUGH TO COUNCIL BLUFFS

ALL MEN
HOPE THEY DON'T THINK WE'RE TOO ROUGH.

WOMEN (entering)

MEN

WY-WYOMING! WY-
WYOMING! WY-
WYOMING! OH!

HERE THEY COME! HERE THEY
COME! HERE THEY COME!
HERE!

OUR FUTURE IS JUST A
HEARTBEAT AWAY
WE'LL BE THE QUEENS
OF ALL WE SURVEY.

SARAH
THIS TRIP HAS HAD
SOME COMPLICATIONS.

ABIGAIL
BUT IT WILL MEET OUR
EXPECTATIONS.

WOMEN
THE END'S AT HAND
AND I'M GLAD TO SAY
OUR FUTURE IS JUST A
HEARTBEAT A-!

THE GIRL THAT I LOVE IS A
HEARTBEAT AWAY. THE
FUTURE IS BRIGHT, WE ARE
HAPPY TO SAY.

SHEEKS
THERE'S BOUND TO BE SOME
FLUCTUATIONS,

BRETT
I'M SURE THEY'VE GOT GOOD
REPUTATIONS.

MEN
IT'S ALMOST HERE I'M GLAD
TO SAY
OUR FUTURE IS JUST A
HEARTBEAT A-!

ESTHER

The next chapter in human history is being written in South Pass City!

WOMEN
WY-WYOMING! WY-
WYOMING. WY-WYOMING.
WHY?

MEN
WY-WYOMING! WY-
WYOMING. WY-WYOMING.
WHY?

There is a moment. CLANCY grabs MINERVA.

CLANCY

Aren't you just as fine as cream gravy, little Missy. What's your name?

MINERVA

It's Minerva.

CLANCY

Well, Mighty Fine Minerva, welcome to Wyoming territory!

CLANCY kisses MINERVA. She screams. The
other women react with alarm. LEAH goes to

CLANCY and knocks him down. FARLEY crosses to MINERVA.

FARLEY

Don't pay any attention to him. He's a little uncivilized.

FARLEY's pants fall down.

MINERVA

Dear me. This isn't the welcome I was expecting.

In trying to pull his pants back up, FARLEY falls into MINERVA and knocks off her hat. LEAH and CLANCY are still fighting.

SARAH

Eve, there's a cute one; let's say hello.

SARAH drags EVE over to BRETT.

SARAH (continued)

Good morning, sir! We're new in town.

BRETT

Welcome, little ladies. Have a swig of this!

EVE

Lips that touch wine will never touch mine!

BRETT

It's corn liquor!

EVE takes the bottle and hits BRETT over the head with it. At opposite ends of the stage, ABIGAIL and BEAU spy each other. The lights dim and while there is pandemonium in the background, ABIGAIL and BEAU move toward each other.

BEAU

Are you Abigail Bardette?

ABIGAIL

I am.

BEAU

I recognized you from your picture. I'm Beau Montgomery. Welcome to South Pass City. I'm so glad to meet you at last.

BEAU bows, and offers ABIGAIL the flowers.

ABIGAIL

What a lovely bouquet.

BEAU

Wyoming wild flowers. But none of them as pretty as you.

ABIGAIL

My goodness, you will take my breath away.

LEAH

Try not to fall over. (to BEAU) I'm Leah Cohen. Abigail's friend. She bought some land out here. I think you made the deal for her.

BEAU and LEAH shake hands.

BEAU

You must be very dragged out from your trip.

LEAH

Not at all. We're full of piss and vinegar and ready to go!

ABIGAIL

I don't feel tired at all. We're just very excited to be here.

BEAU begins taking ABIGAIL's things.

BEAU

A little lady as fragile and dainty as yourself should not have ventured out without a strong man by her side. Let me carry your suitcases to the South Pass City Hotel for you.

LEAH

Oh, no you don't!

ABIGAIL

Leah! Let me handle this. (To BEAU) No, thank you, Beau, we can surely manage these on our own.

BEAU ignores her, continuing to pick up her things.

BEAU

I insist; the Hotel is this way.

LEAH

If you let him do this for you now, he'll start doing everything until you won't be able to do anything for yourself.

ABIGAIL

Mr. Montgomery, really! I am perfectly capable of managing those myself . . . and would prefer to.

BEAU puts the suitcases down.

BEAU

As you wish, Miss Bardette.

ABIGAIL

Thank you for the flowers, of course, and the warm welcome. After we have checked in at the hotel, I would very much like to see the property we have purchased, and complete our business. Perhaps you could take us there.

BEAU

Of course I will.

SARAH

I want to stay for awhile.

ABIGAIL

Sarah, I believe that man you are hanging onto is full as a tick: a drunk and a slobbering fool, and hardly suitable for a girl like you.

EVE

I'm glad I brought my hatchet --- I can chop the nearest alcohol-serving establishment into firewood.

MINERVA

These men are unkempt. And uncouth.

LEAH

And not a real fighter in the bunch!

ESTHER

Ladies, I'm sure you're all quite road-weary. Please come with me. I have prepared refreshments for you all.

The women exit.

FARLEY

What a bunch of unholy heifers!

BRETT

That big-mouth one was wearing trousers!

CLANCY

I didn't see a pretty face in the lot, except the one that talked to Beau.

BRETT

(to BEAU) She told you off, right enough. Did she ask you about her land?

BEAU

You'll quit shootin' your mouth off, if you know what's good for you.

BEAU exits.

SHEEKS

Well, now, what'd I tell you?

Music #12: PANDORA's Box (reprise)

SHEEKS

(Singing) NOW THE WOMEN ARE HERE IN WYOMING
THEY CAME OUT A-1-2-3
BUT YOU'RE FOOLING WITH
GOD'S NAT'RAL ORDER
IT'S NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT IT'D BE.

MEN

WE CAN TELL WE'RE BOUND FOR DISASTER
THE ROAD AHEAD IS PAVED WITH ROCKS
FOR NOW WE'RE CURSED WITH EASTERN WOMEN
WE'VE OPENED UP PANDORA'S BOX.

End Act I.

ACT II, Scene i

The South Pass City Mercantile. The company members are gathered for a public trial. The men shove past the women and take their seats.

WOMEN

NOW WHAT, NOW WHAT, NOW?

WE CAME HERE TO WYOMING; OUR NEW LIFE HAD BEGUN

LEAH

WE'D VOTE, WE'D FARM,

MINERVA

WE'D MARRY
OUR RIGHTS WERE FIN'LLY WON

WOMEN

BUT THIS PLACE IS SO PROVINCIAL, THE TOWNSMEN ARE SUCH
BRUTES
WE'RE FREEZING FROM THE WIND CHILL, AND NO ONE GIVES TWO
HOOTS!

FARLEY/CLANCY

(spoken) That's right!/ Not me!

WOMEN

OUR HAIR IS MESSED, WE'RE FEELING DISPOSSESSED,
THE PLANS WE LAID ARE TATTERED AND FRAYED
WE SHUNNED OUR MOTHERS' ADVICE, NOW WE MUST PAY THE
PRICE
WE LEFT OUR HOMES FOR SUFFRAGE, TO VOTE BESIDE THESE MEN
ELECTIONS ARE A YEAR AWAY! WHAT DO WE DO TILL THEN?

CLANCY

Aw, quit complaining!

CHARLIE and EARL serve refreshments. BEAU
and SHEEKS confer together.

BEAU

Ben, I got no sleep at all this whole week. I'm ready to pony up the money and put the whole
dispute behind me.

SHEEKS

You can't settle. This trial will set a precedent we need in this territory. Five hundred years of
property rights are riding on the outcome.

BEAU

Property rights are the last thing on my mind right now. I made a mistake, and I should be man
enough to admit it.

SHEEKS

That little missy is the one who made a mistake. Now, let me do all the talking.

The two whisper as SHEEKS consults a file.

MINERVA

Let me extend my compliments, Mr. Johnson, this pickled pork is delicious.

CHARLIE

It's my Mother's special recipe. We're selling the pork for just 39 cents a jar!

MINERVA

(to CLANCY) I would enjoy it even more, were we not in the company of such unmannered scoundrels.

CLANCY gives a Bronx cheer to MINERVA.

JULIA

This is the first trial I've ever attended where refreshments were served.

EVE

This is the first time I've been in a court of law when I wasn't on trial.

EVE holds up her hatchet. JULIA gasps.

SARAH

It's a sorry state of affairs that relations between men and women in South Pass City have come down to this trial. Hi, Brett!

BRETT

Howdy, Miss Sarah!

FARLEY

Don't encourage those females. They'd have us all on trial if they could.

LEAH enters.

LEAH

Oy-yay, Oy-yay, Oy-yay. All rise. The first municipal court of South Pass City will come to order. Justice Esther Morris -- a woman -- presiding!

ESTHER enters in judge's robe.

CHARLIE

Hey, Esther, I recognize that. You bought that tablecloth from us last April!

EARL

I hope you're making enough money on this job so you can pay off that fabric.

ESTHER

Order in the court.

LEAH

Okay, then, everybody, pipe down and take your seats.

ALL sit.

ESTHER

Today we hear the case of Abigail Bardette vs. Beauregard Montgomery. Will the defendant and the plaintiff please step forward?

BEAU and ABIGAIL step forward.

ESTHER (Continued)

According to these court documents, Miss Bardette, you are filing suit against Mr. Montgomery because you claim he sold you a piece of property under false pretenses.

ABIGAIL

He charged me ten dollars an acre for land that was probably only worth two dollars an acre.

BEAU

Uh, Miz Morris . . . Abigail-

SHEEKS

(quickly) I am representing the defendant, and I have the contract right here, Justice Morris. We submit that it's her own fault if that property isn't worth what she paid. She should have investigated the deal more closely before agreeing to it.

BEAU

Justice Morris, I'd like to say something, if I may.

EVE

Don't let him talk. He's a sinner and a cheat!

MINERVA

He was trying to take advantage of us newcomers. He's a bitter disappointment. (to CLANCY) And not just him.

SARAH

Abigail, I still think if we'd stayed back East, we wouldn't be in this mess. Back home, they know how to treat a lady.

ESTHER

Leah, can we have order, please!

LEAH

Come on, Esther, this fight is just getting good.

ESTHER

This is a court of law, not a circus tent.

LEAH

Order, order! Everybody, please shut yer yaps!

EVERYONE quiets down.

ESTHER

You submitted this contract in your deposition, Mr. Sheeks, and I find it a valid agreement between two adults.

ABIGAIL

But, your honor, I had never signed a contract before. I didn't fully understand its implications.

BEAU

I would like to say something, Justice Morris, if I may.

ESTHER

I don't think you have anything significant to add, Mr. Montgomery. Abigail is experiencing the consequences of equality --- a sword which, we are learning, cuts two ways. You made your legal choices, Abigail. You must now abide by the results.

ABIGAIL

But doesn't he have to give me any credit on that land?

ESTHER

I find that Beau Montgomery owes you nothing on the parcel you purchased from him. (Gavel)
Found in favor of the defendant. Next case.

LEAH

Esther, it's quittin' time.

CHARLIE

We're running out of refreshments.

ESTHER

All right then. Court adjourned until tomorrow. (Gavel)

BEAU

Hey! When do I get to say my piece?

ESTHER

The trial is over. Anything you have to say, will have to be said in private.

MINERVA

(making notes) My heroine, Gladys Happybottom, would have thrown herself upon the defendant, and earned her money back with passionate kisses!

ESTHER

Not in my court, Minerva.

SHEEKS

Nor in mine!

LEAH

This isn't your court, Ben Sheeks.

SHEEKS

We'll see. I'm seeking reelection as Justice of the Peace. We'll let the people choose! And I think the good citizens of South Pass City might just welcome my return. Mrs. Morris. Best wishes on the waning days of your term.

SHEEKS tips his hat and exits. ESTHER stands center, shaken. Scene shifts.

ACT II, Scene ii

In front of the Mercantile. The company disperses after the trial. BEAU approaches ABIGAIL. ESTHER and LEAH begin a private conversation.

BEAU

Miss Bardette? May I-? The thing is, I tried to get a word in edgewise at the trial, but no one ever called on me.

ABIGAIL

And what is it you wished to say, Mr. Montgomery?

BEAU

That I am truly sorry about the mess I made. I know what you must've thought, and it pains me greatly to think about it.

ABIGAIL

Esther Morris was right. I wanted to enter into a contract, and I needed to educate myself. You were simply trying to get terms that were favorable to you.

BEAU

I must admit when I made my first offer to you, Miss Bardette, you surprised me when you said “yes”. I got all excited when I saw you’d written that word, “Yes.” But I wish I hadn’t kept quiet after that. You were supposed to make a lower offer! What I’m saying is that I will pay you back that extra money you laid out. Even though Mrs. Esther Morris says it’s not legally required.

ABIGAIL

That’s kind, Beau. But what I suspect is that you and Mr. Sheeks thought I would fold up and go home, and then you could get your land back for pennies on the dollar. Am I right?

BEAU

I didn’t want you to leave; I wanted you to stay! Ben told me that you would fail, and then I could . . . Never mind. The point is, I made that deal without thinking it through. And that is what I’m sorry about: the effect it’s had on you and me.

ABIGAIL

I see. Well, then, perhaps, I owe you my own apology.

BEAU

You didn’t do anything wrong.

ABIGAIL

If I had approached you and had this conversation before the trial, all this difficulty might have been avoided. I may have been overly influenced by some of my women friends, and my desire to make a point. So why don’t we call it square for today? No further compensation is required.

BEAU

So Miss....Abigail, can we be friends again?

ABIGAIL

Yes, Beau. We can.

BEAU

That’s fine. And now that you’re going to stay and all, I was thinking I might be able to help you work your land!

ABIGAIL

Why Beau, I would be happy to have another pair of hands.

BEAU

Couldn’t I be more than that?

ABIGAIL

Leah, Sarah and I are like a family, if that’s what you mean?

BEAU

A family! And I could maybe be, like a part of it. (quickly) I mean, I could bring y'all my experience.

ABIGAIL

You would lend us your advice, and Leah, Sarah and I would help you carry out the labor.

BEAU

Oh, no! I would do it all myself. Farming is tough, even for a man. You can help out in the kitchen.

ABIGAIL

It's my land now, Beau. And I have no intention of merely cooking and cleaning. I'll do whatever it takes--get my hands and face dirty, plow the fields, pan for gold, anything!

BEAU

You know, Abigail, I really liked those letters you wrote me when we were first getting to know each other. I put all of them in this carved box I brought with me from Louisiana. I used to read them over and over.

LEAH and ESTHER part. ESTHER exits and LEAH approaches ABIGAIL.

BEAU (continued)

You seemed so feminine and genteel.

LEAH

Hey, Abigail. Mr. Montgomery. You two gettin' along?

ABIGAIL

In a way. I'm afraid we just found out we may have allowed certain romantic ideas to color our expectations of each other. Beau doesn't seem to understand that working our own land is a source of pride for the three of us. And I, on the other hand, have learned that the men of Wyoming are not the champions of equality I thought they would be.

LEAH

I'll say! A bunch of prairie dogs, if you ask me.

ABIGAIL

Mr. Montgomery, while I know your offer of help is well intended, I am only interested in a partnership of equals.

BEAU

Damn. Excuse my language. Thank you, Miss, at least for accepting my apology. But I refuse to be the man who is going to stand by while you get that pretty face dirty.

BEAU exits.

LEAH

What apology?

ABIGAIL

It doesn't matter. We can do this, Leah. I know we can still find a way to make our little farm work. Right?

LEAH

Hell yes! (beat) We could sure use some help, though.

End scene.

ACT II, Scene iii

It is Spring. The South Pass City Mercantile.
GOLDEN FEATHER and THOMAS
JEFFERSON are looking at the wares. ABIGAIL
and LEAH are being helped by CHARLIE and
EARL.

ABIGAIL

We'll need mulch, Charlie. And a hoe. . .

EARL

You're going to need a heckuva lot more supplies than that.

LEAH

Up till now, Abigail's only real farming experience was growing roses back in Ohio.

ABIGAIL

They were award winners.

CHARLIE

Miss Bardette, that land you bought won't support roses. Too many rocks. Have you thought of, well, uh . . .

EARL

Sagebrush?

LEAH

We did not move twelve hundred miles to operate a sagebrush ranch.

ABIGAIL

Charlie, Earl, you're the supply experts. Help us figure out what we need.

CHARLIE

What's your budget?

LEAH

Don't tell him. That's how we got into this trouble in the first place.

EARL

We can help you out. I'm sure you'll need at least two of everything!

ABIGAIL

Earl Johnson, something tells me your shopping list will include a few unnecessary odds and ends.

LEAH

Let's talk to that woman over there, and get her advice.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

(poking GOLDEN FEATHER) That white lady seeks help from the wise Indian Maiden.

ABIGAIL

(to LEAH) She's a . . . Leah, she works upstairs at the El Dorado.

LEAH

You have a better idea?

ABIGAIL

I'll give it a try. (to GOLDEN FEATHER) Excuse me, ma'am, I think your name is Golden Feather, isn't it?

GOLDEN FEATHER nods.

ABIGAIL

Were you born in the Wyoming Territory?

GOLDEN FEATHER

Yes, and I have lived here all my life.

LEAH

Ask her if knows about farming!

ABIGAIL

Leah, please, let me do this in my own way. So, Miss Feather, I have a piece of property down by the Sweetwater River I am trying to farm. I was wondering with your knowledge of the area...

GOLDEN FEATHER

No crop will grow there. The soil is sandy, and in shade most hours of the day.

LEAH

We're sunk.

GOLDEN FEATHER

Your friend has well spoken. The land... is gizhaan. (Shoshone for "bad")

ABIGAIL

How can you be so sure about my land?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Her people are the Shoshone. They used to own the whole territory, till the Army moved in.

LEAH

Then you do know.

GOLDEN FEATHER

And this man next to me has great experience as well.

LEAH

You do?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Before I became a free man, I worked the land like nobody else. Farmin', fishin', trapping animals: I was good at it, too. Up here, though, it's just shoppin', cookin', and washin' the floors for Mr. Sheeks.

ABIGAIL

Then, perhaps the two of you could help us. Work with Leah and me on the farm.

LEAH

Heck, yes! We could be partners!

GOLDEN FEATHER

You ask me, a Shoshone woman, to be a "partner"?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

You'd better take another look at the color of my skin.

LEAH

We're desperate.

ABIGAIL

The color of your skin is not important to us. We're looking for a partnership of equals. Right, Leah?

GOLDEN FEATHER

The Shoshone made a partnership with white people. A treaty. And now they must live on a narrow piece of land that yields very little food.

LEAH

I know it may seem risky, to trust us. But think of Sacagawea, guide to Lewis and Clark. That was an equal arrangement.

GOLDEN FEATHER

Sacagawea was of my tribe.

ABIGAIL

And do you imagine working with us will be worse than where you are now --- at the El Dorado, with Mr. Sheeks?

GOLDEN FEATHER

Nothing could be worse, I think.

ABIGAIL

We're all outsiders here, trying to make our way the best we can.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Begging your pardon, Miss, some of us are a little further outside than others.

LEAH

How do you think people get from the outside to the inside? Working together. Partnership!

Music #15: Partnership

ABIGAIL

THE BIBLE TELLS US A STRONG CORD IS MADE OF MANY STRANDS
AND I KNOW A LOAD GETS LIGHTER WHEN GRIPPED BY EXTRA
HANDS
A BRIDGE THAT'S HELD BY LOTS OF CHAINS IS ONE THAT WILL NOT
SLIP
THE BRIDGE WE NEED TO CROSS THAT GULF IS BUILT ON
PARTNERSHIP

ABIGAIL/LEAH

PARTNERS, YES, PARTNERS, THEY NEVER COME UP SHORT
PARTNERS, YES, PARTNERS, THE PORT OF LAST RESORT
WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD FALSE STARTS

BUT THE WHOLE IS BIGGER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS
PARTNERS, YES PARTNERS, THEY ALWAYS GIVE SUPPORT.

LEAH (SINGING)

THE TWO OF US, WE CAME OUT WEST TO FIND A WAY OF LIFE
WHERE WE WOULD BE MORE THAN JUST GIRLS, A DAUGHTER OR A
WIFE
I'M FIXING THINGS WITH MY TWO HANDS; SHE'S SMART AS A WHIP:
AND THAT'S WHAT'S HELPED THE TWO OF US, WE CALL IT
PARTNERSHIP.

ABIGAL/LEAH

PARTNERS, WE'RE PARTNERS IN GOOD TIMES AND IN HARD
PARTNERS, WE'RE PARTNERS, YOU HAVE MY FOND REGARD
WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD FALSE STARTS
BUT THE WHOLE IS BIGGER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS
PARTNERS, YES PARTNERS, THAT IS OUR CALLING CARD

ABIGAIL

(spoken) It must be the same for you two. You brothers seem quite different from each other.
Almost . . .not like brothers at all.

CHARLIE

We had different fathers!

LEAH

Yet you have been in business together a long time, despite your differences.

EARL

WE COME OUT WEST WITH THIS IDEA TO OPEN UP A STORE
I KNEW I COULD MIND THE STOCK, AND CHARLIE HERE WOULD
WALK THE FLOOR
OUR STORE IS NOW REALITY, OUR GOALS ARE OUTSTRIPPED
AND ONE THING 'BOUT THIS MAN AND ME, WE HAVE OUR
PARTNERSHIP.

EARL/CHARLIE

PARTNERS, WE'RE PARTNERS IN GOOD TIMES AND IN ROUGH
PARTNERS, WE'RE PARTNERS....

CHARLIE

... I'VE SEEN HIM IN THE BUFF.
NOW, THERE WERE TIMES YOU BROKE MY HEART
BUT YOUR HOLE IS BIGGER THAN THE SUM OF YOUR PARTS

EARL/CHARLIE
PARTNERS, WE'RE PARTNERS; YOU KNOW THAT THAT'S ENOUGH.

ABIGAIL

(Speaking) See? Partnership works.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
NOW WE HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE, WITH PARTNERSHIPS GONE BY

GOLDEN FEATHER
AND TELL THE TRUTH, A PARTNER MAY JUST LEAVE YOU HIGH AND
DRY

THOMAS JEFFERSON/GOLDEN FEATHER
WE ALL BRING SOMETHING TO THIS TASK
AND PARTNERSHIP IS WHAT YOU ASK

THOMAS JEFFERSON/GOLDEN FEATHER
A PARTNERSHIP OF THOSE OUTSIDE IS SOMETHING WE COULD TRY.

ABIGAIL/LEAH/GOLDEN FEATHER/THOMAS JEFFERSON
PARTNERS, YES, PARTNERS CAN GET YOU THROUGH DISTRESS
PARTNERS, YES PARTNERS, CAN HELP YOU FIND SUCCESS
WE MAY LEARN BY FITS AND STARTS
BUT THE WHOLE WILL BE BIGGER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS
PARTNERS, YES PARTNERS, AND NOW THE ANSWER'S "YES."

The group huddles. End Scene.

ACT II, Scene iv

ABIGAIL's homestead near the Sweetwater River.
ABIGAIL is scaling a fish. BEAU enters. He carries a
rather large pack.

BEAU
Good morning, Miss Bardette. It's been some time since our paths have crossed. I thought I'd
walk a spell to see how you were making out down here.

ABIGAIL
It's good to see you, Mr. Montgomery. We're doing fine out here.

BEAU
Are you . . . scaling that fish?

ABIGAIL

That's what I'm doing. We've pulled a lot of fish out of the river so far this spring. I will say I've scaled my share of trout.

BEAU

Fishin'? That's something I never thought of doing down here.

ABIGAIL

We gave up on farming. This acreage just won't support it.

BEAU

Is that so? Well, I don't suppose you need any supplies or anything, do you? Nets or...knives, maybe?

ABIGAIL

I think we have everything we need.

BEAU

What about petticoats? Perfume? Soap?

ABIGAIL

Mr. Montgomery, are you trying to sell me something?

BEAU

You gave up farmin' and I gave up land speculatin'. The Johnson Brothers are opening a Mercantile in Cheyenne, so they put me in charge of the South Pass City store.

ABIGAIL

Well, now. Congratulations. Let me ask this.....does the Mercantile carry fabric for wedding gowns?

BEAU

Wedding gowns! You're getting married?

ABIGAIL

Not me, silly. My sister Sarah got herself engaged to that cowboy Brett Walker.

BEAU

Of course! Johnson Brothers Mercantile can get you any kind of fabric. And Esther Morris can sew it for you. She's back to being a seamstress, now that Ben Sheeks got himself re-elected Justice of the Peace.

ABIGAIL

I'd heard that.

BEAU

So, Brett is getting hitched to your sister. I guess a wedding naturally comes with the spring.

ABIGAIL

You call this spring?

BEAU

Sure. Everything is coming to life.

ABIGAIL

We had our first grizzly bear visit last week.

BEAU

Are you okay? A hungry grizzly can be mean.

ABIGAIL

Leah chased him away with a skillet.

BEAU

When I first bought this land, I was just hoping I'd strike gold. But over time, I fell in love with it. I used to watch the elk and deer, and look up there, Miss Bardette. An American eagle. The way it soars through the sky. It's almost as pretty as you are.

ABIGAIL

Why, Mr. Montgomery, you'll make me blush. This is the side I remember about you from your very first letters.

BEAU

And if you listen close, you can hear the wind whistling through the pass.

ABIGAIL shivers.

BEAU (continued)

Are you taking a chill, Miss? Here, you can have my jacket until the sun comes out again.

ABIGAIL

Thank you. You know, this was the first sunny day we've had for weeks. I've been praying for some sunshine, but the way things look right now...it could even snow again before nightfall.

BEAU

In Wyoming, this is what we call "spring".

Music #16: Springtime Frame of Mind

BEAU (Singing)

ALL THAT WE GOT IS A-COVERED IN SNOW.

THERMOMETER SAYS IT'S A HUNDRED BELOW.
IF YOU STARTED TO CRY FOR A HEATING DEVICE,
THE TEARS ON YOUR CHEEKS WOULD JUST TURN TO ICE.

ABIGAIL

AS THE GOOD BOOK SAYS TO GOD'S OWN CHOSEN
MANY ARE COLD, BUT FEW ARE FROZEN.
THE WINTER'S BEEN BLEAK; THE SUN'S HARD TO FIND,

BEAU

BUT SOMEHOW I'M STILL IN A SPRINGTIME FRAME OF MIND

ABIGAIL (Spoken)

How could you be?

BEAU (spoken)

It's coming. You have to open your heart to see the beauty of it all. When you've
been here as long as I have, you'll figure out how it's a little different than back
east.

(Sings) WHEN IT'S SPRINGTIME IN THE MOUNTAINS,
MOTHER NATURE SINGS HER SONG.
SHE COAXES OUT WILD FLOWERS,
AND THE WARBLERS SING ALONG.

ABIGAIL (spoken)

Beau, you are silly--

BEAU

WHEN THE WARMING GENTLE BREEZES
LIFT THE HEARTS OF HUMANKIND,
YOU'LL FORGET THOSE WINTER FREEZES
IN A SPRINGTIME FRAME OF MIND.

ABIGAIL

(SPOKEN) That's not what it feels like to me. (SINGS)
WHEN IT'S SPRINGTIME IN THE MOUNTAINS,
AND THE FLOWERS START TO BUD,
I HAVE SEEN THE MOUNTAIN RUNOFF
IN A GENTLE SPRING FLASH FLOOD.
I'VE BEEN BITTEN BY MOSQUITOES,

BEAU

BOY, HOW YOU WILL ITCH,

ABIGAIL
BECAUSE OUT HERE IN WYOMING

BEAU
MOTHER NATURE IS A ---.

ABIGAIL covers BEAU's mouth.

ABIGAIL
I DO BELIEVE IN SPRINGTIME.
SOMETIMES I FEAR THAT IT WON'T LAST
WHO DOESN'T LOVE THE CALL OF MAGPIES
FROM A LOFTY MOUNTAIN PASS?
AND WHILE DEER AND RABBITS FROLIC
IT'S SO HARD TO TRUST THE FROST
WILL NOT CHANGE THIS SCENE BUCOLIC,
HOPES OF SPRINGTIME WILL BE LOST.

ABIGAIL
YES, BUT SPRINGTIME CAN
BE DAUNTING,
ON A TRAIL OR AT A RANCH.

AND IN A MOUNTAIN PASS
YOU'LL FIND
A SPRINGTIME AVALANCHE.
OH, THE WILDLIFE IS
ABUNDANT
AS THE CRITTERS TAKE
WHAT'S THEIRS
AND ONE DAY YOU'LL FIND
IN YOUR BACK YARD
A GREAT BIG GRIZZLY BEAR

BEAU
I STILL BELIEVE IN SPRINGTIME

AS A TIME FOR STARTING
FRESH
WITH EACH BRILLIANT
PATCH OF COLOR,
SUN WARM ON MY FLESH
EACH SPRING MAKES ME
A BELIEVER
EVEN WHEN IT'S
OVERDUE
DON'T YOU EVER GET
SPRING FEVER, MA'AM
AS THE WORLD GOES
TWO BY TWO.

ABIGAIL (spoken)
Two by two?

BEAU takes ABIGAIL in his arms.

BEAU (spoken)
That's what I said.

ABIGAIL
EVERY APRIL IS SURPRISING

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE.

BEAU
EVERY YEAR, THE SAP IS RISING
IN MORE WAYS THAN JUST ONE.

ABIGAIL
IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL SPRING FEVER, BEAU?

BEAU
IF YOUR HEART IS SO INCLINED

ABIGAIL
BUT SOON I THINK WE BOTH WILL KNOW

BEAU
IF YOU OPEN UP YOUR HEART YOU'LL KNOW
THAT SPRINGTIME FRAME OF MIND.

They almost kiss but are interrupted by O/S voices as
THOMAS JEFFERSON enters, running.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Miss Bardette, come on down to the river! We found something we want to show you.

ABIGAIL
All right, Mr. Howard, I'll be there in a minute.

BEAU
What the heck is Thomas Jefferson Howard doing out here?

ABIGAIL
He's been helping us with the skinning and fishing. Golden Feather is helping us, too.

BEAU
Now, that's a fine how-do-you-do. I told you I was willing to help you, and you go out and hire
the two of them.

ABIGAIL
I offered them a partnership of equals, Beau. And they accepted it.

BEAU
Of course they accepted it. They were working for next to nothing at the El Dorado.

LEAH (o/s)
Gold! We found gold!

LEAH runs in followed by GOLDEN FEATHER.

LEAH (continued)

We've done it! Abigail, we've done it. Eureka!

THOMAS JEFFERSON

We were dragging in the nets, and we found gold!

ABIGAIL

I don't see anything.

LEAH

Look close. See those shiny flecks!

BEAU

She's right! That's gold.

Music #17: Gold!

LEAH/THOMAS JEFFERSON/GOLDEN FEATHER (Singing)
WE WENT DOWN TO THE OLD SWEETWATER RIVER TO CATCH
OURSELVES A HEAP OF FISHES,
BUT WE STRUCK A VEIN AND STAKED OURSELVES A CLAIM
AND NOW ALL THEM FISH HAVE TURN TO RICHES.

LEAH/THOMAS JEFFERSON/GOLDEN FEATHER/ABIGAIL
FILL OUR KNAPSACKS UP WITH GOLD
FOR WE HAVE BROKE A TIRED OLD MOLD;
OLD SOUTH PASS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE RIVER!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE CREEK!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, OUR FLESH IS ALL A-SHIVER!
OH, WE CAN'T BELIEVE OUR LUCK – FOR WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT
WE'D STRUCK - A VEIN OF GOLD!

The scene shifts. They have arrived in town with their
knapsacks and are greeted by the other townspeople.

BRETT

OH SWEETWATER RIVER'S LIKE A FLOWER.

SARAH

BUT ITS WATER'S SO ROUGH AND COLD.

BRIGHT
AND WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT HOUR AFTER HOUR?

JULIA
THEY'D BE PULLING OUT BIG NUGGETS OF GOLD.

MINERVA/CLANCY (Together)
IT GOES TO SHOW, SOME THINGS MAY JUST SURPRISE YOU.
THEY START OUT SOUR, BUT THEN IN TIME TURN SWEET.
IT MAY TURN OUT, THAT MAN YOU THOUGHT DESPISED YOU
WILL SOON BECOME THE MAN WHO MAKES YOU FEEL COMPLETE.

ALL
WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN 'CUZ NOTHING IS AS EASY AS THEY SAID
GRAB A PARTNER; SWING HIM ALL AROUND.
FILL YOUR LAP WITH SOMEONE YOU LOVE.
HE'S YOUR HONEY; SHE'S YOUR DEAR,
CUZ NOT ALL GOLD IS HIDDEN IN THE GROUND.

WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE RIVER!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE CREEK!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THE ARROW'S FOUND ITS QUIVER!
OH, WE CAN'T BELIEVE OUR LUCK – FOR WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT
WE'D STRUCK - A VEIN OF GOLD!

Dance break. Women and men dance together: a clear
change from Scene I.

ALL
TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT WHAT WE'VE BEEN BELIEVING
WAKE UP TO WHAT'S SITTIN' IN OUR MIDST.
WHAT I ONCE MOCKED, NOW I'D LIKE TO TRY.
YOU CAN FIND THE PUREST GOLD,
A LOVELY NUGGET TOO HARD TO RESIST.

WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE RIVER!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE CREEK!
WE'VE STRUCK GOLD, THE ARROW'S FOUND ITS QUIVER!
OH, WE CAN'T BELIEVE OUR LUCK. FOR WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT
WE'D STRUCK—A VEIN OF GOLD.

BEAU has entered and is sitting dejectedly. ABIGAIL
notices this and approaches him.

CHARLIE

We got gold pans on special today!

EARL

Do we?

CHARLIE

We do, now! Beau, c'mon, we're gonna need your help!

BEAU

I'll be there in a minute, Charlie.

Company crowds into the store, leaving SHEEKS, ABIGAIL and BEAU on stage. ABIGAIL hands the jacket back to BEAU, goes into the store. SHEEKS observes, crosses to BEAU, squeezes his shoulder.

SHEEKS

I don't know how she found gold on that land you sold her. All she had to help her was those two women, a colored man and an Injun whore. They're not even Americans.

BEAU

I guess that all depends on how you think about it.

SHEEKS

That's how I think about it. I feel partly responsible for all this. So, I swear to you, if it's the last thing I do, I'll find a way to put all this right.

BEAU

I made my own decisions, and I did what I thought was right at the time. You don't owe me anything.

SHEEKS exits. Beau rummages in his pack, takes out the wooden box, which contains letters from Abigail. He looks at them.

Music #18: Beau's Lament

BEAU

I DID MY BEST TO TEND MY LAND AND TO GET MYSELF A WIFE.
NOW I'VE LOST THE GROUND I STOOD ON, ALL GOLD MINED FROM
MY LIFE.
TELL ME WHERE WAS THE PLACE THAT I STRAYED FROM THE
RIGHT PATH.
I WROTE LETTERS, TIPPED MY HAT, SPOKE WITH KINDNESS.
AND THE SWEAT FELL FROM MY BROW

TILLING SOIL THAT UP TILL NOW
WOULDN'T YIELD UNDER MY PLOW,
UNTIL SHE TOOK IT FROM ME.
MUST I LIVE WITH DISAPPOINTMENT NOW?
SET ME FREE FROM THIS DESPAIR.
PLEASE TELL ME WHAT IS LEFT TO TRY THAT I MIGHT HAVE A
SHARE
OF THE LIFE I ONCE ENVISIONED--
A MAN OF STRENGTH AND PRIDE.
HOW CAN I FIND MY WAY BACK IN?
IT SEEMS I'M LOCKED OUTSIDE.

IS IT TRUE THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING, IN SPITE OF ALL I'VE
TRIED?
HOW CAN I FIND MY WAY BACK HOME AND NOT BE LEFT OUTSIDE?

End of scene.

ACT II, Scene v

Outside the Mercantile.
The Company is assembled. ESTHER is wearing the
suffrage shawl and matching hat. SHEEKS enters.
GOLDEN FEATHER and THOMAS JEFFERSON
HOWARD stand a little to one side. Their attire is
noticeably more upscale than in earlier scenes. BEAU and
EARL are hanging a banner that says: "Welcome
Statehood!"

SHEEKS

What're you doing up there, son? "Welcome Statehood?" That's countin' your chickens while they're still in the shell.

CHARLIE

Pipe down, Ben. William Bright will be here any minute! With good news, I'll wager.

BEAU

Statehood will really improve things around here. Be good for business.

EARL

You know, back when Miss Bardette found gold on her property, we had high hopes for what it would mean for the town. Didn't turn out the way we hoped.

BEAU

Aw, Earl, you been here long enough to know better than that.

SHEEKS

(looking at GOLDEN FEATHER and THOMAS JEFFERSON) Well, it certainly allowed some people in town to improve their situation, now, didn't it?

BEAU

Be careful, Ben. I want you to watch that tone in your voice.

SHEEKS

So Statehood is the next thing to save the town, is it? You all know damn well we don't have enough people to qualify for statehood. And the fact that we gave women the vote makes us look like a bunch of free-thinkers on top of it.

BRETT and SARAH enter.

BRETT

Hey, everybody, we're here for the statehood party.

SARAH

Esther, how's my wedding dress coming along?

ESTHER

You should see how the lace bodice came out! It will be as beautiful as you, my dear.

SARAH

I hope we become a state! Maybe we could get a paved road around here.

BRETT

Aw, paved roads is overrated. But when our firstborn --- Brett, Junior --- comes along, he'll be born into the United States of America.

SARAH

You look so colorful today, Esther.

ESTHER

This is my suffrage shawl. I am wearing it in honor of William Bright's return from Washington. We'll be the first state in the Union to allow women to vote!

ABIGAIL

But not the last. Right, Beau?

BEAU

I thought we agreed it was best for our friendship if we stayed off that subject.

BRIGHT and JULIA enter.

MINERVA

Here he is! William Bright, our champion for Wyoming statehood!

LEAH

And for women's rights, too!

SHEEKS

He doesn't look so triumphant to me.

JULIA

Oh, Esther, I'm so sorry.

JULIA bursts into tears and runs into ESTHER's arms.

ABIGAIL

What's wrong, Julia? What happened?

BRIGHT

Ladies and gentlemen of South Pass City. What I have to tell you will be somewhat of a disappointment, I'm afraid.

JULIA

William, don't blame yourself. It's those stuffy politicians in Washington, DC. (to all) He did the best he could!

BRIGHT

Esther. My fellow citizens. Just days ago, we brought our petition for statehood before our congressional representative. I laid out the advantages of Wyoming joining the union. More taxes! More Republican voters!

As BRIGHT speaks, a spot comes up on Wyoming's Territorial Representative in Washington is reviewing the petition.

BRIGHT (cont'd)

Why, we would plug that great hole in the middle of the country and unite the nation!

REPRESENTATIVE

(looks up from reading) President Harrison being a Republican, most of us would welcome a new Republican state in the Union.

BEAU

What did they decide, Bill?

BRIGHT

They were open to the idea.

REPRESENTATIVE

I think we can get you approved, Bright, but what's this business about equal rights for women? You've lost your minds out there on the frontier. You need to go back to your government and take that cockamamie woman suffrage idea out of your proposed constitution. If we admitted Wyoming, you'd be the only state in America where women could vote and hold office. That's crazy.

BRIGHT

(to the crowd) So, we can become a state, all right!

General applause.

LEAH

Then what's the sour face for?

ESTHER

(realizing) It's suffrage, isn't it?

BRIGHT

I advocated hard for woman suffrage, ladies and gentlemen. But Washington, DC has no use for women's rights.

REPRESENTATIVE

Don't bother sending in another petition, Bright, as long as you've got woman suffrage in your constitution. Until it's repealed, any request for Wyoming statehood will be promptly refused. Good day.

Lights down on REPRESENTATIVE.

BRIGHT

Congress refuses to consider our bid for statehood unless we re-write our constitution. That's all there is to it.

The crowd reacts. Ad libs of dismay from the women, except Sarah. The men have mixed emotions, and want statehood.

SHEEKS

Sensible decision, that's what I say. You people were daft to expect anything else.

CHARLIE

But we need statehood. There hasn't been another gold strike around here since Abigail and Leah's.

EARL

And your big idea that giving women the vote would turn everything around didn't exactly turn out the way you thought, now did it?

CLANCY

Hey, it still worked out all right for some of us, Mr. Johnson.

CLANCY hugs MINERVA, who beams.

BRETT

Now what are we going to do, Bright? I'm about to start a family.

JULIA

He's done everything humanly possible.

BRIGHT

And it wasn't enough. I know what you're going through, Brett. Julia and I have been suffering like everyone else.

JULIA

Too many Easterners don't want to move out here. They just think that the Wyoming territory is completely uncivilized.

LEAH

If we let Washington, DC force us to rewrite our constitution, they'll be right.

SHEEKS

But that's the solution, don't you see?

BEAU

We can re-write our constitution?

SHEEKS

Funny thing. Utah had a constitution that gave women the vote. Federal government refused to let them in. They rewrote their constitution in record time. Who votes in Utah, now? Men only. As it should be. And the same will happen in Wyoming.

ABIGAIL

They can't give us rights and then take them away again!

GOLDEN FEATHER

(to THOMAS JEFFERSON) The white man has never changed his mind before, has he?

ESTHER

Rights don't come from the government, anyway. We are naturally entitled to certain rights. The government just enforces them.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Rights have a strange way of coming and then going, Ma'am.

SHEEKS

Did anyone ask you? When you worked for me-

BEAU

He doesn't work for you anymore, Ben, and in this store, anyone can say anything they please.

SARAH

What if they took away suffrage, Abigail? That was the reason you moved out here! You'd probably go back to Ohio, and I'd be here, with Brett.

BRIGHT

I'm sorry, Esther.

ESTHER

They'll have to reconsider. There must be something we can do.

ABIGAIL

That's right! We'll think of something. If we work together-

ESTHER

The constitutional convention in Cheyenne! You can make a stand there, William.

BRIGHT

I'm sorry to say, I won't be at Cheyenne when the vote comes up.

JULIA

Esther, we're leaving Wyoming.

ABIGAIL

But the convention-!

SHEEKS

-is coming up quite soon, if I'm not mistaken.

ESTHER

You have to stay until after the convention.

JULIA

We can't, Esther.

BRIGHT

Woman suffrage does not pay the bills. We've gone through our reserves. We're going to stay with Julia's family in Boulder until we get back on our feet.

ESTHER

And who will represent South Pass City at the convention, if not you? There will have to be an interim appointment.

SHEEKS

Now, that would be the decision of the Justice of the Peace, wouldn't it?

ESTHER

Your decision? The fate of women in Wyoming lies in your hands? Has all our work for women come down to this?

Music #19: Esther's Lament (A Hat Like That)

ESTHER

WILL WE BE VANQUISHED BY YOUR SCHEMES?
MY HEART IS RIPPING AT THE SEAMS,
THIS MAN WHO HOLDS WOMEN AS CHATTEL
IS THE MAN WHO WILL SETTLE OUR BATTLE?
YOU'LL DO YOUR BEST TO BEAT US
AND YOU'LL GLOAT WHEN YOU DEFEAT US.
WAS IT A MISTAKE?
WHY'D I TRY TO MAKE
A HAT LIKE THAT?

IT SEEMS I WAS PRETENDING
AND NOW IT'S AT AN ENDING
A FOOLISH HOPE THAT HELPED ME COPE,
WHILE I PUSHED A BIG ROCK UP A SLOPE:
IT WAS DOOMED TO TUMBLE.
SHOULD I HAVE BEEN MORE HUMBLE?

I FEEL MY HEART BREAK,
POISONED WITH CONTEMPT.
YOU BLOCKED EACH STEP I TRIED TO TAKE,
AND SPOILED EACH ATTEMPT.

YOU THUMPED ME AT THE POLLS,
AND YOU'VE TRAMPLED ALL MY GOALS.
YOU WILL FIGHT TO CHANGE THE LAWS.
HOLDING WOMEN BACK: THAT IS YOUR CAUSE.

SHEEKS (spoken)

I've heard about enough. C'mon boys, let's go over to the El Dorado. We can start figuring out how to re-write the constitution so the politicians back east change their mind and grant us statehood. Good night, ladies.

CHARLIE

Go on, Beau. We'll close up.

BEAU nods. All men except CHARLIE, EARL, and THOMAS JEFFERSON exit.

ESTHER

PROGRESS MOVES TOO SLOW.
WHY'D I TRY TO SEW
A HAT LIKE THAT?

SARAH

Well I see no reason to stand around here. I need to go home and start supper for Brett.

LEAH

This no time to head for the kitchen. This can't be. What happened to justice?

ESTHER

Justice? Justice is blind.

ESTHER exits.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

(Privately to GOLDEN FEATHER) The history of this country, of the world, is people giving rights and then taking them away.

ABIGAIL

What's that?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Nothin', ma'am. We'll just keep our opinions to ourselves.

GOLDEN FEATHER

The white man promises. The white man gives. The white man takes back. The wind blows. The rain falls. No one pays any attention.

ABIGAIL

It can't end this way. We need to make it right.

LEAH

And how are we going to do that?

End scene.

ACT II. Scene vi

Outside the Mercantile. A few weeks later. BEAU is locking the door. SHEEKS approaches.

SHEEKS

Beau, I need to talk to you for a moment.

BEAU

What is it, Ben? They're having a good-bye party for William and Julia Bright over at Esther Morris' house. I want to get over there and pay my respects.

SHEEKS

You're going to a party for William Bright?

BEAU

A lot of my customers will be there. I got to get out and glad-hand a little. Let people know I want to be involved in their business.

SHEEKS

I remember a time when I had to drag you into the social life of this town.

BEAU

That was a long time ago. So, what do you want?

SHEEKS

I'll get to the point. Now that William Bright is leaving town, I get to appoint a delegate to the constitutional convention. I want to appoint you.

BEAU

Me. Why me?

SHEEKS

Suffrage is going to come up for a vote. It's the only thing standing between Wyoming and statehood. I need you on my side.

BEAU

I don't want to be decidin' anything about woman suffrage. It's brought me nothing but trouble.

SHEEKS

Beau, I told you I'd make it up to for the way that speculating thing ruined your plans for your stake. You'll meet a lot of important people in Cheyenne. It'll be good for your business.

BEAU

I appreciate that, with times getting so tough. But I got to ask you, Ben. Don't take offense, now, but . . . How come you're so down on suffrage? Women have been voting here for a while now, and the sky hasn't fallen down or anything.

SHEEKS

Women are supposed to be subject to men, as men are unto God.

BEAU

You believe that, Ben?

SHEEKS

It's not known much, but once I was a god-fearing man, married to a god-fearing wife. Then she started to read these books that put ideas in her head. One day she began speaking her mind in front of some of my friends. I got so angry I (raises his hand) I set her straight in the way that God ordained a righteous husband could, against a disobedient wife.

BEAU

You struck her?

SHEEKS

It was my duty. It didn't do any good. She left me, Beau.

BEAU

I . . . didn't know.

SHEEKS

Funny thing, I haven't spoken her name to anyone in years. Her name was Hope, Beau. And I couldn't hang on to her.

BEAU

Ben, in some ways you're a lot like my father.

SHEEKS

Your father was a good man.

BEAU

But I got to tell you, I don't think my father would have ever hit a woman.

SHEEKS

Your father and I had different opinions about certain things.

BEAU

Some important things.

SHEEKS exits. LIGHTS CHANGE. BEAU approaches
arrives at Esther Morris' house. ABIGAIL is on the front
porch.

BEAU

Hey, there, I'm not too late for the party, am I?

ABIGAIL

No. But, Beau, we got some more bad news tonight. Esther Morris is leaving town as well.

BEAU

Well, shootfire, I am sorry to hear that. You're not going to leave too, are you?

ABIGAIL

No. With our little stake down by the Sweetwater River, we can live here very comfortably. For a while at least. In fact, Golden Feather thinks there may be more gold down by Hell's Canyon.

BEAU

Hell's Canyon borders on what's left of my property.

ABIGAIL

I know.

BEAU

In that case, I wonder if you might consider-

ABIGAIL

That we could be ...partners? I considered that once before, but your idea of partnership was that you would do all the work. And I would cook and sew.

BEAU

Things are different now. In a lot of ways.

ABIGAIL

Beau, I know you expected to come out here and find gold and strike it rich, but it didn't work out like that. You've ended up being a wonderful merchant. You didn't fail; you just succeeded in a way you didn't expect.

ABIGAIL takes out a pouch and hands it to BEAU.

ABIGAIL (continued)

I want you to have these. They're gold nuggets. From the Sweet Water River. I want you to remember that sometimes you find gold where you least expect it.

BEAU takes out the carved box.

ABIGAIL (Continued)

What a beautiful box.

BEAU

I guess you could say, it's a family heirloom.

BEAU puts the gold nuggets in the box.

BEAU (Continued)

Ben Sheeks just appointed me as delegate to go up to Cheyenne. He wants me to go instead now that Bright is leaving. If I go, I'd have to vote on those changes to Wyoming's constitution. That part about suffrage.

ABIGAIL

Why are you telling me this?

BEAU

I had to tell somebody. I'm going hold my counsel till I see what happens at the convention. I'm just a storekeeper. It won't all come down to me.

ABIGAIL

If Ben Sheeks has his way, I know what you'll do.

BEAU

Maybe.

ABIGAIL

Beau, this is your chance. You'll be able to carry something, for a woman. A great responsibility.

BEAU

But Abigail, it probably won't all come down to one man.

ABIGAIL

Sometimes, just one can make a real difference. Let me tell you what I saw, up by the Sweetwater River.

Music #20: Somebody Has to Do It (Couldn't It Be You?)

ABIGAIL (SINGING)

A HERD OF ELK WAS FEEDING THERE, ALL FEMALES WITH THEIR YOUNG.

A GROUP OF WOLVES THEN GATHERED NEAR, QUITE RAVENOUS OF TONGUE.

THOSE HUNGRY WOLVES SET THE ATTACK.

THEY HAD THEIR MEAL IN HAND.

A STURDY FEMALE SAW THAT PACK
ALONE SHE TOOK HER STAND.

“SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT; AND I WILL BE THE ONE.
I’LL THROW MYSELF INTO IT, MY TIME HAS SURELY COME.”
HER KICKS WERE STRONG, THEY FELL LIKE RAIN
THOSE WOLVES WERE BLEEDING, OH WHAT PAIN!
AND SOON THOSE BEASTS WERE ON THE RUN
SHE SAVED HER DAUGHTERS AND HER SONS
SOMEBODY HAD TO DO IT; I GUESS SHE WAS THE ONE.

BEAU

AND WHAT DOES A LITTLE LADY FROM THE EAST KNOW OF
SACRIFICE?

ABIGAIL

A PLACE KNOWN AS WYOMING, WITH SPACES FAR AND WIDE
MY HEART WAS SET ON ROAMING, MY PARENTS BOTH HAD DIED
MY AUNTS AND UNCLES WERE DISMAYED.
THEY THOUGHT IT WAS THE WORST,
FROM COMMON SENSE I’D STRAYED,
I TRULY WAS THE FIRST

BUT SOME WOMAN HAD TO DO IT; I GUESS I WAS THE ONE.
I THREW MYSELF INTO IT, THE TIME HAD SURELY COME.
OH, I’VE WORKED HARD THROUGH TEARS AND SWEAT.
AND MY DEAR BEAU, I’VE NO REGRETS.
YES, I’VE DONE WELL, YOU MUST AGREE.
I MADE A CHOICE, THAT WAS THE KEY.
SOMEBODY HAD TO DO IT; THAT SOMEBODY WAS ME.

NOW YOU HAVE A DECISION THAT SOON WILL COME YOUR WAY.
YOU MIGHT FACE SOME DERISION, WHATE’ER YOU DO THAT DAY.
A GROUP OF MEN WILL SOON CONVENE.
THE FATE OF SUFFRAGE THEY’LL DECIDE.
OUR RIGHTS MIGHT BURN LIKE KEROSENE.
A SINGLE VOICE COULD TURN THE TIDE.

SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT; AND COULDN’T IT BE YOU?
CAN’T YOU HELP PURSUE IT? I THINK WE’RE OVER DUE.
THIS IS A TIME YOU COULD BE BOLD.
YOU’LL SHOW THEM WHERE THERE’S REALLY GOLD.
SOMEONE ELSE COULD SEE THIS THROUGH,
BUT SEARCH YOUR HEART TO FIND WHAT’S TRUE.
SOMEBODY’S GOT TO DO IT; AND COULDN’T IT BE YOU?

End of Scene.

ACT II. Scene vii

CHEYENNE, Wyoming: The Constitutional Convention. Cheyenne townspeople and representatives are there. In the gallery: ESTHER, JOHNSON BROTHERS, ABIGAIL, LEAH. ESTHER is wearing the shawl and hat made from her fabric. SHEEKS and BEAU are on the convention floor with the other delegates.

SHEEKS

In conclusion, Representative Carey, we must revoke woman suffrage to achieve statehood. That way, we can avail ourselves of better representation in our nation's capital, and make this territory more attractive to potential settlers, improving our financial situation. I urge my fellow delegates to vote with me in revoking woman suffrage.

CAREY

Thank you, Delegate Sheeks. So far, the argument for removing woman suffrage has been ably represented. Perhaps there is a dissenting voice that would like to speak for the other side?

Everyone looks at one another.

CAREY (Continued)

I am extending an invitation . . . ? Well. If no one wishes to speak in dissent, perhaps we can close the matter now.

BEAU rises. LEAH whispers to ABIGAIL.

BEAU

Excuse me, Representative Carey! I have something to say.

SHEEKS

I'm sure his voice will just add further support to the actions we are about to take. Right, Beau?

BEAU

If I may, Representative. Our delegate, William Bright, was called away on personal business, and I am here in his place. I'm not accustomed to speaking before large ---before really large gatherings. I am a simple businessman from South Pass City.

CHARLIE

He works for the Johnson Brothers Mercantile.

BEAU

That's my employer up there. Hey, Charlie! Some time has passed since the women of Wyoming have been granted the right to vote and hold public office. And I am wondering if anyone here has experienced ill effects?

Crowd ad-libs dissent.

BEAU (continued)

There were many who predicted terrible outcomes. Some even said that granting woman suffrage would open Endora's Box of ills.

SHEEKS

That's "Pandora's" Box.

BEAU

But, it seems to me, women exercising their rights in the territory has done nobody no harm --- and has done a lot of good for folks.

SHEEKS

What are you doing, boy? I appointed you to this position. You can't turn on me now.

BEAU

Ben. In order to do what's right, sometimes a man has got to act against his own best interests. Like I might be doing right now.

DELEGATE #1

Let him speak!

DELEGATE #2

Quit peacocking around, Sheeks.

BEAU

Sit down, Ben. You had your say, let me have mine.

Several delegates call out for SHEEKS to sit down. He does so.

BEAU

I got some facts here, from my good friend Esther Morris. (He waves to Esther who waves back. BEAU reads from a piece of paper.) "Woman suffrage has largely aided in banishing crime, poverty, and vice from the territory. It has secured peaceful and orderly elections, good government, and a remarkable degree of civilization and public order." Gentlemen, you often find gold where you least expect it. In our female citizens, we have nuggets of gold, who would shame those politicians back East if they understood their true worth. Even though other states have turned their backs on their women, we must not turn our backs on ours. Someone needs to be the first. It might as well be us!

There are cheers and applause.

DELEGATE #1

Perhaps we should submit to the people a distinct proposition as to whether the **male** citizens of this territory shall be entitled to vote!

Spot up on the territorial REPRESENTATIVE in Washington DC. He is reading letters from the Constitutional Convention.

REPRESENTATIVE (Reading)

I have never read such an outpouring of feeling.

DELEGATE #2

I am unwilling myself to stand here and, by vote or word or gesture, disenfranchise one-half the people of our territory. And that, the better half!

REPRESENTATIVE (Reading)

Such enthusiasm! Utah never set pen to paper for their women. Who would have expected this?

DELEGATE #3

“I say, if you will not let us in with this plank in our constitution, we will stay out of the union forever!”

REPRESENTATIVE

Well, you need not worry, my frontier brethren. Woman’s suffrage or not, Congress has voted to grant you statehood. Welcome to the United States of America. And may Wyoming continue to vote Republican for the next 150 years!

In Cheyenne, the crowd reacts with joy.

REPRESENTATIVE (continued)

I just hope this doesn’t raise expectations in the other territories. Suffrage might gain wide popularity, and then where will we be? (He picks up a telegram) Good lord, these people are terse as well as dedicated. Here’s a telegram, with just four words: / “Not Without Our Women!”

MEN in WYOMING

“Not Without Our Women!”

Spot down on Washington DC. Scene shifts.
Lights up on South Pass City. The
MERCANTILE. BEAU is sitting on the steps, as
ABIGAIL emerges from the store with purchases.

BEAU

Good morning, Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Beau.

She puts her parcels down next to BEAU.
BEAU looks at them and back at her.

ABIGAIL (continued)

Aren't you going to offer to carry my things?

BEAU

No. (pause) Not unless you were to ask me to.

ABIGAIL stoops to pick up her belongings.
BEAU takes her hand.

BEAU (Continued)

But I have something I might ask you to carry for me.

ABIGAIL

What is it?

BEAU gets out the wooden box.

ABIGAIL (Continued)

Your beautiful carved box. Why would you ask me to carry it....?

BEAU

Open it.

ABIGAIL opens the box and takes out a gold ring.

ABIGAIL

It's beautiful.

BEAU

Look here, if I can stand up at a constitutional convention, and speak in front of 200 frontiersmen, tellin' them what to do, then I decided I can surely say what's in my heart to the woman I love. So, uh, . . . that is . . . well . . .

ABIGAIL

Yes!

BEAU

What?

ABIGAIL

Yes. I'll marry you. I love you, Beau. And I am so proud of you.

BEAU pulls ABIGAIL into his arms and kisses her as the company enters. Music under.

CHARLIE

Earl, looks like we got ourselves another wedding. Break out the pickled pork!

LEAH

A wedding! Abby and Beau? (to CHARLIE and EARL) Pay up, boys!

MINERVA

(makes a note) As my heroine, Gladys Happybottom might say, "I love a romantic ending!"

CHARLIE and EARL hand her money.

BEAU

We can get married right away if you want. We got friends all over Wyoming now. We can get Esther Morris to make the wedding dress, and we can get William and Julia Bright to come up from Colorado.

ABIGAIL

It sounds wonderful.

LEAH (continued)

(to ABIGAIL) Abigail, before you get all carried away . . . our plans?

ABIGAIL

(to BEAU) We can get married after November. Leah and I and some of the townspeople want to see Thomas Jefferson Howard and Golden Feather vote in the next election. We're going to form a human chain, /and if-

LEAH

If anybody busts out a gun, I'll bust out mine.

ABIGAIL

Plus . . . we're starting to work with suffragists in other states to pass a national Equal Rights Amendment.

BEAU

Abigail, where on earth do you get these peculiar ideas?

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOWARD

When I first heard of women voting, I thought that was a peculiar idea.

LEAH

(Looks around) We've got to get started now. We can't wait around till the next century!

GOLDEN FEATHER

Oh, it might take that long.

CHARLIE

Or longer.

ABIGAIL

(To BEAU) Will you stand with us, Mr. Montgomery?

BEAU

I guess . . . if you put it like that. . . Oh, hell. It might as well be me.

The Brights, Sarah and Brett, Minerva and Clancy, and Abigail and Beau kiss. ESTHER enters carrying a wedding veil and gives it to SARAH. Song: Not Without Our Women. The BRIGHTS who have arrived for the wedding join in as well.

Music #21: Not Without Our Women!

BEAU

THIS IS THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE
WE'RE GETTING FONDER OF EQUALITY

WOMEN

WE'VE GOT SO MUCH TO THANK YOU FOR
YOU KIND GENTLEMEN OPENED THE DOOR

ALL

NOW JUSTICE CAN PREVAIL
LIKE A TRAIN LEAVING THE STATION
WE WILL NOT LET IT FAIL
WE CAN SENSE A GREAT ACCELERATION

WOMEN

PULLING BACK NOW WOULD BE A MISTAKE

MEN

BESIDES, WE'VE MISPLACED THE GOL-DARN BRAKE

ALL

SO WE SAY
NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NO!
THOUGH YOU INSIST THAT WE GO SLOW.
I SAY GIDDY UP, QUIT YELLIN' WHOA!
NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NO!

NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NAY!
THERE'S FAR TOO BIG A PRICE TO PAY.
PROGRESS WON'T BE KEPT AT BAY,
NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NAY!

MEN

WE'LL KICK UP AN ALMIGHTY FUSS
IF YOU TAKE OUR WOMEN AWAY FROM US.

WOMEN

WE'VE EXERCISED OUR RIGHT TO VOTE.
NO TURNING BACK, THAT'S ALL WE WROTE.

ALL

NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN WHO
HAD THE GRIT TO SEE US THROUGH
STOMP YOUR FEET AND CLANG THE BELL
NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, HELL!

MEN

NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, THEY
JOINED IN THE POLITICAL FRAY.
NOW THEY'RE HERE, THEY'RE FIT TO STAY
NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NAY

EVE/LEAH

I'VE GOT A RIGHT TO A WARRANT
IF YOU SEARCH AND SEIZE

CHARLIE/EARL

GOT A RIGHT TO MARRY WHOMEVER I PLEASE

JULIA/BRIGHT

GOT A RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE
TO VOTE AND TO PRAY

LEAH

GOT A RIGHT TO MY GUNS AND A RIGHT TO SAY

ALL

NOT WITHOUT OUR MOTHERS
NOT WITHOUT OUR SISTERS
NOT WITHOUT OUR BROTHERS
NOT WITHOUT OUR MISTERS.

MEN

NOT WITHOUT OUR WOMEN, NO

WOMEN, TJH. GF

ONE STEP FORWARD BUT FAR TO GO.

ALL

GOD GAVE RIGHTS TO ALL PEOPLE BELOW.
NOT WITHOUT US ALL, HELL NO!

END of play.